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The Adventures of Roderick Random

by Tobias Smollett

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THE AUTHOR’S PREFACE

Of all kinds of satire, there is none so entertaining and universally

improving, as that which is introduced, as it were occasionally, in the

course of an interesting story, which brings every incident home to

life, and by representing familiar scenes in an uncommon and amusing

point of view, invests them with all the graces of novelty, while

nature is appealed to in every particular. The reader gratifies his

curiosity in pursuing the adventures of a person in whose favour he is

prepossessed; he espouses his cause, he sympathises with him in his

distress, his indignation is heated against the authors of his

calamity: the humane passions are inflamed; the contrast between

dejected virtue and insulting vice appears with greater aggravation,

and every impression having a double force on the imagination, the

memory retains the circumstance, and the heart improves by the example.

The attention is not tired with a bare catalogue of characters, but

agreeably diverted with all the variety of invention; and the

vicissitudes of life appear in their peculiar circumstances, opening an

ample field for wit and humour.

Romance, no doubt, owes its origin to ignorance, vanity, and

superstition. In the dark ages of the World, when a man had rendered

himself famous for wisdom or valour, his family and adherents availed

themselves of his superior qualities, magnified his virtues, and

represented his character and person as sacred and supernatural. The

vulgar easily swallowed the bait, implored his protection, and yielded

the tribute of homage and praise, even to adoration; his exploits were

handed down to posterity with a thousand exaggerations; they were

repeated as incitements to virtue; divine honours were paid, and altars

erected to his memory, for the encouragement of those who attempted to

imitate his example; and hence arose the heathen mythology, which is no

other than a collection of extravagant romances. As learning advanced,

and genius received cultivation, these stories were embellished with

the graces of poetry, that they might the better recommend themselves

to the attention; they were sung in public, at festivals, for the

instruction and delight of the audience; and rehearsed before battle,

as incentives to deeds of glory. Thus tragedy and the epic muse were

born, and, in the progress of taste, arrived at perfection. It is no

wonder that the ancients could not relish a fable in prose, after they

had seen so many remarkable events celebrated in verse by their best

poets; we therefore find no romance among them during the era of their

excellence, unless the \_Cyropædia\_ of Xenophon may be so called; and it

was not till arts and sciences began to revive after the irruption of

the barbarians into Europe, that anything of this kind appeared. But

when the minds of men were debauched by the imposition of priestcraft

to the most absurd pitch of credulity, the authors of romance arose,

and losing sight of probability, filled their performances with the

most monstrous hyperboles. If they could not equal the ancient poets in

point of genius they were resolved to excel them in fiction, and apply

to the wonder, rather than the judgment, of their readers. Accordingly,

they brought necromancy to their aid, and instead of supporting the

character of their heroes by dignity of sentiment and practice,

distinguished them by their bodily strength, activity, and extravagance

of behaviour. Although nothing could be more ludicrous and unnatural

than the figures they drew, they did not want patrons and admirers; and

the world actually began to be infected with the spirit of

knight-errantry, when Cervantes, by an inimitable piece of ridicule,

reformed the taste of mankind, representing chivalry in the right point

of view, and converting romance to purposes far more useful and

entertaining, by making it assume the sock, and point out the follies

of ordinary life.

The same method has been practised by other Spanish and French authors,

and by none more successfully than by Monsieur Le Sage, who, in his

\_Adventures of Gil Blas\_, has described the knavery and foibles of

life, with infinite humour and sagacity. The following sheets I have

modelled on his plan, taking me liberty, however, to differ from him in

the execution, where I thought his particular situations were uncommon,

extravagant, or peculiar to the country in which the scene is laid. The

disgraces of Gil Blas are, for the most part, such as rather excite

mirth than compassion; he himself laughs at them; and his transitions

from distress to happiness, or at least ease, are so sudden, that

neither the reader has time to pity him, nor himself to be acquainted

with affliction. This conduct, in my opinion, not only deviates from

probability, but prevents that generous indignation, which ought to

animate the reader against the sordid and vicious disposition of the

world. I have attempted to represent modest merit struggling with every

difficulty to which a friendless orphan is exposed, from his own want

of experience, as well as from the selfishness, envy, malice, and base

indifference of mankind. To secure a favourable prepossession, I have

allowed him the advantages of birth and education, which in the series

of his misfortunes will, I hope, engage the ingenuous more warmly in

his behalf; and though I foresee, that some people will be offended at

the mean scenes in which he is involved, I persuade myself that the

judicious will not only perceive the necessity of describing those

situations to which he must of course be confined, in his low estate,

but also find entertainment in viewing those parts of life, where the

humours and passions are undisguised by affectation, ceremony, or

education; and the whimsical peculiarities of disposition appear as

nature has implanted them. But I believe I need not trouble myself in

vindicating a practice authorized by the best writers in this way, some

of whom I have already named.

Every intelligent reader will, at first sight, perceive I have not

deviated from nature in the facts, which are all true in the main,

although the circumstances are altered and disguised, to avoid personal

satire.

It now remains to give my reasons for making the chief personage of

this work a North Briton, which are chiefly these: I could, at a small

expense, bestow on him such education as I thought the dignity of his

birth and character required, which could not possibly be obtained in

England, by such slender means as the nature of my plan would afford.

In the next place, I could represent simplicity of manners in a remote

part of the kingdom, with more propriety than in any place near the

capital; and lastly, the disposition of the Scots, addicted to

travelling, justifies my conduct in deriving an adventurer from that

country. That the delicate reader may not be offended at the unmeaning

oaths which proceed from the mouths of some persons in these memoirs, I

beg leave to promise, that I imagined nothing could more effectually

expose the absurdity of such miserable expletives, than a natural and

verbal representation of the discourse in which they occur.

APOLOGUE

A young painter, indulging a vein of pleasantry, sketched a kind of

conversation piece, representing a bear, an owl, a monkey, and an ass;

and to render it more striking, humorous, and moral, distinguished

every figure by some emblem of human life. Bruin was exhibited in the

garb and attitude of an old, toothless, drunken soldier; the owl

perched upon the handle of a coffee-pot, with spectacle on nose, seemed

to contemplate a newspaper; and the ass, ornamented with a huge tie-wig

(which, however, could not conceal his long ears), sat for his picture

to the monkey, who appeared with the implements of painting. This

whimsical group afforded some mirth, and met with general approbation,

until some mischievous wag hinted that the whole—was a lampoon upon the

friends of the performer; an insinuation which was no sooner circulated

than those very people who applauded it before began to be alarmed, and

even to fancy themselves signified by the several figures of the piece.

Among others, a worthy personage in years, who had served in the army

with reputation, being incensed at the supposed outrage, repaired to

the lodging of the painter, and finding him at home, “Hark ye, Mr.

Monkey,” said he, “I have a good mind to convince you, that though the

bear has lost his teeth, he retains his paws, and that he is not so

drunk but he can perceive your impertinence.” “Sblood! sir, that

toothless jaw is a d—ned scandalous libel—but don’t you imagine me so

chopfallen as not to be able to chew the cud of resentment.” Here he

was interrupted by the arrival of a learned physician, who, advancing

to the culprit with fury in his aspect, exclaimed, “Suppose the

augmentation of the ass’s ears should prove the diminution of the

baboon’s—nay, seek not to prevaricate, for, by the beard of

Aesculapius! there is not one hair in this periwig that will not stand

up in judgment to convict thee of personal abuse. Do but observe,

captain, how this pitiful little fellow has copied the very curls—the

colour, indeed, is different, but then the form and foretop are quite

similar.” While he thus remonstrated in a strain of vociferation, a

venerable senator entered, and waddling up to the delinquent,

“Jackanapes!” cried he, “I will now let thee see I can read something

else than a newspaper, and that without the help of spectacles: here is

your own note of hand, sirrah, for money, which if I had not advanced,

you yourself would have resembled an owl, in not daring to show your

face by day, you ungrateful slanderous knave!”

In vain the astonished painter declared that he had no intention to

give offence, or to characterise particular persons: they affirmed the

resemblance was too palpable to be overlooked; they taxed him with

insolence, malice, and ingratitude; and their clamours being overheard

by the public, the captain was a bear, the doctor an ass, and the

senator an owl, to his dying day.

Christian reader, I beseech thee, in the bowels of the Lord, remember

this example “while thou art employed in the perusal of the following

sheets; and seek not to appropriate to thyself that which equally

belongs to five hundred different people. If thou shouldst meet with a

character that reflects thee in some ungracious particular, keep thy

own counsel; consider that one feature makes not a face, and that

though thou art, perhaps, distinguished by a bottle nose, twenty of thy

neighbours may be in the same predicament.”

THE ADVENTURES OF RODERICK RANDOM

CHAPTER I

Of my Birth and Parentage

I was born in the northern part of this united kingdom, in the house of

my grandfather, a gentleman of considerable fortune and influence, who

had on many occasions signalised himself in behalf of his country; and

was remarkable for his abilities in the law, which he exercised with

great success in the station of a judge, particularly against beggars,

for whom he had a singular aversion.

My father (his youngest son) falling in love with a poor relation, who

lived with the old gentleman in quality of a housekeeper, espoused her

privately; and I was the first fruit of that marriage. During her

pregnancy, a dream discomposed my mother so much that her husband,

tired with her importunity, at last consulted a highland seer, whose

favourable interpretation he would have secured beforehand by a bribe,

but found him incorruptible. She dreamed she was delivered of a

tennis-ball, which the devil (who, to her great surprise, acted the

part of a midwife) struck so forcibly with a racket that it disappeared

in an instant; and she was for some time inconsolable for the lost of

her offspring; when, all on a sudden, she beheld it return with equal

violence, and enter the earth, beneath her feet, whence immediately

sprang up a goodly tree covered with blossoms, the scent of which

operated so strongly on her nerves that she awoke. The attentive sage,

after some deliberation, assured my parents, that their firstborn would

be a great traveller; that he would undergo many dangers and

difficulties, and at last return to his native land, where he would

flourish in happiness and reputation. How truly this was foretold will

appear in the sequel. It was not long before some officious person

informed my grandfather of certain familiarities that passed between

his son and housekeeper which alarmed him so much that, a few days

after, he told my father it was high time for him to think of settling;

and that he had provided a match for him, to which he could in justice

have no objections. My father, finding it would be impossible to

conceal his situation much longer, frankly owned what he had done; and

excused himself for not having asked the consent of his father, by

saying, he knew it would have been to no purpose; and that, had his

inclination been known, my grandfather might have taken such measures

as would have effectually put the gratification of it out of his power:

he added, that no exceptions could be taken to his wife’s virtue,

birth, beauty, and good sense, and as for fortune, it was beneath his

care. The old gentleman, who kept all his passions, except one, in

excellent order, heard him to an end with great temper, and then calmly

asked, how he proposed to maintain himself and spouse? He replied, he

could be in no danger of wanting while his father’s tenderness

remained, which he and his wife should always cultivate with the utmost

veneration; and he was persuaded his allowance would be suitable to the

dignity and circumstances of his family, and to the provision already

made for his brothers and sisters, who were happily settled under his

protection. “Your brothers and sisters,” said my grandfather, “did not

think it beneath them to consult me in an affair of such importance as

matrimony; neither, I suppose, would you have omitted that piece of

duty, had you not some secret fund in reserve; to the comforts of which

I leave you, with a desire that you will this night seek out another

habitation for yourself and wife, whither, in a short time, I will send

you an account of the expense I have been at in your education, with a

view of being reimbursed. Sir, you have made the grand tour—you are a

polite gentleman—a very pretty gentleman—I wish you a great deal of

joy, and am your very humble servant.”

So saying, he left my father in a situation easily imagined. However,

he did not long hesitate; for, being perfectly well acquainted with his

father’s disposition, he did not doubt that he was glad of this

pretence to get rid of him; and his resolves being as invariable as the

laws of the Medes and Persians, he knew it would be to no purpose to

attempt him by prayers and entreaties; so without any farther

application, he betook himself, with his disconsolate bedfellow to a

farm-house, where an old servant of his mother dwelt: there they

remained some time in a situation but ill adapted to the elegance of

their desires and tenderness of their love; which nevertheless my

father chose to endure, rather than supplicate an unnatural and

inflexible parent but my mother, foreseeing the inconveniences to which

she must have been exposed, had she been delivered in this place (and

her pregnancy was very far advanced), without communicating her design

to her husband, went in disguise to the house of my grandfather, hoping

that her tears and condition would move him to compassion, and

reconcile him to an event which was now irrecoverably past.

She found means to deceive the servants, and get introduced as an

unfortunate lady, who wanted to complain of some matrimonial

grievances, it being my grandfather’s particular province to decide in

all cases of scandal. She was accordingly admitted into his presence,

where, discovering herself, she fell at his feet, and in the most

affecting manner implored his forgiveness; at the same time

representing the danger that threatened not only her life, but that of

his own grandchild, which was about to see the light. He told her he

was sorry that the indiscretion of her and his son had compelled him to

make a vow, which put it out of his power to give them any assistance;

that he had already imparted his thoughts on that subject to her

husband, and was surprised that they should disturb his peace with any

farther importunity. This said, he retired.

The violence of my mother’s affliction had such an effect on her

constitution that she was immediately seized with the pains of

childbed; and had not an old maidservant, to whom she was very dear,

afforded her pity and assistance, at the hazard of incurring my

grandfather’s displeasure, she and the innocent fruit of her womb must

have fallen miserable victims to his rigour and inhumanity. By the

friendship of this poor woman she was carried up to a garret, and

immediately delivered of a man child, the story of whose unfortunate

birth he himself now relates. My father, being informed of what had

happened, flew to the embraces of his darling spouse, and while he

loaded his offspring with paternal embraces, could not forbear shedding

a flood of tears on beholding the dear partner of his heart (for whose

ease he would have sacrificed the treasures of the east) stretched upon

a flock bed, in a miserable apartment, unable to protect her from the

inclemencies of the weather. It is not to be supposed that the old

gentleman was ignorant of what passed, though he affected to know

nothing of the matter, and pretended to be very much surprised, when

one of his grandchildren, by his eldest son deceased, who lived with

him as his heir apparent, acquainted him with the affair; he determined

therefore to observe no medium, but immediately (on the third day after

her delivery) sent her a peremptory order to be gone, and turned off

the servant who had preserved her life. This behaviour so exasperated

my father that he had recourse to the most dreadful imprecations; and

on his bare knees implored that Heaven would renounce him if ever he

should forget or forgive the barbarity of his sire.

The injuries which this unhappy mother received from her removal in

such circumstances, and the want of necessaries where she lodged,

together with her grief and anxiety of mind, soon threw her into a

languishing disorder, which put an end to her life. My father, who

loved her tenderly, was so affected with her death that he remained six

weeks deprived of his senses; during which time, the people where he

lodged carried the infant to the old man who relented so far, on

hearing the melancholy story of his daughter-in-law’s death, and the

deplorable condition of his son, as to send the child to nurse, and he

ordered my father to be carried home to his house, where he soon

recovered the use of his reason.

Whether this hardhearted judge felt any remorse for his cruel treatment

of his son and daughter, or (which is more probable) was afraid his

character would suffer in the neighbourhood, he professed great sorrow

for his conduct to my father, whose delirium was succeeded by a

profound melancholy and reserve. At length he disappeared, and,

notwithstanding all imaginable inquiry, could not be heard of; a

circumstance which confirmed most people in the opinion of his having

made away with himself in a fit of despair. How I understood the

particulars of my birth will appear in the course of these memoirs.

CHAPTER II

I grow up—am hated by my Relations—sent to School—neglected by my

Grandfather—maltreated by my Master—seasoned to Adversity—I form Cabals

against the Pedant—am debarred Access to my Grandfather—hunted by his

Heir—I demolish the Teeth of his Tutor

There were not wanting some who suspected my uncles of being concerned

in my father’s fate, on the supposition that they would all share in

the patrimony destined for him; and this conjecture was strengthened by

reflecting that in all his calamities they never discovered the least

inclination to serve him; but, on the contrary, by all the artifices in

their power, fed his resentment and supported his resolution of leaving

him to misery and want. But people of judgment treated this insinuation

as an idle chimera; because, had my relations been so wicked as to

consult their interest by committing such an atrocious crime, the fate

of my father would have extended to me too whose life was another

obstacle to their expectation. Meanwhile, I grew apace, and as I

strongly resembled my father, who was the darling of the tenants, I

wanted nothing which their indigent circumstances could afford: but

their favour was a weak resource against the jealous enmity of my

cousins; who the more my infancy promised, conceived the more

implacable hatred against me: and before I was six years of age, had so

effectually blockaded my grandfather that I never saw him but by

stealth, when I sometimes made up to his chair as he sat to view his

labourers in the field: on which occasion he would stroke my head, bid

me be a good boy, and promise to take care of me.

I was soon after sent to school at a village hard by, of which he had

been dictator time out of mind; but as he never paid for my board, nor

supplied me with clothes, books, and other necessaries I required, my

condition was very ragged and contemptible, and the schoolmaster, who,

through fear of my grandfather, taught me gratis, gave himself no

concern about the progress I made under his instruction. In spite of

all these difficulties and disgraces, I became a good proficient in the

Latin tongue; and, as soon as I could write tolerably, pestered my

grandfather with letters to such a degree that he sent for my master,

and chid him severely for bestowing such pains on my education, telling

him that, if ever I should be brought to the gallows for forgery, which

he had taught me to commit, my blood would lie on his head.

The pedant, who dreaded nothing more than the displeasure of his

patron, assured his honour that the boy’s ability was more owing to his

own genius and application than to any instruction or encouragement he

received; that, although he could not divest him of the knowledge he

had already imbibed, unless he would empower him to disable his

fingers, he should endeavour, with God’s help, to prevent his future

improvement. And, indeed, he punctually performed what he had

undertaken; for, on pretence that I had written impertinent letters to

my grandfather, he caused a board to be made with five holes in it,

through which he thrust the fingers and thumb of my right hand, and

fastened it by whipcord to my wrist, in such a manner as effectually

debarred me the use of my pen. But this restraint I was freed from in a

few days, by an accident which happened in a quarrel between me and

another boy; who, taking upon him to insult my poverty, I was so

incensed at his ungenerous reproach that with one stroke with my

machine I cut him to the skull, to the great terror of myself and

schoolfellows, who left him bleeding on the ground, and ran to inform

the master of what had happened. I was so severely punished for this

trespass that, were I to live to the age of Methusalem, the impression

it made on me would not be effaced; the more than the antipathy and

horror I conceived for the merciless tyrant who inflicted it. The

contempt which my appearance naturally produced in all who saw me, the

continual wants to which I was exposed, and my own haughty disposition,

impatient of affronts, involved me in a thousand troublesome

adventures, by which I was at length inured in adversity, and

emboldened to undertakings far above my years. I was often inhumanly

scourged for crimes I did not commit, because, having the character of

a vagabond in the village, every piece of mischief, whose author lay

unknown, was charged upon me. I have been found guilty of robbing

orchards I never entered, of killing cats I never hunted, of stealing

gingerbread I never touched, and of abusing old women I never saw. Nay,

a stammering carpenter had eloquence enough to persuade my master that

I fired a pistol loaded with small shot into his window; though my

landlady and the whole family bore witness that I was abed fast asleep

at the time when this outrage was committed. I was once flogged for

having narrowly escaped drowning, by the sinking of a ferry boat in

which I was passenger. Another time, for having recovered of a bruise

occasioned by a horse and cart running over me. A third time, for being

bitten by a baker’s dog. In short, whether I was guilty or unfortunate,

the correction and sympathy of this arbitrary pedagogue were the same.

Far from being subdued by this informal usage, my indignation triumphed

over that slavish awe which had hitherto enforced my obedience; and the

more my years and knowledge increased, the more I perceived the

injustice and barbarity of his behaviour. By the help of an uncommon

genius, and the advice and direction of our usher, who had served my

father in his travels, I made a surprising progress in the classics,

writing, and arithmetic; so that, before I was twelve years old, I was

allowed by everybody to be the best scholar in the school. This

qualification, together with the boldness of temper and strength of

make which had subjected almost all my contemporaries, gave me such

influence over them that I began to form cabals against my persecutor;

and was in hope of being able to bid him defiance in a very short

time. Being at the head of a faction, consisting of thirty boys, most

of them of my own age, I was determined to put their mettle to trial,

that I might know how far they were to be depended upon, before I put

my grand scheme in execution: with this view, we attacked a body of

stout apprentices, who had taken possession of a part of the ground

allotted to us for the scheme of our diversions, and who were then

playing at ninepins on the spot; but I had the mortification to see my

adherents routed in an instant, and a leg of one of them broke in his

flight by the bowl, which one of our adversaries had detached in

pursuit of us. This discomfiture did not hinder us from engaging them

afterwards in frequent skirmishes, which we maintained by throwing

stones at a distance, wherein I received many wounds, the scars of

which still remain. Our enemies were so harassed and interrupted by

these alarms that they at last abandoned their conquest, and left us to

the peaceable enjoyment of our own territories.

It would be endless to enumerate the exploits we performed in the

course of this confederacy, which became the terror of the whole

village; insomuch that, when different interests divided it, one of the

parties commonly courted the assistance of Roderick Random (by which

name I was known) to cast the balance, and keep the opposite faction in

awe. Meanwhile, I took the advantage of every play-day to present

myself before my grandfather, to whom I seldom found access, by reason

of his being closely besieged by a numerous family of his female

grandchildren, who, though they perpetually quarrelled among

themselves, never failed to join against me, as the common enemy of

all. His heir, who was about the age of eighteen, minded nothing but

fox-hunting, and indeed was qualified for nothing else, notwithstanding

his grandfather’s indulgence in entertaining a tutor for him at home;

who at the same time performed the office of parish clerk. This young

Actaeon, who inherited his grandfather’s antipathy to everything in

distress, never sat eyes on me without uncoupling his beagles, and

hunting me into some cottage or other, whither I generally fled for

shelter. In this Christian amusement he was encouraged by his

preceptor, who, no doubt, took such opportunities to ingratiate himself

with the rising sun, observing, that the old gentleman, according to

the course of nature, had not long to live, for he was already on the

verge of fourscore.

The behaviour of this rascally sycophant incensed me so much, that one

day, when I was beleaguered by him and his hounds in a farmer’s house,

where I had found protection, I took aim at him (being an excellent

marksman) with a large pebble, which struck out four of his foreteeth,

and effectually incapacitated him from doing the office of a clerk.

CHAPTER III

My Mother’s Brother arrives—relieves me—a Description of him—he goes

along with me to the House of my Grandfather—is encountered by his

Dogs—defeats them, after a bloody Engagement—is admitted to the old

Gentleman—a Dialogue between them

About this time my mother’s only brother, who had been long abroad,

lieutenant of a man-of-war, arrived in his own country; where being

informed of my condition, he came to see me, and out of his slender

finances not only supplied me with what necessaries I wanted for the

present, but resolved not to leave the country until he had prevailed

on my grandfather to settle something handsome for the future. This was

a task to which he was by no means equal, being entirely ignorant, not

only of the judge’s disposition, but also of the ways of men in

general, to which his education on board had kept him an utter

stranger.

He was a strong built man, somewhat bandy legged, with a neck like that

of a bull, and a face which (you might easily perceive) had withstood

the most obstinate assaults of the weather. His dress consisted of a

soldier’s coat altered for him by the ship’s tailor, a striped flannel

jacket, a pair of red breeches spanned with pitch, clean gray worsted

stockings, large silver buckles that covered three-fourths of his

shoes, a silver-laced hat, whose crown overlooked the brims about an

inch and a half, black bobwig in buckle, a check shirt, a silk

handkerchief, a hanger, with a brass handle, girded to his thigh by a

furnished lace belt, and a good oak plant under his arm. Thus equipped,

he set out with me (who by his bounty made a very decent appearance)

for my grandfather’s house, where we were saluted by Jowler and Caesar,

whom my cousin, young master, had let loose at our approach. Being well

acquainted with the inveteracy of these curs, I was about to betake

myself to my heels, when my uncle seized me with one hand, brandished

his cudgel with the other, and at one blow laid Caesar sprawling on the

ground; but, finding himself attacked at the same time in the rear by

Jowler, and fearing Caesar might recover, he drew his hanger, wheeled

about, and by a lucky stroke severed Jowler’s head from his body. By

this time, the young foxhunter and three servants, armed with

pitchforks and flails, were come to the assistance of the dogs, whom

they found breathless upon the field; and my cousin was so provoked at

the death of his favourites, that he ordered his attendants to advance,

and take vengeance on their executioner, whom he loaded with all the

curses and reproaches his anger could suggest. Upon which my uncle

stepped forwards with an undaunted air, at the sight of whose bloody

weapons his antagonists fell back with precipitation, when he accosted

their leader thus:

“Lookee, brother, your dogs having boarded me without provocation, what

I did was in my own defence. So you had best be civil, and let us shoot

a head, clear of you.”

Whether the young squire misinterpreted my uncle’s desire of peace, or

was enraged at the fate of his hounds beyond his usual pitch of

resolution, I know not; but he snatched a flail from one of his

followers, and came up with a show of assaulting the lieutenant, who,

putting himself in a posture of defence, proceeded thus: “Lookee, you

lubberly son of a w—e, if you come athwart me, ’ware your gingerbread

work. I’ll be foul of your quarter, d—n me.”

This declaration, followed by a flourish of his hanger, seemed to check

the progress of the young gentleman’s choler, who, looking behind him,

perceived his attendants had slunk into the house, shut the gate, and

left him to decide the contention by himself.

Here a parley ensued, which was introduced by my cousin’s asking, “Who

the devil are you? What do you want? Some scoundrel of a seaman, I

suppose, who has deserted and turned thief. But don’t think you shall

escape, sirrah—I’ll have you hang’d, you dog, I will. Your blood shall

pay for that of my two hounds, you ragamuffin. I would not have parted

with them to save your whole generation from the gallows, you ruffian,

you!” “None of your jaw, you swab—none of your jaw,” replied my uncle,

“else I shall trim your laced jacket for you. I shall rub you down with

an oaken towel, my boy, I shall.” So saying, he sheathed his hanger,

and grasped his cudgel. Meanwhile the people of the house being

alarmed, one of my female cousins opened a window, and asked what was

the matter. “The matter!” answered the lieutenant; “no great matter,

young woman; I have business with the old gentleman, and this spark,

belike, won’t allow me to come alongside of him,” that’s all. After a

few minutes pause we were admitted, and conducted to my grandfather’s

chamber through a lane of my relations, who honoured me with very

significant looks as I passed along. When we came into the judge’s

presence my uncle, after two or three sea-bows, expressed himself in

this manner; “Your servant, your servant. What cheer, father? what

cheer? I suppose you don’t know me—mayhap you don’t. My name is Tom

Bowling, and this here boy, you look as if you did not know him

neither; ’tis like you mayn’t. He’s new rigged, i’faith; his cloth

don’t shake in the wind so much as it wont to do. ’Tis my nephew, d’y

see, Roderick Random—your own flesh and blood, old gentleman. Don’t lay

a-stern, you dog,” pulling me forward. My grandfather (who was laid up

with the gout) received this relation, after his long absence, with

that coldness of civility which was peculiar to him; told him he was

glad to see him, and desired him to sit down. “Thank ye, thank ye, sir,

I had as lief stand,” said my uncle; “for my own part, I desire nothing

of you; but, if you have any conscience at all, do something for this

poor boy, who has been used at a very unchristian rate. Unchristian do

I call it? I am sure the Moors in Barbary have more humanity than to

leave their little ones to want. I would fain know why my sister’s son

is more neglected than that there fair-weather Jack” (pointing to the

young squire, who with the rest of my cousins had followed us into the

room). “Is not he as near akin to you as the other? Is he not much

handsomer and better built than that great chucklehead? Come, come,

consider, old gentleman, you are going in a short time to give an

account of your evil actions. Remember the wrongs you did his father,

and make all the satisfaction in your power before it be too late. The

least thing you can do is to settle his father’s portion on him.”

The young ladies, who thought themselves too much concerned to contain

themselves any longer, set up their throats all together against my

protector—“Scurvy companion—saucy tarpaulin—rude, impertinent fellow,

did he think to prescribe to grandpapa? His sister’s brat had been too

well taken care of. Grandpapa was too just not make a difference

between an unnatural, rebellious son and his dutiful, loving children,

who took his advice in all things;” and such expressions were vented

against him with great violence; until the judge at length commanded

silence. He calmly rebuked my uncle for his unmannerly behaviour, which

he said he would excuse on account of his education: he told him he had

been very kind to the boy, whom he had kept at school seven or eight

years, although he was informed he made no progress in his learning but

was addicted to all manner of vice, which he rather believed, because

he himself was witness to a barbarous piece of mischief he had

committed on the jaws of his chaplain. But, however, he would see what

the lad was fit for, and bind him apprentice to some honest tradesman

or other, provided he would mend his manners, and behave for the future

as became him.

The honest tar (whose pride and indignation boiled within him) answered

my grandfather, that it was true he had sent him to school, but it had

cost him nothing, for he had never been at one shilling expense to

furnish him with food, raiment, books, or other necessaries; so that it

was not much to be wondered at, if the boy made small progress; and yet

whoever told him so was a lying, lubberly rascal, and deserved to be

keel-haul’d; for though he (the lieutenant) did not understand those

matters himself, he was well informed as how Rory was the best scholar

of his age in all the country; the truth of which he would maintain, by

laying a wager of his whole half-year’s pay on the boy’s head—with

these words he pulled out his purse, and challenged the company:

“Neither is he predicted to vice, as you affirm, but rather, left like

a wreck, d’ye see, at the mercy of the wind and weather, by your

neglect, old gentleman. As for what happened to your chaplain, I am

only sorry that he did not knock out the scoundrel’s brains instead of

his teeth. By the Lord, if ever I come up with him, he had better be in

Greenland, that’s all. Thank you for your courteous offer of binding

the lad apprentice to a tradesman. I suppose you would make a tailor of

him—would you? I had rather see him hang’d, d’ye see. Come along, Rory,

I perceive how the land lies, my boy—let’s tack about, i’faith—while I

have a shilling you shan’t want a tester. B’we, old gentleman; you’re

bound for the other world, but I believe damnably ill-provided for the

voyage.” Thus ended our visit; and we returned to the village, my uncle

muttering curses all the way against the old shark and the young fry

that surrounded him.

CHAPTER IV

My Grandfather makes his Will—our second Visit—he Dies—his Will is read

in Presence of all his living Descendants—the Disappointment of my

female Cousins—my Uncle’s Behaviour

A few weeks after our first visit, we were informed that the old judge,

at the end of a fit of thoughtfulness, which lasted three days, had

sent for a notary and made his will; that the distemper had mounted

from his legs to his stomach, and, being conscious of his approaching

end, he had desired to see all his descendants without exception. In

obedience to this summons, my uncle set out with me a second time, to

receive the last benediction of my grandfather: often repeating by the

road, “Ey, ey, we have brought up the old hulk at last. You shall

see—you shall see the effect of my admonition,” When we entered his

chamber, which was crowded with his relations, we advanced to the

bedside, where we found him in his last agonies, supported by two of

his granddaughters, who sat on each side of him, sobbing most

piteously, and wiping away the froth and slaver as it gathered on his

lips, which they frequently kissed with a show of great anguish and

affection. My uncle approached him with these words, “What! he’s not

a-weigh. How fare ye? how fare ye, old gentleman? Lord have mercy upon

your poor sinful soul!” Upon which, the dying man turned his languid

eyes towards us, and Mr. Bowling went on—“Here’s poor Roy come to see

you before you die, and to receive your blessing. What, man! don’t

despair, you have been a great sinner, ’tis true,—what then? There’s a

righteous judge above, an’t there? He minds me no more than a porpoise.

Yes, yes, he’s a-going; the land crabs will have him, I see that! his

anchor’s a-peak, i’faith.” This homely consolation scandalised the

company so much, and especially the parson, who probably thought his

province invaded, that we were obliged to retire into another room,

where, in a few minutes, we were convinced of my grandfather’s decease,

by a dismal yell uttered by the young ladies in his apartment; whither

we immediately hastened, and found his heir, who had retired a little

before into a closet, under pretence of giving vent to his sorrow,

asking, with a countenance beslubbered with tears, if his grandpapa was

certainly dead? “Dead!” (says my uncle, looking, at the body) “ay, ay,

I’ll warrant him as dead as a herring. Odd’s fish! now my dream is out

for all the world. I thought I stood upon the forecastle, and saw a

parcel of carrion crows foul of a dead shark: that floated alongside,

and the devil perching upon our spritsail yard, in the likeness of a

blue bear—who, d’ye see jumped overboard upon the carcass and carried

it to the bottom in his claws.” “Out upon thee, reprobate” cries the

parson “out upon thee, blasphemous wretch! Dost thou think his honour’s

soul is in the possession of Satan?” The clamour immediately arose, and

my poor uncle, being, shouldered from one corner of the room to the

other, was obliged to lug out in his own defence, and swear he would

turn out for no man, till such time as he knew who had the title to

send him adrift. “None of your tricks upon travellers,” said he;

“mayhap old Bluff has left my kinsman here his heir: if he has, it will

be the better for his miserable soul. Odds bob! I’d desire no better

news. I’d soon make him a clear shin, I warrant you.” To avoid any

further disturbance, one of my grandfather’s executors, who was

present, assured Mr. Bowling, that his nephew should have all manner of

justice; that a day should be appointed after the funeral for examining

the papers of the deceased, in presence of all his relations; till

which time every desk and cabinet in the house should remain close

sealed; and that he was very welcome to be witness to this ceremony,

which was immediately performed to his satisfaction. In the meantime,

orders were given to provide mourning for all the relations, in which

number I was included; but my uncle would not suffer me to accept of

it, until I should be assured whether or no I had reason to honour his

memory so far. During this interval, the conjectures of people, with

regard to the old gentleman’s will, were various: as it was well known,

he had, besides his landed estate, which was worth £700 per annum, six

or seven thousand pounds at interest, some imagined that the whole real

estate (which he had greatly improved) would go to the young man whom

he always entertained as his heir; and that the money would be equally

divided between my female cousins (five in number) and me. Others were

of opinion, that, as the rest of the children had been already provided

for, he would only bequeath two or three hundred pounds to each of his

granddaughters, and leave the bulk of the sum to me, to atone for his

unnatural usage of my father. At length the important hour arrived, and

the will was produced in the midst of the expectants, whose looks and

gestures formed a group that would have been very entertaining to an

unconcerned spectator. But, the reader can scarce conceive the

astonishment and mortification that appeared, when an attorney

pronounced aloud, the young squire sole heir of all his grandfather’s

estate, personal and real. My uncle, who had listened with great

attention, sucking the head of his cudgel all the while, accompanied

these words of the attorney with a stare, and whew, that alarmed the

whole assembly. The eldest and pertest of my female competitors, who

had been always very officious about my grandfather’s person, inquired,

with a faltering accent and visage as yellow as an orange, “if there

were no legacies?” and was answered, “None at all.” Upon which she

fainted away. The rest, whose expectations, perhaps, were not so

sanguine, supported their disappointment with more resolution, though

not without giving evident marks of indignation, and grief at least as

genuine as that which appeared in them at the old gentleman’s death. My

conductor, after having kicked with his heel for some time against the

wainscot, began: “So there’s no legacy, friend, ha!—here’s an old

succubus; but somebody’s soul howls for it, d—n me!” The parson of the

parish, who was one of the executors, and had acted as ghostly director

to the old man, no sooner heard this exclamation than he cried out,

“Avaunt, unchristian reviler! avaunt! wilt thou not allow the soul of

his honour to rest in peace?” But this zealous pastor did not find

himself so warmly seconded, as formerly, by the young ladies, who now

joined my uncle against him, and accused him of having acted the part

of a busybody with their grandpapa whose ears he had certainly abused

by false stories to their prejudice, or else he would not have

neglected them in such an unnatural manner. The young squire was much

diverted with this scene, and whispered to my uncle, that if he had not

murdered his dogs, he would have shown him glorious fun, by hunting a

black badger (so he termed the clergyman). The surly lieutenant, who

was not in a humour to relish this amusement, replied, “You and your

dogs may be damn’d. I suppose you’ll find them with your old dad, in

the latitude of hell. Come, Rory,—about ship, my lad, we must steer

another course, I think.” And away we went.

CHAPTER V

The Schoolmaster uses me barbarously—I form a Project of Revenge, in

which I am assisted by my Uncle—I leave the Village—am settled at a

University by his Generosity

On our way back to the village, my uncle spoke not a word during the

space of a whole hour, but whistled with great vehemence the tune of

“Why should we quarrel for riches,” etc. his visage being contracted

all the while into a most formidable frown. At length his pace

increased to such a degree that I was left behind a considerable way:

then he waited for me; and when I was almost up with him, called out in

a surly tone, “Bear a hand, damme! must I bring to every minute for

you, you lazy dog.” Then, laying hold of me by the arm, hauled me

along, until his good nature (of which he had a great share) and

reflection getting the better of his he said, “Come, my boy, don’t be

cast down,—the old rascal is in hell, that’s some satisfaction; you

shall go to sea with me, my lad. A light heart and a thin pair of

breeches goes through the world, brave boys, as the song goes—eh!”

Though this proposal did not at all suit my inclination, I was afraid

of discovering my aversion to it, lest I should disoblige the only

friend I had in the world; and he was so much a seaman that he never

dreamt I could have had any objection to his design; consequently gave

himself no trouble in consulting my approbation. But this resolution

was soon dropped, by the device of our usher, who assured Mr. Bowling,

it would be a thousand pities to balk my genius, which would certainly

one day make my fortune on shore, provided it received due cultivation.

Upon which, this generous tar determined (though he could ill afford

it) to give me university education; and accordingly settled my board

and other expenses, at a town not many miles distant, famous for its

colleges, whither we repaired in a short time. But, before the day of

our departure, the schoolmaster, who no longer had the fear of my

grandfather before his eyes, laid aside all decency and restraint, and

not only abused me in the grossest language his rancour could suggest,

as a wicked, profligate, dull, beggarly miscreant, whom he had taught

out of charity; but also inveighed in the most bitter manner against

the memory of the judge (who by the by had procured that settlement for

him), hinting, in pretty plain terms, that the old gentleman’s soul was

damned to all eternity for his injustice in neglecting to pay for my

learning.

This brutal behaviour, added to the sufferings I had formerly undergone

made me think it high time to be revenged on this insolent pedagogue.

Having consulted my adherents, I found them all staunch in their

promises to stand by me; and our scheme was this:—In the afternoon

preceding to the day of our departure for the University, I resolved to

take the advantage of the usher’s going out to make water (which he

regularly did at four o’clock), and shut the great door, that he might

not come to the assistance of his superior. This being done, the

assault was to be begun by my advancing to my master and spitting in

his face. I was to be seconded by two of the strongest boys in the

school, who were devoted to me; their business was to join me in

dragging the tyrant to a bench, over which he was to be laid, and his

bare posteriors heartily flogged, with his own birch, which we proposed

to wrest from him in his struggle; but if we should find him too many

for us all three, we were to demand the assistance of our competitors,

who should be ready to enforce us, or oppose anything that might be

undertaken for the master’s relief. One of my principal assistants was

called Jeremy Gawky, son and heir of a wealthy gentleman in the

neighbourhood; and the name of the other, Hugh Strap, the cadet of a

family which had given shoemakers to the village time out of mind. I

had once saved Gawky’s life, by plunging into a river and dragging him

on shore, when he was on the point of being drowned. I had often

rescued him from the clutches of those whom his insufferable arrogance

had provoked to a resentment he was not able to sustain; and many times

saved his reputation and posteriors, by performing his exercises at

school; so that it is not to be wondered at, if he had a particular

regard for me and my interests. The attachment of Strap flowed from a

voluntary, disinterested inclination, which had manifested itself on

many occasions in my behalf, he having once rendered me the same

service that I had rendered Gawky, by saving my life at the risk of his

own; and often fathered offences that I had committed, for which he

suffered severely, rather than I should feel the weight of the

punishment. These two champions were the more willing to engage in this

enterprise, because they intended to leave the school next day, as well

as I; the first being ordered by his father to return into the country,

and the other being bound apprentice to his barber, at a market town

not far off.

In the meantime, my uncle, being informed of my master’s behaviour to

me, was enraged at his insolence, and vowed revenge so heartily that I

could not refrain from telling him the scheme I had concerted, while he

heard with great satisfaction, at every sentence squirting out a

mouthful of spittle, tinctured with tobacco, of which he constantly

chewed a large quid. At last, pulling up his breeches, he cried, “No,

no, z—ds! that won’t do neither; howsoever, ’tis a bold undertaking, my

lad, that I must say, i’faith; but lookee, lookee, how do you propose

to get clear off—won’t the enemy give chase, my boy?—ay, ay, that he

will, I warrant, and alarm the whole coast; ah! God help thee, more

sail than ballast, Rory. Let me alone for that—leave the whole to me.

I’ll show him the foretopsail, I will. If so be your shipmates are

jolly boys, and won’t flinch, you shall see, you shall see; egad, I’ll

play him such a salt-water trick I’ll bring him to the gangway and

anoint him with a cat-and-nine-tails; he shall have a round dozen

doubled, my lad, he shall—and be left lashed to his meditations.” We

were very proud of our associate, who immediately went to work, and

prepared the instrument of his revenge with great skill and expedition;

after which, he ordered our baggage to be packed up and sent off, a day

before our attempt, and got horses ready to be mounted, as soon as the

affair should be over. At length the hour arrived, when our auxiliary,

seizing the opportunity of the usher’s absence, bolted in, secured the

door, and immediately laid hold of the pedant by his collar who bawled

out, “Murder, Thieves,” with the voice of a Stentor. Though I trembled

all over like an aspen leaf, I knew there was no time to be lost, and

accordingly got up, and summoned our associates to our assistance.

Strap, without any hesitation, obeyed the signal, and seeing me leap

upon the master’s back, ran immediately to one of his legs, which

pulling with all his force, this dreadful adversary was humbled to the

ground; upon which Gawky, who had hitherto remained in his place, under

the influence of a universal trepidation, hastened to the scene of

action, and insulted the fallen tyrant with a loud huzza, in which the

whole school joined. The noise alarmed the usher, who, finding himself

shut out, endeavoured, partly by threats and partly by entreaties, to

procure admission. My uncle bade him have a little patience, and he

would let him in presently; but if he pretended to stir from that

place, it should fare the worse with the son of a bitch his superior,

on whom he intended only to bestow a little wholesome chastisement, for

his barbarous usage of Rory, “to which,” said he, “you are no

stranger.” By this time we had dragged the criminal to a post, to which

Bowling tied him with a rope he had provided on purpose; after having

secured his hands and stripped his back. In this ludicrous posture he

stood (to the no small entertainment of the boys, who crowded about

him, and shouted with great exultation at the novelty of the sight),

venting bitter imprecations against the lieutenant, and reproaching his

scholars with treachery and rebellion; when the usher was admitted,

whom my uncle accosted in this manner: “Harkee, Mr. Syntax, I believe

you are an honest man, d’ye see—and I have a respect for you—but for

all that, we must, for our own security, d’ye see, belay you for a

short time.” With these words, he pulled out some fathoms of cord,

which the honest man no sooner saw than he protested with great

earnestness he would allow no violence to be offered to him, at the

same time accusing me of perfidy and ingratitude. But Bowling

representing that it was in vain to resist, and that he did not mean to

use him with violence and indecency, but only to hinder him from

raising the hue and cry against us before we should be out of their

power, he allowed himself to be bound to his own desk, where he sat a

spectator of the punishment inflicted on his principal. My uncle,

having upbraided this arbitrary wretch with his inhumanity to me, told

him, that he proposed to give him a little discipline for the good of

his soul, which he immediately put in practice, with great vigour and

dexterity. This smart application to the pedant’s withered posteriors

gave him such exquisite pain that he roared like a mad bull, danced,

cursed, and blasphemed, like a frantic bedlamite. When the lieutenant

thought himself sufficiently revenged, he took his leave of him in

these words: “Now, friend, you’ll remember me the longest day you have

to live; I have given you a lesson that will let you know what flogging

is, and teach you to have more sympathy for the future. Shout, boys,

shout!”

This ceremony was no sooner over than my uncle proposed they should

quit the school, and convey their old comrade Rory to the public-house,

about a mile from the village, where he would treat them all. His offer

being joyfully embraced, he addressed himself to Mr. Syntax, and begged

him to accompany us; but this invitation he refused with great disdain,

telling my benefactor he was not the man he took him to be. “Well,

well, old surly,” replied my uncle, shaking his hand, “thou art an

honest fellow notwithstanding; and if ever I have the command of a

ship, thou shalt be our schoolmaster, i’faith.” So saying he dismissed

the boys, and locking the door, left the two preceptors to console one

another; while we moved forwards on our journey, attended by a numerous

retinue, whom he treated according to his promise.

We parted with many tears, and lay that night at an inn on the road,

about ten miles short of the town where I was to remain, at which we

arrived next day, and I found I had no cause to complain of the

accommodations provided for me, in being boarded at the house of an

apothecary, who had married a distant relation of my mother. In a few

days after, my uncle set out for his ship, having settled the necessary

funds for my maintenance and education.

CHAPTER VI

I make great progress in my Studies—am caressed by Everybody—my female

Cousins take notice of me—I reject their Invitation—they are incensed,

and conspire against me—am left destitute by a Misfortune that befalls

my Uncle—Gawky’s Treachery—my Revenge

As I was now capable of reflection, I began to consider my precarious

situation; that I was utterly abandoned by those whose duty it was to

protect me: and that my sole dependence was on the generosity of one

man, who was not only exposed by his profession to continual dangers,

which might one day deprive me of him for ever; but also (no doubt)

subject to those vicissitudes of disposition which a change of fortune

usually creates, or which a better acquaintance with the world might

produce; for I always ascribed his benevolence to the dictates of a

heart as yet undebauched by a commerce with mankind. Alarmed at these

considerations, I resolved to apply myself with great care to my

studies, and enjoy the opportunity in my power: this I did with such

success that, in the space of three years, I understood Greek very

well, was pretty far advanced in the mathematics, and no stranger to

moral and natural philosophy: logic I made no account of; but, above

all things, I valued myself on my taste in the belles lettres, and a

talent for poetry, which had already produced some pieces that had met

with a favourable reception. These qualifications, added to a good face

and shape, acquired the esteem and acquaintance of the most

considerable people in town, and I had the satisfaction to find myself

in some degree of favour with the ladies; an intoxicating piece of good

fortune to one of my amorous complexion! which I obtained, or at least

preserved, by gratifying their propensity to scandal, in lampooning

their rivals.

Two of my female cousins lived in this place, with their mother, since

the death of their father, who left his whole fortune equally divided

between them; so that, if they were not the most beautiful, they were

at least the richest toasts in town; and received daily the addresses

of all the beaux and cavaliers of the country. Although I had hitherto

been looked upon by them with the most supercilious contempt, my

character now attracted their notice so much that I was given to

understand I might be honoured with their acquaintance, if I pleased.

The reader will easily perceive that this condescension either flowed

from the hope of making my poetical capacity subservient to their

malice, or at least of screening themselves from the lash of my

resentment, which they had effectually provoked. I enjoyed this triumph

with great satisfaction, and not only rejected their offer with

disdain, but in all my performances, whether satire or panegyric,

industriously avoided mentioning their names, even while I celebrated

those of their intimates: this neglect mortified their pride

exceedingly and incensed them to such a degree that they were resolved

to make me repent of my indifference. The first stroke of their revenge

consisted in their hiring a poor collegian to write verses against me,

the subject of which was my own poverty, and the catastrophe of my

unhappy parents; but, besides the badness of the composition (of which

they themselves were ashamed), they did not find their account in

endeavouring to reproach me with those misfortunes which they and their

relations had brought upon me; and which consequently reflected much

more dishonour on themselves than on me, who was the innocent victim of

their barbarity and avarice.

Finding this plan miscarry, they found means to irritate a young

gentleman against me, by telling him I had lampooned his mistress; and

so effectually succeeded in the quality of incendiaries that this

enraged lover determined to seize me next night as I returned to my

lodgings from a friend’s house that I frequented: with this view, he

waited in the street, attended by two of his companions, to whom he had

imparted his design of carrying me down to the river, in which proposed

to have me heartily ducked, notwithstanding the severity of the

weather, it being then about the middle of December. But this stratagem

did not succeed; for, being apprised of their ambush, I got home

another way, and by the help of my landlord’s apprentice, discharged a

volley from the garret window, which did great execution upon them, and

next day occasioned so much mirth at their expense that they found

themselves under a necessity of leaving the town, until the adventure

should be entirely forgotten.

My cousins (though twice baffled in their expectation) did not,

however, desist from persecuting me, who had now enraged them beyond a

possibility of forgiveness by detecting their malice and preventing its

effects: neither should I have found them more humane, had I patiently

submitted to their rancour, and borne without murmuring the rigour of

their unreasonable hate; for I have found by experience, that though

small favours may be acknowledged and slight injuries atoned, there is

no wretch so ungrateful as he whom you have most generously obliged,

and no enemy so implacable as those who have done you the greatest

wrong. These good-natured creatures, therefore, had recourse to a

scheme which conspired with a piece of bad news I soon after received,

to give them all the satisfaction they desired: this plan was to

debauch the faith of my companion and confidant, who betrayed the trust

I reposed in him, by imparting to them the particulars of my small

amours, which they published with such exaggerations that I suffered

very much in the opinion of everybody, and was utterly discarded by the

dear creatures whose names had been called in question.

While I was busy in tracing out the author of this treachery, that I

might not only be revenged on him, but also vindicate my character to

my friends, I one day perceived the looks of my landlady much altered,

when I went home to my dinner, and inquiring into the cause, she

screwed up her mouth, and fixed her eyes on the ground, told me her

husband had received a letter from Mr. Bowling, with one inclosed for

me. She was very sorry for what had happened, both for my sake and his

own—people should be more cautious of their conduct—she was always

afraid his brutal behaviour would bring him into some misfortune or

other. As for her part, she should be very ready to befriend me; but

she had a small family of her own to maintain. The world would do

nothing for her if she should come to want—charity begins at home: she

wished I had been bound to some substantial handicraft, such as a

weaver or a shoemaker, rather than loiter away my time in learning

foolish nonsense, that would never bring me in a penny but some folks

are wise, and some are otherwise.

I was listening to this mysterious discourse with great amazement, when

her husband entered, and, without speaking a syllable, put both the

letters into my hand. I received them trembling, and read what follows:

‘To Mr. Roger Potion

‘Sir,

‘This is to let you know that I have quitted the Thunder man of

war, being obliged to sheer off for killing my captain, which I did

fairly on the beach, at Cape Tiberoon, in the Island of Hispaniola;

having received his fire and returned it, which went through his

body: and I would serve the best man so that ever stepped between

stem and stern, if so be that he struck me, as Captain Oakum did. I

am (thank God) safe among the French, who are very civil, though I

don’t understand their lingo; and I hope to be restored in a little

time, for all the great friends and parliamentary interest of the

captain, for I have sent over to my landlord in Deal an account of

the whole affair, with our bearings and distances while we were

engaged, whereby I have desired him to lay it before his majesty,

who (God bless him) will not suffer an honest tar to be wronged. My

love to your spouse, and am

‘Your loving friend and servant to command, while

‘Thomas Bowling,’

‘To Roderick Random

‘Dear Rory,

‘Don’t be grieved at my misfortune, but mind your book, my lad. I

have got no money to send you, but what of that? Mr. Potion will

take care of you for the love he bears to me, and let you want for

nothing; and it shall go hard but I will see him one day repaid. No

more at present, but rests

‘Your dutiful uncle and servant, till death,

‘Thomas Bowling.’

This letter (which, with the other, was dated from Port Louis, in

Hispaniola) I had no sooner read than the apothecary, shaking his head,

began: “I have a very great regard for Mr. Bowling that’s certain; and

could be well content—but times are very hard. There’s no such thing as

money to be got; I believe ’tis all vanished under ground, for my part.

Besides, I have been out of pocket already, having entertained you

since the beginning of this month, without receiving a sixpence, and

God knows if ever I shall; for I believe it will go hard with your

uncle. And more than that, I was thinking of giving you warning, for I

want your apartment for a new prentice, whom I expect from the country

every hour. So I desire you will this week provide yourself with

another lodging.”

The indignation which this harangue inspired gave me spirits to support

my reverse of fortune, and to tell him I despised his mean selfish

disposition so much that I would rather starve than be beholden to him

for one single meal. Upon which, out of my pocket money, I paid him to

the last farthing of what I owed, and assured him, I would not sleep

another night under his roof.

This said, I sallied out in a transport of rage and sorrow, without

knowing whither to fly for shelter, having not one friend in the world

capable of relieving me, and only three shillings in my purse. After

giving way for a few minutes to the dictates of my rage, I went and

hired a small bedroom, at the rate of one shilling and sixpence per

week, which I was obliged to pay per advance, before the landlord would

receive me: thither I removed my luggage; and next morning got up, with

a view of craving the advice and assistance of a person who had on all

occasions loaded me with caresses and made frequent offers of

friendship, while I was under no necessity of accepting them. He

received me with his wonted affability, and insisted on my breakfasting

with him, a favour which I did not think fit to refuse. But when I

communicated the occasion of my visit, he appeared so disconcerted that

I concluded him wonderfully affected with the misery of my condition

and looked upon him as a man of the most extensive sympathy and

benevolence. He did not leave me long under this mistake; for,

recovering himself from his confusion, he told me he was grieved at my

misfortune, and desired to know what had passed between my landlord,

Mr. Potion, and me. Whereupon I recounted the conversation; and, when I

repeated the answer I made to his ungenerous remonstrance with regard

to my leaving his house, this pretended friend affected a stare, and

exclaimed, “Is it possible you could behave so ill to the man who had

treated you so kindly all along?”

My surprise at hearing this was not at all affected, whatever his might

be; and I gave to understand with some warmth, that I did not imagine

he would so unreasonably espouse the cause of a scoundrel who ought to

be expelled from every social community. This heat of mine gave him all

the advantage he desired over me, and our discourse, after much

altercation, concluded in his desiring never to see me again in that

place; to which desire I yielded my consent, assuring him, that, had I

been as well acquainted with his principles formerly as I was now, he

never should have had an opportunity of making that request. And thus

we parted.

On my return, I met my comrade, Squire Gawky, whom his father had sent,

some time ago, to town, for his improvement in writing, dancing,

fencing, and other modish qualifications. As I had lived with him since

his arrival on the footing of our old intimacy, I made no scruple of

informing him of the lowness of my circumstances, and asking a small

supply of money, to answer my present expense; upon which he pulled out

a handful of halfpence with a shilling or two among them, and swore

that was all he had to keep his pocket till next quarter-day he having

lost the greatest part of his allowance the night before at billiards.

Though this assertion might very well be true, I was extremely

mortified at his indifference: for he neither expressed any sympathy

for my mishap nor desire of alleviating my distress; and accordingly I

left him without uttering one word: but, when I afterwards understood

that he was the person who had formerly betrayed me to the malice of my

cousins, to whom likewise he had carried the tidings of my forlorn

situation, which afforded them great matter of triumph and exultation,

I determined with myself to call him to a severe account for which

purpose I borrowed a sword, and wrote a challenge, desiring him to meet

me at a certain time and place, that I might have an opportunity of

punishing his perfidy, at the expense of his blood. He accepted the

invitation, and I betook myself to the field, though not without

feeling considerable repugnance to the combat, which frequently

attacked me in cold sweats by the way; but the desire of revenge, the

shame of retracting, and hope of conquest, conspired to repel these

unmanly symptoms of fear; and I appeared on the plain with a good

grace: there I waited an hour beyond the time appointed, and was not

ill pleased to find he had no mind to meet me, because I should have an

opportunity of exposing his cowardice, displaying my own courage, and

of beating him soundly wheresoever I should find, without any dread of

the consequence.

Elevated with these suggestions, which entirely banished all thoughts

of my deplorable condition, I went directly to Gawky’s lodgings, where

I was informed of his precipitate retreat, he having set out for the

country in less than an hour after he had received my billet; and I was

vain enough to have the whole story inserted in the news, although I

was fain to sell a gold laced hat to my landlord for less than

half-price, to defray the expenses and contribute to my subsistence.

CHAPTER VII

I am entertained by Mr. Crab—a description of him—I acquire the Art of

Surgery—consult Crab’s Disposition—become necessary to him—an Accident

happens—he advises me to launch out into the world—assists me with

Money—I set out for London

The fumes of my resentment being dissipated, as well as the vanity of

my success, I found myself deserted to all the horrors of extreme want,

and avoided by mankind as a creature of a different species, or rather

as a solitary being, noways comprehended within the scheme or

protection of Providence. My despair had rendered me almost quite

stupified, when I was one day told, that a gentleman desired to see me

at a certain public-house, whither immediately I repaired; and was

introduced to one Mr. Launcelot Crab, a surgeon in town, who was

engaged with two more in drinking a liquor called pop-in, composed by

mixing a quartern of brandy with a quart of small beer. Before I relate

the occasion of this message, I believe it will not be disagreeable to

the reader, if I describe the gentleman who sent for me, and mention

some circumstances of his character and conduct which may illustrate

what follows, and account for his behaviour to me.

This member of the faculty was aged fifty, about five feet high, and

ten round the belly; his face was as capacious as a full moon, and much

of the complexion of a mulberry: his nose, resembling a powder-horn,

was swelled to an enormous size, and studded all over with carbuncles;

and his little gray eyes reflected the rays in such an oblique manner

that, while he looked a person full in the face, one would have

imagined he was admiring the buckle of his shoe. He had long

entertained an implacable resentment against Potion, who, though a

younger practitioner, was better employed than he, and once had the

assurance to perform a cure, whereby he disappointed and disgraced the

prognostic of the said Crab. This quarrel which was at one time upon

the point of being made up, by the interposition and mediation of

friends, had been lately inflamed beyond a possibility of

reconciliation by the respective wives of the opponents, who, chancing

to meet at a christening, disagreed about precedence, proceeded from

invectives to blows, and were with great difficulty, by the gossips,

prevented from converting the occasion of joy into a scene of

lamentation.

The difference between these rivals was in the height of rancour, when

I received the message of Crab, who received me as civilly as I could

have expected from one of his disposition; and, after desiring me to

sit, inquired into the particulars of my leaving the house of Potion;

which when I had related, he said, with a malicious grin, “There’s a

sneaking dog! I always thought him a fellow without a soul, d—n me, a

canting scoundrel, who has crept into business by his hypocrisy, and

kissing the a—e of every body.”—“Ay, ay,” says another, “one might see

with half an eye that the rascal has no honesty in him, by his going so

regularly to church.”

This sentence was confirmed by a third, who assured his companions that

Potion was never known to be disguised in liquor but once, at a meeting

of the godly, where he had distinguished himself by an extempore prayer

an hour long. After this preamble, Crab addressed himself to me in

these words: “Well, my lad, I have heard a good character of you, and

I’ll do for you. You may send your things to my house when you please.

I have given orders for your reception. Zounds! What does the booby

stare at? If you have no mind to embrace my courteous offer, you may

let it alone, and be d—d.” I answered with a submissive bow, that I was

far from rejecting his friendly offer, which I would immediately

accept, as soon as he should inform me on what footing I was to be

entertained. “What footing! D—n my blood,” cried he, “d’ye expect to

have a footman and a couple of horses kept for you?” “No, sir,” I

replied, “my expectations are not quite so sanguine. That I may be as

little burthensome as possible, I would willingly serve in your shop,

by which means I may save you the expense of a journeyman, or porter at

least, for I understand a little pharmacy, having employed some of my

leisure hours in the practice of that art, while I lived with Mr.

Potion; neither am I altogether ignorant of surgery, which I have

studied with great pleasure and application.”—“Oho! you did,” says

Crab. “Gentlemen, here is a complete artist! Studied surgery! What? in

books, I suppose. I shall have you disputing with me one of these days

on points of my profession. You can already account for muscular

motion, I warrant, and explain the mystery of the brain and nerves—ha!

You are too learned for me, d—n me. But let’s have no more of this

stuff. Can you blood and give a clyster, spread a plaster, and prepare

a potion?” Upon my answering in the affirmative, he shock his head,

telling me, he believed he should have little good of me, for all my

promises; but, however, he would take me in for the sake of charity. I

was accordingly that very night admitted to his house, and had an

apartment assigned to me in the garret, which I was fain to put up

with, notwithstanding the mortification my pride suffered in this

change of circumstances.

I was soon convinced of the real motives which induced Crab to receive

me in this manner; for, besides the gratification of his revenge, by

exposing the selfishness of his antagonist, in opposition to his own

generosity, which was all affectation, he had occasion for a young man

who understood something of the profession, to fill up the place of his

eldest apprentice, lately dead, not without violent suspicion of foul

play from his master’s brutality. The knowledge of this circumstance,

together with his daily behaviour to his wife and the young apprentice,

did not at all contribute to my enjoying my new situation with ease;

however, as I did not perceive how I could bestow myself to better

advantage, I resolved to study Crab’s temper with all the application,

and manage it with all the address in my power. And it was not long

before I found out a strange peculiarity of humour which governed his

behaviour towards all his dependents. I observed, when he was pleased,

he was such a niggard of his satisfaction that, if his wife or servants

betrayed the least symptom of participation, he was offended to an

insupportable degree of choler and fury, the effects of which they

seldom failed to feel. And when his indignation was roused, submission

and soothing always exasperated it beyond the bounds of reason and

humanity. I therefore pursued a contrary plan; and one day, when he

honoured me with the names of ignorant whelp and lazy ragamuffin, I

boldly replied, I was neither ignorant nor lazy, since I both

understood and performed my business as well as he could do for his

soul; neither was it just to call me ragamuffin, for I had a whole coat

on my back, and was descended from a better family than any he could

boast an alliance with.

He gave tokens of great amazement at this assurance of mine, and shook

his cane over my head, regarding me all the time with a countenance

truly diabolical. Although I was terribly startled at his menacing

looks and posture, I yet had reflection enough left to convince me I

had gone too far to retract, and that this was the critical minute

which must decide my future lot in his service; I therefore snatched up

the pestle of a mortar, and swore, if he offered to strike me without a

cause, I should see whether his skull or my weapon was hardest.

He continued silent for some time, and at last broke forth into these

ejaculations: “This is fine usage from a servant to his master—very

fine! damnation! but no matter, you shall pay for this, you dog, you

shall; I’ll do your business—yes, yes, I’ll teach you to lift your hand

against me.” So saying, he retired, and left me under dreadful

apprehensions, which vanished entirely at our next meeting, when he

behaved with unusual complacency, and treated me with a glass of punch

after dinner.

By this conduct I got the ascendancy over him in a short time, and

became so necessary to him, in managing his business while he was

engaged at the bottle, that fortune began to wear a kinder aspect; and

I consoled myself for the disregard of my former acquaintance, with the

knowledge I daily imbibed by a close application to the duties of my

employment, in which I succeeded beyond my own expectation. I was on

very good terms with my master’s wife, whose esteem I acquired and

cultivated, by representing Mrs. Potion in the most ridiculous lights

my satirical talents could invent, as well as by rendering her some

Christian offices, when she had been too familiar with the dram bottle,

to which she had oftentimes recourse for consolation, under the

affliction she suffered from a barbarous husband.

In this manner I lived, without hearing the least tidings of my uncle

for the space of two years, during which time I kept little or no

company, being neither in a humour to relish nor in a capacity to

maintain much acquaintance; for the Nabal my master allowed me no

wages, and the small perquisites of my station scarcely supplied me

with the common necessaries of life. I was no longer a pert unthinking

coxcomb, giddy with popular applause, and elevated with the

extravagance of hope: my misfortunes had taught me how little the

caresses of the world, during a man’s prosperity, are to be valued by

him; and how seriously and expeditiously he ought to set about making

himself independent of them. My present appearance, therefore, was the

least of my care, which was wholly engrossed in laying up a stock of

instruction that might secure me against the caprice of fortune for the

future. I became such a sloven, and contracted such an air of

austerity, that everybody pronounced me crestfallen; and Gawky returned

to town without running any risk from my resentment, which was by this

time pretty much cooled, and restrained by prudential reasons so

effectually that I never so much as thought of obtaining satisfaction

for the injuries he had done me.

When I deemed myself sufficiently master of my business I began to cast

about for an opportunity of launching into the world, in hope of

finding some provision that might make amends for the difficulties I

had undergone; but, as this could not be effected without a small sum

of money to equip me for the field, I was in the utmost perplexity how

to raise it, well knowing that Crab, for his own sake, would never put

me in a condition to leave him, when his interest was so much concerned

in my stay. But a small accident, which happened about this time,

determined him in my favour. This was no other than the pregnancy of

his maidservant, who declared her situation to me, assuring me at the

same time that I was the occasion of it.

Although I had no reason to question the truth of this imputation, I

was not ignorant of the familiarities which had passed between her

master and her, taking the advantage of which I represented to her the

folly of laying the burden at my door, when she might dispose of it to

much better purpose with Mr. Crab. She listened to my advice, and next

day acquainted him with the pretended success of their mutual

endeavours. He was far from being overjoyed at this proof of his

vigour, which he foresaw might have very troublesome consequences; not

that he dreaded any domestic grumblings and reproaches from his wife,

whom he kept in perfect subjection; but because he knew it would

furnish his rival Potion with a handle for insulting and undermining

his reputation, there being no scandal equal to that of uncleanness, in

the opinion of those who inhabit the part of the island where he lived.

He therefore took a resolution worthy of himself, which was, to

persuade the girl that she was not with child, but only afflicted with

a disorder incidental to young women, which he could easily remove:

with this view (as he pretended) he prescribed for her such medicines

as he thought would infallibly procure abortion; but in this scheme he

was disappointed, for the maid, being advertised by me of his design,

and at the same time well acquainted with her own condition, absolutely

refused to follow his directions; and threatened to publish her

situation to the world if he would not immediately take some method of

providing for the important occasion, which she expected in a few

months. It was not long before I guessed the result of his

deliberation, by his addressing himself to me one day in this manner:

“I am surprised that a young fellow like you discovers no inclination

to push his fortune in the world. Before I was of your age I was

broiling on the coast of Guinea. D—e! what’s to hinder you from

profiting by the war which will certainly be declared in a short time

against Spain? You may easily get on board of a king’s ship in quality

of surgeon’s mate, where you will certainly see a great deal of

practice, and stand a good chance of getting prize-money.”

I laid hold of this declaration, which I had long wished for, and

assured him I would follow his advice with pleasure, if it were in my

power; but that it was impossible for me to embrace an opportunity of

that kind, as I had no friend to advance a little money to supply me

with what necessaries I should want, and defray the expenses of my

journey to London. He told me that few necessaries were required; and,

as for the expense of my journey, he would lend me money, sufficient

not only for that purpose, but also to maintain me comfortably in

London until I should procure a warrant for my provision on board of

some ship.

I gave him a thousand thanks for his obliging offer (although I was

very well apprised of his motive, which was no other than a design to

lay the bastard to my charge after my departure), and accordingly set

out in a few weeks for London; my whole fortune consisting of one suit

of clothes, half a dozen ruffled shirts, as many plain, two pair of

worsted and a like number of threaded stockings; a case of pocket

instruments, a small edition of Horace, Wiseman’s Surgery, and ten

guineas in cash; for which Crab took my bond, bearing five per cent

interest; at the same time giving me a letter to a member of parliament

for our town, which he said would do my business effectually.

CHAPTER VIII

I arrive at Newcastle—meet with my old Schoolfellow Strap—we determine

to walk together to London—set out on our Journey—put up at a solitary

Alehouse—are disturbed by a strange Adventure in the Night

There is no such convenience as a waggon in this country, and my

finances were too weak to support the expense of hiring a horse: I

determined therefore to set out with the carriers, who transport goods

from one place to another on horseback; and this scheme I accordingly

put in execution on the 1st day of September, 1739, sitting upon a

pack-saddle between two baskets, one of which contained my goods in a

knapsack. But by the time we arrived at Newcastle-upon-Tyne I was so

fatigued with the tediousness of the carriage, and benumbed with the

coldness of the weather, that I resolved to travel the rest of my

journey on foot, rather than proceed in such a disagreeable manner.

The ostler of the inn at which we put up, understanding I was bound for

London, advised me to take my passage in a collier which would be both

cheap and expeditious and withal much easier than to walk upwards of

three hundred miles through deep roads in the winter time, a journey

which he believed I had not strength enough to perform. I was almost

persuaded to take his advice, when one day, stepping into a barber’s

shop to be shaved, the young man, while he lathered my face, accosted

me thus: “Sir, I presume you are a Scotchman.” I answered in the

affirmative. “Pray,” continued he, “from what part of Scotland?” I no

sooner told him, than he discovered great emotion, and not confining

his operation to my chin and upper lip, besmeared my whole face with

great agitation. I was so offended at this profusion that starting up,

I asked him what the d—l he meant by using me so? He begged pardon,

telling me his joy at meeting with a countryman had occasioned some

confusion in him, and craved my name. But, when I declared my name was

Random, he exclaimed in rapture, “How! Rory Random?” “The same,” I

replied, looking at him with astonishment. “What!” cried he, “don’t you

know your old schoolfellow, Hugh Strap?”

At that instant recollecting his face, I flew into his arms, and in the

transport of my joy, gave him back one-half of the suds he had so

lavishly bestowed on my countenance; so that we made a very ludicrous

appearance, and furnished a great deal of mirth for his master and

shopmates, who were witnesses of this scene. When our mutual caresses

were over I sat down again to be shaved, but the poor fellow’s nerves

were so discomposed by this unexpected meeting that his hand could

scarcely hold the razor, with which, nevertheless, he found means to

cut me in three places in as many strokes. His master, perceiving his

disorder, bade another supply his place, and after the operation was

performed, gave Strap leave to pass the rest of the day with me.

We retired immediately to my lodgings, where, calling for some beer, I

desired to be informed of his adventures, which contained nothing more

than that his master dying before his time was out, he had come to

Newcastle about a year ago, in expectation of journeywork, along with

three young fellows of his acquaintance who worked in the keels; that

he had the good fortune of being employed by a very civil master, with

whom he intended to stay till the spring, at which time he proposed to

go to London, where he did not doubt of finding encouragement. When I

communicated to him my situation and design, he did not approve of my

taking a passage by sea, by reason of the danger of a winter voyage,

which is very hazardous along that coast, as well as the precariousness

of the wind, which might possibly detain me a great while, to the no

small detriment of my fortune; whereas, if I would venture by land, he

would bear me company, carry my baggage all the way, and if we should

be fatigued before we could perform the journey it would be no hard

matter for us to find on the road either return horses or waggons, of

which we might take the advantage for a very trifling expense.

I was so ravished at this proposal that I embraced him affectionately,

and assured him he might command my purse to the last farthing; but he

gave me to understand he had saved money sufficient to answer his own

occasions; and that he had a friend in London who would soon introduce

him into business in that capital, and possibly have it in his power to

serve me also.

Having concerted the plan and settled our affairs that night, we

departed next morning by daybreak, armed with a good cudgel each (my

companion being charged with the furniture of us both crammed into one

knapsack), and our money sewed between the linings and waistbands of

our breeches, except some loose silver for our immediate expenses on

the road, We travelled all day at a round pace, but, being ignorant of

the proper stages, were benighted at a good distance from any inn, so

that we were compelled to take up our lodging at a small hedge

alehouse, that stood on a byroad, about half-a-mile from the highway:

there we found a pedlar of our own country, in whose company we regaled

ourselves with bacon and eggs, and a glass of good ale, before a

comfortable fire, conversing all the while very sociably with the

landlord and his daughter, a hale buxom lass, who entertained us with

great good humour, and in whose affection I was vain enough to believe

I had made some progress. About eight o’clock we were all three, at our

own desire, shown into an apartment furnished with two beds, in one of

which Strap and I betook ourselves to rest, and the pedlar occupied the

other, though not before he had prayed a considerable time extempore,

searched into every corner of the room, and fastened the door on the

inside with a strong iron screw, which he carried about with him for

that use.

I slept very sound till midnight when I was disturbed by a violent

motion of the bed, which shook under me with a continual tremor.

Alarmed at this phenomenon, I jogged my companion, whom, to my no small

amazement, I found drenched in sweat, and quaking through every limb;

he told me, with a low faltering voice, that we were undone; for there

was a bloody highwayman, loaded with pistols, in the next room; then,

bidding me make as little noise as possible, he directed me to a small

chink in the board partition through which I could see a thick-set

brawny fellow, with a fierce countenance, sitting at a table with our

young landlady, having a bottle of ale and a brace of pistols before

him.

I listened with great attention, and heard him say, in a terrible tone,

“D—n that son of a b—h, Smack the coachman; he has served me a fine

trick, indeed! but d—ion seize me, if I don’t make him repent it! I’ll

teach the scoundrel to give intelligence to others while he is under

articles with me.”

Our landlady endeavoured to appease this exasperated robber, by saying

he might be mistaken in Smack, who perhaps kept no correspondence with

the other gentleman that robbed his coach; and that, if an accident had

disappointed him to-day, he might soon find opportunities enough to

atone for his lost trouble. “I’ll tell thee what, my dear Bet,” replied

he, “I never had, nor ever shall, while my name is Rifle, have such a

glorious booty as I missed to-day. Z—s! there was £400 in cash to

recruit men for the king’s service, besides the jewels, watches,

swords, and money belonging to the passengers. Had it been my fortune

to have got clear off with so much treasure, I would have purchased a

commission in the army, and made you an officer’s lady, you jade, I

would.” “Well, well,” cries Betty, “we must trust to Providence for

that. But did you find nothing worth taking which escaped the other

gentlemen of the road?” “Not much, faith,” said the lover; “I gleaned a

few things, such as a pair of pops, silver mounted (here they are): I

took them loaded from the captain who had the charge of the money,

together with a gold watch which he had concealed in his breeches. I

likewise found ten Portugal pieces in the shoes of a quaker, whom the

spirit moved to revile me with great bitterness and devotion; but what

I value myself mostly for is, this here purchase, a gold snuffbox, my

girl, with a picture on the inside of the lid; which I untied out of

the tail of a pretty lady’s smock.”

Here, as the devil would have it, the pedlar snored so loud, that the

highwayman, snatching his pistols, started up, crying, “Hell and d-n-n!

I am betrayed! Who’s that in the next room?” Mrs. Betty told him he

need not be uneasy: there were only three poor travellers, who, missing

the road, had taken up their lodgings in the house, and were asleep

long ago. “Travellers,” says he, “spies, you b—ch! But no matter; I’ll

send them all to hell in an instant!” He accordingly ran towards our

door; when his sweetheart interposing, assured him, there was only a

couple of poor young Scotchmen, who were too raw and ignorant to give

him the least cause of suspicion; and the third was a presbyterian

pedlar of the same nation, who had often lodged in the house before.

This declaration satisfied the thief, who swore he was glad there was a

pedlar, for he wanted some linen. Then, in a jovial manner, he put

about the glass, mingling his discourse to Betty with caresses and

familiarities, that spoke him very happy in his amours. During that

part of the conversation which regarded this, Strap had crept under the

bed, where he lay in the agonies of fear; so that it was with great

difficulty I persuaded him our danger was over, and prevailed on him to

awake the pedlar, and inform him of what he had seen and heard.

The itinerant merchant no sooner felt somebody shaking him by the

shoulder, than he started up, called, as loud as he could, “Thieves,

thieves! Lord have mercy upon us!” And Rifle, alarmed at this

exclamation, jumped up, cocked one of his pistols, and turned towards

the door to kill the first man that should enter; for he verily

believed himself beset: when his Dulcinea, after an immoderate fit of

laughter, persuaded him that the poor pedlar, dreaming of thieves, had

only cried out in his sleep.

Meanwhile, my comrade had undeceived our fellow-lodger, and informed

him of his reason for disturbing him; upon which, getting up softly, he

peeped through the hole, and was so terrified with what he saw, that,

falling down on his bare knees, he put up a long petition to Heaven to

deliver him from the hands of that ruffian, and promised never to

defraud a customer for the future of the value of a pin’s point,

provided he might be rescued from the present danger. Whether or not

his disburthening his conscience afforded him any ease I knew not, but

he slipped into bed again, and lay very quiet until the robber and his

mistress were asleep, and snored in concert; then, rising softly, he

untied a rope that was round his pack, which making fast to one end of

it, he opened the window with as little noise as possible, and lowered

his goods into the yard with great dexterity: then he moved gently to

our bedside and bade us farewell, telling us that, as we ran no risk we

might take our rest with great confidence, and in the morning assure

the landlord that we knew nothing of his escape, and, lastly, shaking

us by the hands, and wishing us all manner of success, he let himself

drop from the window without any danger, for the ground was not above a

yard from his feet as he hung on the outside.

Although I did not think proper to accompany him in his flight, I was

not at all free from apprehension when I reflected on what might be the

effect of the highwayman’s disappointment; as he certainly intended to

make free with the pedlar’s ware. Neither was my companion at more ease

in his mind, but on the contrary, so possessed with the dreadful idea

of Rifle, that he solicited me strongly to follow our countryman’s

example, and so elude the fatal resentment of that terrible adventurer,

who would certainly wreak his vengeance on us as accomplices of the

pedlar’s elopement. But I represented to him the danger of giving Rifle

cause to think we know his profession, and suggested that, if ever he

should meet us again on the road, he would look upon us as dangerous

acquaintance, and find it his interest to put us out of the way. I told

him, withal, my confidence in Betty’s good nature, in which he

acquiesced; and during the remaining part of the night we concerted a

proper method of behaviour, to render us unsuspected in the morning.

It was no sooner day than Betty, entering our chamber, and perceiving

our window open, cried out, “Odds-bobs! sure you Scotchmen must have

hot constitutions to lie all night with the window open in such cold

weather.” I feigned to start out of sleep, and, withdrawing the

curtain, called, “What’s the matter?” When she showed me, I affected

surprise, and said, “Bless me! the window was shut when we went to

bed.” “I’ll be hanged,” said she, “if Sawney Waddle, the pedlar, has

not got up in a dream and done it, for I heard him very obstropulous in

his sleep.—Sure I put a chamberpot under his bed!”

With these words she advanced to the bed, in which he lay, and, finding

the sheets cold, exclaimed, “Good lackadaisy! The rogue is fled.”

“Fled,” cried I, with feigned amazement, “God forbid! Sure he has not

robbed us!” Then, springing up, I laid hold of my breeches, and emptied

all my loose money into my hand; which having reckoned, I said, “Heaven

be praised, our money is all safe! Strap, look to the knapsack.” He did

so, and found all was right. Upon which we asked, with seeming concern,

if he had stolen nothing belonging to the house. “No, no,” replied she,

“he has stole nothing but his reckoning;” which, it seems, this pious

pedlar had forgot to discharge in the midst of his devotion.

Betty, after a moment’s pause withdrew, and immediately we could hear

her waken Rifle, who no sooner heard of Waddle’s flight than he jumped

out of bed and dressed, venting a thousand execrations, and vowing to

murder the pedlar if ever he should set eyes on him again: “For,” said

he “the scoundrel has by this time raised the hue and cry against me.”

Having dressed himself in a hurry, he mounted his horse, and for that

time rid us of his company and a thousand fears that were the

consequence of it.

While we were at breakfast, Betty endeavoured, by all the cunning she

was mistress of, to learn whether or no we suspected our fellow-lodger,

whom we saw take horse; but, as we were on our guard, we answered her

sly questions with a simplicity she could not distrust; when, all of a

sudden, we heard the trampling of a horse’s feet at the door. This

noise alarmed Strap so much, whose imagination was wholly engrossed by

the image of Rifle, that, with a countenance as pale as milk, he cried,

“O Lord! there is the highwayman returned!”

Our landlady, staring at these words, said, “What highwayman, young

man? Do you think any highwaymen harbour here?”

Though I was very much disconcerted at this piece of indiscretion in

Strap, I had presence of mind enough to tell her we had met a horseman

the day before, whom Strap had foolishly supposed to be a highwayman,

because he rode with pistols; and that he had been terrified at the

sound of a horse’s feet ever since.

She forced a smile at the ignorance and timidity of my comrade; but I

could perceive, not without great concern, that this account was not at

all satisfactory to her.

CHAPTER IX

We proceed on our Journey—are overtaken by a Highwayman who fires at

Strap—is prevented from shooting me by a Company of Horsemen, who ride

in pursuit of him—Strap is put to Bed at an Inn—Adventures at that Inn

After having paid our score and taken leave of our hostess, who

embraced me tenderly at parting, we proceeded on our journey, blessing

ourselves that we had come off so well. We had not walked above five

miles, when we observed a man on horseback galloping after us, whom we

in a short time recognised to be no other than this formidable hero who

had already given us so much vexation. He stopped hard by me, and asked

if I knew who he was? My astonishment had disconcerted me so much that

I did not hear his question, which he repeated with a volley of oaths

and threats; but I remained as mute as before.

Strap, seeing my discomposure, fell upon his knees in the mud,

uttering, with a lamentable voice, these words: “For Christ’s sake,

have mercy upon us, Mr. Rifle! we know you very well.” “Oho!” cried the

thief, “you do! But you never shall be evidence against me in this

world, you dog!” So saying, he drew a pistol, and fired it at the

unfortunate shaver, who fell flat upon the ground without speaking one

word.

My comrade’s fate and my own situation riveted me to the place where I

stood, deprived of all sense and reflection; so that I did not make the

least attempt either to run away or deprecate the wrath of this

barbarian, who snapped a second pistol at me; but, before he had time

to prime again, perceiving a company of horsemen coming up, he rode

off, and left me standing motionless as a statue, in which posture I

was found by those whose appearance had saved my life. This company

consisted of three men in livery, well armed, with an officer, who (as

I afterwards learned,) was the person from whom Rifle had taken the

pocket pistols the day before; and who, making known his misfortune to

a nobleman he met on the road, and assuring him his non-resistance was

altogether owing to his consideration for the ladies in the coach,

procured the assistance of his lordship’s servants to go in quest of

the plunderer. This holiday captain scampered up to me with great

address, and asked who fired the pistol which he had heard.

As I had not yet recovered my reason, he, before I could answer,

observed a body lying on the ground, at which sight his colour changed,

and he pronounced, with a faltering tongue, “Gentlemen, here’s murder

committed! Let us alight.” “No, no,” said one of his followers, “let us

rather pursue the murderer. Which way went he, young man?”

By this time I had recollected myself so far as to tell them that he

could not be a quarter of a mile before; and to beg one of them to

assist me in conveying the corpse of my friend to the next house, in

order to it being interred. The captain, foreseeing that, in case he

should pursue, he must soon come to action, began to curb his horse,

and gave him the spur at the same time, which treatment making the

creature rear up and snort, he called out, his horse was frightened,

and would not proceed; at the same time wheeling him round and round,

stroking his neck, whistling and wheedling him with “Sirrah,

sirrah—gently, gently.” etc. “Z—ds!”, cried one of the servants, “sure

my lord’s Sorrel is not resty!”

With these words he bestowed a lash on his buttocks, and Sorrel,

disdaining the rein sprang forward with the captain at a pace that

would have soon brought him up with the robber, had not the girth

(happily for him) given way, by which means he landed in the dirt; and

two of his attendants continued their pursuit, without minding his

situation. Meanwhile one of the three who remained at my desire,

turning the body of Strap, in order to see the wound which had killed

him, found him still warm and breathing: upon which, I immediately let

him blood, and saw him, with inexpressible joy, recover; he having

received no other wound than what his fear had inflicted. Having raised

him upon his legs, we walked together to an inn, about half a mile from

the place, where Strap, who was not quite recovered, went to bed; and

in a little time the third servant returned with the captain’s horse

and furniture, leaving him to crawl after as well as he could.

This gentleman of the sword, upon his arrival, complained grievously of

the bruise occasioned by his fall; and, on the recommendation of the

servant, who warranted my ability, I was employed to bleed him, for

which service he rewarded me with half-a-crown.

The time between this event and dinner I passed in observing a game at

cards between two farmers, an exciseman, and a young fellow in a rusty

gown and cassock, who, as I afterwards understood, was curate of a

neighbouring parish. It was easy to perceive that the match was not

equal; and that the two farmers, who were partners, had to do with a

couple of sharpers, who stripped them of all their cash in a very short

time. But what surprised me very much, was to hear this clergyman reply

to one of the countrymen, who seemed to suspect foul play, in these

words: “D—n me, friend, d’ye question my honour?”

I did not at all wonder to find a cheat in canonicals, this being a

character frequent in my own country; but I was scandalised at the

indecency of his behaviour, which appeared in the oaths he swore, and

the bawdy songs which he sung. At last, to make amends in some sort,

for the damage he had done to the unwary boors, he pulled out a fiddle

from the lining of his gown, and, promising to treat them at dinner,

began to play most melodiously, singing in concert all the while. This

good humour of this parson inspired the company with so much glee that

the farmers soon forgot their losses, and all present went to dancing

in the yard.

While we were agreeably amused in this manner, our musician, spying a

horseman a riding towards the inn, stopped all of a sudden, crying out,

“Gad so! gentlemen, I beg your pardon, there’s our dog of a doctor

coming into the inn.” He immediately commended his instrument, and ran

towards the gate, where he took hold of the vicar’s bridle, and helped

him off, inquiring very cordially into the state of his health.

This rosy son of the church, who might be about the age of fifty,

having alighted and entrusted the curate with his horse, stalked with

great solemnity, into the kitchen, where sitting down by the fire, he

called for a bottle of ale and a pipe; scarce deigning an answer to the

submissive questions of those who inquired about the welfare of his

family. While he indulged himself in this state, amidst a profound

silence, the curate, approaching him with great reverence, asked him if

he would not be pleased to honour him with his company at dinner? To

which interrogation he answered in the negative, saying, he had been to

visit Squire Bumpkin, who had drank himself into a high fever at the

last assizes; and that he had, on leaving his own house, told Betty he

should dine at home. Accordingly when he had made an end of his bottle

and pipe, he rose, and moved with prelatical dignity to the door, where

his journeyman stood ready with his nag. He had no sooner mounted than

the facetious curate, coming into the kitchen, held forth in this

manner: “There the old rascal goes, and the d—l go with him. You see

how the world wags, gentlemen. By gad, this rogue of a vicar does not

deserve to live; and yet he has two livings worth four hundred pounds

per annum, while poor I am fain to do all his drudgery, and ride twenty

miles every Sunday to preach—for what? why, truly, for twenty pounds a

year. I scorn to boast of my own qualifications but—comparisons are

odious. I should be glad to know how this wag-bellied doctor deserves

to be more at ease than me. He can loll in his elbow chair at home,

indulge himself in the best of victuals and wine and enjoy the

conversation of Betty, his housekeeper. You understand me, gentlemen.

Betty is the doctor’s poor kinswoman, and a pretty girl she is; but no

matter for that; ay, and dutiful girl to her parents, whom she visits

regularly every year, though I must own I could never learn in what

county they live, My service t’ye, gentlemen.”

By this time dinner being ready, I waked my companion, and we ate

altogether with great cheerfulness. When our meal was ended, and every

man’s share of the reckoning adjusted, the curate went out on pretence

of some necessary occasion, and, mounting his house, left the two

farmers to satisfy the host in the best manner they could. We were no

sooner informed of this piece of finesse, than the exciseman, who had

been silent hitherto, began to open with a malicious grin: “Ay, ay this

is an old trick of Shuffle; I could not help smiling when he talked of

treating. You must know this is a very curious fellow. He picked up

some scraps of learning while he served young Lord Trifte at the

university. But what he most excels in is pimping. No one knows his

talents better than I, for I was valet-de-chambre to Squire Tattle an

intimate companion of Shuffle’s lord. He got him self into a scrape by

pawning some of his lordship’s clothes on which account he was turned

away; but, as he was acquainted with some particular circumstances of

my lord’s conduct, he did not care to exasperate him too much, and so

made interest for his receiving orders, and afterwards recommended him

to the curacy which he now enjoys. However, the fellow cannot be too

much admired for his dexterity in making a comfortable livelihood, in

spite of such a small allowance. You hear he plays a good stick, and is

really diverting company; these qualifications make him agreeable

wherever he goes; and, as for playing at cards there is not a man

within three counties for him. The truth is, he is a d—able cheat, and

can shift a card with such address that it is impossible to discover

him.”

Here he was interrupted by one of the farmers, who asked, why he had

not justice enough to acquaint them with these particulars before they

engaged in play. The exciseman replied, without any hesitation, that it

was none of his business to intermeddle between man and man; besides,

he did not know they were ignorant of Shuffle’s character, which was

notorious to the whole country. This did not satisfy the other, who

taxed him with abetting and assisting the curate’s knavery, and

insisted on having his share of the winnings returned; this demand the

exciseman as positively refused affirming that, whatever sleights

Shuffle might practise on other occasions, he was very certain that he

had played on the square with them, and would answer it before any

bench in Christendom; so saying, he got up and, having paid his

reckoning, sneaked off.

The Landlord, thrusting his neck into the passage to see if he was

gone, shook his head, saying, “Ah! Lord help us! if every sinner was to

have his deserts. Well, we victuallers must not disoblige the

excisemen. But I know what; if parson Shuffle and he were weighed

together, a straw thrown into either scale would make the balance kick

the beam. But, masters, this is under the rose,” continued Boniface

with a whisper.

CHAPTER X

The Highwayman is taken—we are detained as Evidence against him—proceed

to the next village—he escapes—we arrive at another inn, where we go to

Bed—in the Night we are awaked by a dreadful Adventure—next night we

lodge at the house of a Schoolmaster—our Treatment there

Strap and I were about to depart on our journey, when we perceived a

crowd on the road coming towards us, shouting and hallooing all the

way. As it approached, we could discern a man on horseback in the

middle, with his hands tied behind him, whom we soon knew to be Rifle.

The highwayman, not being so well mounted as the two servants who went

in pursuit of him, was soon overtaken, and, after having discharged his

pistols, made prisoner without any further opposition. They were

carrying him in triumph, amidst the acclamations of the country people,

to a justice of peace in a neighbouring village, but stopped at our inn

to join their companions and take refreshment.

When Rifle was dismounted and placed in the yard, within a circle of

peasants, armed with pitchforks, I was amazed to see what a pitiful

dejected fellow he now appeared, who had but a few hours before filled

me with such terror and confusion. My companion was so much encouraged

by this alteration in his appearance that, going up to the thief, he

presented his clenched fists to his nose, and declared he would either

cudgel or box with the prisoner for a guinea, which he immediately

produced, and began to strip, but was dissuaded from this adventure by

me, who represented to him the folly of the undertaking, as Rifle was

now in the hands of justice, which would, no doubt, give us all

satisfaction enough.

But what made me repent of our impertinent curiosity was our being

detained by the captors, as evidence against him, when we were just

going to set forward. However, there was no remedy; we were obliged to

comply, and accordingly joined in the cavalcade, which luckily took the

same road that we had proposed to follow. About the twilight we arrived

at the place of our destination, but as the justice was gone to visit a

gentleman in the country, with whom (we understood) he would probably

stay all night, the robber was confined in an empty garret, three

stories high, from which it seemed impossible for him to escape; this,

nevertheless, was the case; for next morning when they went up stairs

to bring him before the justice, the bird was flown, having got out at

the window upon the roof from whence he continued his route along the

tops of the adjoining houses, and entered another garret where he

skulked until the family were asleep; at which time he ventured down

stairs, and let himself out by the street-door, which was open.

This event was a great disappointment to those that apprehended him,

who were flushed with the hopes of the reward; but gave me great joy,

as I was permitted now to continue my journey, without any further

molestation. Resolving to make up for the small progress we had

hitherto made, we this day travelled with great vigour and before night

reached a market town twenty miles from the place from whence we set

out in the morning, without meeting any adventure worth notice. Here

having taken up our lodging at an an inn, I found myself so fatigued

that I began to despair of performing our journey on foot, and desired

Strap to inquire if there were any waggon, return horses, or any cheap

carriage in this place, to depart for London next day. He was informed

that the waggon from Newcastle to London had halted there two nights

ago, and that it would be an easy matter to overtake it, if not the

next day, at farthest, the day after the next. This piece of news gave

us some satisfaction; and, after having made a hearty supper on hashed

mutton, we were shown to our room, which contained two beds, the one

allotted for us, and the other for a very honest gentleman, who, we

were told, was then drinking below. Though we could have very well

dispensed with his company, we were glad to submit to this disposition,

as there was not another bed empty in the house; and accordingly went

to rest, after having secured our baggage under the bolster. About two

or three o’clock in the morning I was awaked out of a very profound

sleep by a dreadful noise in the chamber, which did not fail to throw

me into an agony of consternation, when I heard these words pronounced

with a terrible voice: “Blood and wounds! run the halbert into the guts

of him that’s next you, and I’ll blow the other’s brains out

presently.”

This dreadful salutation had no sooner reached the ears of Strap than,

starting out of bed, he ran against somebody in the dark, and

overturned him in an instant; at the same time bawling out, “Fire!

murder! fire!” a cry which in a moment alarmed the whole house, and

filled our chamber with a crowd of naked people. When lights were

brought, the occasion of all this disturbance soon appeared; which was

no other than a fellow lodger, whom we found lying on the floor,

scratching his head, with a look testifying the utmost astonishment at

the concourse of apparitions that surrounded him.

This honest gentleman was, it seems, a recruiting sergeant, who, having

listed two country fellows over night, dreaded they had mutinied, and

threatened to murder him and the drummer who was along with him. This

made such an impression on his imagination, that he got up in his sleep

and expressed himself as above. When our apprehension of danger

vanished, the company beheld one another with great surprise and mirth;

but what attracted the notice of everyone was our landlady, with

nothing on her but her shift and a large pair of buckskin breeches,

with the backside before, which she had slipped on in the hurry, and

her husband with her petticoat about his shoulders; one had wrapped

himself in a blanket, another was covered with a sheet, and the

drummer, who had given his only shirt to be washed, appeared in cuerpo

with a bolster rolled about his middle.

When this affair was discussed, everybody retired to his own apartment,

the sergeant slipped into bed, and my companion and I slept without any

further disturbance till morning, when we got up, went to breakfast,

paid our reckoning, and set forward in expectation of overtaking the

waggon; in which hope, however, we were disappointed for that day. As

we exerted ourselves more than usual, I found myself quite spent with

fatigue, when we entered a small village in the twilight. We inquired

for a public-house, and were directed to one of a very sorry

appearance. At our entrance the landlord, who seemed to be a venerable

old man, with long gray hair, rose from a table placed by a large fire

in a very neat paved kitchen, and with a cheerful countenance accosted

us in these words: “Salvete, pueri. Ingredimini.” I was not a little

pleased to hear our host speak Latin, because I was in hope of

recommending myself to him by my knowledge in that language; I

therefore answered, without hesitation, “Dissolve frigus, ligna super

foco—large reponens.” I had no sooner pronounced these words, than the

old gentleman, running towards me, shook me by the hand, crying, “Fili

mi dilectissime! unde venis?—a superis, ni fallor?” In short, finding

we were both read in the classics, he did not know how to testify his

regard enough; but ordered his daughter, a jolly rosy-cheeked damsel

who was his sole domestic, to bring us a bottle of his quadrimum,

repeating from Horace at the same time, “Deprome quadrimum sabina, O

Tholiarche, merum diota.” This was excellent ale of his own brewing, of

which he told us he had always an amphora four years old, for the use

of himself and friends.

In the course of our conversation, which was interlarded with scraps of

Latin, we understood that this facetious person was a schoolmaster,

whose income being small, he was fain to keep a glass of good liquor

for the entertainment of passengers by which he made shift to make the

two ends of the year meet. “I am this day,” said he, “the happiest old

fellow in his majesty’s dominions. My wife, rest her soul, is in

heaven. My daughter is to be married next week; but the two chief

pleasures of my life are these (pointing to the bottle and a large

edition of Horace that lay on the table). I am old, ’tis true—what

then? the more reason I should enjoy the small share of life that

remains, as my friend Flaccus advises: ‘Tu ne quaesieris (scire nefas)

quem mihi, quem tibi finem dii dederint. Carpe diem, quam minimum

credula postero.’”

As he was very inquisitive about our affairs, we made no scruple of

acquainting him with our situation, which when he had learned, he

enriched us with advices how to behave in the world, telling us that he

was no stranger to the deceits of mankind. In the meantime he ordered

his daughter to lay a fowl to the fire for supper, for he was resolved

this night to regale his friends—permittens divis caetera. While our

entertainment was preparing, our host recounted the adventures of his

own life, which, as they contained nothing remarkable, I forbear to

rehearse. When we had fared sumptuously, and drunk several bottles of

his I expressed a desire of going to rest, which was with some

difficulty complied with, after he had informed us that we should

overtake the waggon by noon next day; and that there was room enough in

it for half-a-dozen, for there were only four passengers as yet in that

convenience.

Before my comrade and I fell asleep, we had some conversation about the

good humour of our landlord, which gave Strap such an idea of his

benevolence, that he positively believed we should pay nothing for our

lodging and entertainment. “Don’t you observe,” said he, “that he has

conceived a particular affection for us—nay, even treated us at supper

with extraordinary fare, which, to be sure, we should not of ourselves

have called for?”

I was partly of Strap’s opinion; but the experience I had of the world

made me suspend my belief till the morning, when, getting up betimes,

we breakfasted with our host and his daughter on hasty-pudding and ale,

and desired to know what we had to pay. “Biddy will let you know,

gentlemen,” said he; “for I never mind these matters. Money matters are

beneath the concern of one who lives upon the Horatian plan—Crescentum

sequitur cura pecuniam.” Meanwhile, Biddy, having consulted a slate

that hung in the corner, told us our reckoning came to 8s. 7d. “Eight

shillings and seven pence!” cried Strap, “’tis impossible! you must be

mistaken, young woman.” “Reckon again, child,” says her father, very

deliberately; “perhaps you have miscounted.” “No, indeed,” replied she,

“I know my business better.” I could contain my indignation no longer,

but said it was an unconscionable bill, and demanded to know the

particulars; upon which the old man got up, muttering, “Ay, ay, let us

see the particulars—that’s but reasonable.” And, taking pen, ink, and

paper, wrote the following items:

To bread and beer 0 6 To a fowl and sausages 2 6 To four bottles

of \_quadrim\_ 2 0 To fire and tobacco 0 7 To lodging 2 0 To

breakfast 1 0 —— 8 7

As he had not the appearance of a common publican, and had raised a

sort of veneration in me by his demeanour the preceding night, it was

not in my power to upbraid him as he deserved; therefore, I contented

myself with saying I was sure he did not learn to be an extortioner

from Horace. He answered, I was but a young man and did not know the

world, or I would not tax him with extortion, whose only aim was to

live contentus parvo, and keep off importuna pauperies. My fellow

traveller could not so easily put up with this imposition; but swore he

should either take one-third of the money or go without. While we were

engaged in this dispute, I perceived the daughter go out, and,

conjecturing the occasion, immediately paid the exorbitant demand,

which was no sooner done than Biddy returned with two stout fellows,

who came in on pretence of taking their morning draught, but in reality

to frighten us into compliance. Just as we departed, Strap, who was

half-distracted on account of this piece of expense, went up to the

schoolmaster, and, grinning in his face, pronounced with great

emphasis—“Semper avarus eget.” To which the pedant replied, with a

malicious smile—“Animum rege, qui, nisi paret, imperat.”

CHAPTER XI

We descry the Waggon—get into it—arrive at an inn—our Fellow Travellers

described—a Mistake is committed by Strap, which produces strange

things

We travelled half-a-mile without exchanging one word; my thoughts being

engrossed by the knavery of the world, to which I must be daily

exposed, and the contemplation of my finances, which began sensibly to

diminish. At length, Strap, who could hold no longer, addressed me

thus: “Well, fools and their money are soon parted. If my advice had

been taken, that old skin-flint should have been d—n’d before he had

got more than the third of his demand. ’Tis a sure sign you came easily

by your money, when you squander it away in this manner. Ah! God help

you, how many bristly beards must I have mowed before I earned four

shillings and threepence-halfpenny, which is all thrown to the dogs!

How many days have I sat weaving hair till my toes were numbed by the

cold, my fingers cramped, and my nose as blue as the sign of the

periwig that hung over the door! What the devil was you afraid of? I

would have engaged to box with any one of those fellows who came in for

a guinea—I’m sure—I have beat stouter men than either of them.” And,

indeed, my companion would have fought anybody when his life was in no

danger; but he had a mortal aversion to fire-arms and all instruments

of death. In order to appease him, I assured him no part of this

extraordinary expense should fall upon his shoulders; at which

declaration he was affronted, and told me he would have me to know

that, although he was a poor barber’s boy, yet he had a soul to spend

big money with the best squire of the land.

Having walked all day at a great pace, without halting for a

refreshment, we descried, toward the evening, to our inexpressible joy,

the waggon about a quarter of a mile before us; and, by that time we

reached it, were both of us so weary that I verily believe it would

have been impracticable for us to have walked one mile farther. We,

therefore, bargained with the driver, whose name was Joey, to give us a

cast to the next stage for a shilling; at which place we should meet

the master of the waggon, with whom we might agree for the rest of the

journey.

Accordingly the convenience stopped, and Joey having placed the ladder,

Strap (being loaded with our baggage) mounted first; but, just as he

was getting in, a tremendous voice assailed his ears in these words:

“God’s fury! there shall no passengers come here.” The poor shaver was

so disconcerted at this exclamation, which both he and I imagined

proceeded from the mouth of a giant, that he descended with great

velocity and a countenance as white as paper. Joey, perceiving our

astonishment, called, with an arch sneer, “Waunds, coptain, whay woant

yau sooffer the poor waggoneer to meake a penny? Coom, coom, young man,

get oop, get oop, never moind the coptain; I’se not afeard of the

coptain.”

This was not encouragement sufficient to Strap, who could not be

prevailed upon to venture up again; upon which I attempted, though not

without a quaking heart, when I heard the same voice muttering, like

distant thunder—“Hell and the devil confound me, if I don’t make you

smart for this!” However, I crept in, and by accident got an empty

place in the straw, which I immediately took possession of, without

being able to discern the faces of my fellow-travellers in the dark.

Strap following, with the knapsack on his back, chanced to take the

other side, and, by a jolt of the carriage, pitched directly upon the

stomach of the captain, who bellowed out, in a most dreadful manner,

“Blood and thunder! where’s my sword?” At these words my frighted

comrade started up, and, at one spring, bounced against me with such

force that I thought he was the supposed son of Anak, who intended to

press me to death. In the meantime a female voice cried, “Bless me!

what is the matter, my dear?” “The matter,” replied the captain, “d—n

my blood! my guts are squeezed into a pancake by that Scotchman’s

hump.” Strap, trembling all the while at my back, asked him pardon, and

laid the blame of what had happened upon the jolting of the waggon; and

the woman who spoke before went on: “Ay, ay, my dear, it is our own

fault; we may thank ourselves for all the inconveniences we meet with.

I thank God I never travelled so before. I am sure if my lady or Sir

John were to know where we are they would not sleep this night for

vexation. I wish to God we had writ for the chariot; I know we shall

never be forgiven.” “Come, come, my dear,” replied the captain, “it

don’t signify fretting now; we shall laugh it over as a frolic; I hope

you will not suffer in your health. I shall make my lord very merry

with our adventures in this diligence.”

The discourse gave me such a high notion of the captain and his lady

that I durst not venture to join in the conversation; but immediately

after another female voice began: “Some people give themselves a great

many needless airs; better folks than any here have travelled in

waggons before now. Some of us have rode in coaches and chariots, with

three footmen behind them, without making so much fuss about it. What

then? We are now all upon a footing; therefore let us be sociable and

merry. What do you say, Isaac? Is not this a good motion, you doting

rogue? Speak, you old cent per cent fornicator? What desperate debt are

you thinking of? What mortgage are you planning? Well, Isaac,

positively you shall never gain my favour till you turn over a new

leaf, grow honest, and live like a gentleman. In the meantime give me a

kiss, you old fumbler.” These words, accompanied with a hearty smack,

enlivened the person to whom they were addressed to such a degree that

he cried, in transport, though with a faltering voice, “Ah! you wanton

baggage—upon my credit, you are a waggish girl—he, he, he!” This laugh

introduced a fit of coughing, which almost suffocated the poor usurer

(such we afterwards found was the profession of this our

fellow-traveller).

About this time I fell asleep, and enjoyed a comfortable nap till such

time as we arrived at the inn where we put up. Here, having alighted

from the waggon, I had an opportunity of viewing the passengers in

order as they entered. The first who appeared was a brisk, airy girl,

about twenty years old, with a silver-laced hat on her head instead of

a cap, a blue stuff riding-suit, trimmed with silver very much

tarnished, and a whip in her hand. After her came, limping, an old man,

with a worsted nightcap buttoned under his chin, and a broad-brimmed

hat slouched over it, an old rusty blue cloak tied about his neck,

under which appeared a brown surtout, that covered a threadbare coat

and waistcoat, and, as he afterwards discerned, a dirty flannel jacket.

His eyes were hollow, bleared, and gummy; his face was shrivelled into

a thousand wrinkles, his gums were destitute of teeth, his nose sharp

and drooping, his chin peaked and prominent, so that, when he mumped or

spoke, they approached one another like a pair of nutcrackers: he

supported himself on an ivory-headed cane and his whole figure was a

just emblem of winter, famine, and avarice. But how was I surprised,

when I beheld the formidable captain in the shape of a little thin

creature, about the age of forty, with a long withered visage, very

much resembling that of a baboon, through the upper part of which two

little gray eyes peeped: he wore his own hair in a queue that reached

to his rump, which immoderate length, I suppose, was the occasion of a

baldness that appeared on the crown of his head when he deigned to take

off his hat, which was very much of the size and cock of Pistol’s.

Having laid aside his great-coat, I could not help admiring the

extraordinary make of this man of war: he was about five feet and three

inches high, sixteen inches of which went to his face and long scraggy

neck: his thighs were about six inches in length, his legs resembling

spindles or drumsticks, five feet and a half, and his body, which put

me in mind of extension without substance, engrossed the remainder: so

that on the whole, he appeared like a spider or grasshopper erect, and

was almost a vox et praeterea nihil. His dress consisted of a frock of

what is called bearskin, the skirts of which were about half a foot

long, an hussar waistcoat, scarlet breeches reaching half way down his

thighs, worsted stockings rolled up almost to his groin, and shoes with

wooden heels at least two inches high; he carried a sword very near as

long as himself in one hand, and with the other conducted his lady, who

seemed to be a woman of his own age, and still retained some remains of

an agreeable person, but so ridiculously affected, that, had I not been

a novice in the world, I might have easily perceived in her the

deplorable vanity and second-hand airs of a lady’s woman.

