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GENTLEMAN AND COURTIER

BY

FLORENCE MARRYAT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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A ROMANCE.

BY

FLORENCE MARRYAT,

AUTHOR OF "LOVE'S CONFLICT," "VÉRONIQUE," ETC.

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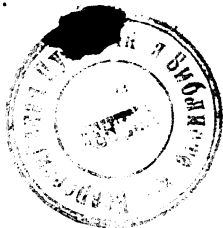
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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1888.

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GENTLEMAN AND COURTIER.

CHAPTER I.

As soon as Mrs. Cadogan's back was fairly turned, the festivities at Cheverill went "merry as a marriage bell." Picnics and shooting parties were organized, the lawn tennis and billiard balls were going all day, and charades and dancing usually wound up the evening. Elsa declared, as she watched Sybil whirling round the room in the arms of one partner after another night after night, that she should never make her contented with the dulness of Newton Hall again.

"Why don't you dance?" asked Jocelyn one evening, as, flushed and excited from a waltz, he came up to the quiet nook where Elsa had ensconced herself upon a sofa. "*Do* have a turn with me. I have been longing to ask you. Come along," and he tried to pull her up from her seat.

"No, no, Jocelyn, I can't," she said, shrinking backwards.

"Why not?"

"I am too old. It would look ridiculous to see me spinning round with the girls."

"Would it? Well then I shall sit this dance out with you instead," he answered, dropping into a place by her side. "I have something very particular to say to you, Elsa. I want to hear what this wonderful age is that comes between you and half your pleasures. Whatever I ask you to do you are generally *too old*."

"Don't be ridiculous, Jocelyn. You know as well as I do. I am eighteen years older than Roland."

"And that makes you thirty-six—nine years older than myself. Well, it's getting serious, there's no doubt about that. For my part I wonder you can get about so well as you do. Most people would be on crutches."

Elsa knew he was joking with her, but it was a joke which made her feel as if she did not quite know whether to laugh or cry.

"But seriously," she said to him, "when women arrive at my age, it is much better they should retire gracefully from those amusements which are essentially intended for youth, than to wait until the capability for enjoying them is over. I do not like to see mothers playing at lawn tennis, or dancing in the same set with their daughters. There is something undignified in it, to my idea. There are plenty of other pleasant things left for us to do. Don't you agree with me?"