

remediless part of my grief is, that I dare not correct or chide her for her imprudence and impudence; for, being conscious of our correspondence, she obliges me to conceal her failings, which I am extremely apprehensive will in the end be very fatal to my happiness." Lothario was at first jealous that Camilla designed cunningly thus to impose her own privado on him for Leonela's; but being convinced by her tears, and the apparent concern in her face, he began to believe her, and at the same time to be infinitely confounded and grieved for what he had done. Yet he comforted Camilla, assuring her he would take effectual care for the future, that Leonela's impudence should do her no prejudice, and therefore begged her not to torment herself any more about it. Then he told all the unhappy effects of his jealous rage, and that her husband had agreed behind the arras to be witness of her weakness. He asked her pardon for the folly, and her counsel how to redress and prevent the ill effect of it, and bring them out of those difficulties into which his madness had plunged them.

Camilla expressed her resentment and her fears; and accused his treachery, baseness, and want of consideration; yet her anger and fears

being appeased, and a woman's wit being always more pregnant in difficulties than a man's, she immediately thought of a way to deliver them from the dangers that bore so dismal and helpless a face. She therefore bid him engage Anselmo to be there the next day, assuring him she did not question but by that means to get a more frequent and secure opportunity of enjoying one another than they hitherto had had. She would not make him privy to her whole design, but bid him be sure to come after her husband was hid, as soon as Leonela should call him, and that he should answer as directly to whatsoever she should ask him, as if Anselmo were not within hearing. Lothario spared no importunity to get from her her whole design, that he might act his part with the greater assurance, and the better to contribute to the imposing on her husband.—"All you have to do," replied Camilla, "is to answer me directly what I shall demand." Nor would she discover any more, for fear he should not acquiesce in her opinion, which she was so well satisfied in, but raise difficulties, and by consequence, obstacles, that might hinder her design from having the desired event, or run her upon some less successful project. Lothario complied, and Anselmo in appearance left the

town to retire to his friend in the country, but secretly returned to hide himself in the wardrobe, which he did with the greater ease, because Camilla and Leonela wilfully gave him opportunity.

We may easily imagine the grief with which Anselmo hid himself, since it was to be a spectator of his own dishonour, and the loss of all that happiness he possessed in the embraces of his beautiful and beloved Camilla. On the other hand, she being now certain that Anselmo was hid, entered the wardrobe with Leonela, and fetching a deep and piteous sigh, thus addressed herself to her.—“Ah! my Leonela! would it not be much better that thou pierce this infamous bosom with Anselmo’s dagger, before I execute what I design, which I have kept from thee that thou might’st not endeavour to disappoint me? Yet not so; for, where is the justice that I should suffer for another’s offence? No, I will first know of Lothario what action of mine has given him assurance to make me a discovery of a passion so injurious to his friend, and my honour. Go to the window, Leonela, and call the wicked man to me, who doubtless is waiting in the street the signal for his admission to accomplish his villainous design; yet first my resolution shall be performed, which, though it be cruel, is what my

honour strictly demands of me.”—“Alas! my dear lady,” cried the cunning Leonela, “alas! what do you intend to do with that dagger? Is your fatal design against yourself or Lothario? Alas! you can attack neither without the ruin of your fame and reputation. You had better give no opportunity to that bad man by admitting him while we are thus alone in the house: consider, madam, we are but two weak and helpless women, he a strong and resolute man, whose force is redoubled by the passion and desire that possess him; so that before you may be able to accomplish what you design, he may commit a crime that will be more injurious to you than the loss of your life. We have reason to curse my master Anselmo, who gives such frequent opportunities to impudence and dishonesty to pollute our house. But, madam, suppose you should kill him, as I believe you design, what shall we do with his dead body?”—“What!” said Camilla, “why we would leave him in this place to be buried by Anselmo; for it must be a grateful trouble to him to bury with his own hand his own infamy and dishonour. Call him therefore quickly, for methinks every moment my revenge is deferred, I injure that loyalty I owe to my husband.”

