

vassal, but not your slave; nor does the greatness of your birth privilege you to injure your inferiors, or exact from me more than the duties which all vassals pay; that excepted, I do not esteem myself less in my low degree, than you have reason to value yourself in your high rank. Do not then think to awe or dazzle me with your grandeur, or fright or force me into a base compliance; I am not to be tempted with titles, pomp and equipage; nor weak enough to be moved with vain sighs and false tears. In short, my will is wholly at my father's disposal, and I will not entertain any man as a lover, but by his appointment. Therefore, my lord, as you would have me believe you so sincerely love me, give over your vain and injurious pursuit; suffer me peaceably to enjoy the benefits of life in the free possession of my honour, the loss of which for ever embitters all life's sweets; and since you cannot be my husband, do not expect from me that affection which I cannot pay to any other.' —'What do you mean, charming Dorothea?' cried the perfidious lord. 'Cannot I be yours by the sacred title of husband? Who can hinder me, if you'll but consent to bless me on those terms? Too happy if I have no other obstacle to surmount. I am yours this moment,

beautiful Dorothea; see, I give you here my hand to be yours, and yours alone for ever: and let all-seeing heaven, and this holy image here on your oratory, witness the solemn truth.'"

Cardenio, hearing her call herself Dorothea, was now fully satisfied she was the person whom he took her to be; however, he would not interrupt her story, being impatient to hear the end of it; only addressing himself to her, "Is then your name Dorothea, madam?" cried he. "I have heard of a lady of that name, whose misfortunes have a great resemblance with yours. But proceed, I beseech you, and when you have done, I may perhaps surprise you with an account of things that have some affinity with those you relate." With that Dorothea made a stop to study Cardenio's face, and his wretched attire, and then earnestly desired him, if he knew anything that concerned her, to let her know it presently; telling him, that all the happiness she had left, was only the courage to bear with resignation all the disasters that might befall her, well assured that no new one could make her more unfortunate than she was already. "Truly, madam," replied Cardenio, "I would tell you all I know, were I sure my conjectures were true; but so

far as I may judge by what I have heard hitherto, I do not think it material to tell it you yet, and I shall find a more proper time to do it." Then Dorothea resuming her discourse: "Don Ferdinand," said she, "repeated his vows of marriage in the most serious manner; and giving me his hand, plighted me his faith in the most binding words, and sacred oaths. But before I would let him engage himself thus, I advised him to have a care how he suffered an unruly passion to get the ascendant over his reason, to the endangering of his future happiness. 'My lord,' said I, 'let not a few transitory and imaginary charms, which could never excuse such an excess of love, hurry you to your ruin. Spare your noble father the shame and displeasure of seeing you married to a person so much below your birth; and do not rashly do a thing of which you may repent, and that may make my life uncomfortable.' I added several other reasons to dissuade him from that hasty match, but they were all unregarded. Don Ferdinand, deaf to every thing but his desires, engaged and bound himself like an inconsiderate lover, who sacrifices all things to his passion, or rather like a cheat, who does not value a breach of vows. When I saw him so obstinate, I began

to consider what I had to do. I am not the first, thought I to myself, whom marriage has raised to un hoped for greatness, and whose beauty alone has supplied her want of birth and merit. Thousands besides Don Ferdinand have married merely for love, without any regard to the inequality of wealth and birth.—The opportunity was fair and tempting; and as fortune is not always favourable, I thought it an imprudent thing to let it slip. Thought I to myself, while she kindly offers me a husband who assures me of an inviolable affection, why should I, by an unreasonable denial, make myself an enemy of such a friend?—And then there was one thing more; I apprehended it would be dangerous to drive him to despair by an ill-timed refusal; nor could I think myself safe alone in his hands, lest he should resolve to satisfy his passion by force; which done, he might think himself free from performing a promise which I would not accept; and then I should be left without either honour or an excuse: for it would be no easy matter to persuade my father, and the censorious world, that this nobleman was admitted into my chamber without my consent. All these reasons, which in a moment offered themselves in my mind, shook my former