We were all assembled in the kitchen, when Captain Weazel (for that was

his name) desired a room with a fire for himself and spouse, and told

the landlord they would up by themselves. The innkeeper replied that he

could not afford them a room by themselves; and as for supping, he had

prepared victuals for the passengers in the waggon, without respect of

persons, but if he could prevail on the rest to let him have his choice

in a separate manner, he should be very well pleased. This was no

sooner said than all of us declared against the proposal, and Miss

Jenny (our other female passenger), observed that, if Captain Weazel

and his lady had a mind to sup by themselves, they might wait until we

should have done. At this hint the captain put on a martial frown, and

looked very big, without speaking; while his yokefellow, with a

disdainful toss of her nose, muttered something about “Creature!” which

Miss Jenny overhearing, stepped up to her, saying, “None of your names,

good Mrs. Abigail. Creature, quotha—I’ll assure you no such creature as

you neither—no ten-pound sneaker—no quality-coupler.” Here the captain

interposed, with a “D—e, madam, what do you mean by that?” “D—n you

sir, who are you?” replied Miss Jenny, “who made you a captain, you

pitiful, trencher-scraping, pimping curler? ’Sdeath! the army is come

to a fine pass, when such fellows as you get commissions. What, I

suppose you think I don’t know you? Egad, you and your helpmate are

well met—a cast-off mistress and a bald valet-de-chambre are well yoked

together.” “Blood and wounds!” cried Weazel, “d’ye question the honour

of my wife, madam? Hell and d-ion! No man in England durst say so

much—I would flay him, carbonado him! Fury and destruction! I would

have his liver for my supper.” So saying, he drew his sword and

flourished with it, to the great terror of Strap; while Miss Jenny,

snapping her fingers, told him she did not value his resentment a

louse.

In the midst of this quarrel the master of the waggon alighted, who,

understanding the cause of the disturbance, and fearing the captain and

his lady would take umbrage and leave his carriage, was at great pains

to have everything made up, which he at last accomplished, and we sat

down to supper altogether. At bedtime we were shown to our apartments;

the old usurer, Strap, and I, to one room; the captain, his wife, and

Miss Jenny, to another. About midnight, my companion’s bowels being

disordered, he got up, in order to go backward, but in his return,

mistaking one door for another, entered Weazel’s chamber, and without

any hesitation went to bed to his wife, who was fast asleep, the

captain being at another end of the room groping for some empty vessel,

in lieu of his own chamberpot, which was leaky: as he did not perceive

Strap coming in, he went towards his own bed, after having found a

convenience; but no sooner did he feel a rough head, covered with a

cotton nightcap, than it came into his mind that he had mistaken Miss

Jenny’s bed instead of his own, and that the head he felt was that of

some gallant, with whom she had made an assignation. Full of his

conjecture, and scandalised at the prostitution of his apartment, he

snatched up the vessel he had just before filled, and emptied it at

once on the astonished barber and his own wife, who waking at that

instant, broke forth into lamentable cries, which not only alarmed the

husband beyond measure, but frighted poor Strap almost out of his

senses; for he verily believed himself bewitched, especially when the

incensed captain seized him by the throat, with a volley of oaths,

asking him how he durst have the presumption to attempt the chastity of

his wife. Poor Strap was so amazed and confounded, that he could say

nothing but—“I take God to witness she’s a virgin for me.”

Mrs. Weazel, enraged to find herself in such a pickle through the

precipitation of her husband, arose in her shift, and with the heel of

her shoe which she found by the bedside, belaboured the captain’s bald

pate till he roared “Murder.” “I’ll teach you to empty your stinkpots

on me,” cried she, “you pitiful hop-o’-my-thumb coxcomb. What, I

warrant you’re jealous, you man of lath. Was it for this I condescended

to take you to my bed, you poor, withered, sapless twig?”

The noise occasioned by this adventure had brought the master of the

waggon and me to the door, where we overheard all that passed with

great satisfaction. In the meantime we were alarmed with the cry of

“Rape! Murder! Rape!” which Jenny pronounced with great vociferation.

“Oh! You vile abominable old villain,” said she, “would you rob me of

my virtue? But I’ll be revenged of you, you old goat! I will! Help! for

heaven’s sake! help! I shall be ravished! ruined! help!” Some servants

of the inn, hearing this cry, came running upstairs with lights, and

such weapons as chance afforded; when we beheld a very diverting scene.

In one corner stood the poor captain shivering in his shirt, which was

all torn to rags: with a woeful visage, scratched all over by his wife,

who had by this time wrapped the counterpane about her, and sat sobbing

on the side of her bed. At the other end lay the old usurer, sprawling

on Miss Jenny’s bed, with his flannel jacket over his shirt, and his

tawny meagre limbs exposed to the air; while she held him fast by the

two ears, and loaded him with execrations. When he asked what was the

matter, she affected to weep, told us she was afraid that wicked rogue

had ruined her in her sleep, and bade us take notice of what we saw,

for she intended to make use of our evidence against him. The poor

wretch looked like one more dead than alive, and begged to be released;

a favour which he had no sooner obtained than he protested she was no

woman, but a devil incarnate—that she had first seduced his flesh to

rebel, and then betrayed him. “Yes, cockatrice,” continued he, “you

know you laid this snare for me—but you shan’t succeed—for I will hang

myself before you shall get a farthing of me.” So saying, he crawled to

his own bed, groaning all the way. We then advanced to the Captain, who

told us, “Gentlemen, here has been a d—d mistake; but I’ll be revenged

on him who was the cause of it. That Scotchman who carries the knapsack

shall not breathe this vital air another day, if my name be Weazel. My

dear, I ask you ten thousand pardons; you are sensible, I could mean no

harm to you.” “I know not what you meant,” replied she, sighing, “but I

know I have got enough to send me to my grave.” At length they were

reconciled. The wife was complimented with a share of Miss Jenny’s bed

(her own being overflowed), and the master of the waggon invited Weazel

to sleep the remaining part of the night with him. I retired to mine,

where I found Strap mortally afraid, he having stolen away in the dark

while the captain and his lady were at loggerheads.

CHAPTER XII

Captain Weazel challenges Strap, who declines the Combat—an Affair

between the Captain and me—the Usurer is fain to give Miss Jenny five

Guineas for a Release—we are in Danger of losing a Meal—the Behaviour

of Weazel, Jenny, and Joey, on that Occasion—an Account of Captain

Weazel and his Lady—the Captain’s Courage tried—Isaac’s mirth at the

Captain’s Expense

Next morning I agreed to give the master of the waggon ten shillings

for my passage to London, provided Strap should be allowed to take my

place when I should be disposed to walk. At the same time I desired him

to appease the incensed captain, who had entered the kitchen with a

drawn sword in his hand, and threatened with many oaths to sacrifice

the villain who attempted to violate his bed; but it was to no purpose

for the master to explain the mistake, and assure him of the poor lad’s

innocence, who stood trembling behind me all the while: the more

submission that appeared in Strap, the more implacable seemed the

resentment of Weazel, who swore he must either fight him or he would

instantly put him to death. I was extremely provoked at this insolence,

and told him, it could not be supposed that a poor barber lad would

engage a man of the sword at his own weapon; but I was persuaded he

would wrestle or box with him. To which proposal Strap immediately gave

assent, by saying, “he would box with him for a guinea.” Weazel replied

with a look of disdain, that it was beneath any gentleman of his

character to fight like a porter, or even to put himself on a footing,

in any respect, with such a fellow as Strap. “Odds bodikins!” cries

Joey, “sure, coptain, yaw would not commit moorder! Here’s a poor lad

that is willing to make atonement for his offence; and an that woan’t

satisfie yaw, offers to fight yaw fairly. And yaw woan’t box, I dare

say, he will coodgel with yaw. Woan’t yaw, my lad?” Strap, after some

hesitation, answered, “Yes, yes, I’ll cudgel with him.” But this

expedient being also rejected by the captain, I began to smell his

character, and, tipping Strap the wink, told the captain that I had

always heard it said, the person who receives a challenge should have

the choice of the weapons; this therefore being the rule in point of

honour, I would venture to promise on the head of my companion, that he

would even fight Captain Weazel at sharps; but it should be with such

sharps as Strap was best acquainted with, namely, razors. At my

mentioning razors: I could perceive the captain’s colour change while

Strap, pulling me by the sleeve, whispered with great eagerness: “No,

no, no; for the love of God, don’t make any such bargain.” At length,

Weazel, recovering himself, turned towards me, and with a ferocious

countenance asked, “Who the devil are you? Will you fight me?” With

these words, putting himself in a posture, I was grievously alarmed at

seeing the point of a sword within half a foot of my breast; and,

springing to one side, snatched up a spit that stood in the

chimney-corner, with which I kept my formidable adversary at bay, who

made a great many half-longes, skipping backward at every push, till at

last I pinned him up in a corner, to the no small diversion of the

company. While he was in this situation his wife entered, and, seeing

her husband in these dangerous circumstances, uttered a dreadful

scream: in this emergency, Weazel demanded a cessation, which was

immediately granted; and at last was contented with the submission of

Strap, who, falling on his knees before him, protested the innocence of

his intention, and asked pardon for the mistake he had committed. This

affair being ended without bloodshed, we went to breakfast, but missed

two of our company, namely, Miss Jenny and the usurer. As for the

first, Mrs. Weazel informed us, that she had kept her awake all night

with her groans; and that when she rose in the morning, Miss Jenny was

so much indisposed that she could not proceed on her journey. At that

instant, a message came from her to the master of the waggon, who

immediately went into her chamber, followed by us all. She told him in

a lamentable tone, that she was afraid of a miscarriage, owing to the

fright she received last night from the brutality of Isaac; and, as the

event was uncertain, desired the usurer might be detained to answer for

the consequence. Accordingly, this ancient Tarquin was found in the

waggon, whither he had retired to avoid the shame of last night’s

disgrace, and brought by force into her presence. He no sooner appeared

than she began to weep and sigh most piteously, and told us, if she

died, she would leave her blood upon the head of that ravisher. Poor

Isaac turned up his eyes and hands to heaven, prayed that God would

deliver him from the machinations of that Jezebel; and assured us, with

tears in his eyes, that his being found in bed with her was the result

of her own invitation. The waggoner, understanding the case, advised

Isaac to make it up, by giving her a sum of money: to which advice he

replied with great vehemence, “A sum of money!—a halter for the

cockatrice!” “Oh! ’tis very well,” said Miss Jenny; “I see it is in

vain to attempt that flinty heart of his by fair means. Joey, be so

good as to go to the justice, and tell him there is a sick person here,

who wants to see him on an affair of consequence.” At the name of

justice Isaac trembled, and bidding Joey stay, asked with a quavering

voice, “What she would have? She told him that, as he had not

perpetrated his wicked purpose, she would be satisfied with a small

matter. And though the damage she might sustain in her health might be

irreparable, she would give him a release for a hundred guineas.” “A

hundred guineas!” cried he in an ecstacy, “a hundred furies! Where

should a poor old wretch like me have a hundred guineas? If I had so

much money, d’ya think I should be found travelling in a waggon, at

this season of the year?” “Come, come,” replied Jenny, “none of your

miserly artifice here. You think I don’t know Isaac Rapine, the

money-broker, in the Minories. Ah! you old rogue! many a pawn have you

had of me and my acquaintance, which was never redeemed.” Isaac,

finding it was in vain to disguise himself, offered twenty shillings

for a discharge, which she absolutely refused under fifty pounds: at

last, however, she was brought down to five, which he paid with great

reluctancy, rather than be prosecuted for a rape. After which

accommodation, the sick person made a shift to get into the waggon, and

we set forward in great tranquillity; Strap being accommodated with

Joey’s horse, the driver himself choosing to walk. The morning and

forenoon we were entertained with an account of the valour of Captain

Weazel, who told us he had once knocked down a soldier that made game

of him; tweaked a drawer by the nose, who found fault with his picking

his teeth with a fork, at another time; and that he had moreover

challenged a cheesemonger, who had the presumption to be his rival: for

the truth of which exploits he appealed to his wife. She confirmed

whatever he said, and observed, “The last affair happened that very day

on which I received a love-letter from Squire Gobble, and don’t you

remember, my dear, I was prodigiously sick that very night with eating

ortolans, when my Lord Diddle took notice of my complexion’s being

altered, and my lady was so alarmed that she had well nigh fainted?”

“Yes, my dear,” replied the captain, “you know my lord said to me, with

a sneer, ‘Billy, Mrs. Weazel is certainly breeding.’ And I answered

cavalierly, ‘My lord, I wish I could return the compliment.’ Upon which

the whole company broke out into an immoderate fit of laughter; and my

lord, who loves a repartee dearly, came round and bussed me.” We

travelled in this manner five days, without interruption or meeting

anything worth notice: Miss Jenny, who soon recovered her spirits,

entertaining us every day with diverting songs, of which she could sing

a great number; and rallying her own gallant, who, notwithstanding,

would never be reconciled to her. On the sixth day, while we were about

to sit down to dinner, the innkeeper came and told us, that three

gentlemen, just arrived, had ordered the victuals to be carried to

their apartment, although he had informed them that they were bespoke

by the passengers in the waggon. To which information they had replied,

“the passengers in the waggon might be d—d, their betters must be

served before them; they supposed it would be no hardship on such

travellers to dine upon bread and cheese for one day.” This was a

terrible disappointment to us all; and we laid our heads together how

to remedy it; when Miss Jenny observed that Captain Weazel, being by

profession a soldier, ought in this case to protect and prevent us from

being insulted. But the Captain excused himself, saying, he would not

for all the world be known to have travelled in a waggon! swearing at

the same time, that could he appear with honour, they should eat his

sword sooner than his provision. Upon this declaration, Miss Jenny,

snatching his weapon, drew it, and ran immediately into the kitchen,

where she threatened to put the cook to death if he did not send the

victuals into our chamber immediately. The noise she made brought the

three strangers down, one of whom no sooner perceived her than he

cried, “Ha! Jenny Ramper! what the devil brought thee hither?” “My dear

Jack Rattle!” replied she, running into his arms, “is it you? Then

Weazel may go to hell for a dinner—I shall dine with you.”

They consented to this proposal with a great deal of joy; and we were

on the point of being reduced to a very uncomfortable meal, when Joey,

understanding the whole affair, entered the kitchen with a pitchfork in

his hand, and swore he would be the death of any man who should pretend

to seize the victuals prepared for the waggon. The menace had like to

have produced fatal consequences; the three strangers drawing their

swords, and being joined by their servants, and we ranging ourselves on

the side of Joey; when the landlord, interposing, offered to part with

his own dinner to keep the peace, which was accepted by the strangers;

and we sat down at table without any further molestation. In the

afternoon, I chose to walk along with Joey, and Strap took my place.

Having entered into a conversation with this driver, I soon found him

to be a merry, facetious, good-natured fellow, and withal very arch; he

informed me, that Miss Jenny was a common girl upon the town, who,

falling into company with a recruiting officer, he carried her down in

the stage coach from London to Newcastle, where he had been arrested

for debt, and was now in prison; upon which she was fain to return to

her former way of life, by this conveyance. He told me likewise, that

one of the gentleman’s servants, who were left at the inn, having

accidentally seen Weazel, immediately knew him, and acquainted Joey

with some particulars of his character. That he had served my Lord

Frizzle in quality of valet-de-chambre many years, while he lived

separate from his lady; but, upon their reconciliation, she expressly

insisted upon Weazel’s being turned off, as well as the woman he kept:

when his lordship, to get rid of them both with a good grace, proposed

that he should marry his Mistress, and he would procure a commission

for him in the army: this expedient was agreed to, and Weazel is now,

by his lordship’s interest, ensigned in —’s regiment. I found he and I

had the same sentiments with regard to Weazel’s courage, which he

resolved to put to the trial, by alarming the passengers with the cry

of a ‘highwayman!’ as soon as a horseman should appear.

This scheme we put in practice, towards the dusk, when we descried a

man on horseback approaching us. Joey had no sooner intimated to the

people in the waggon, that he was afraid we should be all robbed than a

general consternation arose: Strap jumped out of the waggon, and hid

himself behind a hedge. The usurer put forth ejaculations, and made a

rustling among the straw, which made us conjecture he had hid something

under it. Mrs. Weazel, wringing her hands uttered lamentable cries: and

the captain, to our great amazement, began to snore; but this artifice

did not succeed; for Miss Jenny, shaking him by the shoulder, bawled

out, “Sdeath! captain, is this a time to snore, when we are going to be

robbed? Get up for shame, and behave like a soldier and man of honour!”

Weazel pretended to be in a great passion for being disturbed, and

swore he would have his nap out if all the highwaymen in England

surrounded him. “D—n my blood! what are you afraid of?” continued he;

at the same time trembling with such agitation that the whole carriage

shook. This singular piece of behaviour incensed Miss Ramper so much

that she cried, “D—n your pitiful soul, you are as arrant a poltroon,

as ever was drummed out of a regiment. Stop the waggon, Joey—let me

out, and by G—d, if I have rhetoric enough, the thief shall not only

take your purse, but your skin also.” So saying she leaped out with

great agility. By this time the horseman came up and happened to be a

gentleman’s servant well known to Joey, who communicated the scheme,

and desired him to carry it on a little further, by going into the

waggon, and questioning those within. The stranger, consenting for the

sake of diversion, approached it, and in a terrible tone demanded, “Who

have we got here?” Isaac replied, with a lamentable voice, “Here’s a

poor miserable sinner, who has got a small family to maintain, and

nothing in the world wherewithal, but these fifteen shillings which if

you rob me of we must all starve together.” “Who’s that sobbing in the

other corner?” said the supposed highwayman. “A poor unfortunate

woman,” answered Mrs. Weazle, “upon whom I beg you, for Christ’s sake,

to have compassion.” “Are you maid or wife,” said he. “Wife, to my

sorrow,” said she. “Who, or where is your husband?” continued he. “My

husband,” replied Mrs. Weazel, “is an officer in the army and was left

sick at the last inn where we dined.” “You must be mistaken, madam,”

said he, “for I myself saw him get into the waggon this afternoon. But

pray what smell is that? Sure your lapdog has befouled himself; let me

catch hold of the nasty cur, I’ll teach him better manners.” Here he

laid hold of one of Weazel’s legs, and pulled him out from under his

wife’s petticoat, where he had concealed himself. The poor trembling

captain, being detected in his inglorious situation, rubbed his eyes,

and affecting to wake out of sleep, cried, “What’s the matter? What’s

the matter?” “The matter is not much,” answered the horseman; “I only

called in to inquire after your health, and so adieu, most noble

captain.” He clapped spurs to his horse, and was out of sight in a

moment.

It was some time before Weazel could recollect himself, but at length

reassuming the big look, he said, “D—n the fellow! why did he ride away

before I had time to ask him how his lord and lady do? Don’t you

remember Tom, my dear?” addressing himself to his wife. “Yes,” replied

she, “I think I do remember something of the fellow, but you know I

seldom converse with people of his station.” “Hey-day!” cried Joey, “do

yaw knaw the young mon, coptain?” “Know him,” said Weazel, “many a time

has he filled a glass of Burgundy for me, at my Lord Trippett’s table.”

“And what may his name be, coptain?” said Joey. “His name!—his name,”

replied Weazel, “is Tom Rinser.” “Waunds,” cried Joey, “a has changed

his own neame then! for I’se lay a wager he was christened John

Trotter.” This observation raised a laugh against the captain, who

seemed very much disconcerted; when Isaac broke silence, and said, “It

is no matter who or what he was, since he has not proved the robber we

suspected, and we ought to bless God for our narrow escape.” “Bless

God,” said Weazel, “bless the devil! for what? Had he been a

highwayman, I should have eaten his blood, body, and guts, before he

had robbed me, or any one in this diligence.” “Ha, ha, ha,” cried Miss

Jenny, “I believe you will eat all you kill, indeed, captain.” The

usurer was so well pleased at the event of this adventure, that he

could not refrain from being severe, and took notice that Captain

Weazel seemed to be a good Christian, for he had armed himself with

patience and resignation, instead of carnal weapons; and worked out his

salvation with fear and trembling. This piece of satire occasioned a

great deal of mirth at Weazel’s expense, who muttered a great many

oaths, and threatened to cut Isaac’s throat. The usurer, taking hold of

this menace, said, “Gentlemen and ladies, I take you all to witness,

that my life is in danger from this bloody-minded officer; I’ll have

him bound over to the peace.” This second sneer produced another laugh

against him, and he remained crestfallen during the remaining part of

our journey.

CHAPTER XIII

Strap and I are terrified by an Apparition—Strap’s Conjecture—the

Mystery explained by Joey—we arrive in London—our Dress and Appearance

described—we are insulted in the Street—an Adventure in an Alehouse—we

are imposed upon by a waggish Footman—set to rights by a

Tobacconist—take Lodgings—dive for a Dinner—an Accident at our Ordinary

We arrived at our inn, supped, and went to bed; but Strap’s distemper

continuing, he was obliged to rise in the middle of the night, and

taking the candle in his hand, which he had left burning for the

purpose, he went down to the house of office, whence in a short time he

returned in a great hurry, with his hair standing on end, and a look

betokening horror and astonishment. Without speaking a word, he set

down the light and jumped into bed behind me, where he lay and trembled

with great violence. When I asked him what was the matter, he replied,

with a broken accent, “God have mercy on us! I have seen the devil!”

Though my prejudice was not quite so strong as his, I was not a little

alarmed at this exclamation, and much more so when I heard the sound of

bells approaching our chamber, and felt my bedfellow cling close to me,

uttering these words, “Christ have mercy upon us; there he comes!” At

that instance a monstrous overgrown raven entered our chamber, with

bells at his feet, and made directly towards our bed. As this creature

is reckoned in our country a common vehicle for the devil and witches

to play their pranks in, I verily believed we were haunted; and, in a

violent fright, shrank under the bedclothes. This terrible apparition

leaped upon the bed, and after giving us several severe dabs with its

beak through the blankets, hopped away, and vanished. Strap and I

recommended ourselves to the protection of heaven with great devotion,

and, when we no longer heard the noise, ventured to peep up and take

breath. But we had not been long freed from this phantom, when another

appeared, that had well nigh deprived us both of our senses. We

perceived an old man enter the room, with a long white beard that

reached to his middle; there was a certain wild peculiarity in his eyes

and countenance that did not savour of this world; and his dress

consisted of a brown stuff coat, buttoned behind and at the wrists,

with an odd-fashioned cap of the same stuff upon his head. I was so

amazed that I had not power to move my eyes from such a ghastly object,

but lay motionless and saw him come straight up to me: when he reached

the bed, he wrung his hands, and cried, with a voice that did not seem

to belong to a human creature, “Where is Ralph?” I made no reply: upon

which he repeated, in an accent still more preternatural, “Where is

Ralpho?” He had no sooner pronounced these words than I heard the sound

of the bells at a distance; which the apparition, having listened to,

tripped away, and left me almost petrified with fear. It was a good

while before I could recover myself so far as to speak; and, when at

length I turned to Strap, I found him in a fit, which, however, did not

last long. When he came to himself, I asked his opinion of what had

happened; and he assured me that the first must certainly be the soul

of some person damned, which appeared by the chain about his legs (for

his fears had magnified the creature to the bigness of a horse, and the

sound of small morice-bells to the clanking of massy chains). As for

the old man, he took it to be the spirit of somebody murdered long ago

in this place, which had power granted to torment the assassin in the

shape of a raven, and that Ralpho was the name of the said murderer.

Although I had not much faith in this interpretation, I was too much

troubled to enjoy any sleep: and in all my future adventures never

passed a night so ill.

In the morning Strap imparted the whole affair to Joey, who, after an

immoderate fit of laughter, explained the matter, by telling him that

the old man was the landlord’s father, who had been an idiot some

years, and diverted himself with a tame raven, which, it seems, had

hopped away from his apartment in the night, and induced him to follow

it to our chamber, where he had inquired after it under the name of

Ralpho.

Nothing remarkable happened during the remaining part of our journey,

which continued six or seven days longer: at length we entered the

great city, and lodged all night at the inn where the waggon put up.

Next morning all the passengers parted different ways, while my

companion and I sallied out to inquire for the member of parliament, to

whom I had a letter of recommendation from Mr. Crab. As we had

discharged our lodging at the inn, Strap took up our baggage and,

marched behind me in the street with the knapsack on his back, as

usual, so that we made a very whimsical appearance. I had dressed

myself to the greatest advantage; that is, put on a clean ruffled

shirt, and my best thread stockings: my hair (which was of the deepest

red) hung down upon my shoulders, as lank and straight as a pound of

candles; and the skirts of my coat reached to the middle of my leg; my

waistcoat and breeches were of the same piece, and cut in the same

taste; and my hat very much resembled a barber’s basin, in the

shallowness of the crown and narrowness of the brim. Strap was habited

in a much less awkward manner: but a short crop-eared wig, that very

much resembled Scrub’s in the play, and the knapsack on his back, added

to what is called a queer phiz, occasioned by a long chin, a hook nose,

and high cheek bones, rendered him, on the whole, a very fit subject of

mirth and pleasantry. As he walked along, Strap, at my desire, inquired

of a carman, whom we met, whereabouts Mr. Cringer lived: and was

answered by a stare, accompanied with the word “Anan!” Upon which I

came up, in order to explain the question, but had the misfortune to be

unintelligible likewise, the carman damning us for a lousy Scotch

guard, whipping his horses with a “Gee ho!” which nettled me to the

quick, and roused the indignation of Strap so far that, after the

fellow was gone a good way, he told me he would fight him for a

farthing.

While we were deliberating upon what was to be done, a hackney

coachman, driving softly along, and perceiving us standing by the

kennel, came up close to us, and calling, “A coach, master!” by a

dexterous management of the reins made his horses stumble in the wet,

and bedaub us all over with mud. After which exploit he drove on,

applauding himself with a hearty laugh, in which several people joined,

to my great mortification; but one, more compassionate than the rest,

seeing us strangers, advised me to go into an alehouse, and dry myself.

I thanked him for his advice, which I immediately complied with; and,

going into the house he pointed out, called for a pot of beer, and sat

down by a fire in the public room where we cleaned ourselves as well as

we could. In the meantime, a wag, who sat in a box, smoking his pipe,

understanding, by our dialect, that we were from Scotland, came up to

me and, with a grave countenance asked how long I had been caught. As I

did not know the meaning of this question, I made no answer; and he

went on, saying it could not be a great while, for my tail was not yet

cut; at the same time taking hold of my hair, and tipping the wink to

the rest of the company, who seemed highly entertained with his wit. I

was incensed at this usage, but afraid of resenting it, because I

happened to be in a strange place, and perceived the person who spoke

to me was a brawny fellow, for whom I thought myself by no means a

match. However, Strap, having either more courage or less caution,

could not put up with the insults I suffered, but told him in a

peremptory tone, “He was an uncivil fellow for making so free with his

betters.” Then the wit going toward him, asked him what he had got in

his knapsack? “Is it oatmeal or brimstone, Sawney?” said he, seizing

him by the chin, which he shook, to the inexpressible diversion of all

present. My companion, feeling himself assaulted in such an opprobrious

manner, disengaged himself in a trice, and lent his antagonist such a

box on the ear as made him stagger to the other side of the room; and,

in a moment, a ring was formed for the combatants. Seeing Strap

beginning to strip, and my blood being heated with indignation, which

banished all other thoughts, I undressed myself to the skin in an

instant, and declared, that as the affront that occasioned the quarrel

was offered to me, I would fight it out myself; upon which one or two

cried out, “That’s a brave Scotch boy; you shall have fair play.” His

assurance gave me fresh spirits, and, going up to my adversary, who by

his pale countenance did not seem much inclined to the battle, I struck

him so hard on the stomach, that he reeled over a bench, and fell to

the ground. Then I attempted to keep him down, in order to improve my

success, according to the manner of my own country, but was restrained

by the spectators, one of whom endeavoured to raise up my opponent, but

in vain; for he protested he would not fight, for he was not quite

recovered of a late illness. I was very well pleased with this excuse,

and immediately dressed myself, having acquired the good opinion of the

company for my bravery, as well as of my comrade Strap, who shook me by

the hand, and wished me joy of the victory.

After having drunk our pot, and dried our clothes, we inquired of the

landlord if he knew Mr. Cringer, the member of parliament, and were

amazed at his replying in the negative; for we imagined he must be

altogether as conspicuous here as in the borough he represented; but he

told us we might possibly hear of him as we passed along. We betook

ourselves therefore to the street, where seeing a footman standing at

the door, we made up to him, and asked if he knew where our patron

lived? This member of the particoloured fraternity, surveying us both

very minutely, said he knew Mr. Cringer very well, and bade us turn

down the first street on our left, then turn to the right, and then to

the left again, after which perambulation we would observe a lane,

through which we must pass, and at the other end we should find an

alley that leads to another street, where we should see the sign of the

Thistle and Three Pedlars, and there he lodged. We thanked him for his

information, and went forwards, Strap telling me, that he knew this

person to be an honest friendly man by his countenance, before he

opened his mouth; in which opinion I acquiesced, ascribing his good

manners to the company he daily saw in the house where he served.

We followed his directions punctually, in turning to the left, and to

the right, and to the left again; but instead of seeing a lane before

us, found ourselves at the side of the river, a circumstance that

perplexed us not a little; and my fellow-traveller ventured to

pronounce, that we had certainly missed our way. By this time we were

pretty much fatigued with our walk, and not knowing how to proceed, I

went into a small snuff-shop hard by, encouraged by the sign of the

Highlander, where I found, to my inexpressible satisfaction, the

shopkeeper was my countryman. He was no sooner informed of our

peregrination, and the directions we had received from the footman,

than he informed us we had been imposed upon, telling us, Mr. Cringer

lived in the other end of the town and that it would be to no purpose

for us to go thither to-day, for by that time he was gone to the House.

I then asked, if he could recommend us a lodging. He really gave us a

line to one of his acquaintance who kept a chandler’s shop not far from

St. Martin’s Lane; there we hired a bed-room, up two pair of stairs, at

the rate of two shillings per week, so very small, that when the bed

was let down, we were obliged to carry out every other piece of

furniture that belonged to the apartment, and use the bedstead by way

of chairs. About dinner-time, our landlord asked how we proposed to

live? to which interrogation we answered, that we would be directed by

him. “Well, then,” says he, “there are two ways of eating in this town

for people of your condition—the one more creditable and expensive than

the other: the first is to dine at an eating-house frequented by

well-dressed people only; and the other is called diving, practised by

those who are either obliged or inclined to live frugally.” I gave him

to understand that, provided the last was not infamous, it would suit

much better with our circumstances than the other. “Infamous!” cried

he, “not at all; there are many creditable people, rich people, ay, and

fine people, that dive every day. I have seen many a pretty gentleman

with a laced waistcoat dine in that manner very comfortably for three

pence halfpenny, and go afterwards to the coffee-house, where he made a

figure with the best lord in the land; but your own eyes shall bear

witness—I will go along with you to-day and introduce you.”

He accordingly conducted us to a certain lane, where stopping, he bade

us observe him, and do as he did, and, walking a few paces, dived into

a cellar and disappeared in an instant. I followed his example, and

descending very successfully, found myself in the middle of a cook’s

shop, almost suffocated with the steams of boiled beef, and surrounded

by a company of hackney coachmen, chairmen, draymen, and a few footmen

out of place or on board-wages; who sat eating shin of beef, tripe,

cow-heel, or sausages, at separate boards, covered with cloths which

turned my stomach. While I stood in amaze, undetermined whether to sit

down or walk upwards again, Strap, in his descent, missing one of the

stops, tumbled headlong into this infernal ordinary, and overturned the

cook as she carried a porringer of soup to one of the guests. In her

fall, she dashed the whole mess against the legs of a drummer belonging

to the foot-guards, who happened to be in her way, and scalded him so

miserably, that he started up, and danced up and down, uttering a

volley of execrations that made my hair stand on end.

While he entertained the company in this manner, with an eloquence

peculiar to himself, the cook got up, and after a hearty curse on the

poor author of this mischance, who lay under the table with a woful

countenance, emptied a salt-cellar in her hand, and, stripping down the

patient’s stocking, which brought the skin along with it, applied the

contents to the sore. This poultice was scarce laid on, when the

drummer, who had begun to abate of his exclamations, broke forth into

such a hideous yell as made the whole company tremble, then, seizing a

pewter pint pot that stood by him, squeezed the sides of it together,

as if it had been made of pliant leather, grinding his teeth at the

same time with a most horrible grin. Guessing the cause of this violent

transport, I bade the woman wash off the salt, and bathe the part with

oil, which she did, and procured him immediate ease. But here another

difficulty occurred, which was no other than the landlady’s insisting

on his paying for the pot he had rendered useless. He said, he would

pay for nothing but what he had eaten, and bade her be thankful for his

moderation, or else he would prosecute her for damages. Strap,

foreseeing the whole affair would lie at his door, promised to satisfy

the cook, and called for a dram of gin to treat the drummer, which

entirely appeased him, and composed all animosities. After this

accommodation, our landlord and we sat down at a board, and dined upon

shin of beef most deliciously; our reckoning amounting to twopence

halfpenny each, bread and small beer included.

CHAPTER XIV

We visit Strap’s friend—a description of him—his advice—we go to Mr.

Cringer’s house—are denied admittance—an Accident befalls Strap—his

behaviour thereupon—an extraordinary adventure occurs, in the course of

which I lose all my money

In the afternoon my companion proposed to call at his friend’s house,

which, we were informed, was in the neighbourhood, whither we

accordingly went, and were so lucky as to find him at home. This

gentleman, who had come from Scotland three or four years before, kept

a school in town, where he taught the Latin, French, and Italian

languages; but what he chiefly professed was the pronunciation of the

English tongue, after a method more speedy and uncommon than any

practised heretofore, and, indeed, if his scholars spoke like their

master, the latter part of his undertaking was certainly performed to a

tittle: for although I could easily understand every word of what I had

heard hitherto since I entered England, three parts in four of his

dialect were as unintelligible to me as if he had spoken in Arabic or

Irish. He was a middle-sized man, and stooped very much, though not

above the age of forty; his face was frightfully pitted with the

small-pox, and his mouth extended from ear to ear. He was dressed in a

night-gown of plaid, fastened about his middle with a sergeant’s old

sash, and a tie-periwig with a foretop three inches high, in the

fashion of King Charles the Second’s reign.

After he had received Strap, who was related to him, very courteously,

he inquired of him who I was; and being informed, he took me by the

hand, telling me he was at school with my father. When he understood my

situation, he assured me that he would do me all the service in his

power, both by his advice and otherwise, and while he spoke these words

eyed me with great attention, walking round me several times, and

muttering, “Oh, dear! Oh, dear! fat a saight is here!” I soon guessed

the reason of his ejaculation, and said, “I suppose, sir, you are not

pleased with my dress.” “Dress,” answered he, “you may caal it fat you

please in your country, but I vow to Gad ’tis a masquerade here. No

Christian will admit such a figure into his house. Upon my conscience,

I wonder the dogs did not hunt you. Did you pass through St. James’s

market? Bless my eyesaight! you are like a cousin-german of an

ourangoutang.” I began to be a little serious at this discourse, and

asked him, if he thought I should obtain entrance to-morrow at the

house of Mr. Cringer, on whom I chiefly depended for an introduction

into business? “Mr. Cringer, Mr. Cringer,” replied he, scratching his

cheek, “may be a very honest gentleman—I know nothing to the contrary;

but is your sole dependence upon him? Who recommended you to him?” I

pulled out Mr. Crab’s letter, and told him the foundation of my hopes,

at which he stared at me, and repeated “Oh dear! Oh dear!” I began to

conceive bad omens from this behaviour of his, and begged he would

assist me with his advice, which he promised to give very frankly; and

as a specimen, directed us to a periwig warehouse in the neighbourhood,

in order to be accommodated; laying strong injunctions on me not to

appear before Mr. Cringer till I had parted with my carroty locks,

which, he said, were sufficient to beget an antipathy against me in all

mankind. And as we were going to pursue this advice, he called me back

and bade me be sure to deliver my letter into Mr. Cringer’s own hand.

As we walked along, Strap triumphed greatly in our reception with his

friend, who, it seems, had assured him he would in a day or two provide

for him with some good master; “I and now,” says he, “I you will see

how I will fit you with a wig. There’s ne’er a barber in London (and

that’s a bold word) can palm a rotten caul, or a pennyweight of dead

hair, upon me.” And, indeed, this zealous adherent did wrangle so long

with the merchant, that he was desired twenty times to leave the shop,

and see if he could get one cheaper elsewhere. At length I made choice

(if a good handsome bob), for which I paid ten shillings, and returned

to our lodging, where Strap in a moment rid me of that hair which had

given the schoolmaster so much offence.

We got up next day betimes, having been informed that Mr. Cringer gave

audience by candle-light to all his dependents, he himself being

obliged to attend the levee of my Lord Terrier at break of day, because

his lordship made one at the minister’s between eight and nine o’clock.

When we came to Mr. Cringer’s door, Strap, to give me all instance of

his politeness, ran to the knocker, which he employed so loud and so

long, that he alarmed the whole street; and a window opening in the

second story of the next house, a vessel was discharged upon him so

successfully, that the poor barber was wet to the skin, while I, being

luckily at some distance, escaped the unsavoury deluge. In the

meantime, a footman opening the door, and seeing nobody in the street

but us, asked, with a stern countenance, if it was I who made such a

noise, and what I wanted. I told him I had business with his master,

whom I desired to see. Upon which he slapped the door in my face,

telling me I must learn better manners before I could have access to

his master. Vexed at this disappointment, I turned my resentment

against Strap, whom I sharply reprimanded for his presumption; but he,

not in the least regarding what I said, wrung the wet out of his

periwig, and lifting up a large stone, flung it with such force against

the street door of that house from whence he had been bedewed, that the

lock giving way, it flew wide open, and he took to his heels, leaving

me to follow him as I could. Indeed, there was no time for

deliberation; I therefore pursued him with all the speed I could exert,

until we found ourselves about the dawn in a street we did not know.

Here, as we wandered along gaping about, a very decent sort of a man,

passing by me, stopped of a sudden and took up something, which having

examined, he turned and presented to me with these words: “Sir, you

have dropped half-a-crown.” I was not a little surprised at this

instance of honesty, and told him it did not belong to me; but he bade

me recollect, and see if all my money was safe; upon which I pulled out

my purse, for I had bought one since I came to town, and, reckoning my

money in my hand, which was now reduced to five guineas seven shillings

and twopence, assured him I had lost nothing. “Well, then, says he, so

much the better; this is a godsend, and as you two were present when I

picked it up, you are entitled to equal shares with me.” I was

astonished at these words, and looked upon this person to be a prodigy

of integrity, but absolutely refused to take any part of the sum.

“Come, gentlemen,” said he, “you are too modest—I see you are

strangers, but you shall give me leave to treat you with a whet this

cold raw morning.” I would have declined the invitation, but Strap

whispered to me that the gentleman would be affronted, and I complied.

“Where shall we go?” said the stranger; “I am quite ignorant of this

part of the town.” I informed him that we were in the same situation;

upon which he proposed to go into the first public-house we should find

open; and as we walked together, he began in this manner: “I find by

your tongues you are from Scotland, gentlemen; my grandmother by the

father’s side was of your country, and I am so prepossessed in its

favour, that I never meet a Scotchman but my heart warms. The Scots are

very brave people. There is scarce a great family in the kingdom that

cannot boast of some exploits performed by its ancestors many hundred

years ago. There’s your Douglasses, Gordons, Campbells, Hamiltons. We

have no such ancient families here in England. Then you are all very

well educated. I have known a pedlar talk in Greek and Hebrew as well

as if they had been his mother-tongue. And for honesty—I once had a

servant, his name was Gregor Macgregor, I would have trusted him with

untold gold.”

This eulogium of my native country gained my affections so strongly,

that I believe I could have gone to death to serve the author; and

Strap’s eyes swam in tears. At length, as we passed through a dark

narrow lane, we perceived a public-house, which we entered, and found a

man sitting by the fire, smoking a pipe, with a pint of purl before

him. Our new acquaintance asked us if ever we had drunk egg-flip? To

which question we answering in the negative, he assured us of a regale,

and ordered a quart to be prepared, calling for pipes and tobacco at

the same time. We found this composition very palateable, and drank

heartily; the conversation, which was introduced by the gentleman,

turning upon the snares that young inexperienced people are exposed to

in this metropolis. He described a thousand cheats that are daily

practised upon the ignorant and unwary, and warned us of them with so

much good nature and concern, that we blessed the opportunity which

threw us in his way. After we had put the can about for some time, our

new friend began to yawn, telling us he had been up all night with a

sick person; and proposed we should have recourse to some diversion to

keep him awake. “Suppose,” said he, “we should take a hand at whist for

pastime. But let me see: that won’t do, there’s only three of us; and I

cannot play at any other game. The truth is, I seldom or never play,

but out of complaisance, or at such a time as this, when I am in danger

of falling asleep.”

Although I was not much inclined to gaming, I felt no aversion to pass

an hour or two at cards with a friend; and knowing that Strap

understood as much of the matter as I, made no scruple of saying, “I

wish we could find a fourth hand.” While we were in this perplexity the

person whom we found in the house at our entrance, overhearing our

discourse, took the pipe from his mouth very gravely, and accosted us

thus: “Gentlemen, my pipe is out, you see,” shaking the ashes into the

fire, “and rather than you should be balked, I don’t care if I take a

hand with you for a trifle—but remember I won’t play for anything of

consequence.” We accepted his proffer with pleasure. Having cut for

partners, it fell to my lot to play with him against our friend and

Strap, for threepence a game. We were so successful, that in a short

time I was half-a-crown gainer; when the gentleman whom we had met in

the street observing he had no luck to-day, proposed to leave off, or

change partners. By this time I was inflamed with my good fortune and

the expectation of improving it, as I perceived the two strangers

played but indifferently; therefore I voted for giving him his revenge:

and cutting again, Strap and I, to our mutual satisfaction, happened to

be partners. My good fortune attended me still, and in less than an

hour we had got thirty shillings of their money, for as they lost they

grew the keener, and doubled stakes every time. At last the inconstant

goddess began to veer about, and we were very soon stripped of all our

gains, and about forty shillings of our own money. This loss mortified

me extremely, and had a visible effect on the muscles of Strap’s face,

which lengthened apace; but our antagonists perceiving our condition,

kindly permitted us to retrieve our loss, and console ourselves with a

new acquisition. Then my companion wisely suggested it was time to be

gone; upon which the person who had joined us in the house began to

curse the cards, and muttered that we were indebted to fortune only for

what we had got, no part of our success being owing to our good play.

This insinuation nettled me so much that I challenged him to a game at

piquet for a crown: and he was with difficulty persuaded to accept the

invitation. This contest ended in less than an hour to my inexpressible

affliction, who lost every shilling of my own money, Strap absolutely

refusing to supply me with a sixpence.

The gentleman at whose request we had come in, perceiving by my

disconsolate looks the situation of my heart, which well nigh burst

with grief and resentment, when the other stranger got up, and went

away with my money, began in this manner:—“I am truly afflicted at your

bad luck, and would willingly repair it, were it in my power. But what

in the name of goodness could provoke you to tempt your fate so long?

It is always a maxim with gamesters to pursue success as far us it will

go, and to stop whenever fortune shifts about. You are a young man, and

your passions are too impetuous; you must learn to govern them better.

However, there is no experience like that which is bought; you will be

the better for this the longest day you have to live. As for the fellow

who has got your money, I don’t half like him. Did not you see me tip

you the wink to leave off in time?” I answered, “No.” “No,” continued

he; “you was too eager to mind anything but the game. But, harkee,”

said he in a whisper, “are you satisfied of that young man’s honesty?

His looks are a little suspicious—but I may be mistaken; he made a

great many grimaces while he stood behind you, this is a very wicked

town.” I told him I was very well convinced of my comrade’s integrity

and, that the grimaces he mentioned were doubtless owing to his anxiety

of my loss. “Oh ho! if that be the case, I ask his pardon. Landlord,

see what’s to pay.” The reckoning amounted to eighteenpence, which,

having discharged, the gentleman shook us both by the hand, and, saying

he should be very glad to see us again, departed.

CHAPTER XV

Strap moralises—presents his purse to me—we inform our landlord of our

misfortune—he unravels the mystery—I present myself to Cringer—he

recommends and turns me over to Mr. Staytape—I become acquainted with a

fellow dependent, who explains the character of Cringer and

Staytape—and informs me of the method to be pursued at the Navy Office

and Surgeons’ Hall—Strap is employed

In our way to our lodging, after a profound silence on both sides,

Strap, with a hideous groan, observed that we had brought our pigs to a

fine market. To this observation I made no reply, and he went on: “God

send us well out of this place; we have not been in London eight and

forty hours, and I believe we have met with eight and forty thousand

misfortunes. We have been jeered, reproached, buffeted, and at last

stript of our money; and I suppose by and bye we shall be stript of our

skins. Indeed as to the money part of it, that was owing to our own

folly.—Solomon says, ‘Bray a fool in a mortar, and he will never be

wise.’ Ah! God help us, an ounce of prudence is worth a pound of gold.”

This was no time for him to tamper with my disposition, already mad

with my loss, and inflamed with resentment against him for having

refused me a little money to attempt to retrieve it. I therefore turned

towards him with a stern countenance, and asked, who he called fool?

Being altogether unaccustomed to such looks from me, he stood still,

and stared in my face for some time; then, with some confusion,

uttered, “Fool! I called nobody fool but myself; I am sure I am the

greatest fool of the two, for being so much concerned at other people’s

misfortunes; but ‘Nemo omnibus horis sapit’—that’s all, that’s all.”

Upon which a silence ensued, which brought us to our lodging, where I

threw myself upon the bed in an agony of despair, resolved to perish

rather than apply to my companion, or any other body, for relief; but

Strap, who knew my temper, and whose heart bled within him for my

distress, after some pause came to the bedside, and, putting a leathern

purse into my hand, burst into tears, crying, “I know what you think,

but I scorn your thought. There’s all I have in the world, take it, and

I’ll perhaps get more for you before that be done. If not, I’ll beg for

you, steal for you, go through the wide world with you, and stay with

you; for though I be a poor cobbler’s son, I am no scout.” I was so

much touched with the generous passion of this poor creature, that I

could not refrain from weeping also, and we mingled our tears together

for some time. Upon examining the purse, I found in it two half-guineas

and half-a-crown, which I would have returned to him, saying, he knew

better than I how to manage it, but he, absolutely refused my proposal

and told me it was more reasonable and decent that he should depend

upon me, who was a gentleman, than that I should be controlled by him.

After this friendly contest was over, and our minds more at ease, we

informed our landlord of what had happened to us, taking care to

conceal the extremity to which we were reduced. He no sooner heard the

story, than he assured us we had been grievously imposed upon by a

couple of sharpers, who were associates; and that this polite, honest,

friendly, humane person, who had treated us so civilly, was no other

than a rascally money-dropper, who made it his business to decoy

strangers in that manner to one of his own haunts, where an accomplice

or two were always waiting to assist in pillaging the prey he had run

down. Here the good man recounted a great many stories of people who

has been seduced, cheated, pilfered, beat—nay, even murdered by such

villains. I was confounded at the artifice and wickedness of mankind;

and Strap, lifting up his eyes and hands to heaven, prayed that God

would deliver him from such scenes of iniquity, for surely the devil

had set up his throne in London. Our landlord being curious to know

what reception we had met with at Mr. Cringer’s, we acquainted him with

the particulars, at which he shook his head, and told us we had not

gone the right way to work; that there was nothing to be done with a

member of parliament without a bribe; that the servant was commonly

infected with the master’s disease, and expected to be paid for his

work, as well as his betters. He therefore advised me to give the

footman a shilling the next time I should desire admittance to my

patron, or else I should scarce find an opportunity to deliver my

letter. Accordingly, next morning, when the door was opened, I slipped

a shilling into his hand, and told him I had a letter for his master. I

found the good effect of my liberality; for the fellow let me in

immediately, and, taking the letter out of my hand, desired me to wait

in a kind of passage for an answer. In this place I continued standing

for three-quarters-of-an-hour, during which time I saw a great many

young fellows whom I formerly knew in Scotland pass and repass, with an

air of familiarity, in their way to and from the audience-chamber;

while I was fain to stand shivering in the cold, and turn my back to

them that they might not perceive the lowness of my condition. At

length, Mr. Cringer came out to see a young gentleman to the door, who

was no other than Squire Gawky, dressed in a very gay suit of clothes;

at parting Mr. Cringer shook him by the hand and told him he hoped to

have the pleasure of his company at dinner. Then turning about towards

me, asked what were my commands? When he understood I was the person

who had brought the letter from Mr. Crab, he affected to recollect my

name, which, however, he pretended he could not do till he had

consulted the letter again; to save him the trouble, I told him my name

was Random. Upon which he went on, “Ay, ay, Random, Random, Random—I

think I remember the name:” and very well he might, for this very

individual, Mr. Cringer, had many a time rode before my grandfather’s

cloak-bag, in quality of a footman. “Well,” says he, “you propose to go

on board a man-of-war as surgeon’s mate.” I replied by a low bow. “I

believe it will be a difficult matter,” continued he, “to procure a

warrant, there being already such a swarm of Scotch surgeons at the

Navy Office, in expectation of the next vacancy, that the commissioners

are afraid of being torn to pieces, and have actually applied for a

guard to protect them. However, some ships will soon be put in

commission, and then we shall see what’s to be done.” So saying, he

left me, exceedingly mortified at the different reception Mr. Gawky and

I had met with from this upstart, proud, mean member, who, I imagined,

would have been glad of an opportunity to be grateful for the

obligations he owed to my family.

At my return, I was surprised with the agreeable news of Strap’s being

employed, on the recommendation of his friend, the schoolmaster, by a

periwig-maker in the neighbourhood, who allowed him five shillings per

week besides bed and board. I continued to dance attendance every other

morning at the levee of Mr. Cringer, during a fortnight; in which time

I became acquainted with a young fellow of my own country and

profession, who also depended on the member’s interest, but was treated

with much more respect than I, both by the servants and master, and

often admitted into a parlour, where there was a fire for the

convenience of the better sort of those who waited for him. Thither I

was never permitted to penetrate, on account of my appearance, which

was not at all fashionable; but was obliged to stand blowing my fingers

in a cold lobby, and take the first opportunity of Mr. Cringer’s going

to the door to speak with him.

One day, while I enjoyed this occasion a person was introduced, whom

Mr. Cringer no sooner saw, than, running towards him, he saluted him

with a low bow to the very ground, and afterwards shaking him by the

hand with great heartiness and familiarity, called him his good friend,

and asked very kindly after Mrs. Staytape and the young ladies; then,

after a whisper, which continued some minutes, wherein I overheard the

word ‘honour’ repeated several times with great emphasis, Mr. Cringer

introduced me to this gentleman, as to a person whose advice and

assistance I might depend upon; and having given me his direction,

followed me to the door, where he told me I need not give myself the

trouble to call at his house any more, for Mr. Staytape would do my

business. At that instant my fellow-dependent, coming out after me,

overheard the discourse of Mr. Cringer, and, making up to me in the

street, accosted me very civilly: this address I looked upon as no

small honour, considering the figure he made, for he was dressed in a

blue frock with a button, a green silk waistcoat, trimmed with gold,

black velvet breeches, white silk stockings, silver buckles, a

gold-laced hat, a spencer-wig, and a silver-hilted hanger, with a fine

clouded can in his hand. “I perceive,” says he, “you are but lately

come from Scotland; pray what may your business with Mr. Cringer be? I

suppose it is no secret and I may possibly give you some advice that

will be serviceable, for I have been surgeon’s second mate on board of

a seventy-gun ship, and consequently know a good deal of the world.”

I made no scruple to disclose my situation, which, when he had learned,

he shook his head, and told me he had been pretty much, in the same

circumstances about a year ago: that he had relied on Cringer’s

promises, until his money (which was considerable) as well as his

credit, was quite exhausted; and when he wrote to his relations for a

fresh supply, instead of money he received nothing but reproaches, and

the epithets of idle, debauched fellow. That after he had waited at the

Navy Office many months for a warrant to no purpose, he was fain to

pawn some of his clothes, which raised a small sum wherewith he bribed

the secretary, who soon procured a warrant for him, notwithstanding he

had affirmed the same day, that there was not one vacancy. That he had

gone on board, where he remained nine months, at the end of which the

ship was put out of commission, and he said the company were to be paid

off in Broad Street the very next day. That relations being reconciled

to him, had charged him to pay his devoirs regularly to Mr. Cringer,

who had informed them by letter that his interest alone had procured

the warrant; in obedience to which command he came to his levee every

morning; as I saw, though he looked upon him to be a very pitiful

scoundrel. In conclusion, he asked me if I had yet passed at Surgeons’

Hall? To which question I answered, I did not so much as know it was

necessary. “Necessary:” cried he, “Oh then I find I must instruct you:

come along with me, and I’ll give you information about that matter.”

So saying, he carried me into an ale-house, where I called for some

beer, and bread and cheese, on which we breakfasted. While we sat in

this place, he told me I must first go to the Navy Office, and write to

the Board, desiring them to order a letter for me to Surgeon’s Hall,

that I might be examined, touching my skill in surgery. That the

surgeons, after having examined me, would give me my qualification

sealed up in form of a letter directed to the commissioners, which

qualification I must deliver to the secretary of the Board, who would

open it in my presence, and read the contents; after which I must

employ my interest to be provided for as soon as possible. That the

expense of his qualification for second mate of a third-rate, amounted

to thirteen shillings, exclusive of the warrant, which cost him

half-a-guinea and half-a-crown, besides a present to the secretary,

which consisted of a three-pound twelve piece. This calculation was

like a thunderbolt to me, whose whole fortune did not amount to twelve

shillings. I accordingly made him acquainted with this part of my

distress, after having thanked him for his information and advice. He

condoled me on this occasion; but bade me be of good cheer, for he had

conceived a friendship for me, and would make all things easy. He was

ran out at present, but to-morrow or next day, he was certain of

receiving a considerable sum; of which he would lend me what would be

sufficient to answer my exigencies. This frank declaration pleased me

so much, that I pulled out my purse, and emptied it before him, begging

him to take what he pleased for pocket-expense, until he should receive

his own money. With a good deal of pressing, he was prevailed upon to

take five shillings telling me that he might have what money he wanted

at any time for the trouble of going into the city; but as he had met

with me, he would defer his going thither till tomorrow, when I should

go along with him, and he would put me in the way of acting for myself,

without a servile dependence on that rascal Cringer, much less on the

tailor to whom he heard him turn me over. “How!” cried I, “is Mr.

Staytape a tailor.” “No less, I assure you,” answered he, “and, I

confess, more likely to serve you than the member; for, provided you

can entertain him with politics and conundrums, you may have credit

with him for as many and as rich clothes as you please.” I told him, I

was utterly ignorant of both, and so incensed at Cringer’s usage, that

I would never set foot within his door again.

After a good deal more conversation, my new acquaintance and I parted,

having made an appointment to meet next day at the same place; in order

to set out for the city. I went immediately to Strap and related

everything which had happened, but he did not at all approve of my

being so forward to lend money to a stranger, especially as we had

already been so much imposed upon by appearances. “However,” said he,

“if you are sure he is a Scotchman, I believe you are safe.”

CHAPTER XVI

My new acquaintance breaks an appointment—I proceed, by myself, to the

Navy Office—address me to a person there, who assists me with

advice—write to the Board, they grant me a letter to the Surgeons at

the Hall—am informed of the beau’s name and character—find him—he makes

me his confidant in an amour—desires me to pawn my linen for his

occasions—recover what I lent him—some curious observations on Strap on

that occasion—his vanity.

In the morning I rose and went to the place of rendezvous, where I

waited two hours in vain, and was so exasperated against him for

breaking his appointment, that I set out for the city by myself, in

hope of finding the villain, and being revenged on him for his breach

of promise. At length I found myself at the Navy Office, which I

entered, and saw crowds of young fellows walking below, many of whom

made no better appearance than myself. I consulted the physiognomy of

each, and at last made up to one whose countenance I liked, and asked,

if he could instruct me in the form of the letter which was to be sent

to the Board to obtain an order for examination? He answered me in

broad Scotch, that he would show me the copy of what he had writ for

himself, by direction of another who know the form, and accordingly

pulled it out of his pocket for my perusal; and told me that, if I was

expeditious, I might send it into the Board before dinner, for they did

no business in the afternoon. He then went with me to coffee-house hard

by, where I wrote the letter, which was immediately delivered to the

messenger, who told me I might expect an order to-morrow about the same

time.

Having transacted this piece of business, my mind was a good deal

composed; and as I had met with so much civility from the stranger, I

desired further acquaintance with him, fully resolved, however, not to

be deceived by him so much to my prejudice as I had been by the beau.

He agreed to dine with me at the cook’s shop which I frequented; and on

our way thither carried me to ’Change, where I was in hopes of finding

Mr. Jackson (for that was the name of the person who had broke his

appointment), I sought him there to no purpose, and on our way towards

the other end of the town imparted to my companion his behaviour

towards me; upon which he gave me to understand, that he was no

stranger to the name of Bean Jackson (so he was called at the Navy

Office), although he did not know him personally; that he had the

character of a good-natured careless fellow, who made no scruple of

borrowing from any that would lend; that most people who knew him

believed he had a good principle at bottom, but his extravagance was

such, he would probably never have it in his power to manifest the

honesty of his intention. This made me sweat for my five shillings,

which I nevertheless did not altogether despair of recovering, provided

I could find out the debtor.

This young man likewise added another circumstance of Squire Jackson’s

history, which was, that being destitute of all means to equip himself

for sea, when he received his last warrant, he had been recommended to

a person who lent him a little money, after he had signed a will

entitling that person to lift his wages when they should become due, as

also to inherit his effects in case of his death. That he was still

under the tutorage and direction of that gentleman, who advanced him

small sums from time to time upon this security, at the rate of fifty

per cent. But at present his credit was very low, because his funds

would do little more than pay what he had already received, this

moderate interest included. After the stranger (whose name was

Thompson) had entertained me with this account of Jackson, he informed

me that he himself had passed for third mate of a third-rate, about

four months ago; since which time he had constantly attended at the

Navy Office, in hope of a warrant, having been assured from the

beginning, both by a Scotch member, and one of the commissioners to

whom the member recommended him, that he should be put into the first

vacancy; notwithstanding which promise, he had the mortification to see

six or seven appointed in the same station almost every week—that now

being utterly impoverished, his sole hope consisted in the promise of a

friend lately come to town, to lend him a small matter, for a present

to the secretary; without which he was persuaded he might wait a

thousand years to no purpose. I conceived a mighty liking for this

young fellow, which (I believe) proceeded from the similitude of our

fortunes. We spent the whole day together; and as he lived at Wapping I

desired him to take a share of my bed.

Next day we returned to the Navy Office, where, after being called

before the Board, and questioned about the place of my nativity and

education, they ordered a letter to be made out for me, which, upon

paying half-a-crown to the clerk, I received, and delivered into the

hands of the clerk at Surgeons’ Hall, together with a shilling for his

trouble in registering my name. By this time my whole stock was

diminished to two shillings, and I saw not the least prospect of

relief, even for present subsistence, much less to enable me to pay the

fees at Surgeons’ Hall for my examination, which would come on in a

fortnight. In this state of perplexity, I consulted Strap, who assured

me he would pawn everything he had in the world, even to his razors,

before I should want: but this expedient I absolutely rejected, telling

him, I would a thousand times rather list for a soldier, of which I had

some thoughts, than be any longer a burden to him. At the word soldier,

he grew pale as death, and begged on his knees I would think no more of

that scheme. “God preserve us all in our right wits!” cried he, “would

you turn soldier, and perhaps be sent abroad against the Spaniards,

where you must stand and be shot at like a woodcock? Heaven keep cold

lead out of my carcase, and let me die in a bed like a Christian, as

all my forefathers have done. What signifies all earthly riches and

honour, if one enjoys not content? and, hereafter, there is no respect

of persons. Better be a poor honest barber with a good conscience, and

time to repent of my sins upon my death-bed, than be cut off (God bless

us!) by a musket-shot, as it were in the very flower of one’s age, in

the pursuit of riches and fame. What signify riches, my dear friend? do

they not make unto themselves wings and fly away? as the wise man

saith. I could also mention many other sayings in contempt of riches,

both from the Bible and other good books; but I know you are not very

fond of those things, I shall only assure you, that if you take on to

be a soldier, I will do the same; and then if we should both be slain,

you will not only have your own blood to answer for, but mine also: and

peradventure the lives of all those whom we shall kill in battle.

Therefore I pray you, consider whether you will sit down contented with

small things and share the fruits of my industry in peace, till

Providence shall send better tidings; or, by your despair, plunge both

our souls and bodies into everlasting perdition, which God of his

infinite mercy forbid!” I could not help smiling at this harangue,

which was delivered with great earnestness, the tears standing in his

eyes all the time, and promised to do nothing of that sort without his

consent and concurrence. He was much comforted with this declaration;

and told me in a few days he should receive a week’s wages, which

should be at my service, but advised me in the meantime to go in quest

of Jackson, and recover, if possible, what he had borrowed of me. I

accordingly trudged about from one end of the town to the other, for

several days, without being able to learn anything certain concerning

him: and, one day being extremely hungry, and allured by the steams

that regaled my nostrils from a boiling cellar, I went down with an

intention to gratify my appetite with a twopennyworth of beef; when to

my no small surprise found Mr. Jackson sitting at dinner with a

footman. He no sooner perceived me than he got up and shook me by the

hands saying, he was glad to see me, for he intended to have called at

my lodgings in the afternoon. I was so well pleased at this rencounter

and the apologies he made for not keeping his appointment, that I

forgot my resentment, and sat down to dinner, with the happy

expectation of not only recovering my own money before we should part,

but also of reaping the benefit of his promise to lend me wherewithal

to pass examination; and this hope my sanguine complexion suggested,

though the account Thompson gave me of him ought to have moderated my

expectation.

When we had feasted sumptuously, he took his leave of the footman, and

adjourned with me to an ale-house hard by, where, after shaking me by

the hand again, he began thus: “I suppose you think me a sad dog, Mr.

Random, and I do confess that appearances are against me. But I dare

say you will forgive me when I tell you, my not coming at the time

appointed was owing to a peremptory message I received from a certain

lady, whom, harkee! (but this is a great secret) I am to marry very

soon. You think this strange, perhaps, but it is not less true for all

that—a five thousand pounder, I’ll assure you, besides expectations.

For my own part, devil take me if I know what any woman can see

engaging about me—but a whim, you know—and then one would not balk

one’s good fortune. You saw that footman who dined with us—he’s one of

the honestest fellows that ever wore livery. You must know it was by

his means I was introduced to her, for he made me first acquainted with

her woman, who is his mistress—ay, many a crown has he and his

sweetheart had of my money—but what of that? things are now brought to

a bearing. I have—(come a little this way) I have proposed marriage,

and the day is fixed—she’s a charming creature, and writes like an

angel! She can repeat all the English tragedies as well as ever a

player in Drury Lane!-and, indeed, is so fond of plays, that to be near

the stage she has taken lodgings in a court hard by the theatre; but

you shall see—you shall see—here’s the last letter she sent me.” With

these words, he put it into my hand, and I read (to the best of my

remembrance) as follows:

‘Dear Kreeter—As you are the animable hopjack of my contemplayshins,

your aydear is infernally skimming before my keymerycal fansee, when

Murfy sends his puppies to the heys of slipping mortals; and when Febus

shines from his merry dying throne; whereupon I shall canseif old time

has lost his pinners, as also cubit his harrows, until thou enjoy sweet

propose in the loafseek harms of thy very faithfool to commend,

Clayrender

Wingar Yard, Drury Lane,

January 12th.’

While I was reading, he seemed to be in an ecstasy, rubbing his hands,

and bursting out into fits of laughter; at last he caught hold of my

hand, and squeezing it, cried, “There—a style for you! What do you

think of this billet-doux?” I answered, “It might be sublime for aught I

knew, for it was altogether above my comprehension.” “Oh, ho!” said he,

“I believe it is—both tender and sublime; she’s a divine creature! and

so doats upon me! Let me see—what shall I do with this money, when I

have once got it into my hands? In the first place, I shall do for you.

I’m a man of few words—-but say no more that’s determined; whether

would you advise me, to purchase some post, by which I may rise in the

state, or lay out my wife’s fortune in land, and retire to the country

at once?” I gave my opinion without hesitation, that he could not do

better than buy an estate and improve; especially since he had already

seen so much of the world. Then I launched out into the praises of a

country life, as described by the poets whose works I had read. He

seemed to relish my advice, but withal told me, that although he had

seen a great deal of the world both at land and sea, having cruised

three whole months in the Channel, yet he should not be satisfied until

he had visited France, which he proposed to do before he should settle;

and to carry his wife along with him. I had nothing to object to his

proposal; and asked how soon he hoped to be happy. “As to that,” he

replied, “nothing obstructs my happiness but the want of a little ready

cash; for you must know, my friend in the city has gone out of town for

a week or two, but I unfortunately missed my pay at Broad Street, by

being detained too long by the dear charmer—but there will be a recall

at Chatham next week, whither the ship’s books are sent, and I have

commissioned a friend in that place to receive the money.” “If that be

all,” said I, “there’s no great harm in deferring your marriage a few

days.” “Yes, faith, but there is,” said he; “you don’t know how many

rivals I have, who would take all advantages against me. I would not

balk the impatience of her passion for the world—the least appearance

of coldness or indifference would ruin all; and such offers don’t occur

every day.”

I acquiesced in this observation, and inquired how he intended to

proceed. At this question he rubbed his chin, and said, “Why, truly, I

must be obliged to some friend or other—do you know nobody that would

lend me a small sum for a day or two?” I assured him, I was such an

utter stranger in London, that I did not believe I could borrow a

guinea if my life depended upon it. “No!” said he, “that’s hard—that’s

hard! I wish I had anything to pawn—upon my soul, you have got

excellent linen (feeling the sleeve of my shirt); how many shirts of

that kind have you got?” I answered, “Six ruffled, and six plain.” At

which he testified great surprise, and declared that no gentleman ought

to have more than four. “How many d’ye think I have got?” continued he;

“but this and another, as I hope to be saved! and I dare say we shall

be able to raise a good sum out of your superfluity: let me see—let me

see—each of these shirts is worth sixteen shillings at a moderate

computation—now, suppose we pawn them for half-price—eight times eight

is sixty-four, that’s three pounds four; that will do—give me your

hand.” “Softly, softly, Mr. Jackson,” said I; “don’t dispose of my

linen without my consent: first pay me the crown you owe me, and then

we shall talk of other matters.” He protested that he had not above one

shilling in his pocket, but that he would pay me out of the first of

the money raised from the shirts. This piece of assurance incensed me

so much that I swore I would not part with him until I had received

satisfaction for what I had lent him; and as for the shirts, I would

not pawn one of them to save him from the gallows.

At this expression he laughed aloud, and then complained it was very

hard that I should refuse him a trifle that would infallibly enable him

not only to make his own fortune but mine also. “You talk of pawning my

shirts,” said I; “suppose you should sell this hanger, Mr. Jackson. I

believe it would fetch a good round sum.” “No, hang it!” said he, “I

can’t appear decently without my hanger, lest it should go.” However,

seeing me inflexible with regard to my linen, he at length unbuckled

his hanger, and, showing me the three blue balls, desired me to carry

it thither and pawn it for two guineas. This office I would by no means

have performed, had I seen any likelihood of having my money otherwise;

but not willing, out of a piece of false delicacy, to neglect the only

opportunity I should perhaps ever have, I ventured into a pawnbroker’s

shop, where I demanded two guineas on the pledge, in the name of Thomas

Williams. “Two guineas!” said the pawnbroker, looking at the hanger;

“this piece of goods has been here several times before for thirty

shillings: however, since I believe the gentleman to whom it belongs

will redeem it, he shall have what he wants;” and accordingly he paid me

the money, which I carried to the house where I had left Jackson; and,

calling for change, counted out to him seven and thirty shillings,

reserving the other five for myself. After looking at the money some

time, he said, “Well! it don’t signify—this won’t do my business; so

you may as well take half-a-guinea, or a whole one, as the five

shillings you have kept.” I thanked him kindly, but refused to accept

of any more than was my due, because I had no prospect of repaying it.

Upon which declaration, he stared in my face, and told me, I was

excessively raw or I would not talk in that manner. “Upon my word,”

cried he, “I have a very bad opinion of a young fellow who won’t borrow

of his friend when he is in want—’tis the sign of a sneaking spirit.

Come, come, Random, give me back the five shillings, and take this

half-guinea, and if ever you are able to pay me, I believe you will: if

not, I shall never ask it.”

When I reflected upon my present necessity, I suffered myself to be

persuaded, and after making my acknowledgments to Mr. Jackson, who

offered to treat me with a play, I returned to my lodgings with a much

better opinion of this gentleman than I had in the morning; and at

night imparted my day’s adventure to Strap, who rejoiced at my good

luck, saying, “I told you if he was a Scotchman you was safe enough—and

who knows but this marriage may make us all. You have heard, I suppose,

as how a countryman of ours, a journeyman baker, ran away with a great

lady of this town, and now keeps his coach. I say nothing; but

yesterday morning as I was shaving a gentleman at his own house, there

was a young lady in the room, and she threw so many sheep’s eyes at a

certain person whom I shall not name, that my heart went knock, knock,

knock, like a fulling mill, and my hand sh-sh-shook so much that I

sliced a piece of skin off the gentleman’s nose; whereby he uttered a

deadly oath, and was going to horsewhip me, when she prevented him, and

made my peace. Is not a journeyman barber as good as a journeyman

baker? The only difference is, the baker uses flour for the belly, and

the barber rises it for the head: and as the head is a more noble

member than the belly, so is a barber more noble than a baker—for

what’s the belly without the head? Besides, I am told, he could neither

read nor write; now you know I can do both, and moreover, speak

Latin—but I will say no more, for I despise vanity—nothing is more vain

than vanity.” With these words, he pulled out of his pocket a

wax-candle’s end, which he applied to his forehead; and upon

examination, I found had combed his own hair over the toupee of his

wig, and was, indeed, in his whole dress, become a very smart shaver. I

congratulated him on his prospect with a satirical smile, which he

understood very well; and, shaking his head, observed, I had very

little faith, but the truth would come to light in spite of my

incredulity.

CHAPTER XVII

I go to Surgeons’ Hall, when I meet Mr. Jackson—am examined—a fierce

dispute arises between two of the examiners—Jackson disguises himself

to attract respect—irises himself to attract respect—is detected—in

hazard of being sent to Bridewell—he treats us at a Tavern—carries us

to a Night-house—A troublesome adventure there—we are committed to the

Round-house—carried before a Justice—his behaviour

With the assistance of this faithful adherent, who gave me almost all

the money he earned, I preserved my half-guinea entire till the day of

examination, when I went with a quaking heart to Surgeons’ Hall, in

order to undergo that ceremony. Among a crowd of young fellows who

walked in the outward hall, I perceived Mr. Jackson, to whom I

immediately went up; and, inquiring into the state of his love affair,

understood it was still undetermined, by reason of his friend’s

absence, and the delay of the recall at Chatham, which put it out of

his power to bring it to a conclusion. I then asked what his business

was in this place; he replied, he was resolved to have two strings to

his bow, that in case the one failed, he might use the other; and, with

this view, he was to pass that night for a higher qualification. At

that instant, a young fellow came out from the place of examination,

with a pale countenance, his lip quivering, and his looks as wild as if

he had seen a ghost. He no sooner appeared, than we all flocked about

him with the utmost eagerness to know what reception he had met with;

which, after some pause, he described, recounting all the questions

they had asked, with the answers he made. In this manner we obliged no

less than twelve to recapitulate, which, now the danger was past, they

did with pleasure, before it fell to my lot: at length the beadle

called my name, with a voice that made me tremble. However, there was

no remedy. I was conducted into a large hall, where I saw about a dozen

of grim faces sitting at a long table: one of whom bade me come

forward, in such an imperious tone, that I was actually for a minute or

two bereft of my senses. The first question he put to me was, “Where

was you born?” To which I answered, “In Scotland.” “In Scotland,” said

he; “I know that very well—we have scarce any other countrymen to

examine here—you Scotchmen have overspread us of late as the locusts

did Egypt. I ask you in what part of Scotland was you born?” I named

the place of my nativity, which he had never heard of; he then

proceeded to interrogate me about my age, the town where I served my

time, with the term of my apprenticeship; and when I informed him that

I served three years only, he fell into a violent passion, swore it was

a shame and a scandal to send such raw boys into the world as surgeons;

that it was great presumption in me, and an affront upon the English,

to pretend sufficient skill in my business, having served so short a

time, when every apprentice in England was bound seven years at least:

that my friends would have done better if they had made me a weaver or

shoemaker; but their pride would have me a gentleman, he supposed, at

any rate, and their poverty could not afford the necessary education.

This exordium did not at all contribute to the recovery of my spirits;

but on the contrary, reduced me to such a situation that I was scarcely

able to stand; which being perceived by a plump gentleman who sat

opposite to me with a skull before him, he said, Mr. Snarler was too

severe upon the young man; and, turning towards me, told me I need not

be afraid, for nobody would do me any harm: then, bidding me take time

to recollect myself, he examined me, touching the operation of the

trepan, and was very well satisfied with my answers. The next person

who questioned me was a wag, who began by asking if I had ever seen

amputation performed; and I replying in the affirmative, he shook his

head and said, “What! upon a dead subject, I suppose?” “If,” continued

he, “during an engagement at sea, a man should be brought to you with

his head shot off, how would you behave?” After some hesitation, I

owned such a case had never come under my observation, neither did I

remember to have seen any method of care proposed for such an accident,

in any of the systems of surgery I had perused.

Whether it was owing to the simplicity of my answer, or the archness of

the question, I know not, but every member at the board deigned to

smile, except Mr. Snarler, who seemed to have very little of the

‘animal risible’ in his constitution. The facetious member, encouraged

by the success of his last joke, went on thus: “Suppose you was called

to a patient of a plethoric habit, who has been bruised by a fall, what

would you do?” I answered, “I would bleed him immediately.” “What!”

said he, “before you had tied up his arm?” But this stroke of wit not

answering his expectation, he desired me to advance to the gentleman

who sat next him; and who, with a pert air, asked, what method of cure

I would follow in wounds of the intestines. I repeated the method of

care as it is prescribed by the best chirurgical writers, which he

heard to an end, and then said with a supercilious smile, “So you think

with such treatment the patient might recover?” I told him I saw

nothing to make me think otherwise. “That may be,” resumed he; “I won’t

answer for your foresight, but did you ever know a case of this kind

succeed?” I acknowledged I did not, and was about to tell him I had

never seen a wounded intestine; but he stopt me, by saying, with some

precipitation, “Nor never will! I affirm that all wounds of the

intestines, whether great or small, are mortal.” “Pardon me, brother,”

says the fat gentleman, “there is very good authority—” Here he was

interrupted by the other with—“Sir, excuse me, I despise all

authority—Nullius in verbo—I stand on my own bottom.” “But sir, sir,”

replied his antagonist, “the reason of the thing shows—” “A fig for

reason,” cries this sufficient member; “I laugh at reason; give me

ocular demonstratio.” The corpulent gentleman began to wax warm, and

observed, that no man acquainted with the anatomy of the parts would

advance such an extravagant assertion. This inuendo enraged the other

so much, that he started up, and in a furious tone exclaimed: “What,

Sir! do you question my knowledge in anatomy?”

By this time, all the examiners had espoused the opinion of one or

other of the disputants, and raised their voices altogether, when the

chairman commanded silence, and ordered me to withdraw. In less than a

quarter of an hour, I was called in again, received my qualification

scaled up, and was ordered to pay five shillings. I laid down my

half-guinea upon the table, and stood some time, until one of them bade

me begone; to this I replied, “I will when I have got my change:” upon

which another threw me five shillings and sixpence, saying, I should

not be a true Scotchman if I went away without my change. I was

afterwards obliged to give three shillings and sixpence to the beadles,

and a shilling to an old woman who swept the hall: this disbursement

sank my finances to thirteen-pence halfpenny, with which I was sneaking

off, when Jackson, perceiving it, came up to me, and begged I would

tarry for him, and he would accompany me to the other end of the town,

as soon as his examination should be over. I could not refuse this to a

person that was so much my friend; but I was astonished at the change

of his dress which was varied in half-an-hour from what I have already

described to a very grotesque fashion. His head was covered with an old

smoke tie-wig that did not boast one crooked hair, and a slouched hat

over it, which would have very well become a chimney-sweeper, or a

dustman; his neck was adorned with a black crape, the ends of which he

had twisted, and fixed in the button-hole of a shabby greatcoat that

wrapped up his whole body; his white silk stockings were converted into

black worsted hose: and his countenance was rendered venerable by

wrinkles, and a beard of his own painting. When I expressed my surprise

at this metamorphosis, he laughed, and told me it was done by the

advice and assistance of a friend, who lived over the way, and would

certainly produce something very much to his advantage; for it gave him

the appearance of age, which never fails of attracting respect. I

applauded his sagacity, and waited with impatience for the effects of

it. At length he was called in; but whether the oddness of his

appearance excited a curiosity more than small in the board, or his

behaviour was not suitable to his figure, I know not, he was discovered

to be an imposter, and put into the hands of the beadle in order to be

sent to Bridewell. So that instead of seeing him come out with a

cheerful countenance, and a surgeon’s qualification in his hand, I

perceived him led through the outer hall as a prisoner; and was very

much alarmed, and anxious to know the occasion; when he called with a

lamentable voice, and a piteous aspect to me, and some others who know

him, “For God’s sake, gentlemen bear witness that I am the same

individual John Jackson who served as surgeon’s second mate on board

the Elizabeth, or else I shall go to Bridewell!”

It would have been impossible for the most austere hermit that ever

lived to have refrained from laughing at his appearance and address: we

therefore indulged ourselves a good while at his expense, and

afterwards pleaded his cause so effectually with the beadle who was

gratified with half-a-crown, that the prisoner was dismissed, and in a

few moments renewed his former gaiety—swearing, since the board had

refused his money, he would spend every shilling before he went to bed,

in treating his friends; at the same time inviting us all to favour him

with our company. It was now ten o’clock at night, and, as I had a

great way to walk through streets that were utterly unknown to me, I

was prevailed on to be of their party, in hopes he would afterwards

accompany me to my lodgings, according to his promise. He conducted me

to his friend’s house, who kept a tavern over the way where we

continued drinking punch, until the liquor mounted up to our heads, and

made us all extremely frolicsome. I, in particular, was so much

elevated, that nothing would serve me but a wench; at which demand

Jackson expressed much joy, and assured me I should have my desire.

before we parted Accordingly, when he had paid the reckoning, we

sallied out, roaring and singing; and were conducted by our leader to a

place of nocturnal entertainment, where Mr. Jackson’s dress attracted

the assiduities of two or three nymphs, who loaded him with caresses,

in return for the arrack punch with which he treated them, till at

length sleep began to exert his power over us all, and our conductor

called “To pay.” When the bill was brought, which amounted to twelve

shillings, he put his hand in his pocket, but might have saved himself

the trouble, for his purse was gone. This accident disconcerted him a

good deal at first; but after some recollection, he seized the two

ladies who sat by him, one in each hand, and swore if they did not

immediately restore his money he would charge a constable with them.

The good lady at the bar, seeing what passed, whispered something to

the drawer, who went out; and then with great composure, asked what was

the matter? Jackson told her he was robbed, and swore if she refused

him satisfaction, he would have her and her female friends committed to

Bridewell. “Robbed!” cried she, “robbed in my house! Gentlemen and

Ladies, I take you all to witness, this person has scandalised my

reputation.” At that instant, seeing the constable and watch enter, she

proceeded “What! you must not only endeavour by your false aspersions

to ruin my character, but even commit an assault upon my family! Mr.

Constable, I charge you with this uncivil person, who has been guilty

of a riot here; I shall take care and bring an action against him for

defamation.”

While I was reflecting on this melancholy event, which had made me

quite sober, one of the ladies, being piqued at some repartee that

passed between us, cried, “They are all concerned!” and desired the

constable to take us all into custody; an arrest which was performed

instantly, to the utter astonishment and despair of us all, except

Jackson, who having been often in such scrapes, was very little

concerned, and charged the constable, in his turn, with the landlady

and her whole bevy; upon which we were carried altogether prisoners to

the round-house, where Jackson after a word of comfort to us, informed

the constable of his being robbed, to which he said he would swear next

morning before the justice. In a little time the constable, calling

Jackson into another room, spoke to him thus: “I perceive that you and

your company are strangers, and am very sorry for your being involved

in such an ugly business. I have known this woman a great while; she

has kept a notorious house in the neighbourhood this many years; and

although often complained of as a nuisance, still escapes through her

interest with the justices, to whom she and all of her employment pay

contribution quarterly for protection. As she charged me with you

first, her complaint will have the preference, and she can procure

evidence to swear whatsoever she shall please to desire of them; so

that, unless you can make it up before morning, you and your companions

may think yourselves happily quit for a month’s hard labour in

Bridewell. Nay, if she should swear a robbery or an assault against

you, you will be committed to Newgate and tried at the next session at

the Old Bailey for your life.” This last piece of information had such

an effect upon Jackson, that he agreed to make it up, provided his

money might be restored. The constable told him, that, instead of

retrieving what he had lost, he was pretty certain it would cost him

some more before they could come to any composition. But, however, he

had compassion on him, and would, if he pleased, sound them about a

mutual release. The unfortunate beau thanked him for his friendship,

and returning to us, acquainted us with the substance of this dialogue;

while the constable, desiring to speak in private with our adversary,

carried her into the next room, and pleaded, our cause so effectually,

that she condescended to make him umpire: he accordingly proposed an

arbitration, to which we gave our assent; and he fined each party in

three shillings, to be laid out in a bowl of punch, wherein we drowned

all animosities, to the inexpressible joy of my two late acquaintances

and me, who had been extremely uneasy ever since Jackson mentioned

Bridewell and Newgate. By the time we had finished our bowl—to which,

by the bye, I had contributed my last shilling—it was morning, and I

proposed to move homeward, when the constable gave me to understand, he

could discharge no prisoners but by order of the justice, before whom

we must appear. This renewed my chagrin, and I cursed the hour in which

I had yielded to Jackson’s invitation.

About nine o’clock, we were escorted to the house of a certain justice

not many miles distant from Covent Garden, who no sooner saw the

constable enter with a train of prisoners at his heels, than he saluted

him as follows: “So Mr. Constable, you are a diligent man. What den of

rogues have you been scouring?” Then looking at us, who appeared very

much dejected, he continued: “Ay, ay, thieves. I see—old offenders; oh,

your humble servant, Mrs. Harridan! I suppose these fellows have been

taken robbing your house. Yes, yes, here’s an old acquaintance of mine.

You have used expedition,” said he to me, “in returning from

transportation; but we shall save you that trouble for the future—the

surgeons will fetch you from your next transportation, at their

expense.” I assured his worship he was mistaken in me, for he had never

seen me in his life before. To this declaration he replied, “How! you

impudent rascal, dare you say so to my face? Do you think I am to be

imposed upon by that northern accent, which you have assumed? But it

shan’t avail you—you shall find me too far north for you. Here, clerk,

write this fellow’s mittimus. His name is Patrick Gaghagan.” Here Mr.

Jackson interposed, and told him I was a Scotchman lately come to town,

descended of a good family, and that my name was Random. The justice

looked upon this assertion as an outrage upon his memory, on which he

valued himself exceedingly; and strutting up to Jackson, with a fierce

countenance, put his hands in his side, and said, “Who are you, sir? Do

you give me the lie? Take notice, gentlemen, here’s a fellow who

affronts me upon the bench but I’ll lay you fast, sirrah, I will—for

notwithstanding your laced jacket, I believe you are a notorious

felon.” My friend was so much abashed at this menace, which was

thundered out with great vociferation, that he changed colour, and

remained speechless. This confusion his worship took for a symptom of

guilt, and, to complete the discovery, continued his threats, “Now, I

am convinced you are a thief—your face discovers it, you tremble all

over, your conscience won’t lie still—you’ll be hanged, sirrah,”

raising his voice, “you’ll be hanged; and happy had it been for the

world, as well as for your own miserable soul, if you had been

detected, and cut off in the beginning of your career. Come hither,

clerk, and take this man’s confession.” I was in an agony of

consternation, when the constable, going into another room with his

worship, acquainted him with the truth of the story; which having

learned, he returned with a smiling countenance, and, addressing

himself to us all, said it was always his way to terrify young people

when they came before him, that his threats might make a strong

impression on their minds, and deter them from engaging in scenes of

riot and debauchery, which commonly ended before the judge. Thus,

having cloaked his own want of discernment under the disguise of

paternal care, we were dismissed, and I found myself as much lightened

as if a mountain had been lifted off my breast.

CHAPTER XVIII

I carry my qualification to the Navy Office—the nature of it—the

behaviour of the Secretary—Strap’s concern for my absence—a battle

betwixt him a blacksmith—the troublesome consequences of it—his

harangue to me—his friend the schoolmaster recommends me to a French

Apothecary, who entertains me as a journeyman

I would most willingly have gone home to sleep, but was told by my

companions, that we must deliver our letters of qualification at the

Navy office, before one o’clock. Accordingly, we went thither, and gave

them to the secretary, who opened and read them, and I was mightily

pleased to find myself qualified for second mate of a third-rate. When

he had stuck them all together on a file, one of our company asked if

there were any vacancies; to which interrogation he answered “No!” Then

I ventured to inquire if many ships were to be put in commission soon.

At which question he surveyed me with a look of ineffable contempt;

and, pushing us out of his office, locked the door without deigning us

another word. We went down stairs, and conferred together on our

expectations, when I understood that each of them had been recommended

to one or other of the commissioners, and each of them promised the

first vacancy that should fall; but that none of them relied solely

upon that interest, without a present to the secretary, with whom some

of the commissioners went snacks. For which reason, each of them had

provided a small purse; and I was asked what I proposed to give. This

was a vexatious question to me who (far from being in a capacity to

gratify a ravenous secretary) had not wherewithal to purchase a dinner.

I therefore answered, I had not yet determined what to give; and

sneaked off toward my own lodging, lamenting my fate all the way, and

inveighing with much bitterness against the barbarity of my

grandfather, and the sordid avarice of my relations, who left me a prey

to contempt and indigence.

Full of these disagreeable reflections, I arrived at the house where I

lodged, and relieved my landlord from great anxiety on my account; for

this honest man believed I had met with some dismal accident, and that

he never should see me again. Strap, who had come to visit me in the

morning, understanding I had been abroad all night, was almost

distracted, and after having obtained leave of his master, had gone in

quest of me, though he was even more ignorant of the town than I. Not

being willing to inform the landlord of my adventure, I told him I had

met an acquaintance at Surgeons’ Hall, with whom I spent the evening

and night; but being very much infested with bugs, I had not slept

much, and therefore intended to take a little repose; so saying, I went

to bed, and desired to be awakened if Strap should happen to come while

I should be asleep. I was accordingly roused by my friend himself, who

entered my chamber about three o’clock in the afternoon, and presented

a figure to my eyes that I could scarce believe real. In short, this

affectionate shaver, setting out towards Surgeons’ Hall, had inquired

for me there to no purpose: from whence he found his way to the Navy

Office, where he could hear no tidings of me, because I was unknown to

everybody then present; he afterwards went upon ’Change, in hopes of

seeing me upon the Scotch walk, but without success.

At last, being almost in despair of finding me, he resolved to ask

everybody he met in the street, if perchance anyone could give him

information about me! and actually put his resolution in practice, in

spite of the scoffs, curses, and reproaches with which he was answered;

until a blacksmith’s ’prentice seeing him stop a porter with a burden

on his back, and hearing his question, for which he received a hearty

curse, called to him, and asked if the person he inquired after was not

a Scotchman? Strap replied with great eagerness, “Yes, and had on a

brown coat, with long skirts.” “The same!” said the blacksmith. “I saw

him pass by an hour ago,” “Did you so?” cried Strap, rubbing his hands,

“Odd! I am very glad of that—which way went he?” “Towards Tyburn in a

cart,” said he, “if you make good speed, you may get thither time

enough to see him hanged.” This piece of wit incensed my friend to such

a degree, that he called the blacksmith scoundrel, and protested he

would fight him for half-a-farthing. “No, no!” said the other,

stripping; “I’ll have none of your money—you Scotchmen seldom carry

anything about you; but I’ll fight you for love.” There was a ring

immediately formed by the mob: and Strap, finding he could not get off

honourably without fighting, at the same time burning with resentment

against his adversary, quitted his clothes to the care of the

multitude, and the battle began with great violence on the side of

Strap, who in a few minutes exhausted his breath and spirits on his

patient antagonist, who sustained the assault with great coolness, till

finding the barber quite spent, he returned the blows he had lent him,

with such interest, that Strap, after having received three falls on

the hard stones, gave out, and allowed the blacksmith to be the better

man.

The victory being thus decided, it was proposed to adjourn to a cellar

hard by, and drink friends. But when my friend began to gather up his

clothes, he perceived that some honest person or other had made free

with his shirt, neckcloth, hat, and wig, which were carried off; and

probably his coat and waistcoat would have met with the same fate, had

they been worth stealing. It was in vain for him to make a noise, which

only yielded mirth to the spectators; he was fain to get off in this

manner, which he accomplished with much difficulty and appeared before

me all besmeared with blood and dirt. Notwithstanding this misfortune,

such was his transport at finding me safe and sound, that he had almost

stifled and stunk me to death with his embraces. After he had cleaned

himself, and put on one of my shirts, and a woollen nightcap, I

recounted to him the particulars of my night’s campaign, which filled

him with admiration, and made him repeat with great energy an

observation which was often in his mouth, namely, ‘that surely London

is the devil’s drawing-room.’ As neither of us had dined, he desired me

to get up, and the milkwoman coming round at that instant, he went

downstairs, and brought up a quart, with a penny loaf, on which we made

a comfortable meal. He then shared his money with me, which amounted to

eighteen-pence, and left me with an intention to borrow an old wig and

hat of his friend the schoolmaster.

He was no sooner gone, than I began to consider my situation with great

uneasiness, and revolved all the schemes my imagination could suggest,

in order to choose and pursue some one that would procure me bread; for

it is impossible to express the pangs I felt, when I reflected on the

miserable dependence in which I lived at the expense of a poor barber’s

boy. My pride took the alarm, and having no hopes of succeeding at the

Navy Office, I came to a resolution of enlisting in the foot-guards

next day, be the event what it would. This extravagant design, by

flattering my disposition, gave great satisfaction; and I was charging

the enemy at the head of my own regiment, when Strap’s return

interrupted my reverie. The schoolmaster had made him a present of the

tie-wig which he wore, when I was introduced to him, together with an

old hat, whose brims would have overshadowed a Colossus. Though Strap

had ventured to wear them in the dusk, he did not choose to entertain

the mob by day; therefore went to work immediately, and reduced them

both to a moderate size. While he was employed in this office, he

addressed me thus: “To be sure, Mr. Random, you are born a gentleman,

and have a great deal of learning—and, indeed, look like a gentleman;

for, as to person, you may hold up your head with the best of them. On

the other hand, I am a poor but honest cobbler’s son: my mother was as

industrious a woman as ever broke bread, till such time as she took to

drinking, which you very well know; but everybody has failings—Humanum

est errare. Now myself, I am a poor journeyman barber, tolerably well

made and understand some Latin, and have a smattering of Greek; but

what of that? Perhaps I might also say, that I know a little of the

world; but that is to no purpose,—though you be gentle, and I simple,

it does not follow, but that I who am simple may do a good office to

you who are gentle. Now this is the case: my kinsman, the

schoolmaster—perhaps you did not know how nearly he is related to

me—I’ll satisfy you in that presently; his mother and my grandmother’s

sister’s nephew—no, that’s not it!—my grandfather’s brother’s

daughter—rabbit it! I have forgot the degree. But this I know, he and I

are cousins seven times removed.” My impatience to know the good office

he had done me, got the better of my temper, and I interrupted him at

this place with the exclamation, “If the schoolmaster or you can be of

any advantage to me, why don’t you tell me without all this preamble?”

When I pronounced these words with some vehemence, Strap looked at me

for same time with a grave countenance, and then went on: “I’m very

sorry to see such an alteration in your temper of late; you were always

fiery, but now you are grown as crabbed as old Periwinkle the drunken

tinker, on whom you and I (God forgive us!) played so many unlucky

tricks while we were at school—but I will no longer detain you in

suspense, because (doubtless) nothing is more uneasy than doubt—Dubio

procul dubio nil dubius. My friend or relation, or which you will, or

both, the schoolmaster, being informed of the regard I have for you;

for you may be sure I did not fail to let him know of your good

qualities—by the bye, he has undertaken to teach you the pronunciation

of the English tongue, without which, he says, you will be unfit for

business in this country—I say my relation has spoke in your behalf to

a French apothecary who wants a journeyman; and on his recommendation

you may have fifteen pounds a year, bed and board, whenever you

please.” I was too much interested in this piece of news to entertain

it with indifference; but, jumping up, insisted on Strap’s immediately

accompanying me to the house of his friend, that I might not lose this

opportunity through the least delay or neglect on my part.

We were informed, that the schoolmaster was in company at a public-house

in the neighbourhood, whither we repaired, and found him drinking with

the very individual apothecary in question. When he was called to the

door at our desire, and observed my impatience, he broke out into his

usual term of admiration. “Oh! I suppose, when you heard of this offer,

you did not take leisure enough to come downstairs, but leaped out of

the window: did you overturn no porter nor oyster-woman in your way? It

was a mercy of God you did not knock your brains out against some post

in your career. Oh, my conscience! I believe, had I been in the inmost

recesses of my habitation—the very penetralia—your eagerness would have

surmounted bolts, bars, decency, and everything. The den of Cacus, or

sanctum sanctorum, could not have hid me from you. But come along the

gentleman of whom I spoke is in the house; I will present you to him

forthwith.” When I entered the room, I perceived four or five people

smoking, one of whom the schoolmaster accosted thus: “Mr. Lavement,

here’s the young man of whom I spoke to you.” The apothecary, who was a

little old withered man, with a forehead about an inch high, a nose

turned up at the end, large cheek-bones that helped to form a pit for

his little gray eyes, a great bag of loose skin hanging down on each

side in wrinkles, like the alforjos of a baboon, and a mouth so much

accustomed to that contraction which produces grinning, that he could

not pronounce a syllable without discovering the remains of his teeth,

which consisted of four yellow fangs, not improperly, by anatomists,

called canine. This person, I say, after having eyed me some time,

said, “Oho, ’tis ver well, Monsieur Concordance; young man, you are ver

welcome, take one coup of bierre—and come to mine house to-morrow

morning; Monsieur Concordance vil show you de way.” Upon this I made my

bow, and as I went out of the room could hear him say, “Ma foi! c’est

un beau garçon; c’est un gaillard.”

As I had by my own application, while I served Crab, acquired the

French tongue well enough to read authors written in that language and

understand anything that occurred in conversation, I determined to

pretend ignorance to my new master, that he and his family, whom I

supposed to be of the same country, not being on the reserve before me,

I might possibly discover something in discourse, which would either

yield me amusement or advantage. Next morning Mr. Concordance carried

me to the apothecary’s house, where the bargain was made, and orders

given to provide an apartment for me immediately. But before I entered

upon business the schoolmaster recommended me to his tailor, who gave

me credit for a suit of clothes, to be paid out of the first moiety of

my wages, and they were begun upon that very day; he afterwards

accommodated me with a new hat on the same term: so that in a few days

I hoped to make a very fashionable appearance. In the meantime, Strap

conveyed my baggage to the place allotted for me, which was a back room

up two pair of stairs, furnished with a pallet for me to lie upon, a

chair without a back, a bottle by way of candlestick, and a triangular

piece of glass instead of a mirror; the rest of its ornaments having

been lately removed to one of the garrets, for the convenience of the

servant of an Irish captain, who lodged in the first floor.

CHAPTER XIX

The character of Mr. Lavement, his wife and daughter—some anecdotes of

the family—the mother and daughter rivals—I am guilty of a mistake that

gives me present satisfaction, but is attended with troublesome

consequences

Next day, while I was at work in the shop, a bouncing damsel well

dressed came on pretence of finding a vial for some use or other; and

taking an opportunity, when she thought I did not mind her, of

observing me narrowly, went away with a silent look of disdain. I

easily guessed her sentiments, and my pride took the resolution of

entertaining the same indifference and neglect towards her. At dinner

the maids, with whom I dined in the kitchen, gave me to understand that

this was my master’s only daughter, who would have a very handsome

fortune, on account of which, and her beauty, a great many young

gentlemen made their addresses to her—that she had been twice on the

brink of marriage, but disappointed by the stinginess of her father,

who refused to part with a shilling to promote the match; for which

reason the young lady did not behave to her father with all the filial

veneration that might be expected. In particular she harboured the most

perfect hatred for his countrymen; in which disposition she resembled

her mother, who was an English-woman; and, by the hints they dropped, I

learned the gray mare was the better horse—that she was a matron of a

high spirit, which was often manifested at the expense of her

dependents; that she loved diversions, and looked upon miss as her

rival in all parties—which was indeed the true cause of her

disappointments; for had the mother been hearty in her interest, the

father would not have ventured to refuse her demands. Over and above

this intelligence, I, of myself, soon made more discoveries. Mr.

Lavement’s significant grins at his wife, while she looked another way,

convinced me that he was not at all content with his lot; and his

behaviour in presence of the captain made me believe his chief torment

was jealousy. As for my own part, I was considered in no other light

than that of a menial servant, and had been already six days in the

house without being honoured with one word from either mother or

daughter; the latter (as I understood from the maids) having at table

one day expressed some surprise that her papa should entertain such an

awkward mean-looking journeyman. I was nettled at this piece of

information, and next Sunday (it being my turn to take my diversion)

dressed myself in my new clothes to the greatest advantage, and, vanity

apart, made no contemptible figure.

After having spent most part of the day in company with Strap and some

of his acquaintance, I came home in the afternoon, and was let in by

miss, who not knowing me, dropped a low curtsey as I advanced, which I

returned with a profound bow, and shut the door. By the time I had

turned about, she had perceived her mistake, and changed colour, but

did not withdraw. The passage being narrow, I could not get away

without jolting her; so I was forced to remain where I was with my eyes

fixed to the ground, and my face glowing with blushes. At length, her

vanity coming to her assistance, she went away tittering, and I could

hear her pronounce the word ‘creature!’ From this day forward, she came

into the shop fifty times, every day upon various pretences, and put in

practice so many ridiculous airs, that I could easily perceive her

opinion of me was changed, and that she did not think me altogether an

unworthy conquest. But my heart was so steeled against her charms by

pride and resentment, which were two chief ingredients in my

disposition, that I remained insensible to all her arts; and

notwithstanding some advances she made, could not be prevailed upon to

yield her the least attention. This neglect soon banished all the

favourable impressions she felt for me, and the rage of a slighted

woman took place in her heart; this she manifested not only in all the

suggestions her malice could invent to my prejudice with her father,

but also in procuring for me such servile employments as she hoped

would sufficiently humble my spirit. One day in particular, she ordered

me to brush my master’s coat; but I refusing, a smart dialogue ensued,

which ended in her bursting into tears of rage; when her mother

interposing, and examining into the merits of the cause, determined it

in my favour: and this good office I owed not to any esteem or

consideration she had for me, but solely to the desire of mortifying

her daughter, who on this occasion observed, that let people be never

so much in the right, there were some folks who would never do them

justice, but, to be sure, they had their reasons for it, which some

people were ignorant of, although they despised their little arts. This

insinuation of some people and some folks put me upon observing the

behaviour of my mistress more narrowly for the future: and it was not

long before I had reason to believe that she looked upon her daughter

as a rival in the affections of Captain O’Donnell, who lodged in the

house.

In the meantime, my industry and knowledge gained me the goodwill of my

master, who would often say in French, “Mardy! c’est un bon garçon.” He

had a great deal of business; but he was mostly employed among his

fellow refugees, his profits were small. However, his expense for

medicines was not great; for he was the most expert man at a

succedaneum of any apothecary in London, so that I have been sometimes

amazed to see him, without the least hesitation, make up a physician’s

prescription, though he had not in his shop one medicine mentioned in

it. Oyster-shells he could convert into crab’s eyes; common oil into

oil of sweet almonds; syrup of sugar into balsamic syrup; Thames water

into aqua cinnamoni; and a hundred more costly preparations were

produced in an instant, from the cheapest and coarsest drugs of the

materia medica: and when any common thing was ordered for a patient, he

always took care to disguise it in colour or taste, or both, in such a

manner that it could not possibly be known; for which purpose cochineal

and oil of cloves were of great service. Mr. Lavement had attempted

more than once to introduce a vegetable diet into his family, by

launching out into the praise of roots and greens, and decrying the use

of flesh, both as a physician and philosopher; but all his rhetoric

could not make one proselyte to his opinion, and even the wife of his

bosom declared against the proposal.

One afternoon, when her husband was abroad, and his daughter gone to

visit, this lady ordered me to call a hackney-coach, in which she and

the captain drove towards Covent Garden. Miss came home in the evening,

and, supping at her usual hour, went to bed. About eleven o’clock my

master entered, and asked if his wife was gone to sleep: upon which I

told him, my mistress went out in the afternoon, and was not yet

returned. This was like a clap of thunder to the poor apothecary, who

starting back, cried, “Mort de ma vie! vat you tell a me? My vife not

at home!” At that instant a patient’s servant arrived with a

prescription for a draught, which my master taking, went into the shop

to make it up with his own hand. While he rubbed the ingredients in a

glass mortar, he inquired of me, whether or no his wife went out alone;

and no sooner heard that she was in company with the captain, than with

one blow he split the mortar into a thousand pieces, and grinning like

the head of a bass viol, exclaimed, “Ah, traitresse!” It would have

been impossible for me to have preserved my gravity a minute longer,

when I was happily relieved by a rap at the door, which I opened, and

perceived my mistress coming out of the coach. She flounced immediately

into the shop, and addressed her husband thus: “I suppose you thought I

was lost, my dear. Captain O’Donnell has been so good as to treat me

with a play.” The reply, it may be supposed, was anything but courteous

but the captain, who had been all the time at the door discharging the

coach, entered, and Mr. Lavement, changing his tone, saluted him with

all the usual politesse of a Frenchman.

Shortly after this event, by the knowledge which I acquired of the

family secrets, my life became much more agreeable; and as I every day

improved in my knowledge of the town I shook off my awkward air by

degrees, and acquired the character of a polite journeyman apothecary.

CHAPTER XX

I am assaulted and dangerously wounded—suspect O’Donnell, and am

confirmed in my opinion—concert a scheme of revenge, and put it into

execution—O’Donnell robs his own servant and disappears—make my

addresses to a lady, and am miraculously delivered from her snare

One night, at about twelve o’clock, as I returned from visiting a

patient at Chelsea, I received a blow on my head from an unseen hand,

that stretched me senseless on the ground; and was left for dead with

three stabs of a sword in my body. The groans I uttered when I

recovered the use of my reason alarmed the people of a solitary

alehouse that stood near the spot where I lay: and they were humane

enough to take me in, and send for a surgeon, who dressed my wounds,

and assured me they were not mortal. One of them penetrated through the

skin and muscles of one side of my belly in such a manner, that

doubtless the assassin imagined he had run me through the entrails. The

second slanted along one of my ribs; and the last, which was intended

for the finishing stroke, having been directed to my heart, the sword

snapped upon my breast-bone, and the point remained sticking in the

skin. When I reflected upon this event, I could not persuade myself

that I had been assaulted by a common footpad, because it is not usual

for such people to murder though they rob, especially when they meet

with no resistance; and I found my money, and everything else about me

but my carcase, safe. I concluded, therefore, that I must either have

been mistaken for another, or obliged to the private resentment of some

secret enemy for what had happened; and as I could remember nobody who

had the least cause of complaint against me, except Captain O’Donnell

and my master’s daughter, my suspicion settled upon them, though I took

care to conceal it, that I might the sooner arrive at confirmation.

With this view, I went home in the chair about ten o’clock in the

morning; and as the chairman supported me into the house, met the

captain in the passage, who no sooner saw me than he started back and

gave evident signs of guilty confusion, which he would have accounted

for from surprise occasioned by the seeing me in such a condition. My

master having heard my story, condoled me with a good deal of sympathy,

and when he understood my wounds were not dangerous, ordered me to be

carried upstairs to bed; though not without some opposition from his

wife, who was of opinion that it would be better for me to go to an

hospital, where I should be more carefully attended. My meditation was

employed in concerting with myself some method of revenge against

Squire O’Donnell and his inamorata, whom I looked upon as the author of

my misfortune; when miss, who was not at home at my arrival, entered my

chamber, and saying she was sorry for the accident that had befallen

me, asked if I suspected anybody to be the assassin; upon which I fixed

my eyes steadfastly upon her and answered, “Yes.” She discovered no

symptom of confusion, but replied hastily, “If that be the case, why

don’t you take out a warrant, to have him apprehended? It will cost but

a trifle—if you have no money, I’ll lend you.” This frankness not only

cured me of my suspicion with respect to her, but even staggered my

belief with regard to the captain, of whose guilt I resolved to have

further proof before I should enterprise anything in the way of

revenge. I thanked her kindly for her generous offer, which, however, I

had no occasion to accept, being determined to do nothing rashly: for

though I could plainly perceive the person who attacked me to be a

soldier, whose face I thought was familiar to me, I could not swear

with a safe conscience to any particular man; and, granting I could, my

prosecution of him would not much avail.

This uncertainty I pretended, lest the captain, hearing from her that I

knew the person who wounded me, might think proper to withdraw before I

could be in a condition to requite him. In two days I was up and able

to do a little business, so that Mr. Lavement made shift to carry on

his practice without hiring another journeyman in my room.

The first thing I attempted towards a certain discovery of my secret

enemy, was to get into O’Donnell’s apartment, while he was abroad in an

undress, and examine his sword, the point of which being broken off, I

applied the fragment that was found sticking in my body, and found it

answered the fractured part exactly. There was no room left for doubt;

and all that remained was to fix upon a scheme of revenge, which almost

solely engrossed my thoughts during the space of eight nights and days.

Sometimes I was tempted to fall upon him in the same manner as he had

practised upon me, and kill him outright. But this assault my honour

opposed as a piece of barbarous cowardice, in which he was not to be

imitated. At other times I entertained thoughts of demanding

satisfaction in an honourable way; but was diverted from this

undertaking by considering the uncertainty of the event, and the nature

of the injury he had done me, which did not entitle him to such easy

terms. At last I determined to pursue a middle course, and actually put

my design in execution after this manner. Having secured the assistance

of Strap and two of his acquaintance whom he could depend upon, we

provided ourselves with disguises, and I caused the following letter to

be delivered to him by one of our associates in livery, one Sunday

evening:—

“Sir—If I may be allowed to judge from appearance, it will not be

disagreeable for you to hear that my husband is gone to Bagshot to

visit a patient, and will not return till to-morrow night; so that, if

you have anything to propose to me (as your behaviour on many occasions

has seemed to insinuate), you will do well to embrace the present

opportunity of seeing,

Yours, etc.”

