

she never could have imagined. The result of her reflections was this, that since she could not give him any opportunity of speaking to her again, without the hazard of her reputation and honour, she would send a letter to her husband to solicit his return to his house. The letter she sent by a messenger that very night; and it was to this purpose.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH THE HISTORY OF THE CURIOUS IMPERTINENT IS PURSUED

“As it is very improper to leave an army without a general, and a garrison without its governor; so to me it seems much more imprudent to leave a young married woman without her husband; especially when there are no affairs of consequence to plead for his absence. I find myself so ill in your’s, and so impatient, and unable to endure it any longer, that if you come not home very quickly, I shall be obliged to return to my father’s, though I leave your house without any one to look after it: for the person to whom you have entrusted the care of your family, has, I believe, more regard to his own pleasure than your concerns. You are wise and prudent, and therefore I shall say no more, nor is it convenient I should.”

Anselmo was not a little satisfied at the receipt of this letter, which assured him that Lothario had begun the attempt, which she had repelled according to his hopes; and there-

fore he sent her word not to leave his house, assuring her it should not be long before he returned. Camilla was surprised with his answer, and more perplexed than before, being equally afraid of going to her father, and of staying at home; in the first she disobeyed her husband, in the latter ran the risk of her honour. The worst resolution prevailed, which was to stay at her own house, and not avoid Lothario's company, lest it should give some cause of suspicion to her servants. And now she repented her writing to Anselmo, lest he should suspect that Lothario had observed some indiscretion in her, that made him lose the respect due to her, and gave him assurance to offer at the corrupting her virtue; but confiding in heaven and her own innocence, which she thought proof against all Lothario's attempts, she resolved to make no answer to whatever he should say to her, and never more trouble her husband with complaints, for fear of engaging him in disputes and quarrels with his friend. For that reason she considered how she might best excuse him to Anselmo, when he should examine the cause of her writing to him in that manner. With a resolution so innocent and dangerous, the next day she gave ear to all that Lothario said: and he gave the assault with such force and vigour,

that Camilla's constancy could not stand the shock unmoved, and her virtue could do no more than guard her eyes from betraying that tender compassion, of which his vows and entreaties, and all his sighs and tears, had made her heart sensible. Lothario discovered this with an infinite satisfaction, and no less addition to his flame; and found that he ought to make use of this opportunity, of Anselmo's absence, with all his force and importunity to win so valuable a fortress. He began with the powerful battery of the praise of her beauty, which being directly pointed on the weakest part of woman, her vanity, with the greatest ease and facility in the world makes a breach as great as a lover would desire. Lothario was not unskilful or remiss in the attack, but followed his fire so close, that let Camilla's integrity be built on never so obdurate a rock, it must at last have fallen. He wept, prayed, flattered, promised, swore, vowed, and showed so much passion and truth in what he said, that beating down the care of her honour, he, at last, triumphed over what he scarce durst hope, though what he most of all desired; for she, at last, surrendered, even Camilla surrendered! Nor ought we to wonder if she yielded, since even Lothario's friendship and virtue were not

able to withstand the terrible assault; an evident proof that love is a power too strong to be overcome by any thing but flying, and that no mortal creature ought to be so presumptuous as to stand the encounter, since there is need of something more than human, and indeed a heavenly force, to confront and vanquish that human passion. Leonela was the only confidante of this amour, which these new lovers and faithless friends could not by any means conceal from her knowledge. Lothario would not discover to Camilla, that her husband, for her trial, had designedly given him this opportunity, to which he owed so extreme a happiness; because she should not think he wanted love to solicit her himself with importunity, or that she was gained on too easy terms.

Anselmo came home in a few days, but discovered not what he had lost, though it was what he most valued and esteemed: from thence he went to Lothario, and embracing him, begged of him to let him know his fate. "All I can tell you, my friend," answered Lothario, "is that you may boast yourself of the best wife in the world, the ornament of her sex, and the pattern which all virtuous women ought to follow. Words, offers, presents, all is ineffectual; the tears I pretended to shed, moved only

her laughter. Camilla is not only mistress of the greatest beauty, but of modesty, discretion, sweetness of temper, and every other virtue and perfection, that add to the charms of a woman of honour. Therefore, my friend, take back your money; I have had no occasion to lay it out, for Camilla's integrity cannot be corrupted by such base and mercenary things as gifts and promises. And now, Anselmo, be at last content with the trial you have already made; and having so luckily got over the dangerous quicksands of doubts and suspicions that are to be met with in the ocean of matrimony, do not venture out again, with another pilot, that vessel, whose strength you have sufficiently experienced; but believe yourself, as you are, securely anchored in a safe harbour, at pleasure and ease, till death, from whose force, no title, power nor dignity can secure us, does come and cut the cable."

