

Fortunes and Misfortunes

10.

Of the F A M O U S

MOLL FLANDERS,

Who was born in Newgate:

And, during a Life of continued Variety for Threescore Years, besides her Childhood, was Twelve Years a Whore: Five times a Wife, (whereof once to her own Brother) Twelve Years a Thief: Once condemned; and, Seven Years a transported Felon in Virginia. At last, grew Rich, lived Honest, and died a Penitent.



F A L K I R K :

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**T**HE most remarkable account I can give of my parents is, that my father was hang'd for felony, and my mother transported for the same fact, after she was delivered of me in Newgate, from whence I was taken by some gypsies, who left me at Colchester, I then not being above three years of age.

There the magistrates taking pity on me, and took care of me till I was thirteen years of age; and then being fancied by a rich gentlewoman, I shared in the education of her daughters, learning to dance, speak French, and play upon musical instruments. These qualifications, together with my beauty, caused my lad's eldest son to pretend love to me; and at last with his alluring speeches, his powerful gold, melting kisses, and fair promises that he would marry me when he came to his estate, prevailed upon me to surrender my virginity to him, and permit him to use me whenever he had will and opportunity.

But scarce a year was gone before

his younger brother made love to me also, in such an open manner that all the family took notice of it; but how I should be a wife to him and a whore to his brother, I could not think of but with the utmost abhorrence, I loving the former to extremity. But the younger brother pressed me so hard, that I could not know what to make of it; and he even told his mother, that he was positive to marry me, let the event be what it would. In short, the dispute ran so high 'twixt his mother and him, that she resolved to turn me off from the family, and what was to become of me then, put me to a sad consternation, as I had no friends to take me by the hand or support me, and at any event my character would be ruined. I at last was obliged to make my case known to his elder brother, and put him in mind of his solemn promises he made to me of marriage, which at first seemed to startle him not a little; but he excused himself in not performing what he had promised, on account that he was not come to the possession of his estate, his father being still alive, tho' not

then in this country, and if he was to own his marriage with me he would be disinherited, and we would be both undone; but he promised to give me his best advice how I should behave in the matter; so we parted for that time. The next opportunity I pressed him hard what I should do in this my unhappy situation. After a little silence he plainly told me, that the only way he could think of to serve us both, was to comply with his brother's proposal, which, he had no sooner mentioned, than I was fit to have sunk down thro, the chair I sat on with horror and surprise, and fainted away. After I had recovered myself a little, he continued to soothe me with many flattering words, and at the same time, insisting as before, of the unavoidable ruin it would be to us both, if I did not comply; and at the same time, told me, that considering his brother's passion for me, he made no doubt of procuring his mother's consent to the marriage; but I bitterly reproached him, how he thought I could be his whore, and a wife to his brother. But to be short, he manag'd matters so well that

In a short time he obtain'd his mother's consent, so that I was under the fatal necessity, either to comply, or be undone; and as I found at any rate the elder brother was to cast me off, and as I was not with child to him, consented, tho' with much reluctance, so we were married privately.

I had my own fears now, lest my new married spouse, who I had not the least affection for, might be skilful enough to know the difference between a maid and a whore; but the elder brother manag'd it so, whether with a design or not I cannot say, but I had the pleasure of a drunken bed-fellow the first night; by which means he fairly shifted me into his brother's arms for a chaste virgin.

About five years after he died, leaving two children, who were taken care of by his parents. Having now a tolerable fortune, I soon married a linen draper, who soon went from me for debt into France: on which I took a lodging, and in a widow's habit, took upon me the name of Mrs. Flanders.

I was courted as a mistress by several lewd men, but those I treated

with scorn and contempt. At length, I married a gentleman, whose estate was in Virginia, whom I deceived by pretending I had a great fortune. He proved to be a very good husband, and took me over to Virginia, where I was kindly received by his mother.

But here I found that my family was of the Newgate train, she shewing me where she had been burnt in the hand, bidding me not to wonder, for major B. had been an eminent pick-pocket; justice D. a shop-lifter, and Tom W. who had narrowly escaped the nubbing-post, was there metamorphosed into a dissenting preacher.

Here, I lived three years before I had a child, but not without an inward remorse, knowing that my second husband was not dead; and this set me upon returning to England, I teasing my spouse for that purpose, who wanted to know ahe true reason of it; but I told his mother who came to pump me, that the story she told me of her being transported confirmed me in the belief of her being my mother, who was delivered of me in Newgate, by which means she was

saved from the gallows, and that my husband was my brother. This very much surpris'd her, and she insisted upon me keeping it a secret, which I promised, but did not perform.

But I dreaded the thought of another child, and so disclos'd all the matter to my husband, to prevent my coldness to his embraces. This made him fall into so deep a melancholy, that he twice attempted to destroy himself, but was prevented. At length, I obtained his leave, to return to England, which I did, after eight years stay in that country. Landing at Milford Haven, and soon after in London.