This letter was signed with the name of an apothecary’s wife who lived

in Chelsea, of whom I had heard O’Donnell was an admirer. Everything

succeeded to our wish. The hero hastened towards the place of

appointment, and was encountered by us in the very place where he had

assaulted me. We rushed upon him all at once, secured his sword,

stripped off his clothes even to the skin, which was scourged with

nettles till he was blistered from head to foot, notwithstanding all

the eloquence of his tears and supplications. When I was satisfied with

the stripes I had bestowed, we carried off his clothes, which we hid in

a hedge near the place, and left him stark naked to find his way home

in the best manner he could, while I took care to be there before him.

I afterwards understood that, in his way to the lodgings of a friend,

who lived in the skirts of the town, he was picked up by the watch, who

carried him to the round-house, from whence he sent for clothes to his

lodgings, and next morning arrived at the door in a chair, wrapt up in

a blanket he had borrowed; for his body was so sore and swelled, that

he could not bear to be confined in his wearing apparel. He was treated

with the utmost tenderness by my mistress and her daughter, who vied

with each other in their care and attendance of him; but Lavement

himself could not forbear expressing his joy, by several malicious

grins, while he ordered me to prepare an unguent for his sores. As to

myself, nobody can doubt my gratification, when I had every day an

opportunity of seeing my revenge protracted on the body of my

adversary, by the ulcers of which I had been the cause; and, indeed, I

not only enjoyed the satisfaction of having flea’d him alive, but

another also which I had not foreseen. The story of his being attacked

and stripped in such a place having been inserted in the news, gave

information to those who found his clothes next day, whither to bring

them; and accordingly he retrieved everything he had lost except a few

letters, among which was that which I had writ to him in the name of

the apothecary’s wife. This, and the others, which were all on the

subject of love (for this Hibernian hero was one of those people who

are called fortune-hunters), fell into the hands of a certain female

author, famous for the scandal she has published; who, after having

embellished them with some ornaments of her own invention, gave them to

the to town in print. I was very much shocked on reflection, that I

might possibly be the occasion of a whole family’s unhappiness on

account of the letter I had written; but was eased of that

apprehension, when I understood that the Chelsea apothecary had

commenced a lawsuit against the printer for defamation, and looked upon

the whole as a piece of forgery committed by the author, who had

disappeared. But whatever might be his opinion of the matter, our two

ladies seemed to entertain a different idea of it: for as soon as the

pamphlet appeared, I could perceive their care of their patient

considerably diminish, till at last it ended in a total neglect. It was

impossible for him to be ignorant of this change, any more than of the

occasion of it; but as he was conscious to himself of having deserved

worse than contempt at their hands, he was glad to come off so cheaply,

and contented himself with muttering curses and threats against the

apothecary, who, as he imagined, having got an inkling of the

appointment with his wife, had taken revenge of him in the manner

described. By the time he had got a new scarf skin his character was

become so notorious, that he thought it high time for him to decamp;

and his retreat he performed in one night, without beat of drum, after

having robbed his own servant of everything that belonged to him except

the clothes he had on his back.

A few days after he disappeared, Mr. Lavement, for his own security,

took into his custody a large old trunk which he had left; and as it

was very heavy, made no question that the contents were sufficient to

indemnify him for what O’Donnell owed in lodging. But a month being

elapsed without hearing any tidings of this adventurer, and my master

being impatient to know what the trunk contained, he ordered me to

break it open in his presence, which task I performed with the pestle

of our great mortar, and discovered, to his inexpressible astonishment

and mortification, a heap of stones.

About this time, my friend Strap informed me of an offer he had to go

abroad with a gentleman in quality of valet de chambre and at the same

time assured me that, whatever advantage he might propose to himself

from this prospect, he could not bear the thoughts of parting from me,

so much was he attached to my fortune. In spite of all the obligations

I owed to this poor, honest fellow, ingratitude is so natural to the

heart of man, that I began to be tired of his acquaintance: and now

that I had contracted other friendships which appeared more creditable,

was even ashamed to see a journeyman barber inquiring after me with the

familiarity of a companion. I therefore, on pretence of consulting his

welfare, insisted upon his accepting the proposal, which he at last

determined to embrace, with great reluctance, and in a few days, took

his leave of me, shedding a flood of tears, which I could not behold

without emotion. I now began to look upon me as of a gentleman in

reality; learned to dance, frequented plays during the holidays; became

the oracle of an ale-house, where every dispute was referred to my

decision; and at length contracted an acquaintance with a young lady,

who found means to make a conquest of my heart, and upon whom I

prevailed, after much attendance and solicitation, to give me a promise

of marriage. As this beautiful creature passed for a rich heiress, I

blessed my good fortune, and was actually on the point of crowning all

my wishes by matrimony, when I made such a discovery as effectually

turned me from my design, and I abandoned all thoughts of marriage for

the future.

CHAPTER XXI

Squire Gawky comes to lodge with my master—is involved in a troublesome

affair, out of which he is extricated by me—he marries my master’s

daughter—they conspire against me—I am found guilty of theft,

discharged—deserted by my friends, I hire a room in St. Gile’s—where,

by accident, I find the lady to whom I paid my addresses in a miserable

condition—I relieve her

When I enjoyed myself at large in this temper of mind, Lavement let his

first floor to my countryman and acquaintance, Squire Gawky, who by

this time had got a lieutenancy in the army, and such a martial

ferocity in his appearance that I was afraid he would remember what

happened between us in Scotland, and atone for his breach of

appointment then by his punctuality now; but whether he had actually

forgot me, or was willing to make me believe so, he betrayed not the

least symptom of recognition at sight of me, and I remained quite cured

of my apprehension; though I had occasion not long after to be

convinced, that howsoever his externals might be altered, he was at

bottom the same individual Gawky, whom I have already described. For

coming home late one night from the house of a patient, I heard a noise

in the street, and as I approached, perceived two gentlemen in custody,

of three watchmen. The prisoners, who were miserable, disfigured with

dirt, complained bitterly of the loss of their hats and wigs; and one

of them, whom by his tongue I know to be a Scotchman, lamented most

piteously, offering a guinea for his liberty, which the watchman

refused, alleging that one of his companions was wounded grievously,

and that he must stand to the consequence. My prejudice in favour of my

native country was so strong, that I could not bear to see anybody

belonging to it in distress, and therefore, with one blow of my

faithful cudgel, knocked down the watchman who had hold of the person

for whom I was chiefly concerned. He was no sooner disengaged, than he

betook himself to his heels, and left me to maintain the dispute as I

should think proper; and, indeed, I came off but scurvily, for, before

I could avail myself of my speed, I received a blow on the eye, from

one of the other two, that had well nigh deprived me of the use of that

organ. However, I made shift to get home, where I was informed of

Captain Gawky’s being robbed and abused by a company of footpads, and

was ordered by my master to prepare an emollient glyster and paregoric

draught, in order to allay and compose the ferment of his spirits,

occasioned by the barbarous treatment he had undergone, while he took

twelve ounces of blood from him immediately.

When I inquired into the particulars of this adventure, and understood

by the servant that he came in just before me, without hat and wig, I

made no scruple of believing him to be the person I had released, and

was confirmed in my belief upon hearing his voice, to which (before

that event) I had long been a stranger.

My eye being considerably swelled and inflamed, I could not reflect

upon my enterprise without cursing my own folly, and even resolving to

declare the truth of the whole story in order to be revenged on the

cowardly wretch for whom I had suffered: accordingly, next day after he

had told, in presence of my master, his wife and daughter, who came to

him, a thousand lies concerning the prowess he had shown in making his

escape, I ventured to explain the mystery, and, calling in the evidence

of my contused eye, upbraided him with cowardice and ingratitude. Gawky

was so astonished at this that he could not answer one word, and the

rest of the company stared at one another; till at length my mistress

reprimanded me for my insolent behaviour, and threatened to turn me

away for my presumption. Upon which, Gawky (having recollected himself)

observed, as the young man might have mistaken another person for him,

he could forgive his insinuations, more especially as he seemed to have

suffered for his incivility; but advised me to be more certain in my

conjectures for the future, before I ventured to publish them to the

prejudice of any man. Miss applauded the Captain’s generosity in

pardoning one who had so villainously aspersed him, and I began to

imagine her praise was not at all disinterested. But the apothecary,

who perhaps had more penetration or less partiality than his wife and

daughter, differed from them in their sentiments of the matter, and

expressed himself to me in the shop in this manner: “Ah mon pauvre

Roderique! you have more of de veracite dan of de prudence—bot mine

vife and dater be diablement sage, and Monsieur le Capitaine un

fanfaron, pardieu!”

This eulogium on his wife and daughter, though spoken ironically by

him, was nevertheless literally just; by espousing the cause of Gawky,

the one obliged a valuable lodger, and the other acquired a husband at

a juncture when one was absolutely necessary. The young lady insinuated

herself so artfully into the affection of this new lodger, that in less

than a fortnight, on pretence of going to the play, they drove away

together to the Fleet, where they were married; and in the morning came

home, where they asked her father’s and mother’s blessing. The prudent

parents, notwithstanding the precipitation with which the match was

carried on, did not think fit to refuse their approbation; for the

apothecary was not ill pleased to find his daughter married to a young

man of a good prospect, who had not mentioned one syllable on the

article of her dowry; and his wife was rejoiced at being rid of a rival

and a spy upon her. Whatever face Gawky put on the matter, my discovery

of the adventure before related, and the reproaches I vented against

him, had stung him to the soul, and cherished the seeds of enmity so

strongly in his breast, that he imparted his indignation to his wife,

who being as desirous as himself to accomplish the ruin of one that not

only slighted her caresses, but was able on any occasion to discover

particulars not at all advantageous to her character, readily joined in

a conspiracy against me, which (had it taken effect as they expected)

would infallibly have brought me to an ignominious death.

My master having several times missed large quantities of medicines, of

which I could give no account, at last lost all patience, and in plain

terms taxed me with having embezzled them for my own use. As I could

only oppose my single asseveration to his suspicion, he told me one

day, “Your vord not be give me de satisfaction—me find necessaire to

chercher for my medicine; pardonnez moi—il faut chercher—me demand le

clef of your coffre a cette heure.” Then raising his voice to conceal

the fright he was in lest I should make any opposition, he went on,

“Oui! I charge you rendez le clef of your coffre—moi—si, moi qui vous

parle.” I was fired with so much resentment and disdain at this

accusation, that I burst into tears, which he took for a sign of guilt;

and pulling out my key, told him he might satisfy himself immediately,

though he would not find it so easy to satisfy me for the injury my

reputation had suffered from his unjust suspicion. He took the key and

mounted up to my chamber, attended by the whole family, saying, “Eh

bien, nous verrons—nous verrons.” But what was my horror and amazement,

when, opening my chest, he pulled out a handful of the very things that

were missing, and pronounced, “Ah, ha, vous etes bienvenu—mardy, Mons.

Roderique, you be fort innocent!” I had not power to utter one word in

my own vindication, but stood motionless and silent, while everybody

present made their respective remarks on what appeared against me. The

servants said they were sorry for my misfortune, and went away

repeating, “Who would have thought it?” My mistress took occasion from

this detection to rail against the practice of employing strangers in

general; and Mrs. Gawky, after having observed that she never had a

good opinion of my fidelity, proposed to have me carried before the

justice and committed to Newgate immediately. Her husband was actually

upon the stairs in his way for a constable, when Mr. Lavement knowing

the cost and trouble of a prosecution to which he must bind himself,

and at the same time dreading lest some particulars of my confession

might affect his practice, called out. “Restez, mon fils! restez, it be

veritablement one grand crime which dis pauvre diable have

committed—bot peut-etre de good God give him de penitence, and me vill

not have upon mine head de blood of one sinner.” The captain and his

lady used all the Christian arguments their zeal could suggest to

prevail upon the apothecary to pursue me to destruction, and

represented the injustice he did to the community of which he was a

member, in letting a villain escape, who would not fail of doing more

mischief in the world when he should reflect on his coming off so

easily now; but their eloquence made no impression on my master, who

turning to me said, “Go, miserable, go from mine house quick,

quick!—and make reparation for your mauvaise actions.” By this time my

indignation had roused me from the stupefaction in which I had hitherto

remained and I began in this manner:—“Sir, appearances I own condemn

me; but you are imposed upon as much as I am abused: I have fallen a

sacrifice to the rancour of that scoundrel” (pointing to Gawky) “who

has found means to convey your goods hither, that the detection of them

might blast my reputation, and accomplish my destruction. His hatred to

me is owing to a consciousness of his having wronged me in my own

country—for which injury he in a cowardly manner, refused me the

satisfaction of a gentleman; he knows, moreover, that I am no stranger

to his dastardly behaviour in this town, which I have recounted before,

and he is unwilling that such a testimony of his ingratitude and

pusillanimity should live upon the earth; for this reason he is guilty

of the most infernal malice to bring about my ruin. And I am afraid,

madam (turning to Mrs. Gawky) you have too easily entered into the

sentiments of your husband. I have often found you my enemy, and am

well acquainted with the occasion of your being so, which I don’t at

present think proper to declare; but I would advise you, for your own

sake, not to drive me to extremity.” This address enraged her so much

that with a face as red us scarlet and the eyes of a fury, she strutted

up to me and putting her hands in her side, spat in my face, saying, I

was a scandalous villain, but she defied my malice; and that unless her

papa would not prosecute me like a thief as I was, she would not stay

another night under his roof. At the same time, Gawky assuming a big

look, told me, he scorned what lies I could invent against him; but

that, if I pretended to asperse his wife, he would put me to death. To

this threat I answered, “I wish I could meet with thee in a desert,

that I might have an opportunity of punishing thee for thy perfidy

towards me, and rid the world of such a rascal. What hinders me this

moment,” said I, seizing an old bottle that stood by, “from doing

myself that justice?” I had no sooner armed myself in this manner, than

Gawky and his father-in-law retired in such a hurry, that the one

overturned the other, and they rolled together down stairs, while my

mistress swooned away with fear, and her daughter asked if I intended

to murder her. I gave her to understand, that nothing was farther from

my intention, that I would leave her to the stings of her own

conscience; but was firmly resolved to slit her husband’s nose,

whenever fortune should offer a convenient opportunity. Then going down

stairs, I met Lavement coming up trembling with the pestle in his hand,

and Gawky behind armed with his sword, pushing him forward. I demanded

a parley: and having assured him of my pacific disposition, Gawky

exclaimed, “Ah, villain! you have killed my dear wife.” And the

apothecary cried, “Ah, coquin! vere is my shild?” “The lady,” said I,

“is above stairs, unhurt by me, and will, a few months hence, I believe

reward your concern.” Here she called to them, and desired they would

let the wretch go, and trouble themselves no further about him. To

which request her father consented, observing, nevertheless, that my

conversation was ‘very mysterious.’

Finding it impossible to vindicate my innocence, I left the house

immediately, and went to the schoolmaster, with an intention of

clearing myself to him, and asking his advice with regard to my future

conduct; but, to my inexpressible vexation, he was gone to the country,

where he would stay two or three days. I returned with a design of

consulting some acquaintance I had acquired in the neighbourhood; but

my story had taken air through the officiousness of the servants, and

not one of my friends would vouchsafe me a hearing. Thus I found

myself, by the iniquity of mankind, in a much more deplorable condition

than ever: for though I had been formerly as poor, my reputation was

without blemish, and my health unimpaired till now; but at present my

good name was lost, my money gone, my friends were alienated, my body

was infected by an odious distemper; and my faithful Strap, who alone

could yield me pity and assistance, absent I knew not where.

The first resolution I could take in this melancholy conjuncture, was

to remove my clothes to the house of the person with whom I had

formerly lodged, where I remained two days in hopes of getting another

place by the interest of Mr. Concordance, to whom I made no doubt of

being able to vindicate my character; but in this supposition I

reckoned without my best, for Lavement took care to be beforehand with

me; and when I attempted to explain the whole affair to the

schoolmaster, I found him so prepossessed against me, that he would

scarce hear me to an end; but when I had finished my justification,

shook his head, and beginning with his usual exclamation said, “That

won’t go down with me. I am very sorry I should have the misfortune of

being concerned in the affair, but, however, shall be more cautious for

the future. I will trust no man from henceforward—no, not my father who

begat me, nor the brother who lay with me in my mother’s womb: should

Daniel rise from the dead, I would think him an impostor; and were the

genius of truth to appear, would question its veracity!” I told him,

that one day it was possible he might be convinced of the injury I had

suffered, and repent of his premature determination. To which remark he

answered, the proof of my innocence would make his bowels vibrate with

joy; “but till that shall happen,” continued he, “I must beg to have no

manner of connection with you—my reputation is at stake. I shall be

looked upon as your accomplice and abettor—people will say Jonathan

Wild was but a type of me—boys will hoot at me as I pass along; and the

cinder-wenches belch forth reproaches wafted in a gale impregnated with

gin: I shall be notorious—the very butt of slander, and sink of

infamy!” I was not in a humour to relish the climax of expressions upon

which this gentleman valued himself in all his discourses; but, without

any ceremony, took my leave, cursed with every sentiment of horror

which my situation could suggest. I considered, however, in the

intervals of my despondence, that I must, in some shape suit my expense

to my calamitous circumstances, and with that view hired an apartment

in a garret near St. Giles’s, at the rate of nine-pence per week.

I one day, when I sat in this solitary retreat musing upon the

unhappiness of my fate, was alarmed by a groan that issued from a

chamber contiguous to mine, into which I immediately ran, and found a

woman stretched on a miserable truckle bed, without any visible signs

of life. Having applied a smelling bottle to her nose, the blood began

to revisit her cheeks, and she opened her eyes; but, good heaven! what

were the emotions of my soul, when I discovered her to be the same

individual lady who had triumphed over my heart, and to whose fate I

had almost been inseparably joined! Her deplorable situation filled my

breast with compassion. She knew me immediately; and, straining me

gently in her arms, shed a torrent of tears, which I could not help

increasing. At length, casting a languishing look at me, she pronounced

with a feeble voice, “Dear Mr. Random, I do not deserve this concern at

your hands: I am a vile creature, who had a base design upon your

person—suffer me, to expiate that, and all my other crimes, by a

miserable death, which will not fail to overtake me in a few hours.” I

encouraged her as much as I could, told her I forgave all her

intentions with regard to me; and that, although my circumstances were

extremely low, I would share my last farthing with her. I begged in the

meantime to know the immediate cause of that fit from which she had

just recovered, and said, I would endeavour by my skill to prevent any

more such attacks. She seemed very much affected with this expression,

took my hand, and pressed it to her lips, saying, “You are too

generous! I wish I could live to express my gratitude—but alas! I

perish for want.” Then shutting her eyes, she relapsed into another

swoon. Such extremity of distress must have waked the most obdurate

heart to sympathy and compassion; what effect then must it have had on

mine, that was naturally prone to every tender passion? I ran

downstairs, and sent my landlady to a chemist’s shop for some cinnamon

water, while I, returning to this unfortunate creature’s chamber, used

all the means in my power to bring her to herself; this aim with much

difficulty I accomplished, and made her drink a glass of the cordial to

recruit her spirits: then I prepared a little mulled red wine and a

toast, which having taken, she found herself thoroughly revived, and

informed me, that she had not tasted food for eight and forty hours

before. As I was impatient to know the occasion and nature of her

calamity, she gave me to understand, that she was a woman of the town

by profession; that in the course of her adventures she found herself

dangerously infected with a distemper, to which all of her class are

particularly subject; that her malady gaining ground every day, she

became loathsome to herself and offensive to others: when she resolved

to retire to some obscure corner where she might be cured with as

little noise and expense as possible; that she had accordingly chosen

this place of retreat, and put herself into the hands of an advertising

doctor, who having fleeced her of all the money she had, or could

procure, left her three days ago in a worse condition than that in

which he found her; that except the clothes on her back, she had pawned

or sold everything that belonged to her to satisfy that rapacious

quack, and quiet the clamour of her landlady, who still persisted in

her threats to turn her out into the street. After having moralised

upon these particulars, I proposed that she should lodge in the same

room with me, an expedient that would save some money: and assured her,

I would undertake to cure her as well as my own, during which she

should partake of all the conveniences that I could afford to myself.

She embraced my offer with unfeigned acknowledgment, and I began to put

it in practice immediately. I found her not only an agreeable

companion, whose conversation greatly alleviated my chagrin, but also a

careful nurse, who served me with the utmost fidelity and affection.

One day, while I testified my surprise that a woman of her beauty, good

sense, and education (for she had a large portion of each), could be

reduced to such an infamous and miserable way of life, she answered

with a sigh, “These very advantages were the cause of my undoing.” This

remarkable reply inflamed my curiosity to such a degree, that I begged

she would favour me with the particulars of her story, and she complied

in these words.

CHAPTER XXII

The History of Miss Williams

‘My father was an eminent merchant in the city who having, in the

course of trade, suffered very considerable losses, retired in his old

age with his wife to a small estate in the country, which he had

purchased with the remains of his fortune. At that time, I being but

eight years of age, was left in town for the convenience of education,

boarded with an aunt, who was a rigid presbyterian, and confined me so

closely to what she called the duties of religion, that in time I grew

weary of her doctrines, and by degrees received an aversion for the

good books, she daily recommended to my perusal. As I increased in age,

and appeared with a person not disagreeable, I contracted a good deal

of acquaintance among my own sex; one of whom, after having lamented

the restraint I was under from the narrowness of my aunt’s sentiments,

told me I must now throw off the prejudices of opinion imbibed under

her influence and example, and learn to think for myself; for which

purpose she advised me to read Shaftsbury, Tindal, Hobbes, and all the

authors that are remarkable for their deviation from the old way of

thinking, and by comparing one with the other, I should soon be able to

form a system of my own. I followed her advice; and whether it was

owing to my prepossession against what I had formerly read, or the

clearness of argument in these my new instructors, I know not; but I

studied them with pleasure, and in a short time became a professed

freethinker. Proud of my improvement, I argued in all companies, and

that with such success, that I soon acquired the reputation of a

philosopher, and few people durst undertake me in a dispute. I grew

vain upon my good fortune, and at length pretended to make my aunt a

proselyte to my opinion; but she no sooner perceived my drift than,

taking the alarm, she wrote to my father an account of my heresy, and

conjured him, as he tendered the good of my soul, to remove me

immediately from the dangerous place where I had contracted such sinful

principles. Accordingly, my father ordered me into the country, where I

arrived in the fifteenth year of my age, and, by his command gave him a

detail of all the articles of my faith, which he did not find so

unreasonable as they had been represented. Finding myself suddenly

deprived of the company and pleasures of the town, I grew melancholy

and it was some time before I could relish my situation. But solitude

became every day more and more familiar to me and I consoled myself in

my retreat with the enjoyment of a good library, at such times as were

not employed in the management of the family (for my mother had been

dead three years), in visiting, or some other party of rural diversion.

Having more imagination than judgment, I addicted myself too much to

poetry and romance; and, in short, was looked upon as a very

extraordinary person by everybody in the country where I resided.

‘I had one evening strayed, with a book in my hand, into a wood that

bordered on the high road, at a little distance from my father’s house,

when a certain drunken squire, riding by, perceived me, and crying,

“Holloa, there’s a charming creature!” alighted in a moment, caught me

in his arms, and treated me so rudely that I shrieked as loud as I

could, and in the meantime opposed his violence with all the strength

that rage and resentment could inspire. During this struggle, another

horseman came up, who, seeing a lady so unworthily used, dismounted,

and flew to my assistance. The squire, mad with disappointment, or

provoked with the reproaches of the other gentleman, quitted me, and

running to his horse, drew a pistol from the saddle, and fired it at my

protector, who happily receiving no damage, went up, and, with the

butt-end of his whip laid him prostrate on the ground before he could

use the other, which his antagonist immediately seized, and, clapping

to the squire’s breast, threatened to put him to death for his

cowardice and treachery. In this dilemma I interposed and begged his

life, which was granted to my request, after he had asked pardon, and

swore his intention was only to obtain a kiss. However, my defender

thought proper to unload the other pistol, and throw away the flints,

before he gave him his liberty. This courteous stranger conducted me

home, where my father having learned the signal service he had done me,

loaded him with caresses, and insisted on his lodging that night at our

house. If the obligation he had conferred upon me justly inspired me

with sentiments of gratitude, his appearance and conversation seemed to

entitle him to somewhat more. He was about the age of two-and-twenty,

among the tallest of the middle size; had chestnut-coloured hair, which

he wore tied up in a ribbon; a high polished forehead, a nose inclining

to the aquiline, lively blue eyes, red pouting lips, teeth as white as

snow, and a certain openness of countenance—but why need I describe any

more particulars of his person? I hope you will do me the justice to

believe I do not flatter, when I say he was the exact resemblance of

you; and if I had not been well acquainted with his family and degree,

I should have made no scruple of concluding that you was his brother.

He spoke and seemed to have no reserve: for what he said was ingenuous,

sensible, and uncommon. “In short,” said she, bursting into tears, “he

was formed for the ruin of our sex. His behaviour was modest and

respectful, but his looks were so significant, that I could easily

observe he secretly blessed the occasion that introduced him to my

acquaintance. We learned from his discourse that he was the eldest son

of a wealthy gentleman in the neighbourhood, to whose name we were no

strangers—that he had been to visit an acquaintance in the country,

from whose house he was returning home, when my shrieks brought him to

my rescue.”

‘All night long my imagination formed a thousand ridiculous

expectations: there was so much of knight-errantry in this gentleman’s

coming to the relief of a damsel in distress, with whom he immediately

became enamoured, that all I had read of love and chivalry recurred to

my fancy; and I looked upon myself as a princess in some region of

romance, who being delivered from the power of some brutal giant or

satyr, by a generous Oroondates, was bound in gratitude, as well as led

by inclination, to yield up my affections to him without reserve. In

vain did I endeavour to chastise these foolish conceits by reflections

more reasonable and severe: the amusing images took full possession of

my mind, and my dreams represented my hero sighing at my feet, in the

language of a despairing lover. Next morning after breakfast he took

his leave, when my father begged the favour of further acquaintance

with him; to which request he replied by a compliment to him, and a

look to me so full of eloquence and tenderness, that my whole soul

received the soft impression. In a short time he repeated his visit;

and as a recital of the particular steps he pursued to ruin me would be

tedious and impertinent, let it suffice to say, he made it his business

to insinuate himself into my esteem, by convincing me of his own good

sense, and at the same time flattering my understanding. This task he

performed in the most artful manner, by seeming to contradict me often

through misapprehension, that I might have an opportunity of clearing

myself the more to my own honour. Having thus secured my good opinion,

he began to give me some tokens of a particular passion, founded on a

veneration of the qualities of my mind, and, as an accidental ornament,

admired the beauties of my person; till at being fully persuaded of his

conquest, he chose a proper season for the theme, and disclosed his

love in terms so ardent and sincere, that it was impossible for me to

disguise the sentiments of my heart, and he received my approbation

with the most lively transport. After this mutual declaration, we

contrived to meet more frequently in private interviews, where we

enjoyed the conversation of one another, in all the elevation of fancy

and impatience of hope that reciprocal adoration can inspire. He

professed his honourable intentions, of which I made no question;

lamented the avaricious disposition of his father, who had destined him

for the arms of another, and vowed eternal fidelity with such an

appearance of candour and devotion—that I became a dupe to his deceit.

Cursed be the day on which I gave away my innocence and peace! Cursed

be my beauty that first attracted the attention of the seducer! Cursed

be my education, that, by refining my sentiments, made my heart the

more susceptible! Cursed be my good sense, that fixed me to one object,

and taught me the preference I enjoyed was but my due! Had I been ugly,

nobody would have tempted me; had I been ignorant, the charms of my

person would not have atoned for the coarseness of my conversation; had

I been giddy, my vanity would have divided my inclinations, and my

ideas would have been so diffused, that I should never have listened to

the enchantments of one alone.

‘But to return to my unfortunate story. After some months, the visits

of my lover became less frequent, and his behaviour less warm: I

perceived his coldness, my heart took the alarm, my tears reproached

him, and I insisted upon the performance of his promise to espouse me,

that, whatever should happen, my reputation might be safe. He seemed to

acquiesce in my proposal, and left me on pretence of finding a proper

clergyman to unite us in the bands of wedlock. But alas! the inconstant

had no intention to return. I waited a whole week with the utmost

impatience; sometimes doubting his honour, at other times inventing

excuses for him, and condemning myself for harbouring suspicions of his

faith. At length I understood from a gentleman who dined at our house,

that this perfidious wretch was on the point of setting out for London

with his bride, to buy clothes for their approaching nuptials. This

information distracted me! Rage took possession of my soul; I denounced

a thousand imprecations, and formed as many schemes of revenge against

the traitor who had undone me. Then my resentment would subside to

silent sorrow. I recalled the tranquillity I lost, I wept over my

infatuation, and sometimes a ray of hope would intervene, and for a

moment cheer my drooping heart; I would revolve all the favourable

circumstances of his character, repeat the vows he made, ascribe his

absence to the vigilance of a suspicious father who compelled him to a

match his soul abhorred, and comfort myself with the expectation of

seeing him before the thing should be brought to any terms of

agreement. But how vain was my imagination! That villain left me

without remorse, and in a few days the news of his marriage were spread

all over the country. My horror was then inconceivable; and had not the

desire of revenge diverted the resolution, I should infallibly have put

an end to my miserable life. My father observed the symptoms of my

despair: and though I have good reason to believe he guessed the cause,

was at a great deal of pains to seem ignorant of my affliction, while

he endeavoured with parental fondness to alleviate my distress. I saw

his concern, which increased my anguish, and raised my fury against the

author of my calamity to an implacable degree.

‘Having furnished myself with a little money, I made an elopement from

this unhappy parent in the night-time, and about break of day arrived

at a small town, from whence a stage coach set out for London, in which

I embarked, and next day alighted in town; the spirit of revenge having

supported me all the way against every other reflection, My first care

was to hire a lodging, in which I kept myself very retired, assumed a

feigned name, that my character and situation might be better

concealed. It was not long before I found out the house of my lover,

whither I immediately repaired in a transport of rage, determined to

act some desperate deed for the satisfaction of my despair, though the

hurry of my spirits would not permit me to concert or resolve upon a

particular plan. When I demanded admission to Lothario (so let me call

him), I was desired to send up my name and business; but this I

refused, telling the porter I had business for his master’s private

ear; upon which I was conducted into a parlour until he should be

informed of my request. There I remained about a quarter of an hour,

when a servant entered and told me his master was engaged with company,

and begged to be excused at that time. My temper could hold out no

longer. I pulled out a poniard from my bosom, where I had concealed it,

and rushing out flew up stairs like a fury, exclaiming, “Where’s this

perfidious villain? could I plunge this dagger into his false heart, I

should then die satisfied!” The noise I made alarmed not only the

servants, but the company also, who hearing my threats came forward to

the staircase to see was the matter. I was seized, disarmed, and

withheld by two footmen; and in this situation felt the most exquisite

torture in beholding my undoer approach with his young wife. I could

not endure the sight, was deprived of my senses, and fell into a severe

fit, during which I know not how I was treated; but when I recovered

the use of reflection, found myself on a bed in a paltry apartment,

where I was attended by an old woman, who asked a thousand impertinent

questions relating to my condition, and informed me that my behaviour

had thrown the whole family into confusion; that Lothario affirmed I

was mad, and proposed to have me sent to Bedlam; but my lady persuaded

herself there was more in my conduct than he cared should be known, and

had taken to her bed on bare suspicion, having first ordered that I

should be narrowly looked to. I heard all she said without making any

other reply than desiring she would do me the favour to call a chair;

but this she told me could not be done without her master’s consent,

which, however, was easily procured, and I was conveyed to my lodgings

in a state of mind that baffles all description. The agitation of my

thoughts produced a fever, which brought on a miscarriage; and I

believe it is well for my conscience that heaven thus disposed of my

burden; for let me own to you with penitence and horror, if I had

brought a living child into the world, my frenzy would have prompted me

to sacrifice the little innocent to my resentment of the father’s

infidelity.

‘After this event my rage abated, and my hate became more deliberate

and calm: when one day my landlady informed me that there was a

gentleman below who desired to see me, he having something of

consequence to impart, which he was sure would contribute to my peace

of mind. I was exceedingly alarmed at this declaration, which I

attempted to interpret a thousand ways; and before I came to any

determination he entered my room, with an apology for intruding without

my knowledge or consent. I surveyed him some time, and not being able

to recollect his face, demanded, with a faltering accent, what his

business was with me? Upon which he desired I would give him a

particular audience, and he did not doubt of communicating something

that would conduce to my satisfaction and repose. As I thought myself

sufficiently guarded against any violence, I granted his request, and

bade the woman withdraw. The stranger, then advancing, gave me to

understand that he was well acquainted with the particulars of my

story, having been informed of them from Lothario’s own mouth—that from

the time he knew my misfortunes he had entertained a detestation for

the author of them, which had of late been increased and inflamed to a

desire of revenge, by a piece of dishonourable conduct towards him—that

hearing of my melancholy situation, he had come with an intention of

offering his assistance and comfort, and was ready to espouse my

quarrel, and forthwith take vengeance on my seducer, provided I would

grant him one consideration, which, he hoped, I should see no reason to

refuse. Had all the artifice of hell been employed in composing a

persuasive, it could not have had a more instantaneous or favourable

effect than this discourse had upon me. I was transported with a

delirium of gloomy joy. The contract was made; he devoted himself to my

revenge, undertook to murder Lothario that very night, and to bring me

an account of his death before morning. Accordingly, about two of the

clock, he was introduced to my chamber, and assured me that my

perfidious lover was no more: that although he was not entitled to such

an honourable proceeding, he had fairly challenged him to the field,

where he upbraided him with his treachery towards me, for whom, he told

me, his sword was drawn, and after a few passes left him weltering in

his blood. I was so savaged by my wrongs, that I delighted in the

recital of this adventure, made him repeat the particulars and feasted

my eyes on the blood that remained on his clothes and sword. My

imagination was so engrossed by these ideas, that in my sleep I dreamed

Lothario appeared before me pale, mangled, and bloody, blamed my

rashness, protested his innocence, and pleaded his cause so

pathetically, that I was convinced of his fidelity, and waked in a fit

of horror and remorse. I dropped asleep again, and the same apparition

recurred to my fancy. In short, I passed the night in great misery, and

looked upon my avenger with such abhorrence, that in the morning,

perceiving my aversion, he insinuated there was still a possibility of

Lothario’s recovery: it was quite true he left him wounded on the

ground, but not quite dead, and perhaps his hurts might not be mortal.

At these words I started up, bade him fly for intelligence, and if he

could not bring me tidings of Lothario’s safety, at least consult his

own, and never return; for I was resolved to surrender myself to

justice, and declare all I knew of the affair, that, if possible I

might expiate my own guilt, by incurring the rigours of a sincere

repentance and ignominious death. He very coolly represented the

unreasonableness of my prejudice against him, who had done nothing but

what his love of me inspired, and honour justified: that now he had, at

the risk of his life, been subservient to my revenge, I was about to

discard him as an infamous agent, occasionally necessary; and that,

even if he should be so lucky as to bring news of Lothario’s safety, it

was probable my former resentment might revive, and I would upbraid him

with having failed in his undertaking. I assured him, that on the

contrary, he should be dearer to me than ever, as I then should be

convinced he acted more on the principles of a man of honour than on

those of a mercenary assassin, and scorned to take away the life of an

adversary, how inveterate soever, which fortune had put in his power.

“Well, then madam,” said he, “whatever may have happened, I shall find

it no difficult matter to acquit myself in point of honour;” and took

his leave in order to inquire into the consequences of his duel. I was

now more sensible than ever of the degrees of guilt and misery; all the

affliction I had suffered hitherto was owing to my own credulity and

weakness, and my conscience could only accuse me of venial crimes; but

now that I looked upon myself as a murderer, it is impossible to

express the terrors of my imagination, which was incessantly haunted by

the image of the deceased, and my bosom stung with the most exquisite

agonies, of which I saw no end. At length, Horatio (for so I shall call

my new friend) returned, and telling me I had nothing to fear,

delivered into my hands a billet containing these words.

“Madam,

“As I understand it is of consequence to your peace, I take this

liberty to inform you, that the wounds I received from Horatio are

not mortal. This satisfaction my humanity could not deny, even to a

person who has endeavoured to disturb the repose as well as the

life of

“Lothario.”

‘Being well acquainted with this hand, I had no reason to suspect an

imposition in this letter, which I read over and over with a transport

of joy, and caressed Horatio so much that he appeared the happiest man

alive. Thus was I won from despair by the menaces of a greater

misfortune than that which depressed me. Griefs are like usurpers,—the

most powerful deposes all the rest. But my raptures were not lasting:

that very letter which in a manner re-established my tranquillity, in a

little time banished my peace. His unjust reproaches, while they waked

my resentment, recalled my former happiness, and filled my soul with

rage and sorrow. Horatio, perceiving the situation of my mind,

endeavoured to divert my chagrin, by treating me with all the

amusements and entertainments of the town. I was gratified with every

indulgence I could desire; introduced into the company of women in my

own situation, by whom an uncommon deference was paid to me; and I

began to lose all remembrance of my former condition, when an accident

brought it back to my view with all its interesting circumstances.

Diverting myself one day with some newspapers, which I had not before

perused, the following advertisement attracted my attention:

‘“Whereas a young gentlewoman disappeared from her father’s house in

the county of —, about the end of September, on account (as is

supposed) of some uneasiness of mind, and has not been as yet heard of.

Whoever will give any information about her to Mr. — of Gray’s Inn,

shall be handsomely rewarded; or if she will return to the arms of her

disconsolate parent, she will be received with the utmost tenderness,

whatever reason she may have to think otherwise, and may be the means

of prolonging the life of a father already weighed down almost to the

grave with age and sorrow.”

‘This pathetic remonstrance had such an effect on me, that I was fully

resolved to return, like the prodigal son, and implore the forgiveness

of him who gave me life; but, alas! Upon inquiry, I found he had paid

his debt to nature a month before, lamenting my absence to his last

hour, having left his fortune to a stranger, as a mark of his

resentment of my unkind and undutiful behaviour. Penetrated with

remorse on this occasion, I sank into the most profound melancholy, and

considered myself as the immediate cause of his death. I lost all

relish for company; and, indeed, most of my acquaintances no sooner

perceived my change of temper, than they abandoned me. Horatio,

disgusted at my insensibility, or from some other cause, became colder

and colder every day, till at last he left me altogether, without

making any apology for his conduct, or securing me against the miseries

of want, as a man of honour ought to have done, considering the share

he had in my ruin; for I afterwards learned, that the quarrel between

Lothario and him was a story trumped up to rid the one of my

importunities, and give the other a recommendation to me, which, it

seems, he desired, upon seeing me at the house of my seducer. Reduced

to this extremity, I cursed my own simplicity, uttered horrid

imprecations against the treachery of Horatio; and, as I became every

day more and more familiarised to the loss of innocence, resolved to be

revenged on the sex in general, by practising their own arts upon

themselves. Nor was an opportunity long wanting: an old gentlewoman,

under pretence of sympathising, visited me, and after having condoled

me on my misfortunes, and professed a disinterested friendship, began

to display the art of her occupation, in encomiums on my beauty, and

invectives against the wretch who had forsaken me; insinuating withal,

that it would be my own fault if I did not still make my fortune by the

extraordinary qualifications with which nature had endowed me. I soon

understood her drift, and gave her such encouragement to explain

herself, that we came to an agreement immediately to divide whatever

profits might accrue from such gallants as she should introduce to my

acquaintance. The first stroke of my dissimulation was practised upon a

certain judge, to whom I was recommended by this matron as an innocent

creature just arrived from the country.’

CHAPTER XXIII

Miss Williams interrupted by a bailiff, who carries her to the

Marshalsea—I accompany her—prove she is not the person named in the

writ—the bailiff is fain to discharge her—we shift our lodging—her

story, and my reflections thereupon—progress of a common woman of the

town—resolves to quit that way of life

Her story was here interrupted by a rap at the door, which I no sooner

opened, than three or four terrible fellows rushed in, one of whom

accosted my fellow-lodger thus: “Madam, your servant—you must do me the

favour to come along with me, I have a writ against you.” While the

bailiff (for so he was) spoke thus, his followers surrounded the

prisoner, and began to handle her very roughly. This treatment incensed

me so much, that I snatched up the poker and would certainly have used

it in defence of the lady, without any regard to the strength and

number of her adversaries, had she not begged me, with a composure of

countenance for which I could not account, to use no violence on her

behalf, which could be of no service to her, but might be very

detrimental to myself. Then turning to the leader of this formidable

troop, she desired to see the writ, and having perused it, said with a

faltering voice, “I am not the person whose name is here mentioned,

arrest me at your peril.” “Ay, ay, madam,” replied the catchpole. “We

shall prove your identity. In the meantime, whither will you be pleased

to be carried, to my house, or to jail?” “If I must be confined,” said

she, “I would rather be in your house than in a common jail.” “Well,

well,” answered he, “if you have money enough in your pocket, you shall

be entertained like a princess.” But when she acquainted him with her

poverty, he swore he never gave credit, and ordered one of his

myrmidons to call a coach, to carry her to the Marshalsea at once.

While they waited for the convenience, she took me aside, and bade me

be under no concern on her account, for she knew how to extricate

herself from this difficulty very soon, and perhaps gain something by

the occasion. Although her discourse was a mystery to me, I was very

well pleased with her assurance; and when the coach came to the door, I

offered to accompany her to prison, to which proposal, after much

entreaty, she consented.

When we arrived at the gate of the Marshalsea, our conductor alighted,

and having demanded entrance, presented the writ to the turnkey, who no

sooner perceived the name of Elizabeth Cary than he cried, “Ah, ah: my

old acquaintance Bet! I’m glad to see thee with all my heart.” So

saying, he opened the coach door, and helped her to dismount; but when

he observed her face, he started back, saying, “Who have we got here?”

The bailiff, alarmed at this interrogation, cried with some emotion,

“Who should it be but the prisoner, Elizabeth Cary?” The turnkey

replied, “That Elizabeth Cary! I’ll be hanged if that’s Elizabeth Cary

more than my grandmother.” Here the lady thought fit to interpose, and

tell the catchpole, if he had taken her word for it at first, he might

have saved himself and her a great deal of trouble. “It may be so,”

answered he, “but I’ll have further evidence that you are not the

person, before you and I part.” “Yes, yes,” said she, “you shall have

further evidence, to your cost.” Then we adjourned into the lodge, and

called for a bottle of wine, where my companion wrote a direction to

two of her acquaintance, and begged the favour of me to go to their

lodgings, and request them to come to her immediately. I found them

together at a house in Brydges Street, Drury Lane, and as they were

luckily unengaged, they set out with me in a hackney-coach without

hesitation, after I had related the circumstances of the affair, which

flattered them with the hopes of seeing a bailiff trounced; for there

is an antipathy as natural between women of that class and bailiffs, as

that subsisting between mice and cats. Accordingly, when they entered

the lodge, they embraced the prisoner very affectionately by the name

of Nancy Williams, and asked how long she had been nabbed, and for

what? On hearing the particulars of her adventure repeated, they

offered to swear before a justice of peace that she was not the person

mentioned in the writ, whom, it seems, they all knew; but the bailiff,

who was by the time convinced of his mistake, told them he would not

put them to that trouble. “Ladies,” said he, “there’s no harm done—you

shall give me leave to treat you with another bottle, and then we’ll

part friends.” This proposal was not at all relished by the sisterhood:

and Miss Williams told him, sure he did not imagine her such a fool as

to be satisfied with a paltry glass of sour wine? Here the turnkey

interrupted her by affirming with an oath, that the wine was as good as

ever was tipped over tongue. “Well,” continued she, “that may be, but

were it the best of champagne, it is no recompense for the damage I

have suffered both in character and health, by being wrongfully dragged

to jail; at this rate, no innocent person is safe, since an officer of

justice, out of malice, private pique, or mistake, may injure and

oppress the subject with impunity; but, thank heaven, I live under the

protection of laws that will not suffer such insults to pass

unpunished, and I know very well how to procure redress.” Mr. Vulture,

for that was the bailiff’s name, finding he had to deal with one who

would not be imposed upon, began to look very sullen and perplexed,

and, leaning his forehead on his hand, entered into a deliberation with

himself, which lasted a few minutes, and then broke out in a volley of

dreadful curses against the old jade our landlady, as he called her,

for having misinformed him. After much wrangling and swearing, the

matter was referred to the decision of the turnkey, who calling for the

other bottle, mulcted the bailiff in all the liquor that had been

drunk, coach hire, and a couple of guineas for the use of the

plaintiff. The money was immediately deposited; Miss Williams gratified

the two evidences with one half, and putting the other in her pocket

drove home with me, leaving the catchpole grumbling over his loss, yet

pleased in the main, for having so cheaply got clear of a business that

might have cost him ten times the sum, and his place to boot. This

guinea was a very seasonable relief to us, who were reduced to great

necessity, six of my shirts, and almost all my clothes, except those on

my back, having been either pawned or sold for our maintenance before

this happened. As we resented the behaviour of our landlady, our first

care was to provide ourselves with another lodging, whither we removed

next day, with an intention to keep ourselves as retired as possible,

until our cure should be completed. When we were fixed in our new

habitation, I entreated her to finish the story of her life, which she

pursued in this manner:—

‘The success of our experiment on the judge encouraged us to practice

the same deceit on others; but this harvest lasted not long, my

character taking air, and my directress deserting me for some new game.

Then I took lodgings near Charing-Cross, at two guineas a week, and

began to entertain company in a public manner; but my income being too

small to defray my expenses, I was obliged to retrench, and enter into

articles with the porters of certain taverns, who undertook to find

employment enough for me, provided I would share my profits with them.

Accordingly, I was almost every night engaged with company, among whom

I was exposed to every mortification, danger, and abuse, that flow from

drunkenness and brutality. As my spirit was not sufficiently humbled to

the will, nor my temper calculated for the conversation of my gallants,

it was impossible for me to overcome an aversion I felt for my

profession, which manifested itself in a settled gloom on my

countenance, and disgusted those sons of mirth and riot so much, that I

was frequently used in a shocking manner, and kicked down stairs with

disgrace. The messengers, seeing me disagreeable to their benefactors

and employers, seldom troubled me with a call, and I began to find

myself almost totally neglected.

‘To contribute towards my support I was fain to sell my watch, rings,

trinkets, with the best part of my clothes; and I was one evening

musing by myself on misery before me when I received a message from a

tavern, whither I repaired in a chair, and was introduced to a

gentleman dressed like an officer, with whom I supped in a sumptuous

manner. In the morning, when I awoke, I found my gallant had got up,

and, drawing aside the curtain, could not perceive him in the room. I

waited a full hour for his return, and then in the greatest perplexity,

rose up and rang the bell. When the waiter came to the door, he found

it locked, and desired admittance, which I granted, after observing,

with great surprise, that the key remained on the inside, as when we

went to bed. I no sooner inquired for the captain, than the fellow,

staring with a distracted look, cried, “How, madam, is he not abed?”

And when he was satisfied as to that particular, ran into a closet

adjoining to the chamber, the window of which he found open. Through

this the adventurer had got upon a wall, from whence he dropped down

into a court and escaped, leaving me to be answerable not only for the

reckoning, but also for a large silver tankard and posset-bowl, which

he had carried off with him.

‘It is impossible to describe the consternation I was under, when I saw

myself detained as a thief’s accomplice; for I was looked upon in that

light, and carried before a justice, who mistaking my confusion for a

sign of guilt committed me, after a short examination, to Bridewell,

having admonished me, as the only means to save my life, to turn

evidence, and impeach my confederate. I now concluded the vengeance of

Heaven had overtaken me, and that I must soon finish my career by an

ignominious death. This reflection sank so deep into my soul, that I

was for some days deprived of my reason, and actually believed myself

in hell, tormented by fiends. Indeed, there needs not a very

extravagant imagination to form that idea: for of all the scenes on

earth that of Bridewell approaches nearest the notion I had always

entertained of the regions. Here I saw nothing but rage, anguish and

impiety, and heard nothing but groans, curses, and blasphemy. In the

midst of this hellish crew, I was subjected to the tyranny of a

barbarian, who imposed upon me tasks that I could not possibly perform,

and then punished my incapacity with the utmost rigour and inhumanity.

I was often whipped into a swoon, and lashed out of it (during which

miserable interval, I was robbed by my fellow-prisoners of everything

about me, even to my cap, shoes, and stockings): I was not only

destitute of necessaries, but even of food, so that my wretchedness was

extreme. Not one of my acquaintance to whom I imparted my situation,

would grant me the least succour or regard, on pretence of my being

committed for theft, and my landlord refused to part with some of my

own clothes which I sent for, because I was indebted to him for a

week’s lodging.

‘Overwhelmed with calamity, I grew desperate, and resolved to put an

end to my grievances and life together: for this purpose I got up in

the middle of the night, when I thought everybody around me asleep, and

fixing one end of a large hook in the ceiling, that supported the

scales on which the hemp is weighed, I stood upon a chair, and making a

noose on the other end, put my neck into it, with an intention to hang

myself; but before I could adjust the knot I was surprised and

prevented by two women, who had been awake all the while and suspected

my design. In the morning, my attempt was published among the prisoners

and punished with thirty stripes, the pain of which, co-operating with

my disappointment and disgrace, bereft me of my senses, and threw me

into an ecstacy of madness, during which I tore the flesh from my bones

with my teeth, and dashed my head against the pavement; so that they

were obliged to set a watch over me, to restrain me from doing further

mischief to myself and others. This fit of frenzy continued three days,

at the end of which I grew calm and sullen: but as the desire of making

away with myself still remained, I came to a determination of starving

myself to death, and with that view refused all sustenance.

‘Whether it was owing to the want of opposition, or to the weakness of

nature, I know not; but on the second day of my fast, I found my

resolution considerably impaired, and the calls of hunger almost

insupportable. At this critical conjuncture a lady was brought into the

prison, with whom I had contracted an acquaintance while I lived with

Horatio; she was then on the same footing as I was, but afterwards

quarrelling with her gallant, and not finding another to her mind,

altered her scheme of life, and set up a coffee-house among the

hundreds in Drury, where she entertained gentlemen with claret, arrack,

and the choice of half-a-dozen damsels who lived in her house. This

serviceable matron having neglected to gratify a certain justice for

the connivance she enjoyed, was indicted at the quarter sessions, in

consequence of which her bevy was dispersed, and herself committed to

Bridewell. She had not been long there before she learned my disaster,

and coming up to me, after a compliment of condolence, inquired into

the particulars of my fate. While we were engaged in discourse

together, the master came and told me, that the fellow on whose account

I had suffered was taken, that he had confessed the theft, and cleared

me of any concern in the affair; for which reason he, the master, had

orders to discharge me, and that I was from that moment free.

‘This piece of news soon banished all thoughts of death, and had such

an instantaneous effect on my countenance, that Mrs. Coupler (the lady

then present), hoping to find her account in me, very generously

offered to furnish me with what necessaries I wanted, and take me into

her own house as soon as she could compromise matters with the

justices. The conditions of her offer were, that I should pay three

guineas weekly for my board, and a reasonable consideration besides,

for the use of such clothes and ornaments as she should supply me with,

to be deducted from the first profits of my occupation. These were hard

terms, but not to be rejected by one who was turned out helpless and

naked into the wide world, without a friend to pity or assist her. I

therefore embraced her proposal, and she being bailed in a few hours,

took me home with her in a coach. As I was by this time conscious of

having formerly disgusted my admirers by my reserved loud haughty

behaviour, I now endeavoured to conquer that disposition, and the

sudden change of my fortune giving me a flow of spirits, I appeared in

the most winning and gay manner I could assume. Having the advantage of

a good voice and education, I exerted my talents to the uttermost, and

soon became the favourite with all company. This success alarmed the

pride and jealousy of Mrs. Coupler, who could not bear the thoughts of

being eclipsed: she therefore made a merit of her envy, and whispered

among the customers that I was unsound. There needed no more to ruin my

reputation and blast my prosperity; everybody shunned me with marks of

aversion and disdain, and in a very short time I was as solitary as

ever. Want of gallants was attended with want of money to satisfy my

malicious landlady, who having purposely given me credit to the amount

of eleven pounds, took out a writ against me and I was arrested in her

own house. Though the room was crowded with people when the bailiff

entered, not one of them had compassion enough to mollify my

prosecutrix, far less to pay the debt; they even laughed at my tears,

and one of them bade me be of good cheer, for I should not want

admirers in Newgate.

‘At this instant a sea-lieutenant came in, and seeing my plight, began

to inquire into the circumstances of my misfortune. “Harkee, my girl,”

he inquired “how far have you overrun the constable?” I told him that

the debt amounted to eleven pounds, besides the expenses of the writ.

“An that be all,” said he, “you shan’t go to the bilboes this bout.”

And taking out his purse, he paid the money, discharged the bailiff,

and telling me I had got into the wrong port, advised me to seek out a

more convenient harbour, where I could be safely hove down; for which

purpose he made me a present of five guineas more. I was so touched

with this singular piece of generosity, that for some time I had not

power to thank him. However, as soon as I recollected myself, I begged

the favour of him to go with me to the next tavern, where I explained

the nature of my disaster, and convinced him of the falsehood of what

was reported to my prejudice so effectually, that he from that moment

attached himself to me, and we lived in great harmony together, until

he was obliged to go to sea, where he perished in a storm.

‘Having lost my benefactor, and almost consumed the remains of his

bounty, I saw myself in danger of relapsing into my former necessity,

and began to be very uneasy at the prospect of bailiffs and jails! when

one of the sisterhood advised me to take lodgings in a part of the town

where I was unknown, and pass for an heiress, by which artifice I might

entrap somebody to be my husband, who would possibly be able to allow

me a handsome maintenance, or at worst screen me from the dread and

danger of a prison, by becoming liable for whatever debts I should

contract. I approved of this scheme, towards the execution of which my

companion clubbed her wardrobe, and undertook to live with me in

quality of my maid, with the proviso that she should be reimbursed and

handsomely considered out of the profits of my success. She was

immediately detached to look out for a convenient place, and that very

day hired a genteel apartment in Park Street, whither I moved in a

coach loaded with her baggage, and my own. I made my first appearance

in a blue riding habit trimmed with silver; and my maid acted her part

so artfully, that in a day or two my fame spread all over the

neighbourhood, and I was said to be a rich heiress just arrived from

the country. This report brought a swarm of gay young fellows about me;

but I soon found them to be all indigent adventurers like myself, who

crowded to me like crows to a carrion, with a view of preying upon my

fortune. I maintained, however, the appearance of wealth as long as

possible, in hopes of gaining some admirer more for my purpose, and at

length attracted the regard of one who would have satisfied my wishes,

and managed matters so well, that a day was actually fixed for our

nuptials. In the interim, he begged leave to introduce an intimate

friend to me, which request, as I could not refuse, I had the extreme

mortification and surprise to see, next night, in that friend, my old

keeper Horatio, who no sooner beheld me than he changed colour, but had

presence of mind to advance and salute me, bidding me (with a low

voice) be under no apprehension, for he would not expose me. In spite

of his assurance, I could not recover myself so far as to entertain

them, but withdrew to my chamber on pretence of a severe headache, to

the no small concern of my adorer, who took his leave in the tenderest

manner, and went off with his friend.

‘Having imparted my situation to my companion, she found it high time

for us to decamp, and that without any noise, because we were not only

indebted to our landlady, but also to several tradesmen in the

neighbourhood. Our retreat, therefore, was concerted and executed in

this manner: Having packed up all our clothes and moveables in small

parcels, she (on pretence of fetching cordials for me) carried them at

several times to the house of an acquaintance, where she likewise

procured a lodging, to which we retired in the middle of the night,

when every other body in the house was asleep. I was now obliged to aim

at lower game, and accordingly spread my nets among tradespeople, but

found them all too phlegmatic or cautious for my art and attractions,

till at last I became acquainted with you, on whom I practised all my

dexterity; not that I believed you had any fortune, or expectation of

me, but that I might transfer the burden of such debts as I had

incurred, or should contract, from myself to another, and at the same

time avenge myself of your sex, by rendering miserable one who bore

such resemblance to the wretch who ruined me; but Heaven preserved you

from my snares by the discovery you made, which was owing to the

negligence of my maid in leaving the chamber-door unlocked when she

went to buy sugar for breakfast. When I found myself detected and

forsaken by you, I was fain to move my lodging, and dwell two pair of

stairs higher than before. My companion, being disappointed in her

expectations, left me, and I had no other resource than to venture

forth, like the owls in the dark, to pick up a precarious and

uncomfortable subsistence. I have often sauntered between Ludgate Hill

and Charing Cross a whole winter night, exposed not only to the

inclemency of the weather, but likewise to the rage of hunger and

thirst, without being so happy as to meet with one dupe, then creep up

to my garret, in a deplorable draggled condition, sneak to bed, and try

to bury my appetite and sorrows in sleep. When I lighted on some rake

or tradesman reeling home drunk, I frequently suffered the most brutal

treatment, in spite of which I was obliged to affect gaiety and good

humour, though my soul was stung with resentment and disdain, and my

heart loaded with grief and affliction. In the course of these

nocturnal adventures, I was infected with the disease, that in a short

time rendered me the object of my own abhorrence, and drove me to the

retreat where your benevolence rescued me from the jaws of death.’

So much candour and good sense appeared in this lady’s narration, that

I made no scruple of believing every syllable of what she said, and

expressed my astonishment at the variety of miseries she had undergone

in so little time, for all her misfortunes had happened within the

compass of two years; I compared her situation with my own, and found

it a thousand times more wretched. I had endured hardships, ’tis

true—my whole life had been a series of such; and when I looked

forward, the prospect was not much bettered, but then they were become

habitual to me, and consequently I could bear them with less

difficulty. If one scheme of life should not succeed, I could have

recourse to another, and so to a third, veering about to a thousand

different shifts, according to the emergencies of my fate, without

forfeiting the dignity of my character beyond a power of retrieving it,

or subjecting myself wholly to the caprice and barbarity of the world.

On the other hand, she had known and relished the sweets of prosperity,

she had been brought up under the wings of an indulgent parent, in all

the delicacies to which her sex and rank entitled her; and without any

extravagance of hope, entertained herself with the view of

uninterrupted happiness through the whole scene of life. How fatal

then, how tormenting, how intolerable, must her reverse of fortune

be!—a reverse, that not only robs her of these external comforts, and

plunges her into all the miseries of want, but also murders her peace

of mind, and entails upon her the curse of eternal infamy! Of all

professions I pronounced that of a courtesan the most deplorable, and

her of all courtesans the most unhappy. She allowed my observation to

be just in the main, but at the same time affirmed that notwithstanding

the disgraces which had fallen to her share, she had not been so

unlucky in the condition of a prostitute as many others of the same

community. “I have often seen,” said she, “while I strolled about the

streets at midnight, a number of naked wretches reduced to rags and

filth, huddled together like swine, in the corner of a dark alley, some

of whom, but eighteen months before, I had known the favourites of the

town, rolling in affluence, and glittering in all the pomp of equipage

and dress. Miserable wretch that I am! perhaps the same horrors are

decreed for me!” “No!” cried she, after some pause, “I shall never live

to such extremity of distress; my own hand shall open a way for my

deliverance, before I arrive at that forlorn period!” Her condition

filled me with sympathy and compassion: I revered her qualifications,

looked upon her as unfortunate, not criminal, and attended her with

such care and success, that in less than two months her health, as well

as my own, was perfectly re-established. As we often conferred upon our

mutual affairs, and interchanged advice, a thousand different projects

were formed, which, upon further canvassing, appeared impracticable. We

would have gladly gone to service, but who would take us in without

recommendation? At length an expedient occurred to her, of which she

intended to lay hold; and this was, to procure with the first money she

should earn, the homely garb of a country wench, go to some village at

a good distance from town, and come up in a waggon, as a fresh girl for

service: by which means she might be provided for, in a manner much

more suitable to her inclination than her present way of life.

CHAPTER XXIV

I am reduced to a great misery—assaulted on Tower Hill by a press-gang,

who put me on board a tender—my usage there—my arrival on board at a

man-of-war, where I am put in irons, and released by the good offices

of Mr. Thompson, who recommends me as assistant to the surgeon—-he

relates his own story—characters of the captain, surgeon, and first

mate

I applauded the resolution of Miss Williams, who a few days after, was

hired in quality of bar-keeper, by one of the ladies who had witnessed

in her behalf at the Marshalsea, and who since that time had got credit

with a wine merchant, whose favourite she was, to set up a convenient

house of her own. Thither my fellow-lodger repaired, after having taken

leave of me with a torrent of tears, and a thousand protestations of

eternal gratitude; assuring me she would remain in this situation no

longer than she could pick up money sufficient to put her other design

in execution.

As for my own part, I saw no resource but the army or navy, between

which I hesitated so long that I found myself reduced to a starving

condition. My spirit began to accommodate itself to my beggarly fate,

and I became so mean as to go down towards Wapping, with an intention

to inquire for an old schoolfellow, who, I understood, had got the

command of a small coasting vessel then in the river, and implore his

assistance. But my destiny prevented this abject piece of behaviour;

for as I crossed Tower Wharf, a squat tawny fellow with a hanger by his

side, and a cudgel in his hand came up to me, calling, “Yo ho! brother,

you must come along with me.” As I did not like his appearance, instead

of answering his salutation, I quickened my pace, in hope of ridding

myself of his company; upon which he whistled aloud, and immediately

another sailor appeared before me, who laid hold of me by the collar,

and began to drag me along. Not being in a humour to relish such

treatment, I disengaged myself of the assailant, and, with one blow of

my cudgel, laid him motionless on the ground; and perceiving myself

surrounded in a trice by ten or a dozen more, exerted myself with such

dexterity and success, that some of my opponents were fain to attack me

with drawn cutlasses; and after an obstinate engagement, in which I

received a large wound on my head, and another on my left cheek, I was

disarmed, taken prisoner, and carried on board a pressing tender,

where, after being pinioned like a malefactor, I was thrust down into

the hold among a parcel of miserable wretches, the sight of whom well

nigh distracted me. As the commanding officer had not humanity enough

to order my wounds to be dressed, and I could not use my own hands, I

desired one of my fellow captives who was unfettered, to take a

handkerchief out of my pocket, and tie it round my head, to stop the

bleeding. He pulled out my handkerchief, ’tis true, but instead of

applying it to the use for which I designed it, went to the grating of

the hatchway, and, with astonishing composure, sold it before my face

to a bumboat woman (1) then on board, for a quart of gin, with which he

treated his companions, regardless of my circumstances and entreaties.

(1) A Bumboat woman is one who sells bread, cheese, greens, liquor, and

fresh potatoes to the sailors, in a small boat that lies alongside the

ship

I complained bitterly of this robbery to the midshipman on deck,

telling him at the same time, that unless my hurts were dressed, I

should bleed to death. But compassion was a weakness of which no man

could justly accuse this person, who, squirting a mouthful of dissolved

tobacco upon me through the gratings, told me “I was a mutinous dog,

and that I might die for anything he cared!” Finding there was no other

remedy, I appealed to patience, and laid up this usage in my memory, to

be called at a more fitting opportunity. In the meantime, loss of

blood, vexation, and want of food, contributed, with the noisome stench

of the place, to throw me into a swoon, out of which I was recovered by

a tweak of the nose, administered by the tar who stood sentinel over

us, who at the same time regaled me with a draught of flip, and

comforted me with the hopes of being put on board of the Thunder next

day, where I should be freed of my handcuffs, and cured of my wounds by

the doctor. I no sooner heard him name the Thunder, than I asked if he

had belonged to that ship long; and be giving me to understand he had

belonged to her five years, I inquired if he knew Lieutenant Bowling?

“Know Lieutenant Bowling!” said he, “Odds my life! and that I do; and a

good seaman he is as ever stepped upon forecastle, and a brave fellow

as ever cracked biscuit—none of your Guinea pigs, nor your fresh water,

wish-washy, fair-weather fowls. Many a taut gale of wind have honest

Tom Bowling and I weathered together. Here’s his health, with all my

heart: wherever he is, a-loft, or a-low, the lieutenant needs not be

ashamed to show himself.” I was so much affected with this eulogium,

that I could not refrain from telling him that I was Lieutenant

Bowling’s kinsman; in consequence of which connection, he expressed his

inclination to serve me, and when he was relieved, brought some cold

boiled beef in a platter, and biscuit, on which we supped plentifully,

and afterwards drank another can of flip together. While we were thus

engaged, he recounted a great many exploits of my uncle, who, I found,

was very much beloved by the ship’s company, and pitied for the

misfortune that had happened to him in Hispaniola, which I was very

glad to be informed was not so great as I imagined; for Captain Oakum

had recovered of his wounds, and actually at that time commanded the

ship. Having by accident, in my pocket, my uncle’s letter, written from

Port Louis, I gave it my benefactor (whose name was Jack Rattlin) for

his perusal; but honest Jack told me frankly he could not read, and

desired to know the contents, which I immediately communicated. When he

heard that part of it in which he says he had written to his landlord

in Deal, he cried, “Body o’ me! that was old Ben Block; he was dead

before the letter came to hand. Ey, ey, had Ben been alive, Lieutenant

Bowling would have had no occasion to skulk so long. Honest Ben was the

first man that taught him to hand, reef, and steer. Well, well, we must

all die, that’s certain—we must all come to port sooner or later, at

sea or on shore—we must be fast moored one day: death’s like the best

bower anchor, as the saying is—it will bring us all up.” I could not

but signify my approbation of the justness of Jack’s reflections, and

inquired into the occasion of the quarrel between Captain Oakum and my

uncle, which he explained in this manner: “Captain Oakum, to be sure,

is a good man enough—besides, he’s my commander; but what’s that to me?

I do my duty, and value no man’s anger of a rope’s end. Now the report

goes, as how he’s a lord, or baron knight’s brother, whereby (d’ye see

me,) he carries a straight arm, and keeps aloof from his officers,

though mayhap they may be as good men in the main as he. Now we lying

at anchor in Tuberon Bay, Lieutenant Bowling had the middle watch, and

as he always kept a good look out, he made (d’ye see) three lights in

the offing, whereby he ran down to the great cabin for orders, and

found the captain asleep; whereupon he waked him, which put him in a

main high passion, and he swore woundily at the lieutenant, and called

him lousy Scotch son of a whore (for, I being then sentinel in the

steerage, heard all), and swab, and lubber, whereby the lieutenant

returned the salute, and they jawed together fore and aft a good spell,

till at last the captain turned out, and, laying hold of a rattan, came

athwart Mr. Bowling’s quarter: whereby he told the captain that, if he

was not his commander, he would heave him overboard, and demanded

satisfaction ashore; whereby in the morning watch, the captain went

ashore in the pinnace, and afterwards the lieutenant carried the cutter

ashore, and so they, leaving the boats’ crews on their oars, went away

together; and so (d’ye see) in less than a quarter of an hour we heard

firing, whereby we made for the place, and found the captain lying

wounded on the beach, and so brought him on board to the doctor, who

cured him in less than six weeks. But the lieutenant clapped on all the

sail he could bear, and had got far enough ahead before we knew

anything of the matter; so that we could never after get sight of him,

for which we were not sorry, because the captain was mainly wrath, and

would certainly have done him a mischief; for he afterwards caused him

to be run on the ship’s books, whereby he lost all his pay, and, if he

should be taken, would be tried as a deserter.”

This account of the captain’s behaviour gave me no advantageous idea of

his character; and I could not help lamenting my own fate, that had

subjected me to such a commander. However, making a virtue of

necessity, I put a good face on the matter, and next day, was, with the

other pressed men, put on board of the “Thunder,” lying at the Nore.

When we came alongside, the mate, who guarded us thither, ordered my

handcuffs to be taken off, that I might get on board the easier; this

circumstance being perceived by some of the company who stood upon the

gangboard to see us enter, one of them called to Jack Rattlin, who was

busied in doing this friendly office for me, “Hey, Jack, what Newgate

galley have you boarded in the river as you came along? Have we not

thieves enow among us already?” Another, observing my wounds, which

remained exposed to the air, told me, my seams were uncaulked, and that

I must be new payed. A third, seeing my hair clotted together with

blood, as it were into distinct cords, took notice, that my bows were

mended with the red ropes, instead of my side. A fourth asked me, if I

could not keep my yards square without iron braces? And, in short, a

thousand witticisms of the same nature were passed upon me before I

could get up the ship’s side.

After we had been all entered upon the ship’s books, I inquired of one

of my shipmates where the surgeon was, that I might have my wounds

dressed, and had actually got as far as the middle deck (for our ship

carried eighty guns), in my way to the cockpit, when I was met by the

same midshipman who had used me so barbarously in the tender: he,

seeing me free from my chains, asked, with an insolent air, who had

released me? To this question, I foolishly answered, with a countenance

that too plainly declared the state of my thoughts, “Whoever did it, I

am persuaded did not consult you in the affair.” I had no sooner

uttered these words, than he cried, “Damn you, you saucy son of a

hitch, I’ll teach you to talk so to your officer.” So saying, he

bestowed on me several severe stripes with a supple jack he had in his

hand: and, going to the commanding officer, made such a report of me,

that I was immediately put in irons by the master-at-arms, and a

sentinel placed over me. Honest Rattlin, as soon as he heard of my

condition, came to me, and administered all the consolation he could,

and then went to the surgeon in my behalf, who sent one of his mates to

dress my wounds. This mate was no other than my old friend Thompson,

with whom I became acquainted at the Navy Office, as before mentioned.

If I knew him at first sight, it was not easy for him to recognise me,

disfigured with blood and dirt, and altered by the misery I had

undergone. Unknown as I was to him, he surveyed me with looks of

compassion, and handled my sores with great tenderness. When he had

applied what he thought proper, and was about to leave me, I asked him

if my misfortunes had disguised me so much that he could not recollect

my face? Upon this address he observed me with great earnestness for

some time, and at length protested he could not recollect one feature

of my countenance. To keep him no longer in suspense, I told him my

name, which when he heard, he embraced me with affection, and professed

his sorrow at seeing me in such a disagreeable situation. I made him

acquainted with my story, and, when he heard how inhumanly I had been

used in the tender, he left me abruptly, assuring me I should see him

again soon. I had scarce time to wonder at his sudden departure, when

the master-at-arms came to the place of my confinement, and bade me

follow him to the quarter-deck, where I was examined by the first

lieutenant, who commanded the ship in the absence of the captain,

touching the treatment I had received in the tender from my friend the

midshipman, who was present to confront me.

I recounted the particulars of his behaviour to me, not only in the

tender, but since my being on board the ship, part of which being

proved by the evidence of Jack Rattlin and others, who had no great

devotion for my oppressor, I was discharged from confinement, to make

way for him, who was delivered to the master-at-arms to take his turn

in the bilboes. And this was not the only satisfaction I enjoyed, for I

was, at the request of the surgeon, exempted from all other duty than

that of assisting his mates, in making and administering medicines to

the sick. This good office I owed to the friendship of Mr. Thompson,

who had represented me in such a favourable light to the surgeon, that

he demanded me of the lieutenant to supply the place of his third mate,

who was lately dead. When I had obtained this favour, my friend

Thompson carried me down to the cockpit, which is the place allotted

for the habitation of the surgeon’s mates; and when he had shown me

their berth (as he called it), I was filled with astonishment and

horror, We descended by divers ladders to a space as dark as a dungeon,

which, I understood, was immersed several feet under water, being

immediately above the hold. I had no sooner approached this dismal

gulph, than my nose was saluted with an intolerable stench of putrified

cheese and rancid butter, that issued from an apartment at the foot of

the ladder, resembling a chandler’s shop, where, by the faint

glimmering of a candle, I could perceive a man with a pale, meagre

countenance, sitting behind a kind of desk, having spectacles on his

nose, and a pen in his hand. This (I learned of Mr. Thompson) was the

ship’s steward, who sat there to distribute provision to the several

messes, and to mark what each received. He therefore presented my name

to him, and desired I might be entered in his mess; then, taking a

light in his hand, conducted me to the place of his residence, which

was a square of about six feet, surrounded with the medicine-chest,

that of the first mate, his own, and a board by way of table fastened

to the after powder room; it was also inclosed with canvas nailed round

to the beams of the ship, to screen us from the cold, as well as from

the view of the midshipmen and quartermaster, who lodged within the

cable-tiers on each side of us. In this gloomy mansion he entertained

me with some cold salt pork, which he brought from a sort of locker,

fixed above the table: and calling for the boy of the mess, sent for a

can of beer, of which he made excellent flip to crown the banquet.

By this time I began to recover my spirits, which had been exceedingly

depressed with the appearance of everything about me, and could no

longer refrain from asking the particulars of Mr. Thompson’s fortune

since I had seen him in London. He told me, that being disappointed in

his expectations of borrowing money to gratify the rapacious s—t—ry at

the Navy Office, he found himself utterly unable to subsist any longer

in town, and had actually offered his service, in quality of mate, to

the surgeon of a merchant ship, bound to Guinea on the slaving trade;

when, one morning, a young fellow, of whom he had some acquaintance,

came to his lodgings, and informed him that he had seen a warrant made

out in his name at the Navy Office, for surgeon’s second mate of a

third-rate. This unexpected piece of good news he could scarcely

believe to be true, more especially as he had been found qualified at

Surgeons’ Hall for third mate only; but that he might not be wanting to

himself, he went thither to be assured, and actually found it so:

whereupon, demanding his warrant, it was delivered to him, and the

oaths administered immediately. That very afternoon he went to

Gravesend in the tilt-boat, from whence he took place in the tide-coach

for Rochester; next morning got on board the “Thunder,” for which he

was appointed, then lying in the harbour at Chatham; and the same day

was mustered by the clerk of the checque. And well it was for him that

such expedition was used; for, in less than twelve hours after his

arrival, another William Thompson came on board, affirming that he was

the person for whom the warrant was expedited, and that the other was

an impostor.

My friend was grievously alarmed at this accident, the more so, as his

namesake had very much the advantage over him both in assurance and

dress. However, to acquit himself of the suspicion of imposture, he

produced several letters written from Scotland to him in that name,

and, recollecting that his indentures were in a box on board, he

brought them up, and convinced all present that he had not assumed a

name which did not belong to him. His competitor, enraged that they

should hesitate in doing him justice (for to be sure the warrant had

been designed for him), behaved with so much indecent heat, that the

commanding officer (who was the same gentleman I had seen) and the

surgeon were offended at his presumption, and making a point of it with

their friends in town, in less than a week got the first confirmed in

his station. “I have been on board,” said he, “ever since; and, as this

way of life is becoming familiar to me, have no cause to complain of my

situation. The surgeon is a good-natured, indolent man; the first mate

(who is now on shore on duty) is indeed a little proud and choleric, as

all Welshmen are, but in the main a friendly honest fellow. The

lieutenants I have no concern with; and, as for the captain, he is too

much of a gentleman to know a surgeon’s mate, even by sight.”

CHAPTER XXV

The behaviour of Mr. Morgan—his pride, displeasure, and generosity—the

economy of our mess described—Thomson’s further friendship—the nature

of my duty explained—the situation of the sick

While he was thus discoursing to me, we heard a voice on the cockpit

ladder pronounce with great vehemence, in a strange dialect, “The devil

and his dam blow me from the top of Monchdenny, if I go to him before

there is something in my pelly. Let his nose be as yellow as saffron,

or as plue as a pell (look you), or as green as a leek, ’tis all one.”

To this declaration somebody answered, “So it seems my poor messmate

must part his cable for want of a little assistance. His foretopsail is

loose already; and besides the doctor ordered you to overhaul him; but

I see you don’t mind what your master says.” Here he was interrupted

with, “Splutter and cons! you lousy tog, who do you call my master? Get

you gone to the doctor, and tell him my birth, and education, and my

abilities; and moreover, my behaviour is as good as his, or any

shentleman’s (no disparagement to him,) in the whole world. Cot pless

my soul I does he think, or conceive, or imagine, that I am a horse, or

an ass, or a goat, to trudge backwards and forwards, and upwards and

downwards, and by sea and by land; at his will and pleasure? Go your

ways, you rapscallion, and tell Doctor Atkins that I desire and request

that he will give a look upon the tying man, and order something for

him, if he be dead or alive, and I will see him take it by and by, when

my craving stomach is satisfied, look you.” At this, the other went

away, saying, “that if they should serve him so when he was dying, by

God he would be foul of them in the other world.” Here Mr. Thompson let

me know, that the person we heard was Mr. Morgan, the first mate, who

was just come on board from the hospital, whither he had attended some

of the sick in the morning; at the same time I saw him come into the

berth. He was a short thick man, with a face garnished with pimples, a

snub nose turned up at the end, an excessive wide mouth, and little

fiery eyes, surrounded with skin puckered up in innumerable wrinkles.

My friend immediately made him acquainted with my case; when he

regarded me with a very lofty look, but without speaking, set down a

bundle he had in his hand, and approached the cupboard, which, when he

had opened, he exclaimed in a great passion, “Cot is my life, all the

pork is gone, as I am a Christian!” Thompson then gave him to

understand, that, as I had been brought on board half famished, he

could do no less than to entertain me with what was in the locker, and

the rather as he had bid the steward enter me in the mess. Whether this

disappointment made Mr. Morgan more peevish than usual, or he really

thought himself too little regarded by his fellow mate, I know not, but

after some pause, he went on in this manner: “Mr. Thompson, perhaps you

do not use me with all the good manners, and complaisance, and respect

(look you,) that becomes you, because you have not vouchsafed to advise

with me in this affair. I have in my time (look you,) been a man of

some weight, and substance, and consideration, and have kept house and

home, and paid scot and lot, and the king’s taxes; ay, and maintained a

family to boot. And moreover, also, I am your senior, and your older,

and your petter, Mr. Thompson.” “My elder, I’ll allow you to be, but

not my better!” cried Thompson, with some heat. “Cot is my Saviour, and

witness too,” said Morgan, with great vehemence, “that I am more elder,

and therefore more petter by many years than you.” Fearing this dispute

might be attended with some bad consequence, I interposed, and told Mr.

Morgan I was very sorry for having been the occasion of any difference

between him and the second mate; and that, rather than cause the least

breach in their good understanding, I would eat my allowance to myself,

or seek admission into some other company. But Thompson, with more

spirit than discretion (as I thought), insisted upon my remaining where

he had appointed me; and observed that no man, possessed of generosity

and compassion, would have any objection to it, considering my birth

and talents, and the misfortunes I had of late so unjustly undergone.

This was touching Mr. Morgan on the right key, who protested with great

earnestness, that he had no objection to my being received in the mess;

but only complained that the ceremony of asking his consent was not

observed. “As for a sheltenman in distress,” said he, shaking me by the

hand, “I lofe him as I lofe my own powels: for, Cot help me! I have had

vexations enough upon my own pack.” And as I afterwards learned, in so

saying, he spoke no more than what was true; for he had been once

settled in a very good situation in Glamorganshire, and was ruined by

being security for an acquaintance. All differences being composed, he

untied his bundle, which consisted of three bunches of onions, and a

great lump of Cheshire cheese, wrapped up in a handkerchief: and,

taking some biscuit from the cupboard, fell to with a keen appetite,

inviting us to share of the repast. When he had fed heartily on his

homely fare, he filled a large cup, made of a cocoa-nut shell, with

brandy, and, drinking it off, told us, “Prandy was the best menstruum

for onions and sheese.” His hunger being appeased, he began to be in

better humour; and, being inquisitive about my birth, no sooner

understood that I was descended of a good family, than he discovered a

particular good-will to me on that account, deducing his own pedigree

in a direct line from the famous Caractacus, king of the Britons, who

was first the prisoner, and afterwards the friend of Claudius Caesar.

Perceiving how much I was reduced in point of linen, he made me a

present of two good ruffled shirts, which, with two more of check which

I received from Mr. Thompson, enabled me to appear with decency.

Meanwhile the sailor, whom Mr. Morgan had sent to the doctor, brought a

prescription for his messmate, which when the Welshman had read, he got

up to prepare it, and asked, “if the man was dead or alive.” “Dead!”

replied Jack; “if he was dead, he would have no occasion for doctor’s

stuff. No, thank God, death han’t as yet boarded him. But they have

been yard-arm and yard-arm these three glasses.” “Are his eyes open,”

continued the mate. “His starboard eye,” said the sailor, “is open, but

fast jammed in his head: and the haulyards of his under jaw have given

way.” “Passion of my heart!” cried Morgan, “the man is as pad as one

would desire to be! Did you feel his pulses!” To this the other replied

with “Anan!” Upon which this Cambro Briton, with great earnestness and

humanity, ordered the tar to run to his messmate, and keep him alive

till he should come with the medicine, “and then,” said he, “you shall

peradventure pehold what you shall see.”

The poor fellow, with great simplicity, ran to the place where the sick

man lay, but in less than a minute returned with a woful countenance,

and told us his comrade had struck. Morgan, hearing this, exclaimed,

“Mercy upon my salvation! why did you not stop him till I came?” “Stop

him!” said the other; “I hailed him several times, but he was too far

on his way, and the enemy had got possession of his close quarters; so

that he did not mind me.” “Well, well,” said he, “we all owe heaven a

teath. Go your ways, you ragamuffin, and take an example and a warning,

look you, and repent of your misteets.” So saying, he pushed the seaman

out of the berth.

While we entertained us with reflections suitable to this event, we

heard the boatswain pipe to dinner; and immediately the boy belonging

to our mess ran to the locker, from whence he carried off a large

wooden platter, and, in a few minutes, returned with it full of boiled

peas, crying “Scaldings” all the way as he came. The cloth, consisting

of a piece of an old sail, was instantly laid, covered with three

plates, which by the colour I could with difficulty discern to be

metal, and as many spoons of the same composition, two of which were

curtailed in the handles, and the other abridged in the lip. Mr. Morgan

himself enriched this mess with a lump of salt butter scooped from an

old gallipot, and a handful of onions shorn, with some pounded pepper.

I was not very much tempted with the appearance of this dish, of which,

nevertheless, my messmates ate heartily, advising me to follow their

example, as it was banyan day and we could have no meat till next noon.

But I had already laid in sufficient for the occasion, and therefore

desired to be excused: expressing a curiosity to know the meaning of

banyan day. They told me, that, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays,

the ship’s company had no allowance of meat, and that these meagre days

were called banyan days, the reason of which they did not know; but I

have since learned they take their denomination from a sect of devotees

in some parts of the East Indies, who never taste flesh.

After dinner Thompson led me round the ship, showed me the different

parts, described their uses, and, as far as he could, made me

acquainted with the particulars of the discipline and economy practised

on board. He then demanded of the boatswain a hammock for me, which was

slung in a very neat manner by my friend Jack Rattlin; and, as I had no

bed-clothes, procured credit for me with the purser, for a mattress and

two blankets. At seven o’clock in the evening Morgan visited the sick,

and, having ordered what was proper for each, I assisted Thompson in

making up his prescriptions: but when I followed him with the medicines

into the sick berth, or hospital, and observed the situation of the

patients, I was much less surprised that people should die on board,

than that a sick person should recover. Here I saw about fifty

miserable distempered wretches, suspended in rows, so huddled one upon

another, that not more than fourteen inches space was allotted for each

with his bed and bedding; and deprived of the light of the day, as well

as of fresh air; breathing nothing but a noisome atmosphere of the

morbid steams exhaling from their own excrements and diseased bodies,

devoured with vermin hatched in the filth that surrounded them, and

destitute of every convenience necessary for people in that helpless

condition.

CHAPTER XXVI

A disagreeable accident happens to me in the discharge of my

office—Morgan’s nose is offended—a dialogue between him and the Ship’s

steward—upon examination, I find more causes of complaint than one—my

hair is cut off—Morgan’s cookery—the manner of sleeping on board—I am

waked in the night by a dreadful noise

I could not comprehend how it was possible for the attendants to come

near those who hung on the inside towards the sides of the ship, in

order to assist them, as they seemed barricadoed by those who lay on

the outside, and entirely out of the reach of all visitation; much less

could I conceive how my friend Thompson would be able to administer

clysters, that were ordered for some, in that situation; when I saw him

thrust his wig in his pocket, and strip himself to his waistcoat in a

moment, then creep on all fours under the hammocks of the sick, and,

forcing up his bare pate between two, keep them asunder with one

shoulder, until he had done his duty. Eager to learn the service, I

desired he would give me leave to perform the next operation of that

kind; and he consenting, I undressed myself after his example, and

crawling along, the ship happened to roll: this motion alarming me, I

laid hold of the first thing that came within my grasp with such

violence, that I overturned it, and soon found, by the smell that

issued upon me, that I had unlocked a box of the most delicious

perfume. It was well for me that my nose was none of the most delicate,

else I know not how I might have been affected by this vapour, which

diffused itself all over the ship, to the utter discomposure of

everybody who tarried on the same dock! neither was the consequence of

this disgrace confined to my sense of smelling only; for I felt my

misfortune more ways than one. That I might not, however, appear

altogether disconcerted in this my first essay, I got up, and, pushing

my head with great force between two hammocks, towards the middle,

where the greatest resistance was, I made an opening indeed, but, not

understanding the knack of dexterously turning my shoulder to maintain

my advantage, had the mortification to find myself stuck up, as it

were, in a pillory, and the weight of three or four people bearing on

each side of my neck, so that I was in danger of strangulation. While I

remained in this defenceless posture, one of the sick men, rendered

peevish by his distemper, was so enraged at the smell I had occasioned

and the rude shock he had received from me in my elevation, that, with

many bitter reproaches, he seized me by the nose, which he tweaked so

unmercifully, that I roared with anguish. Thompson, perceiving my

condition, ordered one of the waiters to my assistance, who, with much

difficulty, disengaged me from this situation, and hindered me from

taking vengeance on the sick man, whose indisposition would not have

screened him from the effects of my indignation.

After having made an end of our ministry for that time, we descended to

the cockpit, my friend comforting me for what had happened with a

homely proverb, which I do not choose to repeat. When we had descended

half-way down the ladder, Mr. Morgan, before he saw us, having

intelligence by his nose of the approach of something extraordinary,

cried, “Cot have mercy upon my senses! I pelieve the enemy has poarded

us in a stinkpot!” Then, directing his discourse to the steward, from

whence he imagined the odour proceeded, he reprimanded him severely for

the freedoms he took among gentlemen of birth, and threatened to smoke

him like a padger with sulphur, if ever he should presume to offend his

neighbours with such smells for the future. The steward, conscious of

his own innocence, replied with some warmth, “I know of no smells but

those of your own making.” This repartee introduced a smart dialogue,

in which the Welshman undertook to prove, that, though the stench he

complained of did not flow from the steward’s own body, he was

nevertheless the author of it, by serving out damaged provisions to the

ship’s company; and, in particular, putrified cheese, from the use of

which only, he affirmed, such unsavoury steams could arise. Then he

launched out into the praise of good cheese, of which he gave the

analysis; explained the different kinds of that commodity, with the

methods practised to make and preserve it, concluded in observing,

that, in yielding good cheese, the county of Glamorgan might vie with

Cheshire itself, and was much superior to it in the produce of goats

and putter.

I gathered from this conversation, that, if I entered in my present

pickle, I should be no welcome guest, and therefore desired Mr.

Thompson to go before, and represent my calamity; at which the first

mate, expressing some concern, went upon deck immediately, taking his

way through the cable-tier and the main hatchway, to avoid encountering

me; desiring me to clean myself as soon as possible: for he intended to

regale himself with a dish of salmagundy and a pipe. Accordingly, I set

about this disagreeable business, and soon found I had more causes of

complaint than I at first imagined; for I perceived some guests had

honoured me with their company, whose visit I did not think seasonable:

neither did they seem inclined to leave me in a hurry, for they were in

possession of my chief quarters, where they fed without reserve at the

expense of my blood. But, considering it would be easier to extirpate

the ferocious colony in the infancy of their settlement, than after

they should be multiplied and naturalised to the soil, I took the

advice of my friend, who, to prevent such misfortunes, went always

close shaved, and made the boy of our mess cut off my hair, which had

been growing since I left the service of Lavement; and the second mate

lent me an old bobwig to supply the loss of that covering. This affair

being ended, and everything adjusted in the best manner my

circumstances would permit, the descendant of Caractacus returned, and,

ordering the boy to bring a piece of salt beef from the brine, cut off

a slice, and mixed it with an equal quantity of onions, which seasoning

with a moderate proportion of pepper and salt, he brought it to a

consistence with oil and vinegar; then, tasting the dish, assured us it

was the best salmagundy that ever he made, and recommended it to our

palate with such heartiness that I could not help doing honour to his

preparation. But I had no sooner swallowed a mouthful, than I thought

my entrails were scorched, and endeavoured with a deluge of small-beer

to allay the heat it occasioned. Supper being over, Mr. Morgan having

smoked a couple of pipes, and supplied the moisture he had expended

with as many cans of flip, of which we all partook, a certain yawning

began to admonish me that it was high time to repair by sleep the

injury I had suffered from want of rest the preceding night; which

being perceived by my companions, whose time of repose was now arrived,

they proposed we should turn in, or in other words, go to bed. Our

hammocks, which hung parallel to one another, on the outside of the

berth, were immediately unlashed, and I beheld my messmates spring with

great agility into their respective nests, where they seemed to lie

concealed, very much at their ease. But it was some time before I could

prevail upon myself to trust my carcase at such a distance from the

ground, in a narrow bag, out of which, I imagined, I should be apt, on

the least motion in my sleep, to tumble down at the hazard of breaking

my bones. I suffered myself, however, to be persuaded, and taking a

leap to get in, threw myself quite over, with such violence, that had I

not luckily got hold of Thompson’s hammock, I should have pitched upon

my head on the other side, and in all likelihood fractured my skull.

After some fruitless efforts, I succeeded at last; but the apprehension

of the jeopardy in which I believed myself withstood all the attacks of

sleep till towards the morning watch, when, in spite of my fears, I was

overpowered with slumber, though I did not long enjoy this comfortable

situation, being aroused with a noise so loud and shrill, that I

thought the drums of my ears were burst by it; this was followed by a

dreadful summons pronounced by a hoarse voice, which I could not

understand. While I was debating with myself, whether or not I should

wake my companion and inquire into the occasion of this disturbance, I

was informed by one of the quartermasters who passed by me with a

lantern in his hand, that the noise which alarmed me was occasioned by

the boatswain’s mates who called up the larboard watch, and that I must

lay my account with such an interruption every morning at the same

hour. Being now more assured of my safety, I undressed myself again to

rest, and slept till eight o’clock, when rising, and breakfasting with

my comrades on biscuit and brandy, the sick were visited and assisted

as before; after which visitation my good friend Thompson explained and

performed another piece of duty, to which I was a stranger. At a

certain hour in the morning, the boy of the mess went round all the

decks, ringing a small hand-bell, and, in rhymes composed for the

occasion, invited all those who had sores to repair before the mast,

where one of the doctor’s mates attended, with applications to dress

them.

CHAPTER XXVII

I acquire the friendship of the Surgeon, who procures a warrant for me,

and makes me a present of clothes—a battle between a Midshipman and

me—the Surgeon leaves the ship—the Captain comes on board with another

Surgeon—a dialogue between the Captain and Morgan—the sick are ordered

to be brought upon the Quarter-deck and examined—the consequences of

that order—a Madman accuses Morgan, and is set at liberty by command of

the Captain, whom he instantly attacks, and pummels without mercy

While I was busied with my friend in the practice, the doctor chanced

to pass by the place where we were, and stopping to observe me appeared

very well satisfied with my application; and afterwards sent for me to

his cabin, where, having examined me touching my skill in surgery, and

the particulars of my fortune, he interested himself so far in my

behalf, as to promise his assistance in procuring a warrant for me,

seeing I had already been found qualified at Surgeons’ Hall for the

station I filled on board; and in this good office he the more

cordially engaged when he understood I was nephew to lieutenant

Bowling, for whom he expressed a particular regard. In the meantime, I

could learn from his discourse that he did not intend to go to sea

again with Captain Oakum, having, as he thought, been indifferently

used by him during the last voyage.

While I lived tolerably easy, in expectation of preferment, I was not

altogether without mortifications, which I not only suffered from the

rude insults of the sailors and petty officers, among whom I was known

by the name of Loblolly Boy, but also from the disposition of Morgan,

who, though friendly in the main, was often very troublesome with his

pride, which expected a good deal of submission from me, and delighted

in recapitulating the favours I had received at his hands.

About six weeks after my arrival on board, the surgeon, bidding me to

follow him into his cabin, presented a warrant to me, by which I was

appointed surgeon’s third mate on board the Thunder. This he had

procured by his interest at the Navy Office; as also another for

himself, by virtue of which he was removed into a second-rate. I

acknowledged his kindness in the strongest terms my gratitude could

suggest, and professed my sorrow at the prospect of losing so valuable

a friend, to whom I hoped to have recommended myself still further, by

my respectful and diligent behaviour. But his generosity rested not

here; for before he left the ship he made me a present of a chest and

some clothes that enabled me to support the rank to which he had raised

me.

I found my spirit revive with my good fortune; and, now I was an

officer, resolved to maintain the dignity of my station, against all

opposition or affronts; nor was it long before I had occasion to exert

my resolution. My old enemy, the midshipman (whose name was Crampley),

entertaining an implacable animosity against me for the disgrace he had

suffered on my account, had since that time taken all opportunities of

reviling and ridiculing me, when I was not entitled to retort this bad

usage; and, even after I had been rated on the books, and mustered as

surgeon’s mate, did not think fit to restrain his insolence. In

particular, being one day present while I dressed a wound in a sailor’s

leg, he began to sing a song, which I thought highly injurious to the

honour of my country, and therefore signified my resentment, by

observing that the Scots always laid their account with finding enemies

among the ignorant, insignificant, and malicious. This unexpected piece

of assurance enraged him to such a degree, that he lent me a blow on

the face, which I verily thought had demolished my cheek-bone. I was

not slow in returning the obligation, and the affair began to be very

serious, when by accident Mr. Morgan, and one of the master’s mates,

coming that way, interposed, and, inquiring into the cause, endeavoured

to promote a reconciliation; but, finding us both exasperated to the

uttermost, and bent against accommodation, they advised us either to

leave our difference undecided, till we should have an opportunity of

terminating it on shore, like gentlemen, or else choose a proper place

on board, and bring it to an issue by boxing. The last expedient was

greedily embraced by us both; and, being forthwith conducted to the

ground proposed, we stripped in a moment, and began a furious contest,

in which I soon found myself inferior to my antagonist, not so much in

strength and agility, as in skill, which he had acquired in the school

of Hockley-in-the-Hole at Tottenham-court. Many cross buttocks did I

sustain, and pegs on the stomach without number, till at last my breath

being quite gone, as well as my vigour wasted, I grew desperate, and

collecting all my strength in one effort, threw in at once, head,

hands, and feet, with such violence, that I drove my antagonist three

paces backward into the main hatchway, down which he fell, and pitching

upon his head and right shoulder, remained without sense and motion.

Morgan, looking down, and seeing him lie in that condition, cried,

“Upon my conscience, as I am a Christian sinner, (look you,) I believe

his pattles are all ofer; but I take you all to witness that there was

no treachery in the case, and that he has suffered by the chance of

war.” So saying he descended to the deck below, to examine into the

situation of my adversary, and left me very little pleased with my

victory, as I found myself not only terribly bruised, but likewise in

danger of being called to account for the death of Crampley; but this

fear vanished when my fellow-mate having, by bleeding him in the

jugular, brought him to himself, and inquired into the state of his

body, called up to me to be under no concern, for the midshipman had

received no other damage than as pretty a luxation of the os humeri as

one would desire to see on a summer’s day. Upon this information I

crawled down to the cock-pit, and acquainted Thompson with the affair,

who, providing himself with bandages, etc, necessary for the occasion,

went up to assist Mr. Morgan in the reduction of the dislocation. When

this was successfully performed, they wished me joy of the event of the

combat; and the Welshman, after observing, that, in all likelihood, the

ancient Scots and Britons were the same people, bade me “praise Cot for

putting mettle in my pelly, and strength in my limbs to support it.” I

acquired such reputation by this rencontre, which lasted twenty

minutes, that everybody became more cautious in behaviour towards me;

though Crampley, with his arm in a sling, talked very high, and

threatened to seize the first opportunity of retrieving on shore the

honour he had lost by an accident, from which I could justly claim no

merit.

About this time, Captain Oakum, having received sailing orders, came on

board, and brought along with him a surgeon of his own country, who

soon made us sensible of the loss we suffered in the departure of

Doctor Atkins; for he was grossly ignorant, and intolerably assuming,

false, vindictive, and unforgiving; a merciless tyrant to his

inferiors, an abject sycophant to those above him. In the morning after

the captain came on board, our first mate, according to custom, went to

wait on him with a sick list, which, when this grim commander had

perused, he cried with a stern countenance, “Blood and cons! sixty-one

sick people on board of my ship! Harkee, you sir, I’ll have no sick in

my ship, by G—d.” The Welshman replied, “he should be very glad to find

no sick people on board: but, while it was otherwise, he did no more

than his duty in presenting him with a list.” “You and your list may be

d—n’d,” said the captain, throwing it at him; “I say, there shall be no

sick in this ship while I have the command of her.” Mr. Morgan, being

nettled at this treatment, told him his indignation ought to be

directed to Cot Almighty, who visited his people with distempers, and

not to him, who contributed all in his power towards their cure. The

bashaw, not being used to such behaviour in any of his officers, was

enraged to fury at this satirical insinuation, and, stamping with his

foot, called him insolent scoundrel, threatening to have him pinioned

to the deck, if he should presume to utter another syllable. But the

blood of Caractacus being thoroughly heated, disdained to be restricted

by such a command, and began to manifest itself in, “Captain Oakum, I

am a shentleman of birth and parentage (look you), and peradventure I

am moreover.” Here his harangue was broken off by the captain’s

steward, who, being Morgan’s countryman, hurried him out of the cabin

before he had time to exasperate his master to a greater degree, and

this would certainly have been the case; for the indignant Welshman

could hardly be hindered by his friend’s arguments and entreaties from

re-entering the presence-chamber, and defying Captain Oakum to his

teeth. He was, however appeased at length, and came down to the berth,

where, finding Thompson and me at work preparing medicines, he bade us

leave off our lapour to go to play, for the captain, by his sole word,

and power, and command, had driven sickness a pegging to the tevil, and

there was no more malady on board. So saying, he drank off a gill of

brandy, sighed grievously three times, poured fort an ejaculation of

“Cot pless my heart, liver, and lungs!” and then began to sing a Welsh

song with great earnestness of visage, voice, and gesture. I could not

conceive the meaning of this singular phenomenon, and saw by the looks

of Thompson, who at the same time shook his head, that he suspected

poor Cadwallader’s brains were unsettled. He, perceiving our amazement,

told us he would explain the mystery; but at the same time bade us take

notice, that he had lived poy, patchelor, married man, and widower,

almost forty years, and in all that time there was no man, nor mother’s

son in the whole world who durst use him so ill as Captain Oakum had

done. Then he acquainted us with the dialogue that passed between them,

as I have already related it: and had no sooner finished this narration

than he received a message from the surgeon, to bring the sick-list to

the quarter-deck, for the captain had ordered all the patients thither

to be reviewed.

This inhuman order shocked us extremely, as we knew it would be

impossible to carry some of them on the deck, without imminent danger

of their lives: but, as we likewise knew it would be to no purpose for

us to remonstrate against it, we repaired to the quarter-deck in a

body, to see this extraordinary muster; Morgan observing by the way,

that the captain was going to send to the other world a great many

evidences to testify against himself. When we appeared upon deck, the

captain bade the doctor, who stood bowing at his right hand, look at

these lazy lubberly sons of bitches, who were good for nothing on board

but to eat the king’s provision, and encourage idleness in the

skulkers. The surgeon grinned approbation, and, taking the list, began

to examine the complaints of each as they could crawl to the place

appointed. The first who came under his cognizance was a poor fellow

just freed of a fever, which had weakened him so much that he could

hardly stand. Mr. Mackshane (for that was the doctor’s name), having

felt his pulse, protested he was as well as any man in the world; and

the captain delivered him over to the boatswain’s mate, with orders

that he should receive a round dozen at the gangway immediately, for

counterfeiting himself sick; but, before the discipline could be

executed, the man dropped down on the deck, and had well nigh perished

under the hands of the executioner. The next patient to be considered,

laboured under a quartan ague, and, being then in his interval of

health, discovered no other symptoms of distemper than a pale meagre

countenance and emaciated body; upon which he was declared fit for

duty, and turned over to the boatswain; but, being resolved to disgrace

the doctor, died upon the forecastle next day, during his cold fit. The

third complained of a pleuritic stitch, and spitting of blood, for

which Doctor Mackshane prescribed exercise at the pump to promote

expectoration! but whether this was improper for one in his situation,

or that it was used to excess, I know not, but in less than

half-an-hour he was suffocated with a deluge of blood that issued from

his lungs. A fourth, with much difficulty, climbed to the quarter-deck,

being loaded with a monstrous ascites, or dropsy, that invaded his

chest so much, he could scarce fetch his breath; but his disease being

interpreted into fat, occasioned by idleness and excess of eating, he

was ordered, with a view to promote perspiration and enlarge his chest,

to go aloft immediately. It was in vain for this unwieldy wretch to

allege his utter incapacity; the boatswain’s driver was commanded to

whip him up with the cat-o-nine-tails; the smart of this application

made him exert himself so much, that he actually arrived at the puttock

shrouds; but when the enormous weight of his body had nothing else to

support than his weakened arms, either out of spite or necessity, he

quitted his hold, and plunged into the sea, where he must have been

drowned, had not a sailor, who was in a boat alongside, saved his life,

by keeping him afloat till he was hoisted on board by a tackle.

It would be tedious and disagreeable to describe the fate of every

miserable object that suffered by the inhumanity and ignorance of the

captain and surgeon, who so wantonly sacrificed the lives of their

fellow-creatures. Many were brought up in the height of fevers, and

rendered delirious by the injuries they received in the way. Some gave

up the ghost in the presence of their inspectors; and others, who were

ordered to their duties, languished a few days at work among their

fellows, and then departed without any ceremony. On the whole, the

number of the sick was reduced to less than a dozen; and the authors of

this reduction were applauding themselves for the services they had

done to their king and country, when the boatswain’s mate informed his

honour, that there was a man below lashed to his hammock, by direction

of the doctor’s mate, and that he begged hard to be released;

affirming, he had been so maltreated only for a grudge Mr. Morgan bore

him, and that he was as much in his senses as any man aboard. The

captain hearing this, darted a severe look at the Welshman, and ordered

the man to be brought up immediately; upon which, Morgan protested with

great fervency, that the person in question was as mad as a March hare;

and begged for the love of Cot, they would at least keep his arms

pinioned during his examination, to prevent him from doing mischief.

This request the commander granted for his own sake, and the patient

was produced, who insisted upon his being in his right wits with such

calmness and strength of argument, that everybody present was inclined

to believe him, except Morgan, who affirmed there was no trusting to

appearances; for he himself had been so much imposed upon by his

behaviour two days before, that he had actually unbound him with his

own hands, and had well nigh been murdered for his pains: this was

confirmed by the evidence of one of the waiters, who declared he had

pulled this patient from the doctor’s mate, whom he had gotten down,

and almost strangled. To this the man answered, that the witness was a

creature of Morgan’s, and suborned to give his testimony against him by

the malice of the mate, whom the defendant had affronted, by

discovering to the people on board, that Mr. Morgan’s wife kept a

gin-shop in Ragfair. This anecdote produced a laugh at the expense of

the Welshman, who, shaking his head with some emotion, said, “Ay, ay,

’tis no matter. Cot knows, it is an arrant falsehood.” Captain Oakum,

without any farther hesitation, ordered the fellow to be unfettered; at

the same time, threatening to make Morgan exchange situations with him

for his spite; but the Briton no sooner heard the decision in favour of

the madman, than he got up to the mizen-shrouds, crying to Thompson and

me to get out of his reach, for we should see him play the devil with a

vengeance. We did not think fit to disregard his caution, and

accordingly got up on the poop, whence we beheld the maniac (as soon as

he was released) fly at the captain like a fury, crying, “I’ll let you

know, you scoundrel, that I am commander of this vessel,” and pummel

him without mercy. The surgeon, who went to the assistance of his

patron, shared the same fate; and it was with the utmost difficulty

that he was mastered at last, after having done great execution among

those who opposed him.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Captain enraged, threatens to put the Madman to death with his own

hand—is diverted from that resolution by the arguments and persuasion

of the first Lieutenant and Surgeon—we set sail for St. Helen’s, join

the fleet under the command of Sir C— O—gle, and proceed for the West

Indies—are overtaken by a terrible tempest—my friend Jack Rattlin has

his leg broke by a fall from the mainyard—the behaviour of Mr.

Mackshane—Jack opposes the amputation of his limb, in which he is

seconded by Morgan and me, we undertake the cure and perform it

successfully

The captain was carried into his cabin, so enraged with the treatment

he had received, that he ordered the fellow to be brought before him,

that he might have the pleasure of pistoling him with his own hand; and

would certainly have satisfied his revenge in this manner, had not the

first lieutenant remonstrated against it, by observing that, in all

appearances, the fellow was not mad, but desperate; that he had been

hired by some enemy of the captain’s to him, and therefore ought to be

kept in irons till he could be brought to a court-martial, which, no

doubt, would sift the affair to the bottom (by which means important

discoveries might be made), and then sentence the criminal to a death

according to his demerits. This suggestion, improbable as it was, had

the desired effect upon the captain, being exactly calculated for the

meridan of his intellects; more especially as Dr. Mackshane espoused

this opinion, in consequence of his previous declaration that the man

was not mad. Morgan finding there was no more damage done, could not

help discovering by his countenance the pleasure he enjoyed on this

occasion; and, while he bathed the doctor’s face with an embrocation,

ventured to ask him, whether he thought there were more fools or madmen

on board? But he would have been wiser in containing this sally, which

his patient carefully laid up in his memory, to be taken notice of at a

more fit season. Meanwhile we weighed anchor, and, on our way to the

Downs, the madman, who was treated as a prisoner, took an opportunity,

while the sentinel attending him was at the head, to leap and frustrate

the revenge of the captain. We stayed not long at the Downs, but took

the benefit of the first easterly wind to go round to Spithead: where,

having received provisions on board for six months, we sailed from St.

Helen’s in the grand fleet bound for the West Indies, on the

ever-memorable expedition of Carthagena.

It was not without great mortification I saw myself on the point of

being transported to such a distant and unhealthy climate, destitute of

every convenience that could render such a voyage supportable, and

under the dominion of an arbitrary tyrant, whose command was almost

intolerable; however, as these complaints were common to a great many

on board, I resolved to submit patiently to my fate, and contrive to

make myself as easy as the nature of the case would allow. We got out

of the channel with a prosperous breeze, which died away, leaving us

becalmed about fifty leagues to the westward of the Lizard: but this

state of inaction did not last long; for next night our maintop-sail

was split by the wind, which, in the morning, increased to a hurricane.

