

Literature, & C.

From the Illuminated Magazine.
A CHAPTER FROM THE LIFE OF
A LADY-KILLER.

BY DARWIN HILLIER.

Mr. FREDERICK SMITHERS was a lady-killer—I do not mean to affirm that he committed female murder in such a manner as to bring himself under the laws of his country; he was more refined, more dangerous in his cruelty. He used no deadly weapon—he administered no poison; he destroyed by the irresistible power of his fascinations.

It may be wondered how Mr Frederick Smithers could, with a clear conscience, devote himself to so heartless a pastime. He could not. His life, according to his own account, was a constant succession of passion and remorse—of sinning and repenting; and all who heard his discourse—and believed his discourse—pitied, whilst they admired him.

By his voluntary—exceeding voluntary—confession, it appeared that he had broken confiding hearts by the dozen, and had been the real producer of some of the most touching epitaphs in some of the most romantic cemeteries about London. But though the cause of maddening love in all of the gentle sex who came within his influence, he had himself remained insensible. Transient gleams of affection he had experienced indeed—bright spots amid the general desolate darkness—but love—pure and enduring love—such as alone could justify his making choice of one—he had never known. It was his singular and dreadful destiny to light up ardent affection—but himself to be denied its warmth, and to suffer all the pangs of regret for the infliction of unintentional suffering.

This delectable confession, we are bound to say, found credit with but few; and some wild young men, who were quite unsusceptible of anything like sentiment, had even carried their scepticism and contempt so far as to form from the doubtful adventures of Mr Frederick Smithers a comic song of fourteen verses, which they were in the habit of singing with distinguished applause at bachelors' supper-parties. Mr Frederick Smithers, however, was unmoved by vulgar ridicule and incredulity, and continued his accustomed existence, making love as if by habit—boasting of his success—and lamenting his own obduracy.

One autumn it chanced that Mr Frederick Smithers took it into his head to go to Scotland. He was properly struck with the architectural beauties of Edinburgh, and the romantic beauties of the Highlands, and prepared to depart for London with regret, when called home by business of importance. He embarked in a steamer, and after the first few miserable hours of sea-sickness, began to look about him, and assume the air of a man who was used to marine travelling. With one of his fellow passengers he soon became on very friendly terms; this was a young surgeon of the name of Desborough, who had been making rather a lengthened stay in Edinburgh, and was on his way to London, where he contemplated the purchase of a practice. Smithers and Desborough walked the deck together—drank whisky toddy together, played draughts together—and exchanging cards when they landed, continued their acquaintance on shore. Smithers introduced Desborough to his friends, and Desborough introduced Smithers to his friends, and at each other's lodgings they were completely at home.

Amongst those with whom Smithers had become thus acquainted, there was one family which soon absorbed the greatest share of his attention. It consisted of a widow named Lincoln, and her two daughters, both very beautiful and accomplished girls. Desborough had known them from his boyhood, and was consequently treated almost like a member of the family, and Smithers, being presented to them by so valued a friend, was received with more warmth than probably would have been accorded to him had the mode of meeting been different. Be this as it may, the lady-killer attributed his favorable reception entirely to his own merits, and returning warmth for warmth, with interest, was in a short time scarcely ever absent from the residence of the Lincolns. Morning calls gave him an opportunity of forming evening engagements, and these again gave him a pretence for morning calls; concerts, operas, theatres, balls—all were brought into requisition, and as Smithers flattered himself, not in vain.

It may be asked how Desborough relished these vigorous proceedings of his new friend. Indeed, he seemed to take little notice of them. He evinced some surprise at first, and as Smithers thought, some jealousy. But he soon appeared to consider the appearance of the lady-killer at the Lincolns as a matter of course, and all indication of vexation disappeared. Smithers, on his part, was perfectly at his ease; for he had not carried on the siege long before he had arrived at a very satisfactory conclusion, which was that both the Misses Lincoln were desperately in love with him, and that both looked with perfect indifference on Desborough, who was the victim of a hopeless passion for one of both—but if for one, he could not tell for which; and it did not matter, for he could not get her.

Having thus clearly settled in his own mind the state of affairs as regarded others, he began to question as to the condition of his own heart—could he feel happy to select one of the Misses Lincoln, and actually to marry her? After some deliberation he decided that he could. The next question was—which was it to be? It was plain that he could have either, and, as

he had given them both equal reason to hope, neither could be thought of finding herself the chosen one, though misery and a broken heart might, he feared, be the portion of the rejected. He made his election at last, and fixed on the elder as being more beautiful, and he suspected, having better expectations than her sister. His plan formed, he prepared to prepared to put it into immediate execution.

