



## P R E F A C E.

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I HAVE somewhere read, (it was related as a fact) that a murder was discovered through the conscious terrors of the perpetrator at the moment when, for want of evidence against him, he was going to be acquitted. This anecdote, which seemed to me capable of producing a strong dramatic effect, furnished the last scene of this play; the rest of the plot I believe to be entirely my own fabrication—A scene in *Göthe's* German Tragedy of *Egmont*, (in which the Goddess of Liberty appears to the hero while sleeping, and crowns him with laurel) suggested the idea of Adelmorn's dream; and possibly the original of *Egmont's* vision was that of *Posthumus* in *Cymbeline*. When I sketched out my drama, I believed the characters of *Herman* and *Orrila*, (which were at first entirely different from those which they now sustain) to be quite new to the stage; but when my play was finished, to my great surprise, I found them (except in wit) to be the exact counterparts of *Cherubin* and *Sufan* in *Beaumarchais's* celebrated "*Figaro*." I am conscious of no other plagiarisms.

At the first representation, the two first acts were received much more favorably than I had expected; in the third act, the Vision (the machinery of which was admirably executed) was unluckily mistaken by the audience for reality; and when, after seeing *Ulric* stabbed and carried off by demons in one scene, the spectators beheld him, in the next, walk in as quietly as if nothing had happened,

it puzzled them extremely, and they could not tell what to make of the story. In the following scene, it gave great offence, that Lodowick should eat cold chicken and crack bad jokes with a dying man on one side, and a ghost on the other, and this scene was hissed from the first speech to the last. To complete the business, when, in the conclusion of the piece, the Ghost made his appearance with a burning dagger, the catastrophe was near taking a turn at once very novel and very serious; for his drapery, being blown into the flame of his poignard, caught fire, and the public was within an ace of being treated with a roasted spectre. As it turned out, the spirit's alarm and evident exertions to extinguish the fire, excited the mirth of the audience; he was dismissed to his tomb with peals of laughter, and I really thought at the time, that he had carried my play along with him. However, Lodowick's part in the third act being entirely altered, and the Ghost only suffered to appear in the Vision, the drama was received on the succeeding representations with much more applause than in my opinion it deserved. The Performers, it is true, did every thing in their power to assist it, and the Scenery and Music were excellent. I am not so blinded by partiality as to set down to my own score the applause, for which, on the following representations, I am conscious it is as entirely indebted to the above mentioned causes.

This drama was written about six years ago, previous to the performance of "The Castle-Spectre"; the expense bestowed upon it sufficiently proves that the Managers thought well of it: those persons to whom I communicated it, assured me (however little merit it might have) that at least it had more than my other drama. I was not of their opinion—and unluckily the public was of mine. In

justice

justice to myself, I must say that I never had any sanguine hopes of the success of "The Outlaw." The piece being found a great deal too long for representation, so much of it was omitted as made the incidents follow each other without sufficient preparation, and consequently without much effect; the part of *Hugo*, (which I thought rather more likely to affect the risible muscles of the audience than the other attempts at humour, which are very flat) did not please Mr. Suett; scarce ten lines of it were retained, and nothing could be more dull and insignificant than this character in the representation; besides, I was well aware that a violent party would be formed against the piece, which proved to be the case; though I by no means intend to lay the disapprobation expressed on the first night entirely at the door of this cabal.

But if I do not think my play a good one, why do I publish it? Because it can produce no worse consequences than the making me be thought a stupid fellow, which, in my opinion, is no great misfortune.—Stupidity, I take it, is no very heinous crime, nor can I ever consider great genius as a merit, except when exerted for the benefit of mankind.—I firmly believe it possible to write extremely ill, yet be a very worthy member of society, and shall not feel much mortified at being known to scribble bad plays, till convinced that a dull author can never be a benevolent man.—Printing this drama, therefore, (however indifferent the composition) can do very little harm to myself, and may possibly give some pleasure to others. Whatever is good will amuse my friends; whatever is bad will delight my enemies; and those readers who are neither my enemies nor friends, will at least have the satisfaction of gratifying their curiosity,—an emotion which

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“The Outlaw” must in some degree have excited in the public bosom, or my Bookseller would not be at the expense of printing it.

I have for various reasons preferred publishing my play as originally written, with all its imperfections on its head, and sincerely hope that my readers may discover more merit in it than I have hitherto been able to find myself. But before I conclude this Preface, I shall take the liberty of saying a few words respecting the objections which have been made to it, as far as they have reached my knowledge.

To begin—

—“The Outlaw” is insufferably stupid, absurd, uninteresting” &c. &c.—

This is a point which I shall leave to the reader’s decision: for my own part, I am not very unwilling to allow the fact.

