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***THE BLOSSOMS
OF MORALITY***

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The Blossoms of Morality

**Intended for the Amusement and Instruction of
Young Ladies and Gentlemen**

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PREFACE.

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THE very flattering encouragement the Public have been pleased to give "The Looking-glass for the Mind, or Intellectual Mirror," has invited the Editor of that work to intrude once more on their indulgence. As a general preceptor, he wishes to be useful to the rising generation, and with that view recommends to their serious perusal "The Blossoms of Morality."

The Looking-glass is a *very free* translation of some of the most interesting tales of Mons. Berquin, and other foreign writers, whose works in the juvenile line undoubtedly merit the highest encomiums, and claim the most extensive patronage of their fellow-citizens. It certainly must be allowed, that great merit is due to those foreign celebrated writers, who, after studying the higher branches of literature, instead of attempting to acquire honour and fame by delivering lectures on the abstruse sciences, have condescended to humble themselves to the plain language of youth, in order to teach them wisdom, virtue, and morality.

With respect to the present work, though we have not so largely borrowed from foreign writers, yet we have endeavoured to supply that deficiency by the introduction of original matter. The juvenile mind very early begins to enlarge and expand, and is capable of reflection much sooner than we are generally apt to imagine.

From these considerations, we have carried our ideas in this volume one step higher than in the last: and, though we

have given many tales that may contribute to amuse the youthful mind, yet we have occasionally introduced subjects which, we hope, will not fail to exercise their judgment, improve their morals, and give them some knowledge of the world.

For instance: in the History of Ernestus and Fragilis, which is the first, and one of the original pieces inserted in this volume, the youthful reader is led to reflect on the instability of all human affairs; he is taught to be neither insolent in prosperity nor mean in adversity; but is shown how necessary it is to preserve an equality of temper through all the varying stages of fortune. He is also shown, how dangerous are the indulgences of parents, who suffer children to give themselves up to indolence and luxury, which generally, as in this history, terminate in a manner fatal to all the parties concerned.

May these Blossoms of Morality, in due time, ripen to maturity, and produce fruit that may be pleasing to the youthful taste, tend to correct the passions, invigorate the mental faculties, and confirm in their hearts true and solid sentiments of virtue, wisdom, and glory.

Ernestus and Fragilis.

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THE faint glimmerings of the pale-faced moon on the troubled billows of the ocean are not so fleeting and inconstant as the fortune and condition of human life. We one day bask in the sunshine of prosperity, and the next, too often, roll in anguish on the thorny bed of adversity and

affliction. To be neither too fond of prosperity, nor too much afraid of adversity, is one of the most useful lessons we have to learn and practise in the extensive commerce of this world. Happy is the youth whose parents are guided by these principles, who govern their children as good princes should their subjects, neither to load them with the chains of tyranny, nor suffer them to run into the excesses of dissipation and licentiousness. The following History of Ernestus and Fragilis is founded upon these general principles.

Ernestus and Fragilis were both the children of Fortune, but rocked in two different cradles. Philosophy and Prudence were the nurses of the first, and Vanity and Folly lulled the second to his repose. Ernestus was early used to experience the various changes of the air, and accustomed to a regular diet; while Fragilis was treated in a very different manner, being kept in a room where, it was supposed, no rude wind could intrude itself; and hurtful delicacies were given him, under the idle notion, that strength is to be acquired in proportion to the dainties and excesses of our meals.

Hence it is no wonder if, after a few years had strengthened their limbs and mental faculties, that there appeared an indisputable difference between the two youths.

Ernestus was all life and gaiety, and soon showed a propensity to be at the head of all kinds of mischief. Though this disposition often got him into disgrace with his parents, yet he always showed much contrition and sorrow when he really found he had injured any one, and seldom slept after

the commission of a boyish crime till he had made ample amends to the party injured.

Fragilis had very different passions, and very contrary notions of things. Being accustomed to be indulged with whatever he cried for, his ideas soon wandered from real to imaginary wants, and as these could not possibly be gratified, he naturally became peevish, fretful, and ill-natured. Whenever the mind is affected, the body must partake of the shock it occasions. Fragilis was weak, rickety, and feeble; and the remedies they applied to relieve him only contributed to increase the evil.