I was awakened by a most horrible din, occasioned by the play of the

gun carriages upon the decks above, the cracking of cabins, the howling

of the wind through the shrouds, the confused noise of the ship’s crew,

the pipes of the boatswain and his mates, the trumpets of the

lieutenants, and the clanking of the chain pumps. Morgan who had never

been at sea before, turned out in a great hurry, crying, “Cot have

mercy and compassion upon us! I believe, we have cot upon the confines

of Lucifer and the d—n’d!” while poor Thompson lay quaking in his

hammock, putting up petitions to heaven for our safety. I rose and

joined the Welshman, with whom (after having fortified ourselves with

brandy) I went above; but if my sense of hearing was startled before,

how must my sight have been apalled in beholding the effects of the

storm! The sea was swelled into billows mountain-high, on the top of

which our ship sometimes hung as if it were about to be precipitated to

the abyss below! Sometimes we sank between two waves that rose on each

side higher than our topmast-head, and threatened by dashing together

to overwhelm us in a moment! Of all our fleet, consisting of a hundred

and fifty sail, scarce twelve appeared, and these driving under their

bare poles, at the mercy of the tempest. At length the mast of one of

them gave way, and tumbled overboard with a hideous crash! Nor was the

prospect in our own ship much more agreeable; a number of officers and

sailors ran backward and forward with distraction in their looks,

halloaing to one another, and undetermined what they should attend to

first. Some clung to the yards, endeavouring to unbend the sails that

were split into a thousand pieces flapping in the wind; others tried to

furl those which were yet whole, while the masts, at every pitch, bent

and quivered like twigs, as if they would have shivered into

innumerable splinters! While I considered this scene with equal terror

and astonishment, one of the main braces broke, by the shock whereof

two sailors were flung from the yard’s arm into the sea, where they

perished, and poor Jack Rattlin thrown down upon the deck, at the

expense of a broken leg. Morgan and I ran immediately to his

assistance, and found a splinter of the shin-bone thrust by the

violence of the fall through the skin; as this was a case of too great

consequence to be treated without the authority of the doctor I went

down to his cabin to inform him of the accident, as well as to bring up

dressings which we always kept ready prepared. I entered his apartment

without any ceremony, and, by the glimmering of a lamp, perceived him

on his knees before something that very much resembled a crucifix; but

this I will not insist upon, that I may not seem too much a slave to

common report, which indeed assisted my conjecture on this occasion, by

representing Dr. Mackshane as a member of the church of Rome. Be this

as it will, he got up in a sort of confusion, occasioned (I suppose) by

his being disturbed in his devotion, and in a trice snatched the

subject of my suspicion from my sight.

After making an apology for my intrusion, I acquainted him with the

situation of Rattlin, but could by no means prevail upon him to visit

him on deck, where he lay; he bade me desire the boatswain to order

some of the men to carry him down to the cockpit, “and in the

meantime,” said he, “I will direct Thompson to get ready the

dressings.” When I signified to the boatswain the doctor’s desire, he

swore a terrible oath, that he could not spare one man from deck,

because he expected the mast would go by the board every minute. This

piece of information did not at all contribute to my peace of mind;

however, as my friend Rattlin complained very much, with the assistance

of Morgan I supported him to the lower deck, whither Mr. Mackshane,

after much entreaty, ventured to come, attended by Thompson, with a box

full of dressings, and his own servant, who carried a whole set of

capital instruments. He examined the fracture and the wound, and

concluding, from a livid colour extending itself upon the limb, that

mortification would ensue, resolved to amputate the leg immediately.

This was a dreadful sentence to the patient, who, recruiting himself

with a quid of tobacco, pronounced with a woful countenance, “What! is

there no remedy, doctor! must I be dock’d? can’t you splice it?”

“Assuredly, Doctor Mackshane,” said the first mate, “with submission,

and deference, and veneration, to your superior apilities, and

opportunities, and stations, look you, I do apprehend, and conjure, and

aver, that there is no occasion nor necessity to smite off this poor

man’s leg.” “God Almighty bless you, dear Welshman!” cried Rattlin,

“may you have fair wind and weather wheresoever you’re bound, and come

to an anchor in the road of heaven at last!” Mackshane, very much

incensed at his mate’s differing in opinion from him, so openly,

answered, that he was not bound to give an account of his practice to

him; and in a peremptory tone, ordered him to apply the tourniquet. At

the sight of which, Jack, starting up, cried, “Avast, avast! D—n my

heart, if you clap your nippers on me, till I know wherefore! Mr.

Random, won’t you lend a hand towards saving my precious limb! Odd’s

heart, if Lieutenant Bowling was here, he would not suffer Jack

Rattlin’s leg to be chopped off like a piece of old junk.”

This pathetic address to me, joined to my inclination to serve my

honest friend, and the reasons I had to believe there was no danger in

delaying the amputation, induced me to declare myself of the first

mate’s opinion, and affirm that the preternatural colour of the skin

was owing to an inflammation, occasioned by a contusion, and common in

all such cases, without any indication of an approaching gangrene.

Morgan, who had a great opinion of my skill, manifestly exulted in my

fellowship, and asked Thompson’s sentiments in the matter, in hopes of

strengthening our association with him too; but he, being of a meek

disposition, and either dreading the enmity of the surgeon, or speaking

the dictates of his own judgment, in a modest manner espoused the

opinion of Mackshane, who by this time having consulted with himself,

determined to act in such a manner as to screen himself from censure,

and at the same time revenge himself on us, for our arrogance in

contradicting him. With this view, he asked if we would undertake to

cure the leg at our peril: that is, be answerable for the consequence.

To this question, Morgan replied, that the lives of his creatures are

at the hands of Cot alone; and it would be great presumption in him to

undertake for an event that was in the power of his Maker, no more than

the doctor could promise to cure all the sick to whom he administered

his assistance; but if the patient would put himself under our

direction, we would do our endeavour to bring his distemper to a

favourable issue, to which at present we saw no obstruction.

I signified my concurrence; and Rattlin was so overjoyed that, shaking

us both by the hands, he swore nobody else should touch him, and, if he

died, his blood should be upon his own head. Mr. Mackshane, flattering

himself with the prospect of our miscarriage, went away, and left us to

manage it as we should think proper; accordingly, having sawed off part

of the splinter that stuck through the skin, we reduced the fracture,

dressed the wound, applied the eighteen-tailed bandage, and put the leg

in a box, secundam artem. Everything succeeded according to our wish,

and we had the satisfaction of not only preserving the poor fellow’s

leg, but likewise of rendering the doctor contemptible among the ship’s

company, who had all their eyes on us during the course of this cure,

which was completed in six weeks.

CHAPTER XXIX

Mackshane’s malice—I am taken up and imprisoned for a spy—Morgan meets

with the same fate—Thompson is tampered with to turn evidence against

us—disdains the proposal, and is maltreated for his integrity—Morgan is

released to assist the Surgeon during an engagement with some French

ships-of-war—I remain fettered on the poop, exposed to the enemy’s

shot, and grow delirious with fear—am comforted after the battle by

Morgan, who speaks freely of the captain, is overheard by the sentinel,

who informs against him, and again imprisoned—Thompson grows desperate,

and, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Morgan and me, goes overboard

in the night

In the meantime the storm subsided into a brisk gale, that carried us

into the warm latitudes, where the weather became intolerable, and the

crew very sickly. The doctor left nothing unattempted towards the

completion of his vengeance against the Welshman and me. He went among

the sick under pretence of inquiring into their grievances, with a view

of picking up complaints to our prejudice; but, finding himself

frustrated in that expectation by the goodwill we had procured from the

patients by our diligence and humanity, he took the resolution of

listening to our conversation, by hiding himself behind the canvas that

surrounded our berth; here too he was detected by the boy of our mess,

who acquainted us with this piece of behaviour, and one night, while we

were picking a large bone of salt beef, Morgan discerned something stir

on the outside of our hangings, which immediately interpreting to be

the doctor, he tipped me the wink, and pointed to the place, where I

could perceive somebody standing; upon which, I snatched up the bone,

and levelled it with all my force at him, saying, “Whoever you are,

take that for your curiosity.” It had the desired effect, for we heard

the listener tumble down, and afterwards crawl to his own cabin. I

applauded myself much for this feat, which turned out one of the most

unlucky exploits of my life, Mackshane, from that time, marking me out

for destruction.

About a week after this exploit, as I was going my rounds among the

sick, I was taken prisoner, and carried to the poop by the

master-at-arms, where I was loaded with irons, and stapled to the deck,

on pretence that I was a spy on board, and had conspired against the

captain’s life. How ridiculous soever this imputation was, I did not

fail to suffer by it all the rigour that could be shown to the worst of

criminals, being exposed in this miserable condition to the scorching

heat of the sun by day, and the unwholesome damps by night, during the

space of twelve days, in which I was neither brought to trial, nor

examined touching the probability of the charge. I had no sooner

recovered the use of my reflection, which had been quite overthrown by

this accident, than I sent for Thompson, who, after condoling me on the

occasion, hinted, that I owed this misfortune to the hatred of the

doctor, who had given an information against me to the captain, in

consequence of which I was arrested, and all my papers seized. While I

was cursing my capricious fate, I saw Morgan ascend the poop, guarded

by two corporals, who made him sit down by me, that he might be

pinioned in the same machine. Notwithstanding my situation, I could

scarce refrain from laughing at the countenance of my fellow prisoner,

who, without speaking one word, allowed his feet to be inclosed in the

rings provided for that purpose; but, when they pretended to fasten him

on his back he grew outrageous, and drawing a large couteau from his

side-pocket, threatened to rip up the belly of the first man that

should approach him, in order to treat him in such an unworthy manner.

They were prepared to use him very roughly, when the lieutenant on the

quarter-deck called up to them to let him remain as he was. He then

crept towards me, and, taking me by the hand, bade me “put my trust in

Cot.” And looking at Thompson, who sat by us trembling, with a pale

visage; told him there were two more rings for his feet, and he should

be glad to find him in such good company. But it was not the intention

of our adversary to include the second mate in our fate: him he

expected to be his drudge in attending the sick and, if possible, his

evidence against us: with this view he sounded him afar off, but,

finding his integrity incorruptible, harrassed him so much out of

spite, that in a short time this mild creature grew weary of his life.

While I and my fellow prisoner comforted each other in our tribulation,

the admiral discovered four sail to leeward and made signal for our

ship and four more to chase: hereupon everything was cleared for an

engagement, and Mackshane, foreseeing he should have occasion for more

assistants than one obtained Morgan’s liberty, while I was let in this

deplorable posture to the chance of battle. It was almost dark when we

came up with the sternmost chase, which we hailed, and inquired who

they were. They gave us to understand they were French men-of-war, upon

which Captain Oakum commanded them to send their boat on board of him!

but they refused, telling him, if he had any business with them, to

come on board of their ship: he then threatened to pour in a broadside

upon them, which they promised to retain. Both sides were as good as

their word, and the engagement began with great fury. The reader may

guess how I passed my time, lying in this helpless situation, amidst

the terrors of a sea-fight; expecting every moment to be cut asunder,

or dashed in pieces by the enemy’s shot! I endeavoured to compose

myself as much as possible, by reflecting that I was not a whit more

exposed than those who were stationed about me; but, when I beheld them

employed without intermission in annoying the foe, and encouraged by

the society and behaviour of one another, I could easily perceive a

wide difference between their condition and mine: however, I concealed

my agitation as well as I could till the head of the officer of marines

who stood near me, being shot off, bounced from the deck athwart my

face, leaving me well nigh blinded with brains. I could contain myself

no longer, but began to bellow with all the strength of my lungs; when

a drummer, coming towards me asked if I was wounded, and, before I

could answer, received a great shot in his belly, which tore out his

entrails, and he fell flat on my breast. This accident entirely bereft

me of all discretion; I redoubled my cries, which were drowned in the

noise of the battle; and, finding myself disregarded, lost all

patience, and became frantic. I vented my rage in oaths and

execrations, till my spirits, being quite exhausted, I remained quiet,

as insensible of the load that oppressed me.

The engagement lasted till broad day, when Captain Oakum, finding he

was like to gain neither honour nor advantage by the affair, pretended

to be undeceived by seeing their colours; and, hailing the ship whom he

had fought all night, protested he believed them Spaniards; and the

guns being silenced on each side, ordered the barge to be hoisted out,

and went on board the French commodore. Our loss amounted to ten

killed, and eighteen wounded, most part of whom afterwards died. My

fellow-mates had no sooner despatched their business in the cock-pit,

than, full of friendly concern, they came to visit me. Morgan,

ascending first, and seeing my face almost covered with brains and

blood, concluded I was no longer a man for this world; and, calling to

Thompson with great emotion, bade him come up, and take his last

farewell of his comrade and countryman, who was posted to a better

place, where there were no Mackshanes nor Oakums to asperse and torment

him. “No,” said he, taking me by the hand, “you are going to a country

where there is more respect sown to unfortunate shentlemen, and where

you will have the satisfaction of peholding your adversaries tossing

upon pillows of purning primstone.” Thompson, alarmed at this

apostrophe, made haste to the place where I lay, and sitting down by

me, with tears in his eyes inquired into the nature of my calamity. By

this time I had recollected myself so far as to be able to converse

rationally with my friends, whom, to their great satisfaction, I

immediately undeceived with regard to their apprehension of my being

mortally wounded.

After I had got myself disengaged from the carnage in which I wallowed,

and partaken of a refreshment which my friends brought along with them,

we entered into discourse upon the hardships we sustained, and spoke

very freely of the author of our misery; but our discourse being

overheard by the sentinel who guarded me, he was no sooner relieved

than he reported to the captain every syllable of our conversation,

according to the orders he had received. The effect of this information

soon appeared in the arrival of the master-at-arms, who replaced Morgan

in his former station, and gave the second mate a caution to keep a

strict guard over his tongue, if he did not choose to accompany us in

our confinement. Thompson, foreseeing that the whole slavery of

attending the sick and wounded, as well as the cruelty of Mackshane,

must now fall upon his shoulders, grew desperate at the prospect, and,

though I never heard him swear before, imprecated dreadful curses on

the heads of his oppressors, declaring that he would rather quit life

altogether than be much longer under the power of such barbarians. I

was not a little startled at his vivacity, and endeavoured to alleviate

his complaints, by representing the subject of my own, with as much

aggravation as it would bear, by which comparison he might see the

balance of misfortune lay on my side, and take an example from me of

fortitude and submission, till such time as we could procure redress,

which I hoped was not far off, considering that we should probably be

in a harbour in less than three days, where we should have an

opportunity of preferring our complaints to the admiral. The Welshman

joined in my remonstrance, and was at great pains to demonstrate that

it was every man’s duty as well as interest to resign himself to the

divine will, and look upon himself as a sentinel upon duty, who is by

no means at liberty to leave his post before he is relieved. Thompson

listened attentively to what he said, and at last, shedding a flood of

tears, shook his hand, and left us without making any reply. About

eleven at night he came to see us again with a settled gloom on his

countenance, and gave us to understand that he had undergone excessive

toil since he saw us, and in recompense had been grossly abused by the

doctor, who taxed him with being confederate with us, in a design of

taking away his life and that of the captain. After some time spent in

mutual exhortation, he got up, and squeezing me by the hand with

uncommon fervour, cried, “God bless you both!” and left us to wonder at

his singular manner of parting with us, which did not fail to make a

deep impression on us both.

Next morning, when the hour of visitation came round, the unhappy young

man was missing, and, after strict search, supposed to have gone

overboard in the night; and this was certainly the case.

CHAPTER XXX

We lament the fate of our companion—the Captain offers Morgan his

liberty, which he refuses to accept—we are brought before him and

examined—Morgan is sent back into custody, whither also I am remanded

after a curious trial

The news of this event affected my fellow prisoner and me extremely, as

our unfortunate companion had justly acquired by his amiable

disposition the love and esteem of us both; and the more we regretted

his untimely fate, the greater horror we conceived for the villain who

was undoubtedly the occasion of it. This abandoned miscreant did not

discover the least symptom of concern for Thompson’s death, although he

must have been conscious to himself of having driven him by ill usage

to the fatal resolution, but desired the captain to set Morgan at

liberty again to look after the patients. Accordingly one of the

corporals was sent up to unfetter him, but he protested he would not be

released until he should know for what he was confined; nor would he be

a tennisball, nor a shuttlecock, nor a trudge, nor a scullion, to any

captain under the sun. Oakum, finding him obstinate, and fearing it

would not be in his power to exercise his tyranny much longer with

impunity, was willing to show some appearance of justice and therefore

ordered us both to be brought before him on the quarter-deck, where he

sat in state, with his cleric on one side, and his counsellor Mackshane

on the other. When we approached, he honoured us with this salutation:

“So, gentlemen, d—n my blood! many a captain in the navy would have

ordered you both to be tucked up to the yard’s arm, without either

judge or jury, for the crimes you have been guilty of; but, d—n my

blood, I have too much good nature in allowing such dogs as you to make

defence.” “Captain Oakum,” said my fellow-sufferer, “certainly it is in

your power (Cot help the while) to tack us all up at your will, desire,

and pleasures. And perhaps it would be petter for some of us to be

tucked up than to undergo the miseries to which we have been exposed.

So may the farmer hang his kids for his diversion, and amusement, and

mirth; but there is such a thing as justice, if not upon earth, surely

in heaven, that will punish with fire and primstone all those who take

away the lives of innocent people out of wantonness, and parparity

(look you). In the mean time. I shall be glad to know the crimes laid

to my charge, and see the person who accuses me.” “That you shall,”

said the captain; “here, doctor, what have you to say?” Mackshane,

stepping forward, hemmed a good while, in order to clear his throat,

and, before he began, Morgan accosted him thus: “Doctor Mackshane, look

in my face—look in the face of an honest man, who abhors a false

witness as he abhors the tevil, and Cot be judge between you and me.”

The doctor, not minding this conjuration, made the following speech, as

near as I can remember: “I’ll tell you what, Mr. Morgan; to be sure

what you say is just, in regard to an honest man, and if so be it

appears as how you are an honest man, then it is my opinion that you

deserve to be acquitted, in relation to that there affair, for I tell

you what, Captain Oakum is resolved for to do everybody justice. As for

my own part, all that I have to allege is, that I have been informed

you have spoken disrespectful words against your captain, who, to be

sure, is the most honourable and generous commander in the king’s

service, without asparagement or acception of man, woman, or child.”

Having uttered this elegant harangue, on which he seemed to plume

himself, Morgan replied, “I do partly guess, and conceive, and

understand your meaning, which I wish could be more explicit; but,

however, I do suppose, I am not to be condemned upon bare hearsay; or,

if I am convicted of speaking disrespectfully of Captain Oakum, I hope

there is no treason in my words.” “But there’s mutiny, by G—d, and

that’s death by the articles of war!” cried Oakum: “In the meantime,

let the witnesses be called.” Hereupon Mackshane’s servant appeared,

and the boy of our mess, whom they had seduced and tutored for the

purpose. The first declared, that Morgan as he descended the

cockpit-ladder one day, cursed the captain, and called him a savage

beast, saying, he ought to be hunted down as an enemy to mankind.

“This,” said the clerk, “is a strong presumption of a design, formed

against the captain’s life. For why? It presupposes malice

aforethought, and a criminal intention a priori.” “Right,” said the

captain to this miserable grub, who had been an attorney’s boy, “you

shall have law enough: here’s Cook and Littlejohn to it.” This evidence

was confirmed by the boy, who affirmed, he heard the first mate say,

that the captain had no more bowels than a bear, and the surgeon had no

more brain than an ass. Then the sentinel, who heard our discourse on

the poop was examined, and informed the court that the Welshman assured

me, Captain Oakum and Doctor Mackshane would toss upon billows of

burning brimstone in hell for their barbarity. The clerk observed, that

there was an evident prejudication, which confirmed the former

suspicion of a conspiracy against the life of Captain Oakum; for,

because, how could Morgan so positively pronounce that the captain and

surgeon would d—n’d, unless he had intention to make away with them

before they could have time to repent? This sage explanation had great

weight with our noble commander, who exclaimed, “What have you to say

to this, Taffy? you seem to be taken all a-back, brother, ha!” Morgan

was too much of a gentleman to disown the text, although he absolutely

denied the truth of the comment. Upon which the captain, strutting up

to him with a ferocious countenance, said, “So Mr. son of a bitch, you

confess you honoured me with the names of bear and beast, and

pronounced my damnation? D—n my heart! I have a good mind to have you

brought to a court-martial and hang’d, you dog.” Here Mackshane, having

occasion for an assistant, interposed, and begged the captain to pardon

Mr. Morgan with his wonted goodness, upon condition that he the

delinquent should make such submission as the nature of his

misdemeanour demanded. Upon which the Cambro-Briton, who on this

occasion would have made no submission to the Great Mogul, surrounded

with his guards, thanked the doctor for his mediation, and acknowledged

himself in the wrong for calling the image of Cot a peast, “but,” said

he, “I spoke by metaphor, and parable, and comparison, and types; as we

signify meekness by a lamb, lechery by a goat, and craftiness by a fox;

so we liken ignorance to an ass, and brutality to a bear, and fury to a

tiger; therefore I made use of these similes to express my sentiments

(look you), and what I said before Cot, I will not unsay before man nor

peast neither.”

Oakum was so provoked at this insolence (as he termed it,) that he

ordered him forthwith to be carried to the place of his confinement,

and his clerk to proceed on the examination of me. The first question

put to me was touching the place of my nativity, which I declared to be

the north of Scotland. “The north of Ireland more like!” cried the

captain; “but we shall bring you up presently.” He then asked what

religion I professed; and when I answered “the Protestant,” swore I was

an arrant Roman as ever went to mass. “Come, come, clerk,” continued

he, “catechise him a little on this subject.” But before I relate the

particulars of the clerk’s inquiries, it will not be amiss to inform

the reader that our commander himself was an Hibernian, and, if not

shrewdly belied, a Roman Catholic to boot. “You say, you are a

Protestant,” said the clerk; “make the sign of the cross with your

finger, so, and swear upon it to that affirmation.” When I was about to

perform the ceremony, the captain cried with some emotion, “No, no,

d—me! I’ll have no profanation neither. But go on with your

interrogations.” “Well then,” proceeded my examiner, “how many

sacraments are there?” To which I replied, “Two.” “What are they?” said

he. I answered, “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.” “And so you would

explode confirmation and marriage altogether?” said Oakum. “I thought

this fellow was a rank Roman.” The clerk, though he was bred under an

attorney, could not refrain from blushing at this blunder, which he

endeavoured to conceal, by observing, that these decoys would not do

with me, who seemed to be an old offender. He went on with asking, if I

believed in transubstantiation; but I treated the notion of real

presence with such disrespect, that his patron was scandalised at my

impiety, and commanded him to proceed to the plot. Whereupon this

miserable pettifogger told me, there was great reason to suspect me of

being a spy on board, and that I had entered into a conspiracy with

Thompson, and others not yet detected, against the life of Captain

Oakum, which accusation they pretended to support by the evidence of

our boy, who declared he had often heard the deceased Thompson and me

whispering together, and could distinguish the words, “Oakum, rascal,

poison, pistol;” by which expressions it appeared, we did intend to use

sinister means to accomplish his destruction. That the death of

Thompson seemed to confirm this conjecture, who, either feeling the

stings of remorse for being engaged in such a horrid confederacy, or

fearing a discovery, by which he must have infallibly suffered an

ignominious death, had put a fatal period to his own existence. But

what established the truth of the whole was, a book in cyphers found

among my papers, which exactly tallied with one found in his chest,

after his disappearance. This, he observed, was a presumption very near

positive proof, and would determine any jury in Christendom to find me

guilty. In my own defence, I alleged, that I had been dragged on board

at first very much against my inclination, as I could prove by the

evidence of some people now in the ship, consequently could have no

design of becoming spy at that time; and ever since had been entirely

out of the reach of any correspondence that could justly entail that

suspicion upon me. As for conspiring against my captain’s life, it

could not be supposed that any man in his right wits would harbour the

least thought of such an undertaking, which he could not possibly

perform without certain infamy and ruin to himself, even if he had all

the inclination in the world. That, allowing the boy’s evidence to be

true (which I affirmed was false and malicious), nothing conclusive

could be gathered from a few incoherent words; neither was the fate of

Mr. Thompson a circumstance more favourable for the charge; for I had

in my pocket a letter which too well explained that mystery, in a very

different manner from that which was supposed. With these words, I

produced the following letter, which Jack Rattlin brought to me the

very day after Thompson disappeared; and told me it was committed to

his care by the deceased, who made him promise not to deliver it

sooner. The clerk, taking it out of my hand, read aloud the contents,

which were these;

‘Dear Friend,—I am so much oppressed with the fatigue I daily and

nightly undergo, and the barbarous usage of Doctor Mackshane, who is

bent on your destruction as well as mine, that I am resolved to free

myself from this miserable life, and, before you receive this, shall be

no more. I could have wished to die in your good opinion, which I am

afraid I shall forfeit by the last act of my life; but, if you cannot

acquit me, I know you will at least preserve some regard for the memory

of an unfortunate young man who loved you. I recommend it to you, to

beware of Mackshane, whose revenge is implacable. I wish all prosperity

to you and Mr. Morgan, to whom pray offer my last respects, and beg to

be remembered as your unhappy friend and countryman,

‘William Thompson.’

This letter was no sooner read, than Mackshane, in a transport of rage,

snatched it out of the clerk’s hands, and tore it into a thousand

pieces, saying, it was a villainous forgery, contrived and executed by

myself. The captain and clerk declared themselves of the same opinion,

although I insisted of having the remains of it compared with other

writings of Thompson, which they had in their possession; and I was

ordered to answer the last article of my accusation, namely, the book

of ciphers found among my papers. “That is easily done,” said I. “What

you are pleased to call ciphers, are no other than the Greek

characters, in which, for my amusement, I keep a diary of everything

remarkable that has occurred to my observation since the beginning of

the voyage, till the day in which I was put in irons; and the same

method was practised by Mr. Thompson, who copied mine.” “A very likely

story,” cried Mackshane; “what occasion was there for using Greek

characters, if you were not afraid of discovering what you had wrote?

But what d’ye talk of Greek characters? D’ye think I am so ignorant of

the Greek language, as not to distinguish its letters from these, which

are no more Greek than Chinese? No, no, I will not give up my knowledge

of the Greek for you, nor none that ever came from your country.” So

saying, with an unparalleled effrontery, he repeated some gibberish,

which by the sound seemed to be Irish, and made it pass for Greek with

the captain, who, looking at me with a contemptuous sneer, exclaimed,

“Ah, ah! have you caught a tartar?” I could not help smiling at the

consummate assurance of this Hibernian, and offered to refer the

dispute to anybody on board who understood the Greek alphabet. Upon

which Morgan was brought back, and, being made acquainted with the

affair, took the book, and read a whole page in English, without

hesitation, deciding the controversy in my favour. The doctor was so

far from being out of countenance at this detection, that he affirmed

Morgan was in the secret, and repeated from his own invention. Oakum

said, “Ay, ay, I see they are both in a story;” and dismissed my

fellow-mate to his cockloft, although I proposed that he and I should

read and translate, separately, any chapter or verse in the Greek

Testament in his possession, by which it would appear whether we or the

surgeon spoke truth. Not being endued with eloquence enough to convince

the captain that there could be no juggle nor confederacy in this

expedient, I begged to be examined by some unconcerned person on board,

who understood Greek. Accordingly, the whole ship’s company, officers

and all, were called upon deck, among whom it was proclaimed that, if

anyone of them could speak Greek, he or they so qualified should ascend

the quarter-deck immediately. After some pause, two foremast men came

up, and professed their skill in that language, which, they said, they

acquired during several voyages to the Levant, among the Greeks of the

Morea. The captain exulted much in this declaration, and put my journal

book into the hands of one of them, who candidly owned he could neither

read nor write; the other acknowledged the same degree of ignorance,

but pretended to speak the Greek lingo with any man on board; and,

addressing himself to me, pronounced some sentences of a barbarous

corrupted language, which I did not understand. I asserted that the

modern Greek was as different from that spoken and written by the

ancients, as the English used now from the old Saxon spoke in the time

of Hengist: and, as I had only learned the true original tongue, in

which Homer, Pindar, the Evangelists, and other great men of antiquity

wrote, it could not be supposed that I should know anything of an

imperfect Gothic dialect that rose on the ruins of the former, and

scarce retained any traces of the old expression: but, if Doctor

Mackshane, who pretended to be master of the Greek language, could

maintain a conversation with these seamen, I would retract what I had

said, and be content to suffer any punishment be should think proper to

inflict. I had no sooner uttered these words than the surgeon, knowing

one of the fellows to be his countryman, accosted him in Irish, and was

answered in the same brogue; then a dialogue ensued between them, which

they affirmed to be in Greek, after having secured the secrecy of the

other tar, who had his cue in the language of the Morea, from his

companion, before they would venture to assert such an intrepid

falsehood. “I thought,” said Oakum, “we should discover the imposture

at last. Let the rascal be carried back to his confinement. I find he

must dangle.” Having nothing further to urge in my own behalf, before a

court so prejudiced with spite, and fortified with ignorance against

truth, I suffered myself to be reconducted peaceably to my

fellow-prisoner, who, hearing the particulars of my trial, lifted up

his hands and eyes to Heaven, and uttered a dreadful groan: and, not

daring to disburden his thoughts to me by speech, lest he might be

overheard by the sentinel, burst forth into a Welsh song, which he

accompanied with a thousand contortions of face and violent gestures of

body.

CHAPTER XXXI

I discover a subornation against me, by means of a quarrel between two

of the evidences; in consequence of which I am set at liberty, and

prevail upon Morgan to accept of his freedom on the same

terms—Mackshane’s malice—we arrive at Jamaica, from whence in a short

time we beat up to Hispaniola, in conjunction with the West India

squadron—we take in water, sail again, and arrive at

Carthagena—Reflections on our conduct there

Meanwhile, a quarrel happening between the two modern Greeks, the one,

to be revenged of the other, came and discovered to us the mystery of

Mackshane’s dialogue, as I have explained it above. This detection

coming to the ears of the doctor, who was sensible that (now we were in

sight of Jamaica) we should have an opportunity of clearing ourselves

before a court-martial, and, at the same time, of making his malice and

ignorance conspicuous, he interceded for us with the captain so

effectually, that in a few hours we were set at liberty, and ordered to

return to our duty. This was a happy event for me, my whole body being

blistered by the sun, and my limbs benumbed by want of motion: but I

could scarce persuade the Welshman to accept of this indulgence, he

persisted in his obstinacy to remain in irons, until he should be

discharged by a court-martial, which, he believed would also do him

justice on his enemies. At length I represented to him the precarious

issue of a trial, the power and interest of his adversaries, and

flattered his revenge with the hope of wreaking his resentment with his

own hands upon Mackshane after our return to England. This last

argument had more weight with him than all the rest, and prevailed upon

him to repair with me to the cockpit, which I no sooner entered, than

the idea of my departed friend presented itself to my remembrance, and

filled my eyes with tears. We discharged from our mess the boy who had

acted so perfidiously, notwithstanding his tears, intreaties, and of

penitence for what he had done; but not before he had confessed that

the surgeon had bribed him to give evidence against us, with a pair of

stockings and a couple of old check shirts, of which his servant had

since plundered him.

The keys of our chests and lockers being sent to us by the doctor, we

detained the messenger until we had examined the contents; and my

fellow-mate, finding all his Cheshire cheese consumed to a crust, his

brandy exhausted, and his onions gone, was seized with a fit of choler,

which he discharged on Mackshane’s man in oaths and execrations,

threatening to prosecute him as a thief. The fellow swore in his turn,

that he never had the keys in his possession till that time, when he

received them from his master with orders to deliver them to us. “As

Cot is my judge,” cried Morgan, “and my salfation, and my witness;

whosoever has pilfered my provisions is a lousy, peggarly, rascally

knave! and by the soul of my grandsire, I will impeach, and accuse, and

indict him, of a roppery, if I did but know who he is.” Had this

misfortune happened at sea, where we could not repair the loss, in all

probability this descendant of Caractacus would have lost his wits

entirely; but, when I observed how easy it would be to remedy this

paltry mischance, he became more calm, and reconciled himself to the

occasion.

A little while after this transport the surgeon came into the birth,

under pretence of taking something out of the medicine chest, and, with

a smiling aspect, wished us joy of our deliverance, which, he said, he

had been at great pains to obtain of the captain, who was very justly

incensed at our behaviour; but he, the doctor, had passed his word for

our future conduct, and he hoped we should give him no cause to repent

of his kindness. He expected, no doubt, an acknowledgment from us for

this pretended piece of service, as well as a general amnesty of what

was past; but he had to do with people who were not quite so apt to

forgive injuries as he imagined, or to forget that, if our deliverance

was owing to his mediation, our calamity was occasioned by his malice;

I therefore sat silent, while my companion answered, “Ay, ay, ’tis no

matter, Cot knows the heart; there is a time for all things, as the

wise man saith; there is a time for throwing away stones, and to gather

them up.” He seemed to be disconcerted at this reply, and went away in

a pet, muttering something about “Ingratitude,” and “Fellows,” of which

we did not think fit to take any notice.

Our fleet, having joined another that waited for us, lay at anchor

about a month in the harbour of Port Royal in Jamaica, during which

time something of consequence was certainly transacted; notwithstanding

the insinuations of some, who affirmed we had no business at all in

that place; that, in order to take the advantage of the season proper

for our enterprise, the West India squadron, which had previous notice

of our coming, ought to have joined us at the west end of Hispaniola,

with necessary stores and refreshments, from whence we could have

sailed directly for Carthagena, before the enemy could put themselves

in a good posture of defence, or, indeed, have an inkling of our

design. Be this as it will, we sailed from Jamaica, and, in ten days or

a fortnight, beat up against the wind as far as the Isle of Vache, with

an intention, as was said, to attack the French fleet, then supposed to

be lying near that place; but before we arrived, they had sailed for

Europe, having first dispatched an advice-boat to Carthagena, with an

account of our being in those seas, as also of our strength and

destination. We loitered here some days longer, taking in wood and

brackish water, in the use whereof, however, our admiral seemed to

consult the health of the men, by restricting each to a quart a day.

At length we set sail, and arrived in a bay to the windward of

Carthagena, where we came to an anchor, and lay at our ease ten days

longer. Here, again, certain malicious people took occasion to blame

the conduct of their superiors, by saying, that in so doing they not

only unprofitably wasted time, which was very precious, considering the

approach of the rainy season, but also allowed the Spaniards to

recollect themselves from a terror occasioned by the approach of an

English fleet, at least three times as numerous as ever appeared in

that part of the world before. But if I might be allowed to give my

opinion of the matter, I would ascribe this delay to the generosity of

our chiefs, who scorned to take any advantage that fortune might give

them even over an enemy. At last, however, we weighed, and anchored

again somewhat nearer the harbour’s mouth, where we made shift to land

our marines, who encamped on the beach, in despite of the enemy’s shot,

which knocked a good many of them on the head. This piece of conduct,

in choosing a camp under the walls of an enemy’s fortification, which I

believe never happened before, was practised, I presume, with a view of

accustoming the soldiers to stand fire, who were not as yet much used

to discipline, most of them having been taken from the plough-tail a

few months before. This expedient, again, has furnished matter for

censure against the ministry, for sending a few raw recruits on such an

important enterprise, while so many veteran regiments lay inactive at

home. But surely our governors had their reasons for so doing, which

possibly may be disclosed with other secrets of the deep. Perhaps they

were loth to risk their best troops on such desperate service, or the

colonel and the field officers of the old corps, who, generally

speaking, enjoyed their commissions as sinecures or pensions, for some

domestic services rendered to the court, refused to embark in such a

dangerous and precarious undertaking; for which refusal, no doubt, they

are to be much commended.

CHAPTER XXXII

Our Land Forces being disembarked, erect a fascine battery—our ship is

ordered, with four more, to batter the port of Bocca Chica—Mackshane’s

cowardice—the Chaplain’s frenzy—honest Rattlin loses one hand—his

heroism and reflections on the battle—Crampley’s behaviour to me during

the heat of the Fight

Our forces being landed and stationed as I have already mentioned, set

about erecting a fascine battery to cannonade the principal fort of the

enemy; and in something more than three weeks, it was ready to open.

That we might do the Spaniards as much honour as possible, it was

determined, in a council of war, that five of our largest ships should

attack the fort on one side, while the battery, strengthened by two

mortars and twenty-four cohorns, should ply it on the other.

Accordingly, the signal for our ship to engage, among others, was

hoisted, we being advertised, the night before, to make everything

clear for that purpose; and, in so doing, a difference happened between

Captain Oakum and his well-beloved cousin and counsellor Mackshane,

which had well nigh terminated in an open rupture. The doctor, who had

imagined there was no more danger of being hurt by the enemy’s shot in

the cockpit than in the centre of the earth, was lately informed that a

surgeon’s mate had been killed in that part of the ship by a

cannon-ball from two small redoubts that were destroyed before the

disembarkation of our soldiers; and therefore insisted upon having a

platform raised for the convenience of the sick and wounded in the

after-hold, where he deemed himself more secure than on the deck above.

The captain, offended at this extraordinary proposal, accused him of

pusillanimity, and told him, there was no room in the hold for such an

occasion: or, if there was, he could not expect to be indulged more

than the rest of the surgeons of the navy, who used the cockpit for

that purpose. Fear rendering Mackshane obstinate, he persisted in his

demand, and showed his instructions, by which it was authorised; the

captain swore these instructions were dictated by a parcel of lazy

poltroons who were never at sea; nevertheless he was obliged to comply,

and sent for the carpenter to give him orders about it. But, before any

such measure could be taken, our signal was thrown out, and the doctor

compelled to trust his carcass in the cockpit, where Morgan and I were

busy in putting our instruments and dressings in order.

Our ship, with others destined for this service, immediately weighed,

and in less than half-an-hour came to an anchor before the castle of

Bocca Chica, with a spring upon our cable, and the cannonading (which

indeed was dreadful) began. The surgeon, after having crossed himself,

fell flat on the deck; and the chaplain and purser, who were stationed

with us in quality of assistants, followed his example, while the

Welshman and I sat upon a chest looking at one another with great

discomposure, scarce able to refrain from the like prostration. And

that the reader may know it was not a common occasion that alarmed us

thus, I must inform him of the particulars of this dreadful din that

astonished us. The fire of the Spaniards proceeded from eighty-four

great guns, besides a mortar and small arms, in Bocca Chica; thirty-six

in Fort St. Joseph; twenty in two fascine batteries, and four

men-of-war, mounting sixty-four guns each. This was answered by our

land-battery mounted with twenty-one cannon, two mortars, and

twenty-four cohorns, and five great ships of seventy or eighty guns,

that fired without intermission.

We had not been many minutes engaged, when one of the sailors brought

another on his back to the cockpit, where he tossed him down like a bag

of oats, and pulling out his pouch, put a large chew of tobacco in his

mouth without speaking a word. Morgan immediately examined the

condition of the wounded man, and cried out, “As I shall answer now,

the man is as dead as my great grandfather.” “Dead,” said his comrade;

“he may be dead now, for aught I know, but I’ll be d—d if he was not

alive when I took him up.” So saying, he was about to return to his

quarters, when I bade him carry the body along with him, and throw it

overboard. “D—n the body!” said he, “I think ’tis fair enough if I take

care of my own.” My fellow mate, snatching up the amputation knife,

pursued him half-way up the cock-pit ladder, crying, “You lousy rascal,

is this the churchyard, or the charnel-house, or the sepulchre, or the

golgotha, of the ship?”—but was stopped in his career by one calling,

“Yo he, avast there—scaldings!” “Scaldings!” answered Morgan; “Cot

knows ’tis hot enough indeed: who are you?” “Here’s one!” replied the

voice; and I immediately knew it to be that of my honest friend Jack

Rattlin, who coming towards me, told me, with great deliberation, he

was come to be docked at last, and discovered the remains of one hand,

which had been shattered to pieces with a grape shot. I lamented with

unfeigned sorrow his misfortune, which he bore with heroic courage,

observing, that every shot had its commission: “It was well it did not

take him in the head! or if it had, what then? he should have died

bravely, fighting for his king and country. Death was a debt which

every man owed, and must pay; and that now was as well as another

time.” I was much pleased and edified with the maxims of this

sea-philosopher, who endured the amputation of his left hand without

shrinking, the operation being performed (at his request) by me, after

Mackshane, who was with difficulty prevailed to lift his head from the

deck, had declared there was a necessity for his losing the limb.

While I was employed in dressing the stump, I asked Jack’s opinion of

the battle, who, shaking his head, frankly told me, he believed we

should do no good: “For why? because, instead of dropping anchor close

under shore, where we should have to deal with one corner of Bocca

Chica only, we had opened the harbour, and exposed ourselves to the

whole fire of the enemy from their shipping and Fort St. Joseph, as

well as from the castle we intended to cannonade; that, besides, we lay

at too great a distance to damage the walls, and three parts in four of

our shot did not take place; for there was scarce anybody on board who

understood the pointing of a gun. Ah! God help us!” continued he, “If

your kinsman, Lieutenant Bowling, had been here, we should have had

other guess work.” By this time, our patients had increased to such a

number, that we did not know which to begin with; and the first mate

plainly told the surgeon, that if he did not get up immediately and

perform his duty, he would complain of his behaviour to the admiral,

and make application for his warrant. This remonstrance effectually

roused Mackshane, who was never deaf to an argument in which he thought

his interest was concerned; he therefore rose up, and in order to

strengthen his resolution, had recourse more than once to a case-bottle

of rum, which he freely communicated to the chaplain, and purser, who

had as much need of such extraordinary inspiration as himself. Being

thus supported, he went to work, and arms and legs were hewed down

without mercy. The fumes of the liquor mounting into the parson’s

brain, conspired, with his former agitation of spirits, to make him

quite delirious; he stripped himself to the skin; and, besmearing his

body with blood, could scarce be withheld from running upon deck in

that condition. Jack Rattlin, scandalised at this deportment,

endeavoured to allay his transports with reason; but finding all he

said ineffectual, and great confusion occasioned by his frolics, he

knocked him down with his right hand, and by threats kept him quiet in

that state of humiliation. But it was not in the power of rum to

elevate the purser, who sat on the floor wringing his hands, and

cursing the hour in which he left his peaceable profession of a brewer

in Rochester, to engage in such a life of terror and disquiet.

While we diverted ourselves at the expense of this poor devil, a shot

happened to take us between wind and water, and (its course being

through the purser’s store room) made a terrible havoc and noise among

the jars and bottles in its way, and disconcerted Mackshane so much,

that he dropped his scalpel, and falling down on his knees, pronounced

his Pater-noster aloud: the purser fell backward, and lay without sense

or motion; and the chaplain grew so outrageous, that Rattlin with one

hand could not keep him under; so that we were obliged to confine him

in the surgeon’s cabin, where he was no doubt guilty of a thousand

extravagancies. Much about this time, my old antagonist, Crampley, came

down, with express orders, as he said, to bring me up to the

quarter-deck, to dress a slight wound the captain had received by a

splinter: his reason for honouring me in particular with this piece of

service, being, that in case I should be killed or disabled by the way,

my death or mutilation would be of less consequence to the ship’s

company than that of the doctor or his first mate. At another time,

perhaps, I might have disputed this order, to which I was not bound to

pay the least regard; but as I thought my reputation depended upon my

compliance, I was resolved to convince my rival that I was no more

afraid than he of exposing myself to danger. With this view I provided

myself with dressings, and followed him immediately to the

quarter-deck, through a most infernal scene of slaughter, fire, smoke,

and uproar. Captain Oakum, who leaned against the mizen-mast, no sooner

saw me approach in my shirt, with the sleeves tucked up to my armpits,

and my hands dyed with blood, than he signified his displeasure by a

frown, and asked why the doctor himself did not come? I told him that

Crampley had singled me out, as if by express command; at which reply

he seemed surprised, and threatened to punish the midshipman for his

presumption, after the engagement. In the meantime, I was sent back to

my station, and ordered to tell Mackshane, that the captain expected

him immediately. I got safe back, and delivered my commission to the

doctor, who flatly refused to quit the post assigned to him by his

instructions; whereupon Morgan, who I believe, was jealous of my

reputation for courage, undertook the affair, and ascended with great

intrepidity. The captain, finding the surgeon obstinate, suffered

himself to be dressed, and swore he would confine Mackshane as soon as

the service should be over.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A breach being made in the walls, our soldiers give the assault, and

take the place without opposition—our sailors at the same time, become

masters of all the other strengths near Bocca Chica, and take

possession of the harbour—the good consequence of this success—we move

nearer the town—find two forts deserted, and the Channel blocked up

with sunk vessels; which however we find means to clear—land our

soldiers at La Quinta—repulse a body of militia—attack the castle of

St. Lazar, and are forced to retreat with great loss—the remains of our

army are re-embarked—an effort of the Admiral to take the town—the

economy of our expedition described

Having cannonaded the fort during the space of four hours, we were all

ordered to slip our cables, and sheer off; but next day the engagement

was renewed, and continued from the morning till the afternoon, when

the enemy’s fire from Bocca Chica slackened, and towards evening was

quite silenced. A breach being made on the other side, by our land

battery, large enough to admit a middle-sized baboon, provided he could

find means to climb up to it, our general proposed to give the assault

that very night, and actually ordered a detachment on that duty.

Providence stood our friend upon this occasion, and put it into the

hearts of the Spaniards to abandon the fort, which might have been

maintained by resolute men till the day of judgment against all the

force we could exert in the attack. And while our soldiers took

possession of the enemy’s ramparts without resistance, the same good

luck attended a body of sailors, who made themselves masters of Fort

St. Joseph, the fascine batteries, and one Spanish man-of-war; the

other three being burnt or sunk by the foe, that they might not fall

into our hands. The taking of these forts, in the strength of which the

Spaniards chiefly confided, made us masters of the outward harbour, and

occasioned great joy among us, as we laid our accounts at finding

little or no opposition from the town: and indeed, if a few great ships

had sailed up immediately, before they had recovered from the confusion

and despair that our unexpected success had produced among them, it is

not impossible that we might have finished the affair to our

satisfaction, without any more bloodshed; but this step our heroes

disdained as a barbarous insult over the enemy’s distress, and gave

them all the respite they could desire, in order to recollect

themselves. In the meantime, Mackshane, taking the advantage of this

general exultation, waited on our captain, and pleaded his own cause so

effectually that he was re-established in his good graces; and as for

Crampley, there was no more notice taken of his behaviour towards me

during the action. But of all the consequences of the victory, none was

more grateful than plenty of fresh water, after we had languished five

weeks on the allowance of a purser’s quart per day for each man in the

Torrid Zone, where the sun was vertical, and the expense of bodily

fluid so great, that a gallon of liquor could scarce supply the waste

of twenty-four hours; especially as our provision consisted of putrid

salt beef, to which the sailors gave the name of Irish horse; salt

pork, of New England, which, though neither fish nor flesh, savoured of

both; bread from the same country, every biscuit whereof, like a piece

of clockwork, moved by its own internal impulse, occasioned by the

myriads of insects that dwelt within it; and butter served out by the

gill, that tasted like train oil thickened with salt. Instead of small

beer, each man was allowed three half-quarterns of brandy or rum, which

were distributed every morning, diluted with a certain quantity of his

water, without either sugar or fruit to render it palatable, for which

reason, this composition was by the sailors not ineptly styled

Necessity. Nor was this limitation of simple element owing to a

scarcity of it on board, for there was at this time water enough in the

ship for a voyage of six months, at the rate of half-a-gallon per day

to each man: but this fast must, I suppose, have been enjoined by way

of penance on the ship’s company for their sins; or rather with a view

to mortify them into a contempt of life, that they might thereby become

more resolute and regardless of danger. How simply then do those people

argue, who ascribe the great mortality among us, to our bad provision

and want of water; and affirm, that a great many valuable lives might

have been saved, if the useless transports had been employed in

fetching fresh stock, turtle, fruit, and other refreshments from

Jamaica and other adjacent islands, for the use of the army and fleet!

seeing it is to be hoped, that those who died went to a better place,

and those who survived were the more easily maintained. After all, a

sufficient number remained to fall before the walls of St. Lazar, where

they behaved like their own country mastiffs, which shut their eyes,

run into the jaws of a bear, and have their heads crushed for their

valour.

But to return to my narration. After having put garrisons into the

forts we had taken, and re-embarked our soldiers and artillery (a piece

of service that detained us more than a week), we ventured up to the

mouth of the inner harbour, guarded by a large fortification on one

side, and a small redoubt on the other, both of which were deserted

before our approach, and the entrance of the harbour blocked up by

several old galleons, and two men-of-war that the enemy had sunk in the

channel. We made shift, however, to open a passage for some ships, that

favoured a second landing of our troops at a place called La Quinta,

not far from the town, where, after a faint resistance from a body of

Spaniards, who opposed their disembarkation, they encamped with a

design of besieging the castle of St. Lazar, which overlooked and

commanded the city. Whether our renowned general had nobody in his army

who knew how to approach it in form, or that he trusted entirely to the

fame of his arms, I shall not determine; but, certain it is, a

resolution was taken in a council of war, to attack the place with

musketry only. This was put in execution, and succeeded accordingly;

the enemy giving them such a hearty reception, that the greatest part

of their detachment took up their everlasting residence on the spot.

Our chief, not relishing this kind of complaisance in the Spaniard’s,

was wise enough to retreat on board with the remains of his army,

which, from eight thousand able men landed on the beach near Bocca

Chica, was now reduced to fifteen hundred fit for service. The sick and

wounded were squeezed into certain vessels, which thence obtained the

name of hospital ships, though methinks they scarce deserved such a

creditable title, seeing few of them could boast of their surgeon,

nurse, or cook; and the space between decks was so confined that the

miserable patients had not room to sit upright in their beds. Their

wounds and stumps, being neglected, contracted filth and putrefaction,

and millions of maggots were hatched amidst the corruption of their

sores. This inhuman disregard was imputed to the scarcity of surgeons;

though it is well known that every great ship in the fleet could have

spared one at least for this duty, an expedient which would have been

more than sufficient to remove this shocking inconvenience. But perhaps

our general was too much of a gentleman to ask a favour of this kind

from his fellow chief, who, on the other hand, would not derogate so

much from his own dignity, as to offer such assistance unasked; for, I

may venture to affirm, that by this time the Demon of Discord, with her

sooty wings, had breathed her influence upon our councils; and it might

be said of these great men (I hope they will pardon the comparison) as

of Cesar and Pompey, the one could not brook a superior, and the other

was impatient of an equal; so that, between the pride of one and

insolence of another, the enterprise miscarried, according to the

proverb, “Between two stools the backside falls to the ground.” Not

that I would be thought to liken any public concern to that opprobrious

part of the human body, though I might with truth assert, if I durst

use such a vulgar idiom, that the nation did hang on arse at its

disappointment on this occasion; neither would I presume to compare the

capacity of our heroic leaders to any such wooden convenience as a

joint-stool or a close-stool; but only to signify by this simile, the

mistake the people committed in trusting to the union of two

instruments that were never joined.

A day or two after the attempt on St. Lazar, the admiral ordered one of

the Spanish men-of-war we had taken to be mounted with sixteen guns,

and manned with detachments from our great ships, in order to batter

the town; accordingly, she was towed into the inner harbour in the

night, and moored within half a mile of the walls, against which she

began to fire at daybreak; and continued about six hours exposed to the

opposition of at least thirty pieces of cannon, which at length obliged

our men to set her on fire, and get off as well as they could in their

boats. This piece of conduct afforded matter of speculation to all the

wits, either in the army or navy, who were at last fain to acknowledge

it a stroke of policy above their comprehension. Some entertained such

an irreverent opinion of the admiral’s understanding, as to think he

expected the town would surrender to his floating battery of sixteen

guns: others imagined his sole intention was to try the enemy’s

strength, by which he should be able to compute the number of great

ships that would be necessary to force the town to a capitulation. But

this last conjecture soon appeared groundless, inasmuch as no ships of

any kind whatever were afterwards employed on that service. A third

sort swore, that no other cause could be assigned for this undertaking

than that which induced Don Quixote to attack the windmill. A fourth

class (and that the most numerous, though, without doubt, composed of

the sanguine and malicious), plainly taxed this commander with want of

honesty as well as sense; and alleged that he ought to have sacrificed

private pique to the interest of his country; that, where the lives of

so many brave fellow-citizens were concerned, he ought to have

concurred with the general without being solicited or even desired,

towards their preservation and advantage, that, if his arguments could

not dissuade him from a desperate enterprise, it was his duty to have

rendered it as practicable as possible, without running extreme hazard;

that this could have been done, with a good prospect of success, by

ordering five or six large ships to batter the town, while the land

forces stormed the castle; by these means a considerable diversion

would have been made in favour of those troops, who, in their march to

the assault and in the retreat, suffered much more from the town than

from the castle! that the inhabitants, seeing themselves vigorously

attacked on all hands, would have been divided, distracted, and

confused, and in all probability, unable to resist the assailants. But

all these suggestions surely proceeded from ignorance or malevolence,

or else the admiral would not have found it such an easy matter, at his

return to England, to justify his conduct to a ministry at once so

upright and discerning. True it is, that those who undertook to

vindicate him on the spot, asserted, that there was not water enough

for our great ships near the town: though this was a little

unfortunately urged, because there happened to be pilots in the fleet

perfectly well acquainted with the soundings of the harbour, who

affirmed there was water enough for five eighty-gun ships to lie

abreast almost up to the very walls. The disappointments we suffered

occasioned a universal dejection, which was not at all alleviated by

the objects that daily and hourly entertained our eyes, nor by the

prospect of what must have inevitably happened, had we remained much

longer in this place. Such was the economy in some ships that, rather

than be at the trouble of interring the dead, their commanders ordered

their men to throw their bodies overboard, many without either ballast

or winding-sheet; so that numbers of human carcases floated in the

harbour, until they were devoured by sharks and carrion crows, which

afforded no agreeable spectacle to those who survived. At the same time

the wet season began, during which a deluge of rain falls, from the

rising to the setting sun, without intermission, and that no sooner

ceases than it begins to thunder, and lighten with such continued

flashing, that one can see to read a very small print by the

illumination.

CHAPTER XXXIV

An epidemic Fever rages among us—we abandon our Conquests—I am seized

with Distemper—write a Petition to the Captain, which is rejected—I am

in danger of Suffocation through the Malice of Crampley, and relieved

by a Serjeant—my Fever increases—the Chaplain wants to confess me—I

obtain a favourable Crisis—Morgan’s Affection for me proved—the

Behaviour of Mackshane and Crampley towards me—Captain Oakum is removed

into another Ship with his beloved Doctor—our new Captain described—An

Adventure of Morgan

The change of the atmosphere, occasioned by this phenomenon, conspired,

with the stench that surrounded us, the heat of the climate, our own

constitutions, impoverished by bad provisions, and our despair, to

introduce the bilious fever among us, which raged with such violence,

that three-fourths of those whom it invaded died in a deplorable

manner; the colour of their skin being, by the extreme putrefaction of

the juices, changed into that of soot.

Our conductors, finding things in this situation, perceived it was high

to relinquish our conquests, and this we did, after having rendered

their artillery useless, and blown up their walls with gunpowder. Just

as we sailed from Bocca Chica, on our return to Jamaica, I found myself

threatened with the symptoms of this terrible distemper; and knowing

very well that I stood no chance for my life, if I should be obliged to

be in the cockpit, which by this time was grown intolerable, even to

people in health, by reason of the heat and unwholesome smell of

decayed provision, I wrote a petition to the captain, representing my

case, and humbly imploring his permission to be among the soldiers in

the middle deck, for the benefit of the air: but I might have spared

myself the trouble; for this humane commander refused my request, and

ordered me to continue in the place allotted for the surgeon’s mates,

or else be contented to be in the hospital, which, by the by, was three

degrees more offensive and more suffocating than our own berth below.

Another, in my condition, perhaps, would have submitted to his fate,

and died in a pet; but I could not brook the thought of perishing so

pitifully, after I had weathered so many gales of hard fortune: I

therefore, without minding Oakum’s injunction, prevailed upon the

soldiers (whose good-will I had acquired) to admit my hammock among

them; and actually congratulated myself upon my comfortable situation;

which Crampley no sooner understood, than he signified to the captain

my contempt of his orders, and was invested with power to turn me down

again into my proper habitation.

This barbarous piece of revenge incensed me so much against the author,

that I vowed, with bitter imprecations, to call him to a severe

account, if ever it should be in my power; and the agitation of my

spirits increased my fever to a violent degree. While I lay gasping for

breath in this infernal abode, I was visited by a sergeant, the bones

of whose nose I had reduced and set to rights, after they had been

demolished by a splinter during our last engagement; he, being informed

of my condition, offered me the use of his berth in the middle deck,

which was enclosed with canvas, and well aired by a port-hole that

remained open within it. I embraced this proposal with joy, and was

immediately conducted to the place, where I was treated, while my

illness lasted, with the utmost tenderness and care by this grateful

halberdier, who had no other bed for himself than a hencoop during the

whole passage. Here I lay and enjoyed the breeze, notwithstanding which

my malady gained ground, and at length my life was despaired of, though

I never lost hopes of recovery, even when I had the mortification to

see, from my cabin-window, six or seven thrown overboard every day, who

died of the same distemper. This confidence, I am persuaded, conduced a

great deal to the preservation of my life, especially when joined to

another resolution I took at the beginning, namely, to refuse all

medicine, which I could not help thinking co-operated with the disease,

and, instead of resisting putrefaction, promoted a total degeneracy of

the vital fluid. When my friend Morgan, therefore, brought his

diaphoretic bolases, I put them into my mouth, ’tis true, but without

any intention of swallowing them: and, when he went away, spit them

out, and washed my mouth with water-gruel. I seemingly complied in this

matter, that I might not affront the blood of Caractacus, by a refusal

which might have intimated a diffidence of his physical capacity, for

he acted as my physician; Doctor Mackshane never once inquiring about

me, or even knowing where I was. When my distemper was at the height,

Morgan thought my case desperate, and, after having applied a blister

to the nape of my neck, squeezed my hand, bidding me, with a woful

countenance, recommend myself to Cot and my Reteemer; then, taking his

leave, desired the chaplain to come and administer some spiritual

consolation to me; but, before he arrived, I made shift to rid myself

of the troublesome application the Welshman had bestowed on my back.

The person, having felt my pulse, inquired into the nature of my

complaints, hemmed a little, and began thus: “Mr. Random, God out of

his infinite mercy has been pleased to visit you with a dreadful

distemper, the issue of which no man knows. You may be permitted to

recover and live many days on the face of the earth; and, which is more

probable, you may be taken away, and cut off in the flower of your

youth. It is incumbent on you, therefore, to prepare for the great

change, by repenting sincerely of your sins; of this there cannot be a

greater sign, than an ingenuous confession, which I conjure you to make

without hesitation or mental reservation; and, when I am convinced of

your sincerity, I will then give you such comfort as the situation of

your soul will admit of. Without doubt, you have been guilty of

numberless transgressions to which youth is subject, as swearing,

drunkenness, whoredom, and adultery: tell me therefore, without

reserve, the particulars of each, especially of the last, that I may be

acquainted with the true state of your conscience; for no physician

will prescribe for his patient until he knows the circumstances of his

disease.”

As I was not under any apprehensions of death, I could not help smiling

at the chaplain’s inquisitive remonstrance, which I told him savoured

more of the Roman than of the Protestant church, in recommending

auricular confession; a thing, in my opinion, not at all necessary to

salvation, and which, for that reason, I declined. This reply

disconcerted him a little; however, he explained away his meaning, in

making learned distinctions between what was absolutely necessary and

what was only convenient; then proceeded to ask what religion I

professed. I answered, that I had not as yet considered the difference

of religions, consequently had not fixed on any one in particular, but

that I was bred a Presbyterian. At this word the chaplain expressed

great astonishment, and said, he could not comprehend how a

presbyterian was entitled to any post under the English government.

Then he asked if I had ever received the sacrament, or taken the oaths;

to which questions, I replying in the negative, he held up his hands,

assured me he could do me no service, wished I might not be in a state

of reprobation, and returned to his messmates, who were making merry in

the ward-room, round a table well stored with bumbo(2) and wine.

(2)bumbo is a liquor composed of rum, sugar, water, and nutmeg

This insinuation, terrible as it was, had not such an effect upon me as

the fever, which, soon after he had left me, grew outrageous. I began

to see strange chimeras and concluded myself upon the point of being

delirious; in the meantime, being in great danger of suffocation, I

started up in a kind of frantic fit, with an intention to plunge myself

into the sea; and, as my friend the sergeant was not present, would

certainly have cooled myself to some purpose, had I not perceived a

moisture upon my thigh, as I endeavoured to get out of my hammock: the

appearance of this revived my hopes, and I had reflection and

resolution enough to take the advantage of this favourable symptom, by

tearing the shirt from my body, and the sheets from my bed, and

wrapping myself in a thick blanket, in which inclosure, for about a

quarter of an hour, felt all the pains of hell: but it was not long

before I was recompensed for my suffering by a profuse sweat, that,

bursting from the whole surface of my skin, in less than two hours,

relieved me from all my complaints except that of weakness; and left me

as hungry as a kite. I enjoyed a very comfortable nap, after which I

was regaling myself with the agreeable reverie of future happiness,

when I heard Morgan, on the outside of the curtain, ask the sergeant if

I was alive still? “Alive!” cried the other, “God forbid he should be

otherwise! he has lain quiet these five hours, and I do not choose to

disturb him, for sleep will do him great service.” “Ay,” said my

fellow-mate, “he sleeps so sound (look you), that he will not waken

till the great trump plows—Cot be merciful to his soul. He has paid his

debt like an honest man—ay, and moreover, he is at rest from all

persecutions, and troubles, and afflictions, of which, Cot knows, and I

know, he had his own share—Ochree! Ochree! he was a promising youth

indeed!” So saying he groaned grievously, and began to whine in such a

manner, as persuaded me he had a real friendship for me. The sergeant,

alarmed at his words, came into the berth, and, while he looked upon

me, I smiled, and tipped him the wink: he immediately guessed my

meaning and remaining silent, Morgan was confirmed in his opinion of my

being dead; whereupon he approached, with tears in his eyes, in order

to indulge his grief with a sight of the object: and I counterfeited

death so well, by fixing my eyes and dropping my under-jaw, that he

said, “There he lies, no petter than a lump of clay, Cot help me!” and

observed, by the distortion of my face, that I must have had a strong

struggle.

I should not have been able to contain myself much longer, when he

began to perform the last duty of a friend, in closing my eyes and my

mouth, upon which I suddenly snapped at his fingers and discomposed him

so much that he started back, turned pale as ashes, and stared like the

picture of horror; although I could not help laughing at his

appearance, I was concerned for his situation, and stretched out my

hand, telling him I hoped to live and eat some salmagundy of his making

in England. It was some time before he could recollect himself so far

as to feel my pulse, and inquire into the particulars of my disease;

but when he found I had enjoyed a favourable crisis, he congratulated

me upon my good fortune; not failing to ascribe it, under Cot, to the

blister he had applied to my back, at his last visit; which, by the

bye, said he, must now be removed and dressed; he was actually going to

fetch dressings, when I, feigning astonishment, said, “Bless me! sure

you never applied a blister to me—there is nothing on my back, I assure

you.” But he could not be convinced till he had examined it, and then

endeavoured to conceal his confusion, by expressing his surprise in

finding the skin untouched and the plaster missing. In order to excuse

myself for paying so little regard to his prescription, I pretended to

have been insensible when it was put on, and to have pulled it off

afterwards in a fit of delirium. This apology satisfied my friend, who,

on this occasion, abated a good deal of his stiffness in regard to

punctilio; and as we were now safely arrived at Jamaica, where I had

the benefit of fresh provisions and other refreshments, I recovered

strength every day, and, in a short time, my health and vigour were

perfectly re-established.

When I got up at first, and was just able to crawl about the deck with

a staff in my hand, I met Doctor Mackshane, who passed by me with a

disdainful look, and did not vouchsafe to honour me with one word.

After him came Crampley, who, strutting up to me with a fierce

countenance, pronounced, “Here’s fine discipline on-board, when such

lazy, skulking sons of bitches as you are allowed, on pretence of

sickness, to lollop at your ease, while your betters are kept to hard

duty!” The sight and behaviour of this malicious scoundrel enraged me

so much that I could scarce refrain from laying my cudgel across his

pate; but when I considered my present feebleness, and the enemies I

had in the ship, who wanted only a pretence to ruin me, I restrained my

passion, and contented myself with telling him, I had not forgot his

insolence and malice, and that I hoped we should meet one day on shore.

At this declaration he grinned, shook his fist, and swore he longed for

nothing more than such an opportunity. Meanwhile our ship was ordered

to be heaved down, victualled, and watered, for her return to England;

and our captain, for some reason or other, not thinking it convenient

for him to revisit his native country at this time, exchanged with a

gentleman, who, on the other hand, wished for nothing so much as to be

safe without the tropic: all his care and tenderness of himself being

insufficient to preserve his complexion from the injuries of the sun

and weather.

Our tyrant having left the ship, and carried his favourite Mackshane

along with him, to my inexpressible satisfaction, our new commander

came on board in a ten-oared barge, overshadowed with a vast umbrella,

and appeared in everything the reverse of Oakum, being a tall, thin

young man, dressed in this manner: a white hat, garnished with a red

feather, adorned his head, from whence his hair flowed upon his

shoulders, in ringlets tied behind with a ribbon. His coat, consisting

of pink-coloured silk, lined with white, by the elegance of the cut

retired backward, as it were, to discover a white satin waistcoat

embroidered with gold, unbuttoned at the upper part to display a brooch

set with garnets, that glittered in the breast of his shirt, which was

of the finest cambric, edged with right Mechlin: the knees of his

crimson velvet breeches scarce descended so low as to meet his silk

stockings, which rose without spot or wrinkle on his meagre legs, from

shoes of blue Meroquin, studded with diamond buckles that flamed forth

rivals to the sun! A steel-hilted sword, inlaid with gold, and decked

with a knot of ribbon which fell down in a rich tassel, equipped his

side; and an amber-headed cane hung dangling from his wrist. But the

most remarkable parts of his furniture were, a mask on his face, and

white gloves on his hands, which did not seem to be put on with an

intention to be pulled off occasionally, but were fixed with a curious

ring on the little finger of each hand.

In this garb, Captain Whiffle, for that was his name, took possession

of the ship, surrounded with a crowd of attendants, all of whom, in

their different degrees, seemed to be of their patron’s disposition;

and the air was so impregnated with perfumes, that one may venture to

affirm the climate of Arabia Felix was not half so sweet-scented. My

fellow-mate, observing no surgeon among his train, thought he had found

an occasion too favourable for himself to be neglected; and,

remembering the old proverb, “Spare to speak, and spare to speed,”

resolved to solicit the new captain’s interest immediately, before any

other surgeon could be appointed for the ship. With this view he

repaired to the cabin in his ordinary dress, consisting of a check

shirt and trousers, a brown linen waistcoat, and a nightcap of the same

(neither of them very clean,) which, for his further misfortune,

happened to smell strong of tobacco. Entering without any ceremony into

this sacred place, he found Captain Whiffle reposing upon a couch, with

a wrapper of fine chintz about his body, and a muslin cap bordered with

lace about his head; and after several low congees began in this

manner: “Sir, I hope you will forgive, and excuse, and pardon, the

presumption of one who has not the honour of being known to you, but

who is, nevertheless a shentleman porn and pred, and moreover has had

misfortunes, Cot help me, in the world.”

Here he was interrupted by the captain, who, on seeing him, had started

up with great amazement, at the novelty of the apparition; and, having

recollected himself, pronounced with a look and tone signifying

disdain, curiosity and surprise, “Zauns! who art thou?” “I am surgeon’s

first mate on board of this ship,” replied Morgan: “and I most

vehemently desire and beseech you, with all submission, to be pleased

to condescend and vouchsafe to inquire into my character, and my

pehaviour, and my deserts, which, under Cot, I hope, will entitle me to

the vacancy of surgeon.” As he proceeded in his speech, he continued

advancing towards the captain, whose nostrils were no sooner saluted

with the aromatic flavour that exhaled from him, than he cried with

great emotion, “Heaven preserve me! I am suffocated! Fellow, fellow,

away with thee! Curse thee, fellow! Get thee gone! I shall be stunk to

death!” At the noise of his outcries, his servants ran into his

apartment, and he accosted them thus: “Villains! cut-throats! traitors!

I am betrayed! I am sacrificed! Will you not carry that monster away?

or must I be stifled with the stench of him? oh, oh!” With these

interjections he sank down upon his settee in a fit: his

valet-de-chambre plied him with a smelling-bottle, one footman chafed

his temples with Hungary water, another sprinkled the floor with

spirits of lavender, a third pushed Morgan out of the cabin; who coming

to the place where I was, sat down with a demure countenance and,

according to his custom, when he received any indignity which he durst

not revenge, began to sing a Welsh ditty.

I guessed he was under some agitation of spirits and desired to know

the cause; but, instead of answering me directly, he asked with great

emotion, if I thought him a monster and a stinkard? “A monster and a

stinkard!” said I, with some surprise: “did anybody call you so?” “Cot

is my judge,” replied be, “Captain Fifle did call me both; ay, and all

the waters in the Tawy will not wash it out of my remembrance. I do

affirm and avouch, and maintain, with my soul, and my pody, and my

plood, look you, that I have no smells apout me, but such as a

Christian ought to have, except the effluvia of tobacco, which is a

cephalic, odoriferous, aromatic herb; and he is a son of a mountain

goat who says otherwise. As for my being a minister, let that be as it

is: I am as Cot was pleased to create me, which, peradventure, is more

than I shall ever aver of him who gave me that title; for I will

proclaim it before the world, that he is disguised, and transfigured,

and transmogrified, with affectation and whimseys; and that he is more

like a papoon than of the human race.”

CHAPTER XXXV

Captain Whiffle sends for me—his situation described—his surgeon

arrives, prescribes for him, and puts him to bed—a bed is put up for

Mr. Simper contiguous to the state room, which, with other parts of the

captains behaviour, gives the ship’s company a very unfavourable idea

of their commander—I am detained in the West Indies by the admiral, and

go on board of the Lizard sloop of war in quality of surgeon’s mate,

where I make myself known to the surgeon, who treats me very kindly—I

go on shore, sell my ticket, purchase necessaries, and, at my return on

board, am surprised at the sight of Crampley, who is appointed

lieutenant of the sloop—we sail on a cruise—take a prize in which I

arrive at Port Morant under the command of my messmate, with whom I

live in great harmony

He was going on with an eulogium upon the captain, when I received a

message to clean myself, and go up to the great cabin: and with this

command I instantly complied, sweetening myself with rosewater from the

medicine chest. When I entered the room, I was ordered to stand by the

door, until Captain Whiffle had reconnoitered me at a distance with a

spy-glass. He, having consulted one sense in this manner, bade me

advance gradually, that his nose might have intelligence before it

could be much offended: I therefore approached with great caution and

success, and he was pleased to say, “Ay, this creature is tolerable.” I

found him lolling on his couch with a languishing air, his head

supported by his valet-de-chambre, who from time to time applied a

smelling-bottle to his nose. “Vergette,” said he in a squeaking tone,

“dost think this wretch (meaning me) will do me no injury? May I

venture to submit my arm to him?” “Pon my word,” replied the valet, “I

do tink dat dere be great occasion for your honour losing a small

quantite of blodt; and the young man ave quelque chose of de bonne

mine.” “Well, then,” said his master, “I think I must venture.” Then,

addressing himself to me, “Hast thou ever blooded anybody but brutes?

But I need not ask thee, for thou wilt tell me a most d—able lie,”

“Brutes, sir!” answered I, pulling down his glove, in order to feel his

pulse, “I never meddle with brutes.” “What the devil art thou about?”

cried he, “dost thou intend to twist off my hand? Gad’s curse! my arm

is benumbed up to the very shoulder! Heaven have mercy upon me! must I

perish under the hands of savages? What an unfortunate dog was I to

come on board without my own surgeon, Mr. Simper.” I craved pardon for

having handled him so roughly, and, with the utmost care, and

tenderness, tied up his arm with a fillet of silk. While I was feeling

for the vein, he desired to know how much blood I intended to take from

him, and, when I answered, “not above twelve ounces,” started up with a

look full of horror, and bade me be gone, swearing I had a design upon

his life. Vergette appeased him with difficulty, and, opening a bureau,

took out a pair of scales, in one of which was placed a small cup; and

putting them into my hand, told me, the captain never lost above an

ounce and three drams at one time.

While I prepared for this important evacuation, there came into the

cabin a young man gaily dressed, of a very delicate complexion with a

kind of languid smile on his face: which seemed to have been rendered

habitual by a long course of affectation. The captain no sooner

perceived him, than, rising hastily, he flew into his arms, crying, “O,

my dear Simper, I am excessively disordered! I have been betrayed,

frighted, murdered, by the negligence of my servants, who suffered a

beast, a mule, a bear, to surprise me, and stink me into convulsions

with the fumes of tobacco.” Simper, who by this time, I found, was

obliged to act for the clearness of his complexion, assumed an air of

softness and sympathy, and lamented with many tender expressions of

sorrow, the sad accident that had thrown him into that condition; then,

feeling his patient’s pulse on the outside of his glove, gave it as his

opinion, that his disorder was entirely nervous, and that some drops of

tincture of castor, and liquid laudanum, would be of more service to

him than bleeding, by bridling the inordinate sallies of his spirits,

and composing the fermentation of his bile. I was therefore sent to

prepare this prescription, which was administered in a glass of sack

posset, after the captain had been put to bed, and orders sent to the

officers on the quarter-deck, to let nobody walk on that side under

which he lay.

While the captain enjoyed his repose the doctor watched over him, and

indeed became so necessary, that a cabin was made for him contiguous to

the state room where Whiffle slept, that he might be at hand in case of

accidents in the night. Next day, our commander being happily

recovered, gave orders that none of the lieutenants should appear upon

deck without a wig, sword, and ruffles; nor any midshipman, or other

petty officer, be seen with a check shirt or dirty linen. He also

prohibited any person whatever, except Simper and his own servants,

from coming into the great cabin without first sending in to obtain

leave. These singular regulations did not prepossess the ship’s company

in his favour: but, on the contrary, gave scandal an opportunity to be

very busy with his character, and accuse him of maintaining a

correspondence with his surgeon not fit to be named.

In a few weeks, our ship being under sailing orders, I was in hope of

revisiting my native country, in a very short time, when the admiral’s

surgeon came on board, and, sending for Morgan and me to the

quarter-deck, gave us to understand there was a great scarcity of

surgeons in the West Indies; that he was commanded to detain one mate

out of every great ship that was bound for England; and desired us to

agree between ourselves, before the next day at that hour, which of us

should stay behind. We were thunderstruck at this proposal, and stared

at one another some time without speaking; at length the Welshman broke

silence, and offered to remain in the West Indies, provided the admiral

would give him a surgeon’s warrant immediately; but he was told there

was no want of chief surgeons, and that he must be contented with the

station of mate, till he should be further provided for in due course.

Whereupon Morgan flatly refused to quit the ship for which the

commissioners of the navy had appointed him; and the other told him as

plainly, that if we could not determine the affair by ourselves before

to-morrow morning, he must cast lots, and abide by his chance.

When I recalled to my remembrance the miseries I had undergone in

England, where I had not one friend to promote my interest, or favour

my advancement in the navy, and the same time reflected on the present

dearth of surgeons in the West Indies, and the unhealthiness of the

climate, which every day almost reduced the number, I could not help

thinking my success would be much more certain and expeditious by my

staying where I was, than by returning to Europe. I therefore resolved

to comply with a good grace, and next day, when we were ordered to

throw dice, told Morgan he needed not trouble himself, for I would

voluntarily submit to the admiral’s pleasure. This frank declaration

was commended by the gentleman, who assured me, it should not fare the

worse with me for my resignation. Indeed he was as good as his word,

and that very afternoon procured a warrant, appointing me surgeon’s

mate of the Lizard sloop-of-war, which put me on a footing with every

first mate in the service.

My ticket being made out, I put my chest and bedding on board a canoe

that lay alongside, and, having shook hands with my trusty friend the

sergeant, and honest Jack Rattlin, who was bound for Greenwich

Hospital, I took my leave of Morgan with many tears, after we had

exchanged our sleeve buttons as remembrances of each other. Having

presented my new warrant to the captain of the Lizard, I inquired for

the doctor, whom I no sooner saw than I recollected him to be one of

those young fellows with whom I had been committed to the round-house,

during our frolic with Jackson, as I have related before. He received

me with a good deal of courtesy, and, when I put him in mind of our

former acquaintance, expressed great joy at seeing me again, and

recommended me to an exceeding good mess, composed of the gunner and

master’s mate. As there was not one sick person in the ship, I got

leave to go ashore next day with the gunner, who recommended me to a

Jew, that bought my ticket at the rate of forty per cent discount; and,

having furnished myself with the necessaries I wanted, returned on

board in the evening, and, to my surprise, found my old antagonist

Crampley walking upon deck. Though I did not fear his enmity, I was

shocked at his appearance, and communicated my sentiments on that

subject to Mr. Tomlins the surgeon, who told me that Crampley, by dint

of some friends about the admiral, had procured a commission,

constituting him lieutenant on board the Lizard; and advised me, now he

was my superior officer, to behave with some respect towards him, or

else he would find a thousand opportunities of using me ill. This

advice was a bitter potion to me, whom pride and resentment had

rendered utterly incapable of the least submission to, or even of a

reconciliation with, the wretch who had, on many occasions, treated me

so inhumanly: however, I resolved to have as little connection as

possible with him, and to ingratiate myself as much as I could with the

rest of the officers, whose friendship might be a bulwark to defend me

from the attempts of his malice.

In less than a week we sailed on a cruise, and having weathered the

east end of the island, had the good fortune to take a Spanish

barcolongo, with her prize, which was an English ship bound for

Bristol, that sailed from Jamaica a fortnight before, without convoy.

All the prisoners who were well, we put onshore on the north side of

the island; the prizes were manned with Englishmen, and the command of

the barcolongo given to my friend the master’s mate, with orders to

carry them into Port Morant, and there to remain until the Lizard’s

cruise should be ended, at which time she would touch at the same place

in her way to Port Royal. With him I was sent to attend the wounded

Spaniards as well as Englishmen, who amounted to sixteen, and to take

care of them on shore in a house that was to be hired as an hospital.

This destination gave me a great deal of pleasure, as I should, for

some time, be freed from the arrogance of Crampley, whose inveteracy

against me had already broken out on two or three occasions since he

was become a lieutenant. My messmate, who very much resembled my uncle,

both in figure and disposition, treated me on board of the prize with

the utmost civility and confidence: and, among other favours, made me a

present of a silver-hilted hanger, and a pair of pistols mounted with

the same metal, which fell to his share in plundering the enemy. We

arrived safely at Morant, and, going on shore, pitched upon an empty

storehouse; which we hired for the reception of the wounded, who were

brought to it next day, with beds and other necessaries; and four of

the ship’s company appointed to attend them and obey me.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A strange adventure—in consequence of which I am extremely

happy—Crampley does me in offices with the Captain; but his malice is

defeated by the good-nature and friendship of the surgeon—we return to

Port Royal—our Captain gets the command of a larger ship, and is

succeeded by an old man—Brayl is provided for—we receive orders to sail

for England

When my patients were all in a fair way, my companion and commander,

whose name was Brayl, carried me up the country to the house of a rich

planter, with whom he was acquainted, where we were sumptuously

entertained, and in the evening set out on our return to the ship. When

we had walked about a mile by moonlight, we perceived a horseman behind

us, who coming up, wished us good even, and asked which way we went?

His voice, which was quite familiar to me, no sooner struck my ear,

than in spite of all my resolution and reflection, my hair bristled up,

and I was seized with a violent fit of trembling, which Brayl

misinterpreting, bade me be under no concern. I told him he was

mistaken in the cause of my disorder; and, addressing myself to the

person on horseback said, “I could have sworn by your voice, that you

were a dear friend of mine, if I had not been certain of his death.” To

this address, after some pause, he replied, “There are many voices as

well as faces that resemble one another; but, pray, what was your

friend’s name.” I satisfied him in that particular, and gave a short

detail of the melancholy fate of Thompson, not without many sighs and

some tears. A silence ensued, which lasted some minutes, and then the

conversation turned on different subjects, till we arrived at a house

on the road, where the horseman alighted, and begged with so much

earnestness that we would go in and drink a bowl of punch with him,

that we could not resist. But, if I was alarmed at his voice, what must

my amazement be, when I discovered by the light the very person of my

lamented friend! Perceiving my confusion, which was extreme, he clasped

me in his arms, and bedewed my face with tears. It was some time ere I

recovered the use of my reason, overpowered with this event, and longer

still before I could speak. So that all I was capable of was to return

his embraces, and to mingle the overflowings of my joy with his; whilst

honest Brayl, affected with the scene, wept as fast as either of us,

and signified his participation of our happiness by hugging us both,

and capering about the room like a madman. At length, I retrieved the

use of my tongue, and cried, “Is it possible! you can be my friend

Thompson? No certainly, alas! he was drowned; and I am now under the

deception of a dream!” He was at great pains to convince me of his

being the individual person whom I regretted, and bidding me sit down

and compose myself, promised to explain his sudden disappearance from

the Thunder, and to account for his being at present in the land of the

living. This task he acquitted himself of, after I had drunk a glass of

punch, and recollected my spirits, by informing us, that with a

determination to rid himself of a miserable existence, he had gone in

the night-time to the head, while the ship was on her way, from whence

he slipped down as softly as he could, by the bows into the sea, where,

after he was heartily ducked, he began to repent of his precipitation;

and, as he could swim very well, kept himself above water, in hopes of

being taken up by some of the ships astern; that, in this situation, he

hailed a large vessel, and begged to be taken in, but was answered that

she was a heavy sailer, and therefore they did not choose to lose time

by bringing to; however, they threw an old chest overboard for his

convenience, and told him, that some of the ships astern would

certainly save him; that no other vessel came within sight or cry of

him for the space of three hours, during which time he had the

mortification to find himself in the middle of the ocean alone, without

other support or resting-place, but what a few crazy boards afforded;

till at last he discerned a small sloop steering towards him, upon

which he set up his throat, and had the good fortune to be heard and

rescued from the dreary waste by their boat, which was hoisted out on

purpose.

“I was no sooner brought on board,” continued he, “than I fainted, and,

when I recovered my senses, found myself in bed, regaled with a most

noisome smell of onions and cheese, which made me think at first that I

was in my own hammock, alongside of honest Morgan, and that all which

had passed was no more than a dream. Upon inquiry, I understood that I

was on board of a schooner belonging to Rhode Island, bound for

Jamaica, with a cargo of geese, pigs, onions, and cheese, and that the

master’s name was Robertson, by birth a North Briton, whom I knew at

first sight to be an old school-fellow of mine. When I discovered

myself to him, he was transported with surprise and joy, and begged to

know the occasion of my misfortune, which I did not think fit to

disclose, because I knew his notions with regard to religion were very

severe and confined; therefore contented myself with telling him I fell

overboard by accident; but made no scruple of explaining the nature of

my disagreeable station, and of acquainting him with my determined

purpose never to return to the Thunder man-of-war. Although he was not

of my opinion in that particular, knowing that I must lose my clothes

and what pay was due to me, unless I went back to my duty; yet, when I

described the circumstances of the hellish life I led under the

tyrannic sway of Oakum and Mackshane; and, among other grievances,

hinted a dissatisfaction at the irreligious deportment of my shipmates,

and the want of the true presbyterian gospel doctrine; he changed his

sentiments, and conjured me with great vehemence and zeal to lay aside

all thought of rising in the navy; and, that he might show how much he

had my interest at heart, undertook to provide for me in some shape or

other, before he should leave Jamaica. This promise he performed to my

heart’s desire, by recommending me to a gentleman of fortune, with whom

I have lived ever since in quality of surgeon and overseer to his

plantations. He and his lady are now at Kingston, so that I am, for the

present, master of this house, to which, from my soul, I bid you

welcome, and hope you will favour me with your company during the

remaining part of the night.”

I needed not a second invitation; but Mr. Brayl, who was a diligent and

excellent officer, could not be persuaded to sleep out of the ship;

however, he supped with us, and, after having drank a cheerful glass,

set out for the vessel, which was not above three miles from the place,

escorted by a couple of stout negroes, whom Mr. Thompson ordered to

conduct him. Never were two friends more happy in the conversation of

each other than we, for the time it lasted. I related to him the

particulars of our attempt upon Carthagena, of which he had heard but

an imperfect account; and he gratified me with a narration of every

little incident of his life since we parted. He assured me, it was with

the utmost difficulty he could resist his inclination of coming down to

Port Royal, to see Morgan and me, of whom he had heard no tidings since

the day of our separation: but that he was restrained by the fear of

being detained as a deserter. He told me that, when he heard my voice

in the dark, he was almost as much surprised as I was at seeing him

afterwards: and, in the confidence of friendship, disclosed a passion

he entertained for the only daughter of the gentleman with whom he

lived, who, by his description, was a very amiable young lady, and did

not disdain his addresses; that he was very much favoured by her

parents; and did not despair of obtaining their consent to the match,

which would at once render him independent of the world. I

congratulated him on his good fortune, which he protested should never

make him forget his friends; and, towards morning, we betook ourselves

to rest.

Next day he accompanied me to the ship, where Mr. Brayl entertained him

at dinner, and we having spent the afternoon together, he took his

leave of us in the evening, after he had forced upon me ten pistoles,

as a small token of his affection. In short, while he stayed here, we

saw one another every day, and generally ate at the same table, which

was plentifully supplied by him with all kinds of poultry, butcher’s

meat, oranges, limes, lemons, pine-apples, Madeira wine, and excellent

rum; so that this small interval of ten days was by far the most

agreeable period of my life.

At length the Lizard arrived; and my patients being all fit for duty,

they and I were ordered on board of her, where I understood from Mr.

Tomlins that there was a shyness between the lieutenant and him on my

account; the rancorous villain having taken the opportunity of my

absence to fill the captain’s ears with a thousand scandalous stories

to my prejudice; among other things affirming, that I had been once

transported for theft, and that when I was in the Thunder man-of-war, I

had been whipped for the same crime. The surgeon, on the other hand,

having heard my whole story from my own mouth, defended me strenuously,

and in the course of that good-natured office recounted all the

instances of Crampley’s malice against me while I remained on board of

that ship; which declaration, while it satisfied the captain of my

innocence, made the lieutenant as much my defender’s enemy as mine. The

infernal behaviour of Crampley, with regard to me, added such fuel to

his former resentment, that, at certain times, I was quite beside

myself with the desire of revenge, and was even tempted to pistol him

on the quarter-deck, though an infamous death must inevitably have been

my reward. But the surgeon, who was my confidant, argued against such a

desperate action so effectually, that I stifled the flame which

consumed me for the present, and resolved to wait for a more convenient

opportunity. In the meantime, that Mr. Tomlins might be the more

convinced of the wrongs I suffered by this fellow’s slander, I begged

he would go and visit Mr. Thompson, whose wonderful escape I had made

him acquainted with, and inquire of him into the particulars of my

conduct, while he was my fellow-mate.

This request the surgeon complied with, more through curiosity to see a

person whose fate had been so extraordinary, than to confirm his good

opinion of me, which he assured me was already firmly established. He

therefore set out for the dwelling-place of my friend, with a letter of

introduction from me; and being received with all the civility and

kindness I expected, returned to the ship, not only satisfied with my

character beyond the power of doubt or insinuation, but also charmed

with the affability and conversation of Thompson, who loaded him and me

with presents of fresh stock, liquors, and fruit. As he would not

venture to come and see us on board, lest Cramplay should know and

detain him; when the time of our departure approached, I obtained leave

to go and bid him farewell. After we had vowed an everlasting

friendship, he pressed upon me a purse, with four doubloons, which I

refused as long as I could without giving umbrage; and, having

cordially embraced each other, I returned on board, where I found a

small box, with a letter directed for me, to the care of Mr. Tomlins.

Knowing the superscription to be of Thompson’s handwriting, I opened it

with some surprise, and learned that this generous friend, not content

with loading me with the presents already mentioned, had sent, for my

use and acceptance, half a dozen fine shirts, and as many linen

waistcoats and caps, with twelve pair of new thread stockings. Being

thus provided with money and all necessaries for the comfort of life, I

began to look upon myself as a gentleman of some consequence, and felt

my pride dilate a pace.

Next day we sailed for Port Royal, where we arrived safely with our

prizes; and, as there was nothing to do on board, I went ashore, and

having purchased a laced waistcoat, with some other clothes, at a sale,

made a swaggering figure for some days among the taverns, where I

ventured to play a little at hazard, and came off with fifty pistoles

in my pocket. Meanwhile our captain was promoted to a ship of twenty

guns, and the command of the Lizard given to a man turned of fourscore,

who had been lieutenant since the reign of King William, and,

notwithstanding his long service, would have probably died in that

station, had he not applied some prize-money he had lately received, to

make interest with his superiors. My friend Brayl was also made an

officer about the same time, after he had served in quality of a

midshipman and mate for five and twenty years. Soon after these

alterations, the admiral pitched upon our ship to carry home dispatches

for the ministry; and we set sail for England, having first scrubbed

her bottom, and taken in provision and water for the occasion.

CHAPTER XXXVII

We depart for Europe—a misunderstanding arises between the Captain and

the Surgeon, through the scandalous aspersions of Crampley—the Captain

dies—Crampley tyrannises over the surgeon, who falls a Victim for his

Cruelty—I am also ill-used—the Ship strikes—the behaviour of Crampley

and the Seamen on that occasion—-I get on shore, challenge the Captain

to single combat—am treacherously knocked down, wounded, and robbed

Now that I could return to my native country in a creditable way, I

felt excessive pleasure in finding myself out of sight of that fatal

island, which has been the grave of so many Europeans: and, as I was

accommodated with everything to make the passage agreeable, I resolved

to enjoy myself as much as the insolence of Crampley would permit. This

insidious slanderer had found means already to cause a misunderstanding

between the surgeon and captain, who, by his age and infirmities, was

rendered intolerably peevish, his disposition having also been soured

by a long course of disappointments. He had a particular aversion to

all young men, especially to surgeons, whom he considered unnecessary

animals on board of a ship; and, in consequence of these sentiments,

never consulted the doctor, notwithstanding his being seized with a

violent fit of the gout and gravel, but applied to a cask of Holland

gin, which was his sovereign prescription against all distempers:

whether he was at this time too sparing, or took an overdose of his

cordial, certain it is, he departed in the night, without any ceremony,

which indeed was a thing he always despised, and was found stiff next

morning, to the no small satisfaction of Crampley, who succeeded to the

command of the vessel. For that very reason, Mr. Tomlins and I had no

cause to rejoice at this event, fearing that the tyranny of our new

commander would now be as unlimited as his power. The first day of his

command justified our apprehensions: for, on pretence that the decks

were too much crowded, he ordered the surgeon’s hencoops, with all his

fowls, to be thrown overboard; and at the same time prohibited him and

me from walking on the quarter-deck.

Mr. Tomlins could not help complaining of these injuries, and in the

course of his expostulation dropped some hasty words, of which Crampley

taking hold, confined him to his cabin, where, in a few days, for want

of air he was attacked by a fever, which soon put an end to his life,

after he had made his will, by which he bequeathed all his estate,

personal and real, to his sister, and left to me his watch and

instruments as memorials of his friendship. I was penetrated with grief

on this melancholy occasion; the more because there was nobody on board

to whom I could communicate my sorrows, or of whom I could receive the

least consolation or advice. Crampley was so far from discovering the

least remorse for his barbarity, at the news of the surgeon’s death,

that he insulted his memory in the most abusive manner, and affirmed he

had poisoned himself out of pure fear, dreading to be brought to a

court-martial for mutiny; for which reason he would not suffer the

service of the dead to be read over his body before it was thrown

overboard.

Nothing but a speedy deliverance could have supported me under the

brutal sway of this bashaw, who, to render my life more irksome,

signified to my messmates a desire that I should be expelled from their

society. This was no sooner hinted, than they granted his request; and

I was fain to eat in a solitary manner by myself during the rest of the

passage, which, however, soon drew to a period.

We had been seven weeks at sea, when the gunner told the captain that,

by his reckoning, we must be in soundings, and desired he would order

the lead to be heaved. Crampley swore he did not know how to keep the

ship’s way, for we were not within a hundred leagues of soundings, and

therefore he would not give himself the trouble to cast the lead.

Accordingly we continued our course all that afternoon and night,

without shortening sail, although the gunner pretended to discover

Scilly light; and next morning protested in form against the captain’s

conduct, for which he was put in confinement, We discovered no land all

that day, and Crampley was still so infatuated as to neglect sounding;

but at three o’clock in the morning the ship struck, and remained fast

on a sand-bank. This accident alarmed the whole crew; the boat was

immediately hoisted out, but as we could not discern which way the

shore lay, we were obliged to wait for daylight. In the meantime, the

wind increased, and the waves beat against the sloop with such

violence, that we expected she would have gone to pieces. The gunner

was released and consulted: he advised the captain to cut away the

mast, in order to lighten her; this expedient was performed without

success: the sailors, seeing things in a desperate situation, according

to custom, broke up the chests belonging to the officers, dressed

themselves in their clothes, drank their liquors without ceremony, and

drunkenness, tumult, and confusion ensued.

In the midst of this uproar, I went below to secure my own effects, and

found the carpenter’s mate hewing down the purser’s cabin with his

hatchet, whistling all the while with great composure. When I asked his

intention in so doing, he replied, very calmly, “I only want to taste

the purser’s rum, that’s all, master.” At that instant the purser

coming down, and seeing his effects going to wreck, complained bitterly

of the injustice done to him, and asked the fellow what occasion he had

for liquor when, in all likelihood, he would be in eternity in a few

minutes. “All’s one for that,” said plunderer, “let us live while we

can.” “Miserable wretch that thou art!” cried the purser, “what must be

thy lot in another world, if thou diest in the commission of robbery?”

“Why, hell, I suppose,” replied the other, with great deliberation,

while the purser fell on his knees, and begged of Heaven that we might

not all perish for the sake of Jonas.

During this dialogue I clothed myself in my bed apparel, girded on my

hanger, stuck my pistols, loaded, in my belt, disposed of all my

valuable moveables about my person, and came upon deck with a

resolution of taking the first opportunity to get on shore, which, when

the day broke, appeared at the distance of three miles ahead. Crampley,

finding his efforts to get the ship off ineffectual, determined to

consult his own safety, by going into the boat, which he had no sooner

done, than the ship’s company followed so fast, that she would have

sunk alongside, had not some one wiser than the rest cut the rope and

put off. But before this happened, I had made several attempts to get

in, and was always balked by the captain, who was so eager in excluding

me, that he did not mind the endeavours of any other body. Enraged at

this inhuman partiality, and seeing the rope cut, I pulled one of my

pistols from my belt, and cocking it, swore I would shoot any man who

would presume to obstruct my entrance. So saying, I leaped with my full

exertion, and got on board of the boat with the loss of the skin of my

shins. I chanced in my descent to overturn Crampley, who no sooner got

up than he struck at me several times with a cutlass, and ordered the

men to throw me overboard; but they were too anxious about their own

safety to mind what he said. Though the boat was very deeply loaded,

and the sea terribly high, we made shift to get upon dry land in less

than an hour after we parted from the sloop. As soon as I set my foot

on terra firma, my indignation, which had boiled so long within me,

broke out against Crampley, whom I immediately challenged to single

combat, presenting my pistols, that he might take his choice: he took

one without hesitation, and, before I could cock the other, fired in my

face, throwing the pistol after the shot. I felt myself stunned, and

imagining the bullet had entered my brain, discharged mine as quick as

possible, that I might not die unrevenged: then flying upon my

antagonist, knocked out several of his fore-teeth with the butt-end of

the piece, and would certainly have made an end of him with that

instrument, had he not disengaged himself, and seized his cutlass,

which he had given to his servant when he received the pistol. Seeing

him armed in this manner, I drew my hanger, and, having flung my pistol

at his head, closed with him in a transport of fury, and thrust my

weapon into his mouth, which it enlarged on one side to his ear.

Whether the smart of this wound disconcerted him, or the unevenness of

the ground made him reel, I know not, but he staggered some paces back:

I followed close, and with one stroke cut the tendons of the back of

his hand, Upon which his cutlass dropped, and he remained defenceless.

I know not with what cruelty my rage might have inspired me, if I had

not at that instant been felled to the ground by a blow on the back

part of my head, which deprived me of all sensation. In this deplorable

situation, exposed to the rage of an incensed barbarian, and the rapine

of an inhuman crew, I remained for some time; and whether any disputes

arose among them during the state of my annihilation, I cannot pretend

to determine; but in one particular they seemed to have been unanimous,

and acted with equal dexterity and dispatch; for when I recovered the

use of my understanding, I found myself alone in a desolate place,

stripped of my clothes, money, watch, buckles, and everything but my

shoes, stockings, breeches and shirt. What a discovery must this have

been to me, who, but an hour before, was worth sixty guineas in cash! I

cursed the hour of my birth, the parents that gave me being, the sea

that did not swallow me up, the poniard of the enemy, which could not

find the way to my heart, the villainy of those who had left me in that

miserable condition; and in the ecstacy of despair resolved to be still

where I was, and perish.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

I get up and crawl into a barn, where I am in danger of perishing,

through the fear of the country people—their inhumanity—I am succoured

by a reputed witch—her story—her advice—she recommends me as a valet to

a single lady, whose character she explains

But as I lay ruminating, my passion insensibly abated; I considered my

situation in quite another light, from that in which it appeared to me

at first, and the result of my deliberation was to rise if I could, and

crawl to the next inhabited place for assistance. With some difficulty

I got upon my legs, and having examined my body, found I had received

no other injury than two large contused wounds, one on the fore and

another on the hinder part of my head, which seemed to be occasioned by

the same weapon, namely, the butt-end of a pistol. I looked towards the

sea, but could discern no remains of the ship; so that I concluded she

was gone to pieces, and that those who remained in her had perished:

but, as I afterwards learned, the gunner, who had more sagacity than

Crampley, observing that it was flood when he left her, and that she

would probably float at high water, made no noise about getting on

shore, but continued on deck, in hopes of bringing her safe into some

harbour, after her commander should have deserted her, for which piece

of service he expected, no doubt, to be handsomely rewarded. This

scheme he accordingly executed, and was promised great things by the

Admiralty for saving his Majesty’s ship: but I never heard he reaped

the fruits of his expectation. As for my own part, I directed my course

towards a small cottage I perceived, and in the road picked up a

seaman’s old jacket, which I suppose the thief who dressed himself in

my clothes had thrown away: this was a very comfortable acquisition to

me, who was almost stiff with cold: I therefore put it on; and, as my

natural heat revived, my wounds, which had left off bleeding, burst out

afresh; so that, finding myself excessively exhausted, I was about to

lie down in the fields, when I discovered a barn on my left hand,

within a few yards of me; thither I made shift to stagger, and finding

the door open, went in, but saw nobody; however, I threw myself upon a

truss of straw, hoping to be soon relieved by some person or other. I

had not lain here many minutes, when I saw a countryman come in with a

pitchfork in his hand, which he was upon the point of thrusting into

the straw that concealed me, and in all probability would have done my

business, had I not uttered a dreadful groan, after having essayed in

vain to speak. This melancholy note alarmed the clown, who started

back, and discovering a body all besmeared with blood, stood trembling,

with the pitchfork extended before him, his hair bristling up, his eyes

staring, his nostrils dilated, and his mouth wide open. At another time

I should have been much diverted by this figure, which preserved the

same attitude very near ten minutes, during which time I made many

unsuccessful efforts to implore his compassion and assistance; but my

tongue failed me, and my language was only a repetition of groans. At

length an old man arrived, who, seeing the other in such a posture,

cried, “Mercy upon en! the leaad’s bewitched! why, Dick, beest thou

besayd thyself!” Dick, without moving his eyes from the object that

terrified him, replied, “O vather! vather! here be either the devil or

a dead mon: I doant know which o’en, but a groans woundily.” The

father, whose eyesight was none of the best, pulled out his spectacles,

and, having applied them to his nose reconnoitered me over his son’s

shoulder: but no sooner did he behold me, than he was seized with a fit

of shaking, even more violent than Dick’s, and, with a broken accent,

addressed me thus: “In the name of the Vather, Zun, and Holy Ghost, I

charge you, an you been Satan, to be gone to the Red Zen; but an you be

a moordered mon, speak, that you may have a Christom burial.”

As I was not in a condition to satisfy him in this particular, he

repeated his conjuration to no purpose, and they continued a good while

in the agonies of fear. At length the father proposed that the son

should draw nearer, and take a more distinct view of the apparition;

but Dick was of opinion that his father should advance first, he being

an old man past his labour and, if he received any mischief, the loss

would be the smaller; whereas he himself might escape, and be useful,

in his generation. This prudential reason had no effect upon the

senior, who still kept Dick between me and him. In the meantime I

endeavoured to raise one hand as a signal of distress, but had only

strength sufficient to produce a rustling among the straw, which

discomposed the young peasant so much, that he sprang out at the door,

and overthrew his father in his flight. The old gentleman would not

spend time in getting up, but crawled backwards like a crab, with great

speed, till he had got over the threshold, mumbling exorcisms all the

way. I was exceedingly mortified to find myself in danger of perishing

through the ignorance and cowardice of these clowns; and felt my

spirits decay apace, when an old woman entered the barn, followed by

the two fugitives and with great intrepidity advanced to the place

where I lay, saying, “If it be the devil I fearen not, and for a dead

mon a can do us no harm.” When she saw my condition, she cried, “Here

be no devil, but in your en fool’s head. Here be a poor miserable

wretch bleeding to death, and if a dies, we must be at the charge of

burying him; therefore, Dick, go vetch the old wheelbarrow and put en

in, and carry en to goodman Hodge’s backdoor; he is more able than we

to pay out money upon poor vagrants.” Her advice was taken, and

immediately put in execution; I was rolled to the other farmer’s door,

where I was tumbled out like a heap of dung; and should certainly have

fallen a prey to the hogs, if my groans had not disturbed the family,

and brought some of them out to view my situation. But Hodge resembled

the Jew more than the good Samaritan, and ordered me to be carried to

the house of the parson, whose business it was to practise as well as

to preach charity; observing that it was sufficient for him to pay his

quota towards the maintenance of the poor belonging to his own parish.

When I was set down at the vicar’s gate, he fell into a mighty passion,

and threatened to excommunicate him who sent, as well as those who

brought me, unless they would move me immediately to another place.

About this time I fainted with the fatigue I had undergone, and

afterwards understood that I was bandied from door to door through a

whole village, nobody having humanity enough to administer the least

relief to me, Until an old woman, who was suspected of witchcraft by

the neighbourhood, hearing of my distress, received me into her house,

and, having dressed my wounds, brought me to myself with cordials of

her own preparing. I was treated with great care and tenderness by this

grave matron, who, after I had recovered some strength, desired to know

the particulars of my last disaster. This piece of satisfaction I could

not refuse to one who had saved my life, therefore related all my

adventures without exaggeration or reserve. She seemed surprised at the

vicissitudes I had undergone, and drew a happy presage of my future

life from my past suffering, then launched out into the praise of

adversity, with so much ardour and good sense, that I concluded she was

a person who had seen better days, and conceived a longing desire to

hear her story. She perceived my drift by some words I dropped, and

smiling told me, there was nothing either entertaining or extraordinary

in the course of her fortune; but, however, she would communicate it to

me, in consideration of the confidence I had reposed in her. “It is of

little consequence,” said she, “to tell the names of my parents, who

are dead many years ago; let it suffice to assure you, they were

wealthy, and had no other child than me; so that I was looked upon as

heiress to a considerable estate, and teased with addresses on that

account. Among the number of my admirers, there was a young gentleman

of no fortune, whose sole dependence was on his promotion in the army,

in which, at that time, he bore a lieutenant’s commission. I conceived

an affection for this amiable officer, which, in a short time,

increased to a violent passion, and without entering into minute

circumstances, married him privately. We had not enjoyed one another

long in stolen interviews, when he was ordered with his regiment to

Flanders; but, before he set out, it was agreed between us, that we

should declare our marriage to my father by letter, and implore his

pardon for the step we had taken without his approbation. This

discovery was made while I was abroad visiting, and just as I was about

to return home, I received a letter from my father, importing that,

since I had acted so undutifully and meanly as to marry a beggar,

without his privity or consent, to the disgrace of his family as well

as the disappointment of his hopes, he renounced me to the miserable

fate I had entailed upon myself, and charged me never to set foot

within his doors again. This rigid sentence was confirmed by my mother,

who, in a postscript, gave me to understand that her sentiments were

exactly conformable to those of my father, and that I might save myself

the trouble of making any applications, for her resolutions were

unalterable. Thunderstruck with my evil fortune I called a coach, and

drove to my husband’s lodgings, where I found him waiting the event of

his letter. Though he could easily divine by my looks the issue of his

declaration, he read with great steadiness the epistle I had received;

and with a smile full of tenderness, which I shall never forget,

embraced me, saying, “I believe the good lady your mother might have

spared herself the trouble of the last part of her postscript. Well, my

dear Betty, you must lay aside all thoughts of a coach, till I can

procure the command of a regiment.” This unconcerned behaviour, while

it enabled me to support my reverse of fortune, at the same time

endeared him to me the more, by convincing me of his disinterested

views in espousing me. I was next day boarded in company with the wife

of another officer, who had long been the friend and confidant of my

husband, at a village not far from London, where they parted with us in

the most melting manner, went to Flanders, and were killed in sight of

one another at the battle of the Wood.

“Why should I tire you with a description of our unutterable sorrow at

the fatal news of this event, the remembrance of which now fills my

aged eyes with tears! When our grief subsided a little, and reflection

came to our aid, we found ourselves deserted by the whole world, and in

danger of perishing by want; whereupon we made application for the

pension, and were put upon the list. Then, vowing eternal friendship,

sold our jewels and superfluous clothes, retired to this place (which

is in the county of Sussex) bought this little house, where we lived

many years in a solitary manner, indulging our mutual sorrow, till it

pleased Heaven to call away my companion two years ago; since which

time I have lingered out an unhappy being, in hopes of a speedy

dissolution, when I promise myself the eternal reward of all my cares.

In the meantime,” continued she, “I must inform you of the character I

bear among my neighbours. My conversation being different from that of

the inhabitants of the village, my recluse way of life, my skill in

curing distempers, which I acquired from books since I settled here,

and lastly, my age having made the common people look upon me as

something preternatural, and I am actually, at this hour, believed to

be a witch. The parson of the parish, whose acquaintance I have not

been at much pains to cultivate, taking umbrage at my supposed

disrespect, has contributed not a little towards the confirmation of

this opinion, by dropping certain hints to my prejudice among the

vulgar, who are also very much scandalised at my entertaining this poor

tabby cat with the collar about her neck, which was a favourite of my

deceased companion.”