Anselmo gave great attention to all that was

said, and every word of Camilla's made a strange alteration in his sentiments, so that he could scarce forbear coming out to prevent his friend's death, when he heard her desperate resolution against his life; but his desire of seeing the end of so brave a resolve withheld him, till he saw an absolute necessity of discovering himself to hinder the mischief. Now Camilla put on a fear and weakness which resembled a swoon; and having thrown herself on a bed in the room, Leonela began a most doleful lamentation over her.—“Alas!” said she, “how unfortunate should I be, if my lady, so eminent for virtue and chastity, as well as beauty, should thus perish in my arms?” This and much more she uttered with that force of perfect dissimulation, that whoever had seen her would have concluded her one of the most innocent virgins in the world; and her lady a mere persecuted Penelope. Camilla soon came to herself, and cried to Leonela, “Why do not you call the most treacherous and unfaithful of friends? Go, fly, and let not thy delays waste my revenge and anger in mere words, and idle threats and curses.”—“Madam,” replied Leonela, “I will go, but you must first give me that dagger, lest you commit some outrage upon yourself in my absence, which may give an eternal cause of sorrow to all your friends that

love and value you.”—“Let not those fears detain you,” said Camilla, “but assure yourself I will not do anything till your return; for though I shall not fear to punish myself in the highest degree, yet I shall not, like Lucretia, punish myself, without killing him that was the principal cause of my dishonour. If I must die, I shall not refuse it; but I will first satisfy my revenge on him that has tempted me to come to this guilty assignation, to make him lament his crime without being guilty of any myself.”

Camilla could scarce prevail with Leonela to leave her alone, but at last she obeyed her and withdrew; when Camilla entertained herself and her husband with the following soliloquy. “Good heaven,” said she, “had I not better have continued my repulses, than by this seeming consent suffer Lothario to think scandalously of me, till my actions shall convince him of his error? That, indeed, might have been better in some respects; but then I should have wanted this opportunity of revenge, and the satisfaction of my husband's injured honour, if he were permitted, without any correction, to go off with the insolence of offering such criminal assaults to my virtue. No, no; let the traitor's life atone for the guilt of his false and unfaithful attempts, and his blood quench

that lewd fire he was not content should burn in his own breast. Let the world be witness, if it ever comes to know my story, that Camilla thought it not enough to preserve her virtue and loyalty to her husband entire, but also revenged the hateful affront, and the intended destruction of it. But it might be most convenient, perhaps, to let Anselmo know of this before I put my revenge in execution; yet, on the first attempt, I sent him word of it to the village, and I can attribute his not resenting so notorious an abuse, to nothing but his generous temper, and confidence in his friend, incapable of believing so tried a friend could be guilty of so much as a thought against his honour and reputation. Nor is this incredulity so strange, since I for so long together could not persuade myself of the truth of what my eyes and ears conveyed to me; and nothing could have convinced me of my generous error, had his insolence kept within any bounds, and not dared to proceed to large gifts, large promises, and a flood of tears which he shed, as the undissembled testimony of his passion. But to what purpose are these considerations? or is there indeed any need of considering, to persuade me to a brave resolve? Avaunt, false thoughts! Revenge is now my task; let the

treacherous man approach; let him come, let him die, let him perish. Let him but perish, no matter what is the fatal consequence. My dear Anselmo received me to his bosom spotless and chaste, and so shall the grave receive me from his arms. Let the event be as fatal as it will, the worst pollution I can this way suffer, is of mingling my own chaste blood with the impure and corrupted blood of the most false and treacherous of friends." Having said this, she traversed the room in so passionate a manner, with the drawn dagger in her hand, and showed such an agitation of spirits in her looks and motion, that she appeared like one distracted, or more like a murderer, than a tender and delicate lady.

Anselmo, not a little to his satisfaction, very plainly saw and heard all this from behind the arras, which, with the greatest reason and evidence in the world, removed all his past doubts and jealousies, and he, with abundance of concern, wished that Lothario would not come, that he might by that means escape the danger that so apparently threatened him; to prevent which he had discovered himself, had he not seen Leonela at that instant bring Lothario into the room. As soon as Camilla saw him enter, she described a line with the

poniard on the ground, and told him, the minute he presumed to pass that, she would strike the dagger to his heart. "Hear me," said she, "and observe what I say without interruption: when I have done, you shall have liberty to make what reply you please. Tell me first, Lothario, do you know my husband, and do you know me? The question is not so difficult, but you may give me immediate answer; there is no need of considering, speak, therefore, without delay." Lothario was not so dull as not to guess at her design in having her husband hid behind the hangings, and therefore adapted his answers so well to her questions, that the fiction was lost in the appearance of reality.—"I did never imagine fair Camilla," said Lothario, "that you would make this assignation, to ask questions so distant from the dear end of my coming. If you had a mind still to delay my promised happiness, you should have prepared me for the disappointment; for, the nearer the hope of possession brings us to the good we desire, the greater is the pain to have those hopes destroyed. But, to answer your demands, I must own, madam, that I do know your husband, and he me; that this knowledge has grown up with us from our childhood; and, that I