Anselmo was extremely satisfied with Lothario's discourse, and believed it as firmly as if it had been an oracle; yet desired him to continue his pursuit, if it were but to pass away the time: he did not require he should press Camilla with those importunities he had before used, but only make some verses in her praise, under the name of Cloris; and he would make Camilla believe he celebrated a lady he loved,

under that name, to secure her honour and reputation from the censure which a more open declaration would expose her to; he added, that if Lothario would not be at the expense of so much trouble and time, as to compose them himself, he would do it for him with a great deal of pleasure. Lothario told him there was no need of that, since he himself was sometimes poetically given; "do you but tell Camilla of my pretended love, as you say you will, and I will make the verses as well as I can, though not so well as the excellency of the subject requires."

The curious impertinent, and his treacherous friend, having thus agreed the matter, Anselmo went home, and then asked Camilla on what occasion she sent him the letter? Camilla, who wondered that this question had not been asked her before, replied, that the motive that prevailed with her to write in that manner to him, was a jealousy she had entertained, that Lothario, in his absence, looked on her with more criminal and desiring eyes than he used to do when he was at home; but that since she had reason to believe that suspicion but weakly grounded, seeing he discovered rather an aversion than love, as avoiding all occasions of being alone with her. Anselmo told her she

had nothing to apprehend from Lothario on that account, since he knew his affections engaged on one of the noblest young ladies of the city, whose praise he writ under the name of Cloris; but were he not thus engaged, there was no reason to suspect Lothario's virtue and friendship. Camilla, at this discourse, without doubt, would have been very jealous of Lothario, had he not told her his design of abusing her husband, with the pretence of another love, that he might, with the greater liberty and security, express her praise and his passion. The next day, at dinner, Anselmo desired him to read some of the verses he had made on his beloved Cloris; telling him, he might say anything of her before Camilla, since she did not know who the lady was. "Did Camilla know her," replied Lothario, "that should not make me pass over in silence any part of that praise which was her due; for if a lover complains of his mistress's cruelty, while he is praising her perfections, she can never suffer in her reputation. Therefore, without any fear, I shall repeat a sonnet which I made yesterday on the ingratitude of Cloris."

A SONNET

"At dead of night, when every troubled breast
By balmy sleep is eased of anxious pain,
When slaves themselves, in pleasing dreams are blest,
Of heaven and Cloris, restless I complain.

The rosy morn dispels the shades of night,
 The sun, the pleasures, and the day return;
 All nature's cheer'd with the reviving light;
 I, only I, can never cease to mourn.
 At noon, in vain, I bid my sorrow cease,
 The heat increases, and my pains increase,
 And still my soul in the mild evening grieves:
 The night returns, and my complaints renew,
 No moment sees me free; in vain I sue,
 Heaven ne'er relents, and Cloris ne'er relieves."*

Camilla was mightily pleased with the sonnet, but Anselmo transported; he was lavish of his commendation, and added that the lady must be barbarously cruel that made no return to so much truth, and so violent a passion. "What, must we then believe all that a poet in love tells us for truth?" said Camilla.—"Madam," replied Lothario, "though the poet may exceed, yet the lover corrects his fondness for fiction, and makes him speak truth." Anselmo, to advance Lothario's credit with Camilla, confirmed whatever he said; but she, not minding her husband's confirmations, was sufficiently persuaded, by her passion for Lothario, to an implicit faith in all he said; and therefore pleased with this composition, and more satisfied in the knowledge she had that all was addressed to herself, as the true

* This sonnet occurs also in the second act of Cervantes' comedy, "La Casa de los Zelos."

Cloris, she desired him to repeat some other verses he had made on that subject, if he could remember any. "I remember some," replied Lothario; "but, madam, in my opinion, they are not so tolerable as the former; but you shall judge yourself."

A SONNET

"I die your victim, cruel fair;
 And die without reprieve,
 If you can think your slave can bear
 Your cruelty, and live.