The whole behaviour of this venerable person was so primitive,

innocent, sensible, and humane, that I contracted a filial respect for

her, and begged her advice with regard to my future conduct, as soon as

I was in a condition to act for myself. She dissuaded me from a design

I had formed of travelling to London, in hopes of retrieving my clothes

and pay, by returning to my ship, which by this time I read in the

newspaper was safely arrived in the River Thames: “because,” said she,

“you run the hazard of being treated not only as a deserter in quitting

the sloop, but also as a mutineer, in assaulting your commanding

officer, to the malice of whose revenge you will moreover be exposed.”

She then promised to recommend me, as servant to a single lady of her

acquaintance, who lived in the neighbourhood with her nephew, who was a

young foxhunter of great fortune, where I might be very happy, provided

I could bear with the disposition and manners of my mistress, which

were somewhat whimsical and particular. But, above all things, she

counselled me to conceal my story, the knowledge of which would

effectually poison my entertainment; for it was a maxim, among most

people of condition, that no gentleman ought to be admitted into a

family as a domestic, lest he become lazy, and insolent. I was fain to

embrace this humble proposal, because my affairs were desperate; and in

a few days was hired by this lady, to serve in quality of her footman,

having been represented by my hostess as a young man who was bred up to

the sea by his relations against his will, and had suffered shipwreck,

which had increased his disgust to that way of life so much, that he

rather chose to go to service on shore, than enter himself on board of

any other ship. Before I took possession of my new place, she gave me a

sketch of my mistress’s character, that I might know better how to

regulate my conduct.

“Your lady,” said she, “is a maiden of forty years, not so remarkable

for her beauty as her learning and taste, which is famous all over the

country. Indeed, she is a perfect female virtuoso, and so eager after

the pursuit of knowledge that she neglects her person even to a degree

of sluttishness; this negligence, together with her contempt of the

male part of the creation, gives her nephew no great concern, as by

these means he will probably keep her fortune, which is considerable in

the family. He therefore permits her to live in her own way, which is

something extraordinary, and gratifies her in all her whimsical

desires. Her apartment is at some distance from the other inhabited

parts of the house; and consists of a dining-room, bedchamber, and

study; she keeps a cook maid, a waiting-woman, and footman, of her own,

and seldom eats or converses with any of the family but her niece, who

is a very lovely creature, and humours her aunt often to the prejudice

of her own health by sitting up with her whole nights together; for

your mistress is too much of a philosopher to be swayed by the custom

of the world, and never sleeps nor eats like other people. Among other

odd notions, she professes the principles of Rosicrucius, and believes

the earth, air, and sea, are inhabited by invisible beings, with whom

it is possible for the human species to entertain correspondence and

intimacy, on the easy condition of living chaste. As she hopes one day

to be admitted into an acquaintance of this kind, she no sooner heard

of me and my cat, than she paid me a visit, with a view, as she has

since owned, to be introduced to my familiar; and was greatly mortified

to find herself disappointed in her expectation. Being by this

visionary turn of mind abstracted as it were from the world, she cannot

advert to the common occurrences of life; and therefore is frequently

so absent as to commit very strange mistakes and extravagancies, which

you will do well to rectify and repair, as your prudence shall

suggest.”

CHAPTER XXXIX

My Reception by that Lady—I become enamoured of Narcissa—recount the

particulars of my last misfortune—acquire the good opinion of my

Mistress—an Account of the young Squire—I am made acquainted with more

particulars of Narcissa’s Situation—conceive a mortal hatred against

Sir Timothy—examine my Lady’s library and performances—her extravagant

behaviour

Fraught with these useful instructions, I repaired to the place of her

habitation, and was introduced by the waiting-woman to the presence of

my lady, who had not before seen me. She sat in her study, with one

foot on the ground, and the other upon a high stool at some distance

from her seat; her sandy locks hung down, in a disorder I cannot call

beautiful, from her head, which was deprived of its coif, for the

benefit of scratching with one hand, while she held the stump of a pen

in the other. Her forehead was high and wrinkled; her eyes were large,

gray, and prominent; her nose was long, and aquiline: her mouth of vast

capacity, her visage meagre and freckled, and her chin peaked like a

shoemaker’s paring knife; her upper lip contained a large quantity of

plain Spanish, which, by continual falling, had embroidered her neck,

that was not naturally very white, and the breast of her gown, that

flowed loose about her with a negligence that was truly poetic,

discovering linen that was very fine, and, to all appearance, never

washed but in Castalian streams. Around her lay heaps of books, globes,

quadrants, telescopes, and other learned apparatus; her snuff-box stood

at her right hand: at her left hand lay her handkerchief, sufficiently

used, and a convenience to spit in appeared on one side of her chair.

She being in a reverie when we entered, the maid did not think proper

to disturb her; so that we waited some minutes unobserved, during which

time she bit the quill several times, altered her position, made many

wry faces, and, at length, with an air of triumph, repeated aloud:

“Nor dare th’immortal gods my rage oppose!”

Having committed her success to paper, she turned towards the door, and

perceiving us, cried, “What’s the matter?” “Here’s the young man,”

replied my conductress, “whom Mrs. Sagely recommended as a footman to

your ladyship.” On this information she stared in my face for a

considerable time, and then asked my name, which I thought proper to

conceal under that of John Brown. After having surveyed me with a

curious eye, she broke out into, “O! ay, thou wast shipwrecked, I

remember. Whether didst thou come on shore on the back of a whale or a

dolphin?” To this I answered, I had swam ashore without any assistance.

Then she demanded to know if I had ever been at the Hellespont, and

swam from Sestos to Abydos. I replied in the negative; upon which she

bade the maid order a suit of new livery for me, and instruct me in the

articles of my duty: so she spit in her snuff-box, and wiped her nose

with her cap, which lay on the table, instead of a handkerchief.

We returned to the kitchen, where I was regaled by the maids, who

seemed to vie with each other in expressing their regard for me; and

from them I understood, that my business consisted in cleaning knives

and forks, laying the cloth, waiting at table, carrying messages, and

attending my lady when she went abroad. There was a very good suit of

livery in the house, which had belonged to my predecessor deceased, and

it fitted me exactly; so that there was no occasion for employing a

tailor on my account. I had not been long equipped in this manner, when

my lady’s bell rung; upon which, I ran up stairs, and found her

stalking about the room in her shift and under petticoat only; I would

immediately have retired as became me, but she bade me come in, and air

a clean shift for her; which operation I having performed with some

backwardness, she put it on before me without any ceremony, and I

verily believe was ignorant of my sex all that time, as being quite

absorbed in contemplation. About four o’clock in the afternoon I was

ordered to lay the cloth, and place two covers, which I understood were

for my mistress and her niece, whom I had not as yet seen. Though I was

not very dexterous at this work, I performed it pretty well for a

beginner, and, when dinner was upon the table, saw my mistress

approach, accompanied by the young lady, whose name for the present

shall be Narcissa. So much sweetness appeared in the countenance and

carriage of this amiable apparition, that my heart was captivated at

first sight, and while dinner lasted, I gazed upon her without

intermission. Her age seemed to be seventeen, her stature tall, her

shape unexceptionable, her hair, that fell down upon her ivory neck in

ringlets, black as jet; her arched eyebrows of the same colour; her

eyes piercing, yet tender; her lips of the consistence and hue of

cherries; her complexion clear, delicate and healthy; her aspect noble,

ingenuous, and humane; and the whole person so ravishingly delightful,

that it was impossible for any creature endued with sensibility, to see

without admiring, and admire without loving her to excess. I began to

curse the servile station that placed me so far beneath the regard of

this idol of my adoration! and yet I blessed my fate, that enabled me

to enjoy daily the sight of so much perfection! When she spoke I

listened with pleasure; but when she spoke to me, my soul was thrilled

with an extacy of tumultuous joy. I was even so happy as to be the

subject of their conversation; for Narcissa, having observed me, said

to her aunt, “I see your new footman is come.” Then addressing herself

to me, asked, with ineffable complacency, if I was the person who had

been so cruelly used by robbers? When I had satisfied her in this; she

expressed a desire of knowing the other particulars of my fortune, both

before and since my being shipwrecked: hereupon (as Mrs. Sagely had

counselled me) I told her that I had been bound apprentice to the

master of a ship, contrary to my inclination, which ship had foundered

at sea; that I and four more, who chanced to be on deck when she went

down, made shift to swim to the shore, when my companions, after having

overpowered me, stripped me to the shirt, and left me, as they

imagined, dead of the wounds I received in my own defence. Then I

related the circumstances of being found in a barn, with the inhuman

treatment I met with from the country people and parson; the

description of which, I perceived, drew tears from the charming

creature’s eyes. When I had finished my recital, my mistress, said, “Ma

foi! le garçon est bien fait!” To which opinion Narcissa assented, with

a compliment to my understanding, in the same language, that flattered

my vanity extremely.

The conversation, among other subjects, turned upon the young squire,

whom my lady inquired after under the title of the Savage; and was

informed by her niece that he was still in bed, repairing the fatigue

of last night’s debauch, and recruiting strength and spirits to undergo

a fox chase to-morrow morning, in company with Sir Timothy Thicket,

Squire Bumper, and a great many other gentlemen of the same stamp, whom

he had invited on that occasion! so that by daybreak the whole house

would be in an uproar. This was a very disagreeable piece of news to

the virtuoso, who protested she would stuff her ears with cotton when

she went to bed, and take a dose of opium to make her sleep the more

sound, that she might not be disturbed and distracted by the clamour of

the brutes.

When their dinner was over, I and my fellow servants sat down to ours

in the kitchen, where I understood that Sir Timothy Thicket was a

wealthy knight in the neighbourhood, between whom and Narcissa a match

had been projected by her brother, who promised at the same time to

espouse Sir Timothy’s sister; by which means, as their fortunes were

pretty equal, the young ladies would be provided for, and their

brothers be never the poorer; but that the ladies did not concur in the

scheme, each of them entertaining a hearty contempt for the person

allotted to her for a husband by this agreement. This information begat

in me a mortal aversion to Sir Timothy, whom I looked upon as my rival,

and cursed in my heart for his presumption.

Next morning, by daybreak, being awakened by the noise of the hunters

and hounds, I rose to view the cavalcade, and had a sight of my

competitor, whose accomplishments (the estate excluded) did not seem

brilliant enough to give me much uneasiness with respect to Narcissa,

who, I flattered myself, was not to be won by such qualifications as he

was master of, either as to person or mind. My mistress,

notwithstanding her precaution, was so much disturbed by her nephew’s

company, that she did not rise till five o’clock in the afternoon; so

that I had an opportunity of examining her study at leisure, to which

examination I was strongly prompted by my curiosity. Here I found a

thousand scraps of her own poetry, consisting of three, four, ten,

twelve, and twenty lines, on an infinity of subjects, which, as whim

inspired, she had begun, without constancy or capacity to bring to any

degree of composition: but, what was very extraordinary in a female

poet, there was not the least mention made of love in any of her

performances. I counted fragments of five tragedies, the titles of

which were “The Stern Philosopher,” “The Double,” “The Sacrilegious

Traitor,” “The Fall of Lucifer,” and “The Last Day.” From whence I

gathered, that her disposition was gloomy, and her imagination

delighted with objects of horror. Her library was composed of the best

English historians, poets, and philosophers; of all the French critics

and poets, and of a few books in Italian, chiefly poetry, at the head

of which were Tasso and Ariosto, pretty much used. Besides these,

translations of the classics into French, but not one book in Greek or

Latin; a circumstance that discovered her ignorance in these languages.

After having taken a full view of this collection, I retired, and at

the usual time was preparing to lay the cloth, when I was told by the

maid that her mistress was still in bed, and had been so affected with

the notes of the hounds in the morning, that she actually believed

herself a hare beset by the hunters, and begged a few greens to munch

for breakfast. When I expressed my surprise in this unaccountable

imagination she gave me to understand that her lady was very much

subject to whims of this nature; sometimes fancying herself an animal,

sometimes a piece of furniture, during which conceited transformations

it was very dangerous to come near her, especially when she represented

a beast; for that lately, in the character of a cat, she had flown at

her, and scratched her face in a terrible manner: that some months ago,

she prophesied the general conflagration was at hand, and nothing would

be able to quench it but her water, which therefore she kept so long,

that her life was in danger, and she must needs have died of the

retention, had they not found an expedient to make her evacuate, by

kindling a bonfire under her chamber window and persuading her that the

house was in flames: upon which, with great deliberation, she bade them

bring all the tubs and vessels they could find to be filled for the

preservation of the house, into one of which she immediately discharged

the cause of her distemper. I was also informed that nothing

contributed so much to the recovery of her reason as music, which was

always administered on those occasions by Narcissa, who played

perfectly well on the harpsichord, and to whom she (the maid) was just

then going to intimate her aunt’s disorder.

She was no sooner gone than I was summoned by the bell to my lady’s

chamber, where I found her sitting squat on her hands on the floor, in

the manner of puss when she listens to the outcries of her pursuers.

When I appeared, she started up with an alarmed look, and sprang to the

other side of the room to avoid me, whom, without doubt, she mistook

for a beagle thirsting after her life. Perceiving her extreme

confusion, I retired, and on the staircase met the adorable Narcissa

coming up, to whom I imparted the situation of my mistress; she said

not a word, but smiling with unspeakable grace, went into her aunt’s

apartment, and in a little time my ears were ravished with the efforts

of her skill. She accompanied the instrument with a voice so sweet and

melodious, that I did not wonder at the surprising change it produced

on the spirits of my mistress which composed to peace and sober

reflection.

About seven o’clock, the hunters arrived with the skins of two foxes

and one badger, carried before them as trophies of their success; and

when they were about to sit down to dinner (or supper) Sir Timothy

Thicket desired that Narcissa would honour the table with her presence;

but this request, notwithstanding her brother’s threats and entreaties,

she refused, on pretence of attending her aunt, who was indisposed; so

I enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing my rival mortified: but this

disappointment made no great impression on him, who consoled himself

with the bottle, of which the whole company became so enamoured that,

after a most horrid uproar of laughing, singing, swearing, and

fighting, they were all carried to bed in a state of utter oblivion. My

duty being altogether detached from the squire and his family, I led a

pretty easy and comfortable life, drinking daily intoxicating draughts

of love from the charms of Narcissa, which brightened on my

contemplation every day more and more. Inglorious as my station was, I

became blind to my own unworthiness, and even conceived hopes of one

day enjoying this amiable creature, whose, affability greatly

encouraged these presumptuous thoughts.

CHAPTER XL

My mistress is surprised at my learning—communicates her performances

to me—I impart some of mine to her—am mortified at her faint

praise—Narcissa approves of my conduct—I gain an involuntary conquest

over the cookwench and dairymaid—their mutual resentment and

insinuations—the jealousy of their lovers

During this season of love and tranquillity, my muse, which had lain

dormant so long, awoke, and produced several small performances on the

subject of my flame. But as it concerned me nearly to remain

undiscovered in my character and sentiments, I was under a necessity of

mortifying my desire of praise, by confining my works to my own perusal

and applause. In the meantime I strove to insinuate myself into the

good opinion of both ladies; and succeeded so well, by my diligence and

dutiful behaviour, that in a little time I was at least a favourite

servant; and frequently enjoyed the satisfaction of hearing myself

mentioned in French and Italian, with some degree of warmth and

surprise by the dear object of all my wishes, as a person who had so

much of the gentleman in my appearance and discourse, that she could

not for her soul treat me like a common lacquey. My prudence and

modesty were not long proof against these bewitching compliments. One

day, while I waited at dinner, the conversation turned upon a knotty

passage of Tasso’s Gierusalem, which, it seems, had puzzled them both:

after a great many unsatisfactory conjectures, my mistress, taking the

book out of her pocket, turned up the place in question, and read the

sentence over and over without success; at length, despairing of

finding the author’s meaning, she turned to me, saying, “Come hither,

Bruno; let us see what fortune will do for us: I will interpret to thee

what goes before, and what follows this obscure paragraph, the

particular words of which I will also explain, that thou mayst, by

comparing one with another, guess the sense of that which perplexes

us.” I was too vain to let slip this opportunity of displaying my

talents; therefore, without hesitation, read and explained the whole of

that which had disconcerted them, to the utter astonishment of both.

Narcissa’s face and lovely neck were overspread with blushes, from

which I drew a favourable opinion, while her aunt, after having stared

at me a good while with a look of amazement, exclaimed, “In the name of

heaven who art thou?” I told her I had picked up a smattering of

Italian, during a voyage up the Straits. At this explanation she shook

her head, and observed that no smatterer could read as I had done. She

then desired to know if I understood French. To which question I

answered in the affirmative. She asked if I was acquainted with the

Latin and Greek? I replied, “A little.” “Oho!” continued she, “and with

philosophy and mathematics, I suppose?” I owned I knew something of

each. Then she repeated her stare and interrogation. I began to repent

of my vanity, and in order to repair the fault I committed, said, it

was not to be wondered at if I had a tolerable education, for learning

was so cheap in my country, that every peasant was a scholar; but, I

hoped her Ladyship would think my understanding no exception to my

character. “No, no, God forbid.” But during the rest of the time they

sat at table, they behaved with remarkable reserve.

This alteration gave me great uneasiness; and I passed the night

without sleep, in melancholy reflections on the vanity of young men,

which prompts them to commit so many foolish actions, contrary to their

own sober judgment. Next day, however, instead of profiting by this

self-condemnation, I yielded still more to the dictates of the

principle I had endeavoured to chastise, and if fortune had not

befriended me more than prudence could expect, I should have been

treated with the contempt it deserved. After breakfast my lady, who was

a true author, bade me follow her into the study, where she expressed

herself thus: “Since you are so learned, you cannot be void of taste;

therefore I am to desire your opinion of a small performance in poetry,

which I lately composed. You must know that I have planned a tragedy,

the subject of which shall be, the murder of a prince before the altar,

where he is busy at his devotions. After the deed is perpetrated, the

regicide will harangue the people with the bloody dagger in his hand;

and I have already composed a speech, which, I think, will suit the

character extremely. Here it is.” Then, taking up a scrap of paper, she

read, with violent emphasis and gesture, as follows:—

“Thus have I sent the simple King to hell,

Without or coffin, shroud, or passing bell:

To me what are divine and human laws?

I court no sanction but my own applause!

Rapes, robberies, treasons, yield my soul delight,

And human carnage gratifies my sight:

I drag the parent by the hoary hair,

And toss the sprawling infant on the spear,

While the fond mother’s cries regale my ear.

I fight, I vanquish, murder friends and foes;

Nor dare the immortal gods my rage oppose.”

Though I did great violence to my understanding in praising this

unnatural rhapsody, I nevertheless extolled it as a production that of

itself deserved immortal fame; and besought her ladyship to bless the

world with the fruits of those uncommon talents Heaven had bestowed

upon her. She smiled with a look of self-complacency, and encouraged by

the incense I had offered, communicated all her poetical works which I

applauded, one by one, with as little candour as I had shown at first.

Satiated with my flattery, which I hope my situation justified, she

could not in conscience refuse me an opportunity of shining in my turn:

and, therefore, after a compliment to my nice discernment and taste,

observed, that doubtless I must have produced something in that way

myself, which she desired to see. This was temptation I could by no

means resist. I owned that while I was at college I wrote some detached

pieces, at the desire of a friend who was in love; and at her request

repeated the following verses, which indeed my love for Narcissa had

inspired:—

On Celia,

Playing on the harpsichord and singing.

When Sappho struck the quivering wire,

The throbbing breast was all on fire:

And when she raised the vocal lay,

The captive soul was charm’d away.

But had the nymph possessed with these

Thy softer, chaster, power to please;

Thy beauteous air of sprightly youth,

Thy native smiles of artless truth;

The worm of grief had never preyed

On the forsaken love-sick maid:

Nor had she mourn’d a hapless flame,

Nor dash’d on rocks her tender frame.

My mistress paid me a cold compliment on the versification, which, she

said, was elegant enough, but, the subject beneath the pen of a true

poet. I was extremely nettled at her indifference, and looked at

Narcissa, who by this time had joined us, for her approbation; but she

declined giving her opinion, protesting she was no judge of these

matters; so that I was forced to retire very much balked in my

expectation, which was generally a little too sanguine. In the

afternoon, however, the waiting-maid assured me that Narcissa had

expressed her approbation of my performance with great warmth, and

desired her to procure a copy of it as for herself, that she (Narcissa)

might have an opportunity to peruse it at pleasure. I was elated to an

extravagant pitch at this intelligence, and immediately transcribed a

fair copy of my Ode, which was carried to the dear charmer, together

with another on the same subject, as follows:—

Thy fatal shaft unerring move;

I bow before thine altar, Love!

I feel thou soft resistless flame

Glide swift through all my vital frame!

For while I gaze my bosom glows,

My blood in tides impetuous flows;

Hope, fear, and joy alternate roll,

And floods of transports ’whelm my soul!

My faltering tongue attempts in vain

In soothing murmurs to complain;

My tongue some secret magic ties,

My murmurs sink in broken sighs.

Condemn’d to nurse eternal care,

And ever drop the silent tear,

Unheard I mourn, unknown I sigh,

Unfriended live, unpitied die!

Whether or not Narcissa discovered my passion, I could not learn from

her behaviour, which, though always benevolent to me was henceforth

more reserved and less cheerful. While my thoughts aspired to a sphere

so far above me, I had unwittingly made a conquest of the cookwench and

dairymaid, who became so jealous of each other that, if their

sentiments had been refined by education, it is probable one or other

of them would have had recourse to poison or steel to be avenged of her

rival; but, as their minds were happily adapted to their humble

station, their mutual enmity was confined to scolding and fistcuffs, in

which exercise they were both well skilled. My good fortune did not

long remain a secret; for it was disclosed by the frequent broils of

these heroines, who kept no decorum in their encounters. The coachman

and gardener, who paid their devoirs to my admirers, each to his

respective choice, alarmed at my success, laid their heads together, in

order to concert a plan of revenge; and the former, having been

educated at the academy at Tottenham Court, undertook to challenge me

to single combat. He accordingly, with many opprobrious invectives,

bade me defiance, and offered to box me for twenty guineas. I told him

that, although I believed myself a match for him even at that work I

would not descend so far below the dignity of a gentleman as to fight

like a porter; but if he had anything to say to me, I was his man at

blunderbuss, musket, pistol, sword, hatchet, spit, cleaver, fork, or

needle; nay, I swore, that should he give his tongue any more saucy

liberties at my expense, I would crop his ears without any ceremony.

This rhodomontade, delivered with a stern countenance and resolute

tone, had the desired effect upon my antagonist, who, with some

confusion, sneaked off, and gave his friend an account of his

reception.

The story, taking air among the servants, procured for me the title of

Gentleman John, with which I was sometimes honoured, even by my

mistress and Narcissa, who had been informed of the whole affair by the

chambermaid. In the meantime, the rival queens expressed their passion

by all the ways in their power: the cook entertained me with choice

bits, the dairymaid with strokings: the first would often encourage me

to declare myself, by complimenting me upon my courage and learning,

and observing, that if she had a husband like me, to maintain order and

keep accounts, she could make a great deal of money, by setting up an

eating-house in London for gentlemen’s servants on board wages. The

other courted my affection by showing her own importance, and telling

me that many a substantial farmer in the neighbourhood would be glad to

marry her, but she was resolved to please her eye, if she should plague

her heart. Then she would launch out into the praise of my proper

person, and say, she was sure I would make a good husband, for I was

very good-natured. I began to be uneasy at the importunities of these

inamoratas, whom, at another time perhaps, I might have pleased without

the disagreeable sauce of matrimony, but, at present, my whole soul was

engrossed by Narcissa; and I could not bear the thoughts of doing

anything derogatory to the passion I entertained for her.

CHAPTER XLI

Narcissa being in danger from the brutality of Sir Timothy, is rescued

by me, who revenge myself on my rival—I declare my passion, and retreat

to the seaside—am surrounded by smugglers, and carried to Boulogne—find

my Uncle Lieutenant Bowling in great distress, and relieve him—our

conversation

At certain intervals my ambition would revive; I would despise myself

for my tame resignation to my sordid fate, and revolve a hundred

schemes for assuming the character of a gentleman, to which I thought

myself entitled by birth and education. In these fruitless suggestions

time stole away unperceived, and I had already remained eight months in

the station of a footman, when an accident happened that put an end to

my servitude, and, for the present, banished all hopes of succeeding in

my love.

Narcissa went one day to visit Miss Thicket, who lived with her brother

within less than a mile of our house, and was persuaded to walk home in

the cool of the evening, accompanied by Sir Timothy, who, having a good

deal of the brute in him, was instigated to use some unbecoming

familiarities with her, encouraged by the solitariness of a field

through which they passed. The lovely creature was incensed at his rude

behaviour for which she reproached him in such a manner that he lost

all regard to decency, and actually offered violence to this pattern of

innocence and beauty. But Heaven would not suffer so much goodness to

be violated, and sent me, who, passing by accident near the place, was

alarmed with her cries, for her succour. What were the emotions of my

soul, when I beheld Narcissa almost sinking beneath the brutal force of

this satyr! I flew like lightning to her rescue, and he, perceiving me,

quitted his prey, and drew his hanger to chastise my presumption. My

indignation was too high to admit one thought of fear, so that, rushing

upon him, I struck his weapon out of his hand, and used my cudgel so

successfully that he fell to the ground, and lay, to all appearance,

without sense. Then I turned to Narcissa, who had swooned, and sitting

down by her, gently raised her head, and supported it on my bosom,

while, with my hand around her waist, I kept her in that position. My

soul was thrilled with tumultuous joy, at feeling the object of my

dearest wishes within my arms; and, while she lay insensible, I could

not refrain from applying my cheeks to hers, and ravishing a kiss. In a

little time the blood began to revisit her face, she opened her

enchanting eyes, and, having recollected her late situation, said, with

a look full of tender acknowledgment, “Dear John, I am eternally

obliged to you!” So saying she made an effort to rise, in which I

assisted her, and she proceeded to the house, leaning upon me all the

way. I was a thousand times tempted by this opportunity to declare my

passion, but the dread of disobliging her restrained my tongue. We had

not moved a hundred paces from the scene of her distress, when I

perceived Sir Timothy rise and walk homeward—a circumstance which,

though it gave me some satisfaction, inasmuch as I thereby knew I had

not killed him, filled me with just apprehension of his resentment,

which I found myself in no condition to withstand; especially when I

considered his intimacy with our squire, to whom I knew he could

justify himself for what he had done, by imputing it to his love, and

desiring his brother Bruin to take the same liberty with his sister,

without any fear of offence.

When we arrived at the house, Narcissa assured me she would exert all

her influence in protecting me from the revenge of Thicket, and

likewise engage her aunt in my favour. At the same time, pulling out

her purse, offered it as a small consideration for the service I had

done her. But I stood too much upon the punctilios of love to incur the

least suspicion of being mercenary, and refused the present, by saying

I had merited nothing by barely doing my duty. She seemed astonished at

my disinterestedness, and blushed: I felt the same suffusion, and, with

a downcast eye and broken accent, told her I had one request to make,

which, if her generosity would grant, I should think myself fully

recompensed, for an age of misery. She changed colour at this preamble,

and, with great confusion, replied, she hoped my good sense would

hinder me from asking anything she was bound in honour to refuse, and

therefore bade me signify my desire. Upon which I kneeled, and engaged

to kiss her hand. She immediately, with an averted look, stretched it

out: I imprinted on it an ardent kiss, and, bathing it with my tears,

cried, “Dear Madam, I am an unfortunate gentleman, and love you to

distraction, but would have died a thousand deaths rather than make

this declaration under such a servile appearance, were I not determined

to yield to the rigour of my fate, to fly from your bewitching

presence, and bury my presumptuous passion in eternal silence.” With

these words I rose, and went away before she could recover her spirits

so far as to make any reply.

My first care was to go and consult Mrs. Sagely, with whom I had

entertained a friendly correspondence ever since I left her house. When

she understood my situation, the good woman, with real concern,

condoled with me on my unhappy fate, and approved of my resolution to

leave the country, as being perfectly well acquainted with the

barbarous disposition of my rival, “who, by this time,” said she, “has

no doubt meditated a scheme of revenge. Indeed, I cannot see how you

will be able to elude his vengeance; being himself in the commission,

he will immediately grant warrants for apprehending you; and, as almost

all the people in this country are dependent on him or his friend, it

will be impossible for you to find shelter among them. If you should be

apprehended, he will commit you to jail, where you may possibly in

great misery languish till the next assizes, and then be transported

for assaulting a magistrate.”

While she thus warned me of my danger, we heard a knocking at the door,

which threw us both into great consternation, as in all probability, it

was occasioned by my pursuers; whereupon this generous old lady,

putting two guineas into my hand, with tears in her eyes, bade me, for

God’s sake, get out at the back-door and consult my safety as

Providence should direct me. There was no time for deliberation. I

followed her advice, and escaped by the benefit of a dark night to the

seaside, where, while I ruminated on my next excursion, I was all of a

sudden surrounded by armed men, who, having bound my hands and feet,

bade me make no noise on pain of being shot, and carried me on board of

a vessel, which I soon perceived to be a smuggling cutter. This

discovery gave me some satisfaction at first, because I concluded

myself safe from the resentment of Sir Timothy; but, when I found

myself in the hands of ruffians, who threatened to execute me for a

spy, I would have thought myself happily quit for a year’s

imprisonment, or even transportation. It was in vain for me to protest

my innocence: I could not persuade them that I had taken a solitary

walk to their haunt, at such an hour, merely for my own amusement; and

I did not think it my interest to disclose the true cause of my

retreat, because I was afraid they would have made their peace with

justice by surrendering me to the penalty of the law. What confirmed

their suspicion was, the appearance of a custom-house yacht, which gave

them chase, and had well nigh made a prize of their vessel; when they

were delivered from their fears by a thick fog, which effectually

screened them, and favoured their arrival at Boulogne. But, before they

got out of sight of their pursuer, they held a council of war about me,

and some of the most ferocious among them would have thrown me

overboard as a traitor who had betrayed them to their enemies; but

others, more considerate, alleged, that if they put me to death, and

should afterwards be taken, they could expect no mercy from the

legislature, which would never pardon outlawry aggravated by murder. It

was therefore determined by a plurality of votes, that I should be set

on shore in France, and left to find my way back to England, as I

should think proper, this being punishment sufficient for the bare

suspicion of a crime in itself not capital.

Although this favourable determination gave me great pleasure, the

apprehension of being robbed would not suffer me to be perfectly at

ease. To prevent this calamity, as soon as I was untied, in consequence

of the aforesaid decision, I tore a small hole in one of my stockings,

into which I dropped six guineas, reserving half a piece and some

silver in my pocket, that, finding something, they might not be tempted

to make any further inquiry. This was a very necessary precaution, for,

when we came within sight of the French shore, one of the smugglers

told me, I must pay for my passage. To this declaration I replied, that

my passage was none of my own seeking; therefore they could not expect

a reward from me for transporting me into a strange country by force.

“D—me!” said the outlaw, “none of your palaver; but let me see what

money you have got.” So saying, he thrust his hand into my pocket

without any ceremony, and emptied it of the contents; then, casting an

eye at my hat and wig, which captivated his fancy, he took them off,

clapping his own on my head, declared, that a fair exchange was no

robbery. I was fain to put up with this bargain, which was by no means

favourable to me; and a little while after we went all on shore

together.

I resolved to take my leave of those desperadoes without much ceremony,

when one of them cautioned me against appearing to their prejudice if

ever I returned to England, unless I had a mind to be murdered; for

which service, he assured me, the gang never wanted agents. I promised

to observe his advice, and departed for the Upper Town, where I

inquired for a cabaret, or public-house, into which I went, with an

intention of taking some refreshment. In the kitchen, five Dutch

sailors sat at breakfast with a large loaf, a firkin of butter, and a

keg of brandy, the bung of which they often applied to their mouths

with great perseverance and satisfaction. At some distance from them I

perceived another person in the same garb, sitting in a pensive

solitary manner, entertaining himself with a whiff of tobacco, from the

stump of a pipe as black as jet. The appearance of distress never

failed to attract my regard and compassion. I approached this forlorn

tar with a view to offer him my assistance, and, notwithstanding the

alteration of dress and disguise of a long beard, I discovered in him

my long lost and lamented uncle and benefactor, Lieutenant Bowling!

Good Heaven! what were the agitations of my soul, between the joy of

finding again such a valuable friend, and the sorrow of seeing him in

such a low condition! The tears gushed down my cheeks; I stood

motionless and silent for some time. At length, recovering the use of

speech, I exclaimed, “Gracious God! Mr. Bowling!” My uncle no sooner

heard his name mentioned, than he started up, crying, with some

surprise, “Holla!” and, after having looked at me steadfastly, without

being able to recollect me, said, “Did you call me, brother,” I told

him I had something extraordinary to communicate, and desired him to

give me the hearing for a few minutes in another room; but he would by

no means consent to this proposal, saying, “Avast there, friend: none

of your tricks upon travellers;—if you have anything to say to me, do

it above board;—you need not be afraid of being overheard;—here are

none who understand our lingo.” Though I was loth to discover myself

before company, I could no longer refrain from telling him I was his

own nephew, Roderick Random. On this information, he considered me with

great earnestness and astonishment, and, recalling my features, which,

though enlarged, were not entirely altered since he had seen me, came

up, and shook me by the hand very cordially, protesting he was glad to

see me well. After some pause, he went on thus; “And yet, my lad, I am

sorry to see you under such colours; the more so, as it is not in my

power, at present, to change them for the better, times being very hard

with me,” With these words I could perceive a tear trickle down his

furrowed cheek, which affected me so much that I wept bitterly.

Imagining my sorrow was the effect of my own misfortunes, he comforted

me with observing, that life was a voyage in which we must expect to

meet with all weathers; sometimes was calm, sometimes rough; that a

fair gale often succeeded a storm; that the wind did not always sit one

way, and that despair signified nothing; that resolution and skill were

better than a stout vessel: for why? because they require no carpenter,

and grow stronger the more labour they undergo. I dried up my tears,

which I assured him were not shed for my own distress, but for his, and

begged leave to accompany him into another room, where we could

converse more at our ease. There I recounted to him the ungenerous

usage I had met with from Potion; at which relation he started up,

stalked across the room three or four times in a great hurry, and,

grasping his cudgel, cried, “I would I were alongside of him—that’s

all—I would I were alongside of him!” I then gave him a detail of my

adventures and sufferings, which affected him more than I could have

imagined; and concluded with telling him that Captain Oakun was still

alive, and that he might return to England when he would to solicit his

affairs, without danger or molestation. He was wonderfully pleased with

this piece of information, of which, however, he said he could not at

present avail himself, for want of money to pay for his passage to

London. This objection I soon removed, by putting five guineas into his

hand, and telling him I thought myself extremely happy in having an

opportunity of manifesting my gratitude to him in his necessity. But it

was with the utmost difficulty I could prevail upon him to accept of

two, which he affirmed were more than sufficient to defray the

necessary expense.

After this friendly contest was over, he proposed we should have a mess

of something; “For,” said he, “it has been banyan day with me a great

while. You must know I was shipwrecked, five days ago, near a place

called Lisieux, in company with those Dutchmen who are now drinking

below; and having but little money when I came ashore, it was soon

spent, because I let them have share and share while it lasted.

Howsomever, I should have remembered the old saying, every hog his own

apple; for when they found my hold unstowed, they went all hands to

shooling and begging; and, because I would not take a spell at the same

duty, refused to give me the least assistance; so that I have not broke

bread these two days.” I was shocked at the extremity of his distress,

and ordered some bread, cheese, and wine, to be brought immediately, to

allay his hunger, until a fricassee of chickens could be prepared. When

he had recruited his spirits with this homely fare, I desired to know

the particulars of his peregrination since the accident at Cape

Tiberoon, which were briefly these: The money he had about him being

all spent at Port Louis, the civility and hospitality of the French

cooled to such a degree, that he was obliged to list on board one of

their king’s ships as a common foremast man, to prevent himself from

starving on shore. In this situation he continued two years, during

which time he had acquired some knowledge of their language, and the

reputation of a good seaman; the ship he belonged to was ordered home

to France, where she was laid up as unfit for service, and he was

received on board one of Monsieur D’Antin’s squadron, in quality of

quartermaster; which office he performed in a voyage to the West

Indies, where he engaged with our ship, as before related; but his

conscience upbraiding him for serving the one enemies of his country,

he quitted the ship at the same place where he first listed, and got to

Curacoa in a Dutch vessel; there he bargained with a skipper, bound to

Europe, to work for his passage to Holland, from whence he was in hopes

of hearing from his friends in England; but was cast away, as he

mentioned before, on the French coast, and must have been reduced to

the necessity of travelling on foot to Holland, and begging for his

subsistence on the road, or of entering on board of another French

man-of-war, at the hazard of being treated as a deserter, if Providence

had not sent me to his succour. “And now, my lad,” continued he, “I

think I shall steer my course directly to London, where I do not doubt

of being replaced, and of having the R taken off me by the Lords of the

Admiralty, to whom I intend to write a petition, setting forth my case;

if I succeed, I shall have wherewithal to give you some assistance,

because, when I left the ship, I had two years’ pay due to me,

therefore I desire to know whither you are bound: and besides, perhaps,

I may have interest enough to procure a warrant appointing you

surgeon’s mate of the ship to which I shall belong—for the beadle of

the Admiralty is my good friend: and he and one of the under clerks are

sworn brothers, and that under clerk has a good deal to say with one of

the upper clerks, who is very well known to the under secretary, who,

upon his recommendation, I hope, will recommend my affair to the first

secretary; and he again will speak to one of the lords in my behalf; so

that you see I do not want friends to assist me on occasion. As for the

fellow Crampley, tho’f I know him not, I am sure he is neither seaman

nor officer, by what you have told me, or else he could never be so

much mistaken in his reckoning, as to run the ship on shore on the

coast of Sussex before he believed himself in soundings; neither, when

that accident happened, would he have left the ship until she had been

stove to pieces, especially when the tide was making; wherefore, by

this time, I do suppose, he has been tried by a court-martial, and

executed for his cowardice and misconduct.”

I could not help smiling at the description of my uncle’s ladder, by

which he proposed to climb to the attention of the board of admiralty;

and, though I knew the world too well to confide in such dependence

myself, I would not discourage him with doubts, but asked if he had no

friend in London, who would advance a small sum of money to enable him

to appear as he ought, and make a small present to the under secretary,

who might possibly dispatch his business the sooner on that account. He

scratched his head, and after some recollection, replied, “Why, yes, I

believe Daniel Whipcord, the ship-chandler in Wapping, would not refuse

me such a small matter. I know I can have what credit I want for

lodging, liquor, and clothes; but as to money, I won’t be positive. Had

honest Block been living, I should not have been at loss.” I was

heartily sorry to find a worthy man so destitute of friends, when he

had such need of them, and looked upon my own situation as less

miserable than his, because I was better acquainted with the

selfishness and roguery of mankind, consequently less liable to

disappointment and imposition.

CHAPTER XLII

He takes his passage in a cutter for Deal—we are accosted by a Priest,

who proves to be a Scotchman—his profession on friendship—he is

affronted by the Lieutenant, who afterwards appeases him by

submission—my uncle embarks—I am introduced by a Priest to a Capuchin,

in whose company I set out for Paris—the character of my fellow

traveller—an adventure on the road—I am shocked at his behaviour

When our repast was ended, we walked down to the harbour, where we

found a cutter that was to sail for Deal in the evening, and Mr.

Bowling agreed for his passage. In the meantime, we sauntered about the

town to satisfy our curiosity, our conversation turning on the subject

of my designs, which were not as yet fixed: neither can it be supposed

that my mind was at ease, when I found myself reduced almost to extreme

poverty, in the midst of foreigners, among whom I had not one

acquaintance to advise or befriend me. My uncle was sensible of my

forlorn condition, and pressed me to accompany him to England, where he

did not doubt of finding some sort of provision for me; but besides the

other reasons I had for avoiding that kingdom, I looked upon it, at

this time, as the worst country in the universe for a poor honest man

to live in; and therefore determined to remain in France, at all

events.

I was confirmed in this resolution by a reverend priest, who, passing

by at this time, and overhearing us speak English, accosted us in the

same language, telling us he was our countryman, and wishing it might

be in his power to do us any service. We thanked this grave person for

his courteous offer, and invited him to drink a glass with us, which he

did not think proper to refuse, and we went altogether into a tavern of

his recommending. After having drunk to our healths in a bumper of good

Burgundy, he began to inquire into our situation, particularly the

place of our nativity, which we no sooner named than he started up,

and, wringing our hands with great fervour, shed a flood of tears,

crying, “I come from the same part of the country! perhaps you are my

own relations.” I was on my guard against his caresses, which I

suspected very much, when I remembered the adventure of the

money-dropper; but, without any appearance of diffidence, observed,

that, as he was born in that part of the country, he must certainly

know our families, which (howsoever mean our present appearance might

be) were none of the most obscure or inconsiderable. Then I discovered

our names, to which I found he was no stranger; he had known my

grandfather personally; and, notwithstanding an absence of fifty years

from Scotland, recounted so many particulars of the families in the

neighbourhood, that my scruples were entirely removed, and I thought

myself happy in his acquaintance. In the course of our conversation, I

disclosed my condition without reserve, and displayed my talents to

such advantage, that the old father looked upon me with admiration, and

assured me, that, if I stayed in France, and listened to reason, I

could not fail of making my fortune, to which he would contribute all

in his power.

My uncle began to be jealous of the Priest’s insinuation, and very

abruptly declared, that if ever I should renounce my religion, he would

break off all connection and correspondence with me; for it was his

opinion, that no honest man would swerve from his principles in which

he was bred, whether Turkish, Protestant, or Roman. The father,

affronted at this declaration, with great vehemence began a long

discourse, setting forth the danger of obstinacy, and shutting one’s

eyes against the light. He said, that ignorance would be no plea

towards justification, when we had opportunities of being better

informed; and, that, if the minds of people had not been open to

conviction, the Christian religion could not have been propagated in

the world, and we should now be in a state of Pagan darkness and

barbarity: he endeavoured to prove, by some texts of Scripture and many

quotations from the Fathers, that the Pope was the successor of St.

Peter, and vicar of Jesus Christ; that the church of Rome was the true,

holy, catholic church; and that the Protestant faith was an impious

heresy and damnable schism, by which many millions of souls would

suffer everlasting perdition. When he had finished his sermon, which I

thought he pronounced with more zeal than discretion, he addressed

himself to my uncle, desired to know his objections to what had been

said. The lieutenant, whose attention had been wholly engrossed by his

own affairs, took the pipe out of his mouth, and replied, “As for me,

friend, d’ye see, I have no objection to what you say; it may be either

truth or false, for what I know; I meddle with nobody’s affairs but my

own; the gunner to his linstock, and the steersman to the helm, as the

saying is. I trust to no creed but the compass, and do unto every man

as I would be done by; so that I defy the Pope, the Devil, and the

Pretender; and hope to be saved as well as another.” This association

of persons gave great offence to the friar, who protested, in a mighty

passion, that if Mr. Bowling had not been his countryman, he would have

caused him to be imprisoned for his insolence; I ventured to disapprove

of my uncle’s rashness, and appeased the old gentleman, by assuring him

there was no offence intended by my kinsman, who, by this time sensible

of his error, shook the injured party by the hand, and asked pardon for

the freedom he had taken. Matters being amicably compromised, he

invited us to come and see him in the afternoon at the convent to which

he belonged, and took his leave for the present; when my uncle

recommended it strongly to me to persevere in the religion of my

forefathers, whatever advantages might propose to myself by a change,

which could not fail of disgracing myself, and dishonouring my family.

I assured him no consideration would induce me to forfeit his

friendship and good opinion on that score; at which assurance he

discovered great satisfaction, and put me in mind of dinner, which we

immediately bespoke, and when it was ready, ate together.

I imagined my acquaintance with the Scottish priest if properly

managed, might turn out to my advantage, and therefore resolved to

cultivate it as much as I could. With this view we visited him at his

convent, according to his invitation, where he treated us with wine and

sweetmeats, and showed us everything that was remarkable in the

monastery. Having been thus entertained, we took our leave, though not

before I had promised to see him next day, and the time fixed for my

uncle’s embarking being come, I accompanied him to the harbour, and saw

him on board. We parted not without tears, after we had embraced and

wished one another all manner of prosperity: and he entreated me to

write to him often, directing to Lieutenant Bowling, at the sign of the

Union Flag, near the Hermitage, London.

I returned to the house in which we had met, where I passed the night

in a very solitary manner, reflecting on the severity of my fate, and

endeavouring to project some likely scheme of life for the future; but

my invention failed me; I saw nothing but insurmountable difficulties

in my way, and was ready to despair at the miserable prospect! That I

might not, however, neglect any probable reason, I got up in the

morning, and went directly to the father, whose advice and assistance I

implored. He received me very kindly, and gave me to understand, that

there was one way of life in which a person of my talents could not

fail of making a great figure. I guessed his meaning, and told him,

once for all, I was fully determined against any alteration in point of

religion; therefore if his proposal regarded the church, he might save

himself the trouble of explaining it. He shook his head and sighed,

saying, “Ah! son, son, what a glorious prospect is here spoiled by your

stubborn prejudice! Suffer yourself to be persuaded by reason, and

consult your temporal welfare, as well as the concerns of your eternal

soul. I can, by my interest procure your admission as a noviciate to

this convent, where I will superintend and direct you with a truly

paternal affection.” Then he launched out into the praises of a

monastic life, which no noise disturbs, no cares molest, and no danger

invades—where the heart is weaned from carnal attachments, the grosser

appetite subdued and chastised, and the soul wafted to divine regions

of philosophy and truth, on the wing of studious contemplation. But his

eloquence was lost upon me, whom two considerations enabled to

withstand his temptation; namely, my promise to my uncle, and my

aversion to an ecclesiastical life; for as to the difference of

religion, I looked upon it as a thing of too small moment to come in

competition with a man’s fortune. Finding me immovable on this head, he

told me, he was more sorry than offended at my noncompliance, and still

ready to employ his good offices in my behalf. “The same erroneous

maxims,” said he, “that obstruct your promotion in the church, will

infallibly prevent your advancement in the army; but, if you can brook

the condition of a servant, I am acquainted with some people of rank at

Versailles, to whom I can give you letters of recommendation, that you

may be entertained by some one of them in quality of maitre d’hotel;

and I do not doubt that your qualifications will soon entitle you to a

better provision.” I embraced his offer with great eagerness, and he

appointed me to come back in the afternoon, when he would not only give

me letters, but likewise introduce me to a capuchin of his

acquaintance, who intended to set out for Paris next morning in whose

company I might travel, without being at the expense of one livre

during the whole journey. This piece of good news gave me infinite

pleasure; I acknowledged my obligation to the benevolent father in the

most grateful expressions; and he performed his promise to a tittle, in

delivering the letters, and making me acquainted with the capuchin,

with whom I departed next morning by break of day.

It was not long before I discovered my fellow traveller to be a merry

facetious fellow, who, notwithstanding his profession and appearance of

mortification, loved good eating and drinking better than his rosary,

and paid more adoration to a pretty girl than to the Virgin Mary, or

St. Genevieve. He was a thick brawny young man, with red eyebrows, a

hook nose, a face covered with freckles; and his name was Frere

Balthazar. His order did not permit him to wear linen, so that, having

little occasion to undress himself, he was none of the cleanliest

animals in the world; and his constitution was naturally so strongly

scented that I always thought it convenient to keep to the windward of

him in our march. As he was perfectly well known on the road, we fared

sumptuously without any cost, and the fatigue of our journey was much

alleviated by the good humour of my companion, who sang an infinite

number of catches on the subjects of love and wine. We took up our

lodging the first night at a peasant’s house not far from Abbeville,

where we were entertained with an excellent ragout, cooked by our

landlord’s daughters, one of whom was very handsome. After having eaten

heartily and drank a sufficient quantity of small wine, we were

conducted to a barn, where we found a couple of carpets spread upon

clean straw for our reception. We had not lain in this situation above

half-an-hour, when we heard somebody knock softly at the door, upon

which Balthazar got up, and let in our host’s two daughters, who wanted

to have some private conversation with him in the dark. When they had

whispered together some time, the capuchin came to me, and asked if I

was insensible to love, and so hard-hearted as to refuse a share of my

bed to a pretty maid who had a tendre for me? I must own to my shame,

that I suffered myself to be overcome by my passion, and with great

eagerness seized the occasion, when I understood that the amiable

Nanette was to be my bedfellow. In vain did my reason suggest the

respect that I owed to my dear mistress Narcissa; the idea of that

lovely charmer rather increased than allayed the ferment of my spirits;

and the young paysanne had no reason to complain of my remembrance.

Early in the morning, the kind creatures left us to our repose, which

lasted till eight o’clock when we got up, and were treated at breakfast

with chocolate and l’eau-de-vie by our paramours, of whom we took a

tender leave, after my companion had confessed and given them

absolution.

While we proceeded on our journey, the conversation turned upon the

night’s adventure, being introduced by the capuchin, who asked me how I

liked my lodging; I declared my satisfaction, and talked in rapture of

the agreeable Nanette, at which he shook his head, and smiling said,

she was a morceau pour la bonne bouche. “I never valued myself,”

continued he, “upon anything so much as the conquest of Nanette; and,

vanity apart, I have been pretty fortunate in my amours.” This

information shocked me not a little, as I was well convinced of his

intimacy with her sister; and though I did not care to tax him with

downright incest, I professed my astonishment at his last night’s

choice, when, I supposed, the other was at his devotion. To this hint

he answered that, besides his natural complaisance to the sex, he had

another reason to distribute his favours equally between them, namely,

to preserve peace in the family, which could not otherwise be

maintained; that, moreover, Nanette had conceived an affection for me,

and he loved her too well to balk her inclination; more especially,

when he had an opportunity of obliging his friend at the same time. I

thanked him for this instance of his friendship, though I was extremely

disgusted at his want of delicacy, and cursed the occasion that threw

me in his way. Libertine as I was, I could not bear to see a man behave

so wide of the character he assumed. I looked upon him as a person of

very little worth or honesty, and should even have kept a wary eye upon

my pocket, if I had thought he could have had any temptation to steal.

But I could not conceive the use of money to a capuchin, who is

obliged, by the rules of his order, to appear like a beggar, and enjoy

all other necessaries of life gratis; besides, my fellow traveller

seemed to be of a complexion too careless and sanguine to give me any

apprehension on that score; so that I proceeded with great confidence,

in expectation of being soon at my journey’s end.

CHAPTER XLIII

We lodge at a House near Amiens, where I am robbed by the Capuchin, who

escapes while I am asleep—I go to Noyons in search of him, but without

Success—make my Condition known to several People, but find no

Relief—grow desperate—find a Company of Soldiers—Enlist in the Regiment

of Picardy—we are ordered into Germany—I find the Fatigues of the March

almost intolerable—Quarrel with my Comrade in a dispute about

Politics—he challenges me to the Field—wounds and disarms me

The third night of our pilgrimage we passed at a house near Amiens,

where being unknown, we supped upon indifferent fare and sour wine, and

were fain to be in a garret upon an old mattress, which, I believe had

been in the possession of ten thousand myriads of fleas time out of

mind. We did not invade their territory with impunity; in less than a

minute we were attacked by stings innumerable, in spite of which,

however, I fell fast asleep, being excessively fatigued with our day’s

march, and did not wake till nine next morning, when, seeing myself

alone, I started up in a terrible fright, and, examining my pockets,

found my presaging fear too true! My companion had made free with my

cash, and left me to seek my way to Paris by myself! I ran down stairs

immediately; and, with a look full of grief and amazement, inquired for

the mendicant, who, they gave me to understand, had set out four hours

before, after having told them I was a little indisposed, and desired I

might not be disturbed, but be informed when I should wake, that he had

taken the road to Noyons, where he would wait for my coming, at the Coq

d’Or. I spoke not a word, but with a heavy heart directed my course to

that place, at which I arrived in the afternoon, fainting with

weariness and hunger; but learned to my utter confusion, that no such

person had been there! It was happy for me that I had a good deal of

resentment in my constitution, which animated me on such occasions

against the villainy of mankind, and enabled me to bear misfortunes,

otherwise intolerable. Boiling with indignation, I discovered to the

host my deplorable condition, and inveighed with great bitterness

against the treachery of Balthazar; at which he shrugged up his

shoulders, and with a peculiar grimace on his countenance, said, he was

sorry for my misfortune, but there was no remedy like patience. At that

instant some guests arrived, to whom he hastened to offer his service,

leaving me mortified at his indifference, and fully persuaded that an

innkeeper is the same sordid animal all the world over.

While I stood in the porch forlorn and undetermined, venting

ejaculations of curses against the thief who had robbed me, and the old

priest who recommended him to my friendship, a young gentleman richly

dressed, attended by a valet de chambre and two servants in livery,

arrived at the inn. I thought I perceived a great deal of sweetness and

good-nature in his countenance; therefore he had no sooner alighted

than I accosted him, and, in a few words, explained my situation: he

listened with great politeness, and, when I made an end of my story,

said, “Well, monsieur, what would you have me to do?” I was effectually

abashed at this interrogation, which, I believe, no man of common sense

or generosity could make, and made no other compliment than a low bow:

he returned the compliment still lower, and tripped into an apartment,

while the landlord let me know that my standing there to interrupt

company gave offence, and might do him infinite prejudice. He had no

occasion to repeat his insinuation; I moved from the place immediately,

and was so much transported with grief, anger, and disdain, that a

torrent of blood gushed from my nostrils. In this ecstacy, I quitted

Noyons, and betook myself to the fields, where I wandered about like

one distracted, till my spirits were quite exhausted, and I was obliged

to throw myself down at the root of a tree, to rest my wearied limbs.

Here my rage forsook me: I began to feel the importunate cravings of

nature, and relapsed into silent sorrow and melancholy reflection. I

revolved all the crimes I had been guilty of and found them too few and

venial, that I could not comprehend the justice of that Providence,

which, after having exposed me to so much wretchedness and danger, left

me a prey to famine at last in a foreign country, where I had not one

friend or acquaintance to close my eyes, and do the last offices of

humanity to my miserable carcass. A thousand times I wished myself a

bear, that I might retreat to woods and deserts, far from the

inhospitable haunts of man, where I could live by my own talents,

independent of treacherous friends and supercilious scorn.

As I lay in this manner, groaning over my hapless fate, I heard the

sound of a violin, and raising my head, perceived a company of men and

women dancing on the grass at some distance from me. I looked upon this

to be a favourable season for distress to attract compassion, when

every selfish thought is banished, and the heart dilated with mirth and

social joy; wherefore I got up, and approached those happy people, whom

I soon discovered to be a party of soldiers, with their wives and

children, unbending and diverting themselves at this rate, after the

fatigue of a march. I had never before seen such a parcel of scarecrows

together, neither could I reconcile their meagre and gaunt looks, their

squalid and ragged attire, and every other external symptom of extreme

woe, with this appearance of festivity. I saluted them, however, and

was received with great politeness; after which they formed a ring, and

danced around me. This jollity had a wonderful effect upon my spirits.

I was infected with their gaiety, and in spite of my dismal situation,

forgot my cares, and joined in their extravagance. When we had

recreated ourselves a good while at this diversion, the ladies spread

their manteaus on the ground, upon which they emptied their knapsacks

of some onions, coarse bread, and a few flasks of poor wine: being

invited to a share of the banquet, I sat down with the rest, and, in

the whole course of my life, never made a more comfortable meal. When

our repast was ended, we got up again to dance, and, now that I found

myself refreshed I behaved to the admiration of everybody; I was loaded

with a thousand compliments and professions of friendship: the men

commended my person and agility, and the women were loud in the praise

of my bonne grace; the sergeant in particular expressed so much regard

for me, and described the pleasures of a soldier’s life to me with so

much art, that I began to listen to his proposal of enlisting me in the

service; and the more I considered my own condition, the more I was

convinced of the necessity I was under to come to a speedy

determination.

Having, therefore, maturely weighed the circumstances pro and con I

signified my consent, and was admitted into the regiment of Picardy,

said to be the oldest corps in Europe. The company to which this

commander belonged was quartered at a village not far off, whither we

marched next day, and I was presented to my captain, who seemed very

well pleased with my appearance, gave me a crown to drink, and ordered

me to be accommodated with clothes, arms, and accoutrements. Then I

sold my livery suit, purchased linen, and, as I was at great pains to

learn the exercise, in a very short time became a complete soldier.

It was not long before we received orders to join several more

regiments, and march with all expedition into Germany, in order to

reinforce Mareschal Duc de Noailles, who was then encamped with his

army on the side of the river Mayne, to watch the motions of the

English, Hanoverians, Austrians, and Hessians, under the command of the

Earl of Stair. We began our march accordingly, and then I became

acquainted with that part of a soldier’s life to which I had been

hitherto a stranger. It is impossible to describe the hunger and thirst

I sustained, and the fatigue I underwent in a march of so many hundred

miles; during which, I was so much chafed with the heat and motion of

my limbs, that in a very short time the inside of my thighs and legs

were deprived of skin, and I proceeded in the utmost torture. This

misfortune I owed to the plumpness of my constitution, which I cursed,

and envied the withered condition of my comrades, whose bodies could

not spare juice enough to supply a common issue, and were indeed proof

against all manner of friction. The continual pain I felt made me

fretful, and my peevishness was increased by the mortification of my

pride in seeing those miserable wretches, whom a hard gale of wind

would have scattered through the air like chaff, bear those toils with

alacrity under which I was ready to sink.

One day, while we enjoyed a halt, and the soldiers with their wives had

gone out to dance, according to custom, my comrade stayed at home with

me on pretence of friendship, and insulted me with his pity and

consolation! He told me that, though I was young and tender at present,

I should soon be seasoned to the service; and he did not doubt but I

should have the honour to contribute in some measure to the glory of

the king. “Have courage, therefore, my child,” said he, “and pray to

the good God, that you may be as happy as I am, who have had the honour

of serving Louis the Great, and of receiving many wounds, in helping to

establish his glory.” When I looked upon the contemptible object that

pronounced these words, I was amazed at the infatuation that possessed

him; and could not help expressing my astonishment at the absurdity of

a rational who thinks himself highly honoured, in being permitted to

encounter abject poverty, oppression, famine, disease, mutilation, and

evident death merely to gratify the vicious ambition of a prince, by

whom his sufferings were disregarded, and his name utterly unknown. I

observed that, if his situation were the consequence of compulsion, I

would praise his patience and fortitude in bearing his lot: if he had

taken up arms in defence of his injured country, he was to be applauded

for his patriotism: or if he had fled to this way of life as a refuge

from a greater evil, he was justifiable in his own conscience (though I

could have no notion of misery more extreme than he suffered); but to

put his condition on the footing of conducing to the glory of his

prince, was no more than professing himself a desperate slave, who

voluntarily underwent the utmost wretchedness and peril, and committed

the most flagrant crimes, to soothe the barbarous pride of a

fellow-creature, his superior in nothing but the power he derived from

the submission of such wretches as him. The soldier was very much

affronted at the liberty I took with his king, which, he said, nothing

but my ignorance could excuse: he affirmed that the characters of

princes were sacred, and ought not to be profaned by the censure of

their subjects, who were bound by their allegiance to obey their

commands, of what nature soever, without scruple or repining; and

advised me to correct the rebellious principles I had imbibed among the

English, who, for their insolence to their kings, were notorious all

over the world, even to a proverb.

In vindication of my countrymen, I repeated all the arguments commonly

used to prove that every man has a natural right to liberty; that

allegiance and protection are reciprocal; that, when the mutual tie is

broken by the tyranny of the king, he is accountable to the people for

his breach of contract, and subject to the penalties of the law; and

that those insurrections of the English, which are branded with the

name of rebellion by the slaves of arbitrary power, were no other than

glorious efforts to rescue that independence which was their

birthright, from the ravenous claws of usurping ambition. The

Frenchman, provoked at the little deference I paid to the kingly name,

lost all patience, and reproached me in such a manner that my temper

forsook me, I clenched my fist, with an intention to give him a hearty

box on the ear. Perceiving my design, he started back and demanded a

parley; upon which I checked my indignation, and he gave me to

understand that a Frenchman never forgave a blow; therefore, if I were

not weary of my life, I would do well to spare him that mortification,

and do him the honour of measuring his sword with mine, like a

gentleman. I took his advice and followed him to a field hard by, where

indeed I was ashamed at the pitiful figure of my antagonist, who was a

poor little shivering creature, decrepit with age, and blind of one

eye. But I soon found the folly of judging from appearances; being at

the second pass wounded in the sword hand, and immediately disarmed

with such a jerk, that I thought the joint was dislocated. I was no

less confounded than enraged at this event, especially as my adversary

did not bear his success with all the moderation that might have been

expected; for he insisted upon my asking pardon for affronting his king

and him. This proposal I would by no means comply with, but told him,

it was a mean condescension, which no gentleman in his circumstances

ought to propose, nor any in my situation ought to perform; and that,

if he persisted in his ungenerous demand, I would in my turn claim

satisfaction with my musket, when we should be more upon a par than

with the sword, of which he seemed so much master.

CHAPTER XLIV

In order to be revenged, I learn the Science of Defence—we join

Mareschal Duc de Noailles, are engaged with the Allies of Dettingen,

and put to flight—the behaviour of the French soldiers on that

occasion—I industriously seek another combat with the old Gascon, and

vanquish him in my turn—our regiment is put into Winter Quarters at

Rheims, where I find my friend Strap—our Recognition—he supplies me

with Money, and procures my Discharge—we take a trip to Paris; from

whence, by the way of Flanders, we set out for London; where we safely

arrive

He was disconcerted at this declaration, to which he made no reply, but

repaired to the dancers, among whom he recounted his victory with many

exaggerations and gasconades; while I, taking up my sword, went to my

quarters, and examined my wound, which I found was of no consequence.

The same day an Irish drummer, having heard of my misfortune, visited

me, and after having condoled me on the chance of war, gave me to

understand, that he was master of the sword, and would in a very short

time instruct me so thoroughly in that noble science, that I should be

able to chastise the old Gascon for his insolent boasting at my

expense. This friendly office he proffered on pretence of the regard he

had for his countrymen; but I afterwards learned the true motive was no

other than a jealousy he entertained of a correspondence between the

Frenchman and his wife, which he did not think proper to resent in

person. Be this as it will, I accepted his offer and practised his

lessons with such application, that I soon believed myself a match for

my conqueror. In the meantime we continued our march, and arrived at

the Camp of Mareschal Noailles the night before the battle at

Dettingen: notwithstanding the fatigue we had undergone, our regiment

was one of those that were ordered next day to cross the river, under

the command of the Duc de Grammont, to take possession of a narrow

defile, through which the allies must of necessity have passed at a

great disadvantage, or remain where they were, and perish for want of

provision, if they would not condescend to surrender at discretion. How

they suffered themselves to be pent up in this manner it is not my

province to relate; I shall only observe that, when we had taken

possession of our ground, I heard an old officer in conversation with

another express a surprise at the conduct of Lord Stair, who had the

reputation of a good general. But it seems, at this time, that nobleman

was overruled, and only acted in an inferior character; so that no part

of the blame could be imputed to him, who declared his disapprobation

of the step, in consequence of which the whole army was in the utmost

danger; but Providence or destiny acted miracles in their behalf, by

disposing the Duc de Grammont to quit his advantageous post, pass the

defile, and attack the English, who were drawn up in order of battle on

the plain, and who handled us so roughly that, after having lost a

great number of men, we turned our backs without ceremony, and fled

with such precipitation that many hundreds perished in the river

through pure fear and confusion: for the enemy were so generous that

they did not pursue us one inch of ground; and, if our consternation

would have permitted, we might have retreated with great order and

deliberation. But, notwithstanding the royal clemency of the king of

Great Britain, who headed the allies in person, and, no doubt, put a

stop to the carnage, our loss amounted to five thousand men, among whom

were many officers of distinction. Our miscarriage opened a passage for

the foe to Haynau, whither they immediately marched, leaving their sick

and wounded to the care of the French, who next day took possession of

the field of battle, buried the dead, and treated the living with

humanity.

This circumstance was a great consolation to us, who thence took

occasion to claim the victory; and the genius of the French nation

never appeared more conspicuous than now, in the rhodomontades they

uttered on the subject of their generosity and courage. Every man (by

his own account) performed feats that eclipsed all the heroes of

antiquity. One compared himself to a lion retiring at leisure from his

cowardly pursuers, who keep at a wary distance, and gall him with their

darts. Another likened himself to a bear that retreats with his face to

the enemy, who dare not assail him; and the third assumed the character

of a desperate stag, that turns upon the hounds and keeps them at bay.

There was not a private soldier engaged who had not by the prowess of

his single arm demolished a whole platoon, or put a squadron of horse

to flight; and, among others, the meagre Gascon extolled his exploits

above those of Hercules or Charlemagne. As I still retained my

resentment for the disgrace I suffered in my last rencontre with him,

and, now that I thought myself qualified, longed for an opportunity to

retrieve my honour, I magnified the valour of the English with all the

hyperboles I could imagine, and described the pusillanimity of the

French in the same style, comparing them to hares flying before

greyhounds, or mice pursued by cats; and passed an ironical compliment

on the speed he exerted in his flight, which, considering his age and

infirmities I said was surprising. He was stung to the quick by this

sarcasm, and, with an air of threatening disdain, bade me know myself

better, and remember the correction I had already received from him for

my insolence; for he might not always be in the humour of sparing a

wretch who abused his goodness. To this inuendo I made no reply but by

a kick on the breech, which overturned him in an instant. He started up

with wonderful agility, and, drawing his sword, attacked me with great

fury. Several people interposed, but, when he informed them of its

being an affair of honour, they retired, and left us to decide the

battle by ourselves. I sustained his onset with little damage, having

only received a small scratch on my right shoulder, and, seeing his

breath and vigour almost exhausted, assaulted him in my turn, closed

with him, and wrested his sword out of his hand in the struggle. Having

thus acquired the victory, I desired him to beg his life; to which

demand he made no answer, but shrugged up his shoulders to his ears,

expanded his hands, elevated the skin on his forehead and eyebrows, and

depressed the corners of his mouth in such a manner, that I could

scarce refrain from laughing aloud at his grotesque appearance. That I

might, however, mortify his vanity, which triumphed without bounds over

my misfortune, I thrust his sword up to the hilt in something (it was

not a tansy), that lay smoking on the plain, and joined the rest of the

soldiers with an air of tranquillity and indifference.

There was nothing more of moment attempted by either of the armies

during the remaining part of the campaign, which being ended, the

English marched back to the Netherlands; part of our army was detached

to French Flanders, and our regiment ordered into winter quarters in

Champagne. It was the fate of the grenadier company, to which I now

belonged, to lie at Rheims, where I found myself in the utmost want of

everything, my pay, which amounted to five sols a day, far from

supplying me with necessaries, being scarce sufficient to procure a

wretched subsistence to keep soul and body together; so that I was, by

hunger and hard duty, brought down to the meagre condition of my

fellow-soldiers, and my linen reduced from three tolerable shirts to

two pair of sleeves and necks, the bodies having been long ago

converted into spatterdaches; and after all, I was better provided than

any private man in the regiment. In this urgency of my affairs, I wrote

to my uncle in England, though my hopes from that quarter were not at

all sanguine, for the reasons I have already explained; and in the

meantime had recourse to my old remedy patience, consoling myself with

the flattering suggestions of a lively imagination, that never

abandoned me in my distress.

One day, while I stood sentinel at the gate of a general officer, a

certain nobleman came to the door, followed by a gentleman in mourning,

to whom, at parting, I heard him say, “You may depend upon my good

offices.” This assurance was answered by a low bow of the person in

black, who, turning to go away, discovered to me the individual

countenance of my old friend and adherent Strap. I was so much

astonished at the sight, that I lost the power of utterance, and,

before I could recollect myself, he was gone without taking any notice

of me. Indeed, had he stayed, I scarcely should have ventured to accost

him; because, though I was perfectly well acquainted with the features

of his face, I could not be positively certain as to the rest of his

person, which was very much altered for the better since he left me at

London, neither could I conceive by which means he was enabled to

appear in the sphere of a gentleman, to which, while I knew him, he had

not even the ambition to aspire. But I was too much concerned in the

affair to neglect further information, and therefore took the first

opportunity of asking the porter if he knew the gentleman to whom the

marquis spoke. The Swiss told me his name was Monsieur d’Estrapes, that

he had been valet-de-chambre to an English gentleman lately deceased,

and that he was very much regarded by the marquis for his fidelity to

his master, between whom and that nobleman a very intimate friendship

had subsisted. Nothing could be more agreeable to me than this piece of

intelligence, which banished all doubt of its being my friend, who had

found means to frenchify his name as well as his behaviour since we

parted. As soon, therefore, as I was relieved, I went to his lodging,

according to a direction given me by the Swiss, and had the good

fortune to find him at home. That I might surprise him the more, I

concealed my name and business, and only desired the servant of the

house to tell Monsieur d’Estrapes that I begged the honour of

half-an-hour’s conversation with him. He was confounded and dismayed at

this message, when he understood it was sent by a soldier; though he

was conscious to himself of no crime, all that he had heard of the

Bastille appeared to his imagination with aggravated horror, but it was

not before I had waited a considerable time that he had resolution

enough to bid the servant show me up-stairs.

When I entered his chamber, he returned my bow with great civility, and

endeavoured, with forced complaisance, to disguise his fear, which

appeared in the paleness of his face, the wildness of his looks, and

the shaking of his limbs. I was diverted at his consternation, which

redoubled, when I told him in French, I had business for his private

ear and demanded a particular audience. The valet being withdrawn, I

asked in the same language if his name was d’Estrapes, to which he

answered with a faltering tongue, “The same, at your service.” “Are you

a Frenchman?” Said I. “I have not the honour of being a Frenchman

born,” replied he, “but I have an infinite veneration for the country.”

I then desired he would do me the honour to look at me, which he no

sooner did than, struck with my appearance, he started back, and cried

in English, “O Jesus!—sure it can’t! No ’tis impossible!” I smiled at

his interjections, saying, “I suppose you are too much of a gentleman

to own your friend in adversity.” When he heard me pronounce these

words in our own language, he leaped upon me in a transport of joy,

hung about my neck, kissed me from ear to ear, and blubbered like a

great schoolboy who had been whipped. Then, observing my dress, he set

up his throat, crying, “O Lord! O Lord! that ever I should live to see

my dearest friend reduced to the condition of a foot soldier in the

French service! Why did you consent to my leaving you?—but I know the

reason—you thought you had got more creditable friends, and grew

ashamed of my acquaintance. Ah! Lord help us! though I was a little

short-sighted, I was not altogether blind: and though I did not

complain, I was not the less sensible of your unkindness, which was

indeed the only thing that induced me to ramble abroad, the Lord knows

whither; but I must own it has been a lucky ramble for me, and so I

forgive you, and may God forgive you! O Lord! Lord! is it come to

this?” I was nettled at the charge, which, though just, I could not

help thinking unseasonable, and told him with some tartness that,

whether his suspicions were well or ill grounded, he might have chosen

a more convenient opportunity of introducing them; and that the

question now was whether or no he found himself disposed to lend me any

assistance. “Disposed!” replied he with great emotion; “I thought you

had known me so well as to assure yourself without asking, that I, and

all that belongs to me, are at your command. In the meantime you shall

dine with me, and I will tell you something that, perhaps, will not be

displeasing unto you.” Then, wringing my hand, he said, “It makes my

heart bleed to see you in that garb!” I thanked him for his invitation,

which, I observed, could not be unwelcome to a person who had not eaten

a comfortable meal these seven months; but I had another request to

make, which I begged he would grant before dinner, and that was the

loan of a shirt; for although my back had been many weeks a stranger to

any comfort of that kind, my skin was not yet familiarised to the want

of it. He stared in my face, with a woful countenance, at this

declaration, which he could scarce believe, until I explained it by

unbuttoning my coat and disclosing my naked body—a circumstance which

shocked the tender-hearted Strap, who, with tears in his eyes, ran to a

chest of drawers, and taking out some linen, presented to me a very

fine ruffled Holland shirt and cambric neckcloth, assuring me he had

three dozen of the same kind at my service.

I was ravished at this piece of good news and, having accommodated

myself in a moment, hugged my benefactor for his generous offer,

saying, I was overjoyed to find him undebauched by prosperity, which

seldom fails to corrupt the heart. He bespoke for dinner some soup and

bouilli, a couple of pullets roasted, and a dish of asparagus, and in

the interim entertained me with biscuit and Burgundy, after which

repast he entreated me to gratify his longing desire of knowing every

circumstance of my fortune since his departure from London. This

request I complied with, beginning at the adventure of Gawky, and

relating every particular event in which I had been concerned from that

day to the present hour. During the recital, my friend was strongly

affected, according to the various situations described. He stared with

surprise, glowed with indignation, gaped with curiosity, smiled with

pleasure, trembled with fear, and wept with sorrow, as the vicissitudes

of my life inspired these different passions; and, when my story was

ended, signified his amazement on the whole, by lifting up his eyes and

hands and protesting that, though I was a young man, had suffered more

than all the blessed martyrs.

After dinner, I desired in my turn to know the particulars of his

peregrination, and he satisfied me in a few words, by giving me to

understand that he had lived a year at Paris with his master, who, in

that time having acquired the language, as well as the fashionable

exercises to perfection, made a tour of France and Holland, during

which excursion he was so unfortunate as to meet with three of his own

countrymen on their travels, in whose company he committed such

excesses, that his constitution failed, and he fell into a consumption;

that by the advice of physicians, he went to Montpelier for the benefit

of good air, and recovered so well in six weeks, that he returned to

Rheims seemingly in good health, where he had not continued above a

month, when he was seized with a looseness that carried him off in ten

days, to the unspeakable sorrow of all who knew him and especially of

Strap, who had been very happy in his service, and given such

satisfaction, that his master, on his death-bed recommended him to

several persons of distinction for his diligence, sobriety, and

affection, and left him by will his wearing apparel, gold watch, sword,

rings, ready money, and all the moveables he had in France, to the

value of three hundred pounds “which I now,” said he, “in the sight of

God and man, surrender to your absolute disposal: here are my keys;

take them, I beseech you, and God give you joy of the possession.” My

brain was almost turned by this sudden change of fortune, which I could

scarce believe real: however, I positively refused this extravagant

proffer of my friend, and put him in mind of my being a soldier; at

which hint he started, crying, “Odso! that’s true! we must procure your

discharge. I have some interest with a nobleman who is able to do me

that favour.”

We consulted about this affair, and it was determined that Monsieur

d’Estrapes should wait upon the Marquis in the morning, and tell him he

had by accident found his brother, whom he had not seen for many years

before, a private soldier in the regiment of Picardy, and implore that

nobleman’s interest for his discharge. In the meantime, we enjoyed

ourselves over a bottle of good Burgundy, and spent the evening in

concerting schemes for our future conduct, in case I should be so lucky

as to get rid of the army. The business was to make ourselves easy for

life by means of his legacy, a task very difficult, and, in the usual

methods of laying out money, altogether impracticable, so that, after

much canvassing, we could come to no resolution that night, but when we

parted, recommended the matter to the serious attention of each other.

As for my own part, I puzzled my imagination to no purpose. When I

thought of turning merchant, the smallness of our stock, and the risk

of seas, enemies, and markets, deterred me from that scheme. If I

should settle as a surgeon in my own country, I would find the business

already overstocked; or, if I pretended to set up in England, must

labour under want of friends and powerful opposition, obstacles

insurmountable by the most shining merit: neither should I succeed in

my endeavours to rise in the state, inasmuch as I could neither flatter

nor pimp for courtiers, nor prostitute my pen in defence of a wicked

and contemptible administration. Before I could form any feasible

project, I fell asleep, and my fancy was blest with the image of the

dear Narcissa, who seemed to smile upon my passion, and offer her hand

as a reward for all my toils.

Early in the morning, I went to the lodgings of my friend, whom I found

exulting over his happy invention! for I no sooner entered his

apartment, than he addressed himself to me in these words, with a smile

of self-applause: “Well, Mr. Random, a lucky thought may come into a

fool’s head sometimes. I have hit it—I’ll hold you a button my plan is

better than yours, for all your learning. But you shall have the

preference in this as in all other things; therefore proceed, and let

us know the effects of your meditation; and then I will impart my own

simple excogitations.” I told him, that not one thought had occurred to

me which deserved the least notice, and signified my impatience to be

acquainted with the fruits of his reflection. “As we have not,” said

he, “money sufficient to maintain us during a tedious expectation, it

is my opinion that a bold push must be made; and I see none so likely

to succeed as your appearing in the character of a gentleman (which is

your due), and making your addresses to some lady of fortune, who can

render you independent at once. Nay, don’t stare—I affirm that this

scheme is both prudent and honourable; for I would not have you throw

yourself away upon an old toothless wheezing dame, whose breath would

stink you into a consumption in less than three months, neither would I

advise you to assume the character of a wealthy squire, as your common

fortune-hunters do, by which means many a poor lady is cheated into

matrimony, and instead of enjoying the pomp and grandeur that was

promised, sees her dowry seized by her husband’s rapacious creditors,

and herself reduced to misery and despair. No, I know you have a soul

that disdains such imposition; and are master of qualifications, both

of mind and body, which alone entitle you to a match that will set you

above the world. I have clothes in my possession that a duke need not

be ashamed to wear. I believe they will fit you as they are, if not

there are plenty of tailors in France. Let us take a short trip to

Paris, and provide ourselves with all other necessaries, then set out

for England, where I intend to do myself the honour of attending you in

quality of a valet. This expedient will save you the expense of a

servant, shaving, and dressing; and I doubt not but, by the blessing of

God, we shall bring matters to a speedy and fortunate issue.”

Extravagant as this proposal was, I listened to it with pleasure,

because it flattered my vanity, and indulged a ridiculous hope I began

to entertain of inspiring Narcissa with a mutual flame.

After breakfast, Monsieur d’Estrapes went to pay his devoirs to the

marquis, and was so successful in his application, that I obtained a

discharge in a few days, upon which we set out for Paris. Here I had

time to reflect and congratulate myself upon this sudden transition of

fate, which to bear with moderation required some degree of philosophy

and self-denial. This truth will be more obvious, if I give a detail of

the particulars, to the quiet possession of which I was raised in an

instant, from the most abject misery and contempt. My wardrobe

consisted of five fashionable coats full mounted, two of which were

plain, one of cut velvet, one trimmed with gold, and another with

silver lace, two frocks, one of white drab, with large plate buttons,

the other of blue with gold binding; one waistcoat of gold brocade; one

of blue satin, embroidered with silver; one of green silk, trimmed with

figured broad gold lace; one of black silk, with fringes; one of white

satin, one of black cloth, and one of scarlet; six pair of cloth

breeches; one pair of crimson, and another of black velvet; twelve pair

of white silk stockings, as many of black silk, and the same number of

white cotton; one hat, laced with gold point d’Espagne, another with

silver lace scolloped, a third with gold binding, and a fourth plain;

three dozen of fine ruffled shirts, as many neckcloths; one dozen of

cambric handkerchiefs, and the like number of silk. The other

moveables, which I possessed by the generosity and friendship of Strap,

were a gold watch with a chased case, two valuable diamond rings, two

mourning swords, one with a silver handle, and a fourth cut steel

inlaid with gold, a diamond stock buckle, and a set of stone buckles

for the knees and shoes; a pair of silver-mounted pistols with rich

housings; a gold-headed cane, and a snuff-box of tortoiseshell, mounted

with gold, having the picture of a lady in the top. The gentleman left

many other things of value, which my friend had converted into cash

before I met with him; so that, over and above these particulars, our

stock in ready money amounted to something more than two hundred

pounds.

Thus equipped, I put on the gentleman of figure, and, attended by my

honest friend, who was contented with the station of my valet, visited

the Louvre, examined the gallery of Luxembourg, and appeared at

Versailles, where I had the honour of seeing his Most Christian Majesty

eat a considerable quantity of olives. During the month I spent at

Paris, I went several times to court, the Italian comedy, opera, and

playhouse, danced at a masquerade, and, in short, saw everything

remarkable in and about that capital. Then we set out for England by

the way of Flanders, passed through Brussels, Ghent, and Bruges, and

took shipping at Ostend, from whence, in fourteen hours, we arrived at

Deal, hired a postchaise, and in twelve hours more got safe to London,

having disposed of our heavy baggage in the waggon.

CHAPTER XLV

I inquire for my Uncle, and understand he is gone to sea—take Lodgings

at Charing Cross—go to the Play, where I meet with an adventure—Dine at

an ordinary—the Guests described—become acquainted with Medlar and

Doctor Wagtail

As soon as we alighted at the inn, I dispatched Strap to inquire for my

uncle at the Union Flag in Wapping; and he returned in a little time,

with an account of Mr. Bowling’s having gone to sea, mate of a merchant

ship, after a long and unsuccessful application attendance at the

Admiralty; where, it seems, the interest he depended upon was not

sufficient to reinstate him, or recover the pay that was due to him

when he quitted the Thunder.

Next day I hired very handsome lodgings not far from Charing Cross; and

in the evening dressed myself in a plain suit of the true Paris cut,

and appeared in a front box at the play, where I saw a good deal of

company, and was vain enough to believe that I was observed with an

uncommon degree of attention and applause. This silly conceit

intoxicated me so much, that I was guilty of a thousand ridiculous

coquetries; and I dare say, how favourable soever the thoughts of the

company might be at my first appearance, they were soon changed by my

absurd behaviour into pity or contempt. I rose and sat down, covered

and uncovered my head twenty times between the acts; pulled out my

watch, clapped it to my ear, wound it up, set it, gave it the hearing

again; displayed my snuff-box, affected to take snuff, that I might

have all opportunity of showing my brilliant, and wiped my nose with

perfumed handkerchief; then dangled my cane, and adjusted my

sword-knot, and acted many more fooleries of the same kind, in hopes of

obtaining the character of a pretty fellow, in the acquiring of which I

found two considerable obstructions in my disposition—namely, a natural

reserve and jealous sensibility. Fain would I have entered into

conversation with the people around me: but I was restrained by the

fear of being censured for my assurance, as well as by reflecting that

I was more entitled to a compliment of this kind from them, than they

to such condescension from a stranger like me. How often did I redden

at the frequent whispers and loud laughter of my fellow beaux, which I

imagined were excited by me; and how often did I envy the happy

indifference of those choice spirits, who behold the distress of the

scene without discovering the least symptom of approbation or concern.

My attention was engaged in spite of myself, and I could not help

weeping with the heroine of the stage, though I practised a great many

shifs to conceal this piece of unpolite weakness.

When the play was ended, I sat waiting for an opportunity of handing

some lady to her coach; but everyone was attended by such a number of

officious gallants, that for a long time I was balked in my

expectation. At length, however, I perceived a very handsome creature,

genteelly dressed, sitting by herself in a box, at some distance from

me; upon which I went up to her, and offered my service. She seemed to

be in some confusion, thanked me for my complaisance, and with a tender

look declined giving me the trouble: looking at her watch, and

testifying her surprise at the negligence of her footman whom she had

ordered to have a chair ready for her at that hour. I repeated my

entreaty with all the eloquence and compliment I was master of; and, in

the event, she was prevailed upon to accept of a proposal I made, to

send my servant for a chair or coach: accordingly, Strap was detached

for that purpose, and returned without success. By this time the

playhouse was quite empty, and we were obliged to retire. As I led her

through the passage, I observed five or six young fellows of fashion

standing in a corner, one of whom, as I thought, tipped my charmer the

wink, and when we were passed, I heard a loud laugh. This note aroused

my attention, and I was resolved to be fully satisfied of this lady’s

character, before I should have any nearer connection with her. As no

convenience appeared, I proposed to conduct her to a tavern, where we

might stay a few minutes, until my servant could fetch a coach from the

Strand. She seemed particularly shy of trusting herself in a tavern

with a stranger, but at last yielded to my pathetic remonstrances,

rather than endanger her health by remaining in a cold, damp

thoroughfare. Having thus far succeeded, I begged to know what wine she

would be pleased to drink a glass of; but she professed the greatest

aversion to all sorts of strong liquors, and it was with much

difficulty that I could persuade her to eat a jelly.

In the meantime, I endeavoured to alleviate the uneasiness she

discovered, by saying all the agreeable things I could think of; at

which she would often sigh, and regard me with a languishing look, that

seemed, however, too near akin to the lewd leer of a courtesan. This

discovery added to my former suspicion, while it put me upon my guard

against her arts, divested me of reserve, and enabled me to entertain

her with gaiety and freedom. In the course of our conversation, I

pressed her to allow me the honour of waiting upon her next day at her

lodgings, a request which she, with many apologues, refused, lest it

should give umbrage to Sir John, who was of a disposition apt to be

fretted with trifles. This information, by which I was to understand

that her husband was a knight, did not check my addresses, which became

more and more importunate, and I was even hardy enough to ravish a

kiss. But, O heavens! instead of banqueting on the ambrosial flavour,

that her delicacy of complexion promised, I was almost suffocated with

the steams of Geneva! An exhalation of this kind, from a mouth which

had just before declared an utter abhorrence of all spirituous liquors,

not only changed my doubts into certainty, but my raptures into

loathing; and it would have been impossible for me to have preserved

common complaisance five minutes longer, when my servant returned with

a coach. I took the advantage of this occasion, and presented my hand

to the lady, who put in practice against me the whole artillery of her

charms, ogling, languishing, sighing, and squeezing, with so little

reserve that Strap perceived her tenderness, and rubbed his hands with

joy as he followed us to the door; but I was proof against all her

endearments, and handed her into the coach with an intention to take my

leave immediately. She guessed my design, and invited me to her house,

whispering, that now Sir John was gone to bed, she could have the

pleasure of my conversation for half-an-hour without interruption. I

told her there was no mortification I would not undergo, rather than

endanger the repose of her ladyship; and, bidding the coachman drive

on, wished her a good night. She lost all temper at my indifference,

and, stopping the coach, at the distance of about twenty yards from me,

popped out her head, and howled with the lungs of a fishwoman, “D—n

you, you dog, won’t you pay the coach-hire?” As I made no answer, she

held forth against me with an eloquence peculiar to herself; calling me

pitifull fellow, scoundrel, and a hundred such appellations; concluding

with an oath, that, for all my appearance, she believed I had got no

money in my pocket.

Having thus vented her indignation, she ordered her coachman to

proceed, and I returned to the tavern, where I bespoke something for

supper, very well pleased at the issue of this adventure. I dispensed

with the attendance of the waiter at table, on pretence that my own

servant was present, and, when we were alone, said to Strap, “Well,

Monsieur d’Estrapes, what d’ye think of this lady?” My friend, who had

not opened his mouth since her departure, could make no other reply

than the monosyllable “Think!” which he pronounced with a note of fear

and astonishment. Surprised at this emphasis, I surveyed my valet, and,

perceiving a wildness in his looks, asked if he had seen his

grandfather’s ghost? “Ghost!” said he, “I am sure I have seen a devil

incarnate! Who would have thought that so much devilish malice and

Billingsgate could lurk under so much sweetness of countenance and

modesty of behaviour? Ah! God help us! Fronti nulla fides—nimium ne

crede colori—but we ought to down on our knees, and bless God for

delivering us from the jaws of that painted sepulchre!” I was pretty

much of Strap’s opinion, and, though I did not believe myself in any

danger from the allurements of that sisterhood, I determined to act

with great circumspection for the future, and shun all commerce of that

kind, as equally prejudicial to my purse and constitution.

My next care was to introduce myself into a set of good acquaintance:

for which purpose I frequented a certain coffee-house, noted for the

resort of good company, English as well as foreigners, where my

appearance procured all the civilities and advances I could desire. As

there was an ordinary in the same house, I went upstairs to dinner with

the other guests, and found myself at a table with thirteen people, the

greatest part of whom were better dressed than myself. The

conversation, which was mostly carried on in French, turned chiefly on

politics; and I soon found the whole company were in the French

interest, myself excepted, and a testy old gentleman, who contradicted

everything that was advanced in favour of his Most Christian Majesty,

with a surliness truly English. But this trusty patriot, who had never

been out of his own country, and drew all his maxims and notions from

prejudice and hearsay, was very unequal to his antagonists, who were

superior to him in learning and experience, and often took the liberty

of travellers in asserting things which were not strictly true, because

they thought themselves in no danger of being detected by him. The

claim of the Queen Of Spain to the Austrian dominions in Italy was

fully explained and vindicated, by a person who sat opposite to me,

and, by the solemnity of his manner and the richness of his apparel,

seemed to be a foreign ambassador. This dissertation produced another

on the Pragmatic Sanction, handled with great warmth by a young

gentleman at my right hand, dressed in a green frock, trimmed with

gold, who justified the French king for his breach of that contract;

and affirmed that he could not have observed it without injuring his

own glory. Although I was not at all convinced by this gentleman’s

arguments, I could not help admiring his vivacity which, I imagined,

must be the effect of his illustrious birth and noble education, and

accordingly rated him, in my conjecture, as a young prince on his

travels. The discourse was afterwards shifted by an old gentleman, of a

very martial appearance, to the last campaign, when the battle of

Dettingen was fought over again, with so many circumstances to the

honour of the French and disadvantages if the Allies, that I began to

entertain some doubts of my having been there in person, and took the

liberty to mention some objections to what he advanced. This freedom

introduced a dispute, which lasted a good while, to the mortification

of all present; and was at last referred to the determination of a

grave person, whom they styled Doctor, and who, under a show of great

moderation, decided it against me, with so little regard to truth, that

I taxed him with partiality in pretty severe terms, to the no small

entertainment of the true English politician, who rejoiced at my

defence of a cause he had so often espoused without success.

My opponent, pleased with the victory he had gained, affected a great

deal of candour, and told me, he should not have been so positive, if

he had not been at great pains to inform himself of each particular.

“Indeed,” said he, “I am convinced that the previous steps considered,

things could not happen otherwise; for we generals who have seen

service, though we may not be on the spot ourselves, know by the least

sketch of the disposition what must be the event.” He then censured,

with great freedom, every circumstance of the conduct of those who

commanded the Allies; from thence made a transition to the ministry,

which he honoured with many invectives for employing people who had

neither experience nor capacity, to the prejudice of old officers, who

had been distinguished for both; dropped many hints of his own

importance, and concluded with observing, that the French and Spaniards

knew better how to value generals of merit; the good effects of which

are seen in the conquests they gain, and the discipline of their

troops, which are at the same time better clothed and paid than any

soldiers in the universe. These remarks furnished the green knight with

an opportunity of launching out in the praise of the French government

in general, civil as well as military; on which occasion he made many

odious comparisons to the disadvantage of the English. Everybody,

almost, assented to the observations he made, and the doctor gave his

sanction, by saying, the people of France were undoubtedly the happiest

subjects in the world. I was so much astonished and confounded at their

infatuation and effrontery, that I had not power to utter one word in

opposition to their assertions; but my morose associate could not put

up with the indignity that was offered to Old England, and therefore

with a satirical grin addressed himself to the general in these words:

“Sir, sir, I have often heard it said, She’s a villainous bird that

befouls her own nest. As for what those people who are foreigners say,

I don’t mind it; they know no better; but you who were bred and born,

and have got your bread, under the English government, should have more

regard to gratitude, as well as truth in censuring your native country.

If the ministry have thought fit to lay you aside, I suppose they have

their own reasons for so doing; and you ought to remember, that you

still live on the bounty of this nation. As for these gentlemen

(meaning the prince and ambassador), who make so free with our

constitution, laws, and genius of our people, I think they might show a

little more respect for their benefactors, who, I must own, are to

blame in harbouring and protecting, and encouraging such ungrateful

vagrants as they are.” At these words, the chevalier in green started

up in a great passion, and laying his hand on the hilt of his hanger,

exclaimed, “Ah! foutre!” The Englishman on the other hand, grasping his

cane cried, “Don’t foutre me, sirrah, or by G—d I’ll knock you down.”

The company interposed, the Frenchman sat down again, and his

antagonist proceeded—“Lookey, Monsieur, you know very well that had you

dared to speak so freely of the administration of your own country in

Paris as you have done of ours in London, you would have been sent to

the Bastille without ceremony, where you might have rotted in a

dungeon, and never seen the light of the sun again. Now, sir, take my

word for it, although our constitution screens us from such oppression,

we want not laws to chastise the authors of seditious discourse, and if

I hear another syllable out of your mouth in contempt or prejudice of

this kingdom, I will give you a convincing proof of what I advance, and

have you laid by the heels for your presumption.” This declaration had

an effect on the company as sudden as surprising. The young prince

became as supple as a spaniel, the ambassador trembled, the general sat

silent and abashed, and the doctor, who it seems, had felt the rod of

power, grew pale as death, and assured us all, that he had no intention

to affront any person or people. “Your principles, doctor,” resumed the

old gentleman, “are no secret—I have nothing to say upon that head; but

am very much surprised, that a man who despises us so much, should

notwithstanding live among us, when he has no visible motive for so

doing. Why don’t you take up your habitation in your beloved France,

where you may rail at England without censure?” To this remonstrance

the doctor thought proper to make no reply, and an unsocial silence

ensued; which I perceiving, took notice, that it was pity such idle

disputes, maintained very often through whim or diversion, should

create any misunderstanding among gentlemen of good sense, and proposed

to drink down all animosity in another bottle.

This motion was applauded by the whole company. The wine was brought,

and the English champion, declaring he had no spleen against any man

for differing in opinion from him, any more than for difference of

complexion, drank to the good health of all present; the compliment was

returned, and the conversation once more became unreserved though more

general than before. Among other topics, the subject of war was

introduced, on which the general declaimed with great eloquence,

recounting many of his own exploits by way of illustration. In the

course of his harangue he happened to mention the word epaulement, upon

which the testy gentleman asked the meaning, of that term. “I’ll tell

you what an epaulement is,” replied he, “I never saw an epaulement but

once, and that was at the siege of Namur. In a council of war, Monsieur

Cohorn, the famous engineer, affirmed that the place could not be

taken.” “Yes,” said the Prince of Vandemont, “it may be taken by an

epaulement.” “This was immediately put into execution, and in

twenty-four hours Mareschal Boufflers was fain to capitulate.” Here he

made a full stop, and the old gentleman repeated the question, “But

pray what is an epaulement?” To this interrogation the officer made no

immediate reply, but rang the bell, and called for the bill, which

being brought, he threw down his proportion of the reckoning, and,

telling the company he would show them an epaulement when his majesty

should think fit to entrust him with the command of our army abroad,

strutted away with great dignity. I could not imagine why he was so shy

of explaining one of the most simple terms of fortification, which I

forthwith described as a side-work composed of earth, gabions, or

fascines; but I was very much surprised when I afterwards understood

that his reserve proceeded from his ignorance.

Having paid our bill, we adjourned to the coffee-room, where my

fellow-labourer insisted on treating me with a dish, giving me to

understand, at the same time, that I had acquired his good opinion,

both with respect to my principles and understanding. I thanked him for

his compliment, and, professing myself an utter stranger in this part

of the world, begged he would have the goodness to inform me of the

quality and characters of the people who dined above. This request was

a real favour to one of his disposition, which was no less

communicative than curious; he therefore complied with great

satisfaction, and told me, to my extreme astonishment, that the

supposed young prince was a dancer at one of the theatres, and the

ambassador no other than a fiddler belonging to the opera. “The

doctor,” said he “is a Roman Catholic priest, who sometimes appears in

the character of an officer, and assumes the name of captain; but more

generally takes the garb, title, and behaviour of a physician, in which

capacity he wheedles himself into the confidence of weak-minded people,

and by arguments no less specious than false, converts them from their

religion and allegiance. He has been in the hands of justice more than

once for such practices, but he is a sly dog, and manages matters with

so much craft, that hitherto he has escaped for a short imprisonment.

As for the general, you may see he has owed his promotion more to his

interest than his capacity; and, now that the eyes of the ministry are

opened, his friends dead or become inconsiderable, he is struck off the

list, and obliged to put up with a yearly pension. In consequence of

this reduction, he is become malcontent, and inveighs against the

government in all companies, with so little discretion, that I am

surprised at the lenity of the administration, in overlooking his

insolence, but the truth of the matter is, he owes his safety to his

weakness and want of importance. He has seen a little, and but a

little, service, and yet, if you will take his word to it, there has

not been a great action performed in the field since the Revolution, in

which he was not principally concerned. When a story is told of any

great general, he immediately matches it with one of himself, though he

is often unhappy in his invention, and commits such gross blunders in

the detail, that everybody is in pain for him. Caesar, Pompey, and

Alexander the Great, are continually in his mouth; and, as he reads a

good deal without any judgment to digest it, his ideas are confused,

and his harangues as unintelligible as infinite; for, if once he begin,

there is no chance of his leaving off speaking while one person remains

to yield attention; therefore the only expedient I know, for putting a

stop to his loquacity, is to lay hold of some incongruity he has

uttered, and demand an explanation; or ask the meaning of some

difficult term that he knows by name; this method will effectually put

him to silence, if not to flight, as it happened when I inquired about

an epaulement. Had he been acquainted with the signification of that

word, his triumph would have been intolerable, and we must have quitted

the field first, or been worried with impertinence.”

Having thus gratified my curiosity, the old gentleman began to discover

his own, in questions relating to myself, to which I thought proper to

return ambiguous answers. “I presume, Sir,” said he, “you have

travelled.” I answered, “Yes.” “I dare say you have found it very

expensive,” said he. I replied, “To be sure, one cannot travel without

money.” “That I know by experience,” said he, “for I myself take a trip

to Bath or Tunbridge every season; and one must pay sauce for what he

has on the road, as well in other countries as in this. That’s a pretty

stone in your ring—give me leave, sir—the French have attained to a

wonderful skill in making compositions of this kind. Why, now, this

looks almost as well as a diamond.” “Almost as well, Sir!” said I, “Why

not altogether? I am sure if you understand anything of jewels, you

must perceive, at first sight, that this stone is a real diamond, and

that of a very fine water. Take it in your hand and examine it.” He did

so with some confusion, and returned it, saying, “I ask your pardon; I

see it is a true brilliant of immense value.” I imagined his respect to

me increased after this inquiry; therefore to captivate his esteem the

more, I told him, I would show him a seal of composition, engraved

after a very valuable antique; upon which I pulled out my watch with a

rich gold chain, adorned with three seals set in gold, and an opal

ring. He viewed each of them with great eagerness, handled the chain,

admired the chased case, and observed that the whole must have cost me

a vast sum of money. I affected indifference, and replied in a careless

manner, “Some trifle of sixty or seventy guineas.” He stared in my face

for some time, and then asked if I was an Englishman? I answered in the

negative. “You are from Ireland then, Sir, I presume,” said he. I made

the same reply. “Oh! perhaps,” said he “you were born in one of our

settlements abroad.” I still answered No. He seemed very much

surprised, and said, he was sure I was not a foreigner. I made no

reply, but left him upon the tenter-hooks of impatient uncertainty. He

could not contain his anxiety, but asked pardon for the liberties he

had taken and, to encourage me the more to disclose my situation,

displayed his own without reserve. “I am,” said he, “a single man, have

a considerable annuity, on which I live according to my inclination,

and make the ends of the year meet very comfortably. As I have no

estate to leave behind, I am not troubled with the importunate

officiousness of relations or legacy hunters, and I consider the world

as made for me, not me for the world. It is my maxim, therefore, to

enjoy it while I can, and let futurity shift for itself.”

While he thus indulged his own talkative vein, and at the same time, no

doubt, expected retaliation from me, a young man entered, dressed in

black velvet and an enormous tie-wig, with an air in which natural

levity and affected solemnity were so jumbled together, that on the

whole he appeared a burlesque on all decorum. This ridiculous oddity

danced up to the table at which we sat, and, after a thousand grimaces,

asked my friend by the name of Mr. Medlar, if we were not engaged upon

business. My companion put on a surly countenance, and replied “No

great business, doctor—but however—” “Oh! then,” cried the physician;

“I must beg your indulgence a little; pray pardon me, gentlemen.”

“Sir,” said he, addressing himself to me, “your most humble servant. I

hope you will forgive me, sir—I must beg the favour to sit—sir—sir—I

have something of consequence to impart to my friend Mr. Medlar—sir, I

hope you will excuse my freedom in whispering, sir,” Before I had time

to give this complaisant person my permission, Mr. Medlar cried, “I’ll

have no whispering—if you have anything to say to me, speak with an

audible voice.” The doctor seemed a little disconcerted at this

exclamation, and, turning again to me, made a thousand apologies for

pretending to make a mystery of anything, a piece of caution which he

said was owing to his ignorance of my connection with Mr. Medlar; but

now he understood I was a friend, and would communicate what he had to

say in my hearing. He then began, after two or three hems, in this

manner: “You must know, sir, I am just come from dinner at my Lady

Flareit’s (then addressing himself to me), a lady of quality, sir, at

whose table I have the honour of dining sometimes. There was Lady

Stately and my Lady Larum, and Mrs. Dainty, and Miss Biddy Giggler,

upon my word, a very good-natured young lady, with a very pretty

fortune sir. There was also my Lord Straddle. Sir John Shrug, and

Master Billy Chatter, who is actually a very facetious young gentleman.

So, sir, her ladyship seeing me excessively fatigued, for she was the

last of fifteen patients (people of distinction, sir) whom I had

visited this forenoon, insisted upon my staying dinner, though upon my

word I protest I had no appetite; however, in compliance with her

ladyship’s request, sir, I sat down, and the conversation turning on

different subjects, among other things, Mr Chatter asked very earnestly

when I saw Mr. Medlar. I told him I had not had the pleasure of seeing

you these nineteen hours and a half; for you may remember, sir, it was

nearly about that time; I won’t be positive as to a minute.” “No,” says

he, “then I desire you will go to his lodgings immediately after

dinner, and see what’s the matter with him, for he must certainly be

very bad from having eaten last night such a vast quantity of raw

oysters.” The crusty gentleman, who, from the solemnity of his

delivery, expected something extraordinary, no sooner heard his

conclusion, than he started up in a testy humour, crying, “Pshaw,

pshaw! D—n your oysters!” and walked away, after a short compliment of,

“Your servant sir,” to me. The doctor got up also, saying, “I vow and

protest, upon my word, I am actually amazed;” and followed Mr. Medlar

to the bar, which was hard by, where he was paying for his coffee:

there he whispered so loud that I could overhear, “Pray who is this

gentleman?” His friend replied hastily, “I might have known that before

now, if it had not been for your impertinent intrusion,”—and walked off

very much disappointed. The ceremonious physician returned immediately

and sat down by me, asking a thousand pardons for leaving me alone: and

giving me to understand that what he had communicated to Mr. Medlar at

the bar, was an affair of the last importance, that would admit of no

delay. He then called for some coffee, and launched out into the

virtues of that berry, which, he said, in cold phlegmatic

constitutions, like his, dried up the superfluous moisture, and braced

the relaxed nerves. He told me it was utterly unknown to the ancients;

and derived its name from an Arabian word, which I might easily

perceive by the sound and termination. From this topic he transferred

his disquisitions to the verb drink, which he affirmed was improperly

applied to the taking of coffee, inasmuch as people did not drink, but

sip or sipple that liquor; that the genuine meaning of drinking is to

quench one’s thirst, or commit a debauch by swallowing wine; that the

Latin word, which conveyed the same idea, was bibere or potare, and

that of the Greeks pinein or poteein, though he was apt to believe they

were differently used on different occasions: for example—to drink a

vast quantity, or, as the vulgar express it, to drink an ocean of

liquor, was in Latin potare, and in Greek poteein; and, on the other

hand, to use it moderately, was bibere and pinein;—that this was only a

conjecture of his, which, however, seemed to be supported by the word

bibulous, which is particularly applied to the pores of the skin, and

can only drink a very small quantity of the circumambient moisture, by

reason of the smallness of their diameters;—whereas, from the verb

poteein is derived the substantive potamos, which signifies a river, or

vast quantity of liquor. I could not help smiling at this learned and

important investigation; and, to recommend myself the more to my new

acquaintance, whose disposition I was by this time well informed of, I

observed that, what he alleged, did not, to the best of my remembrance,

appear in the writings of the ancients; for Horace uses the words poto

and bibo indifferently for the same purpose, as in the twentieth Ode of

his first Book.

“Vile potabis modicis sabinum cantharis—

—Et prœlo domitam caleno tu bibes uvam.”

That I had never heard of the verb \_poteein\_, but that \_potamos,

potema\_, and \_potos\_, were derived from \_pino, poso, pepoka\_, in

consequence of which, the Greek poets never use any other word for

festal drinking. Homer describes Nestor at his cups in these words,

“Nestora d’ouk elathen iache \_pinonta\_ perempes.”

And Anacreon mentions it on the same occasion always in every page.

“\_Pinonti\_ de oinon hedun.

Otan \_pino\_ ton oinon.

Opliz’ ego de \_pino\_.”

And in a thousand other places. The doctor who doubtless intended by

his criticism to give me a high idea of his erudition, was infinitely

surprised to find himself schooled by one of my appearance; and after a

considerable pause cried, “Upon my word, you are in the right, sir—I

find I have not considered this affair with my usual accuracy.” Then,

accosting me in Latin, which he spoke very well, the conversation was

maintained full two hours, on a variety of subjects, in that language;

and indeed he spoke so judiciously, that I was convinced,

notwithstanding his whimsical appearance and attention to trifles, that

he was a man of extensive knowledge, especially in books; he looked

upon me, as I afterwards understood from Mr. Medlar, as a prodigy in

learning, and proposed that very night, if I were not engaged, to

introduce me to several young gentlemen of fortune and fashion, with

whom I had an appointment at the Bedford coffee house.

CHAPTER XLVI

Wagtail introduces me to a set of fine Gentlemen with whom I spend the

Evening at a Tavern—our Conversation—the Characters of my new

Companions—the Doctor is roasted—our Issue of our Debauch

I accepted his offer with pleasure, and we went thither in a hackney

coach where I saw a great number of gay figures fluttering about, most

of whom spoke to the doctor with great familiarity. Among the rest

stood a group of them round the fire whom I immediately knew to be the

very persons who had the night before, by their laughing, alarmed my

suspicion of the lady who had put herself under my protection. They no

sooner perceived me enter with Dr. Wagtail (for that was my companion’s

name) than they tittered and whispered one to another, and I was not a

little surprised to find that they were the gentlemen to whose

acquaintance he designed to recommend me; for, when he observed them

together, he told me who they were, and desired to know by what name he

should introduce me. I satisfied him in that particular, and he

advanced with great gravity, saying, “Gentlemen, your most obedient

servant:—give me leave to introduce my friend Mr. Random to your

society.” Then, turning to me, “Mr. Random, this is Mr. Bragwell—Mr.