Soon after, I went to Bath, where I was courted by a gentleman, and from whom I received several presents, viz. 100 guineas at one time, and 50 at another, for taking care of him in a fit of illness. In short I took him for my best friend; but at length he got me with child, and I was delivered of a fine boy. From Bath we remov'd to Hammersmith, near London.

Six years did I live with this gentleman, and had three children by

him; at length he fell sick at Bloomsbury, in a house he had taken for his wife and family. But, upon his recovery, I found I was slighted, no doubt through remorse of conscience, yet, he sent a letter with a bank note of fifty pounds, promising to take care of my little boy, the other two being dead. I wanting to get another fifty pounds from him, signed a general release, which put an end to that affair.

Not long after, I got acquainted with a clerk belonging to the Bank, whose wife having made him a cuckold, by the help of an officer of the army, and after that, with a draper's apprentice. I had like to have become his bride, he promising on that account to sue for a divorce from his wife: But while this was transacting, I going down into Lancashire, and passing for a fortune of L. 15,000,----- was married to an Irish gentleman by a Romish clergyman.

But finding that I had no such effects as had been represented, nor he any estate more than what he had spent upon his equipage in courting



me, he left me as much money as would bear my charges to London, discharged me from the marriage, left a letter for me on the table, and went away in the morning; but after he had discharged his servants, he returned at night, to my great joy, and accompanied me as far as Dunitable, where we parted, after mutual instructions for our future course of life, and wishes for our well-being.

At London I lodged in an old midwife's house, I being then big with child, where, as I had given instructions, a letter was sent me from Lancashire, which had been directed thither by the clerk of the Bank, who told me he had obtained a decret against his wife, and that he was at my service. I sent an answer under a cover, that I should be in town the latter end of the year.

At length having opened the matter to my landlady, the midwife, who proposed to assist me in the affair, and being delivered of a brave boy, which with much difficulty, I allowed her to dispose of. I went to Lancashire, and there taking a coach, wrote a

letter to my clerk to meet me at Brick-hall, where we were married.

Next day, from the window of the inn where we lay, I saw my Lancashire husband, with two others, pass by, and soon after they were pursued as highwaymen.

My husband and I returned to town, where we lived very happy for the space of five years, by whom I had two children, when I rewarded my midwife for her fidelity. But my husband's clerk robbing him, it cast him in a consumption, which ended his life, and my happiness together.

Soon after this, being reduced to great extremity, I was tempted to steal a small bundle out of an apothecary's shop in Leadenhall-street, in which I found a suit of child-bed linen, some fine lace, a silver mug, six spoons, three shillings, and some other matters.

Afterwards I inveigled a little child from whom I took a gold necklace; but tho' I had it in a private place, I did not kill it, but put it in its way home again. Another time I took out of a shop at Stepney two rings, one a

diamond, and the other a plain one.

Once a thief being pursu'd in Lombard street, dropp'd a bundle of silk, which I made pff with, and dispos'd of it to good advantage, and not as thieves generally do, for a song.

Another time I stole a silver tankard out of an ale-house, which I sold to a pawn-broker, who encouraged me in such things, who shortly help'd me to a mistress, who made me more expert in the thieving art, but not more fortunate; for she herself, and one of her scholars, were soon sent to Newgate for stealing two pieces of cambric from a linen-draper in Cheap-side. Both of them were condemn'd to die, but only our tutore's was executed, the other coming off with a circuit pardon.

I reflect much upon one crime I committed, in taking from the hands of a gentlewoman a bundle of plate, when her house was on fire, and convey'd it to my own house.

So fortunate was I in escaping, that became remarkable among the thieves; none so great as Moll Flanders: but at length being threaten'd by some

in Newgate, I clothed myself in man's apparel, tho' my smooth face, (otherwise personable and tall enough), might have soon betrayed me.

I kept company with another thief, who being pursu'd as he was stealing off some goods, was unfortunately taken; but I, with much difficulty, made my escape. And indeed, had my brother thief known of my being a woman, I should have been betray'd; but throwing off my man's apparel, had sometime after, the satisfaction to see him hang'd.

My name was as well known at the Old Bailey, as a remarkable traitor is at the Secretary's office.

Being now an excellent pick-pocket as well as a whore, I took from a cull, after I had made him drunk, his gold watch, purse of gold, fine perriwig, sword, and snuff-box, and leaping out of the coach, (which stopped to let another pass by it), and left my snoring fool to lament his disaster.

This success made me follow whoring again, but finding the profit of it too little to support me, I stuck principally to my trade of shop-lifting.