As the two little heroes of my history lived in the same neighbourhood, and their parents were nearly equal in point of fortune, they consequently became intimate companions, and frequently visited each other. It was easily to be discovered which of these two children would one day figure most on the busy stage of the world. Ernestus and his lady with pleasure beheld in their little son an ample share of spirit and activity, kindness and affability, resolution and integrity. The parents of Fragilis, however, had not the same pleasing prospect in their favourite and darling; for he was of a dull and gloomy turn, seldom contented with any thing, perpetually wrangling with every one about him, and constantly pining after those things which he knew were not to be procured.

Ernestus made a rapid progress in his literary pursuits, under the tuition of his masters; for his application to his books was equal to the genius nature had bestowed on him. On the other hand, Fragilis advanced very slowly in the paths of science; for his genius had been spoiled by the

pernicious indulgences of his parents in his infant years, and he had been suffered to acquire a habit of indolence, which made the least labour of body or of mind tiresome and disgusting.

These circumstances, however, did not seem to interrupt the rising friendship between these two youths, their connections growing stronger as they ripened in years. They were joint proprietors in their kites, their tops, their marbles, and their dumps; though Ernestus was generally the manufacturer of the first and last articles. Indeed, the kites made by Fragilis were always too heavy, and not equally balanced on both sides; consequently they were difficult to be raised into the air, and when there, they had a wavering and unsteady motion; whereas, those made by Ernestus were light and elegant, darted into the air like an eagle, and remained there as steady as a hawk resting on its wings; his dumps had the elegance of medals; and his tops and marbles were so judiciously chosen as to claim the admiration of all the neighbouring youths.

The time at length arrived, when it is usual for parents to begin to think of sending their children from home, to engage in the busy commerce of the world, and to learn how to provide for themselves. The feathered inhabitants of the woods and groves give up every pleasure to that of rearing their little brood; but, as soon as they have acquired a proper degree of maturity, they then drive them from their nests, to form new connections, and to shift for themselves. Man, more helpless than birds, requires the assistance of the parental hand, for some years, to rear and cherish him;

nor do their cares and anxieties for him cease till life is no more.

Though Ernestus loved his parents with all the affections of a dutiful child, yet he could not help rejoicing at the idea of embarking in the bustle of the world, and making a figure as a man. On the other hand, Fragilis could not prevail on himself to quit the apron-string of his mother, and engage in the rude clamour of a commercial life, in which so much attention, thought, and industry, are required. Neither could his parents part with their darling, whose constitution they had spoiled, and rendered unfit for business. Ernestus, in a short time after, by his own desire, was placed as a clerk in a merchant's house in London; while Fragilis continued with his parents, to squander away his time in destructive scenes of indolence and luxury.

Five years had glided away as it were imperceptibly, when Ernestus found himself disengaged from the ties of his clerkship. His person was by this time arrived at the state of manhood, his figure was graceful and genteel, and his mind was improved from the polite companies he had engaged in at his leisure hours. As business had ever been the first object of his attention, and as he had thereby made himself of no small consequence to his late master, the latter, to connect him more closely with his interests, offered Ernestus his daughter in marriage, and a considerable share in the trade of the house. Such a flattering offer could not admit of a moment's hesitation, especially as a secret passion had long mutually glowed in the bosom of each party. They were married, and they were happy.

Soon after this period, a most dreadful inundation happened on the sea-coast, on the very spot where the houses and lands of the parents of Ernestus and Fragilis were situated. Dreadful indeed it was, for it not only washed down their houses, but drowned some hundreds of cattle, and left that as a part of the briny ocean, which, but a few hours before, was beautiful meadows and gardens, adorned with every thing pleasing to regale the appetite, or please the eye.

Deplorable indeed was now the situation of those two families: their houses washed away, their cattle destroyed, and all their fruitful lands, on the produce of which their fortunes depended, were irrecoverably lost, and become of no value. Surely, to support such a situation with any tolerable degree of tranquility of mind, requires more courage and philosophy than generally fall to the lot of imperfect mortals!

