

## RICHARD MANSFIELD

### IN BEAU BRUMMELL.

Mr. Mansfield's Beau Brummell is doubtless one of the most distinct triumphs of the modern stage. Such a dainty creature is this bean, with his supreme regard for that which is "quite correct" and his horror of that which is "bad form," so abhorrent of wrinkles, so indifferent to creditors, so interested in his boots, his coat, his cravat, his finger nails, and so imperturbable.

Had the Prince of Wales ordered him to the headsman's block, instead of simply damping him and knocking his snuffbox from his hand, one can imagine this exquisite of exquisites saying, even as he did say, and without the slightest discomposure:

"Oh, deah me, that's very bad form! I shall have to order my carriage. Wales, ring the bell."

What sublime audacity the man had! and upon this he builded. It made him the setter of fashions, it brought the nobility courteously to his door, and enabled him to lead the heir to the throne of England by his princely ear, so to speak.

"You may walk down the Mall with me and afterward be seen with me a few moments at the window of my club and your fortune is made," he says to his nephew—audacity in the finest sense.

It has been said that no man is a hero to his own valet. The saying should be amended to except Beau Brummell. Mr. Mansfield does not allow him to drop his dignified audacity even in the privacy of his own morning room during the making of his toilet.

The man lives and moves in an atmosphere so exalted that he cannot by any possibility consider himself as on the level of common humanity. He holds the Prince in contempt and all other people as almost beneath notice. So that when he has broken with the Prince and is in turn "cut" by that royal personage on the Mall next day, it is the most natural thing in the world for him to ask Sheridan in a tone loud enough for the Prince to hear:

"Sherry, who's your fat friend?"

There was not another man in England who would have dared thus affront the Prince of Wales. There was not another man who could have done it and remained unpunished.

It is this incomprehensible, overtopping audacity which compels admiration for the man. It is his human weakness peeping from beneath pretension's mask that causes sympathy. His vanity—that pillar of strength in prosperity—becomes a heavy burden in adversity. Yet the beau bears it bravely.

In his miserable lodgings at Calais he maintains the airs and manners belonging to the master of a palace. But while high-sounding words are on his lips his face is expressive of pain and mortification, and his eyes glance restlessly about as if seeking a means of escape. It is in this scene that the one touch of greatness—and one which has no foundation in fact—is given Brummell's character. Visited by the man whose daughter, Mariana, he once thought to marry, he repels this good-natured gentleman's proffers of assistance, and knowing that his nephew and Mariana love each other he cleverly leads the stubborn father to approve of the match. As the happy young lovers leave the place, the wretched beau turns with a look of heart anguish and covers his drawn face with a trembling hand. It is an artistic touch, as natural and as graphic as life.

Having thus thrown away the aid which he saw within his grasp, Brummell is forced to fly Calais. He is next seen in his attic at Caen, still accompanied by his faithful and adoring valet, Mortimer.

His mind is weakening, and he thinks he sees the Prince of Wales seated at his table as he enters. His face tells more than ever the story of his privation, his humiliation, his suffering. The wrinkles of which he once had such horror are there in plenty, yet he heeds them not. He sinks into a chair and looks blankly before him.

"Mortimer," he says presently, "is my hat on?"

"Yes, Mr. Brummell, Sir," says the devoted Mortimer.

A hand is feebly raised to lift the head covering, but the old-time flourish is gone. The hat falls from the nerveless fingers to the floor, the fading eyes close, and the pinched face becomes a shade whiter as the head drops low on the breast.

Presently he starts. His old-time friends are about him. He stands in his own elegant reception room again and welcomes them.

"Ah, the Duchess of Leamington? In pink! Duchess, you come like the rosy morning sun into the gloom of my poor abode; you do, really."

"Lord Manly! And sober, too! Most remarkable! You are not gallant. You should have been ere this intoxicated by the Duchess's smile."

"Ah, Sherry, how do do, how do do?"

"Mrs. St. Aubyn. Delighted, I am sure. You are most kind."

"The Prince! Your Royal Highness is welcome."

In his phantasy he disposes the company about the room, moving hither and thither with trembling steps to keep them entertained. Then he gathers them about his little table and imagines a feast, as in the olden time.

Mortimer, with a breaking heart, pretends to bring on the different courses, until Brummell's weary head again sinks on his breast and he goes, with his vision, into the land of visions and of dreams.

The door opens and the old friends come in. They come with cheery, uplifted voices, but Mortimer stops them with "Sh!" Even the King himself is silenced by the valet's uplifted finger. Mortimer informs them of his master's hallucination, and suggests that he be allowed to awaken upon its reality.

Quietly the visitors take their places about the unconscious man. He opens his eyes feebly and stares at the guttering candle. Then his gaze falls upon Mariana, but without ability to comprehend; he turns and sees the Duchess, turns again and sees his nephew, sees Mrs. St. Aubyn, sees the King.

"Mortimer," he says, weakly.

Mortimer is at his side.

"Yes, Mr. Brummell, Sir."

"Is it real?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Brummell, Sir, it is real."

He stretches out his arms to his nephew and Mariana, and folds them to his heart. Then he rises with tottering step. The King says they have sought him out and mean to take him back to London with them.

"You shall dine with me to-night," says his Majesty.

The old, audacious pride asserts itself in his rags as it once did in the sunlight of success.

"Mortimer!"

"Yes, Mr. Brummell, Sir!"

"Have I any other engagement?"

"Oh, no, Sir; no!"

"I—will—be—pleased—"

His limbs begin to sink under him and his pale face bears the marks of accentuated pain.

"To—dine—with—your—Majesty."

He drops into his chair; his head again falls on his breast; his eyes are closed.

The curtain falls.

Mr. Mansfield begins a short engagement at the Garden Theatre on Monday next.—*Exchange.*