As he was about to go out on this errand, a knock at the door announced a visitor, and Desborough entered. He had not called on Smithers for some time, but there was no diminution of friendship in his manner as he shook hands with him, and, taking a chair, began chatting on the topics of the day.

An idea came into the mind of Smithers. Here was the very man who first introduced him to the Lincolns, and who probably would feel hurt if not consulted on an affair of such moment. At all events he had no cause to fear him as a rival—of that he was certain; an opportunity for a little boasting, and perhaps the gratification of a little friendly malice, was irresistible.

"Desborough," exclaimed he, "I wish to have your advice on a matter of importance. My constant attention to the Lincoln family have no doubt been very obvious to you, and probably you have thought that I was merely seeking the gratification of an idle vanity; but I assure you my motives were of a higher order. I have long sought—unsuccessfully sought—a girl with whom, as I believed, I could happily pass my life. At length I have found her—Mary Lincoln is that girl. Tell me if, in your opinion, I have chosen wisely."

"Mary Lincoln is a charming creature," exclaimed Desborough.

"I have not come to a decision without much thought," said Mr. Smithers. "Both the Misses Lincoln are charming creatures; and Sophia certainly has fine eyes! But there is something about Mary that is quite irresistible, and to Mary is my heart given."

"Upon my word," said Desborough, laughing, in spite of all attempts to keep his countenance, "you are very impartial in your praise and it would appear, have given half your heart to each. I hope that both ladies are not enamored of you, and that there is no danger of one pining beneath your indifference."

"Ah, my dear friend," exclaimed Smithers, "you are very penetrating, I find. Yes; the case is just as you say. Mary and Sophia, I have every reason to believe, are both passionately in love with me; and what will become of poor Sophia when I propose for her sister, I dread to contemplate."

"But what are your reasons for this very complacent belief?" asked Desborough.

"Oh, they are innumerable!" replied Smithers. "Looks, words, tone of voice tell all—and have long told me their secret. Do you remember that Mary some time ago left off wearing her hair in bands, and took to wearing it in ringlets?—well, that was because I said how I preferred ringlets. Have you never observed, too, how often Sophia dresses in black? I like her best in black."

"Oh, the matter is plain!" exclaimed Desborough.

"Plain enough to me at all events," said Smithers; "too plain, I may say. But egad," continued he, playfully slapping Desborough on the shoulder, "I thought once you were my rival, egad I did! whether with Mary or Sophia I could not discover; but with one certainly. However, I soon found that they looked on you merely as a friend."

"I always told you so," said Desborough, "and that I regarded them in that light also."

"Yes," said Smithers, "but I did not believe you; I thought you were only endeavoring to lull my suspicion in order to throw me off my guard, and so supplant me."

"And," said Desborough, "which sister did you consider my favourite?"

"Oh, that I could not discover," said Smithers. "I should have been jealous of you too with either; for at that time I had not made up my mind, but now that I have, I must lose no time. If you are coming part of my way I shall be glad of your company; and depend on it I will not forget to send you some bride-cake."

Accordingly they left the house together, and parting at some distance from the residence of Mrs. Lincoln, Smithers repaired thither at once, and knocked a knock which evinced his usual confidence, with some small alloy of unusual trepidation.

Now it so happened, that everything was arranged most properly for the occasion of his visit. Mrs. Lincoln had gone out; Mary was painting an oil picture in the breakfast parlour; and Sophia was practising the piano-forte in the drawing-room. Mr Smithers entered the former apartment in his wonted familiar manner, and preventing Mary from calling her sister, seated her in a chair, took another close beside her, and commenced proceedings in the following manner.

"My dear Miss Lincoln, I have that to say to you the purport of which you may probably know. My constant and devoted attentions to you can hardly be misinterpreted. I declare that I love you, and beseech that your words may give me hope."

"Indeed, Mr. Smithers," said Mary, smiling, "I did not interpret so exactly as you suppose. I considered your attentions pretty equally divided between my sister and myself. Had I suspected that they were intended solely for me, I should at once have told you that such attentions were in vain."

"In vain, Miss Lincoln!" exclaimed Smithers, flushing with a feeling between shame and anger.

"Perfectly so!" said Mary. "As a friend, and particularly as a friend of Edward Desbo-

rough, I esteem you; but love you I feel I never can."