may be a witness against myself for the injury I am compelled by love to do him, I do also own, divine Camilla, that you do too well know the tenderness of our mutual friendship; yet love is a sufficient excuse for all my errors, if they were much more criminal than they are. And, madam, that I know you is evident, and love you equal to him, for nothing but your charms could have power enough to make me forget what I owe to my own honour, and what to the holy laws of friendship, all which I have been forced to break by the resistless tyranny of love. Ah! had I known you less, I had been more innocent."—"If you confess all this," said Camilla, "if you know us both, how dare you to violate so sacred a friendship, injure so true a friend, and appear thus confidently before me, whom you know to be esteemed by him the mirror of his love, in which that love so often views itself with pleasure and satisfaction, and in which you ought to have surveyed yourself so far, as to have seen how small the temptation is, that has prevailed on you to wrong him. But, alas! this points me to the cause of your transgression; some suspicious action of mine, when I have been least on my guard, as thinking myself alone; but assure yourself whatever it was, it proceeds not

from looseness or levity of principle, but a negligence and liberty which the sex sometimes innocently fall into, when they think themselves unobserved. If this were not the cause, say, traitor, when did I listen to your prayers, or in the least regard your tears and vows, so that you might derive from thence the smallest hope of accomplishing your infamous desires? Did I not always with the last aversion and disdain reject your criminal passion? Did I ever betray a belief in your lavish promises, or admit of your prodigal gifts? But since, without some hope, no love can long subsist, I will lay that hateful guilt on some unhappy inadvertency of mine, and therefore will inflict the same punishment on myself that your crime deserves. And to show you that I cannot but be cruel to you, who will not spare myself, I sent for you to be a witness of that just sacrifice I shall make to my dear husband's injured honour, on which you have fixed the blackest mark of infamy that your malice could suggest; and which I, alas! have sullied too by my thoughtless neglect of depriving you of the occasion, if, indeed, I gave any, of nourishing your wicked intentions. Once more I tell you, that the bare suspicion that my want of caution, and setting so severe a guard

on my actions as I ought, has made you harbour such wild and infamous intentions, is the sharpest of my afflictions, and what with my own hands I resolve to punish with the utmost severity. For, should I leave that punishment to another, it would but increase my guilt. Yes, I will die; but first, to satisfy my revenge and impartial justice, I will, unmoved and unrelenting, destroy the fatal cause that has reduced me to this desperate condition."

At these words she flew with so much violence, and so well-acted a fury, on Lothario, with her naked dagger, that he could scarce think it feigned, and therefore secured himself from her blow by avoiding it, and holding her hand. Thereupon, to give more life to the fiction, as in a rage at her disappointed revenge on Lothario, she cried out, "Since my malicious fortune denies a complete satisfaction to my just desires, at least it shall not be in its power entirely to defeat my resolution."—With that, drawing back her dagger-hand from Lothario who held it, she struck it into that part of her body where it might do her the least damage, and then fell down, as fainting away with the wound. Lothario and Leonela, surprised at the unexpected event, knew not

yet what to think, seeing her still lie all bloody on the ground. Lothario, pale and trembling, ran to take out the dagger; but was delivered of his fears when he saw so little blood follow it; and more than ever admired the cunning and wit of the beautiful Camilla. Yet, to play his part as well, and show himself a friend, he lamented over Camilla's body in the most pathetic manner in the world, as if she had been really dead; he cursed himself, and cursed his friend, that had put him on that fatal experiment; and knowing that Anselmo heard him, he said such things that were able to draw a greater pity for him than even for Camilla, though she seemed to have lost her life in the unfortunate adventure. Leonela removed her body to the bed, and begged Lothario to seek some surgeon, that might with all the secrecy in the world cure her lady's wound. She also asked his advice how to excuse it to her master, if he should return before it was perfectly cured. He replied, They might say what they pleased, that he was not in a humour of advising, but bid her endeavour to staunch her mistress's blood, for he would go where they should never hear more of him. And so he left them, with all the appearance of grief and concern that the occasion required. He was no sooner gone, but

