Self-Dependence. A novel. In 3 vols. [London: T. C. Newby. 1849.

"Self-Dependence" is a novel, with the incidents of a melodrama and the improbabilities of a romance; yet withal it is not unattractive reading. The plot turns upon the fate of a certain Edward Mortimer, who is accused and convicted, too, of having murdered his friend, a Mr. Dormer, for the purpose of plunder. Dormer had been uncommonly successful at a gaming-house one night; and Mortimer was not alone seen in the room, in a sort of disguise, but seen also armed with a brace of pistols. Subsequently Dormer was found dead in the adjacent street; and Mortimer was seized by the police in close proximity to the body—his clothes stained with blood, and, worse than all, a roll of bank notes, the winnings of the ill-fated deceased, in his possession.

The result of the trial is, sentence of death, which is commuted to transportation for life to Norfolk Island; though why such commutation should have taken place is by no means obvious. Edward is, however, innocent, the reader is informed in the outset; and with less auctorial artifice than the writer might obtain credit for, the finger of suspicion is pointed at the very outset of the tale to the real murderer—a foreigner of course, as Englishmen are never supposed, at least in "true British novels," to be capable of committing any great crime. The voyage of the convict is full of adventure. He is known by the master of the convict-ship, who, on this occasion, is transformed into an officer of the navy; and from him receives kindness and as much relaxation of penal discipline as is possible. The accidents they encounter in the course of their navigation bind them but the more closely together. The captain is hurt by getting foul of another ship in a dark night, and he is attended by Edward; a successful mutiny of the convicts deprives him of his ship, and turns him adrift on the bosom of the ocean, but Edward is still his friend and his brother. A variety of events supervene, such as the capture of two slavers—the accidental recognition of one of the mutineers on board of an American vessel—the communication of the plans of the convict crew through this channel—and finally the recovery of the abstracted ship. At the moment of its recovery, however, the Captain is slain in the conflict, and consigned to the "deep," sailor fashion, with his standing rigging, and "all the honours" of his dangerous occupation.

In the meanwhile Matilda Godfrey, the betrothed of Edward Mortimer, believing implicitly in his innocence, leaves no stone unturned to secure its legal proof; and in this object she is singularly aided by accident and the extraordinary good will of every person with whom she comes into contact—to say nothing of the influence of her wealth upon the feelings of her accidental friends and casual acquaintances, which must not be set down as inconsiderable. The real murderer is tracked from post to pillar, from country to country of the continent of Europe. He is a young Swiss or Frenchman, named Etienne Legrand; but he has as many aliases, as a matter of course, as an experienced pickpocket—sometimes the Count Trapani, sometimes the Baron Tunder ten Tronck, sometimes the Duca de Devildose, and so on. His adventures form the most melo-dramatic portion of the work; but as the phrase runs, "they are too numerous to mention." He is gambler, murderer, forger, and brigand—worse than Mrs. Malaprop's Cerberus—"three single gentlemen rolled into one." He it is who led poor Dormer on to his untimely end; he it is who has broken half the gambling "banks" of Europe, and who, nevertheless, is himself "a broken man;" he it is who has forged a will to deprive a virtuous widow of the property devised and bequeathed to her by his brother; he it is, in a word, who heads a gang of thieves in the fastnesses of the Apennines, and slays and robs all unwary passengers, especially rich islanders. Slarted, however, by the unerring judgment of Matilda, and hampered in all his movements by the inscrutable plans of Providence, who generally seems, in novels, to prefer a roundabout way of proceeding to a plain, straight-forward course, he eventually falls a victim, and, before his death, discovers all his villany.

The discovery is promptly made known to the authorities in this country, and Edward is released from his imprisonment free from stain—nay, more, in consideration of his bravery, in recovering the convict ship and in capturing the slavers, he is created a baronet. Need it be said that he and the fair Matilda are soon "made one." In fact all the characters in the story are provided with wives and husbands, as the case may be. And when the wicked have ceased from troubling—either by their conversion to virtue or their removal from this world—and the weary are at rest, the curtain falls and the novel closes.

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