—“Sigismund’s speech in the third act—*Sovereigns, be warned by what I suffer, how you make laws which exclude mercy*—is the sentiment of a *Jacobin*”——!!!

I shall not so far insult the sense or the humanity of my readers, as to suppose it necessary to answer such an observation. I am well content that he who disapproves of the above sentiment should disapprove of me.

—“The Vision is intended to make a mockery of the Ascension, and the idea is taken from Raphael’s picture of the Transfiguration.”——

I had no such intention, and when the play was performed did not know there was such a picture in existence.

—“In the Vision, one man is sent down to Hell and another is sent up to Heaven; and Hell and Heaven ought not to be publicly exhibited.”——

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I am rather of this opinion too; but it so happens that in the Vision heaven and hell are not publicly exhibited; my phantoms are only seen upon the road thither; and in showing this to the audience, I have only shown them what they have not merely been accustomed to see, but accustomed to applaud.—*Don Juan’s* devils have exhibited their flame-coloured stockings and black periwigs in every theatre throughout the kingdom; and it is no less certain, that at Covent-Garden the bleeding Nun in “Raymond and Agnes” has been for many years in the habit of ascending to heaven with great applause in a sort of postchaise made of paste-board. The spectators never failed to bestow their smiles on these supernatural visitants, and angels and devils have been indiscriminately honoured with the same impartial approbation.

—“The Outlaw” is written by the author of “The Monk”; therefore it must be immoral and irreligious.”——

I positively deny the conclusion——A fault, were it one ever so serious, committed at twenty, and followed during a course of years by no error of a similar nature, might, I should think, be forgiven without exercising any dangerous lenity, or requiring any very great exertion of candour. That I have not found such candour, however, I do not very poignantly regret; what pains but little, is not worthy a complaint, and censure is only terrible to me, when I feel it to have been merited. I have nearly served a seven years apprenticeship to patience, under the attacks of the most uncandid criticism, unmitigated censure, and exaggerating misrepresentation; nor have I ever written a line to right myself, or blame those who magnified a single act of imprudence into charges equally discordant with my principles, and insulting to my understanding.

Hitherto

Hitherto I have only listened with contempt to censure inflicted without justice; for once, and for once only I will alter my conduct, and address a few words on this head to those who may feel any interest respecting me.

Without entering into the discussion, whether the principles inculcated in "The Monk" are right or wrong, or whether the *means* by which the story is conducted is likely to do more mischief than the *tendency* is likely to produce good, I solemnly declare, that when I published the work I had no idea that its publication *could* be prejudicial; if I was wrong, the error proceeded from my judgment, not from my intention.

Without entering into the merits of the advice which it proposes to convey, or attempting to defend (what I now condemn myself) the *language and manner* in which that advice was delivered, I solemnly declare, that in writing the passage which regards the Bible (consisting of a single page, and the only passage which I ever wrote on the subject) I had not the most distant intention to bring the sacred Writings into contempt, and that, had I suspected it of producing such an effect, I should not have written the paragraph.

To those who know me well I am certain these assertions are superfluous: it is to those who know me not that I address them, and whom, if they do not convince, I must be contented to leave in error.

M. G. LEWIS.

May 24th 1801.

HAVING had occasion to mention the Romance of "The Monk," I shall take the liberty of adding here a singular circumstance respecting it. Its outline was suggested by the Tale of "The Santon Barfisa," related in "The Guardian;" but it also bears, in the two first chapters, a striking resemblance to the French Novel, "Le Diable Amoureux," a production which I had not read when I published "The Monk." The earliest edition of it then fell into my hands. This Novel relates the adventures of a young Spaniard, whom Beelzebub, in the form of a beautiful woman, endeavours to seduce through the medium of his passions, but whose arts ultimately *fail* of success—I found, therefore, that the catastrophe of this Romance was totally different from that of the Monk, and that Monsieur Cazotte's work resembled only the two first chapters of mine.—Last year, however, I met with a later edition of "Le Diable Amoureux," in which the catastrophe is in some degree altered, though slightly; but to which also the following advertisement is affixed.