After the first transports of terror and affright were a little abated, and calm reason and reflection succeeded the sad emotions of horror and despair, the old Ernestus thus addressed the fair partner of his misfortunes:—

"My dearest Emelia," for that was the name of his amiable lady, "in the midst of this terrible misfortune, we have the happiness to reflect, that what has befallen us is not derived from any fault of our own, but by the pleasure of Him who gave us every thing, and who has a just right to take what he pleases from us. Though he has taken from us our house and lands, he has still graciously left us our beloved son, who will not fail to console us in our misery, and who will perhaps help us in our distresses. Though we

are deprived of our fortune, we have the pleasing consolation to reflect, that, by bringing him up in the school of Prudence and Industry, we have secured him from sinking under the wreck of our present calamity. Nothing can more contribute to soften the calamities of good parents, than to reflect that their children are not exposed to partake of their miseries."

The heart of this amiable spouse was, for some time, too full of grief for the misfortune she felt, to give any immediate reply: but, at last, recovering her usual spirits and sensibility, she withdrew her head from the bosom of her generous husband, on which it had been for some time tenderly reclined.

"Ah! my beloved partner of happiness and misery," said she, "why am I thus sorrowful and wretched? why do I thus fly in the face of Providence, for depriving us only of the baubles of life? Have I not still left an amiable and tender husband, and a dutiful and beloved son. These are treasures which I still possess—treasures infinitely beyond those I have lost—treasures that will support me in the stormy hour of adversity, and enable me to make a mockery and derision of every thing that the cruel hand of fabled Fortune can inflict."

She then caught her husband in her arms, and there fainted, rather through excess of joy than grief. Virtuous minds, however they may be distressed for a moment, by unforeseen accidents, soon find an inexpressible consolation in the integrity of their hearts.

Such was the character of Ernestus and his lady, that this dreadful calamity was no sooner known, than all the

neighbouring gentry flocked round them, and seemed to contend with each other for the honour of assisting such distinguished characters. What is the empty parade of riches acquired by fraud, rapine, and plunder, when compared to the heartfelt satisfaction which virtue in distress must have here felt?

It may reasonably be supposed, that it was not long before this dreadful calamity of these amiable parents reached the ears of young Ernestus. A youth, brought up in the wilds of modern extravagance, would have exclaimed, perhaps in bitter terms, on being thus suddenly deprived of a fine patrimonial estate; he would, probably, have even arraigned the severe hand of Providence, and have dared to utter impieties against his omnipotent Maker!

Such was not the conduct of Ernestus. His parents had taken care to give him, not a flighty and frothy, but a rational and manly education, the foundation of which was honour, probity, and virtue; not folly, luxury, and vanity. It is a just proverb, that the first seasoning sticks longest by the vessel, and that those who have been accustomed, in their early days, to tread the paths of Prudence, will seldom, when they grow up, run into those of Folly.

Ernestus received the news of this terrible calamity, just as he and his lady returned from a party of pleasure. It is too often found, that after pleasure comes pain, and never was it more truly verified than in this instance; with this exception, that here the one was not the consequence of the other.

He tenderly embraced his lady, took leave of her for the present, and instantly set out for the fatal scene of ruin, to

assist, console, and comfort, his unfortunate parents. What passed between them in the first moments of their meeting, afforded such a scene of tenderness and affection, as exceeds the possibility of description to reach: the feelings of the heart, in such a situation, exceed every thing the most lively imagination can fabricate.

Ernestus found his dear parents had taken shelter in the house of an old gentleman, who lived in the neighbourhood, who was immensely rich, and had neither children nor relations living. Here they enjoyed all the consolation and comfort their generous hearts could wish for; nor was the young Ernestus suffered to contribute his mite to their aid. "It is enough," said the old gentleman of the house, "that you have lost your patrimony; but I have riches sufficient, and have no near relation to succeed me. How can I dispose of it better than in cherishing the distressed, and in taking virtue by the hand to raise it above the wrecks of fortune?"

In a little time after, this worthy old gentleman paid the debt of nature, and left the bulk of his fortune to the parents of Ernestus; who, by this act of generosity, were become as opulent as ever, and consequently resumed their former figure in the world. The fortune of young Ernestus was every day increasing, from his great success in commerce, till he at length found himself master of a sufficient independency, when he quitted trade; and he and his lady retired to the country, where they passed their days under the same roof with their parents, happy in themselves, and diffusing happiness to all who lived within the circle of their knowledge.

We could wish here to drop the curtain, and leave the mind filled with those pleasing ideas, which the good fortune of the family of Ernestus must raise in the bosoms of the generous and humane—but we must return to the unhappy family of Fragilis.