Banter, sir—Mr. Chatter—my friend Mr. Slyboot, and Mr. Ranter sir.” I

saluted each of then in order, and when I came to take Mr. Slyboot by

the hand, I perceived him thrust his tongue in his cheek, to the no

small entertainment of the company; but I did not think proper to take

any notice of it on this occasion. Mr. Ranter too (who I afterwards

learned was a player) displayed his talents, by mimicking my air,

features, and voice, while he returned my compliment: this feat I

should not have been so sensible of, had I not seen him behave in the

same manner to my friend Wagtail, when he made up to them at first. But

for once I let him enjoy the fruits of his dexterity without question

or control, resolved however to chastise his insolence at a more

convenient opportunity. Mr. Slyboot, guessing I was a stranger, asked

if I had been lately in France? and when I answered in the affirmative,

inquired if I had seen the Luxembourg Gallery? I told him I had

considered it more than once with great attention: upon this a

conversion ensued, in which I discovered him to be a painter.

While we were discoursing upon the particulars of this famous

performance, I overheard Banter ask Dr. Wagtail, where he had picked up

this Mr. Random. To which question the physician answered, “Upon my

word, a mighty pretty sort of a gentleman—a man of fortune, sir—he has

made the grand tour, and seen the best company in Europe, air.” “What,

he told you so, I suppose?” said the other: “I take him to be neither

more nor less than a French valet-de-chambre.” “O barbarous,

barbarous!” cried the doctor; “this is actually, upon my word,

altogether unaccountable. I know all his family perfectly well, sir; he

is of the Randoms of the north—a very ancient house sir, and a distant

relation of mine.” I was extremely nettled at the conjecture of Mr.

Banter, and began to entertain a very indifferent opinion of my company

in general; but, as I might possibly by their means acquire a more

extensive and agreeable acquaintance, I determined to bear these little

mortifications as long as I could without injuring the dignity of my

character. After having talked for some time on the weather, plays,

politics, and other coffee-house subjects, it was proposed that we

should spend the evening at a noted tavern in the neighbourhood,

whither we repaired in a body.

Having taken possession of a room, called for French wine, and bespoke

supper, the glass went about pretty freely, and the characters of my

associates opened upon me more and more. It soon appeared that the

doctor was entertained as butt for the painter and player to exercise

their wit upon, for the diversion of the company. Mr. Ranter began the

game by asking him what was good for a hoarseness, lowness of spirits,

and in digestion, for he was troubled with all these complaints to a

very great degree. Wagtail immediately undertook to explain the nature

of his case, and in a very prolix manner harangued upon prognostics,

diagnostics, symptomatics, therapeutics, inanition, and repletion; then

calculated the force of the stomach and lungs in their respective

operations; ascribed the player’s malady to a disorder in these organs,

proceeding from hard drinkings and vociferations, and prescribed a

course of stomachics, with abstinence from venery, wine, loud speaking,

laughing, singing, coughing, sneezing, or hallooing. “Pah, pah!” cried

Ranter, interrupting him, “the remedy is worse than the disease—I wish

I knew where to find some tinder water.” “Tinder water!” said the

doctor; “Upon my word, I don’t apprehend you, Mr. Ranter.” “Water

extracted from tinder,” replied the other, “a universal specific for

all distempers incident to man. It was invented by a learned German

monk, who, for a valuable consideration, imparted the secret to

Paracelsus.” “Pardon me,” cried the painter, “it was first used by

Solomon, as appears by a Greek manuscript in his civil handwriting,

lately found at the foot of Mount Lebanon, by a peasant who was digging

for potatoes—” “Well,” said Wagtail, “in all my vast reading, I never

met with such a preparation! neither did I know till this minute, that

Solomon understood Greek, or that potatoes grew in Palestine.”

Here Banter interposed, saying, he was surprised that Dr. Wagtail

should make the least doubt of Solomon’s understanding Greek, when he

is represented to us as the wisest and best-educated prince in the

world; and as for potatoes, they were transplanted thither from

Ireland, in the time of the Crusade, by some knights of that country.

“I profess,” said the doctor, “there is nothing more likely. I would

actually give a vast sum for a sight of that manuscript, which must be

inestimable; and, if I understood the process, would set about it

immediately.” The player assured him the process was very simple—that

he must cram a hundred-weight of dry tinder into a glass retort, and,

distilling it by the force of animal heat, it would yield half a

scruple of insipid water, one drop of which is a full dose. “Upon my

integrity!” exclaimed the incredulous doctor, “this is very amazing and

extraordinary! that a caput mortuum should yield any water at all. I

must own I have always been an enemy to specifics which I thought

inconsistent with the nature of the animal economy; but certainly the

authority of Solomon is not to be questioned. I wonder where I shall

find a glass retort large enough to contain such a vast quantity of

tinder, the consumption of which must, undoubtedly, raise the price of

paper, or where shall I find animal heat sufficient even to warm such a

mass?” Slyboot informed him, that he might have a retort blown for him

as big as a church: and, that the easiest method of raising the vapour

by animal heat, would be to place it in the middle of an infirmary for

feverish patients, who might be upon mattresses around and in contact

with it. He had he sooner pronounced these words, than Wagtail

exclaimed in a rapture, “An admirable expedient, as I hope to be saved!

I will positively put it in practice.”

This simplicity of the physician furnished excellent diversion for the

company, who, in their turns, sneered at him in ironical compliments,

which his vanity swallowed as the genuine sentiments of their hearts.

Mr. Chatter, impatient of so long a silence, now broke out and

entertained us with a catalogue of all the people who danced at the

last Hampstead assembly, with a most circumstantial account of the

dress and ornaments of each, from the lappets of the ladies to the

shoe-buckles of the men; concluding with telling Bragwell, that his

mistress Melinda was there, and seemed to miss him: and soliciting his

company at the next occasion of that kind.

“No, d—mm,” said Bragwell, “I have something else to mind than dangling

after a parcel of giddy-headed girls; besides, you know my temper is so

unruly, that I am apt to involve myself in scrapes when a woman is

concerned. The last time I was there, I had an affair with Tom

Trippit.” “Oh! I remember that!” cried Banter; “You lugged out before

the ladies; and I commend you for so doing, because you had an

opportunity of showing your manhood without running any risk.” “Risk!”

said the other with a fierce countenance, “d—n my blood! I fear no

risks. I an’t afraid of lugging out against any man that wears a head,

d—me! ’Tis well known that I have drawn blood more than once, and lost

some too; but what does that signify?” The player begged this champion

to employ him as his second the next time he intended to kill, for he

wanted to see a man die of a stab, that he might know how to act such

an art the more naturally on the stage. “Die!” replied the hero: “No,

by G—! I know better things than to incur the verdict of a Middlesex

jury—I should look upon my fencing-master to be an ignorant son of a

b—h, if he had not taught me to prick any of my antagonist’s body that

I please to disable.” “Oho!” cried Slyboot, “if that be the case, I

have a favour to ask. You must know I am employed to paint a Jesus on

the cross; and my purpose is to represent him at that point of time

when the spear is thrust into his side. Now I should be glad if you

would, in my presence, pink some impertinent fellow into convulsions,

without endangering his life, that I may have an opportunity of taking

a good clever agony from nature: the doctor will direct you where to

enter and how far to go, but pray let it be as near the left side as

possible.” Wagtail, who took this proposal seriously, observed, that it

would be a very difficult matter to penetrate into the left side of the

thorax without hurting the heart, and in consequence killing the

patient; but he believed it was possible for a man of a very nice hand

and exact knowledge of anatomy, to wound the diaphragma somewhere about

the skirts, which might induce a singultus, without being attended with

death: that he was ready to demonstrate the insertion of that muscle to

Mr. Bragwell; but desired to have no concern with the experiment, which

might essentially prejudice his reputation, in case of a miscarriage.

Bragwell was as much imposed upon by the painter’s waggery as the

doctor, and declined engaging in the affair, saying he held a very

great regard for Mr. Slyboot, but had laid it down as a maxim, never to

fight except when his honour was engaged. A thousand jokes of this kind

were uttered; the wine circulated, supper was served in, we ate

heartily, returned to the bottle, Bragwell became noisy and

troublesome, Banter grew more and more severe, Ranter rehearsed,

Slyboot made faces at the whole company, I sang French catches, and

Chatter kissed me with great affection; while the doctor, with a wofull

countenance, sat silent like a disciple of Pythagoras. At length, it

was proposed by Bragwell, that we should scour the hundreds, sweat the

constable, maul the watch, and then reel soberly to bed.

While we deliberated upon this expedition, the waiter came into the

room, and asked for Doctor Wagtail: when he understood he was present,

he told him there was a lady below to inquire for him, at which message

the physician started from his melancholy contemplation, and, with a

look of extreme confusion, assured the company he could not possibly be

the person wanted, for he had no connection with any lady whatever, and

bade the drawer tell her so. “For shame!” cried Banter; “would you be

so impolite as to refuse a lady a hearing? perhaps she comes for a

consultation. It must be some extraordinary affair that brings a lady

to a tavern at this time of night. Mr. Ranter, pray do the doctor’s

base-mains to the lady, and squire her hither.” The player immediately

staggered out, and returned, leading in with much ceremony, a tall

strapping wench, whose appearance proclaimed her occupation. We

received her with the utmost solemnity, and with a good deal of

entreaty she was persuaded to sit, when a profound silence ensued,

during which she fixed her eyes, with a disconsolate look, upon the

doctor, who was utterly confounded at her behaviour, and returned her

melancholy fourfold; at length, after a good many piteous sighs, she

wiped her eyes, and accosted him thus: “What! not one word of comfort?

Will nothing soften that stony heart of thine? Not all my tears! not

all my affliction! not the inevitable ruin thou hast brought upon me!

Where are thy vows, thou faithless, perjured man? Hast thou no

honour—no conscience—no remorse for thy perfidious conduct towards me?

Answer me, wilt thou at last do me justice, or must I have recourse to

heaven or hell for my revenge?” If poor Wagtail was amazed before she

spoke, what must his confusion be on hearing this address! His natural

paleness changed into a ghastly clay colour, his eyes rolled, his lip

trembled, and he answered in an accent not to be described, “Upon my

word, honour, and salvation, madam, you are actually mistaken in my

person. I have a most particular veneration for your sex, and, am

actually incapable of injuring any lady in the smallest degree, madam;

besides, madam, to the best of my recollection, I never had the honour

of seeing you before, as I hope to be saved, madam!” “How, traitor!”

cried she, “dost thou disown me then? Mistaken! no, too well I know

that fair bewitching face! too well I know that false enchanting

tongue! Alas! gentlemen, since the villain compels me by his

unkindness, to expose myself and him, know that this betrayer, under

the specious pretence of honourable addresses, won my heart, and taking

advantage of his conquest, robbed me of my virgin treasure, and

afterwards abandoned me to my fate! I am now four months gone with

child by him, turned out of doors by my relations, and left a prey to

misery and want! Yes, thou barbarian,” said she, turning to Wagtail,

“thou tiger, thou succubus! too well thou knowest my situation. But I

will tear out thy faithless heart, and deliver the world from such a

monster.” So saying, she sprang forward at the doctor, who with

incredible agility, jumped over the table, and ran behind Bragwell,

while the rest of us endeavoured to appease the furious heroine.

Although everybody in the company affected the utmost surprise, I could

easily perceive it was a scheme concerted among them to produce

diversion at the doctor’s expense, and being under no concern about the

consequence, I entered into the confederacy, and enjoyed the distress

of Wagtail, who with tears in his eyes begged the protection of the

company, declaring himself as innocent of the crime laid to his charge

as the foetus in utero; and hinting at the same time, that nature had

not put it in his power to be guilty of such a trespass. “Nature!”

cried the lady, “there was no nature in the case; he abused me by the

help of charms and spells; else how is it possible that any woman could

have listened to the addresses of such a scarecrow? Were these owlish

eyes made for ogling; that carrion complexion to be admired; or that

mouth, like a horse-shoe, to be kissed? No, no, you owe your success to

your philtres, to your drugs and incantations; and not to your natural

talents, which are, in every respect, mean and contemptible.”

The doctor thought he had got an opportunity of vindicating himself

effectually; and desired the complainant to compose herself but for

half-an-hour, in which he undertook to prove the absurdity of believing

in the power of incantations, which were only idle dreams of ignorance

and superstition. He accordingly pronounced a very learned discourse

upon the nature of ideas, the power and independence of the mind, the

properties of stimulating medicines, the difference between a proneness

to venery, which many simples would create, and a passion limited to

one object, which can only be the result of sense and reflection; and

concluded with a pathetic remonstrance, setting forth his unhappiness

in being persecuted with the resentment of a lady whom he had never

injured, nor even seen before that occasion, and whose faculties were,

in all likelihood, so much impaired by her misfortunes that an innocent

person was in danger of being ruined by her disorder. He had no sooner

finished his harangue, than the forlorn princess renewed her

lamentations, and cautioned the company against his eloquence, which,

she said, was able to bias the most impartial bench in Christendom.

Ranter advised him to espouse her immediately, as the only means to

save his reputation, and offered to accompany him to the Fleet for that

purpose; but Slyboot proposed that a father should be purchased for the

child, and a comfortable alimony settled on the mother. Ranter promised

to adopt the infant gratis. Wagtail was ready to worship him for his

generosity, and, though he persisted in protesting his innocence,

condescended to everything rather than his unblemished character should

be called into question. The lady rejected the proposal, and insisted

on matrimony. Bragwell took up the cudgels for the doctor, and

undertook to rid him of her importunity for half-a-guinea; upon which

Wagtail, with great eagerness, pulled out his purse, and put it into

the hand of his friend, who, taking half a piece out of it, gave it to

the plaintiff, and bade her thank God for her good fortune. When she

had received this bounty, she affected to weep, and begged, since the

physician had renounced her, he would at least vouchsafe her a parting

kiss; this he was prevailed upon to grant with great reluctance, and

went up with his usual solemnity to salute her, when she laid hold of

his cheek with her teeth, and held fast, while he roared with anguish,

to the unspeakable diversion of all present. When she thought proper to

release him, she dropped a low courtesy to the company, and quitted the

room, leaving the doctor in the utmost horror, not so much on account

of the pain, as the apprehension of the consequence of the bite; for,

by this time, he was convinced of her being mad. Banter prescribed the

actual cautery, and put the poker in the fire to be heated, in order to

sear the place. The player was of opinion that Bragwell should scoop

out the part affected with the point of his sword; but the painter

prevented both these dreadful operations by recommending a balsam he

had in his pocket, which never failed to cure the bite of a mad dog; so

saying, he pulled out a small bladder of black paint, with which he

instantly anointed not only the sore, but the greatest part of the

patient’s face, and left it in a frightful condition. In short, the

poor creature was so harassed with fear and vexation, that I pitied him

extremely, and sent him home in a chair, contrary to the inclination of

everybody present.

This freedom of mine gave umbrage to Bragwell, who testified his

displeasure by swearing a few threats, without making any application;

which, being perceived by Slyboot, who sat by me, he, with a view of

promoting a quarrel, whispered to me, that he thought Bragwell used me

very ill, but every man was the best judge of his own affairs. I

answered aloud, that I would neither suffer Mr. Bragwell nor him to use

me ill with impunity; and that I stood in no need of his counsel in

regard to the regulation of my conduct. He thought proper to ask a

thousand pardons, and assure me he meant no offence; while Bragwell

feigned himself asleep, that he might not be obliged to take notice of

what passed. But the player, who had more animal spirits and less

discretion than Slyboot, unwilling to let the affair rest where he had

dropped it, jogged Mr. Bragwell and told him softly that I had called

him names, and threatened to cudgel him. This particular I understood

by his starting, up and crying, “Blood and wounds, you lie! No man

durst treat me so ignominiously. Mr. Random, did you call me names, and

threaten to drub me?” I denied the imputation, and proposed to punish

the scoundrel who endeavoured to foment disturbance in the company.

Bragwell signified his approbation, and drew his sword; I did the same,

and accosted the actor in these words: “Lookee, Mr. Ranter; I know you

possess all the mimicry and mischievous qualities of an ape, because I

have observed you put them all in practice more than once to-night, on

me and others; now I want to see if you resemble one in nimbleness

also; therefore, I desire you leap over this sword without hesitation.”

So saying, I held it parallel to the horizon, at the distance of about

three feet from the floor, and called, “Once-twice-thrice—and away!”

but, instead of complying with my demand, he snatched his hat and

hanger, and, assuming the looks, swagger, and phrase of Pistol, burst

out into the following exclamation, “Ha! must I then perform inglorious

prank of sylvan ape in mountain forest caught! Death rock me asleep,

abridge my doleful days, and lay my head in fury’s lap—Have we not

Hiren here?” This buffoonery did not answer his expectation, for, by

this time, the company was bent on seeing him in a new character. Mr.

Banter desired me to hold my sword a foot or two higher, that he might

have the better opportunity of exerting himself. The painter told him,

if he performed well, he would recommend him as a vaulter to the

proprietors of Sadler’s Wells; and Bragwell crying, “Leap for the

King!” applied the point of his sword to the player’s posteriors with

such success, that he sprang over in a trice, and, finding the door

unguarded, vanished in a twinkling; glad, no doubt, of having paid his

share of the reckoning so easily.

It being now near two o’clock in the morning, we discharged the bill,

and sallied out into the street. The painter slunk away without taking

his leave. Billy Chatter, being unable to speak or stand, was sent to a

bagnio; and Banter and I accompanied Bragwell to Moll King’s

coffee-house, where after he had kicked half a dozen hungry whores, we

left him asleep on a bench, and directed our course towards

Charing-cross, near which place both he and I lodged.

The natural dryness of my companion being overcome by liquor, he

honoured me by the way with many compliments and professions, of

friendship, for which I made suitable acknowledgments, and told him I

thought myself happy in having, by my behaviour, removed the

unfavourable opinion he entertained of me at first sight. He was

surprised at this declaration, and begged me to explain myself; upon

which I mentioned what I had overheard him say of me to Wagtail in the

coffee-house. He laughed, and made an apology for his freedom, assuring

me, that my appearance had very much prepossessed him in my favour; and

what he said was only intended as a joke on the doctor’s solemnity. I

was highly pleased at being undeceived in this particular, and not a

little proud of the good opinion of this wit, who shook me by the hand

at parting, and promised to meet me the next day at the ordinary.

CHAPTER XLVII

Strap communicates to me a conquest he had made of a Chandler’s

Widow—finds himself miserably mistaken—I go to the Opera—admire

Melinda—am cautioned by Banter—go to the Assembly at Hampstead—dance

with that young lady—receive an insolent message from Bragwell, whose

mettle is soon cooled—am in favour with my Mistress, whom I visit next

day, and am bubbled out of eighteen guineas at cards—Strap triumphs at

my success, but is astonished at my expense—Banter comes to my lodging,

is very sarcastic at my expense, and borrows five guineas from me, as a

proof of his friendship

In the morning, before I got up, Strap came into my chamber, and,

finding me awake, hemmed several times, scratched his head, cast his

eyes upon the ground, and, with a very foolish kind of simper upon his

face gave me to understand he had something to communicate. “By your

countenance,” said I, “I expect to hear good tidings.” “Indifferently,”

replied he, tittering, “that is, hereafter as it shall be. You must

know, I have some thoughts of altering my condition.” “What!” cried I,

astonished, “a matrimonial scheme? O rare Strap! thou hast got the

heels of me at last.” “N—no less, I assure you,” said he, bursting into

a laugh of self-approbation: “a tallow chandler’s widow that lives hard

by, has taken a liking to me, a fine jolly dame, as plump as a

partridge. She has a well-furnished house, a brisk trade, and a good

deal of the ready. I may have her for the asking. She told a friend of

mine, a brother footman, that she would take me out of a stinking

clout. But I refused to give my final answer, till I knew your opinion

of the matter.” I congratulated Monsieur d’Estrapes upon his conquest,

and approved of the scheme, provided he could be assured of those

circumstances of her fortune; but advised him to do nothing rashly, and

give me an opportunity of seeing the lady before matters should be

brought to a conclusion. He assured me he would do nothing without my

consent and approbation, and that very morning, while I was at

breakfast, introduce his inamorata to my acquaintance. She was a short

thick woman, about the age of thirty-six, and had a particular

prominence of belly, which I perceived at first sight, not without some

suspicion of foul play. I desired her, however, to sit, and treated her

with a dish of tea; the discourse turning on the good qualities of

Strap, whom I represented as a prodigy of sobriety, industry and

virtue. When she took her leave, he followed her to the door, and

returned licking his lips, and asking if I did not think she was a

luscious creature. I made no mystery of my apprehension, but declared

my sentiments of her without reserve; at which he was not surprised,

telling me he had observed the same symptom, but was informed by his

friend that she was only livergrown and would in few months be as small

in the waist as ever. “Yes,” said I, “a few weeks, I believe, will do

the business. In short, Strap, it is my opinion, that you are

egregiously imposed upon; and that this friend is no other than a

rascal who wants to palm his trull upon you for a wife, that he may at

once deliver himself from the importunities of the mother and the

expense of her bantling; for which reason I would not have you trust

implicitly to the report he makes of her wealth, which is inconsistent

with his behaviour, nor run your head precipitately into a noose, that

you may afterwards wish exchanged for the hangman’s.” He seemed very

much startled at my insinuation, and promised to look twice before he

leaped; saying, with some heat, “Odds, if I find his intention is to

betray me, we shall see which of us is the better man.” My prediction

was verified in less than a fortnight, her great belly producing an

infant, to the unspeakable amazement of Strap, who was before this

happened, inclinable to believe I had refined a little too much in my

penetration. His false friend disappeared; and a few days after an

execution was issued against her goods and household furniture, which

were seized by the creditors.

Meanwhile I met my friend Banter at the ordinary, and in the evening

went to the Opera with him and Mr Chatter, who pointed out Melinda in

one of the boxes, and offered to introduce me to her, observing at the

same time, that she was a reigning toast worth ten thousand pounds.

This piece of information made my heart bound with joy, and I

discovered great eagerness to accept the proposal; upon which he

assured me I should dance with her at the next assembly, if he had any

influence in that quarter: so saying, he went round, spoke to her some

minutes, and, as I imagined, pointed at me; then returning, told me, to

my inexpressible pleasure, that I might depend upon what he had

promised, for she was now engaged as my partner. Banter in a whisper,

gave me to understand that she was an incorrigible coquette, who would

grant the same favour to any young fellow in England of a tolerable

appearance, merely to engage him among the herd of her admirers, that

she might have the pleasure of seeing them daily increase; that she was

of a cold insensible disposition, dead to every passion but vanity, and

so blind to merit, that he would lay any wager the wealthiest fool

would carry her at last. I attributed a good deal of this intelligence

to the satirical turn of my friend, or resentment for having himself

suffered a rebuff from the lady in question, and, at any rate, trusted

so much to my own accomplishments as to believe no woman could resist

the ardour of my addresses.

Full of this confidence I repaired to Hampstead in company with Billy

Chatter, my Lord Hobble, and Doctor Wagtail. There I saw a very

brilliant assembly, before whom I had the honour to walk a minuet with

Melinda, who charmed me with her frank manner and easiness of

behaviour. Before the country dances began, I received a message by a

person I did not know from Bragwell, who was present, importing that

nobody who knew him presumed to dance with Melinda while he was there

in person, that I would do well to relinquish her without noise,

because he had a mind to lead up a country dance with her. This

extraordinary intimation, which was delivered in the lady’s hearing,

did not at all discompose me, who, by this time, was pretty well

acquainted with the character of my rival. I therefore, without the

least symptom of concern bade the gentleman tell Mr. Bragwell, that

since I was so happy as to obtain the lady’s consent, I should not be

solicitous about his; and desired the bearer himself to bring me no

such impertinent messages for the future. Melinda, affected a sort of

confusion, and pretended to wonder that Mr. Bragwell should give

himself such liberties with regard to her, who had no manner of

connection with the fellow. I laid hold of this opportunity to display

my valour, and offered to call him to an account for his insolence, a

proposal which she absolutely refused, under pretence of consulting my

safety; though I could perceive, by the sparkling of her eyes, that she

would not have thought herself affronted by being the subject of a

duel. I was by no means pleased with this discovery of her thoughts,

which not only argued the most unjustifiable vanity, but likewise the

most barbarous indifference; however, I was allured by her fortune, and

resolved to gratify her pride, in making her the occasion of a public

quarrel between me and Bragwell, who, I was pretty certain, would never

drive matters to a dangerous extremity.

While we danced together, I observed this formidable rival at one end

of the room, encircled with a cluster of beaux, to whom he talked with

great vehemence, casting many big looks at me from time to time. I

guessed the subject of his discourse, and as soon as I had handed my

partner to her seat, strutted up to the place where he stood, and,

cocking my hat in his face, demanded aloud, if he had anything to say

to me. He answered with a sullen tone, “Nothing, at present, sir;” and

turned about upon his heel. “Well,” said I, “you know where I am to be

found at any time.” His companions stared at one another, and I

returned to the lady, whose features brightened at my approach, and

immediately a whisper ran through the whole room; after which so many

eyes were turned upon me that I was ready to sink with confusion. When

the ball broke up, I led her to her coach, and, like a true French

gallant, would have got up behind it, in order to protect her from

violence on the road, but she absolutely refused my offer, and

expressed her concern that there was not an empty seat for me within

the vehicle.

Next day, in the afternoon, I waited on her at her lodgings, by

permission, in company with Chatter, and was very civilly received by

her mother, with whom she lived. There were a good many fashionable

people present, chiefly young fellows, and immediately after tea, a

couple of card tables were set, at one of which I had the honour to

play with Melinda, who in less than three hours, made shift to plunder

me of eight guineas. I was well enough content to lose a little money

with a good grace, that I might have an opportunity in the meantime to

say soft things, which are still most welcome when attended with good

luck; but I was by no means satisfied of her fair play, a circumstance

that shocked me not a little, and greatly impaired my opinion of her

disinterestedness and delicacy. However, I was resolved to profit by

this behaviour, and treat her in my turn with less ceremony;

accordingly, I laid close siege to her, and, finding her not at all

disgusted with the gross incense I offered, that very night made a

declaration of love in plain terms. She received my addresses with

great gaiety, and pretended to laugh them off, but at the same time

treated me with such particular complacency that I was persuaded I had

made a conquest of her heart, and concluded myself the happiest man

alive. Elevated with these flattering ideas, I sat down again to cards

after supper, and with great cheerfulness suffered myself to be cheated

of ten guineas more.

It was late before I took my leave, after being favoured with a general

invitation; and, when I got into bed, the adventures of the day

hindered me from sleeping. Sometimes I pleased myself with the hopes of

possessing a fine woman with ten thousand pounds; then I would ruminate

on the character I had heard of her from Banter, and compare it with

the circumstances of her conduct towards me, which seemed to bear too

great a resemblance to the picture he had drawn. This introduced a

melancholy reflection on the expense I had undergone, and the smallness

of my funds to support it, which, by-the-by, were none of my own. In

short, I found myself involved in doubts and perplexities, that kept me

awake the greatest part of the night.

In the morning, Strap, with whom I had not conversed for two days,

presented himself with the utensils for shaving me; upon which, I asked

his opinion of the lady he had seen me conduct to her coach at

Hampstead. “Odds! she’s a delicious creature!” cried he, “and, as I am

informed, a great fortune. I am sorry you did not insist on going home

with her. I dare say, she would not have refused your company; for she

seems to be a good-humoured soul.” “There’s a time for all things,”

said I, “you must know, Strap, I was in company with her till one

o’clock this morning.” I had no sooner pronounced these words than he

began to caper about the room, and snap his fingers, crying in a

transport, “The day’s our own—the day’s our own!” I gave him to

understand that his triumph was a little premature, and that I had more

difficulties to surmount than he was aware of; then I recounted to him

the intelligence I had received from Banter. At which he changed

colour, shook his head, and observed there was no faith in woman. I

told him I was resolved to make a bold push notwithstanding, although I

foresaw it would lead me into a great expense; and bade him guess the

sum I had lost last night at cards. He scratched his chin, and

protested his abhorrence of cards, the very name of which being

mentioned, made him sweat with vexation, as it recalled the

money-dropper to his remembrance. “But, however,” said he, “you have to

do with other guess people now. Why, I suppose, if you had a bad run

last night, you would scarce come off for less than ten or twelve

shilling.” I was mortified at this piece of simplicity, which I

imagined, at that time, was all affected by way of reprimand for my

folly; and asked with some heat if he thought I had spent the evening

in a cellar with chairmen and bunters; giving him to know, at the same

time, that my expense had amounted to eighteen guineas.

It would require the pencil of Hogarth to express the astonishment and

concern of Strap on hearing this piece of news; the basin, in which he

was preparing the lather for my chin, dropped out of his hands, and he

remained some time immovable in that ludicrous attitude, with his mouth

open, and his eyes thrust forward considerably beyond their station;

but, remembering my disposition, which was touchy, and impatient of

control, he smothered his chagrin, and attempted to recollect himself.

With this view he endeavoured to laugh, but in spite if his teeth,

broke out in a whimper, took up his wash-ball and pewter-pot, scrubbed

my beard with the one, and discharged the other upon my face. I took no

notice of this confusion, but after he had fully recovered himself, put

him in mind of his right, and assured him of my readiness to surrender

my effects whenever he should think proper to demand them. He was

nettled at my insinuation, which he thought proceeded from my distrust

of his friendship; and begged I would never talk to him in that strain

again, unless I had a mind to break his heart.

This good creature’s unalterable friendship for me affected me with the

most grateful sentiments, and acted as a spur to my resolution of

acquiring a fortune, that I might have it in my power to manifest my

generosity in my turn. For this purpose, I determined to bring matters

to a speedy conclusion with Melinda; well knowing that a few such

nights as the last would effectually incapacitate me from prosecuting

that or any other advantageous amour.

While my meditation was busied in planning out my future conduct, Mr.

Banter favoured me with a visit, and after breakfast asked how I had

passed the preceding evening. I answered I was very agreeably

entertained at a private house. “Yes,” said he, with a sarcastic smile,

“you deserve something extraordinary for the price you paid.” I was

surprised at this remark, and pretended ignorance of his meaning.

“Come, come, Mr. Random,” continued he, “you need not make a mystery of

it to me; the whole town has it. I wish that foolish affair between you

and Bragwell at Hampstead had been less public. It has set all the

busybodies at work to find out your real character and situation; and

you cannot imagine what conjectures have already circulated at your

expense. One suspects you to be a Jesuit in disguise; another thinks

you are an agent from the Pretender; a third believes you to be an

upstart gamester, because nobody knows anything of your family or

fortune; a fourth is of opinion that you are an Irish fortune-hunter.”

This last hypothesis touched me so nearly that, to conceal my

confusion, I was fain to interrupt his detail, and damn the world for

an envious meddling community, that would not suffer a gentleman to

live without molestation. He took no notice of this apostrophe, but

went on. “For my own part, I neither know nor desire to know who or

what you are. This I am certain of, that few people make a mystery of

their origin or situation, who can boast of anything advantageous in

either; and my own opinion of the matter is that you have raised

yourself, by your industry, from nothing to the appearance you now

maintain, and which you endeavour to support by some matrimonial

scheme.” Here he fixed his eyes steadfastly upon me and perceiving my

face covered with blushes, told me, how he was confirmed in his

opinion. “Look ye, Random,” said he, “I have divined your plan, and am

confident it will never succeed. You are too honest and too ignorant of

the town to practise the necessary cheats of your profession, and

detect the conspiracies that will be formed against you. Besides, you

are downright bashful. What the devil! set up for a fortune hunter

before you have conquered the sense of shame! Perhaps you are entitled

by your merit, and I believe you are, to a richer and a better wife

than Melinda; but take my word for it, she is not to be won at that

rate;—or, if you are so lucky as to carry her, between you and me, you

may say, as Teague said, By my soul, I have gained a loss! She would

take care to spend her fortune in a twinkling, and soon make you sick

of her extravagance.”

I was alarmed by his discourse, while I resented the freedom of it, and

expressed my disgust by telling him, he was mistaken in my intentions,

and desiring he would give me leave to regulate my conduct according to

the dictates of my own reason. He made no apology for the liberty he

had taken, and ascribed it to the warmth of his friendship for me; as

an uncommon instance of which he borrowed five guineas, assuring me

there were very few people in the world whom he would so far favour

with his confidence. I gave him the money, and professed myself so well

convinced of his sincerity, that he had no occasion to put it to such

extraordinary proofs for the future. “I thought,” said he, “to have

asked five pieces more, but hearing you were bubbled of eighteen last

night, I presumed you might be out of cash, and resolved to model my

demand accordingly.” I could not help admiring the cavalier behaviour

of this spark, of whom I desired to know his reason for saying I was

bubbled. He then gave me to understand, that before he came to my

lodgings, he had beat up Tom Tossle, who, being present, informed him

of the particulars, rehearsed all the fine things I said to Melinda,

with which he proposed to entertain the town, and among other

circumstances, assured him my mistress cheated with so little art, that

nobody but a mere novice could be imposed upon.

The thoughts of becoming a subject of raillery for coxcombs, and losing

my money to boot, stung me to the quick; but I made a virtue of my

indignation, and swore that no man should with impunity either asperse

the character of Melinda, or turn my behaviour into ridicule. He

replied in a dry manner, that I would find it a Herculean task to

chastise everybody who should laugh at my expense; and, as for the

character of Melinda, he did not see how it could suffer by what was

laid to her charge; for that cheating at cards, far from being reckoned

a blemish among people of fashion, was looked upon as an honourable

indication of superior genius and address. “But let us waive this

subject,” said he, “and go to the coffee-house, in order to make a

party for dinner.”

CHAPTER XLVIII

We repair to the coffee-house, where we overhear a curious dispute

between Wagtail and Medlar, which is referred to our decision—the

Doctor gives an account of his experiment—Medlar is roasted by Banter

at the ordinary—the old gentleman’s advice to me

Being as willing to drop the theme as he was to propose it, I

accompanied him thither, where we found Mr. Medlar and Dr. Wagtail

disputing upon the word Custard, which the physician affirmed should be

spelt with a G, observing that it was derived from the Latin verb

gustare, “to taste;” but Medlar pleaded custom in behalf of C,

observing, that, by the Doctor’s rule, we ought to change pudding into

budding, because it is derived from the French word boudin; and in that

case why not retain the original orthography and pronunciation of all

the foreign words we have adopted, by which means our language would

become a dissonant jargon without standard or propriety? The

controversy was referred to us; and Banter, notwithstanding his real

opinion to the contrary, decided it in favour of Wagtail; upon which

the peevish annuitant arose, and uttering the monosyllable pish! with

great emphasis, removed to another table.

We then inquired of the doctor, what progress he had made in the

experiment of distilling tinder-water; and he told us he had been at

all the glass-houses about town, but could find nobody who would

undertake to blow a retort large enough to hold the third part of the

quantity prescribed; but he intended to try the process on as much as

would produce five drops, which would be sufficient to prove the

specific, and then he would make it a parliamentary affair; that he had

already purchased a considerable weight of rags, in reducing which to

tinder, he had met with a misfortune, which had obliged him to change

his lodgings; for he had gathered them in a heap on the floor, and set

fire to them with a candle, on the supposition that the boards would

sustain no damage, because it is the nature of flame to ascend; but, by

some very extraordinary accident, the wood was invaded, and began to

blaze with great violence, which disordered him so much, that he had

not the presence of mind enough to call for assistance, and the whole

house must have been consumed with him in the midst of it, had not the

smoke that rolled out of the windows in clouds alarmed the

neighbourhood, and brought people to his succour: that he had lost a

pair of black velvet breeches and a tie-wig in the hurry, besides the

expense of the rags, which were rendered useless by the water used to

quench the flame, and the damage of the floor, which he was compelled

to repair; that his landlord, believing him distracted, had insisted on

his quitting his apartment at a minute’s warning, and he was put to

incredible inconvenience; but now he was settled in a very comfortable

house, and had the use of a large paved yard for preparing his tinder;

so that he hoped in a very short time to reap the fruits of his labour.

After having congratulated the doctor on his prospect, and read the

papers, we repaired to an auction of pictures, where we entertained

ourselves an hour or two; from thence we adjourned to the Mall, and,

after two or three turns, went back to dinner, Banter assuring us, that

he intended to roast Medlar at the ordinary; and, indeed, we were no

sooner set than this cynic began to execute his purpose, by telling the

old gentleman that he looked extremely well, considering the little

sleep he had enjoyed last night. To this compliment Medlar made no

reply, but by a stare, accompanied with a significant grin; and Banter

went on thus; “I don’t know whether most to admire the charity of your

mind, or the vigour of your body. Upon my soul, Mr. Medlar, you do

generous things with the best taste of any man I know! You extend your

compassion to real objects, and exact only such returns as they are

capable of making. You must know, gentlemen,” said he, turning to the

company, “I had been up most part of the night with a friend who is ill

of a fever, and, on my return home this morning, chanced to pass by a

gin shop still open, whence issued a confused sound of mirth and

jollity: upon which, I popped in my head, and perceived Mr. Medlar

dancing bareheaded in the midst of ten or twenty ragged bunters, who

rejoiced at his expense. But indeed, Mr. Medlar, you should not

sacrifice your constitution to your benevolence. Consider, you grow old

apace; and, therefore, have a reverend care of your health, which must

certainly be very much impaired by these nocturnal expeditions.” The

testy senior could no longer contain himself, but cried hastily, “’Tis

well known that your tongue is no slanderer.” “I think,” said the

other, “you might spare that observation, as you are very sensible,

that my tongue has done you signal service on many occasions. You may

remember, that, when you made your addresses to the fat widow who kept

a public-house at Islington, there was a report spread very much to the

prejudice of your manhood, which coming to the ears of your mistress,

you were discarded immediately: and I brought matters to a

reconciliation, by assuring her you had three bastards at nurse in the

country. How you ruined your own affair afterwards, it is neither my

business nor inclination to relate.”

This anecdote, which had no other foundation than in Banter’s own

invention, afforded a good deal of mirth to everybody present, and

provoked Mr. Medlar beyond all sufferance; so that he started up in a

mighty passion, and, forgetting that his mouth was full, bespattered

those who sat next to him, while he discharged his indignation in a

volley of oaths, and called Banter insignificant puppy, impertinent

jackanapes, and a hundred such appellations; telling the company he had

invented these false and malicious aspersions, because he would not

lend him money to squander away upon rooks and whores. “A very likely

story,” said Banter, “that I should attempt to borrow money of a man

who is obliged to practise a thousand shifts to make his weekly

allowance hold out till Saturday night. Sometimes he sleeps

four-and-twenty hours at a stretch, by which means he saves three

meals, besides coffee-house expense. Sometimes he is fain to put up

with bread and cheese and small beer for dinner; and sometimes he

regales on twopennyworth of ox cheek in a cellar.” “You are a lying

miscreant!” cried Medlar, in an ecstacy of rage; “I can always command

money enough to pay your tailor’s bill, which I am sure is no trifle;

and I have a good mind to give you a convincing proof of my

circumstances, by prosecuting you for defamation, sirrah.” By this time

the violence of his wrath had deprived him of his appetite, and he sat

silent, unable to swallow one mouthful, while his tormentor enjoyed his

mortification, and increased his chagrin, by advising him to lay in

plentifully for his next day’s fast.

Dinner being ended, we came down stairs to the coffee room, and Banter

went away to keep an appointment, saying, he supposed he should see

Wagtail and me in the evening at the Bedford Coffee-house. He was no

sooner gone than the old gentleman took me aside, and said, he was

sorry to see me so intimate with that fellow, who was one of the most

graceless rakes about town, and had already wasted a good estate and

constitution upon harlots; that he had been the ruin of many a young

man, by introducing them into debauched company, and setting a lewd

example of all manner of wickedness; and that, unless I were on my

guard, he would strip me in a short time both of my money and

reputation. I thanked him for his information, and promised to conduct

myself accordingly, wishing, however, his caution had been a few hours

more early, by which means I might have saved five guineas.

Notwithstanding this intelligence, I was inclinable to impute some part

of the charge to Medlar’s revenge for the liberties taken with him at

dinner; and therefore, as soon as I could disengage myself, applied to

Wagtail for his opinion of the character in question, resolved to

compare their accounts, allowing for the prejudice of each, and to form

my judgment upon both, without adhering strictly to either. The doctor

assured me, that he was a very pretty gentleman of family and fortune;

a scholar, a wit, a critic, and perfectly well acquainted with the

town; that his honour and courage were unquestionable, though some

extravagances he had been guilty of, and his talents for satire had

procured him enemies, and made some people shy of his acquaintance.

From these different sketches, I concluded that Banter was a young

fellow of some parts, who had spent his fortune, but retained his

appetites, and fallen out with the world, because he could not enjoy it

to his wish.

I went to the Bedford Coffee-house in the evening, where I met my

friends, from thence proceeded to the play, and afterwards carried them

home to my lodgings, where we supped in great good humour.

CHAPTER XLIX

I receive a Challenge—the Consequence of it—the Quarrel being made up,

am put in Arrest by the Care and Affection of Strap—but immediately

released upon explaining my Affair—the Behaviour of Mr. Oregan and his

two Friends—I visit Melinda, whom I divert with an account of the

Duel—propose Marriage—she refers the Matter to her Mother, of whom I

make a solemn Demand of her Daughter—the old Lady’s behaviour—I am

discarded—-resent their Disdain

When I was ready to go abroad next day, Strap brought me a letter, To

Mr. Random, Esq., these; which, upon opening, I found contained a

challenge conceived in these very extraordinary terms:

“Sir,—Whereas I am informed that you make love to Miss Melinda

Goosetrap, this is to let you know that she is under promise of

marriage to me; and that I am at this present waiting at the back of

Montague House, with a pair of good pistols in my hand; and if you will

keep your appointment, I will make your tongue confess (after the

breath is out of your body) that you do not deserve her so well as

Yours, etc.

Rourk Oregan.”

I guessed, from the style and superscription of this billet, that my

rival was a true Milesian, and was not a little uneasy at the contents;

especially that part, in which he asserted his right to my mistress by

promise, a circumstance I did not not know how to reconcile to her good

sense and penetration. However, this was no time for me to decline the

defiance, because the success of my addresses in a great measure

depended upon my behaviour in that affair. I therefore immediately

loaded my pistols, and betook myself in a hackney coach to the place

appointed, where I found a tall raw-boned man, with a hard-featured

countenance and black bushy beard, walking by himself, wrapped up in a

shabby green coat, over which his own hair descended in leathern queue

from his head, that was covered with a greasy hat trimmed with a

tarnished pointe d’Espagne. He had no sooner perceived me advancing

than he pulled a pistol from his bosom, and, presenting it at me,

snapped it without the least preamble. Alarmed at this rude salutation,

I made a stand, and, before he could adjust his other piece, fired one

of mine at him, without doing any damage, By this time he was ready

with his second, that flashed in the pan without going off; upon which

he called, with a true Tipperary cadence, “Fire away, honey!” and began

to hammer his flint with great deliberation. But I was resolved to make

use of the advantage fortune had given me, and therefore stepped up

without throwing away my fire, desiring him to ask his life, or prepare

for another world; but this stout Hibernian refused to condescend, and

complained bitterly of my having quitted my ground before he could

return my shot: saying I ought to go back to my station, and let him

have an equal chance with me. I endeavoured to persuade him that I had

given him a double chance already: and it was my business to prevent

him from enjoying a third; but now, since I had an opportunity, I

demanded a parley, and desired to know his condition and reason for

calling me to the field, who, to the best of my remembrance, far from

having done him any injury, had never before seen him. He told me that

he was a gentleman of fortune, who had spent all he had, and, hearing

that Melinda had got ten thousand pounds, he intended to make himself

master of that sum by espousing her, and he was determined, in an

honourable way, to cut the throats of all those who stood between him

and his hopes.

I then demanded to know the foundation of his hopes; and now that I had

seen him, being more and more astonished at the circumstance of the

promise, desired that he would explain that mystery. He gave me to

understand, that he trusted entirely to his birth and personal merit;

that he had frequently written to Melinda, setting forth his claim and

pretensions, but she was never kind enough to send an answer, or even

to admit him into her presence; and that the promise he mentioned in

his letter was made by his friend Mr. Gahagan, who assured him that no

woman could resist a man of his appearance. I could not forbear

laughing to excess at the simplicity of my rival, who did not seem to

relish my mirth, but began to be very serious: upon which I endeavoured

to appease him, by giving him my word and honour that, far from

prejudicing his addresses to the lady, I would represent him to her in

the most favourable light I could with any regard to truth; but he must

not be surprised if she should remain blind to his deserts, for nothing

was more capricious than a woman’s mind, and the affection of that sex

was seldom purchased with virtue alone. That my declaration might have

the better effect, I took notice of his deshabille, and, professing

sorrow at seeing a gentleman reduced, slipped two guineas into his

hand, at sight of which he threw away his pistols, and hugging me in

his arms, cried, “Arrah, by Jasus, now, you are the best friend I have

met with these seven long years!” When I had suffered some minutes in

his embrace, he quitted me, and picking up his rusty arms, wished the

devil might burn him if ever he should give me any further trouble

about womankind.

The quarrel being thus amicably composed, I begged leave to look at his

pistols, which I found so crazy and so foul, that I believe it was

happy for him neither of them was discharged, for one of them would

certainly have split in the going off, and he would, in all

probability, have lost his hand in the explosion; but what gave me a

lively idea of the man’s character was, to find, upon examination, that

one of them had been loaded without being primed, and the other primed

without a charge.

While we walked home together, I expressed a desire of knowing my new

friend’s history; and he informed me of his having served in the German

army as a volunteer against the Turks; that for his behaviour at the

siege of Belgrade, he had been honoured with an ensign’s commission,

and afterwards promoted to the rank of lieutenant, in which station it

was his misfortune to affront his captain, who challenged him to the

field, and was killed in the duel, upon which he was obliged to

retreat; that he had been in England some years soliciting his friends

for provision in the British army; but being hitherto unsuccessful, was

desired by Mr. Gahagan to turn his thoughts to matrimony, and make his

fortune by an advantageous match; in consequence of which advice, he

had made up to Melinda: and, having heard by means of an Irish footman

in the family, that I was her chief favourite, had called me out in

hopes of removing by my death the greatest obstruction to his desires;

but now he was convinced of my honour and generosity, he swore by the

blessed Virgin, he would think of her no more, if there were not

another woman in the world. As a further proof of his veracity, which I

did not at all doubt, he opened an old iron snuff-box, and pulled out

his commission in the Imperial army, and his captain’s challenge, which

he preserved as testimonials of his character. I was so well convinced

of this poor man’s honesty and courage, that I determined to speak in

his behalf to some of my acquaintance, who might recommend his case to

the consideration of those who could provide for him; and in the

meantime to accommodate him with a few clothes, by which his appearance

would be much mended, and himself enabled to renew his solicitations in

person.

As we walked along conversing socially together, we were met by a file

of musketeers, and Strap at their head, who no sooner approached than,

with a frantic look, he cried, “Seize them! In the name of God seize

them!” We were accordingly surrounded, and I put in arrest by the

corporal, who was commanding officer; but Captain Oregan disengaged

himself, and ran with such speed towards Tottenham Court Road that he

was out of sight in a moment. When my arms were delivered up, and

myself secured, Strap became a little more composed, and asked pardon

for the liberty he had taken, which he hoped I would excuse, as it

proceeded from his affection. He then told me that, suspecting the

letter (which by the by was brought by the author himself) contained

something extraordinary, he had peeped through the keyhole, and seen me

load my pistols; upon which he ran down to Whitehall, and applied to

the officer on guard for a party to put me in arrest, but before he

returned, I was gone in a coach; that he had inquired which way I went,

and, having heard that duels were commonly fought at the back of

Montague House, he conducted the guard to this place, where he thanked

God for having found me safe and sound. I gave him to understand that I

forgave his officious concern for once, but cautioned him in pretty

severe terms for making me the subject of idle conversation for the

future; then turning to the corporal, thanked him for his care, and

gave him a crown to drink with his men, assuring him that the rencontre

was over long before he came up, and everything compromised, as he

might have observed by our behaviour; as a farther proof of which, he

would find upon examination that one of my pistols had been discharged:

but this civil person, without giving himself or me any farther

trouble, received the bounty with a thousand bows and acknowledgments,

and, returning the pistols, released me immediately.

He was not gone a hundred yards, when my friend Oregan came up in order

to rescue me, with two tatterdemalions, whom he had engaged for that

purpose about the purlieus of St. Giles’s. One of them was armed with a

musket that wanted a lock, and another with a rusty broadsword, but

their dress surpassed all description. When he understood I was already

free he made an apology for his abrupt departure, and introduced me to

his two companions: First, to Counsellor Fitzclabber, who, he told me,

was then employed in compiling a history of the kings of Minster, from

Irish manuscripts; and then to his friend Mr. Gahagan, who was a

profound philosopher and politician, and had projected many excellent

schemes for the good of his country. But it seems these literati had

been very ill rewarded for their ingenious labours; for, between them

both, there was but one shirt, and half a pair of breeches. I thanked

them very kindly for their readiness to assist me, and, having offered

my service in my turn, bade them good morrow, desiring Oregan to

accompany me to my lodgings, where he was fitted with decent clothes

from my wardrobe, so much to his satisfaction, that he swore eternal

gratitude and friendship to me, and, at my request, recounted all the

adventures of his life.

In the afternoon, I waited on Melinda, who received me with great

kindness and familiarity, and laughed excessively at my adventure with

the Irishman, to whose wishes she was no stranger, having more than a

dozen letters in her possession, which he had written to her on the

subject of love, and which, for my entertainment, she submitted to my

perusal. Having made ourselves merry at the expense of this poor

admirer, I seized the opportunity of her mother’s going out of the

room, and introduced my own passion, which I recommended to her with

all the ardour and eloquence I was master of. I flattered, sighed,

swore, entreated, and acted a thousand extravagancies, in hopes of

making some impression on her heart; but she heard everything I said

without discovering the least emotion; and other company came in before

she would vouchsafe one serious reply. After tea, the cards were

brought in according to custom, and it was my good fortune to have

Melinda for my partner; by which means, instead of losing, I came off

with five guineas clear gain.

I soon became acquainted with a good many people of fashion, and spent

my time in the modish diversions of the town, such as plays, operas,

masquerades, drums, assemblies, and muppet-shows; chiefly in company

with Melinda, whom I cultivated with all the eagerness and address that

my prospect could inspire, and my education afford. I spared neither my

person nor my purse to gratify her vanity and pride; my rivals were

intimidated, and indeed outshone; and, after all, I began to fear that

the dear creature had not a heart to lose.

At last, finding myself unable to support the expense of this amour

much longer, I was determined to bring the matter to a crisis; and one

evening, while we were together by ourselves, complained of her

indifference, described the tortures of suspense to a love-sick mind,

and pressed her to disclose her sentiments of matrimony and me with

such earnestness, that she could not, with all her art, shift the

subject, but was obliged to come to an eclaircissement. She told me,

with a careless air, that she had no objection to my person, and if I

could satisfy her mother in other particulars, I should not find her

averse to the match; but she was resolved to do nothing in such a

momentous concern without the advice and consent of her parent. This

was no very agreeable declaration to me, whose aim had been to win her

inclination first, and then secure my conquest by a private marriage,

to which I flattered myself she would express no reluctance. That I

might not, however, desert my cause before it was desperate, I waited

on her mother; and, with great formality, demanded the daughter in

marriage. The good lady, who was a very notable woman, behaved with

great state and civility; thanked me for the honour I intended her

family; and said, she did not doubt that I was in all respects

qualified to make a woman happy; but it concerned her as a parent

anxious about the welfare of her child, to inquire into the particulars

of my fortune, and know what settlement I proposed to make. To this

intimation, which would have utterly disconcerted me if I had not

expected it, I replied, without hesitation that, though my fortune was

very small, I was a gentleman by birth and education, would maintain

her daughter in the sphere of a gentlewoman, and settle her own dowry

on her and her heirs for ever. This careful matron did not seem to

relish my proposal, but observed, with a demure countenance, that there

was no necessity for settling that upon her child which was her own

already; however, if I pleased, her lawyer should confer with mine upon

the matter; and, in the meantime, she desired I would favour her with a

perusal of my rent-roll. Notwithstanding the vexation I was under, I

could scarce forbear laughing in her face at the mention of my

rent-roll, which was indeed a severe piece of satire upon my

pretensions. I frankly owned I had no landed estate; and told her that

I could not exactly specify the sum I was master of, until I had

regulated my affairs, which were at present in some disorder; but that

I would take an opportunity of satisfying her on that head very soon.

It was not long before I took my leave, and returned to my lodgings in

a very melancholy mood, persuaded that I had nothing more to expect

from that quarter. I was confirmed in this opinion next day, when I

went back with a view of explaining myself more fully to the old

gentlewoman; and was told by the footman that his ladies were not at

home, although I had seen Melinda through the blinds at a parlour

window, as I went up to the door. Incensed at this affront, I quitted

the door without saying one word, and as I repassed the parlour, bowed

to Miss, who still remained in the same situation, securely screened,

as she thought, from my view.

This disappointment gave me more uneasiness on Strap’s account than my

own, for I was in no danger of dying for love of Melinda; on the

contrary, the remembrance of my charming Narcissa was a continual check

upon my conscience during the whole course of my addresses; and perhaps

contributed to the bad success of my scheme, by controlling my raptures

and condemning my design.

There was a necessity for informing my companion of everything that

happened to me and I performed this piece of duty in an affected

passion, swearing I would be his pack-horse no longer, and desiring him

to take the management of his affairs into his own hands. This finesse

had the desired effect, for, instead of grumbling over my miscarriage,

Strap was frightened at the passion I feigned, and begged me, for the

love of God, to be appeased; observing that, although we had suffered a

great loss, it was not irreparable; and if Fortune frowned to-day, she

might perhaps smile to-morrow. I pretended to acquiesce in his remarks,

praise his equanimity, and promised to improve my misfortune. He, on

the other hand, pretended to be perfectly well satisfied with my

conduct, and conjured me to follow the dictates of my own reflection;

but, in spite of all his affectation, I could perceive his inward

affliction, and his visage sensibly increased in longitude from that

day.

CHAPTER L

I long to be revenged on Melinda—apply to Banter for his Assistance—he

contrives a scheme for that purpose—which is put in Execution with

great Success—I make an Attempt upon the Heart of Miss Gripewell, but

am disappointed—grow melancholy at my Disappointment, and have recourse

to the Bottle—receive a Billet-doux—am ravished with the Contents—find

myself involved in Intrigue, which I imagined would make my Fortune—am

confounded at my mistake, which banishes all Thoughts of Matrimony

In the meantime, my attention was wholly engrossed in search of another

mistress, and the desire of being revenged on Melinda, in both which

schemes I was very much assisted by Billy Chatter, who was such a

necessary creature among the ladies, that in all private dances he

engaged the men. To him therefore I applied, desiring he would

introduce me to a partner of some figure, at the next private assembly,

for the sake of a frolic, the intention of which I would afterwards

communicate. Billy, who had heard something of a difference between

Melinda and me, immediately smoked part of my design, and, thinking I

only wanted to alarm her jealousy a little, promised to gratify my

desire, by matching me with a partner worth thirty thousand pounds,

whom the ladies of this end of the town had lately taken under their

management and protection. Upon further inquiry, I found this person’s

name was Miss Biddy Gripewell; that her father, who had been a

pawnbroker, died intestate, by which means all his substance descended

to his daughter, who was so little a favourite that, could the old man

have prevailed with his own rapacious disposition to part with as much

money as would have paid the expense of a will, she would not have

inherited the sixth part of his fortune; that during his life, far from

being educated in a way suitable to such great expectations, she was

obliged to live like a servant wench, and do the most menial offices in

the family. But his funeral was no sooner performed, than she assumed

the fine lady, and found so many people of both sexes to flatter,

caress, and instruct her, that, for want of discretion and experience,

she was grown insufferably vain and arrogant, and pretended to no less

than a duke or earl at least for her husband; that she had the

misfortune to be neglected by the English quality, but a certain poor

Scottish lord was then making interest to be introduced to her

acquaintance. In the meantime, she was fallen into the hands of a

notable lady, who had already disposed of her to a lieutenant of foot,

a distant relation of her ladyship’s, though Miss as yet knew nothing

of the affair; and lastly that if I proposed to dance with her, I must

give him leave to represent me as a knight, or foreign count at least.

I was ravished at this piece of information, and consented for one

night, to personate a French marquis, that I might the easier fulfil my

revenge.

Having made the appointment with Chatter I went to Banter’s lodgings,

as I had by this time conceived a great opinion of his penetration and

knowledge; and, after I had enjoined secrecy, told him every

circumstance of my disgrace with Melinda, and imparted the plan I had

projected to mortify that proud coquette, desiring his advice in

proving, and assistance in executing the scheme. Nothing could be more

agreeable to his misanthropical temper than an account of her behaviour

and my resentment: he applauded my resolution, and proposed that I

should not only provide myself with a proper partner, but also procure

such a one for Miss Goosetrap, as should infallibly entail upon her the

ridicule of all her acquaintance. For this purpose he mentioned his

barber who he said, was an exceeding coxcomb lately come from Paris,

whose absurd affectation and grimace, would easily pass upon her for

the sprightly politesse of a gentleman improved by travel. I hugged him

for this hint; and he assured me it would be no difficult matter to

make him believe, that Melinda, having seen him by accident, was

captivated by his appearance, and begged for his acquaintance. He

actually engaged him on this pretence, and painted his good fortune in

such colours that the poor shaver was quite beside himself with joy. He

was immediately fitted with a tawdry suit of clothes belonging to

Banter, and by him recommended to Chatter as a very pretty fellow, just

returned from his travels. Master Billy, who acted as a gentleman usher

to a great many of the fair sex in and about town, undertook at once to

bespeak Melinda in his behalf; and everything happened according to my

wish.

At the time appointed I appeared dressed to the best advantage; and, in

the character of a Marquis, had the honour of opening the ball with the

rich heiress, who attracted the eyes of the whole company by the

prodigious number of jewels with which she was adorned. Among others I

perceived Melinda, who could not more conceal her envy than

astonishment at my success; her curiosity was still more flagrant and

tormenting, for she had never seen Miss Gripewell before; and Chatter,

who alone could give her any satisfaction on that head, was engaged in

conversation at the other end of the room. I observed her impatience,

and exulted in her chagrin; and after my partner was set, took the

opportunity of passing by her to make a slight bow without stopping,

which completed my triumph and her indignation. She changed colour,

bridled up, assumed an air of disdain, and flirted her fan with such a

fury, that it went to pieces in a moment, to the no small entertainment

of those who sat near and observed her.

At length the metamorphosed barber took her out, and acted his part

with such ridiculous extravagance that the mirth of the whole company

was excited at his expense, and his partner was so much ashamed that,

before the country dances began, she retired in great confusion, under

pretence of being taken suddenly ill, and was followed by her gallant,

who no doubt imagined her indisposition was nothing but love; and laid

hold of the occasion of conducting her home, to comfort her, with an

assurance of his entertaining a reciprocal passion. They were no sooner

gone than an inquisitive whisper of “Who is he?” ran round the room;

and Chatter could give them no other intelligence about him than that

he was a man of fortune just returned from his travels. I, who alone

was acquainted with his real quality, affected ignorance well knowing

that female curiosity would not rest satisfied with such a general

account, and that the discovery would proceed with a better grace from

anybody than me.

Meanwhile, I was tempted by the richness of the prize to practise upon

Miss Gripewell’s heart, but soon found it too well fortified with pride

and indifference to yield to any efforts in my own character, and I

neither would nor could preserve the title I had borrowed longer than

that night.

As I expected, everything came to light next day. The barber, in pure

simplicity of heart, detected himself to Melinda, and discovered the

foundation of his hopes; she sickened at the affront, and was ashamed

to show her face in public for many weeks after this accident. Poor

Chatter found it impossible to justify himself to her satisfaction; was

in utter disgrace with Miss Gripewell, for having imposed me upon her

as a nobleman; and suffered very much in his character and influence

among the ladies in general.

Finding my finances diminished more than one-half, and my project as

little advanced as on the first day of my arrival in town, I began to

despair of my success, and grew melancholy at the prospect of

approaching want. To dispel the horrors of this fiend I had recourse to

the bottle, and kept more company than ever. I became particularly

attached to the playhouse, conversed with the actors behind the scenes,

grew acquainted with a body of templars, and in a short time commenced

a professed wit and critic. Indeed, I may say, without vanity, that I

was much better qualified than any one of my companions, who were,

generally speaking, of all the creatures I ever conversed with, the

most ignorant and assuming. By means of these avocations I got the

better of care, and learned to separate my ideas in such a manner that,

whenever I was attacked by a gloomy reflection, I could shove it aside,

and call in some agreeable reverie to my assistance. This was not the

case with Strap, who practised a thousand shifts to conceal the sorrow

that preyed upon his carcass, and reduced him to the resemblance of a

mere skeleton.

While I thus posted, in a thoughtless manner, towards poverty, I one

day received, by the penny post, a letter written in a woman’s hand,

containing a great many high-flown compliments, warm protestations of

love, couched in a very poetical style, an earnest desire of knowing

whether or not my heart was engaged, by leaving an answer at a certain

place, directed to R. B., and the whole subscribed “Your incognita.” I

was transported with joy on reading the contents of this billet-doux,

which I admired as a masterpiece of tenderness and elegance, and was

already up to my ears in love with the author, whom my imagination

represented as a lady of fortune, in the bloom of youth and beauty.

Elevated with this conjecture, I went to work, and exhausted my

invention in composing an answer suitable to the sublimity of her style

and the ardour of her sentiments. I expressed my admiration of her wit

in terms the most hyperbolical, and while I acknowledged myself

unworthy of her regard, declared myself enamoured of her understanding;

and in the most pathetic manner implored the honour of an interview.

Having finished this performance, and communicated it to Strap, who

skipped about for joy, I dispatched him with it to the place appointed,

which was the house of a milliner not far from Bond Street, and desired

him to keep watch near the door for some time, that he might discover

the person who should call for it. In less than an hour he returned

with a joyful countenance, and told me that, soon after he had

delivered the letter, a chairman was called, to whom it was given, with

directions to carry it to the house of a rich gentleman in the

neighbourhood, whither he (Strap) followed him, and saw him put it into

the hands of a waiting-woman, who paid the messenger, and shut the

door; that, upon inquiry at an alehouse hard by, where he called for a

pint of beer, he understood the gentleman to whom the house belonged

had an only daughter, very handsome, who would inherit his whole

estate; and who certainly was the author of the billet I had received.

I was of the same opinion, and, hugging myself in the happy prospect,

dressed immediately, and passed in great state the house that contained

my unknown admirer. Nor was my vanity disappointed; for I perceived a

beautiful young creature standing at one of the windows of the

dining-room, who, I imagined, observed me with more than common

curiosity. That I might indulge her view, and at the same time feast my

own, I affected to stop, and gave orders to Strap, in the street, just

opposite to her station, by which means I had an opportunity of seeing

her more distinctly, and of congratulating myself on having made a

conquest of so much perfection. In a few moments she retired, and I

betook myself to the ordinary in a rapture of hope, which deprived me

of my appetite for that meal, and sent me home in the evening to

indulge my contemplation.

Early next day, I was favoured with another epistle from my unknown

admirer, signifying her unutterable joy at the receipt of mine, which,

while it made a tender of my heart, convinced her of the value of it.

Above all things, she professed her extreme pleasure in finding me so

much attached to her understanding, a circumstance that not only

flattered her in the most sensible part, but at the same time argued my

own sagacity. As for the interview I desired, she assured me, that I

could not be more eager for such an occasion than she; but she must not

only sacrifice a little more to decorum, but be satisfied of my

honourable intentions, before she could grant that request. Meanwhile

she gave me to understand that, although she might owe some deference

to the opinion of certain persons, she was resolved, in an affair that

so nearly concerned her happiness, to consult her own inclination,

preferable to the advice of the whole world; especially as she was

urged to such condescension by no consideration of fortune, what she

depended upon being her own without restriction or control. Struck with

admiration at the philosophy and self-denial of my mistress, who seemed

insensible of the beauty she possessed, and in particular ravished with

that piece of intelligence by which I learned her fortune was

independent; I resumed the pen, launched out into encomiums on the

dignity of her sentiments, affected to undervalue the charms of

external beauty, pretended to ground my passion on the qualities of her

mind, complained of her rigour in sacrificing my repose to an

overscrupulous regard to decorum, and declared the purity of my designs

in the most solemn and pathetic vows. This performance being sealed and

directed, was sent to the place appointed by Strap, who, that we might

be still the more confirmed in our belief, renewed his watch, and in a

little time brought back the same information as before, with this

addition, that Miss Sparkle (the name of my correspondent), looking out

at the window, no sooner saw the messenger arrive, than she shut the

casement in a sort of beautiful confusion, and disappeared, eager no

doubt to hear from the dear object of her love.

My doubts now vanished, the long-expected port appeared, and I looked

upon myself as perfectly secure of that happiness I had been in quest

of so long. After dinner, I sauntered in company with Dr. Wagtail, to

that part of the town in which my inamorata lived; and, as he was a

mere register, inquired of him into the name, character, and fortune of

everybody who possessed a good house in the streets through which we

passed. When it came to his turn to mention Sir John Sparkle, he

represented him as a man of an immense estate and narrow disposition,

who mewed up his only child, a fine young lady, from the conversation

of mankind, under the strict watch and inspection of an old governante,

who was either so honest, envious, or insatiable, that nobody had been

as yet able to make her a friend, or get access to her charge, though

numbers attempted it every day; not so much on account of her

expectations from her father, who, being a widower, might marry again

and have sons, as for a fortune of twelve thousand pounds left her by

an uncle, of which she could not be deprived. This piece of news,

exactly tallying with the last part of the letter I had been honoured

with in the morning, had such an effect on me, that any man except

Wagtail might have observed my emotion; but his attention was too much

engrossed by the contemplation of his own importance to suffer him to

be affected with the deportment of any other body, unless it happened

to be so particular that he could not help taking notice of it.

When I had disengaged myself from him, whose conversation grew insipid

to me, I went home, and made Strap acquainted with the fruit of my

researches. This faithful squire was almost choked with transport, and

even wept with joy; but whether on account of himself or me, I shall

not pretend to determine. Next day a third billet-doux was brought to

me, containing many expressions of tenderness, mingled with some

affecting doubts about the artifice of man, the inconstancy of youth,

and the jealousy often attending the most sincere passion; withal

desiring I would excuse her, if she should try me a little longer,

before she declared herself beyond the power of retracting. These

interesting scruples added fuel to my flame and impatience to my hope;

I redoubled my complaints of her indifference, and pressed her to an

assignation with such fervent entreaties, that in a few days she

consented to meet me at the house of that milliner who had forwarded

all my letters. During the interval between the date of her promise and

the hour of appointment, my pride soared beyond all reason and

description; I lost all remembrance of the gentle Narcissa, and my

thoughts were wholly employed in planning triumphs over the malice and

contempt of the world.

At length the happy hour arrived. I flew to the place of rendezvous,

and was conducted into an apartment, where I had not waited ten

minutes, when I heard the rustling of silk, and the sound of feet

ascending the stairs; my heart took the alarm, and beat quick; my

cheeks glowed, my nerves thrilled, and my knees shook with ecstacy! I

perceived the door opening, saw a gold brocade petticoat advance, and

sprang forward to embrace my charmer. Heaven and earth! how shall I

paint my situation, when I found Miss Sparkle converted into a wrinkled

hag turned of seventy! I was struck dumb with amazement, and petrified

with horror! This ancient Urganda, perceived my disorder, and,

approaching with a languishing air, seized my hand, asking in a

squeaking tone, if I was indisposed. Her monstrous affectation

completed the disgust I had conceived for her at her first appearance,

and it was a long time before I could command myself so much as to

behave with common civility: at length, however, I recollected myself,

and pronounced an apology for my behaviour, which I said proceeded from

a dizziness that seized me all of a sudden. My hoary Dulcinea, who, no

doubt, had been alarmed at my confusion, no sooner learned the cause to

which I now ascribed it, than she discovered her joy in a thousand

amorous coquetries, and assumed the sprightly airs of a girl of

sixteen. One while she ogled me with her dim eyes, quenched in rheum;

then, as if she was ashamed of that freedom, she affected to look down,

blush, and play with her fan; then toss her head that I might not

perceive a palsy that shook it, ask some childish questions with a

lisping accent, giggle and grin with her mouth shut to conceal the

ravage of time upon her teeth, leer upon me again, sigh piteously,

fling herself about in her chair to show her agility, and act a great

many more absurdities that youth and beauty can alone excuse. Shocked

as I was at my disappointment, my disposition was incapable of

affronting any person who loved me; I therefore endeavoured to put a

good face to the matter for the present, resolved to drop the whole

affair as soon as I should get clear of her company; with this view, I

uttered some civil things, and in particular desired to know the name

and condition of the lady who had honoured me so much. She told me her

name was Withers, that she lived with Sir John Sparkle in quality of

governess to his only daughter, in which situation she had picked up a

comfortable sufficiency to make her easy for life; that she had the

pleasure of seeing me at church, where my appearance and deportment

made such an impression upon her heart, that she could enjoy no ease

until she had inquired into my character, which she found so amiable in

all respects, that she yielded to the violence of her inclination, and

ventured to declare her passion with too little regard perhaps to the

decorum of her sex; but she hoped I would forgive a trespass of which I

myself was in some measure the cause, and impute her intrusion to the

irresistible dictates of love. No decayed rake ever swallowed a bolus

with more reluctance than I felt in making a reply suitable to this

compliment, when, instead of the jewel, I found the crazy casket only

in my power; and yet my hopes began to revive a little, when I

considered, that, by carrying on the appearance of an intrigue with the

duenna, I might possibly obtain access to her charge. Encouraged by

this suggestion, my temper grew more serene, my reserve wore off, I

talked en cavalier, and even made love to this antiquated coquette, who

seemed extremely happy in her adorer, and spread all her allurements to

make her imagined conquest more secure. The good woman of the house

treated us with tea and sweetmeats, and afterwards withdrew, like a

civil experienced matron as she was.

Left thus to our mutual endearments, Miss Withers (for she was still a

maiden) began to talk of matrimony, and expressed so much impatience in

all her behaviour that, had she been fifty years younger, I might

possibly have gratified her longing without having recourse to the

church; but this step my virtue as well as interest forbade. When the

inclinations of an old maid settle upon a young fellow, he is

persecuted with her addresses; but, should he once grant her the

favour, he will never be able to disentangle himself from her

importunities and reproaches. It was my business to defer the ceremony

as long as possible, under the most specious pretences, with a view of

becoming acquainted with Miss Sparkle in the meantime; and I did not

despair of success, when I considered, that in the course of our

correspondence, I should, in all probability, be invited to visit my

mistress in her own apartment, and by these means have an opportunity

of conversing with her charming ward. Pleased with this prospect, my

heart dilated with joy; I talked in raptures to the state governante,

and kissed her shrivelled hand with great devotion, She was so much

transported with her good fortune, that she could not contain her

ecstacy, but flew upon me like a tigress, and pressed her skinny lips

to mine; when (as it was no doubt concerted by her evil genius) a dose

of garlic she had swallowed that morning, to dispel wind, I suppose,

began to operate with such a sudden explosion, that human nature,

circumstanced as I was, could not endure the shock with any degree of

temper. I lost all patience and reflection, flung away from her in an

instant, snatched my hat and cane, and ran downstairs as if the devil

had me in pursuit, and could scarcely retain the convulsion of my

bowels, which were grievously offended by the perfume that assaulted

me. Strap, who waited my return with impatience, seeing me arrive in

the utmost disorder, stood motionless with apprehension, and durst not

inquire into the cause.

After I had washed my mouth, more than once, and recruited my spirits

with a glass of wine, I recounted to him every particular of what had

happened; to which he made no other reply for some time than lifting up

his eyes, clasping his hands, and uttering a hollow groan. At length he

observed, in a melancholy tone, that it was a thousand pities my organs

were so delicate as to be offended with the smell of garlic. “Ah! God

help us,” said he, “’tis not the steams of garlic, no, nor of something

else, that would give me the least uneasiness—see what it is to be a

cobler’s son!” I replied hastily, “I wish then you would go and

retrieve my miscarriage.” At this suggestion he started, forced a

smile, and left the room, shaking his head. Whether the old gentlewoman

resented my abrupt departure so much that her love changed into

disdain, or was ashamed to see me on account of her infirmity, I know

not; but I was never troubled again with her passion.

CHAPTER LI

I cultivate an Acquaintance with two Noblemen—am introduced to earl

Strutwell—his kind Promise and Invitation—the Behaviour of his Porter

and Lacquey—he receives me with an Appearance of uncommon

Affection—undertakes to speak in my Behalf to the Minister—informs me

of his Success, and wishes me Joy—introduces a Conversation about

Petronius Arbiter—falls in Love with my Watch, which I press upon him—I

make a present of a Diamond Ring to Lord Straddle—impart my good

Fortune to Strap and Banter, who disabuses me, to my utter

Mortification

Baffled hitherto in my matrimonial schemes, I began to question my

talents for the science of fortune-hunting, and to bend my thoughts

towards some employment under the government. With the view of

procuring which, I cultivated the acquaintance of Lords Straddle and

Swillpot, whose fathers were men of interest at court. I found these

young noblemen as open to my advances as I could desire; I accompanied

them in their midnight rambles, and often dined with them at taverns,

where I had the honour of paying the reckoning.

I one day took the opportunity, while I was loaded with protestations

of friendship, to disclose my desire of being settled in some sinecure,

and to solicit their influence in my behalf. Swillpot, squeezing my

hand, said, I might depend upon his service by G—. The other swore that

no man would be more proud than he to run my errands. Encouraged by

these declarations, I ventured to express an inclination to be

introduced to their fathers, who were able to do my business at once.

Swillpot frankly owned he had not spoken to his father these three

years; and Straddle assured me, his father, having lately disobliged

the minister by subscribing his name to a protest in the house of

peers, was thereby rendered incapable of serving his friends at

present; but he undertook to make me acquainted with Earl Strutwell,

who was hand and glove with a certain person who ruled the roast. This

offer I embraced with many acknowledgments, and plied him so closely,

in spite of a thousand evasions, that he found himself under a

necessity of keeping his word, and actually carried me to the levee of

this great man, where he left me in a crowd of fellow-dependents, and

was ushered to a particular closet audience; from whence, in a few

minutes, he returned with his lordship, who took me by the hand,

assured me he would do me all the service he could, and desired to see

me often. I was charmed with my reception, and, although I had heard

that a courtier’s promise is not to be depended upon, I thought I

discovered so much sweetness of temper and candour in this earl’s

countenance, that I did not doubt of finding my account in his

protection. I resolved therefore to profit by this permission, and

waited on him next audience day, when I was favoured with a particular

smile, squeeze of the hand, and a whisper, signifying that he wanted

half-an-hour’s conversation with me in private, when he should be

disengaged, and for that purpose desired me to come and drink a dish of

chocolate with him to-morrow morning.

This invitation, which did not a little flatter my vanity and

expectation, I took care to observe, and went to his lordship’s house

at the time appointed. Having rapped at the gate, the porter unbolted

and kept it half open, placing himself in the gap, like soldiers in the

broach, to dispute my passage. I asked if his lord was stirring? He

answered with a surly aspect, “No.” “At what hour does he commonly

rise?” said I. “Sometimes sooner, sometimes later,” said he, closing

the door upon me by degrees. I then told him I was come by his

lordship’s own appointment, to which intimation this Cerberus replied,

“I have received no orders about the matter,” and was upon the point of

shutting me out, when I recollected myself all of a sudden, and

slipping a crown into his hand, begged as a favour that he would

inquire, and let me know whether or not the earl was up. The grim

janitor relented at the touch of my money, which he took with all the

indifference of a taxgatherer, and showed me into a parlour, where, he

said, I might amuse myself till such time as his lord should be awake.

I had not sat ten minutes in this place, when a footman entered, and,

without speaking, started at me; I interpreted this piece of his

behaviour into, “Pray, sir, what is your business?” and asked the same

question I had put to the porter, when I accosted him first. The

lacquey made the same reply, and disappeared before I could get any

further intelligence. In a little time he returned, on pretence of

poking the fire, and looked at me again with great earnestness; upon

which I began to perceive his meaning, and, tipping him with

half-a-crown, desired he would be so good as to fall upon some method

of letting the earl know that I was in the house. He made a low bow,

said, “Yes, sir,” and vanished. This bounty was not thrown away, for in

an instant he came back, and conducted me to a chamber, where I was

received with great kindness and familiarity by his lordship, whom I

found just risen, in his morning-gown, and slippers. After breakfast,

he entered into a particular conversation with me about my travels, the

remarks I had made abroad, and examined me to the full extent of my

understanding. My answers seemed to please him very much, he frequently

squeezed my hand, and, looking at me with a singular complacency in his

countenance, bade me depend upon his good offices with the ministry in

my behalf. “Young men of your qualifications,” said he, “ought to be

cherished by every administration. For my own part, I see so little

merit in the world, that I have laid it down as a maxim, to encourage

the least appearance of genius and virtue to the utmost of my power:

you have a great deal of both; and will not fail of making a figure one

day, if I am not mistaken; but you must lay your account with mounting

by gradual steps to the summit of your fortune. Rome was not built in a

day. As you understand the languages perfectly well, how would you like

to cross the sea as secretary to an embassy?” I assured his lordship,

with great eagerness, that nothing could be more agreeable to my

inclination: upon which he bade me make myself easy, my business was

done, for he had a place of that kind in his view. This piece of

generosity affected me so much, that I was unable for some time to

express my gratitude, which at length broke out in acknowledgments of

my own unworthiness, and encomiums on his benevolence. I could not even

help shedding tears at the goodness of this noble lord, who no sooner

perceived them than he caught me in his arms, and hugged and kissed me

with a seemingly paternal affection. Confounded at this uncommon

instance of fondness for a stranger, I remained a few moments silent

and ashamed; then rose and took my leave, after he had assured me that

he would speak to the minister in my favour that very day; and desired

that I would not for the future give myself the trouble of attending at

his levee, but come at the same hour every day, when he should be at

leisure, that is, three times a week.

Though my hopes were now very sanguine, I determined to conceal my

prospect from everybody, even from Strap, until I should be more

certain of success: and in the meantime give my patron no respite from

my solicitations. When I renewed my visit, I found the street-door

opened to me as if by enchantment; but in my passage towards the

presence-room, I was met by the valet-de-chambre, who cast some furious

looks at me the meaning of which I could not comprehend. The earl

saluted me at entrance with a tender embrace, and wished me joy of his

success with the Premier, who, he said, had preferred his

recommendation to that of two other noblemen very urgent in behalf of

their respective friends, and absolutely promised that I should go to a

certain foreign court in quality of secretary to an ambassador and

plenipotentiary who was to set out in a few weeks an affair of vast

importance to the nation. I was thunderstruck with my good fortune, and

could make no other reply than kneel and attempt to kiss my

benefactor’s hand, which submission he would not permit; but, raising

me up, pressed me to his breast with surprising emotion, and told me he

had now taken upon himself the care of making my fortune. What enhanced

the value of the benefit still the more, was his making light of the

favour, and shifting the conversation to another subject.

Among other topics of discourse, that of the Belles Lettres was

introduced, upon which his lordship held forth with great taste and

erudition and discovered an intimate knowledge of the authors of

antiquity, “Here’s a book,” said he, taking one from his bosom,

“written with great elegance and spirit; and, though the subject may

give offence to some narrow-minded people, the author will always be

held in esteem by every person of wit and learning.” So saying, he put

into my hand Petronius Arbiter, and asked my opinion of his wit and

manner. I told him, that, in my opinion, he wrote with great ease and

vivacity, but was withal so lewd and indecent that he ought to find no

quarter or protection among people of morals and taste. “I own,”

replied the earl, “that his taste in love is generally decried, and

indeed condemned by our laws; but perhaps that may be more owing to

prejudice and misapprehension than to true reason and deliberation. The

best man among the ancients is said to have entertained that passion;

one of the wisest of their legislators has permitted the indulgence of

it in his commonwealth; the most celebrated poets have not scrupled to

avow it. At this day it prevails not only over all the East, but in

most parts of Europe; in our own country, it gains ground apace, and in

all probability will become in a short time a more, fashionable vice

than simple fornication. Indeed there is something to be said in

vindication of it; for, notwithstanding the severity of the law against

offenders in this way, it must be confessed that the practice of this

passion is unattended with that curse and burthen upon society which

proceeds from a race of miserable and deserted bastards, who are either

murdered by their parents, deserted to the utmost want and

wretchedness, or bred up to prey upon the commonwealth: and it likewise

prevents the debauchery of many a young maiden, and the prostitution of

honest men’s wives; not to mention the consideration of health, which

is much less liable to be impaired in the gratification of this

appetite, than in the exercise of common venery, which, by ruining the

constitutions of our young men, has produced a puny progeny that

degenerates from generation to generation. Nay, I have been told, that

there is another motive perhaps more powerful than all these, that

induces people to cultivate this inclination; namely, the exquisite

pleasure attending its success.”

From this discourse I began to be apprehensive that his lordship,

finding I had travelled, was afraid I might have been infected with

this spurious and sordid desire abroad, and took this method of

sounding my sentiments on the subject. Fired at this supposed

suspicion, I argued against it with great warmth, as an appetite

unnatural, absurd, and of pernicious consequence; and declared my utter

detestation and abhorrence of it in these lines of the satirist:—

Eternal infamy the wretch confound

Who planted first that vice on British ground!

A vice! That spite of nature and sense reigns,

And poisons genial love, and manhood stains.

The earl smiled at my indignation, and told me he was glad to find my

opinion of the matter so conformable to his own, and that what he had

advanced was only to provoke me to an answer, with which he professed

himself perfectly well pleased. After I had enjoyed a long audience, I

happened to look at my watch, in order to regulate my motions by it;

and his lordship, observing the chased case, desired to see the device,

and examine the exception, which he approved with some expressions of

admiration. Considering the obligations I lay under to his lordship, I

thought there could not be a fitter opportunity than the present to

manifest, in some shape, my gratitude; I therefore begged he would do

me the honour to accept of the watch as a small testimony of the sense

I had of his lordship’s generosity; but, he refused it in a peremptory

manner, and said he was sorry I should entertain such a mercenary

opinion of him; observing at the same time, that it was the most

beautiful piece of workmanship he had ever seen, and desiring to know

where he could have such another. I begged a thousand pardons for the

freedom I had taken, which I hoped he would impute to nothing else than

the highest veneration for his person—told him, that, as it came to my

hand by accident in France, I could give him no information about the

maker, for there was no name on the inside; and once more humbly

entreated that he would indulge me so far as to use it for my sake. He

was still positive in refusing it; but was pleased to thank me for my

generous offer, saying, it was a present that no nobleman need be

ashamed of receiving: though he was resolved to show his

disinterestedness with regard to me, for whom he had conceived a

particular friendship; and insisted (if I were willing to part with the

watch) upon knowing what it had cost, that he might at least indemnify

me, by refunding the money. On the other hand, I assured his lordship

that I should look upon it as an uncommon mark of distinction, if he

would take it without further question; and, rather than disoblige me,

he was at last persuaded to put it in his pocket, to my no small

satisfaction, who took my leave immediately, after having received a

kind squeeze, and an injunction to depend upon his promise.

Buoyed up with this reception, my heart opened; I gave away a guinea,

among the lacqueys, who escorted me to the door, flew to the lodgings

of Lord Straddle, upon whom I forced my diamond ring as an

acknowledgment for the great service he had done me, and from thence

hied me home, with an intent of sharing my happiness with honest Strap.

I determined, however, to heighten his pleasure, by depressing his

spirits at first, and then bringing in good news with double relish.

For this purpose, I affected the appearance of disappointment and

chagrin, and told him in an abrupt manner that I had lost the watch and

diamond. Poor Hugh, who had been already harassed into a consumption by

intelligence of this sort, no sooner heard these words, than, unable to

contain himself, he cried, with distraction in his looks, “God in

heaven forbid!” I could carry on the farce no longer; but, laughing in

his face, told him everything that had passed, as above recited. His

features were immediately unbended, and the transition was so

affecting, that he wept with joy, calling my Lord Strutwell by the

appellations of Jewel, Phoenix, Rara avis; and praising God, that there

was still some virtue left among our nobility. Our mutual

congratulations being over, we gave way to our imagination, and

anticipated our happiness by prosecuting our success through the

different steps of promotion, till I arrived at the rank of a prime

minister, and he to that of my first secretary.

Intoxicated with these ideas, I went to the ordinary, where, meeting

with Banter, I communicated the whole affair in confidence to him,

concluding with an assurance that I would do him all the service in my

power. He heard me to an end with great patience, then regarding me a

good while with a look of disdain, pronounced, “So your business is

done, you think?” “As good as done. I believe,” said I. “I’ll tell

you,” replied he, “what will do it still more effectually—a halter!

’Sdeath! if I had been such a gull to two such scoundrels as Strutwell

and Straddle, I would, without any more ado, tuck myself up.” Shocked

at this exclamation, I desired him with some confusion to explain

himself; upon which he gave me to understand that Straddle was a poor

contemptible wretch, who lived by borrowing and pimping for his

fellow-peers; that in consequence of this last capacity, he had

doubtless introduced me to Strutwell, who was so notorious for a

passion for his own sex that he was amazed his character had never

reached my ears; and that, far from being able to obtain for me the

post he had promised, his interest at court was so low, that he could

scarce provide for a superannuated footman once a year in the customs

or excise; that it was a common thing for him to amuse strangers, whom

his jackals ran down, with such assurances and caresses as he had

bestowed on me, until he had stripped them of their cash, and

everything valuable about them, very often of their chastity, and then

leave them a prey to want and infamy: that he allowed his servants no

other wages than that part of the spoil which they could glean by their

industry; and the whole of his conduct towards me was so glaring, that

nobody who knew anything of mankind could have been imposed upon by his

insinuations.

I leave the reader to judge how I relished this piece of information,

which precipitated me from the most exalted pinnacle of hope to the

lowest abyss of despondence, and well nigh determined me to take

Banter’s advice and finish my chagrin with a halter. I had no room to

suspect the veracity of my friend, because, upon recollection, I found

every circumstance of Strutwell’s behaviour exactly tallying with the

character he had described; his hugs, embraces, squeezes, and eager

looks, were now no longer a mystery; no more than his defence of

Petronius, and the jealous frown of his valet-de-chambre, who, it

seems, had been the favourite pathic of his lord.

CHAPTER LII

I attempt to recover my Watch and Jewel, but to no Purpose—resolve to

revenge myself on Strutwell by my Importunity—am reduced to my last

Guinea—obliged to inform Strap of my Necessity, who is almost

distracted with the News, but nevertheless obliged to pawn my best

Sword for present Subsistence—that small Supply being exhausted, I am

almost stupified with my Misfortunes—go to the Gaming Table by the

Advice of Banter, and come off with unexpected Success—Strap’s

Ecstacy—Mrs. Gawky waits upon me, professes Remorse for her Perfidy,

and implores my Assistance—I do myself a Piece of Justice by her Means,

and afterwards reconcile her to her Father

I was so confounded that I could make no reply to Banter, who

reproached me with great indignation for having thrown away upon

rascals that which, had it been converted into ready money, would have

supported the rank of a gentleman for some months, and enabled me, at

the same time, to oblige my friends. Stupified as I was, I could easily

divine the source of his concern, but sneaked away in a solitary

manner, without yielding the least answer to his expostulations; and

began to deliberate within myself in what manner I should attempt to

retrieve the movables I had so foolishly lost. I should have thought it

no robbery to take them again by force, could I have done it without

any danger of being detected; but, as I could have no such opportunity,

I resolved to work by finesse, and go immediately to the lodgings of

Straddle, where I was so fortunate as to find him. “My Lord,” said I,

“I have just now recollected, that the diamond I had the honour of

presenting to you is loosened a little in the socket, and there is a

young fellow just arrived from Paris, who is reckoned the best jeweller

in Europe; I knew him in France; and, if your lordship will give me

leave, will carry the ring to him to be set to rights.” His lordship

was not to be caught in this snare; he thanked me for my offer, and

told me, that, having himself observed the defect, he had sent it to

his own jeweller to be mended; and, indeed, by this time I believe it

was in the jeweller’s hands, though not in order to be mended, for it

stood in need of no alteration.

Balked in this piece of politics, I cursed my simplicity; but resolved

to play a surer game with the earl, which I thus devised. I did not

doubt of being admitted into familiar conversation with him, as before,

and hoped by some means to get the watch into my hand; then, on

pretence of winding or playing with it, drop it on the floor, when, in

all probability, the fall would disorder the work so as to stop its

motion; this event would furnish me with an opportunity of insisting

upon carrying it away in order to be repaired, and then I should be in

no hurry to bring it back. What pity it was I could not find an

occasion of putting this fine scheme in execution! When I went to renew

my visit to his lordship, my access to the parlour was as free as ever;

but after I had waited for some time, the valet-de-chambre came in with

his lord’s compliments, and a desire to see me to-morrow at his levee,

he being at present so much indisposed that he could not see company. I

interpreted this message into a bad omen, and came away muttering

curses against his lordship’s politeness, and ready to go to

loggerheads with myself for being so egregiously duped. But, that I

might have some satisfaction for the loss I had sustained, I besieged

him so closely at his levee, and persecuted him with my solicitations;

not without faint hopes, indeed, of reaping something more from my

industry than the bare pleasure of making him uneasy; though I could

never obtain another private hearing the whole course of my attendance;

neither had I resolution enough to undeceive Strap, whose looks in a

little time were so whetted with impatience, that whenever I came home,

his eyes devoured me, as it were, with eagerness of attention.

At length, however, finding myself reduced to my last guinea, I was

compelled to disclose my necessity, though I endeavoured to sweeten the

discovery by rehearsing to him the daily assurances I received from my

patron. But these promises were not of efficacy sufficient to support

the spirits of my friend, who no sooner understood the lowness of my

finances, than, uttering a dreadful groan, he exclaimed, “In the name

of God, what shall we do?” In order to comfort him, I said, that many

of my acquaintances, who were in a worse condition than we, supported,

notwithstanding, the character of gentlemen; and advising him to thank

God that as yet we had incurred no debt, proposed he should pawn my

sword of steel, inlaid with gold, and trust to my discretion for the

rest. This expedient was wormwood and gall to poor Strap, who, in spite

of his invincible affection for me, still retained notions of economy

and expense suitable to the narrowness of his education; nevertheless

he complied with my request, and raised seven pieces on the sword in a

twinkling. This supply, inconsiderable as it was, made me as happy for

the present, as if I had kept five hundred pounds in bank; for by this

time I was so well skilled in procrastinating every troublesome

reflection, that the prospect of want seldom affected me very much, let

it be ever so near. And now indeed it was nearer than I imagined. My

landlord, having occasion for money, put me in mind of my being

indebted to him five guineas in lodging; and, telling me he had a sum

to make up, begged I would excuse his importunity, and discharge the

debt. Though I could ill spare so much cash, my pride took the

resolution of disbursing it. This I did in a cavalier manner, after he

had written a discharge, telling him with an air of scorn and

resentment, I saw he was resolved that I should not be long in his

books; while Strap, who stood by, and knew my circumstances, wrung his

hands in secret, gnawed his nether lip, and turned yellow with despair.

Whatever appearance of indifference my vanity enabled me to put on, I

was thunderstruck with this demand, which I had no sooner satisfied,

than I hastened into company, with a view of beguiling my cares with

conversation, or drowning them with wine.

After dinner, a party was accordingly made in the coffee-house, from

whence we adjourned to the tavern, where, instead of sharing the mirth

of the company, I was as much chagrined at their good humour as a

damned soul in hell would be at a glimpse of heaven. In vain did I

swallow bumper after bumper! the wine had lost its effect upon me, and,

far from raising my dejected spirits, could not even lay me asleep.

Banter, who was the only intimate I had (Strap excepted), perceived my

anxiety, and, when we broke up, reproached me with pusillanimity, for

being cast down at my disappointment that such a rascal as Strutwell

could be the occasion of. I told him I did not at all see how

Strutwell’s being a rascal alleviated my misfortune; and gave him to

understand that my present grief did not so much proceed from that

disappointment, as from the low ebb of my fortune, which was sunk to

something less than two guineas. At this declaration he cried, “Psha!

is that all?” and assured me there were a thousand ways of living in

town without a fortune, he himself having subsisted many years entirely

by his wit. I expressed an eager desire of being acquainted with some

of these methods, and he, without farther expostulation, bade me follow

him. He conducted me to a house under the piazzas in Covert Garden,

which we entered, and having delivered our swords to a grim fellow who

demanded them at the foot of the staircase, ascended to the second

story, where I saw multitudes of people standing round two

gaming-tables, loaded, in a manner, with gold and silver. My conductor

told me this was the house of a worthy Scotch lord, who, using the

privilege of his peerage, had set up public gaming tables, from the

profits of which he drew a comfortable livelihood. He then explained

the difference between the sitters and the bettors; characterised the

first as old rooks, and the last as bubbles; and advised me to try my

fortune at the silver table, by betting a crown at a time. Before I

would venture anything, I considered the company more particularly, and

there appeared such a group of villanous faces, that I was struck with

horror and astonishment at the sight! I signified my surprise to

Banter, who whispered in my ear, that the bulk of those present were

sharpers, highwaymen, and apprentices, who, having embezzled their

master’s cash, made a desperate push in this place to make up their

deficiencies. This account did not encourage me to hazard any part of

my small pittance: but, at length, being teased by the importunities of

my friend, who assured me there was no danger of being ill-used,

because people were hired by the owner to see justice done to

everybody, I began by risking one shilling, and, in less than an hour,

my winning amounted to thirty. Convinced by this time of the fairness

of the game, and animated with success, there was no need of further

persuasion to continue the play: I lent Banter (who seldom had any

money in his pocket) a guinea, which he carried to the gold table, and

lost in a moment. He would have borrowed another, but finding me deaf

to his arguments, went away in a pet. Meanwhile my gain advanced to six

pieces, and my desire of more increased in proportion: so that I moved

to the higher table, where I laid half-a-guinea on every throw, and

fortune still favouring me, I became a sitter, in which capacity I

remained until it was broad day; when I found myself, after many

vicissitudes, one hundred and fifty guineas in pocket.

Thinking it now high time to retire with my booty, I asked if anybody

would take my place, and made a notion to rise; upon which an old

Gascon, who sat opposite to me, and of whom I had won a little money,

started up with fury in his looks, crying, “Restez, foutre, restez! il

faut donner moi mon ravanchio!” At the same time, a Jew, who sat near

the other, insinuated that I was more beholden to art than fortune for

what I had got; that he had observed me wipe the table very often, and

that some of the divisions appeared to be greasy. This intimation

produced a great deal of clamour against me, especially among the

losers, who threatened with many oaths and imprecations, to take me up

by a warrant as a sharper, unless I would compromise the affair by

refunding the greatest part of my winning. Though I was far from being

easy under his accusation, I relied upon my innocence, threatened in my

turn to prosecute the Jew, for defamation, and boldly offered to submit

my cause to the examination of any justice in Westminster; but they

knew themselves too well to put their characters on that issue, and

finding that I was not to be intimidated into any concession, dropped

their plea, and made way for me to withdraw. I would not, however, stir

from the table until the Israelite had retracted what he had said to my

disadvantage, and asked pardon before the whole assembly.

As I marched out with my prize, I happened to tread on the toes of a

tall raw-boned fellow, with a hooked nose, fierce eyes, black thick

eyebrows, a pigtail wig of the same colour, and a formidable hat pulled

over his forehead, who stood gnawing his fingers in the crowd, and he

sooner felt the application of my shoe heel, than he roared out in a

tremendous voice, “Blood and wounds! you son of a whore, what’s that

for?” I asked pardon with a great deal of submission, and protested I

had no intention of hurting him; but the more I humbled myself the more

he stormed, and insisted on gentlemanly satisfaction, at the same time

provoking me with scandalous names that I could not put up with; so

that I gave loose to my passion, returned his Billingsgate, and

challenged him down to the piazzas. His indignation cooling as mine

warmed, he refused my invitation, saying he would choose his own time,

and returned towards the table muttering threats, which I neither

dreaded nor distinctly heard; but, descending with great deliberation,

received my sword from the door-keeper, whom I gratified with a guinea,

according to the custom of the place, and went home in a rapture of

joy.

My faithful valet, who had set up all night in the utmost uneasiness on

my account, let me in with his face beslubbered with tears, and

followed me to my chamber, where he stood silent like a condemned

criminal, in expectation of hearing that every shilling was spent, I

guessed the situation of his thoughts, and, assuming a sullen look,

bade him fetch me some water to wash. He replied, without lifting his

eyes from the ground, “In my simple conjecture, you have more occasion

for rest, not having (I suppose) slept these four-and-twenty hours.”

“Bring me some water!” said I, in a peremptory tone; upon which he

sneaked away shrugging his shoulders. Before he returned, I had spread

my whole stock on the table in the most ostentatious manner; so that,

when it first saluted his view, he stood like one entranced; and,

having rubbed his eyes more than once, to assure himself of his being

awake, broke out into, “Lord have mercy upon us, what a vast treasure

is here!” “’Tis all our own, Strap,” said I; “take what is necessary,

and redeem the sword immediately.” He advanced towards the table,

stopped short by the way, looked at the money and me by turns, and with

a wildness in his countenance, produced from joy checked by distrust,

cried, “I dare say it is honestly come by.” To remove his scruples, I

made him acquainted with the whole story of my success, which, when he

heard, he danced about the room in an ecstacy, crying, “God be

praised!—a white stone!—God be praised!—a white stone!” So that I was

afraid the change of fortune had disordered his intellects, and that he

was run mad with joy. Extremely concerned at this event, I attempted to

reason him out of his frenzy, but to no purpose; for without regarding

what I said, he continued to frisk up and down, and repeat his

rhapsody, of “God be praised!—a white stone!” At last, I rose in the

utmost consternation, and, laying violent hands upon him, put a stop to

his extravagance by fixing him down to a settee that was in the room.

This constraint banished his delirium; he started as if just awoke, and

terrified at my behaviour, cried, “What is the matter!” When he learned

the cause of my apprehension, he was ashamed of his transports, and

told me, that in mentioning the white stone, he alluded to the Dies

fasti of the Romans, albo lapide notati.

Having no inclination to sleep, I secured my cash, dressed, and was

just going abroad, when the servant of the house told me, there was a

gentlewoman at the door who wanted to speak with me. Surprised at this

information, I made Strap show her up, and in less than a minute, saw a

young woman of a shabby decayed appearance enter my room. After

half-a-dozen curtsies, she began to sob, and told me her name was

Gawky; upon which information I immediately recollected the features of

Miss Lavement, who had been the first occasion of my misfortunes.

Though I had all the reason in the world to resent her treacherous

behaviour to me, I was moved at her distress, and professing my sorrow

at seeing her so reduced desired her to sit, and inquired into the

particulars of her situation. She fell upon her knees and implored my

forgiveness for the injuries she had done me, protesting before God,

that she was forced, against her inclination, into that hellish

conspiracy which had almost deprived me of my life, by the entreaties

of her husband, who, having been afterwards renounced by his father on

account of his marriage with her, and unable to support a family on his

pay, left his wife at her father’s house, and went with the regiment to

Germany, where he was broke for misbehaviour at the battle of

Dettingen; since which time she had heard no tidings of him. She then

gave me to understand, with many symptoms of penitence, that it was her

misfortune to bear a child four months after marriage, by which event

her parents were so incensed, that she was turned out of doors with the

infant, that died soon after: and had hitherto subsisted in a miserable

indigent manner, on the extorted charity of a few friends, who were now

quite tired of giving; that, not knowing where or how to support

herself one day longer, she had fled for succour even to me, who, of

all mankind, had the least cause to assist her, relying upon the

generosity of my disposition, which, she hoped, would be pleased with

this opportunity of avenging itself in the noblest manner on the wretch

who had wronged me. I was very much affected with her discourse and,

having no cause to suspect the sincerity of her repentance, raised her

up, freely pardoned all she had done against me, and promised to

befriend her as much as lay in my power.

Since my last arrival in London, I had made no advances to the

apothecary, imagining it would be impossible for me to make my

innocence appear, so unhappily was my accusation circumstanced: Strap

indeed had laboured to justify me to the schoolmaster; but, far from

succeeding in his attempt, Mr. Concordance dropped all correspondence

with him, because he refused to quit his connection with me. Things

being in this situation, I thought a fairer opportunity of vindicating

my character could not offer than that which now presented itself; I

therefore stipulated with Mrs. Gawky, that before I would yield her the

least assistance, she should do me the justice to clear my reputation

by explaining upon oath before a magistrate the whole of the

conspiracy, as it had been executed against me. When she had given me

this satisfaction, I presented her with five guineas, a sum so much

above her expectation, that she could scarce believe the evidence of

her senses, and was ready to worship me for my benevolence. The

declaration, signed with her own hand, I sent to her father, who, upon

recollecting and comparing the circumstances of my charge, was

convinced of my integrity, and waited on me next day, in company with

his friend the schoolmaster, to whom he had communicated my

vindication. After mutual salutation, Monsieur Lavement began a long

apology for the unjust treatment I had received; but I saved him a good

deal of breath by interrupting his harangue, and assuring him that, far

from entertaining a resentment against him, I thought myself obliged to

his lenity, which allowed me to escape, after such strong assumptions

of guilt appeared against me. Mr. Concordance, thinking it now his turn

to speak, observed that Mr. Random had too much candour and sagacity to

be disobliged at their conduct, which, all things considered, could not

have been otherwise with any honesty of intention. “Indeed,” said he,

“if the plot had been unravelled to us by any supernatural

intelligence; if it had been whispered by a genius, communicated by

dream, or revealed by an angel from on high, we should have been to

blame in crediting ocular demonstration; but as we were left in the

midst of mortality, it cannot be expected we should be incapable of

imposition. I must assure you, Mr. Random, no man on earth is more

pleased than I am at this triumph of your character: and, as the news

of your misfortune panged me to the very entrails, this manifestation

of your innocence makes my midriff quiver with joy.” I thanked him for

this concern, desired them to undeceive those of their acquaintance who

judged harshly of me, and, having treated them with a glass of wine,

represented to Lavement the deplorable condition of his daughter, and

pleaded her cause so effectually, that he consented to settle a small

annuity on her for life: but could not be persuaded to take her home,

because her mother was so much incensed, that she would never see her.

CHAPTER LIII

I purchase new Clothes—reprimand Strutwell and Straddle—Banter proposes

another matrimonial Scheme—I accept of his Terms—set out to Bath in the

Stage-coach with the young Lady and her Mother—the Behaviour of an

Officer and Lawyer—our fellow Travellers described—a smart dialogue

between my Mistress and the Captain

Having finished this affair to my satisfaction, I found myself

perfectly at ease; and, looking upon the gaming-table as a certain

resource for a gentleman in want, became more gay than ever. Although

my clothes were almost as good as new, I grew ashamed of wearing them,

because I thought everybody by this time had got an inventory of my

wardrobe. For which reason I disposed of a good part of my apparel to a

salesman in Monmouth Street for half the value, and bought two new

suits with the money. I likewise purchased a plain gold watch,

despairing of recovering that which I had so foolishly given to

Strutwell, whom, notwithstanding, I still continued to visit at his

levee, until the ambassador he had mentioned set out with a secretary

of his own choosing. I thought myself then at liberty to expostulate

with his lordship, whom I treated with great freedom in a letter, for

amusing me with vain hopes, when he neither had the power nor

inclination to provide for me. Nor was I less reserved with Straddle,

whom I in person reproached for misrepresenting to me the character of

Strutwell, which I did not scruple to aver was infamous in every

respect. He seemed very much enraged at my freedom, talked a great deal

about his quality and honour, and began to make some comparisons which

I thought so injurious to mine, that I demanded an explanation with

great warmth, and he was mean enough to equivocate, and condescend in

such a manner that I left him with a hearty contempt of his behaviour.

About this time, Banter, who had observed a surprising and sudden

alteration in my appearance and disposition, began to inquire very

minutely into the cause, and, as I did not think fit to let him know

the true state of the affair, lest he might make free with my purse, on

the strength of having proposed the scheme that filled it, I told him

that I had received a small supply from a relation in the country, who

at the same time had proffered to use all his interest (which was not

small) in soliciting some post for me that should make me easy for

life. “If that be the case,” said Banter, “perhaps you won’t care to

mortify yourself a little in making your fortune another way. I have a

relation who is to set out for Bath next week, with an only daughter,

who being sickly and decrepit, intends to drink the waters for the

recovery of her health. Her father, who was a rich Turkey merchant,

died about a year ago, and left her with a fortune of twenty thousand

pounds, under the sole management of her mother, who is my kinswoman. I

would have put in for the plate myself, but there is a breach at

present between the old woman and me. You must know, that some time ago

I borrowed a small sum of her and promised, it seems, to pay it before

a certain time; but being disappointed in my expectation of money from

the country, the day elapsed without my being able to take up my note;

upon which she wrote a peremptory letter, threatening to arrest me, if

I did not pay the debt immediately. Nettled at this precise behaviour,

I sent a d—d severe answer, which enraged her so much that she actually

took out a writ against me. Whereupon, finding the thing grow serious,

I got a friend to advance the money for me, discharged the debt, went

to her house, and abused her for her unfriendly dealing. She was

provoked by my reproaches, and scolded in her turn. The little deformed

urchin joined her mother with such virulence and volubility of tongue,

that I was fain to make a retreat, after having been honoured with a

great many scandalous epithets, which gave me plainly to understand

that I had nothing to hope from the esteem of the one, or the affection

of the other. As they are both utter strangers to life, it is a

thousand to one that the girl will be picked up by some scoundrel or

other at Bath, if I don’t provide for her otherwise. You are a

well-looking fellow, Random, and can behave as demurely as a quaker. If

you will give me an obligation of five hundred pounds, to be paid six

months after your marriage, I will put you in a method of carrying her

in spite of all opposition.”

This proposal was too advantageous for me to be refused. The writing

was immediately drawn up and executed; and Banter, giving me notice of

the time when, and the stage coach in which they were to set out, I

bespoke a place in the same convenience; and, having hired a horse for

Strap, who was chagrined with the prospect, set forward accordingly.

As we embarked before day, I had not the pleasure for some time of

seeing Miss Snapper (that was the name of my mistress), nor even of

perceiving the number and sex of my fellow travellers, although I

guessed that the coach was full, by the difficulty I found in seating

myself. The first five minutes passed in a general silence, when, all

of a sudden, the coach heeling to one side, a boisterous voice

pronounced, “To the right and left, cover your flanks, d—me! whiz!” I

easily discovered by the tone and matter of this exclamation that it

was uttered by a son of Mars; neither was it hard to conceive the

profession of another person who sat opposite to me, and observed that

we ought to have been well satisfied of our security before we entered

upon the premises. These two sallies had not the desired effect. We

continued a good while as mute as before, till at length the gentleman

of the sword, impatient of longer silence, made a second effort, by

swearing he had got into a meeting of quakers. “I believe so too,” said

a shrill female voice at my left hand, “for the spirit of folly begins

to move.” “Out with it then, madam!” replied the soldier. “You seem to

have no occasion for a midwife,” cried the lady. “D—mn my blood!”

exclaimed the other, “a man can’t talk to a woman, but she immediately

thinks of a midwife.” “True sir,” said she, “I long to be delivered.”