"Since all my hopes of ease are vain,
 To die I now submit;
 And that you may not think I feign;
 It must be at your feet.

"Yet when my bleeding heart you view,
 Bright nymph, forbear to grieve;
 For I had rather die for you,
 Than for another live.

"In death and dark oblivion's grave,
 Oh! let me lie forlorn,
 For my poor ghost would pine and rave,
 Should you relent and mourn."

Anselmo was not less profuse in his praise of this sonnet, than he had been of the other, and so added new fuel to the fire that was to consume his reputation. He contributed to his own abuse, in commending his false friend's

attempts on his honour, as the most important service he could do it; and this made him believe, that every step Camilla made down to contempt and disgrace, was a degree she mounted towards that perfection of virtue which he desired she should attain.

Some time after, Camilla being alone with her maid, "I am ashamed," said she, "my Leonela, that I gave Lothario so easy a conquest over me, and did not know my own worth enough to make him undergo some greater fatigues, before I made him so entire a surrender. I am afraid he will think my hasty consent the effect of the looseness of my temper, and not at all consider that the force and violence he used, deprived me of the power of resisting."—"Ah! madam," returned Leonela, "let not that disquiet you; for the speedy bestowing a benefit of an intrinsic value, and which you design to bestow at last, can never lessen the favour; for according to the proverb, He that gives quickly gives twice."—"To answer your proverb with another," replied Camilla, "That which costs little is less valued."—"But this has nothing to do with you," answered Leonela, "since it is said of love that it sometimes goes, sometimes flies; runs with one, walks gravely with

another; turns a third into ice, and sets a fourth into a flame; it wounds one, another it kills: like lightning, it begins and ends in the same moment: it makes that fort yield at night which is besieged but in the morning; for there is no force able to resist it. Since this is evident, what cause have you to be surprised at your own frailty? And why should you apprehend anything from Lothario, who has felt the same irresistible power, and yielded to it as soon? For love, to gain a conquest, took the short opportunity of my master's absence, which being so short and uncertain, love, that had before determined this should be done, added force and vigour to the lover, not to leave anything to time and chance, which might, by Anselmo's return, cut off all opportunities of accomplishing so agreeable a work. The best and most officious servant of love's retinue, is occasion or opportunity: this it is that love improves in all its progress, but most in the beginning and first rise of an amour. I trust not in what I have said to the uncertainty of report, but to experience, which affords the most certain and most valuable knowledge, as I will inform you, madam, some day or other; for I am, like you, made of frail flesh and blood, fired by youth and youth-

ful desires. But, madam, you did not surrender to Lothario till you had sufficient proof of his love, from his eyes, his vows, his promises, and gifts; till you had seen the merit of his person, and the beauty of his mind; all which convinced you how much he deserved to be loved. Then trouble yourself no more, madam, with these fears and jealousies; but thank your stars, that since you were doomed a victim to love, you fell by the force of such valour and merit that cannot be doubted. You yielded to one who has not only the four S's,¹ which are required in every good lover, but even the whole alphabet; as for example, he is, in my opinion, agreeable, bountiful, constant, dutiful, easy, faithful, gallant, honourable, ingenious, kind, loyal, mild, noble, officious, prudent, quiet, rich, secret, true, valiant, wise; the X, indeed, is too harsh a letter to agree with him, but he is young and zealous for your honour and service." Camilla laughed at her woman's alphabet, and thought her (as indeed she was) more learned in the practical art of love, than she had yet confessed. She then informed her mistress of an affair that had been betwixt her and a young man of the town. Camilla was not a little concerned at what she said, being

¹ See Appendix, Note I, Chap. VII.

apprehensive that her honour might suffer by her woman's indiscretion; and therefore asked her if the amour had passed any farther than words? Leonela, without any fear or shame, owned her guilty correspondence with all the freedom in the world; for the mistress's guilt gives the servant impudence; and generally they imitate their ladies' frailties without any fear of the public censure.