"I thank you, Miss Lincoln, for your candour," said Smithers. "You are certainly not prone to delude with false hopes; others perhaps, may not be so obdurate—and once gone, mind, I am gone for ever! Allow me to wish you a good morning."

He quitted the breakfast-parlour, and repaired full of rage and disappointment straight to the drawing room, from which had issued during the whole of the preceding interview the rumbling and tinkling of the piano-forte. He resolved at once to propose to Sophia—the charming bright-eyed Sophia—in every respect superior to her haughty deceitful sister, and so gratify by one bold stroke, his love and revenge.

He drew his chair to her side, very much in the same style, as at the commencement of interview the first, and dismissing from his countenance all appearance of chagrin, putting an expression of sentiment. His late opening speech had been coned on his way to the house, and as he had certainly not anticipated the possibility of requiring such a speech to two different persons on the same morning, he resolved that it should do duty on the present occasion likewise.

"My dear Miss Sophy Lincoln," said he, "I have that to say to you, the purport of which you may probably know. My constant and devoted attentions could hardly be misinterpreted. I declare that I love you, and beseech that your words may give me hope."

It was a strange and startling fact, that no sooner had Smithers addressed Sophia thus in the very same words which he had just used to her sister, than Sophia replied in very nearly the same words in which her sister had replied.

"Pardon me Mr. Smithers," said she; your attentions were not, indeed, to be interpreted so easily. They seemed divided with tolerable impartiality between my sister and myself, and to her I suspected them to be directed. Had I believed that I was their object, I should have endeavoured to bring about an *éclaircissement*, that I might tell you the truth."

"And that?" faltered Smithers.

"And that, Mr. Smithers," said Sophia, "is that I wish to look on you as a friend, but that to love you is not in my power."

Then I have been prettily fooled between you and your sister," exclaimed Smithers, considerably excited. "You have encouraged me only to laugh at me!"

Sophia appeared somewhat shocked by this coarse charge, but replied gently:—"For myself, and for my sister too, I can deny such an accusation. If you had rendered your motives more marked before, you might have been earlier undeceived; but for Mary or myself to have assumed at once where your affections tended would have appeared conceited and indelicate. We would have checked your constant visits; but we were afraid of exhibiting anything like harshness to a friend of Edward Desborough."

"And to Edward Desborough I suppose I am sacrificed," exclaimed Smithers, passionately. "He was my rival as I suspected at first; and with his quiet artful manoeuvres has duped me, and triumphs over me. But he shall repent his triumph."

"Be calm, Sir," exclaimed Sophia, "or I shall leave the room. You have been no dupe of Edward Desborough; but the dupe only of your unbounded vanity, which made everything appear falsely to you. You imagined encouragement where no encouragement was given, and suspected a rival where no rivalry existed. Edward Desborough was engaged before you knew him, to a young lady in Edinburgh, and in three months they will be married."

As Sophia uttered these words a loud knock was heard at the street door, and immediately afterwards Mrs. Lincoln entered the room.

"Ah, Mr. Smithers," exclaimed she, holding forth her hand, "good morning, I am glad to see you!"

To the great astonishment and alarm of the old lady, Mr. Smithers rushed past her without uttering a word, and in another moment had left the house.

That evening he was a passenger in the Boulogne packet.

Edward Desborough is now a married man with an increasing family and an increasing practice. Mary and Sophia Lincoln, too, are married and happy. Mr. Frederick Smithers, having met with two matrimonial refusals in Paris and one in Florence, has taken up his abode in Brussels, and is about to be united to a rich, plump, elderly widow in that city.

From the Quarterly Review.

WILLIAM HONE.

Few of my readers ever saw my friend Hone; those who did, will never forget him. His noble countenance, indicating intelligence and benevolence in equal degrees, commanded respect and admiration. Whether you visited him in his own house, surrounded by his family, stepped into his little room while he was preparing the next number of "The Every Day Book," or met him in the large political or literary party, you saw good temper, and listened to tones you would never willingly forget. He could be severe, but this power was seldom called into action; when it was employed, the object of it never lost the impression he produced.