“What of—a mouse, madam?” said he. “No, Sir,” said she, “of a fool.”

“Are you far gone with a fool?” said he. “Little more than two miles,”

said she. “By Gad, you’re a wit, madam,” cried the officer, “I wish I

could with any justice return the compliment,” said the lady. “Zounds,

I have done,” said he. “Your bolt is soon shot, according to the old

proverb,” said she. The warrior’s powder was quite spent; the lawyer

advised him to drop the prosecution, and a grave matron, who sat on the

left hand of the victorious wit, told her she must not let her tongue

run so fast among strangers. This reprimand, softened with the

appellation of child, convinced me that the satirical lady was no other

than Miss Snapper, and I resolved to regulate my conduct accordingly.

The champion, finding himself so smartly handled, changed his battery,

and began to expatiate on his own exploits. “You talk of shot, madam,”

said he; “d—me! I have both given and received some shot in my time—I

was wounded in the shoulder by a pistol ball at Dettingen, where—I say

nothing—but by G—d! if it had not been for me—all’s one for that—I

despise boasting, d—me! whiz!” So saying, he whistled one part and

hummed another, of the Black Joke; then, addressing himself to the

lawyer, went on thus; “Wouldn’t you think it d—d hard, after having, at

the risk of your life, recovered the standard of a regiment that had

been lost, to receive no preferment for your pains? I don’t choose to

name no names, sink me! but, howsomever, this I will refer, by G—d! and

that is this—a musketeer of the French guards, having a standard from a

certain cornet of a certain regiment, d—e! was retreating with his

prize as fast as his horse’s heels could carry him, sink me! Upon

which, I snatched up firelock that belonged to a dead man, d—me! Whiz!

and shot his horse under him, d—n my blood! The fellow got upon his

feet, and began to repose me, upon which I charged my bayonet breast

high, and ran him through the body by G—! One of his comrades, coming

to his assistance, shot me in the shoulder, as I told you before; and

another gave me a contusion on the head with the butt-end of his

carbine; but, d—me, that did not signify. I killed one, put the other

to flight, and taking up the standard, carried it off very

deliberately. But the best joke of all was the son of a b—ch of a

cornet, who had surrendered it in a cowardly manner, seeing it in my

possession, demanded it from me in the front of the line. “D—n my

blood!” says he, “where did you find my standard?” says he. “D—n my

blood!” said I, “where,” said I, “did you lose it?” said I. “That’s

nothing to you,” says he, “’tis my standard,” says he” and by G—d I’ll

have it,” says he. “D—nation seize me,” says I, “if you shall,” says I,

“till I have first delivered it to the general,” says I; and

accordingly I went to the headquarters after the battle, and delivered

it to my Lord Stair, who promised to do for me. But I am no more than a

poor lieutenant still, d—n my blood.”

Having vented this repetition of expletives, the lawyer owned he had

not been requited according to his deserts; observed that the labourer

is always worthy of his hire, and asked if the promise was made before

witnesses, because in that case the law would compel the general to

perform it; but understanding that the promise was made over a bottle,

without being restricted to time or terms, he pronounced it not valid

in law, proceeded to inquire into the particulars of the battle, and

affirmed that, although the English had drawn themselves into premunire

at first, the French managed their cause so lamely in the course of the

dispute, that they would have been utterly nonsuited, had they not

obtained a nolli prosequi. In spite of these enlivening touches, the

conversation was like to suffer another long interruption, when the

lieutenant, unwilling to conceal any of his accomplishments that could

be displayed in his present situation, offered to regale the company

with a song; and, interpreting our silence into a desire of hearing,

began to warble a fashionable air the first stanza of which he

pronounced thus:

“Would you task the moon-tide hair,

To yon flagrant beau repair.

Where waving with the poplin vow,

The bantling fine will shelter you,” etc.

The sense of the rest he perverted as he went on with such surprising

facility that I could not help thinking he had been at some pains to

burlesque the performance. Miss Snapper ascribed it to the true cause,

namely ignorance; and, when he asked her how she relished his music,

answered that, in her opinion, the music and the words were much of a

piece. “Oh, d—n my blood!” said he “I take that as a high compliment;

for everybody allows the words are d—able fine.” “They may be so,”

replied the lady, “for aught I know, but they are above my

comprehension.” “I an’t obliged to find you comprehension, madam, curse

me!” cried he. “No, nor to speak sense neither,” said she. “D—n my

heart,” said he, “I’ll speak what I please.” Here the lawyer

interposed, by telling him, there were some things he must not speak;

and upon being defied to give an instance, mentioned treason and

defamation. “As for the king,” cried the soldier, “God bless him—I eat

his bread, and have lost blood in his cause, therefore I have nothing

to say to him—but, by G—d, I dare say anything to any other man.” “No,”

said the lawyer, “you dare not call me rogue.” “D—me, for what?” said

the other. “Because,” replied the counsellor, “I should have it good

action against you, and recover.” “Well, well,” cried the officer, “if

I dare not call you rogue, I dare think you one, d—me!” This stroke of

wit he accompanied with a loud laugh of self-approbation, which

unluckily did not affect the audience, but effectually silenced his

antagonist, who did not open his mouth for the space of an hour, except

to clear his pipe with three hems, which however, produced nothing.

CHAPTER LIV

Day breaking, I have the Pleasure of viewing the Person of Miss

Snapper, whom I had not seen before—the Soldier is witty upon me—is

offended—talks much of his Valour—is reprimanded by a grave

Gentlewoman—we are alarmed by the cry of Highwaymen—I get out of the

Coach, and stand in my own defence—they ride off without having

attacked us—I pursue them—one of them is thrown from his Horse and

taken—I return to the Coach—am complimented by Miss Snapper—the

Captain’s Behaviour on this Occasion—the Prude reproaches me in a

Soliloquy—I upbraid her in the same Manner—the Behaviour of Miss

Snapper, at Breakfast, disobliges me—the Lawyer is witty upon the

Officer, who threatens him

In the meantime, the day breaking in upon us, discovered to one another

the faces of their fellow travellers: and I had the good fortune to

find my mistress not quite so deformed nor disagreeable as she had been

represented to me. Her head, indeed, bore some resemblance to a

hatchet, the edge being represented by her face; but she had a certain

delicacy in her complexion, and a great deal of vivacity in her eyes,

which were very large and black; and, though the protuberance of her

breast, when considered alone, seemed to drag her forwards, it was easy

to perceive an equivalent on her back which balanced the other, and

kept her body in equilibrio. On the whole, I thought I should have

great reason to congratulate myself if it should be my fate to possess

twenty thousand pounds encumbered with such a wife. I began therefore

to deliberate about the most probable means of acquiring the conquest,

and was so much engrossed by this idea, that I scarce took any notice

of the rest of the people in the coach, but revolved my project in

silence; while the conversation was maintained as before by the object

of my hopes, the son of Mars, and the barrister, who by this time

recollected himself, and talked in terms as much as ever. At length a

dispute happened, which ended in a wager, to be determined by me, who

was so much absorbed in contemplation, that I neither heard the

reference nor the question which was put to me by each in his turn.

Affronted at my supposed contempt, the soldier with great vociferation

swore I was either dumb or deaf if not both, and that I looked as if I

could not say Bo to a goose. Aroused at this observation, I fixed my

eyes upon him, and pronounced with emphasis the interjection Bo! Upon

which he cocked his hat in a fierce manner, and cried, “D—me sir, what

d’ye mean by that.” Had I intended to answer him, which by the by was

not my design, I should have been anticipated by Miss, who told him, my

meaning was to show, that I could cry Bo to a goose; and laughed very

heartily at my laconic reproof. Her explanation and mirth did not help

to appease his wrath, which broke out in several martial insinuations,

such as—“I do not understand such freedoms, d—me! D—n my blood! I’m a

gentleman, and bear the king’s commission. ’Sblood! some people deserve

to have their noses pulled for their impertinence.” I thought to have

checked these ejaculations by a frown; because he had talked so much of

his valour that I had long ago rated him as an ass in a lion’s skin;

but this expedient did not answer my expectation, he took umbrage at

the contraction of my brow, swore he did not value my sulky looks a

fig’s end, and protested he feared no man breathing. Miss Snapper said,

she was very glad to find herself in company with a man of so much

courage, who, she did not doubt, would protect her from all the

attempts of highwaymen during our journey. “Make yourself perfectly

easy on that head, madam,” replied the officer. “I have got a pair of

pistols (here they are), which I took from a horse officer at the

battle of Dettingen; they are double loaded, and if any highwayman in

England robs you of the value of a pin while I have the honour of being

in your company, d—n my heart.” When he had expressed himself in this

manner, a prim gentlewoman, who had sat silent hitherto, opened her

mouth, and said, she wondered how any man could be so rude as to pull

out such weapons before ladies. “D—me, madam,” cried the champion, “if

you are so much afraid at the sight of a pistol, how d’ye propose to

stand fire if there should be occasion?” She then told him that, if she

thought he could be so unmannerly as to use fire-arms in her presence,

whatever might be the occasion, she would get out of the coach

immediately, and walk to the next village, where she might procure a

convenience to herself. Before he could make any answer, my Dulcinea

interposed, and observed that, far from being offended at a gentleman’s

using his arms in his own defence, she thought herself very lucky in

being along with one by whose valour she stood a good chance of saving

herself from being rifled. The prude cast a disdainful look at Miss,

and said that people, who have but little to lose, are sometimes the

most solicitous about preserving it. The old lady was affronted at this

inuendo, and took notice, that people ought to be very well informed

before they speak slightingly of other people’s fortune, lest they

discover their own envy, and make themselves ridiculous. The daughter

declared, that she did not pretend to vie with anybody in point of

riches; and if the lady, who insisted upon non-resistance, would

promise to indemnify us all for the loss we should sustain, she would

be one of the first to persuade the captain to submission, in case we

should be attacked. To this proposal, reasonable as it was, the

reserved lady made no other reply than a scornful glance and a toss of

her head. I was very well pleased with the spirit of my young mistress,

and even wished for an opportunity of distinguishing my courage under

her eye, which I believed could not fail of prepossessing her in my

favour, when all of a sudden Strap rode up to the coach door, and told

us in a great fright, that two men on horseback were crossing the heath

(for by this time we had passed Hounslow), and made directly towards

us.

This piece of information was no sooner delivered, than Mrs. Snapper

began to scream, her daughter grew pale, the old lady pulled out her

purse to be in readiness, the lawyer’s teeth chattered, while he

pronounced, “’Tis no matter—we’ll sue the county and recover.” The

captain gave evident signs of confusion: and I, after having commanded

the coachman to stop, opened the door, jumped out, and invited the

warrior to follow me. But, finding him backward and astonished, I took

his pistols, and, giving them to Strap, who had by this time alighted

and trembled very much, I mounted on horseback; and, taking my own

(which I could better depend upon) from the holsters, cocked them both,

and faced the robbers, who were now very near us. Seeing me ready to

oppose them on horseback, and another man armed a-foot, they made a

halt at some distance to reconnoitre us: and after having rode round us

twice, myself still facing about as they rode, went off the same way

they came, at a hand gallop. A gentleman’s servant coming up with a

horse at the same time, I offered him a crown to assist me in pursuing

them, which he no sooner accepted, than I armed him with the officer’s

pistols, and we galloped after the thieves, who, trusting to the

swiftness of their horses, stopped till we came within shot of them and

then, firing at us, put their nags to the full speed. We followed them

as fast as our beasts could carry us; but, not being so well mounted as

they, our efforts would have been to little purpose, had not the horse

of one of them stumbled, and thrown his rider with such violence over

his head, that he lay senseless when we came up, and was taken without

the least opposition; while his comrade consulted his own safety in

flight, without regarding the distress of his friend. We scarce had

time to make ourselves masters of his arms, and tie his hands together,

before he recovered his senses, when, learning his situation he

affected surprise, demanded to know by what authority we used a

gentleman in that manner, and had the impudence to threaten us with a

prosecution for robbery. In the meantime, we perceived Strap coming up

with a crowd of people, armed up with different kinds of weapons; and

among the rest a farmer, who no sooner perceived the thief, whom we had

secured, than he cried with great emotion, “There’s the fellow who

robbed me an hour ago of twenty pounds, in a canvas bag.” He was

immediately searched, and the money found exactly as it had been

described; upon which we committed him to the charge of the countryman,

who carried him to the town of Hounslow, which, it seems, the farmer

had alarmed; and I, having satisfied the footman for his trouble,

according to promise, returned with Strap to the coach, where I found

the captain and lawyer busy in administering smelling bottles and

cordials to the grave lady, who had gone into a fit at the noise of

firing.

When I had taken my seat, Miss Snapper, who from the coach had seen

everything that happened; made me a compliment on my behaviour, and

said she was glad to see me returned without having received any

injury; her mother too owned herself obliged to my resolution: the

lawyer told me, that I was entitled by act of parliament to a reward of

forty pounds, for having apprehended a highwayman. The soldier

observed, with a countenance in which impudence and shame struggling,

produced some disorder, that if I had not been in such a d—d hurry to

get out of the coach, he would have secured the rogues effectually,

without all this bustle and loss of time, by a scheme, which my heat

and precipitation ruined. “For my own part,” continued he, “I am always

extremely cool on these occasions.” “So it appeared, by your

trembling,” said the young lady. “Death and d—ion!” cried he, “your sex

protects you, madam; if any man on earth durst tell me so much, I’d

send him to hell, d—n my heart! in an instant.” So saying, he fixed his

eyes upon me, and asked if I had seen him tremble? I answered without

hesitation, “Yes.” “D—me, sir!” said he, “d’ye doubt my courage?” I

replied, “Very much.” This declaration quite disconcerted him. He

looked blank, and pronounced with a faltering voice, “Oh! it’s very

well: d—n my blood! I shall find a time.” I signified my contempt of

him, by thrusting my tongue in my cheek, which humbled him so much,

that he scarce swore another oath aloud during the whole journey.

The precise lady, having recruited her spirits by the help of some

strong waters, began a soliloquy, in which she wondered that any man,

who pretended to maintain the character of a gentleman, could, for the

sake of a little paltry coin, throw persons of honour into such

quandaries as might endanger their lives; and professed her surprise

that women were not ashamed to commend such brutality. At the same time

vowing that for the future she would never set foot in a stage coach,

if a private convenience could be had for love or money.

Nettled at her remarks, I took the same method of conveying my

sentiments, and wondered in my turn, that any woman of common sense

should be so unreasonable as to expect that people, who had neither

acquaintance nor connection with her, would tamely allow themselves to

be robbed and maltreated, merely to indulge her capricious humour. I

likewise confessed my astonishment at her insolence and ingratitude in

taxing a person with brutality, who deserved her approbation and

acknowledgment; and vowed that, if ever she should be assaulted again,

I would leave her to the mercy of the spoiler, that she might know the

value of my protection.

This person of honour did not think fit to carry on the altercation any

further, but seemed to chew the cud of her resentment with the

crestfallen captain, while I entered into discourse with my charmer,

who was the more pleased with my conversation, as she had conceived a

very indifferent opinion of my intellects from my former silence. I

should have had cause to be equally satisfied with the sprightliness of

her genius, could she have curbed her imagination with judgment; but

she laboured under such a profusion of talk, that I dreaded her unruly

tongue, and felt by anticipation the horrors of an eternal clack!

However, when I considered, on the other hand, the joys attending the

possession of twenty thousand pounds, I forgot her imperfections,

seized occasion by the forelock, and tried to insinuate myself into her

affection. The careful mother kept a strict watch over her and though

she could not help behaving civilly to me, took frequent opportunities

of discouraging our communication, by reprimanding her for being so

free with strangers, and telling her she must learn to speak less and

think more. Abridged of the use of speech, we conversed with our eyes,

and I found the young lady very eloquent in this kind of discourse. In

short, I had reason to believe that she was sick of the old

gentlewoman’s tuition, and that I should find it no difficult matter to

supersede her authority.

When we arrived at the place where we were to breakfast, I alighted,

and helped my mistress out of the coach, as well as her mother who

called for a private room to which they withdrew in order to eat by

themselves. As they retired together, I perceived that Miss had got

more twists from nature than I had before observed for she was bent

sideways into the figure of an S, so that her progression very much

resembled that of a crab. The prude also chose the captain for her

messmate, and ordered breakfast for two only, to be brought into

another separate room: while the lawyer and I, deserted by the rest of

the company, were fain to put up with each other. I was a good deal

chagrined at the stately reserve of Mrs. Snapper, who, I thought, did

not use me with all the complaisance I deserved; and my companion

declared that he had been a traveller for twenty years, and never knew

the stage coach rules so much infringed before. As for the honourable

gentlewoman I could not conceive the meaning of her attachment to the

lieutenant; and asked the lawyer if he knew for which of the soldier’s

virtues she admired him? The counsellor facetiously replied, “I suppose

the lady knows him to be an able conveyancer, and wants him to make a

settlement in tail.” I could not help laughing at the archness of the

barrister, who entertained me during breakfast with a great deal of wit

of the same kind, at the expense of our fellow travellers; and among

other things said, he was sorry to find the young lady saddled with

such incumbrances.

When we had made an end of our repast, and paid our reckoning, we went

into the coach, took our places, and bribed the driver with sixpence to

revenge us on the rest of his fare, by hurrying them away in the midst

of their meal. This task he performed to our satisfaction, after he had

disturbed their enjoyment with his importunate clamour. The mother and

daughter obeyed the summons first, and, coming to the coach door, were

obliged to desire the coachman’s assistance to get in, because the

lawyer and I had agreed to show our resentment by our neglect. They

were no sooner seated, than the captain appeared, as much heated as if

he had been pursued a dozen miles by an enemy; and immediately after

him came the lady, not without some marks of disorder. Having helped

her up, he entered himself, growling a few oaths against the coachman

for his impertinent interruption; and the lawyer comforted him by

saying, that if he had suffered a nisi prius through the obstinacy of

the defendant, he might have an opportunity to join issue at the next

stage. This last expression gave offence to the grave gentlewoman, who

told him, if she was a man, she would make him repent of such

obscenity, and thanked God she had never been in such company before.

At this insinuation the captain thought himself under a necessity of

espousing the lady’s cause; and accordingly threatened to cut off the

lawyer’s ears, if he should give his tongue any such liberties for the

future. The poor counsellor begged pardon, and universal silence

ensued.

CHAPTER LV

I resolve to ingratiate myself with the Mother, and am favoured by

accident—the Precise Lady finds her husband, and quit the Coach—the

Captain is disappointed of his dinner—we arrive at Bath—I accompany

Miss Snapper to the Long-room, where she is attacked by beau Nash, and,

turns the Laugh against him—I make love to her, and receive a

check—Squire her to an Assembly, where I am blessed with a Sight of my

dear Narcissa, which discomposes me so much, that Miss Snapper,

observing my disorder, is at pains to discover the Cause—is piqued at

the Occasion, and, in our way home, pays me a sarcastic Compliment—I am

met by Miss Williams, who is the maid and Confidante of Narcissa—she

acquaints me with her Lady’s regard for me while under the disguise of

a Servant, and describes the Transports of Narcissa on seeing me at the

Assembly, in the Character of a Gentleman—I am surprised with an

Account of her Aunt’s Marriage, and make an Appointment to meet Miss

Williams the next day

During this unsocial interval, my pride and interest maintained a

severe conflict on the subject of Miss Snapper, whom the one

represented as unworthy of notice, and the other proposed as the object

of my whole attention: the advantages and disadvantages of such a match

were opposed to one another by my imagination; and, at length, my

judgment gave it so much in favour of the first, that I resolved to

prosecute my scheme with all the address in my power. I thought I

perceived some concern in her countenance, occasioned by my silence,

which she, no doubt, imputed to my disgust at her mother’s behaviour;

and, as I believed the old woman could not fail of ascribing my

muteness to the same motive, I determined to continue that sullen

conduct towards her, and fall upon some other method of manifesting my

esteem for the daughter, nor was it difficult for me to make her

acquainted with my sentiments by the expression of my looks, which I

modelled into the character of humanity and love; and which were

answered by her with all the sympathy and approbation I could desire.

But when I began to consider, that, without further opportunities of

improving my success, all the progress I had hitherto made would not

much avail, and that such opportunities could not be enjoyed without

the mother’s permission, I concluded it would be requisite to vanquish

her coldness and suspicion by my assiduities and respectful behaviour

on the road; and she would, in all likelihood, invite me to visit her

at Bath, where I did not fear of being able to cultivate her

acquaintance as much as would be necessary to the accomplishment of my

purpose. And indeed accident furnished me with an opportunity of

obliging her so much that she could not, with any appearance of good

manners, forbear to gratify my inclination.

When we arrived at our dining-place, we found all the eatables at the

inn bespoke by a certain nobleman, who had got the start of us and, in

all likelihood, my mistress and her mother must have dined with Duke

Humphrey, had I not exerted myself in their behalf, and bribed the

landlord with a glass of wine to curtail his lordship’s entertainment

of a couple of fowls and some bacon, which I sent with my compliments

to the ladies. They accepted my treat with a great many thanks, and

desired I would favour them with my company at dinner, where I amused

the old gentlewoman so successfully, by maintaining a seemingly

disinterested ease in the midst of my civility, that she signified a

desire of being better acquainted, and hoped I would be so kind as to

see her sometimes at Bath. While I enjoyed myself in this manner, the

precise lady had the good fortune to meet with her husband, who was no

other than gentleman, or, in other words, valet-de-chambre, to the very

nobleman whose coach stood at the door. Proud of the interest she had

in the house, she affected to show her power by introducing the captain

to her spouse as a person who had treated her with great civility upon

which he was invited to a share of their dinner; while the poor lawyer,

finding himself utterly abandoned, made application to me, and was

through my intercession admitted into our company. Having satisfied our

appetites, and made ourselves merry at the expense of the person of

honour, the civil captain, and complaisant husband, I did myself the

pleasure of discharging the bill by stealth, for which I received a

great many apologies and acknowledgments from my guests, and we

re-embarked at the first warning. The officer was obliged, at last, to

appease his hunger with a luncheon of bread and cheese, and a pint

bottle of brandy, which he dispatched in the coach, cursing the

inappetence of his lordship, who had ordered dinner to be put back a

whole hour.

Nothing remarkable happened during the remaining part of our journey,

which was finished next day, when I waited on the ladies to the house

of a relation, in which they intended to lodge, and, passing that night

at the inn, took lodgings in the morning for myself.

The forenoon was spent in visiting everything that was worth seeing in

the place, in company with a gentleman to whom Banter had given me a

letter of introduction; and in the afternoon I waited on the ladies,

and found Miss a good deal indisposed with the fatigue of their

journey. As they foresaw they should have occasion for a male

acquaintance to squire them at all public places, I was received with

great cordiality, and had the mother’s permission to conduct them next

day to the Long Room, which we no sooner entered, than the eyes of

everybody present were turned upon us, and, when we had suffered the

martyrdom of their looks for some time, a whisper circulated at our

expense, which was accompanied with many contemptuous smiles and

tittering observations, to my utter shame and confusion. I did not so

much conduct as follow my charge to a place where she seated her mother

and herself with astonishing composure notwithstanding the unmannerly

behaviour of the whole company, which seemed to be assumed merely to

put her out of countenance. The celebrated Mr. Nash, who commonly

attends in this place, as master of the ceremonies, perceiving the

disposition of the assembly, took upon himself the task of gratifying

their ill-nature further, by exposing my mistress to the edge of his

wit. With this view he approached us, with many bows and grimaces, and,

after having welcomed Miss Snapper to the place, asked her in the

hearing of all present, if she could inform him of the name of Tobit’s

dog. Miss was so much incensed at his insolence, that I should

certainly have kicked him where he stood without ceremony, had not the

young lady prevented the effects of my indignation, by replying with

the utmost vivacity, “His name was Nash, and an impudent dog he was.”

This repartee so unexpected and just, raised such a universal laugh at

the aggressor, that all his assurance was insufficient to support him

under their derision; so that, after he had endeavoured to compose

himself by taking snuff and forcing a smile, he was obliged to sneak

off in a ludicrous attitude, while my Dulcinea was applauded to the

skies for the brilliancy of her wit, and her acquaintance immediately

courted by the best people of both sexes in the room.

This event, with which I was indefinitely pleased at first, did not

fail of alarming me, upon further reflection, when I considered, that

the more she was caressed by persons of distinction, the more her pride

would be inflamed, and consequently, the obstacles to my success

multiplied and enlarged. Nor were my presaging fears untrue. That very

night I perceived her a little intoxicated with the incense she had

received, and, though, she still behaved with a particular civility to

me, I foresaw, that, as soon as her fortune should be known, she would

be surrounded with a swarm of admirers, some of whom might possibly, by

excelling me on point of wealth, or in the arts of flattery and

scandal, supplant me in her esteem, and find means to make the mother

of his party. I resolved therefore to lose no time, and, being invited

to spend the evening with them, found an opportunity, in spite of the

old gentlewoman’s vigilance, to explain the meaning of my glances in

the coach, by paying homage to her wit, and professing myself enamoured

of her person. She blushed at my declaration and in a favourable manner

disapproved of the liberty I had taken, putting me in mind of our being

strangers to each other, and desiring I would not be the means of

interrupting our acquaintance, by any such unseasonable strokes of

gallantry for the future. My ardour was effectually checked by this

reprimand, which was, however, delivered in a gentle manner, that I had

no cause to be disobliged; and the arrival of her mother relieved me

from a dilemma in which I should not have known how to demean myself a

minute longer. Neither could I resume the easiness of carriage with

which I came in; my mistress acted on the reserve, and the conversation

beginning to flag, the old lady introduced her kinswoman of the house,

and proposed a hand at whist.

While we amused ourselves at this diversion, I understood from the

gentlewoman, that there was to be an assembly next night at which I

begged to have the honour of dancing with Miss. She thanked me for the

favour I intended her, assured me she never did dance, but signified a

desire of seeing the company, when I offered my service, which was

accepted, not a little proud of being exempted from appearing with her

in a situation, that, notwithstanding my profession to the contrary,

was not at all agreeable to my inclination.

Having supped, and continued the game, till such time as the successive

yawns of the mother warned me to be gone, I took my leave, and went

home, where I made Strap very happy with an account of my progress.

Next day I put on my gayest apparel, and went to drink tea at Mrs.

Snapper’s, according to appointment, when I found, to my inexpressible

satisfaction, that she was laid up with the toothache, and that Miss

was to be intrusted to my care. Accordingly, we set out for the

ball-room pretty early in the evening, and took possession of a

commodious place, where we had not sat longer than a quarter of an

hour, when a gentleman, dressed in a green frock, came in, leading a

young lady, whom I immediately discovered to be the adorable Narcissa!

Good heaven! what were the thrillings of my soul at that instant! my

reflection was overwhelmed with a torrent of agitation! my heart

throbbed with surprising violence! a sudden mist overspread my eyes, my

ears were invaded with a dreadful sound! I panted for want of breath,

and, in short, was for some moments entranced! This first tumult

subsiding, a crowd of flattering ideas rushed upon my imagination.

Everything, that was soft, sensible, and engaging, in the character of

that dear creature recurred to my remembrance, and every favourable

circumstance of my own qualifications appeared in all the aggravation

of self-conceit, to heighten my expectation! Neither was this transport

of long duration. The dread of her being already disposed of

intervened, and overcast my enchanting reverie! My presaging

apprehension represented her encircled in the arms of some happy rival,

and in consequence for ever lost to me. I was stung with this

suggestion, and, believing the person who conducted her to be the

husband of this amiable young lady, already devoted him to my fury, and

stood up to mark him for my vengeance, when I recollected, to my

unspeakable joy, her brother the fox-hunter, in the person of her

gallant.

Undeceived so much to my satisfaction in this particular, I gazed in a

frenzy of delight on the irresistible charms of his sister, who no

sooner distinguished me in the crowd, than her evident confusion

afforded a happy omen to my flame. At sight of me she started, the

roses instantly vanished from her polished cheeks, and returned in a

moment with a double glow, that overspread her lovely neck, while her

enchanting bosom heaved with strong emotion. I hailed these favourable

symptoms, and, lying in wait for her looks, did homage with my eyes.

She seemed to approve my declaration, by the complacency of her aspect;

and I was so transported with the discovery, that more than once I was

on the point of making up to her, to disclose the throbbings of my

heart in person, had not that profound veneration, which her presence

always inspired, restrained the unseasonable impulse. All my powers

being engrossed in this manner, it may easily be imagined how ill I

entertained Miss Snapper on whom I could not now turn my eyes, without

making comparisons very little to her advantage. It was not even in my

power to return distinct answers to the questions she asked from time

to time, so that she could not help observing my absence of mind; and

having a turn for observation, watched my glances, and, tracing them to

the divine object, discovered the cause of my disorder. That she might,

however, be convinced of the truth of her conjecture, she began to

interrogate me with regard to Narcissa, and, notwithstanding all my

endeavours to disguise my sentiments, perceived my attachment by my

confusion: upon which, she assumed a stateliness of behaviour, and sat

silent during the remaining part of the entertainment. At any other

time, her suspicion would have alarmed me: but now I was elevated by my

passion above every other consideration. The mistress of my soul having

retired with her brother, I discovered so much uneasiness at my

situation, that Miss Snapper proposed to go home; and, while I

conducted her to a chair, told me she had too great a regard for me to

keep me any longer in torment. I feigned ignorance of her meaning, and

having seen her safely at her lodgings, took my leave, and went home in

an ecstasy, where I disclosed everything that had happened to my

confidant and humble servant, Strap, who did not relish the accident so

well as I expected; and observed, that a bird in the hand is worth two

in the bush. “But, however,” said he, “you know best—you know best.”

Next day, as, I went to the Pump Room, in hopes of seeing or hearing

some tidings of my fair enslaver, I was met by a gentlewoman, who,

having looked hard at me, cried, “O Christ, Mr. Random!” Surprised at

this exclamation, I examined the countenance of the person who spoke,

and immediately recognised my old sweetheart and fellow sufferer, Miss

Williams.

I was mightily pleased to find this unfortunate woman under such a

decent appearance, professed my joy at seeing her so well, and desired

to know where I should have the pleasure of her conversation. She was

as heartily rejoiced at the apparent easiness of my fortune, and gave

me to know that she, as yet, had no habitation that she could properly

call her own; but would wait on me at any place I should please to

appoint. Understanding that she was unengaged for the present, I showed

her the way to my lodgings, where, after a very affectionate

salutation, she informed me of her being very happy in the service of a

young lady to whom she was recommended by a former mistress deceased,

into whose family she had recommended herself by the honest deceit she

had concerted, while she lived with me in the garret at London. She

then expressed a vehement desire to be acquainted with the vicissitudes

of my life since we parted, and excused her curiosity on account of the

concern she had for my interest. I forthwith gratified her request,

and, when I described my situation in Sussex, perceived her to attend

to my story with particular eagerness. She interrupted me, when I had

finished that period, with, “Good God! is it possible?” and then begged

I would be so good as to continue my relation; which I did as briefly

as I could, burning with impatience to know the cause of her surprise,

about which I had already formed a very interesting conjecture.

When I had brought my adventures down to the present day, who seemed

very much affected with the different circumstances of my fortune; and

saying, with a smile, she believed my distresses were now at a period,

proceeded to inform me that the lady whom she served was no other than

the charming Narcissa, who had honoured her with her confidence for

some time; in consequence of which trust, she had often repeated the

story of John Brown with great admiration and regard; that she loved to

dwell upon the particulars of his character, and did not scruple to own

a tender approbation of his flame. I became delirious at this piece of

intelligence, strained Miss Williams in my embrace, called her the

angel of my happiness, and acted such extravagances, that she might

have been convinced of my sincerity, had she not been satisfied of my

honour before. As soon as was in condition to yield attention, she

described the present situation of her mistress, who had no sooner

reached her lodgings the night before, than she closeted her, and in a

rapture of joy gave her to know that she had seen me at the ball, where

I appeared in the character which she always thought my due, with such

advantage of transformation that, unless my image had been engraven on

her heart, it would have been impossible to know me for the person who

had worn her aunt’s livery; that by the language of my eyes, she was

assured of the continuance of my passion for her, and consequently of

my being unengaged to any other; and that, though she did not doubt I

would speedily fall upon some method of being introduced, she was so

impatient to hear of me, that she (Miss Williams) had been sent abroad

this very morning, on purpose to learn the name and character I at

present bore. My bosom had been hitherto a stranger to such a flood of

joy as now rushed upon it; my faculties were overborne by the tide; it

was some time before I could open my mouth, and much longer ere I could

utter a coherent sentence. At length, I fervently requested her to lead

me immediately to the object of my adoration; but she resisted my

importunity, and explained the danger of such premature conduct. “How

favourable soever,” said she, “my lady’s inclination towards you may

be, you may depend upon it, she will not commit the smallest trespass

on decorum, either in disclosing her own, or in receiving a declaration

of your passion: and, although the great veneration I have for you has

prompted me to reveal what she communicated to me in confidence, I know

so well the severity of her sentiments with respect to the punctilios

of her sex that, if she should learn the least surmise of it, she would

not only dismiss me as a wretch unworthy of her benevolence, but also

for ever shun the efforts of your love.” I assented to the justness of

her remonstrance, and desired she would assist me with her advice and

direction: upon which it was concerted between us, that for the present

I should be contented with her telling Narcissa that, in the course of

her inquiries, she could only learn my name: and that, if, in a day or

two, I could fall upon no other method of being introduced to her

mistress, she would deliver a letter from me, on pretence of consulting

her happiness: and say that I met her in the streets, and bribed her to

this piece of service. Matters being thus adjusted, I kept my old

acquaintance to breakfast, and learned from her conversation, that my

rival Sir Timothy had drunk himself into an apoplexy, of which he died

five months ago; that the savage was still unmarried and that his aunt

had been seized with a whim which he little expected, and chosen the

schoolmaster of the parish for her lord and husband: but matrimony not

agreeing with her constitution she had been hectic and dropsical a good

while, and was now at Bath, in order to drink the waters for the

recovery of her health; that her niece had accompanied her thither at

her request, and attended her with the same affection as before,

notwithstanding the mistake she had committed: and that the nephew, who

had been exasperated at the loss of her fortune, did not give his

attendance out of good will, but purely to have an eye on his sister,

lest she should likewise throw herself away without his consent or

approbation. Having enjoyed ourselves in this manner, and made an

assignation to meet next day at a certain place, Miss Williams took her

leave; and Strap’s looks being very inquisitive about the nature of the

communication subsisting between us, I made him acquainted with the

whole affair, to his great astonishment and satisfaction.

CHAPTER LVI

I become acquainted with Narcissa’s brother, who invites me to his

House, where I am introduced to that adorable Creature—after dinner,

the Squire retires to take his nap—Freeman, guessing the Situation of

my Thought, withdraws likewise, on pretence of Business—I declare my

passion for Narcissa—am well-received—charmed with her Conversation—the

Squire detains us to Supper—I elude his design by a Stratagem, and get

home sober

In the afternoon, I drank tea at the house of Mr. Freeman, to whom I

had been recommended by Banter; where I had not sat five minutes, till

the foxhunter came in, and by his familiar behaviour appeared to be

intimate with my friend. I was, at first, under some concern, lest he

should recollect my features; but when I found myself introduced to him

as a gentleman from London, without being discovered, I blessed the

opportunity that brought me into his company; hoping that, in the

course of my acquaintance, he would invite me to his house; nor were my

hopes frustrated, for, as we spent the evening together, he grew

extremely fond of my conversation, asked a great many childish

questions about France and foreign parts; and seemed so highly

entertained with my answers, that in his cups he shook me often by the

hand, pronounced me an honest fellow, and in fine desired our company

at dinner next day, at his civil house. My imagination was so much

employed in anticipating the happiness I was to enjoy next day, that I

slept very little that night; but, rising early in the morning, went to

the place appointed, where I met my she-friend, and imparted to her my

success with the squire. She was very much pleased at the occasion,

“which,” she said, “could not fail of being agreeable to Narcissa, who,

in spite of her passion for me, had mentioned some scruples relating to

my true situation and character, which the delicacy of her sentiments

suggested, and which she believed I would find it necessary to remove,

though she did not know how.” I was a good deal startled at this

insinuation, because I foresaw the difficulty I should find in barely

doing myself justice: for, although it never was my intention to impose

myself upon any woman, much less on Narcissa, I laid claim to the

character of a gentleman by birth, education, and behaviour; and yet

(so unlucky had the circumstances of my life fallen out) I should find

it a very hard matter to make good my pretensions even to these,

especially to the last, which was the most essential. Miss Williams was

as sensible as I of this my disadvantage, but comforted me with

observing that, when once a woman has bestowed her affections on a man,

she cannot help judging of him in all respects with a partiality easily

influenced in his favour: she remarked that, although some situations

of my life had been low, yet none of them had been infamous; that my

indigence had been the crime not of me, but of fortune; and that the

miseries I had undergone, by improving the faculties both of mind and

body, qualified me the more for any dignified station; and would of

consequence recommend me to the good graces of any sensible woman: she

therefore advised me to be always open and unreserved to the inquiries

of my mistress, without unnecessarily betraying the meanest occurrences

of my fate; and trust to the strength of her love and reflection for

the rest.

The sentiments of this sensible young woman on this, as well as on

almost every other subject, perfectly agreed with mine. I thanked her

for the care she took of my interests, and, promising to behave myself

according to her directions we parted, after she had assured me that I

depend upon her best offices with her mistress, and that she would from

time to time communicate to me such intelligence as she could procure,

relating to my flame. Having dressed myself to the best advantage, I

waited for the time of dinner with the most fearful impatience; and, as

the hour drew near, my heart beat with such increased velocity, and my

spirits contracted such disorder, that I began to suspect my

resolution, and even to wish myself disengaged. At last Mr. Freeman

called at my lodgings in his way, and I accompanied him to the house

where all my happiness was deposited. We were very kindly received by

the squire, who sat smoking his pipe in a parlour, and asked if we

chose to drink any thing before dinner: though I never had more

occasion for a cordial, I was ashamed to accept his offer, which was

also refused, by my friend. We sat down, however, entered into

conversation, which lasted half-an hour, so that I had time to

recollect myself; and (so capricious were my thoughts) even to hope

that Narcissa would not appear—when, all of a sudden, a servant coming

in, gave us notice that dinner was upon the table, and my perturbation

returned with such violence that I could scarcely conceal it from the

company, as I ascended the staircase. When I entered the dining-room,

the first object that saluted my ravished eyes was the divine Narcissa,

blushing like Aurora, adorned with all the graces that meekness,

innocence, and beauty can diffuse! I was seized with a giddiness, my

knees tottered and I scarce had strength enough to perform the ceremony

of salutation, when her brother, slapping me on the shoulder, cried,

“Measure Randan, that there is my sister.” I approached her with

eagerness and fear; but in the moment of our embrace, my soul was

agonized with rapture! It was a lucky circumstance for us both, that my

entertainer was not endued with an uncommon stock of penetration; for

our mutual confusion was so manifest that Mr. Freeman perceived it, and

as we went home together, congratulated me on my good fortune. But so

far was Bruin from entertaining the least suspicion, that he encouraged

me to begin a conversation with my mistress in a language unknown to

him, by telling her, that he had a gentleman who could jabber with her

in French and other foreign lingoes as fast as she pleased; then,

turning to me, said, “Odds bobs! I wish you would hold discourse with

her in your French or Italian, and tell me if she understands it as

well as she would be thought to do. There’s her aunt and she will

chatter together whole days in it, and I can’t have a mouthful of

English for love or money.” I consulted the look of my amiable mistress

and found her averse to his proposal, which indeed she declined with a

sweetness of denial peculiar to herself, as a piece of disrespect to

that part of the company which did not understand the language in

question. As I had the happiness of sitting opposite to her, I feasted

my eyes much more than my palate which she tempted in vain with the

most delicious bits carved by her fair hand, and recommended by her

persuasive tongue; but all my other appetites were swallowed up in

immensity of my love, which I fed by gazing incessantly on the

delightful object. Dinner was scarcely ended, when the squire became

very drowsy, and after several dreadful yawns, got up, stretched

himself, took two or three turns across the room, begged we would allow

him to take a short nap, and, having laid a strong injunction on his

sister to detain us till his return, went to his repose without further

ceremony. He had not been gone many minutes, when Freeman, guessing the

situation of my heart, and thinking he could not do me a greater favour

than to leave me alone with Narcissa, pretended to recollect himself

all of a sudden, and, starting up, begged the lady pardon for

half-an-hour, for he had unluckily remembered an engagement of some

consequence, that he must perform at that instant: so saying, he took

his leave, promising to come back time enough for tea, leaving my

mistress and me in great confusion.

Now that I enjoyed an opportunity of disclosing the paintings of my

soul, I had not the power to use it. I studied many pathetic

declarations, but, when I attempted to give them utterance, my tongue

denied its office and she sat silent with a downcast look full of

anxious alarm, her bosom heaving with expectation of some great event.

At length I endeavoured to put an end to this solemn pause, and began

with, “It is very surprising, madam, madam”—here the sound dying away,

I made a full stop; while Narcissa, starting, blushed, and, with a

timid accent answered, “Sir?” Confounded at this note of interrogation,

I pronounced with the most sheepish bashfulness, “Madam!” To which she

replied, “I beg pardon—I thought you had spoken to me.” Another pause

ensued—I made another effort, and, though my voice faltered very much

at the beginning, made shift to express myself in this manner: “I say,

madam, it is very surprising that love should act so inconsistently

with itself, as to deprive its votaries of the use of their faculties,

when they have most need of them. Since the happy occasion of being

alone with you presented itself, I have made many unsuccessful attempts

to declare a passion for the loveliest of her sex—a passion which took

possession of my soul, while my cruel fate compelled me to wear a

servile disguise so unsuitable to my birth, sentiments, and let me add,

my deserts; yet favourable in one respect, as it furnished me with

opportunities of seeing and adoring your perfections. Yes, madam, it

was then your dear idea entered my bosom, where it has lived unimpaired

in the midst of numberless cares, and animated me against a thousand

dangers and calamities!”

While I spoke thus, she concealed her face with her fan, and when I

ceased speaking, recovering herself from the most beautiful confusion,

told me she thought herself very much obliged by my favourable opinion

of her, and that she was very sorry to hear I had been unfortunate.

Encouraged by this gentle reply, I proceeded, owned myself sufficiently

recompensed by her kind compassion for what I had undergone, and

declared the future happiness of my life depended solely upon her.

“Sir,” said she, “I should be very ungrateful, if after the signal

protection you once afforded me, I should refuse to contribute towards

your happiness in any reasonable condescension.” Transported at this

acknowledgment I threw myself at her feet, and begged she would regard

my passion with a favourable eye. She was alarmed at my behaviour,

entreated me to rise lest her brother should discover me in that

posture, and to spare her for the present upon a subject for which she

was altogether unprepared. In consequence of this remonstrance, I rose,

assuring her I would rather die than disobey her: but in the meantime

begged her to consider how precious the minutes of this opportunity

were, and what restraint I put upon my inclinations, in sacrificing

them to her desire. She smiled with unspeakable sweetness, and said

there would be no want of opportunities, provided I could maintain the

good opinion her brother had conceived of me, and I, enchanted by her

charms, seized her hand, which I well nigh devoured with kisses. But

she checked my boldness with a severity of countenance, and desired I

would not so far forget myself to her, as to endanger the esteem she

had for me; she reminded me of our being almost strangers to each

other, and of the necessity there was for her knowing me better, before

she could take any resolution in my favour; and, in short, mingled so

much good sense and complacency in her reproof, that I became as much

enamoured of her understanding as I had been before of her beauty, and

asked pardon for my presumption with the utmost reverence of

conviction. She forgave my offence with her usual affability, and

sealed my pardon with a look so full of bewitching tenderness, that,

for some minutes, my senses were lost in ecstacy! I afterwards

endeavoured to regulate my behaviour according to her desire, and turn

the conversation upon a more indifferent subject; but her presence was

an insurmountable obstacle to my design; while I beheld so much

excellence, I found it impossible to call my attention from the

contemplation of it! I gazed with unutterable fondness! I grew mad with

admiration! “My condition is insupportable!” cried I: “I am distracted

with passion! Why are you so exquisitely fair?—why are you so

enchantingly good?—why has nature dignified you with charms so much

above the standard of woman? and, wretch that I am, how dare my

unworthiness aspire to the enjoyment of such perfection!”

She was startled at my ravings, reasoned down my transport, and by her

irresistible eloquence, soothed my soul into a state of tranquil

felicity; but, lest I might suffer a relapse, industriously promoted

other subjects to entertain my imagination. She chid me for having

omitted to inquire about her aunt who (she assured me), in the midst of

all her absence of temper, and detachment from common affairs, often

talked of me with uncommon warmth. I professed my veneration for the

good lady, excused my omission, by imputing it to the violence of my

love, which engrossed my whole soul, and desired to know the situation

of her health. Upon which, the amiable Narcissa repeated what I had

heard before of her marriage, with all the tenderness for her

reputation that the subject would admit of; told me she lived with her

husband hard by, and was so much afflicted with the dropsy, and wasted

by a consumption, that she had small hopes of her recovery. Having

expressed my sorrow for her distemper, I questioned her about my good

friend, Mrs. Sagely, who, I learned to my great satisfaction, was in

good health, and who had by the encomiums she bestowed upon me after I

was gone, confirmed the favourable impression my behaviour at parting

had made on Narcissa’s heart. This circumstance introduced an inquiry

into the conduct of Sir Timothy Thicket, who (she informed me) had

found means to incense her brother so much against me that she found it

impossible to undeceive him: but, on the contrary, suffered very much

in her own character by his scandalous insinuations; that the whole

parish was alarmed, and actually in pursuit of me; so that she had been

in the utmost consternation on my account, well knowing how little my

own innocence and her testimony would have weighed with the ignorance,

prejudice, and brutality of those who must have judged me, had I been

apprehended; that Sir Timothy, having been seized with a fit of

apoplexy, from which with great difficulty he was recovered, began to

be apprehensive of death, and to prepare himself accordingly for that

great event; as a step to which he sent for her brother, owned with

great contrition the brutal design he had upon her, and in consequence

acquitted me of the assault, robbery, and correspondence with her,

which he had laid to my charge; after which confession he lived about a

month in a languishing condition, and was carried off by a second

assault.

Every word that this dear creature spoke, riveted the chains with which

she held me enslaved! My mischievous fancy began to work, and the

tempest of my passion to wake again, when the return of Freeman

destroyed the tempting opportunity, and enabled me to quell the rising

tumult. A little while after, the squire staggered into the room,

rubbing his eyes, and called for his tea, which he drank out of a small

bowl, qualified with brandy; while we took it in the usual way,

Narcissa left us in order to visit her aunt; and when Freeman and I

proposed to take our leave, the foxhunter insisted on our spending the

evening at his house with such obstinacy of affection, that we were

obliged to comply. For my own part, I should have been glad of the

invitation, by which, in all likelihood, I should be blessed with more

of his sister’s company, had I not been afraid of risking her esteem,

by entering into a debauch of drinking with him, which, from the

knowledge of his character, I foresaw would happen: but there was no

remedy. I was forced to rely upon the strength of my constitution,

which I hoped would resist intoxication longer than the squire’s, and

to trust to the good nature and discretion of my mistress for the rest.

Our entertainer, resolving to begin by times, ordered the table to be

furnished with liquor and glasses immediately after tea, but we

absolutely refused to set in for drinking so soon; and prevailed upon

him to pass away an hour or two at whist, in which we engaged as soon

as Narcissa returned. The savage and I happened to be partners at

first, and, as my thoughts were wholly employed in a more interesting

game, I played so ill that he lost all patience, swore bitterly, and

threatened to call for wine, if they would not grant him another

associate. This desire was gratified, and Narcissa and I were of a

side; he won for the same reason that made him lose before; I was

satisfied, my lovely partner did not repine, and the time slipped away

very agreeably, until we were told that supper was served in another

room.

The squire was enraged to find the evening so unprofitably spent, and

wreaked his vengeance on the cards, which he tore, and committed to the

flames with many execrations; threatening to make us redeem our loss

with a large glass and quick circulation; and indeed we had no sooner

supped, and my charmer withdrawn, than he began to put his threat in

execution. Three bottles of port (for he drank no other sort of wine)

were placed before us, with as many water glasses, which were

immediately filled to the brim, after his example, by each out of his

respective allowance, and emptied in a trice to the best in

Christendom. Though I swallowed this, and the next, as fast as the

glass could be replenished, without hesitation or show of reluctance, I

perceived that my brain would not be able to bear many bumpers of this

sort, and dreading the perseverance of a champion who began with such

vigour, I determined to make up for the deficiency of my strength by a

stratagem, which I actually put in practice when the second course of

bottles was called for. The wine being strong and heady, I was already

a good deal discomposed by the dispatch we had made. Freeman’s eyes

began to reel, and Bruin himself was elevated into a song, which he

uttered with great vociferation. When I therefore saw the second round

brought in, I assumed a gay air, entertained him with a French catch on

the subject of drinking, which, though he did rot understand it,

delighted him highly; and, telling him your choice spirits at Paris

never troubled themselves with glasses, asked if he had not a bowl or

cup in the house that would contain a whole quart of wine. “Odds

niggers!” cried he, “I have a silver candle cup that holds just the

quantity, for all the world; fetch it hither, Numps.” The vessel being

produced, I bade him decant his bottle into it, which he having done, I

nodded in a very deliberate manner, and said, “Pledge you.” He stared

at me for some time, and crying, “What! all at one pull, Measter

Randan?” I answered, “At one pull, Sir, you are no milk-sop—we shall do

you justice.” “Shall you?” said he, shaking me by the hand; “odds then,

I’ll see it out, an’t were a mile to the bottom: here’s to our better

acquaintance, measter Randan,” So saying, he applied it to his lips,

and emptied it in a breath. I knew the effect of it would be almost

instantaneous; therefore taking the cup, began to discharge my bottle

into it, telling him he was now qualified to drink with the Cham of

Tartary. I had no sooner pronounced these words than he took umbrage at

them, and after several attempts to spit, made shift to stutter, “A f—t

for your Chams of T—Tartary! I am a f—f—freeborn Englishman, worth

th—three thousand a-year, and v—value no man, d—me.” Then, dropping his

jaw, and fixing his eyes, he hiccuped aloud, and fell upon the floor as

mute as a flounder. Mr. Freeman, heartily glad at his defeat, assisted

me in carrying him to bed, where we left him to the care of his

servants, and went home to our respective habitations, congratulating

each other on our good fortune.

CHAPTER LVII

Miss Williams informs me of Narcissa’s Approbation of my Flame—I

appease the Squire—write to my Mistress—am blessed with an Answer—beg

Leave of her Brother to dance with her at a Ball—obtain his Consent and

hers—enjoy a private Conversation with her—am perplexed with

Reflections—have the Honour of appearing her Partner at a Ball—we are

complimented by a certain Nobleman—he discovers some Symptoms of a

Passion for Narcissa—I am stung with Jealousy—Narcissa, alarmed,

retires—I observe Melinda in the company—the Squire is captivated by

her Beauty

I was met next morning at the usual place by Miss Williams, who gave me

joy of the progress I had made in the affection of her mistress, and

blessed me with an account of that dear creature’s conversation with

her, after she had retired the night before from our company. I could

scarce believe her information, when she recounted her expressions in

my favour, so much more warm and passionate were they than my most

sanguine hopes had presaged; and was particularly pleased to hear that

she approved of my behaviour to her brother after she withdrew.

Transported at the news of my happiness, I presented my ring to the

messenger as a testimony of my gratitude and satisfaction; but she was

above such mercenary considerations, and refused my compliment with

some resentment, saying, she was not a little mortified to see my

opinion of her so low and contemptible. I did myself a piece of justice

by explaining my behaviour on this head, and to convince her of my

esteem, promised to be ruled by her directions in the prosecution of

the whole affair, which I had so much at heart, that the repose of my

life depended upon the consequence.

As I fervently wished for another interview, where I might pour out the

effusion of my love without danger of being interrupted, and perhaps

reap some endearing return from the queen of my desires, I implored her

advice and assistance in promoting this event: but she gave me to

understand, that Narcissa would make no precipitate compliances of this

kind, and I would do well to cultivate her brother’s acquaintance, in

the course of which I should not want opportunities of removing that

reserve which my mistress thought herself obliged to maintain during

the infancy of our correspondence. In the meantime she promised to tell

her lady that I had endeavoured by presents and persuasions, to prevail

upon her (Miss Williams) to deliver a letter from me, which she had

refused to charge herself with, until she should know Narcissa’s

sentiments of the matter; and said, by these means she did not doubt of

being able to open a literary communication between us, which could not

fail of introducing more intimate connections.

I approved of her counsel, and, our appointment being renewed for the

next day, left her with an intent of falling upon some method of being

reconciled to the squire, who, I supposed, would be offended with the

trick we had put upon him. With this view I consulted Freeman, who,

from his knowledge of the foxhunter’s disposition, assured me there was

no other method of pacifying him, than that of sacrificing ourselves

for one night to an equal match with him in drinking. This expedient I

found myself necessitated to comply with for the interest of my

passion, and therefore determined to commit the debauch at my own

lodgings, that I might run no risk of being discovered by Narcissa, in

a state of brutal degeneracy. Mr. Freeman, who was to be of the party,

went, at my desire, to the squire, in order to engage him, while I took

care to furnish myself for his reception. My invitation was accepted,

my guests honoured me with their company in the evening, when Bruin

gave me to understand that he had drunk many tons of wine in his life,

but was never served such a trick as I had played upon him the night

before. I promised to atone for my trespass, and, having ordered to

every man his bottle, began the contest with a bumper to the health of

Narcissa. The toasts circulated with great devotion, the liquor began

to operate, our mirth grew noisy, and, as Freeman said, I had the

advantage of drinking small French claret, the savage was effectually

tamed before our senses were in the least affected, and carried home in

an apoplexy of drunkenness.

I was next morning, as usual, favoured with a visit from my kind and

punctual confidante, who, telling me she was permitted to receive my

letters for her mistress, I took up the pen immediately, and, following

the first dictates of my passion, wrote as follows:

“Dear Madam,

“Were it possible for the powers of utterance to reveal the soft

emotions of my soul, the fond anxiety, the glowing hopes, the

chilling flame, that rule my breast by turns, I should need no

other witness than this paper, to evince the purity and ardour of

that flame your charms have kindled in my heart, But alas!

expression wrongs my love! I am inspired with conceptions that no

language can convey! Your beauty fills me with wonder, your

understanding with ravishment, and your goodness with adoration! I

am transported with desire, distracted with doubts, and tortured

with impatience. Suffer me then, lovely arbitress of my fate, to

approach you in person, to breathe in soft murmurs my passion to

your ear, to offer the sacrifice of a heart overflowing with the

most genuine and disinterested love, to gaze with ecstacy on the

divine object of my wishes, to hear the music of her enchanting

tongue, and to rejoice in her smiles of approbation, which will

banish the most intolerable suspense from the bosom of

“Your enraptured, R— R—.”

Having finished this effusion, I committed it to the care of my

faithful friend, with an injunction to second my entreaty with all her

eloquence and influence, and in the meantime went to dress, with an

intention of visiting Mrs. Snapper and Miss, whom I had utterly

neglected, and indeed almost forgotten, since my dear Narcissa had

resumed the empire of my soul. The old gentlewoman received me very

kindly, and Miss affected a frankness and gaiety which, however, I

could easily perceive was forced and dissembled: among other things,

she pretended to joke me upon my passion for Narcissa, which she

averred was no secret, and asked if I intended to dance with her at the

next assembly. I was a good deal concerned to find myself become the

town talk on this subject, lest the squire, having notice of my

inclinations, should disapprove of them, and, by breaking off all

correspondence with me, deprive me of the opportunities I now enjoyed.

But I resolved to use the interest I had with him, while it lasted; and

that very night, meeting him occasionally, asked his permission to

solicit her company at the ball, which he very readily granted, to my

inexpressible satisfaction.

Having been kept awake the greatest part of the night by a thousand

delightful reveries that took possession of my fancy, I got up by

times, and, flying to the place of rendezvous, had in a little time the

pleasure of seeing Miss Williams approach with a smile on her

countenance, which I interpreted into a good omen. Neither was I

mistaken in my presage. She presented me with a letter from the idol of

my soul, which, after having kissed it devoutly, I opened with the

utmost eagerness, and was blessed with her approbation in these terms:

“Sir,

“To say I look upon you with indifference would be a piece of

dissimulation which I think no decorum requires, and no custom can

justify. As my heart never felt an impression that my tongue was

ashamed to declare, I will not scruple to own myself pleased with

your passion; confident of your integrity, and so well convinced of

my own discretion, that I should not hesitate in granting you the

interview you desire, were I not overawed by the prying curiosity

of a malicious world, the censure of which might be fatally

prejudicial to the reputation of

“Your Narcissa.”

No anchorite in the ecstacy of devotion ever adored a relic with more

fervour than that with which I kissed this inimitable proof of my

charmer’s candour, generosity, and affection! I read it over a hundred

times, was ravished with her confession in the beginning; but the

subscription of Your Narcissa yielded me such delight as I had never

felt before! My happiness was still increased by Miss Williams, who

blessed me with a repetition of her lady’s tender expressions in my

favour, when she received and read my letter. In short, I had all the

reason in the world to believe that this gentle creature’s bosom was

possessed by a passion for me, as warm, though perhaps not so impetuous

as mine for her.

I informed my friend of the squire’s consent to my dancing with

Narcissa at the ball and desired her to tell her mistress, that I would

do myself the honour of visiting her in the afternoon, in consequence

of his permission, when I hoped to find her as indulgent as her brother

had been complaisant in that particular. Miss Williams expressed a good

deal of joy at hearing I was so much in favour with the foxhunter, and

ventured to assure me, that my visit would be very agreeable to my

mistress, the rather because Bruin was engaged to dine abroad. This was

a circumstance which, I scarce need say, pleased me. I went immediately

to the Long Room, where I found him, and, affecting to know nothing of

his engagement, told him, I would do myself the pleasure to wait upon

him in the afternoon, and to present his sister with a ticket for the

ball. He shook me by the hand, according to custom, and, giving me to

understand that he was to dine abroad, desired me to go and drink tea

with Narcissa notwithstanding, and promised to prepare her for my visit

in the meantime.

Everything succeeding thus to my wish, I waited with incredible

impatience for the time, which no sooner arrived than I hastened to the

scene, which my fancy had preoccupied long before. I was introduced

accordingly to the dear enchantress, whom I found accompanied by Miss

Williams, who, on pretence of ordering tea, retired at my approach.

This favourable accident, which alarmed my whole soul, disordered her

also. I found myself actuated by an irresistible impulse; I advanced to

her with eagerness and awe; and, profiting by the confusion that

prevailed over her, clasped the fair angel in my arms, and imprinted a

glowing kiss upon her lips, more soft and fragrant than the dewy

rosebud just bursting from the stem! Her face was in an instant covered

with blushes, her eyes sparkled with resentment; I threw myself at her

feet, and implored her pardon. Her love became advocate in my cause;

her look softened into forgiveness; she raised me up, and chid me with

so much sweetness of displeasure that I could have been tempted to

repeat the offence, had not the coming in of the servant with the

tea-board prevented my presumption. While we were subject to be

interrupted or overheard, we conversed about the approaching ball, at

which she promised to grace me as a partner, but, when the equipage was

removed, and we were left alone, I resumed the more interesting theme,

and expressed myself with such transport and agitation, that my

mistress, fearing I should commit some extravagance, rang the bell for

her maid, whom she detained in the room, as a check upon my vivacity. I

was not sorry for this precaution, because I could unbosom myself

without reserve before Miss Williams, who was the confidante of us

both. I therefore gave a loose to the inspirations of my passion, which

operated so successfully upon the tender affections of Narcissa, that

she laid aside the constraint she had hitherto worn, and blessed me

with the most melting declaration of her mutual flame! It was

impossible for me to forbear taking the advantage of this endearing

condescension. She now gently yielded to my embraces; while I,

encircling all that I held dear within my arms, tasted in advance the

joys of that paradise I hoped in a little time wholly to possess! We

spent the afternoon in all the ecstacy of hope that the most fervent

love exchanged by mutual vows could inspire; and Miss Williams was so

much affected with our chaste caresses, which recalled the sad

remembrance of what she was, that her eyes were filled with tears.

The evening being pretty far advanced, I forced myself from the dear

object of my flame, who indulged me in a tender embrace at parting,

and, repairing to my lodgings, communicated to my friend Strap every

circumstance of my happiness, which filled him with so much pleasure,

that it ran over at his eyes; and he prayed heartily, that no envious

devil might, as formerly, dash the cup of blessing from my lip. When I

reflected on what had happened, and especially on the unreserved

protestations of Narcissa’s love, I could not help being amazed at her

omitting to inquire into the particular circumstances of life and

fortune of one whom she had favoured with her affection, and I began to

be a little anxious about the situation of her finances; well knowing

that I should do an irreparable injury to the person my soul held most

dear, if I should espouse her without being able to support her in the

rank which was certainly her due. I had heard, indeed, while I served

her aunt, that her father had left her a considerable sum; and that

everybody believed she would inherit the greatest part of her

kinswoman’s dowry, but I did not know how far she might be restricted

by the old gentleman’s will in the enjoyment of what he left her: and I

was too well informed of the virtuoso’s late conduct, to think my

mistress could have any expectation from that quarter. I confided,

however, in the good sense and policy of my charmer, who, I was sure,

would not consent to unite her fate with mine, before she had fully

considered and provided for the consequence.

The ball night being arrived, I dressed myself in a suit I had reserved

for some grand occasion; and, having drunk tea with Narcissa and her

brother, conducted my angel to the scene, where she, in a moment,

eclipsed all her female competitors for beauty, and attracted the

admiration of the whole assembly. My heart dilated with pride on this

occasion, and my triumph rejected all bounds, when, after we had danced

together, a certain nobleman, remarkable for his figure, and influence

in the beau monde, came up, and in the hearing of all present, honoured

us with a very particular compliment upon our accomplishments and

appearance; but this transport was soon checked, when I perceived his

lordship attach himself with great assiduity to my mistress, and say

some warm things, which, I thought, savoured too much of passion. It

was then I began to feel the pangs of jealousy; I dreaded the power and

address of my rival; I sickened at his discourse; when she opened her

lips to answer, my heart died within me; when she smiled, I felt the

pains of the damned! I was enraged at his presumption: I cursed her

complaisance: at length he quitted her, and went to the other side of

the room. Narcissa, suspecting nothing of the rage that inflamed me,

put some questions to me as soon as he was gone, to which I made no

reply, but assumed a grim look, which too well denoted the agitation of

my breast, and surprised her not a little. She no sooner observed my

emotion than she changed colour, and asked what ailed me? but before I

could make answer, her brother, pulling me by the sleeve, bade me take

notice of a lady who sat fronting us, whom I immediately, to my vast

astonishment, distinguished to be Melinda, accompanied by her mother,

and an elderly gentleman, whom I did not know. “Wounds! Mr. Randan,”

cried the squire, “is she not a delicate piece of stuff? ’Sdeath! I

have a good mind—if I thought she was a single person.”

Notwithstanding the perplexity I was in, I had reflection enough to

foresee that my passion might suffer greatly by the presence of this

lady, who, in all probability, would revenge herself upon me, for

having formerly disgraced her, by spreading reports to my prejudice. I

was therefore alarmed at these symptoms of the Squire’s admiration; and

for some time did not know what reply to make, when he asked my opinion

of her beauty; at length I came to a determination, and told him that

her name was Melinda, that she had a fortune of ten thousand pounds,

and was said to be under promise of marriage to a certain lord, who

deferred his nuptials a few months, until he should be of age. I

thought this piece of intelligence, which I had myself invented, would

have hindered him effectually from entertaining any further thoughts of

her; but I was egregiously mistaken. The foxhunter had too much

self-sufficiency to despair of success against any competitor on earth.

He therefore made light of her engagement, saying, with a smile of

self-approbation, “Mayhap she will change her mind; what signifies his

being a lord? I think myself as good a man as e’er a lord in

Christendom, and I’ll see if a commoner worth three thousand a year

won’t serve her turn.” This determination startled me not a little; I

knew he would soon discover the contrary of what I advanced; and as I

believed he would find her ear open to his addresses, did not doubt of

meeting with every obstacle in my amour that her malice could invent,

and her influence execute. This reflection increased my chagrin—my

vexation was evident. Narcissa insisted on going home immediately: and,

as I led her to the door, her noble admirer, with a look full of

languishment, directed to her a profound bow, which stung me to the

soul. Before she went into the chair, she asked, with an appearance of

concern, what was the matter with me? and I could pronounce no more

than “By heaven, I am distracted!”

CHAPTER LVIII

Tortured with Jealousy, I go Home, and abuse Strap—receive a Message

from Narcissa, in Consequence of which I hasten to her Apartment, where

her endearing Assurances banish all my Doubts and Apprehensions—in my

Retreat discover Somebody in the Dark, whom, suspecting to be a Spy, I

resolve to kill, but, to my great Surprise, am convinced of his being

no other than Strap—Melinda slanders me—I become acquainted with Lord

Quiverwit, who endeavours to sound me with regard to Narcissa—the

Squire is introduced to his Lordship, and grows cold towards me—I learn

from my Confidante, that this Nobleman professes honourable Love to my

Mistress, who continues faithful to me, notwithstanding the scandalous

Reports she had heard to my Prejudice—I am mortified with an Assurance

that her whole Fortune depends upon the Pleasure of her Brother—Mr.

Freeman condoles me on the Decline of my Character, which I vindicate

so much to his satisfaction, that he undertakes to combat Fame on my

behalf

Having uttered this exclamation, at which she sighed, I went home in

the condition of a frantic Bedlamite: and, finding the fire in my

apartment almost extinguished, vented my fury upon poor Strap, whose

ear I pinched with such violence, that he roared hideously with pain;

and, when I quitted my hold, looked so foolishly aghast, that no

unconcerned spectator could have seen him without being seized with an

immoderate fit of laughter. It is true, I was soon sensible of the

injury I had done, and asked pardon for the outrage I had committed;

upon which my faithful valet, shaking his head, said, “I forgive you,

and may God forgive you!” But he could not help shedding some tears at

my unkindness. I felt unspeakable remorse for what I had done, cursed

my own ingratitude, and considered his tears as a reproach that my

soul, in its present disturbance, could not bear. It set all my

passions into a ferment: I swore horrible oaths without meaning or

application. I foamed at the mouth, kicked the chairs about the room,

and played abundance of mad pranks that frightened my friend almost out

of his senses. At length my transport subsided, I became melancholy,

and wept insensibly.

During this state of dejection, I was surprised with the appearance of

Miss Williams, whom Strap, blubbering all the while, had conducted into

the chamber without giving me previous notice of her approach. She was

extremely affected with my condition, which she had learned from him,

begged me to moderate my passion, suspend my conjectures, and follow

her to Narcissa, who desired to see me forthwith. That dear name

operated upon me like a charm! I started up, and, without opening my

lips, was conducted into her apartment through the garden, which we

entered by a private door. I found the adorable creature in tears; I

was melted at the sight—we continued silent for some time—my heart was

too full to speak—her snowy bosom heaved with fond resentment; at last

she sobbing cried, “What have I done to disoblige you?” My heart was

pierced with the tender question. I drew near with the utmost reverence

of affection. I fell upon my knees before her, and, kissing her hand,

exclaimed, “Oh! thou art all goodness and perfection! I am undone by

want of merit; I am unworthy to possess thy charms, which heaven hath

destined for the arms of some more favourite being.” She guessed the

cause of my disquiet, upbraided me gently for my suspicion, and gave me

such flattering assurances of her eternal fidelity, that all my doubts

and fears forsook me, and peace and satisfaction reigned within my

breast.

At midnight I left the fair nymph to her repose, and, being let out by

Miss Williams at the garden gate by which I entered, began to explore

my way homeward in the dark, when I heard at my back a noise like that

of a baboon when he mews and chatters. I turned instantly, and,

perceiving something black, concluded I was discovered by some spy,

employed to watch for that purpose; aroused at this conjecture, by

which the reputation of the virtuous Narcissa appeared in jeopardy, I

drew my sword, and would have sacrificed him to her fame, had not the

voice of Strap restrained my arm, it was with great difficulty he could

pronounce, “D—d—d-do! mum—um—um—murder me if you please.” Such an

effect had the cold upon his jaws, that his teeth rattled like a pair

of castanets. Pleased to be thus undeceived, I laughed at his

consternation, and asked what brought him thither? Upon which he gave

me to understand, that his concern for me had induced him to follow me

to that place, where the same reason had detained him till now, and he

frankly owned, that, in spite of the esteem he had for Miss Williams he

began to be very uneasy about me, considering the disposition in which

I went abroad; and, if I had stayed much longer, would certainly have

alarmed the neighbourhood in my behalf. The knowledge of this his

intention confounded me. I represented to him the mischievous

consequences that would have attended such a rash action, and,

cautioning him severely against any such design for the future,

concluded my admonition with an assurance, that, in case he should ever

act so madly, I would, without hesitation, put him to death. “Have a

little patience!” cried he, in a lamentable tone; “your displeasure

will do the business, without your committing murder.” I was touched

with this reproach; and, as soon as we got home, made it my business to

appease him, by explaining the cause of that transport during which I

had used him so unworthily.

Next day when I went into the Long Room, I observed several whispers

circulate all of a sudden, and did not doubt that Melinda had been busy

with my character; but I consoled myself with the love of Narcissa,

upon which I rested with the most perfect confidence; and going up to

the rowly-powly table, won a few pieces from my suspected rival, who,

with an easy politeness, entered into conversation with me, and,

desiring my company to the coffee-house, treated me with tea and

chocolate. I remembered Strutwell, and guarded against his insinuating

behaviour; nor was my suspicion wrong placed; he artfully turned the

discourse upon Narcissa, and endeavoured by hinting at an intrigue he

pretended to be engaged in elsewhere, to learn what connection there

was between her and me. But all his finesse was ineffectual, I was

convinced of his dissimulation, and gave such general answers to his

inquiries, that he was forced to drop the subject, and talk of

something else.

While we conversed in this manner, the savage came in with another

gentleman, who introduced him to his lordship, and he was received with

such peculiar marks of distinction, that I was persuaded the courtier

intended to use him in some shape or other; and from thence I drew an

unlucky omen. But I had more cause to be dismayed the following day,

when I saw the squire in company with Melinda and her mother, who

honoured me with several disdainful glances; and when I afterwards

threw myself in his way, instead of the cordial shake of the hand, he

returned my salute with a cold repetition of “Servant, servant!” which

he pronounced with such indifference or rather contempt, that if he had

not been Narcissa’s brother, I should have affronted him in public.

These occurrences disturbed me not a little; I foresaw the brooding

storm, and armed myself with resolution for the occasion; but Narcissa,

being at stake, I was far from being resigned. I could have renounced

every other comfort of life with some degree of fortitude, but the

prospect of losing her disabled all my philosophy, and tortured my soul

into madness.

Miss Williams found me, next morning, full of anxious tumult, which did

not abate when she told me that my Lord Quiverwit, having professed

honourable intentions, had been introduced to my lovely mistress by her

brother, who had, at the same time, from the information of Melinda,

spoken of me as an Irish fortune-hunter, without either birth or

estate; who supported myself in the appearance of a gentleman by

sharping and other infamous practices; and who was of such an obscure

origin, that I did not even know my own extraction. Though I expected

all this malice, I could not hear it with temper, especially as truth

was so blended with falsehood in the assertion, that it would be almost

impossible to separate the one from the other in my vindication. But I

said nothing on this head, being impatient to know how Narcissa had

been affected with the discovery. That generous creature, far from

believing these imprecations, was no sooner withdrawn with her

confidante, than she inveighed with great warmth against the

malevolence of the world, to which only she ascribed the whole of what

had been said to my disadvantage, and, calling every circumstance of my

behaviour to her into review before her, found everything so polite,

honourable, and disinterested, that she could not harbour the least

doubt of my being the gentleman I assumed. “I have indeed,” said she,

“purposely forborne to ask the particulars of his life, lest the

recapitulation of some misfortunes, which he has undergone, should give

him pain; and, as to the article of his fortune, I own myself equally

afraid of inquiring into it, and of discovering the state of my own,

lest we should find ourselves both unhappy in the explanation; for,

alas! my provision is conditional, and depends entirely on my marrying

with my brother’s consent.”

I was thunderstruck with this intelligence, the light forsook my eyes,

the colour vanished from my cheeks, and I remained in a state of

universal trepidation! My female friend, perceiving my disorder,

encouraged me with assurances of Narcissa’s constancy, and the hope of

some accident favourable to our love; and, as a further consolation,

gave me to understand, that she had acquainted my mistress with the

outlines of my life: and that, although she was no stranger to the

present low state of my finances, her love and esteem were rather

increased than diminished by the knowledge of my circumstances. I was

greatly comforted by this assurance, which saved me a world of

confusion and anxiety; for I must have imparted my situation one day to

Narcissa, and this task I could not have performed without shame and

disorder.

As I did not doubt that by this time the scandalous aspersions of

Melinda were diffused all over the town, I resolved to collect my whole

strength of assurance, to browbeat the efforts of her malice, and to

publish her adventure with the frenchified barber by way of reprisal.

In the meantime, having promised to be at the garden-gate about

midnight, Miss Williams took her leave, bidding me repose myself

entirely on the affection of my dear Narcissa, which was as perfect as

inviolable. Before I went abroad, I was visited by Freeman, who came on

purpose to inform me of the infamous stories that were raised at my

expense. I heard them with great temper, and in my turn disclosed

everything that had happened between Melinda and me; and among other

circumstances entertained him with the story of the barber, letting him

know what share his friend Banter had in that affair. He was convinced

of the injury my reputation had suffered; and, no longer doubting the

fountain from whence this deluge of slander had flowed upon me,

undertook to undeceive the town in my behalf, and roll the stream back

upon its source; but in the meantime, cautioned me from appearing in

public, while the prepossession was so strong against me, lest I should

meet with some affront that might have bad consequences.

CHAPTER LIX

I receive an extraordinary Message at the Door of the Long Room, which,

however, enter, and affront the Squire, who threatens to take the Law

of me—Rebuke Melinda for her Malice—she weeps with Vexation—Lord

Quiverwit is severe upon me—I retort his Sarcasm—am received with the

utmost Tenderness by Narcissa, who desires to hear the Story of my

Life—we vow eternal Constancy to other—I retire—am waked by a

Messenger, who brings a Challenge from Quiverwit, whom I meet, engage,

and vanquish

I thanked him for his advice, which, however, my pride and resentment

would not permit me to follow; for he no sooner left me, in order to do

justice to my character among his friends and acquaintance, than I

sallied out, and went directly to the Long Room. I was met at the door

by a servant, who presented a billet to me without a subscription,

importing that my presence was disagreeable to the company, and

desiring I would take the hint without further disturbance, and bestow

myself elsewhere for the future. This peremptory message filled me with

indignation. I followed the fellow who delivered it, and, seizing him

by the collar in presence of all the company, threatened to put him

instantly to death, if he did not discover the scoundrel who had

charged him with such an impudent commission, that I might punish him

as he deserved. The messenger, affrighted at my menaces and furious

looks, fell upon his knees, and told me, that the gentleman who ordered

him to deliver the letter was no other than Narcissa’s brother, who, at

that time, stood at the other end of the room, talking to Melinda. I

went up to him immediately, and in the hearing of his inamorata,

accosted him in these words; “Lookee, squire, were it not for one

consideration that protects you from my resentment, I would cane you

where you stand, for having had the presumption to send me this

scurrilous intimation;” which I tore to pieces and threw in his face:

at the same time darting an angry regard at his mistress, I told her, I

was sorry she had put it out of my power to compliment her upon her

invention, but at the expense of her good nature and veracity. Her

admirer, whose courage never rose, but in proportion to the wine he had

swallowed, instead of resenting my address in what is called an

honourable way, threatened to prosecute me for an assault, and took

witnesses accordingly: while she, piqued at his pusillanimous

behaviour, and enraged at the sarcasm I had uttered against her,

endeavoured to make her quarrel a public cause, and wept aloud with

spite and vexation.

The tears of a lady could not fail of attracting the notice and concern

of the spectators to whom she complained of my rudeness with great

bitterness, saying, if she were a man, I durst not use her so. The

greatest part of the gentlemen, already prejudiced against me, were

offended at the liberty I had taken, as appeared from their looks;

though none of them signified their disgust any other way except my

Lord Quiverwit, who ventured to say, with a sneer, that I was in the

right to establish my own character, of which he had now no longer any

doubt. Nettled at this severe equivocation, which raised a laugh at my

expense, I replied with some warmth, “I am proud of having in that

particular got the start of your lordship.” He made no answer to my

repartee, but with a contemptuous smile walked off, leaving me in a

very disagreeable situation. In vain did I make up to several people of

my acquaintance, whose conversation, I hoped, would banish my

confusion; everybody shunned me like a person infected, and I should

not have been able to bear my disgrace, had not the idea of the ever

faithful and fond Narcissa come to my relief. I quitted the scene of my

mortification, and, sauntering about the town, happened to wake from my

contemplation, when I found myself just opposite to a toy-shop, which I

entered, and purchased a ring set with a ruby in the form of a heart,

surrounded by diamond sparks, for which I paid ten guineas, intending

it for a present to the charmer of my soul.

I was introduced, at the hour appointed, to this divine creature, who,

notwithstanding what she had heard to my disadvantage, received me with

the utmost confidence and tenderness; and, having been informed of the

general sketches of my life by Miss Williams, expressed a desire, of

knowing the particular circumstances, which I related with great

candour, omitting, however, some things which I concluded altogether

improper for her ear, and which the reader’s reflection will easily

suggest. As my story was little else than a recital of misfortunes, the

tear of sympathy ceased not to trickle from her enchanting eyes during

the whole of the narration, which, when I had finished, she recompensed

me for my trouble with the most endearing protestations of eternal

love. She bewailed her restricted condition, as it was the means of

retarding my happiness; told me that Lord Quiverwit, by her brother’s

permission, had been to drink tea with her that very afternoon, and

actually proposed marriage; and, seeing me extremely affected with this

piece of information, offered to give me a convincing proof of her

affection, by espousing me in private, and leaving the rest to fate. I

was penetrated with this instance of her regard, but, that I might not

be outdone in generosity, resisted the bewitching temptation in

consideration of her honour and interest; at the same time I presented

my ring as a pledge of my inviolable attachment, and, on my knees,

implored Heaven to shower its curses on my head, if ever my heart

should entertain one thought unworthy of the passion I then avowed. She

received my token, gave me in return her picture in miniature,

exquisitely drawn and set in gold; and, in the same posture, called

Heaven to witness and to judge her flame. Our vows being thus

reciprocally breathed, a confidence of hope ensued, and our mutual

fondness becoming as intimate as innocence would allow, I grew

insensible of the progress of time, and it was morning before I could

tear myself from this darling of my soul! My good angel foresaw what

would happen, and permitted me to indulge myself on this occasion, in

consideration of the fatal absence I was doomed to suffer.

I went to bed immediately on my return to my lodging, and, having slept

about two hours, was waked by Strap, who in great confusion told me

there was a footman below with a letter, which he would deliver to

nobody but myself. Alarmed at this piece of news, I desired my friend

to show him into my chamber, and received the following letter, which,

he said, required an immediate answer:

“Sir,—

“When any man injures my honour, let the difference of rank between

us be ever so great, I am contented to wave the privilege of my

quality, and to seek reparation from him on equal terms. The

insolence of your reply to me yesterday, in the Long Room, I might

have overlooked, had not your presumptive emulation in a much more

interesting affair, and which I made this morning, concurred in

persuading me to chastise your audacity with my sword. If you

therefore have spirit enough to support the character you assume,

you will not fail to follow the bearer immediately to a convenient

place, where you shall be met by

“Quiverwit.”

Whether I was enervated by the love and favour of Narcissa, or awed by

the superior station of my antagonist, I know not, but I never had less

inclination to fight than at this time. However, finding there was a

necessity for vindicating the reputation of my mistress, as well as for

asserting my own honour, I forthwith rose, and, dressing in a hurry,

put on my sword, bade Strap attend me, and set out with my conductor,

cursing my bad fortune all the way, for having been observed in my

return from my angel; for so I interpreted his lordship’s discovery.

When I came within sight of my rival, his lacquey told me he had orders

to stop; upon which I commanded Strap to halt also, while I walked

forward; resolving, if possible, to come to an explanation with my

challenger, before we should come to battle. Nor was an opportunity

wanting; for I no sooner approached than he asked, with a stern

countenance, what business I had in Mr. Topehall’s garden so early in

the morning? “I don’t know, my lord,” said I, “how to answer a question

put to me with such magisterial haughtiness. If your lordship will

please to expostulate calmly, you will have no cause to repent of your

condescension; otherwise I am not to be intimated into any confession.”

“There is no room for denial,” answered he; “I saw you come out with my

own eyes.” “Did any other see me?” said I. “I neither know nor care,”

said he; “I want no other evidence than that of my own senses.” Pleased

to hear that the suspicion was confined to him alone, I endeavoured to

appease his jealousy, by owning an intrigue with the waiting maid: but

he had too much discernment to be so easily imposed upon, and told me

there was only one way to convince him of the truth of what I alleged,

which was no other than renouncing all claim to Narcissa upon oath, and

promising, upon honour, never to speak to her for the future.

Exasperated at this proposal, I unsheathed my sword, saying, “Heavens!

what title have you, or any man on earth, to impose such terms on me?”

He did the same, and making towards me with a contracted brow, said I

was a villain, and had dishonoured Narcissa. “He’s a villain,” I

replied, in a transport of fury, “who brands me with that imputation!

She is a thousand times more chaste than the mother that bore you; and

I will assert her honour with my heart’s blood!” So saying, I rushed

upon him with more eagerness than address, and, endeavouring to get

within his point, received a wound in my neck, which redoubled my rage.

He excelled me in temper as well as in skill, by which means he parried

my thrusts with great calmness, until I had almost exhausted my

spirits; and, when he perceived me beginning to flag, attacked me

fiercely in his turn. Finding himself, however, better opposed than he

expected, he resolved to follow his longe, and close with me;

accordingly, his sword entered my waistcoat, on the side of the breast

bone, and, running up between my shirt and skin, appeared over my left

shoulder. I imagined that his weapon had perforated my lungs, and of

consequence that the wound was mortal; therefore, determined not to die

unrevenged, I seized his shell, which was close to my breast, before he

could disentangle his point, and, keeping it fast with my left hand,

shortened my own sword with my right, intending to run him through the

heart; but he received the thrust in the left arm, which penetrated up

to the shoulder blade. Disappointed at this expectation, and afraid

still that death would frustrate my revenge, I grappled with him, and,

being much the stronger, threw him upon the ground, where I wrested his

sword out of his hand, and, so great was my confusion, that instead of

turning the point upon him, struck out three of his foreteeth with the

hilt. In the meantime, our servants, seeing us fall, ran up to separate

and assist us; but before their approach I was upon my feet, and had

discovered that my supposed mortal wound was only a slight scratch. The

knowledge of my own safety disarmed me of a good deal of my resentment,

and I began to inquire with some concern into the situation of my

antagonist, who remained on the ground bleeding plentifully at his

mouth and arm. I helped his footman to raise him, and, having bound up

his wound with my handkerchief, assured it was not dangerous; I

likewise restored his sword, and offered to support him to his house.

He thanked me with an air of sullen dignity: and whispering that I

should hear from him soon, went away, leaning on his servant’s

shoulder.

I was surprised at this promise, which I construed into a threat, and

resolved, if ever he should call me out again, to use whatever

advantage fortune might give me over him in another manner. In the

meantime I had leisure to take notice of Strap, who seemed quite

stupified with horror: I comforted him with an assurance, that I had

received no damage, and explained the nature of this affair as we

walked homeward. By the time I had got into my apartment, I found the

wound in my neck stiff and uneasy, and a good deal of clotted blood ran

down upon my shirt; upon which I pulled off my coat and waistcoat, and

unbuttoned my collar, that I might dress it with more ease. My friend

no sooner perceived my shirt quite dyed with blood, than, imagining I

had got at least twenty thousand wounds, he cried, “O Jesus!” and fell

flat on the floor. I stopped the bleeding with a little dry lint, and,

applying a plaster over it, cleaned myself from the gore, shifted, and

dressed, while he lay senseless at my feet, so that when he recovered,

and saw me perfectly well, he could scarce believe his own eyes. Now

that the danger was passed, I was very well pleased with what had

happened, hoping that it would soon become known, and consequently

dignify my character not a little in this place. I was also proud of

having shown myself, in some shape, worthy of the love of Narcissa,

who, I was persuaded, would not think the worse of me for what I had

done.

CHAPTER LX

I am visited by Freeman, with whom I appear in Public, and am

caressed—am sent for by Lord Quiverwit, whose Presence I quit

flung—Narcissa is carried off by her Brother—I intend to pursue him,

and am dissuaded by my Friend—engage in Play, and lose all my Money—set

out for London—try my Fortune at the Gaming Table without

success—receive a letter from Narcissa—bilk my Tailor

While I entertained myself with these reflections, the news of the

duel, being communicated by some unknown channel, spread all over the

town. I was visited by Freeman, who testified his surprise at finding

me; for it was told, that Lord Quiverwit being dead of his wounds, I

had absconded, in order to avoid the cognizance of the law. I asked, if

people guessed the occasion of the quarrel; and, understanding it was

attributed to his lordship’s resentment of my reply in the Long Room,

confirmed that conjecture, glad to find Narcissa unsuspected. My

friend, after I had assured him that my antagonist was in no danger,

wished me joy of the event, than which, he said, nothing could happen

more opportunely to support the idea he had given of my character to

his friends, among whom he had been very assiduous in my behalf.

On the strength of this assurance, I went with him to the coffee-house,

where I was saluted by a great many of those very persons who had

shunned me the preceding day; and I found everybody making merry with

the story of Melinda’s French gallant. While I remained in this place,

I received a message from Lord Quiverwit, desiring, if I were not

engaged, to see me at his house.

Thither I immediately repaired, and was conducted to an apartment where

I was received by his lordship in bed. When we were left by ourselves,

he thanked me in very polite terms for having used the advantage

fortune had given me over him with such moderation, and asked pardon

for any offence his resentment might have prompted him to commit. “I

would willingly,” said he, “make you my friend; but, as it is

impossible for me to divest myself of my passion for Narcissa, I am too

well convinced of your sentiments, to think we shall ever agree on that

subject. I took the liberty, therefore, of sending for you, in order to

own candidly, that I cannot help opposing your success with that young

lady; though, at the same time I promise to regulate my opposition by

the dictates of justice and honour. This, however, I think proper to

advertise you of, that she has no independent fortune; and, if you

should even succeed in your addresses, you will have the mortification

to see her reduced to indigence, unless you have wherewithal to support

her—and I am credibly informed of your incapacity that way—nay, I will

confess, that, urged by this consideration, I have actually sent notice

to her brother of the progress I suspect you have made in her

affection, and desired him to take his precautions accordingly.”

Alarmed and provoked at this information, I told his lordship, that I

did not see how he could reconcile that piece of conduct with his

profession of open dealing, and flung away from him in a passion.

As I walked homeward, in hope of hearing from my mistress as usual by

means of Miss Williams, I was surprised with the waving of a

handkerchief from the window of a coach-and-six that passed by me at

full speed: and upon further observation, I saw a servant on horseback

riding after it, who, I knew by his livery, belonged to the squire.

Thunderstruck with this discovery, the knowledge of my misfortune

rushed all at once upon my reflection! I guessed immediately that the

signal was made by the dear hand of Narcissa, who, being hurried away

in consequence of Lord Quiverwit’s message to her brother, had no other

method of relating her distress, and imploring my assistance. Frantic

with this conjecture, I ran to my lodgings, snatched my pistols, and

ordered Strap to get post-horses, with such incoherence of speech and

disorder, that the poor valet, terrified with the suspicion of another

duel, instead of providing what I desired, went forthwith to Freeman,

who, being informed of my behaviour, came straight to my apartment, and

conjured me so pathetically to make him acquainted with the cause of my

uneasiness, that I could not refuse telling him my happiness was fled

with Narcissa, and that I must retrieve her or perish. He represented

the madness of such an undertaking, and endeavoured to divert me from

it with great strength of friendship and reason. But all his arguments

would have been ineffectual, had he not put me in mind of the

dependence I ought to have on the love of Narcissa, and the attachment

of her maid, who could not fail of finding opportunities to advertise

me of their situation; and at the same time demonstrated the injury my

charmer’s reputation must suffer from my precipitate retreat. I was

convinced and composed by these considerations: I appeared in public

with an air of tranquillity, was well received by the best company in

town, and, my misfortune taking air, condoled accordingly: while I had

the satisfaction of seeing Melinda so universally discountenanced that

she was fain to return to London, in order to avoid the scoffs and

censure of the ladies at Bath. But, though the hope of hearing from the

darling of my soul supported my spirits a little while, I began to be

very uneasy, when, at the end of several weeks I found that expectation

disappointed. In short, melancholy and despondence took possession of

my soul; and, repining at that providence which, by acting the

stepmother towards me, kept me from the fruition of my wishes, I

determined, in a fit of despair, to risk all I had at the gaming table,

with a view of acquiring a fortune sufficient to render me independent

for life; or of plunging myself into such a state of misery, as would

effectually crush every ambitious hope that now tortured my

imagination.

Actuated by this fatal resolution, I engaged in play, and, after some

turns of fortune found myself, at the end of three days, worth a

thousand pounds; but it was not my intention to stop there, for which

cause I kept Strap ignorant of my success, and continued my career

until I was reduced to five guineas, which I would have hazarded also,

had I not been ashamed to fall from a bet of two hundred pounds to such

a petty sum.

Having thus executed my scheme, I went home, amazed to find myself so

much at ease, and informed my friend Strap of my mischance with such

calmness, that he, imagining I joked, affected to receive the tidings

with great equanimity. But both he and I found ourselves mistaken very

soon. I had misinterpreted my own stupidity into deliberate

resignation, and he had reason to believe me in earnest when he saw me

next morning agitated with the most violent despair, which he

endeavoured to alleviate with all the consolation in his power.

In one of my lucid intervals, however, I charged him to take a place in

the stage coach for London; and, in the meantime, paid my debts in

Bath, which amounted to thirty shillings only. Without taking leave of

my friends, I embarked, Strap having the good fortune to find a return

horse, and arrived in town, without having met with anything remarkable

on the road. While we crossed Bagshot Heath, I was seized with a sort

of inclination to retrieve my fortune, by laying passengers under

contribution in some such place. My thoughts were so circumstanced at

this time, that I should have digested the crime of robbery, so

righteously had I concerted my plan, and ventured my life in the

execution, had I not been deterred by reflecting upon the infamy that

attends detection.

The apartment I formerly lived in being unengaged, I took possession of

it, and next day went in quest of Banter, who received me with open

arms, in expectation of having his bond discharged to his liking: but

when he understood what had happened, his countenance changed of a

sudden, and he told me, with a dryness of displeasure peculiar to

himself, that, if he were in my place, he would put it out of fortune’s

power to play him such another trick, and be avenged of his own

indiscretion at once. When I desired him to explain his meaning, he

pointed to his neck, raised himself on his tiptoes, and was going away

without any further ceremony, when I put him in mind of my indigence,

and demanded the five guineas I had formerly lent him. “Five guineas?”

cried he; “zounds! had you acted with common prudence, you might have

had twenty thousand in your pocket by this time. I depended upon five

hundred from you, as much as if I had had notes for it in the bank; and

by all the rules of equity, you are indebted to me for that sum.” I was

neither pleased nor convinced by this computation, and insisted on my

right with such determined obstinacy, that he was fain to alter his

ton, and appease my clamour by assuring me, that he was not master of

five shillings. Society in distress generally promotes good

understanding among people; from being a dun I descended to be a

client, and asked his advice about repairing my losses. He counselled

me to have recourse again to the gaming table, where I succeeded so

well before, and put myself in a condition by selling my watch. I

followed his directions, and, having accommodated him with a few

pieces, went to the place, where I lost every shilling.

Then I returned to my lodgings full of desperate resolution, and having

made Strap acquainted with my fate, ordered him to pawn my sword

immediately, that I might be enabled to make another effort. This

affectionate creature no sooner understood my purpose, than, seized

with insupportable sorrow at the prospect of my misery, he burst into

tears, and asked what I proposed to do after the small sum he could

raise on the sword should be spent. “On my own account” said he, “I am

quite unconcerned; for, while God spares me health and these ten

fingers, I can earn a comfortable subsistence anywhere; but what must

become of you, who have less humility to stoop, and more appetites to

gratify?” Here I interrupted him, by saying, with a gloomy aspect, I

should never want a resource while I had a loaded pistol in possession.

Stupified with horror at this dreadful insinuation, he stood mute for

some time and then broke out into “God of his infinite mercy enable you

to withstand that temptation of the devil! Consider your immortal

soul—there’s no repentance in the grave! O Lord! that we ever should

have come to this! Are we not enjoined to resign ourselves to the will

of Heaven?—where is your patience?—Durum patientia frango—you are but a

young man—there may be many good things in store for you—accidit in

puncto quo non speratur in anno—remember your uncle, Mr. Bowling;

perhaps he is now on his voyage homeward, pleasing himself with the

hopes of seeing and relieving you; nay, peradventure, he has already

arrived, for the ship was expected about this time.” A ray of hope shot

athwart my soul at this suggestion; I thanked my friend for this

seasonable recollection, and, after having promised to take no

resolution till his return, dismissed him to Wapping for intelligence.

In his absence I was visited by Banter, who, being informed of my bad

luck at play, told me that fortune would probably be one day weary of

persecuting me. “In the meantime,” said he, “here’s a letter for you,

which I received just now inclosed in one from Freeman.” I snatched it

with eagerness, and knowing the superscription to be of Narcissa’s

handwriting, kissed it with transport, and, having opened it, read:

“It is with great difficulty that I have stolen, from the observation

of those spies who are set over me, this opportunity of telling you,

that I was suddenly carried away from Bath by my brother, who was

informed of our correspondence by Lord Quiverwit whom, I since

understand, you have wounded in a duel on my account. As I am fully

convinced of your honour and love, I hope I shall never hear of such

desperate proofs of either for the future. I am so strictly watched

that it will be impossible for you to see me, until my brother’s

suspicion shall abate, or Heaven contrive some other unforeseen event

in our behalf. In the meantime, you may depend on the constancy and

affection of

“Your own

“Narcissa.

“P. S. Miss Williams, who is my fellow prisoner, desires to be

remembered to you. We are both in good health, and only in pain for

you, especially as it will be impracticable for you to convey any

message or letter to the place of our confinement; for which reason

pray desist from the attempt, that, by miscarrying, might prolong

our captivity.

“N—.”

This kind letter afforded me great consolation: I communicated it to

Banter, and, at the same time, showed him her picture: he approved of

her beauty and good sense, and could not help owning that my neglect of

Miss Snapper was excusable, when such a fine creature engrossed my

attention.

I began to be reconciled to my fate, and imagined, that, if I could

contrive means of subsisting until my uncle should arrive, in case he

were not already at home, he would enable me to do something effectual

in behalf of my love and fortune; I therefore consulted Banter about a

present supply, who no sooner understood that I had credit, with a

tailor, than he advised me to take off two or three suits of rich

clothes, and convert them into cash, by selling them at half-price to a

salesman in Monmouth Street. I was startled at this proposal, which I

thought savoured a little of fraud; he rendered it palatable, by

observing that, in a few months, I might be in a condition to do

everybody justice; and, in the meantime, I was acquitted by the honesty

of my intention. I suffered myself to be persuaded by his salvo, by

which my necessity, rather than my judgment, was convinced; and, when I

found there were no accounts of the ship in which my uncle embarked,

actually put the scheme in practice, and raised by it five-and-twenty

guineas, paying him for his advice with the old five.

CHAPTER LXI

I am arrested—carried to the Marshalsea—find my old Acquaintance beau

Jackson in that Jail—he informs me of his Adventures—Strap arrives, and

with difficulty is comforted—Jackson introduces me to a Poet—I admire

his Conversation and Capacity—am deeply affected with my

Misfortune—Strap hires himself as a Journeyman Barber

But this expedient was in a few weeks followed with a consequence I did

not foresee. A player, having purchased one of the suits that were

exposed to sale, appeared in it on the stage one night, while my tailor

unfortunately happened to be present. He knew it immediately, and,

inquiring minutely into the affair, discovered my whole contrivance:

upon which he came into my lodgings, and telling me that he was very

much straitened for want of money, presented his bill, which amounted

to fifty pounds. Surprised at which unexpected address, I affected to

treat him cavalierly, swore some oaths, asked if he doubted my honour,

and telling him I should take care whom I dealt with for the future,

bade him come again in three days. He obeyed me punctually, demanded

his money, and finding himself amused with bare promises, arrested me

that very day in the street. I was not much shocked at this adventure,

which, indeed, put an end to a state of horrible expectation: but I

refused to go to a sponging-house, where I heard there was nothing but

the most flagrant imposition: and, a coach being called, was carried to

the Marshalsea, attended by a bailiff and his follower, who were very

much disappointed and chagrined at my resolution.

The turnkey, guessing from my appearance that I had money in my pocket,

received me with the repetition of the Latin word depone, and gave me

to understand, that I must pay beforehand for the apartment I should

choose to dwell in. I desired to see his conveniences, and hired a

small paltry bed-chamber for a crown a week, which, in any other place,

would not have let for half the money. Having taken possession of this

dismal habitation, I sent for Strap, and my thoughts were busied in

collecting matter of consolation to that faithful squire, when somebody

knocked at my door, which I no sooner opened, than a young fellow

entered in very shabby clothes and marvellous foul linen. After a low

bow, he called me by name, and asked if I had forgotten him. His voice

assisted me in recollecting his person, whom I soon recognised to be my

old acquaintance, Jackson, of whom mention is made in the first part of

my memoirs. I saluted him cordially, expressed my satisfaction at

finding him alive, and condoled him on his present situation, which,

however, did not seem to affect him much, for he laughed very heartily

at the occasion of our meeting so unexpectedly in this place. Our

mutual compliments being past, I inquired about his amour with the lady

of fortune, which seemed to be so near a happy conclusion when I had

the pleasure of seeing him last: and, after an immoderate fit of

laughter, he gave me to understand that he had been egregiously bit in

that affair. “You must know,” said he, “that a few days after our

adventure with the bawd, and her b—ches, I found means to be married to

that same blue lady you speak of, and passed the night with her at her

lodgings, so much to her satisfaction, that early in the morning, after

a good deal of snivelling and sobbing, she owned, that, far from being

an heiress of great fortune, she was no other than a common woman of

the town, who had decoyed me into matrimony, in order to enjoy the

privilege of a femme couverte; and that, unless I made my escape

immediately, I should be arrested for a debt of her contracting, by

bailiffs employed and instructed for that purpose. Startled at this

intimation, I rose in a twinkling, and taking leave of my spouse with

several hearty damns, got safe into the verge of the court, where I

kept snug, until I was appointed surgeon’s mate of a man-of-war at

Portsmouth; for which place I set out on Sunday, went on board of my

ship, in which I sailed to the Straits, where I had the good fortune to

be made surgeon of a sloop that came home a few months after, and was

put out of commission: whereupon, I came to London, imagining myself

forgotten, and freed from my wife and her creditors, but had not been

in town a week, before I was arrested for a debt of hers, amounting to

twenty pounds, and brought to this place, where I have been fixed by

another action since that time. However, you know my disposition, I

defy care and anxiety; and being on the half-pay list, make shift to

live here tolerably easy.” I congratulated him on his philosophy, and,

remembering that I was in his debt, repaid the money he formerly lent

me, which, I believe, was far from being unseasonable. I then inquired

about the economy of the place, which he explained to my satisfaction;

and, after we had agreed to mess together, he was just now going to

give orders for dinner when Strap arrived.

I never in my life saw sorrow so extravagantly expressed in any

countenance as in that of my honest friend, which was, indeed,

particularly adapted by nature for such impressions. When we were left

by ourselves, I communicated to him my disaster, and endeavoured to

console him with the same arguments he had formerly used to me, withal

representing the fair chance I had of being relieved in a short time by

Mr. Bowling. But his grief was unutterable: he seemed to give attention

without listening, and wrung his hands in silence; so that I was in a

fair way of being infected by his behaviour, when Jackson returned,

and, perceiving the deference I paid to Strap, although in a footman’s

habit, distributed his crumbs of comfort with such mirth, jollity and

unconcern, that the features of the distressed squire relaxed by

degrees; he recovered the use of speech, and began to be a little more

reconciled to this lamentable event. We dined together on boiled beef

and greens, brought from a cook’s shop in the neighbourhood, and,

although this meal was served up in a manner little corresponding with

the sphere of life in which I had lately lived, I made a virtue of

necessity, ate with good appetite, and treated my friends with a bottle

of wine, which had the desired effect of increasing the good humour of

my fellow prisoner, and exhilarating the spirits of Strap, who now

talked cavalierly of my misfortune.

After dinner Jackson left us to our private affairs; when I desired my

friend to pack up all our things, and carry them to some cheap lodgings

he should choose for himself in the neighbourhood of the Marshalsea,

after he had discharged my lodgings, for which purpose I gave him

money. I likewise recommended to him the keeping my misfortune secret,

and saying to my landlord, or any other who should inquire for me, that

I was gone into the country for a few weeks: at the same time I laid

strong injunctions upon him to call every second day upon Banter, in

case he should receive any letter for me from Narcissa, by the channel

of Freeman; and by all means to leave a direction for himself at my

uncle’s lodgings in Wapping, by which I might be found when my kinsman

should arrive.

When he departed to execute these orders (which by the bye were

punctually performed that very night), I found myself so little

seasoned to my situation, that I dreaded reflection, and sought shelter

from it in the company of the beau, who, promising to regale me with a

lecture upon taste, conducted me to the common side, where I saw a

number of naked miserable wretches assembled together. We had not been

here many minutes, when a figure appeared, wrapped in a dirty rug, tied

about his loins with two pieces of list, of different colours, knotted

together; having a black bushy beard, and his head covered with a huge

mass of brown periwig, which seems to have been ravished from the crown

of some scarecrow. This apparition, stalking in with great solemnity,

made a profound bow to the audience, who signified their approbation by

a general response of “How d’ye do, doctor!” He then turned towards us,

and honoured Jackson with a particular salutation, upon which my

friend, in a formal manner, introduced him to me by the name of Mr.

Melopoyn. This ceremony being over, he advanced into the middle of the

congregation, which crowded around him, and hemming three times, to my

utter astonishment, pronounced with great significance of voice and

gesture, a very elegant and ingenious discourse upon the difference

between genius and taste, illustrating his assertions with apt

quotations from the best authors, ancient as well as modern. When he

had finished his harangue, which lasted a full hour, he bowed again to

the spectators; not one of whom (I was informed) understood so much as

a sentence of what he had uttered. They manifested, however, their

admiration and esteem by voluntary contributions, which Jackson told

me, one week with another, amounted to eighteen pence. This moderate

stipend, together with some small presents that he received for making

up differences and deciding causes amongst the prisoners, just enabled

him to breathe and walk about in the grotesque figure I have described.

I understood also, that he was an excellent poet, and had composed a

tragedy, which was allowed by everybody who had seen it to be a

performance of great merit: that his learning was infinite, his morals

unexceptionable, and his modesty invincible. Such a character could not

fail of attracting my regard; I longed impatiently to be acquainted

with him, and desired Jackson would engage him to spend the evening in

my apartment. My request was granted; he favoured us with his company,

and, in the course of our conversation perceiving that I had a strong

passion for the Belles Lettres, acquitted himself so well on that

subject, that I expressed a fervent desire of seeing his productions.

In this point too he gratified my inclination; he promised to bring his

tragedy to my room next day, and in the meantime, entertained me with

some detached pieces, which gave me a very advantageous idea of his

poetical talent. Among other things I was particularly pleased with

some elegies, in imitation of Tibullus; one of which I beg leave to

submit to the reader as a specimen of his complexion and capacity:—

Where now are all my flattering dreams of joy?

Monimia, give my soul her wonted rest;—

Since first thy beauty fixed my roving eye,

heart-gnawing cares corrode my pensive breast!

Let happy lovers fly where pleasures call,

With festive songs beguile the fleeting hour,

Lead beauty through the mazes of the ball,

Or press her wanton in love’s roseate bower:

For me, no more I’ll range the empurpled mead,

Where shepherd’s pipe and virgins dance around,

Nor wander through the woodbine’s fragrant shade,

To hear the music of the grove resound.

I’ll seek some lonely church, or dreary hall,

Where fancy paints the glimmering taper blue,

Where damps hang mouldering on the ivy’d wall,

And sheeted ghosts drink up the midnight dew,

There, leagued with hopeless anguish and despair,

A while in silence o’er my fate repair:

Then, with a long farewell to love and care,

To kindred dust my weary limbs consign.

Wilt thou, Monimia, shed a gracious tear

On the cold grave where all my sorrows rest?

Strew vernal flowers, applaud my love sincere,

And bid the turf lie easy on my breast?

I was wonderfully affected with this pathetic complaint, which seemed

so well calculated for my own disappointment in love, that I could not

help attaching the idea of Narcissa to the name of Monimia, and of

forming such melancholy presages of my passion, that I could not

recover my tranquillity: and was fain to have recourse to the bottle,

which prepared me for a profound sleep that I could not otherwise have

enjoyed. Whether these impressions invited and introduced a train of

other melancholy reflections, or my fortitude was all exhausted in the

effort I made against despondence, during the first day of my

imprisonment, I cannot determine; but I awoke in the horrors, and found

my imagination haunted with such dismal apparitions, that I was ready

to despair: and I believe the reader will own, I had no great cause to

congratulate myself, when I considered my situation. I was interrupted

in the midst of these gloomy apprehensions by the arrival of Strap, who

contributed not a little to the re-establishment of my peace, by

letting me know that he had hired himself as a journeyman barber; by

which means he would be able not only to save me a considerable

expense, but even make shift to lay up something for my subsistence,

after my money should be spent, in case I should not be relieved

before.

CHAPTER LXII

I read Melopoyn’s Tragedy, and conceive a vast Opinion of his Genius—he

recounts his Adventures

While we ate our breakfast together, I made him acquainted with the

character and condition of the poet, who came in with his play at that

instant, and, imagining we were engaged about business, could not be

prevailed upon to sit; but, leaving his performance, went away. My

friend’s tender heart was melted at the sight of a gentleman and

Christian (for he had a great veneration for both these epithets) in

such misery; and assented with great cheerfulness to a proposal I made

of clothing him with the our superfluities; a task with which he

charged himself, and departed immediately to perform it.