"Lorsque la première édition du *Diable Amoureux* parut, les lecteurs en trouvèrent le dénouement trop brusque. Le plus grand nombre eût désiré que le héros tombât dans un piège couvert d'assez de fleurs pour qu'elles pussent lui sauver le désagrément de la chute. Enfin l'imagination leur sembloit avoir abandonné l'auteur parvenu aux trois quarts de sa petite carrière: alors la vanité qui ne veut rien perdre, suggéra à celui-ci, pour se venger du reproche de stérilité & justifier son propre goût; de réciter aux personnes de sa connoissance

“ le Roman en entier tel qu’il l’avoit conçu dans le premier feu. *Alvare* y devenoit la dupe de son ennemi, & l’ouvrage alors, divisé en deux parties, se terminoit dans la première par cette fâcheuse catastrophe, dont la seconde partie développoit les suites: d’obsédé qu’il étoit, *Alvare* devenu possédé n’étoit plus qu’un instrument entre les mains du diable, dont celui-ci se servoit pour mettre le désordre partout. Le canevas de cette seconde partie, en donnant beaucoup d’essor à l’imagination, ouvroit la carrière la plus étendue à la critique, au sarcasme, à la licence.

“ Sur ce récit, les avis se partagèrent, les uns prétendirent qu’on devoit conduire *Alvare* jusqu’à la chute inclusive, & s’arrêter-là; les autres qu’on ne devoit pas en retrancher les conséquences.

“ On a cherché à concilier les idées des critiques dans cette nouvelle édition. *Alvare* y est dupe jusqu’à un certain point, mais sans être victime; son adversaire, pour le tromper, est réduit à se montrer honnête & presque prude: ce qui détruit les effets de son propre système, & rend son succès incomplet.

“ On pressentira aisément les raisons qui ont fait supprimer la deuxième partie de l’ouvrage; elle présentoit des idées noires, & il n’en faut pas offrir de cette espèce à une Nation dont il faut ménager le beau naturel, & lui épargner les convulsions.

“ Le petit ouvrage que l’on donne aujourd’hui réimprimé & augmenté, quoique peu important, a eu dans le principe des motifs raisonnables, & son origine est assez noble pour qu’on ne doive en parler ici qu’avec les plus grands ménagemens. Il fut inspiré par la lecture du passage d’un auteur infiniment respectable,

“ dans lequel il est parlé des ruses que peut employer le démon quand il veut plaire & séduire. On les a rassemblées, autant qu’on a pu le faire, dans une allégorie où les principes sont aux prises avec les passions: l’ame est le champ de bataille; la curiosité engage l’action, l’allégorie est double, & les lecteurs s’en appercevront aisément.”

Here the French Author marks out so exactly the plan of “*The Monk*,” that I could almost fancy I had seen that second part of *Cazotte’s* work, which he states himself to have suppressed; and perhaps, after perusing the foregoing extract, the reader will scarcely be persuaded that I had not at least seen the advertisement. I can, however, assert with perfect truth, that it did not fall in my way till August 1800; and besides, I can have no interest to deny my obligations, had I any, to “*Le Diable Amoureux*,” when, by acknowledging my Romance to have been founded on “*The Santon Barisfa*,” I relinquish all pretence to originality, a merit to which I am perfectly conscious that my writings have no claim.

Every thing which I have hitherto published, except my Imitation of *Juvenal*, and the translation of a play of *Kotzebue’s* was written between fourteen and twenty-one; a period which I passed in scribbling Novels and Plays, but which, I am aware, would have been much better employed in reading sense than in writing nonsense. Formerly, indeed, I was of a different opinion; and the consequence is, that I have it still in my power to deluge the town with such an inundation of Ghosts and Magicians, as would satisfy the thirst of the most insatiable swallower of wonders. Whether I shall exercise this power in future, I am not decided; but nothing tempts me to it more than the splenetic and ludicrous indignation,



dignation, so ill suited to a subject so trifling, which my productions have excited in certain persons. They make of so much consequence what I think of none,—they assure me so gravely that my writings have made the whole town go the wrong way of taste, when I cannot think they have the power to make one individual go any way but his own,—they take so much trouble with productions which I thought from their nature not worthy to cost me any,—they convert that into a source of so much labour to them, which to me was merely a source of amusement,—and, in short, make my proceedings of so much more importance than I ever suspected them to be myself, that, (unlike the fly on the chariot,) I can hardly believe it is *I* who have really raised such a dust, and am sometimes ready to cry out in my surprize, with the old woman in the song :

“ *Oh!*” says the little woman, “ *sure it can't be I.*”

One would think, to hear these violent Critics, that bad jokes ought to be classed with bad actions; that to print a silly novel is much the same thing as to commit an heinous murder; that he who writes a Play which deserves to be damned, deserves to be damned himself; and that it is almost a matter of moral indifference, whether a man proves that he has no brains in his own head, or knocks out those contained in his next-door neighbour's.—Now I do assure these gentlemen that, when they find fault with my Works, I am nine times out of ten of their opinion; but still, until writing ceases to amuse me, I shall not cease to write; whenever my Writings cease to amuse the Public, I sincerely advise the Public to cease to read my Writings.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SIGISMOND, Duke of Saxony,	Mr. POWELL.
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