The reader will remember some fifteen or twenty years ago, when Hone published his Parodies of the Litany, and sundry other matters. He had been disgusted with the cant of priests and of politicians, and determined to hold them up to the ridicule of the world. He had not then learnt to distinguish between religion and its professors, and we cannot be sur-

prised that he did not perform his task wisely. The British government, in an evil hour, resolved on Hone's prosecution; and Hone wisely evaded personally to defend himself. Poor Lord Ellenborough, to the latest day of his life, remembered his third trial. His lordship was angry at his former acquittals, and determined to occupy the bench himself on the trial of the third indictment. The court was crowded—the indictment was read—the witnesses were examined, and it was clear enough that Hone had published Parodies tending to bring the government and the established church into contempt. He rose, however, to defend himself; the immense assemblage, were almost breathless. He stood there the very embodiment of intellect, scorn, and energy! On either side he had a pile of books, ancient and modern, to be used during his address. In vain did the judge tell him that he had adopted a wrong course, and that it would avail him nothing to show that many others had done wrong before him. Hone told his lordship that his address was to the jury, and that his object was to show that judges, priests, and bishops, from the middle ages downwards, had indulged in parodies, and were never accused of attempting to bring government or religion into contempt. How often did Ellenborough endeavor to stop him, and as often did Hone, with the most admirable tact and good temper ward off his attempts to destroy his argument. At length, seeing the jury were becoming fatigued, Hone exclaimed, "Gentlemen, I will only detain your attention a few minutes longer. His lordship has told you that all parodies of this character are opposed to the law, and renders their authors obnoxious to punishment; gentlemen, we will test the impartiality of his lordship: I hold in my hand a parody written a few years since, within the walls of one of our universities; a parody of sacred writ; its author, a man of splendid talents, is now one of the ablest judges of the land; gentlemen, listen!"—and he began to read an able but violent attack on living persons; suspicion was soon awakened as to the author; Hone warmed as he read; fire seemed to flash from his eyes as he looked the judge in the face, and read some of its sentences with the strongest emphasis. Then, after a pause, which spoke louder than any words, he turned from the bench to the jury, and exclaimed, "Gentlemen, we will have one short passage more!" Poor Ellenborough! How he had felt for some quarter of an hour! Throwing himself back on his seat, and looking as no man ever looked before, he cried out in the most beseeching tone; "Spare me, Mr. Hone, spare me!" Hone threw down the book, saying, "My Lord, your request is granted." The jury acquitted the prisoner, but the judge never recovered his confidence. The universal opinion was, that Hone had inflicted his death-blow.

Years rolled along, and Hone avowed himself a Christian. More transparency of character, or simplicity of conduct, were never witnessed. No man ever doubted the sincerity of his profession. He had yielded to conviction, forced upon him in a manner irresistibly powerful. He lost money and friends by his profession of religion, and was some time before he formed new connexions from whom he could obtain any degree of support for a numerous family. He became at length one of the Editors of *The Patriot*, the newspaper organ of the English Dissenters, and gained their high esteem for the independence, the consistent character, and healthy tone of whatever he wrote.

It was my happiness to meet Hone at the last dinner party at which he was present. His health had long been declining; and, as he assured us, nothing but his high regard for the gentleman whose table he surrounded, and his wish once more to utter his undying attachment to the great principles of liberty, civil and religious, would have induced him to venture three or four miles from his residence. The party consisted of some twenty-five of the noblest spirits of England's metropolis. There were present clergymen, civilians, and lords of the press; antiquarians, historians, and poets, united to furnish one of the highest intellectual treats I ever enjoyed. During the evening, our host proposed the health of William Hone, which was drunk with every mark of the most profound respect. He rose to acknowledge it. I remember—not can I ever forget—how he stood at the corner of the table, at the elbow of the president; his open, manly countenance how it was lit up with intellect and benevolence; you could read his very soul by the light it gave. He thanked us for the compliment we had paid to him; expressed his delight that he was once more surrounded by such a party; avowed his full conviction that his health would never again permit him to associate with his friends; and begged permission, therefore, to leave with us his "last legacy." He then glanced at his former life, assured us of the entirely unsatisfactory character of infidelity, and ably contrasted it with the peace inspired in the breast by Christianity. He frankly regretted that he had ever done or said anything injurious to Christianity; and, after a long pause, looking with intense earnestness round the table, he added, "Do not mistake me, gentlemen, I still detest the representations of Christianity given by many of those who wear her garb, and live on the public purse; and taking out a New Testament, which he always had in his pocket, he added, "this is my Christianity; and while it fills me with hope of immortality, it teaches me that it is too holy to be loved by tyrants. Liberty, gentlemen, liberty, civil and religious, is the doctrine of this book. I live and die protesting against the union of religion with tyranny. I must do so," gently tapping the New Testament several times. "For so does this book." No, the reader has not a full idea of the