One day as I was walking along the street, near Covent-garden, there was a cry of, Stop thief, a mercer's shop being robbed, and I was secured as a transgressor; and haughtily insulted by the mercer and his servants.

In a little time they got the right thief, who was much in the same habit, but for this affront, I threatened to prosecute him at law, and obliged him to come to an agreement, where I got an hundred & fifty pounds, which with my other subsistence might have done well to have maintain'd me; but having got such an itch for thieving, I could not leave it off.

I had the opportunity of commencing a coiner, but that being such a beggarly, and yet so dangerous a business, that I could never embark in it; nor could I be brought into the society of house-breakers.

No person could be more dexterous at stealing gold watches from ladies sides, either at the Park, play-house, or the church. But to particularise them all, would be tedious.

I was very dexterous at gaming, and, at one time cleared 73 guineas.

The uncommon success I had met with, made me go into the country, and at Cambridge, Sturbitch fair, and New-market, I very expertly performed the same pranks.

At Ipswich, I robbed a gentleman of a portmanteau, by pretending to be his wife, at an inn, in which was a large quattity of gold and silver.

Being come to London, and venturing into a Silver-smith's shop, when no one was there, I was perceived by a shop-keeper over the way; but as I had got a glance of him, I medled with nothing: and, a justice of the peace just then coming by, being called in, cleared me with flying colours.

Another time going into a milliner's shop in Cheapside, and cheapening half a dozen of Holland shifts, I doubted the length of them, upon which, she slipped one of the shifts upon her, which gave me an opportunity to pin it with two or three pins to her petticoat; and then taking up the rest with several fine pieces of nussin, I ran away out of the shop. The milliner, endeavouring to pull off her smock, pulled up her petticoats,

and running after me, cried out, Stop thief, stop thief, with all she had exposed to the public; who taking her for a mad woman, I got clear off with my booty; and she was bantered to her dying day, besides losing the value of eighty pounds worth of muslin.

But at last, happening to steal some brocaded silk from a mercer's shop, I was apprehended, and carried before a justice and committed to Newgate, the place of my nativity; where it is impossible for me to express the horror of my disconsolate mind. Here all the wretches triumphed over me. What! said they, is Mrs. Flanders come to Newgate! what, Mrs. Mary! and afterwards, plain Moll Flanders. They thought the devil had helped me, they said, that I had reigned so long, and a deal to that purpose; then called for brandy, and drank to me, and put it all to my score; for they told me, that I was just now come to the college, as they called it, and sure I had money in my pocket, tho' they had none; but it was a horrible and dismal place to me, tho' they seemed to make very light of it:

I asked one of this crew, How long she had been there; she said, for four months; I seem'd to lament for her, What signifies being sad, says she, for if I am hang'd there's an end of me, and away she turns, dancing and singing as she goes:

*If I swing by the string,*

*I shall hear the bell ring;*

*And that's an end of poor Jenney.*

But my old tutoreſs did what ſhe could to make me eaſy in this diſmal place, and furniſhed me with bedding, and prevail'd with my keeper to let me have a ſmall place by myſelf, by giving him ſome money, for there are no favours to be got without it.

I lived many days here under the utmoſt horror of ſoul; and the Ordinary of Newgate come to me, and talk'd a little to me, but all his divinity ran upon confeſſing my crime, and making a full diſcovery, without which he told me, God would never forgive me; and would preach confeſſion and repentance to me in the morning, and I would find him drunk with ſpirits by noon, which ſhock'd

\* A bell that tolls on execution days.



me, so much, that I began to naufeate  
the man more than his work.

At the sessions when my trial came  
on, pleaded Not Guilty to the in-  
dictment, but was found guilty of  
felony, and received sentence of death  
accordingly.

So concerned was my poor gover-  
ness, that having repented herself of  
her sins, she sent me a reverend cler-  
gyman, who exhorted me seriously to  
repent of all my sins, and to daily no  
longer with my soul, and not to flatter  
myself with the hopes of life; which  
he said he was informed that there  
was no room to expect, and was very  
serious with me, in explaining the  
terms of divine mercy, &c. In short,  
I soon became so taken with his ex-  
hortations and discourses, that I could  
have wished to have heard him con-  
stantly; he indeed never failed to vi-  
sit me once every day, excepting the  
day immediately before the day ap-  
pointed for my execution, which great-  
ly discourag'd me; however, about  
four o'clock in the afternoon he cal-  
led at me, who I received with great  
joy and, after his making a short ev-

cuse for not coming sooner, he told me his time had been employed on my account, and in short, he had got my sentence changed for transportation; at hearing of which, I was so overset with joy that I swooned away, and it was with some difficulty that I came to myself again.

I having now liberty to go through among the rest of the prisoners, and who should I discover, but my Lancashire husband? Upon the first discovery we were both thunder struck, the one being quite ignorant of the other's adventures.