resolves; and Don Ferdinand's sighs, his tears, his vows, and the sacred witnesses by which he swore, together with his graceful mien, his extraordinary accomplishments, and the love which I fancied I read in all his actions, helped to bring on my ruin, as I believe they would have prevailed with any one's heart as free and as well guarded as was mine. Then I called my maid to be witness to Don Ferdinand's vows and sacred engagements, which he reiterated to me, and confirmed with new oaths and solemn promises; he called again on heaven, and on many particular saints, to witness his sincerity, wishing a thousand curses might fall on him, in case he ever violated his word. Again he sighed, again he wept, and moved me more and more with fresh marks of affection; and the treacherous maid having left the room, the perfidious lord, presuming on my weakness, completed his pernicious design. The day which succeeded that unhappy night, had not yet began to dawn, when Don Ferdinand, impatient to be gone, made all the haste he could to leave me. For after the gratifications of brutish appetite are past, the greatest pleasure then is, to get rid of that which entertained it. He told me, though not with so great a show of affection, nor so warmly as

before, that I might rely on his honour, and on the sincerity of his vows and promises; and as a further pledge, he pulled off a ring of great value from his finger, and put it upon mine. In short, he went away, and my maid, who, as she confessed it to me, let him in privately, took care to let him out into the street by break of day, while I remained so strangely concerned at the thoughts of all these passages, that I cannot well tell whether I was sorry or pleased. I was in a manner quite distracted, and either forgot, or had not the heart, to chide my maid for her treachery, not knowing yet whether she had done me good or harm. I had told Don Ferdinand before he went, that seeing I was now his own, he might make use of the same means to come again to see me, till he found it convenient to do me the honour of owning me publicly for his wife; but he came to me only the next night, and from that time I never could see him more, neither at church nor in the street, though for a whole month together I tired myself endeavouring to find him out. Being credibly informed he was still near us, and went a-hunting almost every day, I leave you to think with what uneasiness I passed those tedious hours, when I perceived his neglect,

and had reason to suspect his breach of faith. So unexpected a slight, which I looked upon as the most sensible affliction that could befall me, had like to have quite overwhelmed me. Then it was that I found my maid had betrayed me. I broke out into severe complaints of her presumption, which I had smothered till that time. I exclaimed against Don Ferdinand, and exhausted my sighs and tears without assuaging my sorrow. What was worse, I found myself obliged to set a guard upon my very looks, for fear my father and mother should inquire into the cause of my discontent, and so occasion my being guilty of shameful lies and evasions to conceal my more shameful disaster. But at last I perceived it was in vain to dissemble, and I gave a loose to my resentments; for I could no longer hold, when I heard that Don Ferdinand was married in a neighbouring town to a young lady of rich and noble parentage, and extremely handsome, whose name is Lucinda."—Cardenio hearing Lucinda named, felt his former disorder, but by good fortune it was not so violent as it used to be; and he only shrugged up his shoulders, bit his lips, knit his brows, and a little while after let fall a shower of tears, which did not hinder Dorothea from going on.

"This news," continued she, "instead of freezing up my blood with grief and astonishment, filled me with burning rage. Despair took possession of my soul, and in the transports of my fury I was ready to run raving through the streets, and publish Don Ferdinand's disloyalty, though at the expense of my reputation. I do not know whether a remainder of reason stopped these violent motions, but I found myself mightily eased as soon as I had pitched upon a design that presently came into my head. I discovered the cause of my grief to a young country fellow that served my father, and desired him to lend me a suit of man's apparel, and to go along with me to the town where I heard Don Ferdinand was. The fellow used the best arguments he had to hinder me from so strange an undertaking; but finding I was inflexible in my resolution, he assured me he was ready to serve me. Thereupon I put on this habit which you see, and taking with me some of my own clothes, together with some gold and jewels, not knowing but I might have occasion for them, I set out that very night, attended with that servant, and many anxious thoughts, without so much as acquainting my maid with my design. To tell

you the truth, I did not well know myself what I went about; for as there could be no remedy, Don Ferdinand being actually married to another, what could I hope to get by seeing him, unless it were the wretched satisfaction of upbraiding him with his infidelity? In two days and a half we got to the town, where the first thing I did was to inquire where Lucinda's father lived. That single question produced a great deal more than I desired to hear; for the first man I addressed myself to, showed me the house, and informed me of all that had happened at Lucinda's marriage, which it seems was grown so public, that it was the talk of the whole town. He told me how Lucinda had swooned away as soon as she had answered the priest, that she was contented to be Don Ferdinand's wife; and how after he had approached to open her stays, to give her more room to breathe, he found a letter under her own hand, wherein she declared she could not be Don Ferdinand's wife, because she was already contracted to a considerable gentleman of the same town, whose name was Cardenio; and that she had only consented to that marriage in obedience to her father. He also told me, that it appeared by the letter, and a dagger which