Young Fragilis, owing to the mistaken manner in which he was brought up, was feeble and enervated at that age, in which youths generally grow strong and robust. Hence it happened, from the sudden inundation of the waters, that it was with great difficulty he could save his life. However, though he escaped the fury of the unrelenting waves, he caught such a cold, that a fever ensued, which, heightened by the fright he had received, proved too much for his weakly constitution to support, and put a period to his existence in a few days.

Trying indeed was the situation of Mr. Fragilis and his lady: in one day, deprived of all their wealth and possessions, and in a few days afterwards of their only son, whom they loved to excess, whom they ruined by false indulgences, and by whom they were reproached for their mistaken conduct in his dying moments. To be reproached by the only object they loved in this world, as being in some distant degree instrumental to his death, was too cutting a consideration for them to bear. They felt the wound effectually, it festered in their hearts, and they soon followed their son to his untimely tomb.

Reflect, ye too tender and indulgent parents, how dangerous it is to rear your children in the lap of Luxury and Indolence, since you thereby make them unfit members of the community, frequently a heavy load to themselves, and

always a source of anxiety and fear to their mistaken parents. Without health, strength, and vigour, life is but a burthen; why should then so many parents take such trouble to deprive their children of the three principal blessings of this life, which, when once lost, are never known to return?





Juvenile Tyranny conquered.

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MR. Wilson, his lady, and little family, left the noise and bustle of the city, to pass the more agreeable half of the year amidst the delights of rural scenes and prospects. Mr. Wilson, to a refined education, had added much knowledge and experience in the commerce of the polite world. His lady, though an amiable and sensible woman, had, in the education of her children, given rather too much into the fashionable errors of the metropolis.

As soon as they were properly settled in their rural retirement, Mr. Wilson thus addressed his lady: "I flatter myself, my dear, that you will now leave me at liberty to manage our two children, in the manner that shall appear to me most proper; for I wish to eradicate those seeds of pride,

obstinacy, and perversity, which the little circle of their acquaintance in London has sown in their minds, and to which the corrupted manners of the city have given deep root."

Mrs. Wilson seemed a little angry at this introduction, and wished to know what were those defects he imagined to have discovered in the minds of her two little ones: she entreated him not to conceal them from her, as it was equally her duty to assist in every thing where the happiness of their children was concerned.

"I do not wish, my dear," replied Mr. Wilson, "to complain of your conduct as a wife; but I think you are too fond and indulgent as a mother, you encourage them too much in the pride of dress, and fill their minds with the love of those things, which, so far from being of any use to them, may in time be productive of the worst of evils. Children, who are taught to value themselves only on their dress, or in proportion as they expect a superiority of fortune to others, will with difficulty consent to be governed by the rigid rules of prudence, or submit with cheerfulness to those laborious studies, from which alone true greatness is derived."

Mrs. Wilson laughed at the oddities of her husband, as she called them, and represented him as one born in the beginning of the last century. She considered it as an indispensable duty to educate her children in conformity to the manners of the times, and the modes of education almost universally adopted in the fashionable world.

Mr. Wilson, however, was of a very different opinion, and considered nothing so dangerous to the morals of his children, as to suffer them to be brought up in the modern

school of extravagance and pride. He owned it was a privilege which most wives claimed, of being permitted to spoil their daughters in their own way; and if, out of complaisance, he gave up that point, he hoped he should be permitted to educate his son as he thought proper.

The first thing he should endeavour to break him of, he said, should be his pride, which induced him to despise every one who was not dressed like himself, or whom he otherwise thought beneath him. Mr. Wilson considered it as very pernicious, to suffer children to value themselves merely on account of their dress or fortune.

Mrs. Wilson, however, could not be convinced of the truth of these arguments. "I suppose," said she, "you would have him brought up like a ploughman, or as if he were born to nothing greater than little Jackson, the son of the gardener, who lives at the bottom of your grounds."

The conversation now began to grow serious, and the gentleman could not help saying, he most heartily wished that his son, born as he was to an ample fortune, possessed all the good qualities which were conspicuous in that *poor* boy. He very judiciously observed, that what the world generally calls a *polite* education, often falls short of producing those happy effects, which Nature sometimes bestows on uncultivated minds. Children of humble birth are often despised, merely on account of their poverty, without considering, whether Nature may not have done more for them than for the children of Fortune. "Happy should I think myself," said he, "if my son and heir possessed half the civility and condescension which are so much taken notice