After we had recovered our surprise a little, I gave my history, and he in his turn, gave his, which indeed was a very strange one; by which I understood he had taken to the highway about 12 years before he married me, and that he had now carried on that desperate trade about 25 years, with tolerable success, and had never been taken up before, and even now, the evidence was but very slender, and he believed, if he petitioned for transportation before his trial came on, he could obtain it; which accor-

ingly happened in a few days thereafter.

We now being very well reconciled to our fate, began to consult how we were to conduct ourselves when arrived at Virginia, that being the place of our destination; and by the kindly assistance of my old governess and the shipmaster, that was to carry us, we purchased a good deal of merchandise fitting for that place, my husband had still saved about one hundred and eighty pounds sterling, and about double that sum.

After we were put aboard for transportation, a little of our money procured very good convenience, and were used as captain passengers.

Our only difficulty now being, to get free when landed, for our sentence being seven years slavery; but after consulting our captain, and paying him very handsomely for our passage, &c. he procured a receipt from the governor of Virginia for us, so on our landing, were set at liberty for to go and settle in any place we pleased.

When landed at Virginia, I soon learned, that my former husband,

(my brother), was still alive, and as I did not cease to let my present husband know any thing of that affair as yet, I advised him to go and settle at Maryland, which he very easily agreed to.

On our landing there, we purchased an Englishwoman and a Negro man for servants, and took a piece of land, on which we built a house.

Indeed all our affairs prospered exceedingly, so we looked upon one another with pleasure and soon obtained my husband's consent to take a voyage to Virginia, to learn something of my brother.

When I landed, I sent a letter unto him, telling of several particular affairs.

This letter fell into my son's hands, who asked the messenger, Where the lady put up that sent it? On being informed, he said, He would see me very soon.

And accordingly very soon after he called upon me attended by two servants on horseback, and approaching towards me, he saluted me with these very tender and affecting expressions,

Dear mother, are you still alive? and thereupon, both of us burst into tears of joy.

He soon after told me, that his father had not been right in his senses for a considerable season, and that he had broke open the letter, and soon learn'd who had sent it; and that the plantation that his grandmother had left me, was in his possession, and of the produce thereof, he gave me an hundred pounds, promising to be a faithful factor. And indeed, in all his actions, he proved a tender and a very dutiful child, allotting servants to take care of me, and treating me as I had been a princess.

I presented him a gold watch, and taking leave of him, after I had acquainted him that I intended to marry a gentleman that had come over with me, I set sail in a sloop that my son had provided, and landed safe at our plantation, bringing over three horses with harness and saddles three cows, several hogs, and other implements for husbandry.

When I had related all this good fortune to my husband, he lifted up

his hands in an extasy of joy, and gave thanks to heaven for his happy change. Very soon after this, a cargo came from England, which my old governess had sent, with three women servants, which greatly surpris'd and amazed my husband, especially, I assuring him, that they were all paid for. How! says he, Was I deceived when I took you by the hand in Lancashire? and what followed after, did I ever think that after all, such fortune awaited us!

I took care to buy those things for my husband, which I knew he delighted to have; such as long wigs, silver hilted swords, several fine fowling pieces, a very fine saddle, holsters, and pistols, &c. a fine scarlet cloak, and a deal of other suitable cloathing; in a word, every thing I could think of to oblige him, and to make him appear what he really was, a very fine gentleman.

I must not omit that one of the girls my governess sent us, happened to come double, having been got with child by one of the seamen, as she afterwards told, before the ship had

got so far as Gravesend: so that she brought us a boy, seven months after landing.

After the death of my brother, or former husband, my son invited us to come and see him, and made us exceeding welcome; and truly no person could be blessed with a more dutiful child. Being thus happy, we lived for the space of twenty years, spending our time in sincere penitence, for the bad lives we had both lived, and that we did, by being hospitable and generous to the poor, relieving them from want and slavery.

Thus far we have given an account of Moll Flanders, exactly taken from her history given by herself; to which there is only to add, That we have an account from Virginia, that she died there, after having prepared for that change, with the greatest piety and devotion; and as she perceived her dissolution drawing near, she bequeathed several legacies to charitable uses; and dying, her funeral was performed with great solemnity, being interred in St Mary's Church in Virginia;

THE FOLLOWING  
EPI T A P H

Was written on her T O M B

NEWGATE thy dwelling was,  
Thy beauty made the  
A Goddess seem;  
And that alone betray'd thee.

Twelve years a whore,  
A wife unto thy brother:  
And such a thief,  
There scarce could be another!

Unwearied trav'ler,  
Whether dost thou roam?  
Lo! in this place remote  
To find a tomb!

Transported hence,  
To heav'n, 'tis hop'd; thou'rt sent,  
Who wicked liv'd,  
But dy'd a penitent.

F I N I S.