Camilla, finding her error past remedy, could only beg Leonela to disclose nothing of her affair to her lover, and manage her amour with secrecy and discretion for fear Lothario or Anselmo should hear of it. Leonela promised to obey her; but she did it in such a manner, that Camilla was perpetually in fear of the loss of her reputation by her folly; for she grew so confident on her knowledge of her lady's transgression, that she admitted the gallant into the house, not caring if her lady knew it, being certain that she durst not make any discovery to her master; for when once a mistress has suffered her virtue to be vanquished, and admits of any criminal correspondence, it subjects her to her own servants, and makes her subservient to their lewd practices, which she is slavishly bound to conceal. Thus it was with Camilla, who was forced to wink at the

visible rendezvous, which Leonela had with her lover, in a certain chamber of the house which she thought proper for the occasion; nor was that all, she was constrained to give her the opportunity of hiding him, that he might not be seen by her husband.

But all this caution did not secure him from being seen by Lothario one morning, as he was getting out of the house by break of day. His surprise had made him think it a spirit, had not his haste away, and his muffing himself up as he did, that he might not be known, convinced him of his error, and thrown him into a fit of jealousy, that had certainly undone them all, had not Camilla's wit and address prevented it. For Lothario concluded that Camilla, that had made no very obstinate resistance to him, had as easily surrendered to some other; and he fancied that the person he saw come from the house was the new favoured lover; never remembering there was such a person as Leonela in the house, and that he might be a lover of her's. For when once a woman parts with her virtue, she loses the esteem even of the man whose vows and tears won her to abandon it; and he believes she will with as little, if not less difficulty, yield to another; he perverts the least suspicions

into reality, and takes the slightest appearance for the most evident matter of fact.

Thus Lothario, distracted by the most violent jealousy in the world, without allowing himself time to consider, gave way to the transports of his rage and desire of revenge on Camilla, who had not injured him. He goes immediately to Anselmo, and having found him a-bed: "I have, my friend," said he to him, "these several days undergone a most severe conflict within my mind, and used all the force and violence I was capable of to conceal an affair from you, which I can no longer forbear discovering, without an apparent wrong to justice, and my friendship. Know, then, that Camilla is now ready to do whatsoever I shall desire of her; and the reason that most prevailed with me to delay this discovery, was, that I would be satisfied whether she were in earnest, or only pretended this compliance to try me; but had she been so virtuous as you and I believed her, she would, by this time, have informed you of that importunity which, by your desire, I used; but finding that she is silent, and takes no notice of that to you, I have reason to believe that she is but too sincere in those guilty promises she has made me, of meeting me to my satisfaction, in the

wardrobe, the next time your absence from the town should furnish her with an opportunity." This was true indeed, for that was the place of their common rendezvous. "Yet I would not have you," continued he, "take a rash and inconsiderate revenge, since it is possible, before the time of assignation, her virtue may rally, and she repent her folly. Therefore, as you have hitherto taken my advice, be ruled by me now, that you may not be imposed on, but have a sufficient conviction, before you put your resolves into execution. Pretend two or three days' absence, and then privately convey yourself behind the hangings in the wardrobe, as you easily may, whence you may, without difficulty, be an eye-witness with me of Camilla's conduct; and if it be as criminal as we may justly fear, then you may with secrecy and speed punish her, as the injury deserves."

Anselmo was extremely surprised at so unexpected a misfortune, to find himself deceived in those imaginary triumphs he pleased himself with, in Camilla's supposed victory over all Lothario's assaults. A great while he was in a silent suspense, with his eyes dejected, without force, and without spirit; but turning at last to his friend, "You have done all,"

said he, "Lothario, that I could expect from so perfect a friendship; I will therefore be entirely guided by your advice; do therefore what you please, but use all the secrecy a thing of this nature requires." Lothario, assuring him of that, left him; but full of repentance for the rashness he had been guilty of in telling him so much as he had, since he might have taken a sufficient revenge, by a less cruel and dishonourable way. He cursed his want of sense, and the weakness of his resolution, but could not find out any way to produce a less fatal event of his treachery, than he could justly expect from the experiment. But at last he concluded to inform Camilla of all he had done; which his freedom of access gave him opportunity to do that very day, when he found her alone; and she began thus to him:—"I am so oppressed, my Lothario, with a misfortune which I lie under, that it will certainly for ever destroy my quiet and happiness, if there be not some speedy remedy found for it: Leonela is grown so presumptuous, on her knowledge of my affairs, that she admits her lover all night to her chamber, and so exposes my reputation to the censure of any that shall see him go out at unseasonable hours from my house; and the greatest, and most