was found about her, that she designed to have killed herself after the ceremony was over: and that Don Ferdinand, enraged to see himself thus deluded, would have killed her himself with that very dagger, had he not been prevented by those that were present. He added, it was reported, that upon this Don Ferdinand immediately left the town; and that Lucinda did not come to herself till next day, and then she told her parents that she was really Cardenio's wife, and that he and she were contracted before she had seen Don Ferdinand. I heard also that this Cardenio was present at the wedding; and that as soon as he saw her married, which was a thing he never could have believed, he left the town in despair, leaving a letter behind him, full of complaints of Lucinda's breach of faith, and to inform his friends of his resolution to go to some place where they should never hear of him more. This was all the discourse of the town when we came thither, and soon after we heard that Lucinda also was missing, and that her father and mother were grieving almost to distraction, not being able to learn what was become of her. For my part, this news revived my hopes, having reason to be pleased to find

Don Ferdinand unmarried. I flattered myself that heaven had perhaps prevented this second marriage, to make him sensible of violating the first, and to touch his conscience, in order to his acquitting himself in his duty like a christian, and a man of honour. So I strove to beguile my cares with an imaginary prospect of a far distant change of fortune, amusing myself with vain hopes that I might not sink under the load of affliction, but prolong life; though this was only a lengthening of my sorrows, since I have now but the more reason to wish to be eased of the trouble of living. But while I staid in that town, not knowing what I had best to do, seeing I could not find Don Ferdinand, I heard a crier publicly describe my person, my clothes, and my age, in the open streets, promising a considerable reward to any that could bring tidings of Dorothea. I also heard that it was rumoured I was run away from my father's house with the servant who attended me; and that report touched my soul as much as Don Ferdinand's perfidiousness; for thus I saw my reputation wholly lost, and that too for a subject so base and so unworthy of my nobler thoughts. Thereupon I made all the haste I could to get out of the town with my servant, who even

then, to my thinking, began by some tokens to betray a faltering in the fidelity he had promised me. Dreading to be discovered, we reached the most desert part of this mountain that night: but, as it is a common saying, that misfortunes seldom come alone, and the end of one disaster is often the beginning of a greater, I was no sooner got to that place, where I thought myself safe, but the fellow, whom I had hitherto found to be modest and respectful, now, rather incited by his own villainy than my beauty, and the opportunity which that place offered, than by anything else, had the impudence to talk to me of love; and seeing I answered him with anger and contempt, he would no longer lose time in clownish courtship, but resolved to use violence to compass his wicked design. But just heaven, which seldom or never fails to succour just designs, so assisted mine, and his brutish passion so blinded him, that, not perceiving he was on the brink of a steep rock, I easily pushed him down, and then, without looking to see what was become of him, and with more nimbleness than could be expected from my surprise and weariness, I ran into the thickest part of the desert to secure myself. The next day I met a countryman, who took me to his

house amidst these mountains, and employed me ever since in quality of his shepherd. There I have continued some months, making it my business to be as much as possible in the fields, the better to conceal my sex. But notwithstanding all my care and industry, he at last discovered I was a woman, which made him presume to importune me with beastly offers; so that fortune not favouring me with the former opportunity of freeing myself, I left his house, and chose to seek a sanctuary among these woods and rocks, there with sighs and tears to beseech heaven to pity me, and to direct and relieve me in this forlorn condition; or at least to put an end to my miserable life, and bury in this desert the very memory of an unhappy creature, who, more through ill fortune than ill intent, has given the idle world occasion to be too busy with her fame."

CHAPTER II

AN ACCOUNT OF THE BEAUTIFUL DOROTHEA'S DISCRETION, WITH OTHER PLEASANT PASSAGES

"THIS, gentlemen," continued Dorothea, "is the true story of my tragical adventure; and now be you judges whether I had reason to make the complaint you overheard, and whether so unfortunate and hopeless a creature be in a condition to admit of comfort. I have only one favour to beg of you; be pleased to direct me to some place where I may pass the rest of my life secure from the search and inquiry of my parents; not but their former affection is a sufficient warrant for my kind reception, could the sense I have of the thoughts they must have of my past conduct permit me to return to them; but when I think they must believe me guilty, and can now have nothing but my bare word to assure them of my innocence, I can never resolve to stand their sight." Here Dorothea stopt, and the blushes that overspread her cheeks were certain signs of the discomposure of her