he had leisure to reflect, with the greatest wonder imaginable, on Camilla's and her woman's conduct in this affair, and on the assurance which this scene had given Anselmo of his wife's virtue; since now, he could not but believe he had a second Portia; and he longed to meet him, to rejoice over the best dissembled imposture that ever bore away the opinion of truth. Leonela staunched the blood, which was no more than necessary for covering the cheat, and washing the wound with wine only as she bound it up, her discourse was so moving, and so well acted, that it had been alone sufficient to have convinced Anselmo that he had the most virtuous wife in the world. Camilla was not silent, but added fresh confirmations. In every word she spoke, she complained of her cowardice and baseness of spirit, that denied her time and force to despatch that life which was now so hateful to her. She asked her too, whether she should inform her husband of what had passed, or not? Leonela was for her concealing it, since the discovery must infallibly engage her husband in a revenge on Lothario, which must as certainly expose him too; for those things were never accomplished without the greatest danger; and that a good wife ought to the best of her power

prevent involving her husband in quarrels. Camilla yielded to her reasons; but added, that they must find out some pretended cause of her wound, which he would certainly see at his return. Leonela replied, that it was a difficult task, since she was incapable, even in jest, to dissemble the truth. "Am I not," answered Camilla, "under the same difficulty, who cannot save my life by the odious refuge of a falsehood? Had we not better, then, confess the real truth, than be caught in a lie?"—"Well, madam," returned Leonela, "let this give you no further trouble; by to-morrow morning I shall find out some expedient or other; though I hope the place where the wound is, may conceal it enough from his observation to secure us from all apprehension; leave, therefore, the whole event to heaven, which always favours and assists the innocent."

Anselmo saw and heard this formal tragedy of his ruined honour with all the attention imaginable, in which all the actors performed their parts so to the life, that they seemed the truth they represented. He wished with the last impatience for the night, that he might convey himself from his hiding-place to his friend's house, and there rejoice for this happy discovery of his wife's experienced virtue.

Camilla and her maid took care to furnish him with an opportunity of departing, of which he soon took hold, for fear of losing it. It is impossible to tell you all the embraces he gave Lothario, and the joy and extreme satisfaction he expressed at his good fortune, or the extravagant praises he gave Camilla. Lothario heard all this without taking a friend's share in the pleasure, for he was shocked with the concern he had to see his friend so grossly imposed on, and the guilt of his own treachery in injuring his honour. Though Anselmo easily perceived that Lothario was not touched with any pleasure at his relation, yet he believed Camilla's wound, caused by him, was the true motive of his not sharing his joy; and therefore assured him, he need not too much trouble himself for it, since it could not be dangerous, she and her woman having agreed to conceal it from him. This cause of his fear being removed, he desired him to put on a face of joy, since, by his means, he should now possess a perfect happiness and content; and therefore he would spend the rest of his life in conveying Camilla's virtue to posterity, by writing her praise in verse. Lothario approved his resolution, and promised to do the same. Thus Anselmo remained the most delightfully

deceived of any man alive. He therefore carried Lothario immediately to his house, as the instrument of his glory, though he was, indeed, the only cause of his infamy and dishonour. Camilla received him with a face that ill expressed the satisfaction of her mind, being forced to put on frowns in her looks, while her heart prompted nothing but smiles of joy for his presence.

For some months the fraud was concealed; but then fortune, turning her wheel, discovered to the world the wickedness they had so long and artificially disguised; and Anselmo's impertinent curiosity cost him his life.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONCLUSION OF THE NOVEL OF THE CURIOUS IMPERTINENT; WITH THE DREADFUL BATTLE BETWIXT DON QUIXOTE AND CERTAIN WINE-SKINS

THE novel was come near a conclusion, when Sancho Panza came running out of Don Quixote's chamber in a terrible fright, crying out, "Help, help, good people, help my master! He is just now at it, tooth and nail, with that same giant, the Princess Micomicona's foe: I never saw a more dreadful battle in my born-days. He has lent him such a sliver, that whip off went the giant's head, as round as a turnip."—"You are mad, Sancho," said the curate, interrupted in his reading; "is thy master such a devil of a hero, as to fight a giant at two thousand leagues' distance?" Upon this, they presently heard a noise and bustle in the chamber, and Don Quixote bawling out, "Stay, villain, robber, stay; since I have thee here, thy scimitar shall but little avail thee;" and with this, they heard him strike with his sword, with all his force against the walls.—"Good folks,"