He was no sooner gone than I locked my door, and sat down to the

tragedy; which I read to the end with vast pleasure, not a little

amazed at conduct of the managers who had rejected it. The fable, in my

opinion, was well chosen and naturally conducted, the incidents

interesting, the characters beautifully contrasted, strongly marked,

and well supported; the diction poetical, spirited and correct; the

unities of the drama maintained with the most scrupulous exactness; the

opening gradual and engaging, the peripeteia surprising, and the

catastrophe affecting. In short, I judged it by the laws of Aristotle

and Horace, and could find nothing in it exceptionable but a little too

much embellishment in some few places, which objection he removed to my

satisfaction, by a quotation of Aristotle’s \_Poetics\_, importing, that

the least interesting parts of a poem ought to be raised and dignified

by the charms and energy of diction.

I revered his genius, and was seized with an eager curiosity to know

the particular events of a fortune so unworthy of his merit. At that

instant Strap returned with a bundle of clothes, which I sent with my

compliments to Mr. Melopoyn, as a small token of my regard, and desired

the favour of his company to dinner. He accepted my present and

invitation, and in less than half-an-hour made his appearance in a

decent dress, which altered his figure very much to his advantage. I

perceived by his countenance that his heart was big with gratitude, and

endeavoured to prevent his acknowledgments, by asking pardon for the

liberty I had taken; he made no reply, but, with an aspect full of

admiration and esteem, bowed to the ground, while the tears gushed from

his eyes. Affected with these symptoms of an ingenuous mind, I shifted

the conversation, and complimented him on his performance, which I

assured him afforded me infinite pleasure. My approbation made him

happy. Dinner being served, and Jackson arrived, I begged their

permission for Strap to sit at table with us, after having informed

them that he was a person to whom I was extremely obliged; they were

kind enough to grant that favour, and we ate together with great

harmony and satisfaction.

Our meal being ended, I expressed my wonder at the little regard Mr.

Melopoyn had met with from the world: and signified a desire of hearing

how he had been treated by the managers of the playhouses, to whom I

understood from Jackson, he had offered his tragedy without success.

“There is so little entertaining in the incidents of my life,” said he,

“that I am sure the recital will not recompense your attention; but,

since you discover an inclination to know them I understand my duty too

well to disappoint your desire.

“My father, who was a curate in the country, being by the narrowness of

his circumstances hindered from maintaining me at the university, took

the charge of my education upon himself, and laboured with such

industry and concern in the undertaking, that I had little cause to

regret the want of public masters. Being at great pains to consult my

natural bias, He discovered in me betimes an inclination for poetry;

upon which he recommended to me an intimate acquaintance with the

classics, in the cultivation of which he assisted me with a paternal

zeal and uncommon erudition. When he thought me sufficiently acquainted

with the ancients, he directed my studies to the best modern authors,

French and Italian as well as English, and laid a particular injunction

upon me make myself master of my mother tongue.

“About the age of eighteen, I grew ambitious of undertaking a work of

some consequence; and, with my father’s approbation, actually planned

the tragedy you have read; but, before I had finished four acts, that

indulgent parent died, and left my mother and me in very indigent

circumstances. A near relation, compassionating our distress, took us

into his family, where I brought my fable to a conclusion; and, soon

after that period my mother quitted this life. When my sorrow for this

melancholy event had subsided, I told my kinsman, who was a farmer,

that, having paid my last duty to my parent, I had now no attachment to

detain me in the country, and therefore was resolved to set out for

London, and offer my play to the stage, where I did not doubt of

acquiring a large share of fame as well as fortune; in which case I

should not be unmindful of my friends and benefactors. My cousin was

ravished with the prospect of my felicity, and willingly contributed

towards the expense of fitting me out for my expedition.

“Accordingly I took a place in the waggon, and arrived in town, where I

hired an apartment in a garret, willing to live as frugally as

possible, until I should know what I had to expect from the manager, to

whom I intended to offer my play. For, though I looked upon myself as

perfectly secure of a good reception, imagining that a patentee would

be as eager to receive as I to present my production, I did not know

whether or not he might be pre-engaged in favour of another author, a

circumstance that would certainly retard my success. On this

consideration, too, I determined to be speedy in my application, and

even to wait upon one of the managers the very next day. For this

purpose, I inquired my landlord if he knew where either or both of them

lived: and he, being curious to know my business, and at the same time

appearing to be a very honest friendly man (a tallow chandler), I made

him acquainted with my design, upon which he told me that I went the

wrong way to work; that I would not find such easy access to a manager

as I imagined; and that if I delivered my performance without proper

recommendation, it would be as one to a thousand if ever it would be

minded. “Take my advice,” said he, “and your business is done. One of

the patentees is a good catholic, as I am, and uses the same father who

confesses me. I will make you acquainted with this good priest, who is

an excellent scholar, and if he should approve of your play, his

recommendation will go a great way in determining Mr. Supple to bring

it on the stage.” I applauded his expedient, and was introduced to the

friar, who, having perused the tragedy, was pleased to signify his

approbation, and commended me in particular for having avoided all

reflections upon religion. He promised to use all his influence with

his son Supple in my behalf, and to inform himself that very day at

what time it was proper for me to wait upon him with the piece. He was

punctual in performing his engagement, and next morning gave me to

understand that he had mentioned my affair to the manager, and that I

had nothing more to do than to go to his house any time in the

forenoon, and make use of his name, upon which I should find immediate

admittance. I took his advice, put my performance in my bosom, and,

having received directions, went immediately to the house of Mr.

Supple, and knocked at the door, which had a wicket in the middle,

faced with a net-work of iron. Through this a servant having viewed me

for some time, demanded to know my business. I told him my business was

with Mr. Supple, and that I came from Mr. O’Varnish. He examined my

appearance once more, then went away, returned in a few minutes, and

said his master was busy, and could not be seen. Although I was a

little mortified at my disappointment, I was persuaded that my

reception was owing to Mr. Supple’s ignorance of my errand: and, that I

might meet with no more obstructions of the same kind, I desired Mr.

O’Varnish to be my introductor the next time. He complied with my

request, and obtained immediate admittance to the manager, who received

me with the utmost civility, and promised to read my play with the

first convenience. By his own appointment I called again in a

fortnight, but he was gone out: I returned in a week after, and the

poor gentleman was extremely ill: I renewed my visit in a fortnight

after that, and he assured me he had been so much fatigued with

business, that he had not been able as yet to read it to an end, but he

would take the first opportunity: and, in the meantime, observed that

what he had yet seen of it was very entertaining. I comforted myself

with this declaration a few weeks longer, at the end of which I

appeared again before his wicket, was let in, and found him laid up

with the gout. I no sooner entered his chamber than, looking at me with

a languishing eye, he said, “Mr. Melopoyn, I’m heartily sorry for an

accident that has happened during my illness. You must know that my

eldest boy, finding your manuscript upon the table in the dining-room,

where I used to read it, carried it into the kitchen, and leaving it

there, a negligent wench of a cook-maid, mistaking it for waste paper,

has expended it but a few leaves in singing fowls upon the spit. But I

hope the misfortune is not irreparable, since, no doubt, you have

several copies.”

“I protest to you, my good friend, Mr. Random, I was extremely shocked

at this information; but the good-natured gentleman seemed to be so

much affected with my misfortune, that I suppressed my concern, and

told him that, although I had not another copy, I should be able to

retrieve the loss by writing another from my memory, which was very

tenacious. You cannot imagine how well pleased Mr. Supple was at this

assurance; he begged I would set about it immediately, and carefully

revolve and recollect every circumstance before I pretended to commit

it to paper, that it might be the same individual play that he had

perused. Encouraged by this injunction, which plainly demonstrated how

much he interested himself in the affair, I tasked my remembrance and

industry, and in three weeks produced the exact image of the former,

which was conveyed to him by my good friend Father O’Varnish, who told

me next day, that Mr. Supple would revise it superficially, in order to

judge of its sameness with the other, and then give his final answer.

For this examination I allotted a week: and, in full confidence of

seeing it acted in a little while, demanded an audience of the manager,

when that term was expired. But, alas! the season had slipped away

insensibly. He convinced me, that if my play had been put into

rehearsal at the time, it could not have been ready for performing

until the end of March, when the benefit nights came on; consequently,

it would have interfered with the interest of the players, whom it was

not my business to disoblige.

“I was fain to acquiesce in these reasons, which, to be sure, were

extremely just; and to reserve my performance for the next season, when

he hoped I would not be so unlucky. Although it was a grievous

disappointment to me, who, by this time, began to want both money and

necessaries; having on the strength of my expectation from the theatre,

launched out into some extravagances, by which the sum I brought to

town was already almost consumed. Indeed, I ought to be ashamed at this

circumstance of my conduct; for my finances were sufficient, with good

economy, to have maintained me comfortably a whole year. You will

perhaps be amazed when I tell you that, in six months, I expended not a

farthing less than ten guineas: but, when one considers the temptations

to which a young man is exposed in this great city, especially if he be

addicted to pleasure, as I am, the wonder will vanish, or at least

abate. Nor was the cause of my concern limited to my own situation

entirely: I had written an account of my good reception to my kinsman

the farmer, and desired him to depend upon me for the money he had

kindly accommodated me with about the end of February, which promise I

now found myself unable to perform. However, there was no remedy but

patience: I applied to my landlord, who was a very good-natured man,

candidly owned my distress, and begged his advice in laying down some

plan for my subsistence; he readily promised to consult his confessor

on this subject, and, in the meantime, told me, I was welcome to lodge

and board with him until fortune should put it in my power to make

restitution.

“Mr. O’Varnish, being informed of my necessity, offered to introduce me

to the author of a weekly paper, who, he did not doubt, would employ me

in that way, provided he should find me duly qualified; but, upon

inquiry, I understood that this journal was calculated to foment

divisions in the commonwealth, and therefore I desired to be excused

from engaging in it. He then proposed that I should write something in

the poetical way, which I might dispose of to a bookseller for a pretty

sum of ready money, and, perhaps, establish my own character into the

bargain. This event would infallibly procure friends, and my tragedy

would appear next season to the best advantage, by being supported both

by interest and reputation. I was charmed with this prospect, and

having heard what friends Mr. Pope acquired by his pastorals, set about

a work of that kind, and in less than six weeks composed as many

eclogues, which I forthwith offered to an eminent bookseller, who

desired me to leave them for his perusal, and he would give an answer

in two days. At the end of that time, I went to him, when he returned

the poems, telling me, they would not answer his purpose, and sweetened

his refusal by saying there were some good clever lines in them. Not a

little dejected at this rebuff, which, I learned from Mr. O’Varnish,

was owing to the opinion of another author whom this bookseller always

consulted on these occasions, I applied to another person of the same

profession, who told me the town was cloyed with pastorals, and advised

me, if I intended to profit by my talents, to write something satirical

or luscious, such as the Button Hole, Shockey and Towner, The Leaky

Vessel, etc, and yet this was a man in years, who wore a reverend

periwig, looked like a senator, and went regularly to church. Be that

as it will, I scorned to prostitute my pen in the manner proposed, and

carried my papers to a third, who assured me that poetry was entirely

out of his way; and asked me if I had got never a piece of secret

history, thrown into a series of letters, or a volume of adventures,

such as those of Robinson Crusoe, and Colonel Jack, or a collection of

Conundrums, wherewith to entertain the plantations. Being quite

unfurnished for this dealer, I had recourse to another with as little

success; and I verily believe, was rejected by the whole trade.

“I was afterwards persuaded to offer myself as a translator, and

accordingly repaired to a person who was said to entertain numbers of

that class in his pay; he assured me, he had already a great deal of

that work on his hands, which he did not know what to do with; observed

that translations were a mere drug, that branch of literature being

overstocked with an inundation of authors from North Britain; and asked

what I would expect per sheet for rendering the Latin classics into

English. That I might not make myself too cheap, I determined to set a

high price upon my qualifications, and demanded half-a-guinea for every

translated sheet. “Half-a-guinea!” cried he, staring at me; then paused

a little, and said, he had no occasion for my service at present. I

found my error, and, resolving to make amends, fell one-half in my

demand; upon which he stared at me and told me his hands were full. I

attempted others without finding employment, and was actually reduced

to a very uncomfortable prospect, when I bethought myself of offering

my talents to the printers of half-penny ballads and other such

occasional essays, as are hawked about the streets. With this in view I

applied to one of the most noted and vociferous of this tribe, who

directed me to a person whom I found entertaining a whole crowd of them

with gin, bread, and cheese; he carried me into a little back parlour,

very neatly furnished, where I signified my desire of being enrolled

among his writers; and was asked what kind of composition I professed.

Understanding that my inclination leaned towards poetry, he expressed

his satisfaction, telling me one of his poets had lost his senses, and

was confined in Bedlam, and the other was become dozed with drinking

drams; so that he had not done anything tolerable these many weeks.

When I proposed that we should enter into terms of agreement, he gave

me to understand that his bargains were always conditional, and his

authors paid in proportion to the sale of their works.

“Having therefore settled these conditions, which (I do assure you)

were not very advantageous to me, he assigned me a subject for a

ballad, which was to be finished in two hours; and I retired to my

garret in order to perform his injunction. As the theme happened to

suit my fancy, I completed a pretty sort of an ode within the time

prescribed, and brought it to him, big with hope of profit and

applause. He read it in a twinkling, and, to my utter astonishment,

told me it would not do; though indeed he owned I wrote a good hand,

and spelled very well, but my language was too high flown, and of

consequence not at all adapted to the capacity and taste of his

customers. I promised to rectify that mistake and in half an hour

humbled my style to the comprehension of vulgar readers; he approved of

the alteration, and gave me some hopes of succeeding in time, though he

observed that my performance was very deficient in the quaintness of

expression that pleases the multitude: however, to encourage me, he

ventured the expense of printing and paper, and, if I remember aright,

my share of the sale amounted to fourpence halfpenny.

“From that day I studied the Grub Street manner with great diligence,

and at length became such a proficient that my works were in great

request among the most polite of the chairmen, draymen,

hackney-coachmen, footmen, and servant maids: nay, I have enjoyed the

pleasure of seeing my productions adorned with cuts, pasted upon the

walls as ornaments in beer cellars and cobblers’ stalls; and have

actually heard them sung in clubs of substantial tradesmen—but empty

praise (you know, my dear friend) will not supply the cravings of

nature. I found myself in danger of starving in the midst of all my

fame; for of ten songs I composed, it was well if two had the good

fortune to please. For this reason I turned my thoughts to prose, and,

during a tract of gloomy weather, published an apparition, on the

substance of which I subsisted very comfortably a whole month; I have

made many a good meal upon a monster; a rape has often afforded me

great satisfaction; but a murder, well timed, was my never-failing

resource. What then? I was almost a slave to my employers, who expected

to be furnished at a minute’s warning with prose and verse, just as

they thought the circumstances of the times required, whether the

inclination was absent or present. Upon my sincerity, Mr. Random, I

have been so much pestered and besieged by those children of clamour,

that life became a burden to me.”

CHAPTER LXIII

The Continuation and Conclusion of Mr. Melopoyn’s Story

‘I made shift, notwithstanding, to maintain myself till the beginning

of next winter, when I renewed my addresses to my friend Mr. Supple,

and was most graciously received. “I have been thinking of your affair,

Mr. Melopoyn,” said he, “and am determined to show how far I have your

interest at heart, by introducing you to a young nobleman of my

acquaintance, who is remarkable for his fine taste in dramatic

writings, and is besides a man of such influence that, if once he

should approve of your play, his patronage will support it against all

the efforts of envy and ignorance; for, I do assure you, that merit

alone will not bring success. I have already spoken of your performance

to Lord Rattle, and if you will call at my house in a day or two, you

shall have a letter of introduction to his lordship.” I was sensibly

touched with this mark of Mr. Supple’s friendship; and looking upon my

affair as already done, went home and imparted my good fortune to my

landlord, who, to render my appearance more acceptable to my patron,

procured a suit of new clothes for me on his own credit.

“Not to trouble you with idle particulars, I carried my tragedy to his

lordship’s lodgings, and sent it up along with Mr. Supple’s letter by

one of his servants, who desired me, by his lord’s order, to return in

a week. I did so, and was admitted to his lordship, who received me

very courteously, told me he had perused my play, which he thought, on

the whole, was the best coup d’essai he had ever seen; but that he had

marked some places in the margin, which he imagined might be altered

for the better. I was transported with this reception, and promised

(with many acknowledgments of his lordship’s generosity) to be governed

solely by his advice and direction.”

“Well, then,” said he, “write another fair copy with the alterations I

have proposed, and bring it to me as soon as possible; for I am

resolved to have it brought on the stage this winter.” You may be sure

I set about this task with alacrity; and although I found his

lordship’s remarks much more numerous and of less importance than I

expected, I thought it was not my interest to dispute upon trifles with

my patron; therefore new modelled it according to his desire in less

than a month.

“When I waited upon him with the manuscript, I found one of the actors

at breakfast with his lordship, who immediately introduced him to my

acquaintance, and desired him to read a scene of my play. This task he

performed very much to my satisfaction, with regard to emphasis and

pronunciation; but he signified his disgust at several words in every

page, which I presuming to defend, Lord Rattle told me, with a

peremptory look, I must not pretend to dispute with him, who had been a

player these twenty years, and understood the economy of the stage

better than any man living. I was forced to submit; and his lordship

proposed the same actor should read the whole play in the evening,

before some gentlemen of his acquaintance, whom he would convene to his

lodgings for that purpose.

“I was present at the reading; and I protest to you, my dear friend, I

never underwent such a severe trial in the whole course of my life at

that juncture; for although the player might be a very honest man and a

good performer, he was excessively illiterate and assuming, and made a

thousand frivolous objections, which I was not permitted to answer.

However, the piece was very much applauded on the whole; the gentlemen

present, who, I understood, were men of fortune, promised to

countenance and support it as much as they could; and Lord Rattle,

assuring me that he would act the part of a careful nurse to it,

desired me to carry it home, and alter it immediately according to

their remarks. I was fain to acquiesce in his determination, and

fulfilled his injunctions with all the expedition in my power; but,

before I could present the new copy, my good friend Mr. Supple had

disposed of his property and patent to one Mr. Brayer; so that fresh

interest was to be made with the new manager. This task Lord Rattle

undertook, having some acquaintance with him, and recommended my

performance so strongly that it was received.

“I looked upon myself now as upon the eve of reaping the fruits of all

my labour. I waited a few days in expectation of its being put in

rehearsal, and wondering at the delay, applied to my worthy patron, who

excused Mr. Brayer on account of the multiplicity of business in which

he was involved, and bade me beware of teasing the patentee. I

treasured up this caution, and exerted my particular three weeks

longer; at the end of which his lordship gave me to understand that Mr.

Brayer had read my play, and owned it had indubitable merit; but, as he

had long been pre-engaged to another author, he could not possibly

represent it that season; though, if I would reserve it for the next,

and in the interim make such alterations as he had proposed by

observations on the margin, I might depend upon his compliance.

“Thunderstruck at this disappointment, I could not, for some minutes,

utter one syllable. At length, however, I complained bitterly of the

manager’s insincerity in amusing me so long, when he knew from the

beginning that he could not gratify my desire. But his lordship

reprimanded me for my freedom, said Mr. Brayer was a man of honour, and

imputed his behaviour with respect to me nothing else but

forgetfulness. And indeed I have had some reason, since that time, to

be convinced of his bad memory; for, in spite of appearances, I will

not allow myself to interpret his conduct in any other way. Lord Rattle

observing me very much affected with my disappointment, offered his

interest to bring on my play at the other house, which I eagerly

accepting, he forthwith wrote a letter of recommendation to Mr.

Bellower, actor and prime minister to Mr. Vandal, proprietor of that

theatre, and desired me to deliver it with my tragedy, without loss of

time. Accordingly, I hastened to his house, where after having waited a

whole hour in the lobby, I was admitted to his presence, and my

performance received with great state. He told me he was extremely busy

at present, but he would peruse it as soon as possible, and bade me to

call again in a week. I took my leave, not a little astonished at the

pert and supercilious behaviour of this stage player, who had not

treated me with good manners; and began to think the dignity of a poet

greatly impaired since the days of Euripides and Sophocles; but all

this was nothing in comparison of what I have since observed.

“Well, Mr. Random, I went back at the appointed time, and was told that

Mr. Bellower was engaged, and could not see me, I repeated my visit a

few days after, and having waited a considerable time was favoured with

an audience, during which, he said, he had not as yet read my play.

Nettled at this usage, I could contain myself no longer, but, telling

him, I imagined he would have paid more deference to Lord Rattle’s

recommendation, demanded my manuscript with some expression of

resentment. “Ay,” said he in a theatrical tone, “with all my heart.”

Then pulling out the drawer of the bureau at which he sat, he took out

a bundle, and threw it upon a table that was near him, pronouncing the

word, “There!” with great disdain. I took it up, and perceiving with

some surprise, that it was a comedy, told him it did not belong to me;

upon which he offered another which I also disclaimed. A third was

produced, and rejected for the same reason. At length he pulled out a

whole bundle, and spread them before me, saying, “There are seven—take

which you please—or take them all.” I singled out my own, and went

away, struck dumb with admiration at what I had seen—not so much on

account of his insolence, as of the number of new plays which from this

circumstance I concluded were yearly offered to the stage. You may be

sure, I did not fail to carry my complaint to my patron, who did not

receive it with all the indignation I expected; but taxed me with

precipitation, and told me I must lay my account with bearing with the

humours of the players, if I intended to write for the stage. “There is

now no other remedy,” he said, “but to keep it till the next season for

Mr. Brayer, and alter it at your leisure, in the summer, according to

his directions.” I was now reduced to a terrible alternative, either to

quit all hopes of my tragedy, from which I had all along promised

myself a large share of fortune and reputation, or to encounter eight

long months of adversity in preparing for and expecting its appearance.

This last penance, painful as it was, seemed most eligible to my

reflection at that time, and therefore I resolved to undergo it.

“Why should I tire you with particulars of my consequence? I wrestled

with extreme poverty until the time of my probation was expired; and

went to my Lord Rattle in order to remind him of my affair, when I

understood, to my great concern, that his lordship was just on the

point of going abroad, and which was still more unfortunate for me, Mr.

Brayer had gone into the country; so that my generous patron had it not

in his power to introduce me personally, as he intended: however, he

wrote a very strong letter to the manager in my favour, and put him in

mind of the promise he had made in behalf of my play.

“As soon as I was certified of Brayer’s return, I went to his house

with this letter, but was told he was gone out. I called again next day

early in the morning, received the same answer, and was desired to

leave my name and business: I did so, and returned the day after, when

the servant still affirmed that his master was gone abroad; though I

perceived him, as I retired, observing me through a window. Incensed at

this discovery, I went to a coffee-house hard by, and, inclosing his

lordship’s letter in one from myself, demanded a categorical answer. I

sent it to his house by a porter, who returned in a few minutes, and

told me Mr. Brayer would be glad to see me at that instant. I obeyed

the summons, and was received with such profusion of compliments and

apologies, that my resentment immediately subsided, and I was even in

pain for the concern which this holiest man showed at the mistake of

his servant, who, it seems, had been ordered to deny him to everybody

but me. He expressed the utmost veneration for his good and noble

friend, Lord Rattle, whom he should always be proud to serve; promised

to peruse the play with all dispatch, and give me a meeting upon it:

and, as a testimony of his esteem, made me a present of a general order

for the season, by which I should be admitted to any part of the

theatre. This was a very agreeable compliment to me, whose greatest

pleasure consisted in seeing dramatic performances, and you need not

doubt that I often availed myself of my privilege. As I had an

opportunity of being behind the scenes when I pleased, I frequently

conversed with Mr. Brayer about my play, and asked when he meant to put

it into rehearsal; but he had always so much business upon his hands,

that it remained with him unopened a considerable while; and I became

very uneasy about the season, that wasted apace, when I saw in the

papers another new play advertised, which had been written, offered,

accepted, and rehearsed, in the compass of three months. You may easily

guess how much I was confounded at this event! I own to you that, in

the first transports of my anger, I suspected Mr. Brayer of having

acted towards me in the most pitiful perfidious manner; and was

actually glad at his disappointment in the success of his favourite

piece, which, by the strength of art, lingered till the third night,

and then died in a deplorable manner. But now that passion has no share

in my reflection, I am willing to ascribe his behaviour to his want of

memory or want of judgment, which, you know, are natural defects, that

are more worthy of compassion than reproach.

“About this time I happened to be in company with a gentlewoman, who,

having heard of my tragedy, told me, she was well acquainted with the

wife of a gentleman who was very well known to a lady, who had great

interest with a person who was intimate with Earl Sheerwit: and that,

if I pleased, she would use her influence in my behalf. As this

nobleman had the character of a Maecenas in the nation, and could stamp

a value upon any work by his sole countenance and approbation, I

accepted her offer with eagerness, in full confidence of seeing my

reputation established, and my wishes fulfilled in a very short time,

provided that I should have the good fortune to please his lordship’s

taste. I withdrew the manuscript from the hands of Mr. Brayer, and

committed it to the care of this gentlewoman, who laboured so

effectually in my interest, that in less than a month it was conveyed

to the earl, and in a few weeks after, I had the satisfaction to hear

that he had read and approved it very much. Transported with this piece

of intelligence, I flattered myself with the hopes of his interesting

himself in its favour, but, hearing no more of this matter in three

whole months, I began (God forgive me!) to suspect the veracity of the

person who brought me the good tidings; for I thought it impossible

that a man of his rank and character, who knew the difficulty of

writing a good tragedy, and understood the dignity of the work, should

read and applaud an essay of this kind, without feeling an inclination

to befriend the author, whom his countenance alone could raise above

dependence. But it was not long before I found my friend very much

wronged by my opinion.

“You must know, that the civilities I had received from Lord Rattle,

and the desire he manifested to promote the success of my play,

encouraged me to write an account of my bad fortune to his lordship,

who condescended so far as to desire, by letter, a young squire of a

great estate, with whom he was intimate, to espouse my cause, and, in

particular, make me acquainted with one Mr. Marmozet, a celebrated

player, who had lately appeared on the stage with astonishing eclat,

and bore such sway in the house where he acted, that the managers durst

not refuse anything he recommended. The young gentleman, whom Lord

Rattle had employed for this purpose, being diffident of his own

interest with Mr. Marmozet, had recourse to a nobleman of his

acquaintance, who, at his solicitation, was so good as to introduce me

to him; and the conversation turning upon my performance, I was not a

little surprised, as well as pleased, to hear that Earl Sheerwit had

spoken very much in its praise, and even sent Mr. Marmozet the copy,

with a message, expressing a desire that he would act in it next

season. Nor was this favourite actor backward in commending the piece,

which he mentioned with such expressions of regard, that I do not

choose to repeat: assuring me that he would appear in it, provided he

should be engaged to play at all during the ensuing season. In the

meantime, he desired I would give him leave to peruse it in the

country, whither he intended to remove next day, that he might have

leisure to consider and point out such alterations as might, perhaps,

be necessary for its representation; and took my direction, that he

might communicate by letter the observations he should make. Trusting

to these assurances, and the interest which had been made in my behalf,

I hugged myself in the expectation of seeing it not only acted, but

acted to the greatest advantage, and this I thought could not fail of

recompensing me in ample manner for the anxiety and affliction I had

undergone; but six weeks being elapsed, I did not know how to reconcile

Mr. Marmozet’s silence with his promise of writing to me in ten days

after he set out for the country; however, I was at last favoured with

a letter, importing that he had made some remarks on my tragedy, which

he would freely impart at meeting, and advised me to put it, without

loss of time, into the hands of that manager, who had the best company;

as he himself was quite uncertain whether or not he should be engaged

that winter. I was a good deal alarmed at this last part of his letter,

and advised about it with a friend, who told me, it was a plain

indication of Mr. Marmozet’s desire to get rid of his promise; that his

pretended uncertainty about acting next winter was no other than a

scandalous evasion; for, to his certain knowledge, he was already

engaged, or at least in terms, with Mr. Vandal; and that his design was

to disappoint me, in favour of a new comedy, which he had purchased of

the author, and intended to bring upon the stage for his own advantage.

“In short, my dear sir, this person, who, I must own, is if a sanguine

complexion, handled the moral character of Mr. Marmozet with such

severity, that I began to suspect him of some particular prejudice, and

put myself upon my guard against his insinuations. I ought to crave

pardon for this tedious narration of trivial circumstances, which,

however interesting they may be to me, must certainly be very dry and

insipid to the ear of one unconcerned in the affair. But I understand

the meaning of your looks, and will proceed.

“Well, sir, Mr. Marmozet, upon his return to town, treated me with

uncommon complaisance, and invited me to his lodgings, where he

proposed to communicate his remarks, which, I confess, were more

unfavourable than I expected; but I answered his objections, and, as I

thought, brought him over to my opinion; for, on the whole, he

signified the highest approbation of the performance. In the course of

our dispute, I was not a little surprised to find this poor gentleman’s

memory so treacherous, as to let him forget what he had said to me,

before he went out of town, in regard to Earl Sheerwit’s opinion of my

play, which he now professed himself ignorant of; and I was extremely

mortified at hearing from his own mouth, that his interest with Mr.

Vandal was so very low as to be insufficient of itself to bring a new

piece upon the stage. I then begged his advice, and he counselled me to

apply to Earl Sheerwit, for a message in my favour to the manager, who

would not presume to refuse anything recommended by so great man; and

he was so kind as to promise to second this message with all his power.

I had immediate recourse to the worthy gentlewoman my friend, already

mentioned, who opened the channels of her conveyance with such

expedition, that in a few days I had a promise of the message, provided

I could assure myself of Mr. Vandal’s being unengaged to any other

writer; for his lordship did not choose to condescend so far, until he

should understand that there was a probability (at least) of

succeeding; at the same time that blessed me with this piece of news, I

was startled at another, by the same channel of communication; which

was, that Mr. Marmozet, before he advised me to this application, had

informed the earl that he had read my play, and found it altogether

unfit for the stage. Though I could not doubt the certainty of this

intelligence, I believed there was some inapprehension in the case;

and, without taking any notice of it, told Mr. Marmozet the answer I

had been favoured with; and he promised to ask Mr. Vandal the question

proposed. I waited upon him in a day or two, when he gave me to

understand, that Mr. Vandal having professed himself free of all

engagements, he had put my play into his hands, and represented it as a

piece strongly recommended by Earl Sheerwit, who (he assured him) would

honour him with a message in its favour; and he desired me to call for

an answer at Mr. Vandal’s house in three days. I followed his

directions, and found the manager, who being made acquainted with my

business, owned that Mr. Marmozet had given him a manuscript play, but

denied that he had mentioned Earl Sheerwit’s name. When I informed him

of the circumstances of the affair, he said, he had no engagement with

any author; that he would read my tragedy forthwith; and did not

believe he should venture to reject it in contradiction to his

lordship’s opinion, for which he had the utmost veneration, but put it

into rehearsal without loss of time. I was so much intoxicated with

this encouragement, that I overlooked the mysterious conduct of Mr.

Marmozet, and attended the manager at the time appointed, when, to my

infinite confusion, he pronounced my play improper for the stage, and

rejected it accordingly. As soon as I could recollect myself from the

disorder into which this unexpected refusal had thrown me, I expressed

a desire of hearing his objections, which were so groundless,

indistinct, and unintelligible, that I persuaded myself he had not at

all perused the piece, but had been prompted by somebody whose lessons

he had not rightly retained. However, I have been since informed that

the poor man’s head, which was not naturally very clear, had been

disordered with superstition, and that he laboured under the tyranny of

a wife, and the terrors of hellfire at the same time.

“Precipitated in this manner from the highest pinnacle of hope to the

abyss of despondence, I was ready to sink under the burden of my

affliction, and, in the bitterness of my anguish, could not help

entertaining some doubts of Mr. Marmozet’s integrity, when I

recollected and compared the circumstances of his conduct towards me. I

was encouraged in this suspicion by being told that my Lord Sheerwit

had spoken of his character with great contempt: and, in particular,

resented his insolence in opposing his own taste to that of his

lordship, concerning my tragedy. While I hesitated between different

opinions of the matter, that friend, who (as I told you before) was a

little hot-headed, favoured me with a visit, and, having heard a

circumstantial account of the whole affair, could not contain his

indignation, but affirmed without ceremony that Mr. Marmozet was the

sole occasion of my disappointment; that he acted from first to last

with the most perfidious dissimulation, cajoling me with insinuating

civilities, while he underhand employed all his art and influence to

prejudice the ignorant manager against my performance; that nothing

could equal his hypocrisy but his avarice, which engrossed the

faculties of his soul so much, that he scrupled not to be guilty of the

meanest practices to gratify that sordid appetite; that, in consequence

of this disposition, he had prostituted his honour in betraying my

inexperience, and in undermining the interest of another author of

established reputation, who had also offered a tragedy to the stage,

which he thought would interfere with the success of the comedy he had

bought, and determined to bring on at all events.

“I was shocked at the description of such a monster, which I could not

believe existed in the world, bad as it is, and argued against the

asseverations of my friend, by demonstrating the bad policy of such

behaviour, which could not fail of entailing infamy upon the author;

and the small temptation that a man of Mr. Marmozet’s figure and

success could have to consult his interest in such a grovelling manner,

which must create contempt and abhorrence of him in his patrons, and

effectually deprive him of the countenance and protection he now enjoys

in such an eminent degree. He pretended to laugh at my simplicity, and

asked, if I knew for which of his virtues he was so much caressed by

the people of fashion. “It is not,” said he, “for the qualities of his

heart, that this little parasite is invited to the tables of dukes and

lords, who hire extraordinary cooks for his entertainment. His avarice

they see not, his ingratitude they feel not, his hypocrisy accommodates

itself to their humours, and is of consequence pleasing; but he is

chiefly courted for his buffoonery, and will be admitted into the

choicest parties of quality for his talent of mimicking Punch and his

wife Joan, when a poet of the most excellent genius is not able to

attract the least regard.” God forbid, Mr. Random, that I should credit

assertions that degrade the dignity of our superiors so much, and

represent the poor man as the most abject of all beings! No, I looked

upon them as the hyperboles of passion; and though that comedy of which

he spoke did actually appear, I dare not doubt the innocence of Mr.

Marmozet, who, I am told, is as much as ever in favour with the earl; a

circumstance that, surely, could not be, unless he had vindicated his

character to the satisfaction of his lordship. Pray forgive this long

digression, and give me the hearing a little longer; for, thank heaven!

I am now near the goal.

“Baffled in all my attempts, I despaired of seeing my play acted; and

bethought myself of choosing some employment that might afford a sure,

though mean subsistence; but my landlord, to whom I was by this time

considerably indebted, and who had laid his account with having his

money paid all in a heap from the profits of my third night, could not

brook his disappointment, therefore made another effort in my behalf,

and, by dint of interest, procured a message from a lady of fashion to

Mr. Brayer, who had always professed a great veneration for her,

desiring that he would set up my play forthwith, and assuring him that

she and all her friends would support it in the performance. To

strengthen my interest, she engaged his best actors in my cause; and,

in short, exerted herself so much, that it was again received, and my

hopes began to revive. But Mr. Brayer, honest man, was so much

engrossed by business of vast consequence, though to appearance he had

nothing at all to do, that he could not find time to read it until the

season was pretty far advanced; and read it he must, for

notwithstanding his having perused it before, his memory did not retain

one circumstance of the matter.

“At length he favoured it with his attention, and having proposed

certain alterations, sent his duty to the lady who patronised it, and

promised, on his honour, to bring it on next winter, provided these

alterations should be made, and the copy delivered to him before the

end of April. With an aching heart, I submitted to these conditions,

and performed them accordingly: but fortune owed me another unforeseen

mortification; Mr. Marmozet, during the summer, became joint patentee

with Mr. Brayer, so that when I claimed performance of articles, I was

told he could do nothing without the consent of his partner, who was

pre-engaged to another author.

“My condition was rendered desperate by the death of my good friend and

landlord, whose executors obtained a judgment against my effects, which

they seized, turned me out into the streets naked, friendless, and

forlorn: there I was arrested at the suit of my tailor, and thrown into

the prison, where I have made shift to live these five weeks on the

bounty of my fellow prisoners, who, I hope, are not the worse for the

instruction and good offices by which I manifest my gratitude; but in

spite of all their charitable endeavours, my life was scarce tolerable,

until your uncommon benevolence enabled me to enjoy it with comfort.”

CHAPTER LXIV

I am seized with a deep Melancholy, and become a Sloven—am relieved by

my Uncle—he prevails upon me to engage with his Owners, as a Surgeon of

the Ship which he commands—he makes me a considerable Present—entertain

Strap as his steward—I take leave of my Friends, and go on Board—the

Ship arrives in the Downs

I shall not make any reflection on this story, in the course of which

the reader must perceive how egregiously the simplicity and milky

disposition of this worthy man had been duped and abused by a set of

scoundrels, who were so habituated to falsehood and equivocation, that

I verily believed they would have found the utmost difficulty in

uttering one syllable of truth, though their lives had depended upon

their sincerity. Notwithstanding all I had suffered from the knavery

and selfishness of mankind, I was amazed and incensed by the base

indifference which suffered such uncommon merit as he possessed to

languish in obscurity, and struggle with all the miseries of a

loathsome gaol; and should have blessed the occasion that secluded me

from such a perfidious world, had not the remembrance of my amiable

Narcissa preserved my attachment to a society of which she constituted

a part. The picture of that lovely creature was the constant companion

of my solitude. How often did I contemplate the resemblance of those

enchanting features that first captivated my heart! how often did I

weep over those endearing scenes which her image recalled! and how

often did I curse my perfidious fate for having robbed me of the fair

original! In vain did my imagination flatter me with schemes of future

happiness: surly reason always interposed, and in a moment overthrew

the unsubstantial fabric, by chastising the extravagance of my hope,

and representing my unhappy situation in the right point of view. In

vain did I fly for refuge to the amusements of the place, and engage in

the parties of Jackson at cards, billiards, nine-pins, and fives; a

train of melancholy thoughts took possession of my soul, which even the

conversation of Melopoyn could not divert. I ordered Strap to inquire

every day at Banter’s lodgings, in expectation of hearing again from my

charmer; and my disappointment considerably, augmented my chagrin. My

affectionate valet was infected with my sorrow, and often sat with me

whole hours without speaking, uttering sigh for sigh, and shedding tear

for tear. This fellowship increased our distemper; he became incapable

of business, and was discarded by his master; while I, seeing my money

melt away without any certainty of deliverance, and, in short, all my

hopes frustrated, grew negligent of life, lost all appetite, and

degenerated into such a sloven that during the space of three months I

was neither washed, shifted, nor shaved; so that my face, rendered

meagre with abstinence, was obscured with dirt, and overshadowed with

hair, and my whole appearance squalid and even frightful; when, one

day, Strap brought me notice, that there was a man below who wanted to

speak with me. Roused at this intelligence, and in full hopes of

receiving a letter from the dear object of my love, I ran downstairs

with the utmost precipitation. And found to my infinite surprise my

generous uncle, Mr. Bowling! Transported at the sight, I sprang forward

to embrace him. Upon which he started aside with great agility, drew

his hanger, and put himself upon his guard, crying, “Avast, brother,

avast! Sheer off. Yo ho! you turnkey, why don’t you keep a better look

out? Here’s one of your crazy prisoners broke from his lashings, I

suppose.” I could not help laughing heartily at his mistake; but this I

soon rectified by my voice, which he instantly recollected, and shook

me by the hand with great affection, testifying his concern at seeing

me in such a miserable condition.

I conducted him to my apartment, where, in presence of Strap, whom I

introduced to him as one of my best friends, he gave me to understand,

that he was just arrived from the Coast Of Guinea, after having made a

pretty successful voyage, in which he had acted as mate, until the ship

was attacked by a French privateer, that the captain being killed

during the engagement, he had taken the command, and was so fortunate

as to sink the enemy; after which exploit he fell in with a merchant

ship from Martinico, laden with sugar, indigo and some silver and by

virtue of his letter of marque, attacked, took, and carried her safe

into Kinsale in Ireland, where she was condemned as a lawful prize; by

which means he had not only got a pretty sum of money, but also

acquired the favour of his owners, who had already conferred upon him

the command of a large ship, mounted with twenty nine-pounders, ready

to sail upon a very advantageous voyage, which he was not at liberty to

discover. And he assured me that it was with the greatest difficulty he

found me, in consequence of a direction left for him at his lodgings at

Wapping.

I was rejoiced beyond measure at this account of his good fortune; and,

at his desire, recounted all the adventures that had happened to me

since we parted. When he understood the particulars of Strap’s

attachment to me, he squeezed his hand very cordially, and promised to

make a man of him; then, giving me ten guineas for my present occasion,

took a direction for the tailor who arrested me, and went away in order

to discharge the debt, telling me at parting, that he would soon fetch

up all my leeway with a wet sail.

I was utterly confounded at this sudden transition, which affected me

more than any reverse I had formerly felt; and a crowd of incoherent

ideas rushed so impetuously upon my imagination, that my reason could

neither separate nor connect them; when Strap, whose joy had manifested

itself in a thousand fool-cries, came into my room with his shaving

utensils, and without any previous intimation, began to lather my

beard, whistling with great emotion all the while. I started from my

reverie, and, being too well acquainted with Strap to trust myself in

his hands while he was under such agitation, desired to be excused,

sent for another barber, and suffered myself to be trimmed. Having

performed the ceremony of ablution, I shifted, and dressing in my

gayest apparel, waited for the return of my uncle, who was agreeably

surprised at my sudden transformation.

This beneficent kinsman had satisfied my creditor, and obtained an

order for my discharge, so that I was no longer a prisoner; but, as I

had some reluctance to part with my friends and fellows in distress, I

prevailed upon Mr. Bowling to favour us with his company, and invited

Mr. Melopoyn and Jackson to spend the evening at my apartment, where I

regaled them with a supper, good wine, and the news of my release, on

which they heartily congratulated me, notwithstanding the loss of my

company, which, they were pleased to say, they should severely feel. As

for Jackson, his misfortune made so little impression on himself, and

he was altogether so loose, indifferent, and indiscreet, that I could

scarce pity his situation: but I had conceived a veneration and

friendship for the poet, who was, in all respects, an object much more

worthy of compassion and regard. When our guests withdrew, and my uncle

had retired, with an intention of visiting me next morning, I made up a

bundle of some linen and other necessaries; and, bidding Strap carry

them to Mr. Melopoyn’s lodgings, went thither myself, and pressed it

upon his acceptance, with five guineas, which, with much difficulty, he

received, assuring me at the same time, that he should never have it in

his power to make satisfaction. I then asked if I could serve him in

any other way; to which he answered, “You have already done too much;”

and, unable to contain the emotions of his soul any longer, burst into

tears, and wept aloud. Moved at this spectacle, I left him to his

repose, and, when my uncle returned in the morning, represented his

character in such a favourable light, that the honest seaman was

affected with his distress, and determined to follow my example, in

presenting him with five pieces more; upon which, that I might save him

some confusion, I advised Mr. Bowling to inclose it in a letter to be

delivered by Strap, after we should be gone.

This was accordingly done. I took a formal leave of all my acquaintance

in the gaol; and, just as I was about to step into a hackney coach at

the gate, Jackson calling me, I returned, and he asked me in a whisper,

if I could lend him a shilling! His demand being so moderate, and in

all likelihood the last he would make upon me, I slipped a guinea into

his hand, which he no sooner perceived, than he cried, “O Jesus, a

guinea!” then laying hold of a button of my coat, broke out into

laughter; and when his immoderate fit of convulsion was ended, told me

I was an honest fellow, and let me go. The coachman was ordered to

drive to Mr. Bowling’s lodgings, where, when we arrived, he entered

into a serious discourse with me, on the subject of my situation, and

proposed that I should sail with him in quality of his surgeon; in

which case he would put me in a method of getting a fortune in a few

years by my own industry; and assured me, that I might expect to

inherit all that he should die possessed of, provided I should survive

him. Though I was penetrated with a sense of his generosity, l was

startled at a proposal that offered violence to my love, and signified

my sentiments on that head, which he did not seem to relish; but

observed that love was the fruit of idleness, that when once I should

be employed in business, and my mind engaged in making money, I should

be no more troubled with these silly notions, which none but your

fair-weathered Jacks, who have nothing but their pleasure to mind,

ought to entertain. I was piqued at this insinuation, which I looked

upon as a reproach, and, without giving myself time to deliberate,

accepted his offer. He was overjoyed at my compliance, carried me

immediately to his chief owner, with whom a bargain was struck; so that

then I could not retract with honour, had I been ever so much averse to

the agreement. That I might not have time to cool, he bade me draw out

a list of medicines for a complement of five hundred men, adapted to

the distempers of hot climates and sufficient for a voyage of eighteen

months; and carry it to a certain wholesale apothecary, who would also

provide me in two well-qualified mates. While I was thus employed Strap

came in, and looked very blank, when he understood my resolution:

however, after a pause of some minutes, he insisted upon going along

with me; and at my desire was made ship’s steward by Captain Bowling,

who promised to be at the expense of fitting him out, and to lend him

two hundred pounds to purchase an adventure.

When I had delivered my list of medicines, chosen a couple of my own

countrymen for mates, and bespoke a set of chirurgical instruments, my

uncle told me, that by his last voyage he had cleared almost three

thousand pounds, one-third of which he would immediately make over and

put into my hands; that he would procure for me credit to the value of

so much more in such goods as would turn to best account in the country

to which we were bound; and that, although he looked upon my interest

as his own, he would keep the remaining part of his fortune in his own

disposal, with a view of preserving his independence, and the power of

punishing me, in case I should not make a good use of what he had

already bestowed.

Without troubling the reader with an account of the effect which this

surprising generosity had upon my mind, I shall only say, that his

promises were instantly performed, and an invoice of merchandise proper

for the voyage presented to me, that I might purchase the goods, and

ship them with all expedition. In the midst of this hurry, the

remembrance of my charming Narcissa often interposed, and made me the

most miserable of all mortals. I was distracted with the thought of

being torn from her, perhaps for ever; and though the hope of seeing

her again might have supported me under the torments of separation, I

could not reflect upon the anguish she must feel at parting with me,

and the incessant sorrows to which her tender bosom would be exposed

during my absence, without being pierced with the deepest affliction!

As my imagination was daily and nightly upon the rack to invent some

method of mitigating this cruel stroke, or at least of acquitting my

love and honour in the opinion of this gentle creature, I at length

stumbled upon an expedient, with which the reader will be made

acquainted in due time; and, in consequence of my determination, became

less uneasy and disturbed.

My business being finished, and the ship ready to sail, I resolved to

make my last appearance among my acquaintance at the other end of the

town, where I had not been since my imprisonment; and as I had, by the

advice of my uncle, taken off some very rich clothes for sale, I put on

the gayest suit in my possession, and went in a chair to the

coffee-house I used to frequent, where I found my friend Banter so

confounded at the magnificence of my dress, that, when I made up to

him, he gazed at me with a look of astonishment, without being able,

for some minutes, to open his lips; then pulling me aside by the

sleeve, and fixing his eyes on mine, accosted me thus: “Random, where

the devil have you been! eh? What is the meaning of all this finery?

Oho! I understand you. You are just arrived from the country! what, the

roads are good, eh? Well, Random, you are a bold fellow, and a lucky

fellow! but take care, the pitcher goes often to the well, but is broke

at last.” So saying, he pointed to his collar; by which gesture, and

the broken hints he had ejaculated, I found he suspected me of having

robbed on the highway; and I laughed very heartily at his supposition.

Without explaining myself any further, I told him he was mistaken in

his conjecture; that I had been for some time past with the relation of

whom he had frequently heard me speak; and that, as I should set out

next day upon my travels, I had come to take my leave of my friends,

and to receive of him the money he had borrowed from me, which, now

that I was going abroad, I should certainly have occasion for. He was a

little disconcerted at this demand; but, recollecting himself in a

moment, swore in an affected passion, that I had used him extremely

ill, and he would never forgive me for having, by this short warning,

put it out of his power to free himself of an obligation he could no

longer bear. I could not help smiling at this pretended delicacy, which

I commended highly, telling him he needed not to be uneasy on that

score, for I would give him a direction to a merchant in the city, with

whom I would leave a discharge on the sum, to be delivered upon

payment. He professed much joy at this expedient, and with great

eagerness asked the person’s name and place of abode, which he

forthwith wrote in his pocket-book, assuring me, that he should not be

long in my debt. This affair, which I knew he should never after think

of, being settled to his satisfaction, I sent cards to all my friends,

desiring the favour of their company at a tavern in the evening, when

they honoured my invitation, and I had the pleasure of treating them in

a very elegant manner, at which they expressed equal admiration as

applause. Having enjoyed ourselves till midnight, I took my leave of

them, and was well nigh stifled with caresses: next day, I set out with

Strap in a postchaise for Gravesend, where we went on board; and the

wind serving, weighed anchor in less than twelve hours. Without meeting

with any accident, we reached the Downs, where we were obliged to come

to an anchor, and wait for an easterly wind to carry us out of the

Channel.

CHAPTER LXV

I set out for Sussex—consult Mrs. Sagely—achieve an Interview with

Narcissa—return to the Ship—we get clear of the Channel—I learn our

Destination—we are chased by a large Ship—the company are dismayed, and

encouraged by the Captain’s speech—our pursuer happens to be an English

Man of War—we arrive at the Coast of Guinea, purchase four hundred

Negroes—sail for Paraguay, get safe into the River of Plate, and sell

our Cargo to great Advantage

It was now I put in execution the scheme I had projected at London; and

asking leave of the captain for Strap and me to stay on shore till the

wind should become favourable, my request was granted, because he had

orders to remain in the Downs until he should receive some dispatches

from London, which he did not expect in less than a week. Having

imparted my resolution to my trusty valet, who (though he endeavoured

to dissuade me from such a rash undertaking) would not quit me in the

enterprise, I hired horses, and set out immediately for that part of

Sussex where my charmer was confined, which was not above thirty miles

distant from Deal, where we mounted. As I was perfectly well acquainted

with the extent of the squire’s estate and influence, I halted within

five miles of his house, where we remained till the twilight, at which

time we set forward, and, by the favour of a dark night, reached a

copse about half-a-mile from the village where Mrs. Sagely lived. Here

we left our horses tied to a tree, and went directly to the house of my

old benefactress, Strap trembling all the way, and venting ejaculatory

petitions to heaven for our safety. Her habitation being quite

solitary, we arrived at the door without being observed, when I ordered

my companion to enter by himself; and, in case there should be company

with her, deliver a letter which I had writ for that purpose, and say

that a friend of hers in London, understanding that he intended to

travel this road, had committed it to his care. He rapped at the door,

to which the good old matron coming, told him that, being a lone woman,

he must excuse her, if she did not open it, until he had declared his

name and business. He answered, that his name was unknown to her, and

that his business was to deliver a letter, which (to free her from all

apprehension) he would convey to her through the space between the door

and threshold. This he instantly performed: and she no sooner read the

contents, which specified my being present, than she cried, “If the

person who wrote this letter be at hand, let him speak, that I may be

assured by his voice whether or not I may safely admit him.” I

forthwith applied my mouth to the keyhole, and pronounced, “Dear

mother, you need not be afraid, it is I, so much indebted to your

goodness, who now crave admittance.” She knew my voice, and opening the

door immediately, received me with a truly maternal affection,

manifesting, by the tears she let fall, her concern lest I should be

discovered, for she had been informed of everything that had happened

between Narcissa and me from the dear captive’s own mouth. When I

explained the motive of my journey, which was no other than a desire of

seeing the object of my love before I should quit the kingdom, that I

might in person convince her of the necessity I was under to leave her,

reconcile her to that event, by describing the advantages that in all

probability would attend it, repeat my vows of eternal constancy, and

enjoy the melancholy pleasure of a tender embrace at parting. I say,

when I had thus signified my intention, Mrs. Sagely told me, that

Narcissa, upon her return from Bath, had been so strictly watched that

nobody but one or two of the servants devoted to her brother, was

admitted to her presence, that afterwards she had been a little

enlarged, and was permitted to see company; during which indulgence,

she had been several times at the cottage; but of late she had been

betrayed by one of the servants, who discovered to the squire, that he

had once carried a letter from her to the post-house directed to me;

upon which information she was now more confined than ever, and that I

could have no chance of seeing her, unless I would run the risk of

getting into the garden, where she and her maid were every day allowed

to take the air, and lie hid until I should have an opportunity of

speaking to them—an adventure attended with such danger, that no man in

his right wits would attempt it. This enterprise, hazardous as it was,

I resolved to perform, in spite of all the arguments of Mrs. Sagely,

who reasoned, chid, and entreated by turns; and the tears and prayers

of Strap, who conjured me on his knees, to have more regard to myself

as well as to him, than to attempt my own destruction in such a

precipitate manner. I was deaf to but the suggestions of my love; and

ordering him to return immediately with the horses to the inn from

whence we set out, and wait for my coming in that place, he at first

peremptorily refused to leave me, until I persuaded him, that if our

horses should remain where they were till daylight, they would

certainly be discovered, and the whole country alarmed. On this

consideration, he took his leave in a sorrowful plight, kissed my hand,

and, weeping, cried “God knows if ever I shall see you again.” My kind

landlady, finding me obstinate, gave me her best advice how to behave

in the execution of my project: and after having persuaded me to take a

little refreshment, accommodated me with a bed, and left me to my

repose. Early in the morning I arose, and armed with a couple of loaded

pistols and a hanger, went to the back part of the squire’s garden,

climbed over the wall, and, according to Mrs. Sagely’s direction,

concealed myself in a thicket, hard by an alcove that terminated a walk

at a good distance from the house, which (I was told) my mistress

mostly frequented. Here I absconded from five o’clock in the morning to

six in the evening, without seeing a human creature; at last I

perceived two women approaching, whom, by my throbbing heart, I soon

recognised to be the adorable Narcissa and Miss Williams. I felt the

strongest agitation of soul at the sight; and guessing, that they would

repose themselves in the alcove, stepped into it unperceived, and hid

upon the stone table a picture of myself in miniature, for which I had

sat in London, purposing to leave it with Narcissa before I should go

abroad. I exposed it in this manner, as an introduction to my own

appearance, which, without some previous intimation, I was afraid might

have an unlucky effect upon the delicate nerves of my fair enslaver;

and then withdrew into the thicket, where I could hear their discourse,

and suit myself to the circumstance of the occasion. As they advanced,

I observed an air of melancholy in the countenance of Narcissa, blended

with such unspeakable sweetness, that I could scarce refrain from

flying into her arms, and kissing away the pearly drop that stood

collected in each bewitching eye. According to my expectation, she

entered the alcove, and perceiving something on the table, took it up.

No sooner did she cast her eye upon the features, than, startled at the

resemblance, she cried, “Good God!” and the roses instantly vanished

from her cheeks. Her confidante, alarmed at this exclamation, looked at

the picture; and, struck with the likeness, exclaimed, “Jesus! the very

features of Mr. Random!” Narcissa, having recollected herself a little,

said, “Whatever angel brought it hither as a comfort to me in my

affliction, I am thankful for the benefit, and will preserve it as the

dearest object of my care.” So saying, she kissed it with surprising

ardour, shed a flood of tears, and then deposited the lifeless image in

her lovely bosom. Transported at these symptoms of her unaltered

affection, I was about to throw myself at her feet, when Miss Williams,

whose reflection was less engaged than that of her mistress, observed

that the picture could not transport itself hither, and that she could

not help thinking I was not far off. The gentle Narcissa, starting at

this conjecture, answered, “Heaven forbid! for although nothing in the

universe could yield me satisfaction equal to that of his presence for

one poor moment, in a proper place, I would rather forfeit his

company—almost for ever, than see him here, where his life would be

exposed to so much danger.” I could no longer restrain the impulse of

my passion, but, breaking from my concealment, stood before her, when

she uttered a fearful shriek, and fainted in the arms of her companion.

I flew towards the treasure of my soul, clasped her in my embrace, and

with the warmth of my kisses, brought her again to life. Oh that I were

endowed with the expression of a Raphael, the graces of a Guido, the

magic touches of a Titian, that I might represent the fond concern, the

chastened rapture and ingenuous blush, that mingled on her beauteous

face, when she opened her eyes upon me, and pronounced, “O heavens! is

it you?” I am afraid I have already encroached upon the reader’s

patience with the particulars of this amour, of which (I own) I cannot

help being impertinently circumstantial. I shall therefore omit the

less material passages of this interview, during which I convinced her

reason, though I could not appease the sad presages of her love, with

regard to the long voyage and dangers I must undergo. When we had spent

an hour (which was all she could spare from the barbarity of her

brother’s vigilance) in lamenting over our hard fate, and in repeating

our reciprocal vows, Miss Williams reminded us of the necessity there

was for our immediate parting; and, sure, lovers never parted with such

sorrow and reluctance as we. But because my words are incapable of

doing justice to this affecting circumstance, I am obliged to draw a

veil over it, and observe, that I returned in the dark to the house of

Mrs. Sagely, who was overjoyed to hear of my success, and opposed the

tumults of my grief with such strength of reason, that my mind

regained, in some measure, its tranquillity; and that very night, after

having forced upon the good gentlewoman a purse of twenty guineas, as a

token of my gratitude and esteem, I took my leave of her, and set out

on foot for the inn, where my arrival freed honest Strap from the

horrors of unutterable dread.

We took horse immediately, and alighted early next morning at Deal,

where I found my uncle in great concern on account of my absence,

because he had received his despatches, and must have weighed with the

first fair wind, whether I had been on board or not. Next day, a brisk

easterly gale springing up, we set sail, and in eight and forty hours

got clear of the Channel.

When we were about two hundred leagues to westward of the Land’s End,

the captain, taking me apart into the cabin, told me that, now he was

permitted by his instructions, he would disclose the intent and

destination of our voyage. “The ship,” said he, “which has been fitted

out at a great expense, is bound for the coast of Guinea, where we

shall exchange part of our cargo for slaves and gold dust, from whence

we will transport our negroes to Buenos Ayres in New Spain, where (by

virtue of passports, obtained from our own court, and that of Madrid)

we will dispose of them and the goods that remain on board for silver,

by means of our supercargo, who is perfectly well acquainted with the

coast, the lingo, and inhabitants.” Being thus let into the secret of

our expedition, I borrowed of the supercargo a Spanish grammar,

dictionary, and some other books of the same language, which I studied

with such application that, before we arrived in New Spain, I could

maintain a conversation with him in that tongue. Being arrived in the

warm latitudes, I ordered (with the captain’s consent) the whole ship’s

company to be blooded and purged, myself undergoing the same

evacuation, in order to prevent those dangerous fevers to which

northern constitutions are subject in hot climates; and I have reason

to believe, that this precaution was not unserviceable, for we lost but

one sailor during our whole passage to the coast.

One day, when we had been about five weeks at sea, we descried to

windward a large ship bearing down upon us with all the sail she could

carry. Upon which, my uncle ordered the studding-sails to be hoisted

and the ship to be cleared for engaging; but, finding that (to use the

seaman’s phrase) we were very much wronged by the ship which had us in

chase, and by this time had hoisted French colours, he commanded the

studding-sails to be taken in, the courses to be clowed up, the main

topsail to be backed, the tompions to be taken out of the guns, and

every man to repair to his quarters. While every body was busied in the

performance of these orders, Strap came upon the quarter-deck,

trembling and looking aghast, and, with a voice half-suppressed by

fear, asked if I thought we were a match for the vessel in pursuit of

us. Observing his consternation, I said, “What! are you afraid, Strap.”

“Afraid! (he replied); n-n-no; what should I be afraid of? I thank God

I have a clear conscience; but I believe it will be a bloody battle,

and I wish you may not have occasion for another hand to assist you in

the cockpit.” I immediately perceived his drift, and making the captain

acquainted with his situation, desired he might be stationed below with

me and my mates. My uncle, incensed at his pusillanimity, bade me send

him down instantly, that his fear might not infect the ship’s company;

whereupon I told the poor steward that I had begged him for my

assistant, and desired him to go down and help my mates to get ready

the instruments and dressings. Notwithstanding the satisfaction he must

have felt at those tidings, he affected a shyness of quitting the upper

deck; and said, he hoped I did not imagine he was afraid to do his duty

above board; for he believed himself as well prepared for death as any

man in the ship, no disparagement to me or the captain. I was disgusted

at this affectation; and, in order to punish his hypocrisy, assured him

he might take his choice, either of going down to the cockpit with me,

or staying upon deck during the engagement. Alarmed at this

indifference, he replied, “Well, to oblige you, I’ll go down, but

remember it is more for your sake than my own.” So saying, he

disappeared in a twinkling, without waiting for an answer.

By this time, we could observe two tier of guns in the ship which

pursued us, and which was now but two short miles astern. This

discovery had an evident effect upon the sailors, who did not scruple

to say, that we should be torn to pieces, and blown out of the water,

and that, if in case any of them should lose their precious limbs, they

must go a begging for life, for there was no provision made by the

merchants for those poor souls who are maimed in their service. The

captain, understanding this, ordered the crew abaft, and spoke to them

thus: “My lads, I am told you hang an a—se. I have gone to sea thirty

years, a man and a boy, and never saw English sailors afraid before.

Mayhap you may think I want to expose you for the lucre of gain.

Whosoever thinks so, thinks a d—ned lie, for my whole cargo is insured;

so that, in case I should be taken, my loss would not be great. The

enemy is stronger than we, to be sure. What then? have we not a chance

for carrying away one of her masts, and so get clear of her? If we find

her too hard for us, ’tis but striking at last. If any man is hurt in

the engagement, I promise on the word of an honest seaman, to make him

a recompense according to his loss. So now, you that are lazy,

lubberly, cowardly dogs, get away and skulk in the hold and bread-room;

and you, that are jolly boys, stand by me, and let us give one

broadside for the honour of Old England.” This eloquent harangue was so

well adapted to the disposition of his hearers, that one and all of

them, pulling off their hats, waved them over their heads, and saluted

him with three cheers; upon which he sent his boy for two large

case-bottles of brandy: having treated every man with a dram, they

repaired to their quarters, and waited impatiently for the word of

command. I must do my uncle the justice to say, that in the whole of

his disposition, he behaved with the utmost intrepidity, conduct, and

deliberation. The enemy being very near, he ordered me to my station,

and was just going to give the word for hoisting the colours, and

firing, when the supposed Frenchman hauled down his white pennant,

jack, and ensign, hoisted English ones, and fired a gun a-head of us.

This was a joyful event to Captain Bowling, who immediately showed his

colours, and fired a gun to leeward; upon which the other ship ran

alongside of us, hailed him, and, giving him to know that she was an

English man-of-war of forty guns, ordered him to hoist out his boat and

come on board. This command he obeyed with the more alacrity, because,

upon inquiry, he found that she was commanded by an old messmate of

his, who was overjoyed to see him, detained him to dinner, and sent his

barge for the supercargo and me, who were very much caressed on his

account. As this commander was destined to cruise upon the French in

the latitude of Martinico, his stem and quarters were adorned with

white fleurs-de-lis, and the whole shell of the ship so much disguised

for a decoy to the enemy, that it was no wonder my uncle did not know

her, although he had sailed on board of her many years. We kept company

with her four days, during which time the captains were never asunder,

and then parted, our course lying different from hers.

In less than fortnight after our separation, we made the land of

Guinea, near the mouth of the River Gambia; and trading along the coast

as far to the southward of the Line as Angola and Bengula, in less than

six months disposed of the greatest part of our cargo, and purchased

four hundred negroes, my adventure having been laid out in gold dust.

Our complement being made up, we took our departure from Cape Negroe,

and arrived in the Rio de la Plata in six weeks, having met with

nothing remarkable in our voyage, except an epidemic fever, not unlike

the jail distemper, which broke out among our slaves and carried off a

good many of the ship’s company; among whom I lost one of my mates, and

poor Strap had well nigh given up the ghost. Having produced our

passport to the Spanish governor, we were received with great courtesy,

sold our slaves in a very few days, and could have put off five times

the number at our own price; though we were obliged to smuggle the rest

of our merchandise, consisting of European bale-goods, which however we

made shift to dispose of at a great advantage.

CHAPTER LXVI

I am invited to the Villa of a Spanish Don, where we went with an

English Gentleman, and make a very interesting discovery—we leave

Buenos Ayres, and arrive at Jamaica

Our ship being freed from the disagreeable lading of negroes, to whom,

indeed, I had been a miserable slave since our leaving the coast of

Guinea, I began to enjoy myself, and breathe with pleasure the pure air

of Paraguay, this part of which is reckoned the Montpelier of South

America, and has obtained, on account of its climate, the name of

Buenos Ayres. It was in this delicious place that I gave myself

entirely up to the thoughts of my dear Narcissa, whose image still kept

possession of my breast, and whose charms, enhanced by absence,

appeared to my imagination, if possible, more engaging than ever! I

calculated the profits of my voyage, which even exceeded my

expectation; resolved to purchase sinecure upon my arrival in England,

and if I should find the squire as averse to me as ever, marry his

sister by stealth; and in case our family should increase, rely on the

generosity of my uncle, who was by this time worth a considerable sum.

While I amused myself with these agreeable projects, and the

transporting thoughts of enjoying Narcissa, we were very much caressed

by the Spanish gentlemen, who frequently formed parties of pleasure for

our entertainment, in which we made excursions a good way into the

country. Among those who signalised themselves by their civility to us,

was one Don Antonio de Ribera, a very polite young gentleman, with whom

I had contracted an intimate friendship, who invited us one day to his

country house, and, as a further inducement to our compliance, promised

to procure for us the company of an English Signor, who had been

settled in those parts many years and acquired the love and esteem of

the whole province by his affability, good sense, and honourable

behaviour.

We accepted his invitation, and set out for his villa, where we had not

been longer than an hour, when the person arrived in whose favour I had

been so much prepossessed. He was a tall man, remarkably well shaped,

of a fine mien and appearance, commanding respect, and seemed to be

turned of forty; the features of his face were saddened with a reserve

and gravity, which in other countries would have been thought the

effect of melancholy; but here appeared to have been contracted by his

commerce with the Spaniards, who are remarkable for that severity of

countenance. Understanding from Don Antonio that we were his

countrymen, he saluted us all round very complacently, and fixing his

eyes attentively on me, uttered a deep sigh. I had been struck with a

profound veneration for him at his first coming into the room; and no

sooner observed this expression of his sorrow, directed, as it were, in

a particular manner to me, that my heart took part in his grief; I

sympathised involuntarily and sighed in my turn. Having asked leave of

our entertainer, he accosted us in English, professed his satisfaction

at seeing so many of his countrymen in such a remote place, and asked

the captain, who went by the name of Signor Thoma, from what part of

Britain he had sailed and whither he was bound. My uncle told him that

we had sailed from the River Thames, and were bound for the same place

by the way of Jamaica, where we intended to take in a lading of sugar.

Having satisfied himself in these and other particulars about the state

of the war, he gave us to understand, that he had a longing desire to

revisit his native country, in consequence of which he had already

transmitted to Europe the greatest part of his fortune in neutral

bottoms, and would willingly embark the rest of it with himself in our

ship, provided the captain had no objection to such a passenger. My

uncle very prudently replied, that for his part he should be glad of

his company, if he could procure the consent of the governor, without

which he durst not take him on board, whatever inclination he had to

oblige him. The gentleman approved of his discretion, and telling him

that there would be no difficulty in obtaining the connivance of the

governor, who was his good friend, shifted the conversation to another

subject.

I was overjoyed to hear his intention, and already interested myself so

much in his favour that, had he been disappointed, I should have been

very unhappy. In the course of our entertainment, he eyed me with

uncommon attachment, I felt a surprising attraction towards him; when

he spoke, I listened with attention and reverence; the dignity of his

deportment filled me with affection and awe; and, in short, the

emotions of my soul, in presence of this stranger, were strong and

unaccountable.

Having spent the best part of the day with us, he took his leave,

telling Captain Thoma, that he should hear from him in a short time. He

was no sooner gone than I asked a thousand questions about him of Don

Antonio, who could give me no other satisfaction than that his name was

Don Rodrigo, that he had lived fifteen or sixteen years in these parts,

was reputed rich, and supposed to have been unfortunate in his younger

years, because he was observed to nourish a pensive melancholy, even

from the time of his first settlement among them; but that nobody had

ventured to inquire into the cause of his sorrow, in consideration of

his peace, which might suffer in the recapitulation of his misfortunes.

I was seized with an irresistible desire of knowing the particulars of

his fate, and enjoyed not an hour of repose during the whole night, by

reason of the eager conceptions that inspired me with regard to his

story, which I resolved (if possible) to learn. Next morning, while we

were at breakfast, three mules, richly caparisoned, arrived with a

message from Don Rodrigo, desiring our company, and that of Don

Antonio, at his house, which was situated about ten miles further up in

the country. I was pleased with this invitation, in consequence of

which we mounted the mules which he had provided for us, and alighted

at his house before noon. Here we were splendidly entertained by the

generous stranger, who still seemed to show a particular regard for me,

and after dinner made me a present of a ring, set with a beautiful

amethyst, the production of that country, saying, at the same time,

that he was once blessed with a son, who, had he lived, would have been

nearly of my age. This observation, delivered with a profound sigh,

made my heart throb with violence: a crowd of confused ideas rushed

upon my imagination, which, while I endeavoured to unravel, my uncle

perceived my absence of thought, and tapping me on the shoulder, said,

“Oons, are you asleep, Rory?” Before I had time to reply, Don Rodrigo,

with uncommon eagerness of voice and look, pronounced, “Pray, captain,

what is the young gentleman’s name?” “His name,” said my uncle, “is

Roderick Random.” “Gracious Powers!” cried the stranger, starting

up—“And his mother’s?” “His mother,” answered the captain, amazed, “was

called Charlotte Bowling.” “O bounteous Heaven!” exclaimed Don Rodrigo,

springing across the table, and clasping me in his arms, “my son! my

son! have I found thee again? do I hold thee in my embrace, after

having lost and despaired of seeing thee so long?” So saying, he fell

upon my neck, and wept aloud with joy; while the power of nature

operating strongly in my breast. I was lost in rapture, and while he

pressed me to his heart, let fall a shower of tears in his bosom. His

utterance was choked up a good while by the agitation of his soul; at

length he broke out into “Mysterious Providence!—O my dear Charlotte,

there yet remains a pledge of our love! and such a pledge!—so found! O

infinite Goodness, let me adore thy all-wise decrees!” Having thus

expressed himself, he kneeled upon the floor, lifted up his eyes and

hands to heaven, and remained some minutes in silent ecstacy of

devotion. I put myself in the same posture, adored the all-good

Dispenser in a prayer of mental thanksgiving: and when his ejaculation

was ended, did homage to my father, and craved his paternal blessing.

He hugged me again with unutterable fondness, and having implored the

protection of Heaven upon my head, raised me from the ground, and

presented me as his son to the company, who wept in concert over this

affecting scene. Among the rest, my uncle did not fail to discover the

goodness and joy of his heart. Albeit unused to the melting mood, he

blubbered with great tenderness, and wringing my father’s hand, cried,

“Brother Random, I’m rejoiced to see you—God be praised for this happy

meeting!” Don Rodrigo, understanding that he was his brother-in-law,

embraced him affectionately, saying, “Are you my Charlotte’s brother?

Alas! unhappy Charlotte! but why should I repine? we shall meet again,

never more to part! Brother, you are truly welcome. Dear son, I am

transported with unspeakable joy! This day is a jubilee—my friends and

servants shall share my satisfaction.”

While he dispatched messengers to the gentlemen in the neighbourhood,

to announce this event, and gave orders for a grand entertainment, I

was so much affected with the tumults of passion, which assailed me on

this great, sudden, and unexpected occasion, that I fell sick, fevered,

and in less than three hours became quite delirious: so that the

preparations were countermanded, and the joy of the family converted

into grief and despair. Physicians were instantly called, I was

plentifully blooded in the foot, my lower extremities were bathed in a

decoction of salutiferous herbs: in ten hours after I was taken ill I

enjoyed a critical sweat, and next day felt the remains of the

distemper, but an agreeable lassitude, which did not hinder me from

getting up. During the progress of this fever, which, from the term or

its duration, is called ephemera, my father never once quitted my

bedside, but administered the prescriptions of the physicians with the

most pious care; while Captain Bowling manifested his concern by the

like attendance. I no sooner found myself delivered from this disease,

than I bethought myself of my honest friend Strap; and resolving to

make him happy forthwith in the knowledge of my good fortune, told my

father in general, that I had been infinitely obliged to this faithful

adherent, and begged he would indulge me so far as to send for him,

without letting him know my happiness, until he could receive an

account of it from my own mouth.

My request was instantly complied with, and a messenger with a spare

mule despatched to the ship, carrying orders from the captain to the

mate, to send the steward by the bearer. My health being, in the

meantime, re-established, and my mind composed I began to relish this

important turn of my fortune, in reflecting upon the advantages with

which it must be attended; and, as the idea of my lovely Narcissa

always joined itself to every scene of happiness I could imagine, I

entertained myself now with the prospect of possessing her in that

distinguished sphere to which she was entitled by her birth and

qualifications. Having often mentioned her name while I was deprived of

my senses, my father guessed that there was an intimate connection

between us, and discovering the picture which hung in my bosom by

ribbon, did not doubt that it was the resemblance of my amiable

mistress. In this belief he was confirmed by my uncle, who told him

that it was the picture of a young woman, to whom I was under promise

of marriage. Alarmed at this piece of information, Don Rodrigo took the

first opportunity of questioning me about the particulars of this

affair, which when I had candidly recounted, he approved of my passion,

and promised to contribute all in his power towards its success. Though

I never doubted his generosity, I was transported on this occasion, and

throwing myself at his feet, told him, he had now completed my

happiness, for, without the possession of Narcissa I should be

miserable among all the pleasures of life. He raised me with a smile of

paternal fondness; said he knew what it was to be in love; and observed

that, if he had been as tenderly beloved by his father as I was by

mine, he should not now perhaps have cause—here he was interrupted by a

sigh, the tear rushed into his eye, suppressed the dictates of his

grief, and the time being opportune, desired me to relate the passages

of my life, which my uncle had told him were manifold and surprising. I

recounted the most material circumstances of my fortune, to which he

listened with wonder and attention, manifesting from time to time the

different emotions which my different situations may be supposed to

have raised in a parent’s breast; and, when my detail was ended,

blessed God for the adversity I had undergone, which, he said, enlarged

the understanding, improved the heart, steeled the constitution, and

qualified a young man for all the duties and enjoyments of life much

better than any education which affluence could bestow.

When I had thus satisfied his curiosity, I discovered an inclination to

hear the particulars of his story, which he gratified by beginning with

his marriage, and proceeded to the day of his disappearing, as I have

related in the first part of my memoirs. “Careless of life,” continued

he, “and unable to live in a place where every object recalled the

memory of my dear Charlotte, whom I had lost through the barbarity of

an unnatural parent, I took my leave of you, my child, then an infant,

with a heart full of unutterable woe, but little suspecting that my

father’s unkindness would have descended to my innocent orphan; and

setting out alone at midnight for the nearest seaport, early next

morning got on board a ship, bound, as I had heard, for France; and,

bargaining with the master for my passage, bade a long adieu to my

native country, and put to sea with the first fair wind. The place of

our destination was Granville, but we had the misfortune to run upon a

ridge of rocks near the Island of Alderney, called the Caskets, where

the sea running high, the ship went to pieces, the boat sunk alongside,

and every soul on board perished, except myself, who, by the assistance

of a grating got ashore on the coast of Normandy. I went directly to

Caen, where I was so lucky as to meet with a count, whom I had formerly

known in my travels; with this gentleman I set out for Paris, where I

was recommended by him and other friends, as tutor to a young nobleman,

whom I accompanied to the court of Spain. There we remained a whole

year, at the end of which my pupil being recalled by his father, I

quitted my office, and stayed behind, by the advice of a certain

Spanish grandee, who took me into his protection, and introduced me to

another nobleman, who was afterwards created viceroy of Peru. He

insisted on my attending, him to his government of the Indies, where,

however, by reason of my religion, it was not in his power to make my

fortune any other way than by encouraging me to trade, which I had not

long prosecuted when my patron died, and I found myself in the midst of

strangers, without one friend to support or protect me. Urged by this

consideration, I sold my effects, and removed to this country, the

governor of which, having been appointed by the viceroy, was my

intimate acquaintance. Here has heaven prospered my endeavours, during

a residence of sixteen years, in which my tranquillity was never

invaded but by the remembrance of your mother, whose death I have in

secret mourned without ceasing, and the reflection of you, whose fate I

could never learn notwithstanding all my inquiries by means of my

friends in France, who, after the most strict examination, could give

me no other account than that you went abroad six years ago, and was

never after heard of. I could not rest satisfied with this imperfect

information, and, though my hope of finding you was but languid,

resolved to go in quest of you in person; for which purpose, I have

remitted to Holland the value of twenty thousand pounds, and am in

possession of fifteen thousand more, with which I intended to embark

myself on board of Captain Bowling, before I discovered this amazing

stroke of Providence, which, you may be sure, has not altered my

intention.”

My father, having entertained us with this agreeable sketch of his

life, withdrew, in order to relieve Don Antonio, who, in his absence,

had done the honours of his house; and I was just dressed for my

appearance among the guests, when Strap arrived from the ship.

He no sooner entered the grand apartment in which I was, and saw the

magnificence of my apparel, than his speech was lost in amazement, and

he gaped in silence at the objects that surrounded him. I took him by

the hand, observed that I had sent for him to be a witness and sharer

of my happiness, and told him I had found a father. At these words he

started, and, after having continued some minutes with his mouth and

eyes wide open, cried, “Ah!—odd, I know what! go thy ways, poor

Narcissa, and go thy ways somebody else—well—Lord, what a thing is

love! God help us! are all our mad pranks and protestations come to

this? And have you fixed your habitation in this distant land? God

prosper you—I find we must part at last—for I would not leave my poor

carcase so far from my native home, for all the wealth of the

universe!” With these ejaculations, he began to sob and make wry faces;

upon which I assured him of his mistake, both in regard to my staying

in Paraguay, and informed him, as briefly as I could, of the great

event that had happened. Never was rapture more ludicrously expressed

than in the behaviour of this worthy creature, who cried, laughed,

whistled, sung, and danced, all in a breath. His transport was scarce

over, when my father entered, who no sooner understood that this was

Strap, than he took him by the hand, saying, “Is this the honest man

who befriended you so much in your distress? You are welcome to my

house, and I will soon put it in the power of my son to reward you for

your good offices in his behalf; in the meantime go with us and partake

of the repast that is provided.” Strap, wild as he was with joy, would

by no means accept of the proffered honour, crying, “God forbid! I know

my distance—your worship shall excuse me.” And Don Rodrigo, finding his

modesty invincible, recommended him to his major-domo, to be treated

with the utmost respect; while he carried me in a large saloon, where I

was presented to a numerous company, who loaded me with compliments and

caresses, and congratulated my father in terms not proper for me to

repeat.

Without specifying the particulars of our entertainment, let it suffice

to say, it was at the same time elegant and sumptuous, and the

rejoicings lasted two days; after which, Don Rodrigo settled his

affairs, converted his effects into silver and gold, visited and took

leave of all his friends, who were grieved at his departure, and

honoured me with considerable presents; and, coming on board of my

uncle’s ship, with the first fair wind we sailed from the Rio de la

Plata, and in two months came safe to an anchor in the harbour of

Kingston, in the Island of Jamaica.

CHAPTER LXVII

I visit my old Friend Thompson—we set sail for Europe—meet with an odd

Adventure—arrive in England—I ride across the Country from Portsmouth

to Sussex—converse with Mrs. Sagely, who informs me of Narcissa’s being

in London—in consequence of this Intelligence, I proceed to

Canterbury—meet with my old friend Morgan—arrive in London—visit

Narcissa—introduce my Father to her—he is charmed with her good sense

and beauty—we come to a Determination of demanding her Brother’s

Consent to our Marriage

I inquired, as soon as I got ashore, about my generous companion, Mr.

Thompson, and hearing that he lived in a flourishing condition upon the

estate left him by his wife’s father, who had been dead some years, I

took horse immediately, with the consent of Don Rodrigo, who had heard

me mention him with great regard, and in a few hours reached the place

of his habitation.

I should much wrong the delicacy of Mr. Thompson’s sentiments to say

barely he was glad to see me: he felt all that the most sensible and

disinterested friendship could feel on this occasion, introduced me to

his wife, a very amiable young lady, who had already blessed him with

two fine children, and being as yet ignorant of my circumstances,

frankly offered me the assistance of his purse and interest. I thanked

him for his generous intention, and made him acquainted with my

situation, on which he congratulated me with great joy, and, after I

had stayed with him a whole day and night, accompanied me back to

Kingston, to wait upon my father, whom he invited to his house. Don

Rodrigo complied with his request, and, having been handsomely

entertained during the space of a week, returned extremely well

satisfied with the behaviour of my friend and his lady, to whom, at

parting, he presented a very valuable diamond ring, as a token of his

esteem. During the course of my conversation with Mr. Thompson, he gave

me to understand, that his old commander Captain Oakum was dead some

months, and that, immediately after his death, a discovery had been

made of some valuable effects that he had feloniously secreted out of a

prize by the assistance of Dr. Mackshane, who was now actually in

prison on that account, and, being destitute of friends, subsisted

solely on the charity of my friend, whose bounty he had implored in the

most abject manner, after having been the barbarous occasion of driving

him to that terrible extremity on board of The Thunder, which we have

formerly related. Whatsoever this wretch had been guilty of, I

applauded Mr. Thompson’s generosity towards him in his distress, which

wrought so much upon me also, that I sent him ten pistoles, in such a

private manner that he could never know his benefactor.

While my father and I were caressed among the gentlemen on shore,

Captain Bowling had written to his owners, by the packet, which sailed

a few days after our arrival, signifying his prosperous voyage

hitherto, and desiring them to insure his ship and cargo homeward

bound: after which precaution he applied himself so heartily to the

task of loading his ship that, with the assistance of Mr. Thompson, she

was full in less than six weeks. This kind gentleman likewise procured

for Don Rodrigo bills upon London for the greatest part of his gold and

silver, by which means it was secured against the risk of the seas and

the enemy; and, before we sailed, supplied us with such large

quantities of all kinds of stock, that not only we, but the ship’s

company, fared sumptuously during the voyage.

Everything being ready, we took our leave of our kind entertainers,

and, going on board at Port Royal, set sail for England on the first

day of June. We beat up to windward, with fine easy weather, and one

night believing ourselves near Cape Tiberon, lay to, with an intention

to wood and water next morning in the bay. While we remained in this

situation, a sailor, having drunk more new rum than he could carry,

staggered over board, and, notwithstanding all the means that could be

used to preserve him, went to the bottom, and disappeared. About two

hours after this melancholy accident happened, as I enjoyed the cool

air on the quarter-deck, I heard a voice rising, as it were, out of the

sea and calling, “Ho, the ship ahoy!” Upon which one of the men upon

the forecastle cried, “I’ll be d—n’d if that an’t Jack Marlinspike, who

went overboard!” Not a little surprised at this event, I jumped into

the boat that lay alongside, with the second mate and four men, and

rowing towards the place from whence the voice (which repeated the

hail) seemed to proceed, we perceived something floating upon the

water. When we had rowed a little further, we discerned it to be a man

riding upon a hencoop, who, seeing us approach, pronounced with a

hoarse voice, “D—n your bloods! why did you not answer when I hailed?”

Our mate, who was a veritable seaman, hearing his salute, said, “By G—,

my lads, this is none of our man. This is the devil—pull away for the

ship.” The fellows obeyed his command without question, and were

already some fathoms on our return, when I insisted on their taking up

the poor creature, and prevailed upon them to go back to the wreck,

which when we came near the second time, and signified our intention,

we received an answer of “Avast, avast—what ship, brother?” Being

satisfied in this particular, he cried, “D—n the ship, I was in hopes

it had been my own—where are you bound?” We satisfied his curiosity in

this particular too; upon which he suffered himself to be taken on

board, and, after having been comforted with a dram, told us, he

belonged to the Vesuvio man-of-war, upon a cruise off the island of

Hispaniola; that he had fallen overboard four-and-twenty hours ago, and

the ship being under sail, they did not choose to bring to, but tossed

a hencoop overboard for his convenience, upon which he was in good

hopes of reaching the Cape next morning: howsomever, he was as well

content to be aboard of us because he did not doubt that we should meet

his ship, and if he had gone ashore in the bay, he might have been

taken prisoner by the French. My uncle and father were very much

diverted with the account of this fellow’s unconcerned behaviour; and

in two days, meeting with the Vesuvio, as he expected, sent him on

board of her, according to his desire.

Having beat up successfully the windward passage, we stretched to the

northward, and falling in with a westerly wind, in eight weeks arrived

in the soundings, and in two days after made for the Lizard. It is

impossible to express the joy I felt at the sight of English ground!

Don Rodrigo was not unmoved, and Strap shed tears of gladness. The

sailors profited by our satisfaction, the shoe that was nailed to the

mast being quite filled with our liberality. My uncle resolved to run

up into the Downs at once, but the wind shifting when we were abreast

of the Isle of Wight, he was obliged to turn into St. Helen’s, and come

to Spithead, to the great mortification of the crew, thirty of whom

were immediately pressed on board a man-of-war.

My father and I went ashore immediately at Portsmouth, leaving Strap

with the captain to go round with the ship and take care of our

effects; and I discovered so much impatience to see my charming

Narcissa, that my father permitted me to ride across the country to her

brother’s house; while he should hire a post-chaise for London, where

he would wait for me at a place to which I directed him.

Fired with all the eagerness of passion, I took post that very night,

and in the morning reached an inn about three miles from the squire’s

habitation; here I remained till next morning, allaying the torture of

my impatience with the rapturous hope of seeing that divine creature

after an absence of eighteen months, which, far from impairing, had

raised my love to the most exalted pitch! Neither were my reflections

free from apprehensions: that something intervened in spite of all my

hope, and represented her as having yielded to the importunity of her

brother and blessed the arms of a happy rival. My thoughts were even

maddened with the fear of her death; and, when I arrived in the dark at

the house of Mrs. Sagely, I had not for some time courage to desire

admittance, lest my soul should be shocked with dismal tidings. At

length, however, I knocked, and no sooner certified the good

gentlewoman of my voice than she opened the door, and received me with

the most affectionate embrace, that brought tears into her aged eyes:

“For heaven’s sake, dear mother,” cried I, “tell me how is Narcissa? is

she the same that I left her?” She blessed my ears with saying, “She is

as beautiful, in as good health, and as much yours as ever.”

Transported at this assurance, I begged to know if I could not see her

that very night, when this sage matron gave me to understand that my

mistress was in London, and that things were strangely altered in the

squire’s house since my departure; that he had been married a whole

year to Melinda, who at first found means to wean his attention so much

from Narcissa, that he became quite careless of that lovely sister,

comforting himself with the clause in his father’s will, by which she

should forfeit her fortune, by marrying without his consent: that my

mistress, being but indifferently treated by her sister-in-law, had

made use of her freedom some months ago, and gone to town, where she

was lodged with Miss Williams, in expectation of my arrival; and had

been pestered with the addresses of Lord Quiverwit, who, finding her

heart engaged, had fallen upon a great many shifts to persuade her that

I was dead; but, finding all his artifices unsuccessful, and despairing

of gaining her affection, he had consoled himself for her indifference,

by marrying another lady some weeks ago, who had already left him on

account of some family uneasiness. Besides this interesting

information, she told me there was not a great deal of harmony between

Melinda and the squire, who was so much disgusted at the number of

gallants who continued to hover about her even after her marriage, that

he had hurried her down into the country, much against her own

inclination, where their mutual animosities had risen to such a height,

that they preserved no decency before company or servants, but abused

one another in the grossest terms.

This good old gentlewoman, to give me a convincing proof of my dear

Narcissa’s unalterable love, gratified me with a sight of the last

letter she had favoured her with, in which I was mentioned with so much

honour, tenderness, and concern, that my soul was fired with

impatience, and I determined to ride all night, that I might have it

the sooner in my power to make her happy. Mrs. Sagely, perceiving my

eagerness, and her maternal affection being equally divided between

Narcissa and me, begged leave to remind me of the sentiments with which

I went abroad, that would not permit me for any selfish gratification

to prejudice the fortune of that amiable young lady, who must entirely

depend upon me, after having bestowed herself in marriage. I thanked

her for her kind concern, and as briefly as possible described my

flourishing situation, which afforded this humane person infinite

wonder and satisfaction. I told her, that now I had an opportunity to

manifest my gratitude for the many obligations I owed, I would

endeavour to make her old age comfortable and easy; as a step to which

I proposed she should come and live with Narcissa and me. This

venerable gentlewoman was so much affected with my words, that the

tears ran down her ancient cheeks; she thanked heaven that I had not

belied the presages she had made, on her first acquaintance with me;

acknowledging my generosity, as she called it, in the most elegant and

pathetic expressions; but declined my proposal, on account of her

attachment to the dear melancholy cottage where she had so peacefully

consumed her solitary widowhood. Finding her immovable on this subject,

I insisted on her accepting a present of thirty guineas, and took my

leave, resolving to accommodate her with the same sum annually, for the

more comfortable support of the infirmities of old age.

Having rode all night, I found myself at Canterbury in the morning,

where I alighted to procure fresh horses; and, as I walked into the

inn, perceived an apothecary’s on the other side of the street, with

the name of Morgan over the door; alarmed at this discovery, I could

not help thinking that my old messmate had settled in this place, and

upon inquiry found my conjecture true, and that he was married lately

to a widow in that city, by whom he had got three thousand pounds.

Rejoiced at this intelligence, I went to his shop as soon as it was

open, and found my friend behind the counter, busy in preparing a

clyster. I saluted him at entrance, with, “Your servant, Mr. Morgan.”

Upon which he looked at me, and replying, “Your most humble servant,

good sir,” rubbed his ingredients in the mortar without any emotion.

“What,” said I, “Morgan, have you forgot your old messmate?” At these

words he looked up again, and starting, cried, “As Cot is my—sure it

cannot—yes, by my salfation, I pelieve it is my dear friend Mr.

Rantom.” He was no sooner convinced of my identity, than he threw down

the pestle, overset the mortar, and jumping over the board, swept up

the contents with his clothes, flew about my neck, hugged me

affectionately, and daubed me all over with turpentine and the yolks of

eggs which he had been mixing when I came in. Our mutual

congratulations being over, he told me, that he found himself a widower

upon his return from the West Indies; that he had got interest to be

appointed surgeon of a man-of-war, in which capacity he had served some

years, until he married an apothecary’s widow, with whom he now enjoyed

a pretty good sum of money, peace, and quiet, and an indifferent good

trade. He was very desirous of hearing my adventures, which I assured

him I had not time to relate, but told him in general, my circumstances

were very good, and that I hoped to see him when I should not be in

such a hurry as at present. He insisted, however, on my staying

breakfast, and introduced me to his wife, who seemed to be a decent

sensible woman, pretty well stricken in years. In the course of our

conversation, he showed the sleeve-buttons I had exchanged with him at

our parting in the West Indies, and was not a little proud to see that

I had preserved his with the same care. When I informed him of

Mackshane’s condition, he seemed at first to exult over his distress;

but, after a little recollection, said, “Well, he has paid for his

malice; I forgife him, and may Cot forgife him likewise.” He expressed

great concern for the soul of Captain Oakum, which he believed was now

gnashing its teeth; but it was some time before I could convince him of

Thompson’s being alive, at whose good fortune, nevertheless, he was

extremely glad.

Having renewed our protestations of friendship, I bade the honest

Welshman and his spouse farewell, and, taking post-horses, arrived at

London that same night, where I found my father in good health, to whom

I imparted what I had learned of Narcissa. This indulgent parent

approved of my intention of marrying her, even without fortune,

provided her brother’s consent could not be obtained; promised to make

over to me in a few days a sufficiency to maintain her in a fashionable

manner and expressed a desire of seeing this amiable creature, who had

captivated me so much. As I had not slept the night before, and was

besides fatigued with my journey, I found myself under a necessity of

taking some repose, and went to bed accordingly: next morning, about

ten o’clock, took a chair, and according to Mrs. Sagely’s directions,

went to my charmer’s lodgings, and inquired for Miss Williams. I had

not waited in the parlour longer than a minute, when this young woman

entered, and no sooner perceived me, than she shrieked and ran

backward: but I got between her and the door, and clasping her in my

arms, brought her to herself with an embrace. “Good heaven,” cried she,

“Mr. Random, is it you indeed? My mistress will run distracted with

joy.” I told her, it was from an apprehension that my sudden appearance

might have had some bad effect on my dear Narcissa, that I had desired

to see her first, in order to concert some method of acquainting her

mistress gradually with my arrival. She approved of my conduct, and,

after having yielded to the suggestions of her own friendship, in

asking if my voyage had been successful, charged herself with that

office, and left me glowing with desire of seeing and embracing the

object of my love. In a very little time I heard some body coming down

the stairs in haste, and the voice of my angel pronounce, with an eager

tone, “O heaven! is it possible! where is he?” How were my faculties

aroused at this well known sound! and how was my soul transported when

she broke in upon my view in all the bloom of ripened beauty! Grace was

in all her steps, heaven in her eye, in every gesture dignity and love!

You, whose souls are susceptible of the most delicate impressions,

whose tender bosoms have felt the affecting vicissitudes of love, who

have suffered an absence of eighteen long months from the dear object

of your hope, and found at your return the melting fair as kind and

constant as your heart can wish, do me justice on this occasion, and

conceive what unutterable rapture possessed us both, while we flew into

each other’s arms! This was no time for speech: locked in a mutual

embrace, we continued some minutes in a silent trance of joy! When I

thus encircled all my soul held dear—while I hung over her

beauties—beheld her eyes sparkle, and every feature flush with virtuous

fondness—when I saw her enchanting bosom heave with undissembled

rapture, and knew myself the happy cause—heavens! what was my

situation! I am tempted to commit my paper to the flames, and to

renounce my pen for ever, because its most ardent and lucky expression

so poorly describes the emotions of my soul. “O adorable Narcissa!”

cried I, “O miracle of beauty, love and truth! I at last fold thee in

my arms! I at last can call thee mine! No jealous brother shall thwart

our happiness again; fortune hath at length recompensed me for all my

sufferings, and enabled me to do justice to my love.” The dear creature

smiled ineffably charmingly, and, with a look of bewitching tenderness,

said, “and shall we never part again?” “Never,” I replied, “thou

wondrous pattern of all earthly perfection! never, until death shall

divide us! By this ambrosial kiss, a thousand times more fragrant than

the breeze that sweeps the orange grove, I never more will leave thee!”

As my first transport abated, my passion grew turbulent and unruly. I

was giddy with standing on the brink of bliss, and all my virtue and

philosophy were scarce sufficient to restrain the inordinate sallies of

desire. Narcissa perceived the conflict within me, and with her usual

dignity of prudence, called off my imagination from the object in view,

and with eager expressions of interested curiosity, desired to know the

particulars of my voyage. In this I gratified her inclination, bringing

my story down to the present hour. She was infinitely surprised at the

circumstance of finding my father, which brought tears into her lovely

eyes. She was transported at hearing that approved of my flame,

discovered a longing desire of being introduced to him, congratulated

herself and me upon my good fortune, and observed, that this great and

unexpected stroke of fate seemed to have been brought about by the

immediate direction of Providence. Having entertained ourselves some

hours with the genuine effusions of our souls, I obtained her consent

to complete my happiness as soon as my father should judge it proper;

and, applying with my own hands a valuable necklace, composed of

diamonds and amethysts set alternately, which an old Spanish lady at

Paraguay had presented me with, I took my leave, promising to return in

the afternoon with Don Rodrigo. When I went home, this generous parent

inquired very affectionately about the health of my dear Narcissa, to

whom, that I might be the more agreeable, he put into my hand a deed,

by which I found myself in possession of fifteen thousand pounds,

exclusive of the profits of my own merchandise, which amounted to three

thousand more. After dinner I accompanied him to the lodgings of my

mistress, who, being dressed for the occasion, made a most dazzling

appearance. I could perceive him struck with her figure, which I really

think was the most beautiful that ever was created under the sun. He

embraced her tenderly, and told her he was proud of having a son who

had spirit to attempt, and qualifications to engage the affections of

such a fine lady. She blushed at this compliment, and, with eyes full

of the softest languishment turned upon me, said, she should have been

unworthy of Mr. Random’s attention, had she been blind to his

extraordinary merit. I made no other answer than a low bow. My father,

sighing, pronounced, “Such was once my Charlotte;” while the tear

rushed into his eye, and the tender heart of Narcissa manifested itself

in two precious drops of sympathy, which, but for his presence, I would

have kissed away. Without repeating the particulars of our

conversation, I shall only observe, that Don Rodrigo was as much

charmed with her good sense as with her appearance, and she was no less

pleased with his understanding and polite address. It was determined

that he should write to the squire, signifying his approbation of my

passion for his sister, and offering a settlement, which he should have

no reason to reject; and that, if he should refuse the proposal, we

would crown our mutual wishes without any further regard to his will.

CHAPTER LXVIII

My Father makes a present to Narcissa—the Letter is dispatched to her

Brother—I appear among my Acquaintance—Banter’s Behaviour—the Squire

refuses his Consent—my Uncle comes to Town—approves of my Choice—I am

married—we meet the Squire and his Lady at the Play—our Acquaintance is

courted

After having spent the evening to the satisfaction of all present, my

father addressed himself thus to Narcissa. “Madam, give me leave to

consider you hereafter as my daughter, in which capacity I insist upon

your accepting this first instance of my paternal duty and affection.”

With these words he put into her hand a bank note of five hundred

pounds, which she no sooner examined, than with a low courtesy she

replied. “Dear sir, though I have not the least occasion for this

supply, I have too great a veneration for you to refuse this proof of

your generosity and esteem, which I the more freely receive, because I

already look upon Mr. Random’s interest as inseparably connected with

mine.” He was extremely well pleased with her frank and ingenuous

reply, upon which we saluted, and wished her good night. The letter, at

my request, was dispatched to Sussex by an express, and in the

meantime, Don Rodrigo, to grace my nuptials, hired a ready furnished

house, and set up a very handsome equipage.

Though I passed the greatest part of the day with the darling of my

soul, I found leisure sometimes to be among my former acquaintance, who

were astonished at the magnificence of my appearance. Banter in

particular was confounded at the vicissitudes of my fortune, the causes

of which he endeavoured in vain to discover, until I thought fit to

disclose the whole secret of my last voyage, partly in consideration of

our former intimacy, and partly to prevent unfavourable conjectures,

which he and others, in all probability, would have made in regard to

my circumstances. He professed great satisfaction at this piece of

news; and I had no cause to believe him insincere, when I considered

that he would now look upon himself as acquitted of the debt he owed

me, and at the same time flatter himself with the hopes of borrowing

more. I carried him home to dinner with me, and my father liked his

conversation so much, that, upon hearing his difficulties, he desired

me to accommodate him for the present, and inquire, if he would accept

of a commission in the army, towards the purchase of which he should

willingly lend him money. Accordingly, I gave my friend an opportunity

of being alone with me, when, as I expected, he told me that he was

just on the point of being reconciled to an old rich uncle, whose heir

he was, but wanted a few pieces for immediate expense, which he desired

I would lend him and take my bond for the whole. His demand was limited

to ten guineas; and when I put twenty in his hand, he stared at me for

some moments; then, putting it into his purse, “Ay,—’tis all one—you

shall have the whole in a very short time.” When I had taken his note,

to save the expense of a bond, I expressed some surprise that a fellow

of his spirit should loiter away his time in idleness, and, asked why

he did not choose to make his fortune in the army. “What,” said he,

“throw away money upon a subaltern’s commission, and be under the

command of a parcel of scoundrels, who have raised themselves above me

by the most infamous practices. No, I love independency too well to

sacrifice my life, health, and pleasure, for such a pitiful

consideration.” Finding him adverse to this way of life, I changed the

subject, and returned to Don Rodrigo, who had just received the

following epistle from the squire:

“Sir,—Concerning a letter which I received, subscribed R. Random, this

is the answer. As for you, I know nothing of you. Your son, or

pretended son, I have seen; if he marries my sister, at his peril be

it; I do declare that he shall not have one farthing of her fortune,

which becomes my property, if she takes a husband without my consent.

Your settlement, I do believe, is all a sham, and yourself no better

than you should be; but if you had all the wealth of the Indies, your

son shall never match in our family with the consent of

“Orson Topehall”

My father was not much surprised at this polite letter, after having

heard the character of the author; and as for me, I was even pleased at

his refusal, because I had now an opportunity of showing my

disinterested love. By his permission I waited on my charmer: and

having imparted the contents of her brother’s letter, at which she wept

bitterly, in spite of all my consolation and caresses, the time of our

marriage was fixed two days. During this interval, in which my soul was

wound up to the last stretch of rapturous expectation, Narcissa

endeavoured to reconcile some of her relations in town to her marriage

with me; but, finding them all deaf to her remonstrances, either out of

envy or prejudice, she told me with the most enchanting sweetness,

while the tears bedewed her lovely cheeks, “Sure the world will no

longer question your generosity when you take a poor forlorn beggar to

your arms?” Affected with her sorrow, I pressed the fair mourner to my

breast, and swore that she was more dear and welcome on that account,

because she had sacrificed her friends and fortune to her love for me.

My uncle, for whose character she had a great veneration, being by this

time come to town, I introduced him to my bride; and, although he was

not very much subject to refined sensations, he was struck dumb with

admiration at her beauty. After having kissed and gazed at her for some

time, he turned to me, saying. “Odds bobs, Rory! a notable prize

indeed, finely built and gloriously rigged, i’faith! If she an’t well

manned when you take the command of her, sirrah, you deserve to go to

sea in a cockle shell. No offence, I hope, niece! you must not mind

what I say, being (as the saying is) a plain seafaring man, though

mayhap I have as much regard for you as another.” She received him with

great civility, told him she had longed a great while to see a person

to whom she was so much indebted for his generosity to Mr. Random; that

she looked upon him as her uncle, by which name she begged leave to

call him for the future; and that she was very sure he could say

nothing that would give her the least offence. The honest captain was

transported at her courteous behaviour, and insisted upon giving her

away at the ceremony, swearing that he loved her as well as if she was

his own child, and that he would give two thousand guineas to the first

fruit of our love, as soon as it would squeak. Everything being settled

for the solemnisation of our nuptials, which were to be performed

privately at my father’s house, the auspicious hour arrived, when Don

Rodrigo and my uncle went in the coach to fetch the bride and Miss

Williams: leaving me with a parson, Banter, and Strap, neither of whom

had as yet seen my charming mistress. My faithful valet, who was on the

rack of impatience to behold a lady of whom he had heard so much, no

sooner understood that the coach was returned, than he placed himself

at a window, to have a peep at her as she alighted; and, when he saw

her, clapped his hands together, turned up the white of his eyes, and,

with his mouth wide open, remained in a sort of ecstacy, which broke

out into “O Dea certe! qualis in Eurotae ripis, aut per iuga Cynthi

exercet Diana choros?” The doctor and Banter were surprised to hear my

man speak Latin; but when my father led Narcissa into the room, the

object of their admiration was soon changed, as appeared in the

countenances of both. Indeed, they must have been the most insensible

of all beings, could they have beheld without emotion the divine

creature that approached! She was dressed in a sack of white satin,

embroidered on the breast with gold, the crown of her head was covered

with a small French cap, from whence descended her beautiful hair in

ringlets that waved upon her snowy neck, which dignified the necklace I

had given her; her looks glowed with modesty and love; and her bosom,

through the veil of gauze that shaded it, afforded a prospect of

Elysium! I received this inestimable gift of Providence as became me;

and in a little time the clergyman did his office, my uncle, at his own

earnest request, acting the part of a father to my dear Narcissa, who

trembled very much, and had scarce spirits sufficient to support her

under this great change of situation. Soon as she was mine by the laws

of heaven and earth, I printed a burning kiss upon her lips; my father

embraced her tenderly, my uncle hugged her with great affection, and I

presented her to my friend Banter, who saluted her in a very polite

manner; Miss Williams hung round her neck, and went plentifully; while

Strap fell upon his knees, and begged to kiss his lady’s hand, which

she presented with great affability. I shall not pretend to describe my

own feelings at this juncture; let it suffice to say that having supped

and entertained ourselves till ten o’clock, I cautioned my Narcissa

against exposing her health by sitting up too late, and she was

prevailed upon to withdraw with her maid to an apartment destined for

us. When she left the room, her face overspread with a blush that set

all my blood in a state of fermentation, and made every pulse beat with

tenfold vigour! She was so cruel as to let me remain in this condition

a full half-hour: when, no longer able to restrain my impatience, I

broke from the company, burst into her chamber, pushed out her

confidante, and locked the door, and found her—O heaven and earth!—a

feast a thousand times more delicious than my most sanguine hopes

presaged! But, let me not profane the chaste mysteries of Hymen. I was

the happiest of men!

In the morning I was awaked by three or four drums, which Banter had

placed under the window; upon which I withdrew the curtain, and enjoyed

the unspeakable satisfaction of contemplating those angelic charms

which were now in my possession! Beauty! which, whether sleeping or

awake, shot forth peculiar graces! The light darting upon my Narcissa’s

eyes, she awoke also, and recollecting her situation, hid her blushes

in my bosom. I was distracted with joy! I could not believe the

evidence of my senses, and looked upon all that had happened as the

fictions of a dream! In the meantime my uncle knocked at the door, and

bade me turn out, for I had had a long spell. I rose accordingly, and

sent Miss Williams to her mistress, myself receiving the congratulation

of Captain Bowling, who rallied me in his sea phrase with great

success. In less than an hour, Don Rodrigo led my wife into breakfast,

where she received the compliments of the company on her looks, which,

they said, if possible, were improved by matrimony. As her delicate

ears were offended with none of those indecent ambiguities which are

too often spoken on such occasions, she behaved with dignity,

unaffected modesty, and ease; and, as a testimony of my affection and

esteem, I presented her, in presence of them all, with a deed, by which

I settled the whole fortune I was possessed of on her and her heirs for

ever. She accepted it with a glance of most tender acknowledgment,

observed, that she could not be surprised at anything of this kind I

should do, and desired my father to take the trouble of keeping it,

saying, “Next to my own Mr. Random, you are the person in whom I ought

to have the greatest confidence.” Charmed with her prudent and

ingenuous manner of proceeding, he took the paper, and assured her that

it should not lose its value while in his custody.

As we had not many visits to give and receive, the little time we

stayed in town was spent in going to public diversions, where I have

the vanity to think Narcissa was seldom eclipsed. One night, in

particular, we sent our footman to keep one of the stage boxes, which

we no sooner entered, than we perceived in the opposite box the squire

and his lady, who seemed not a little surprised at seeing us. I was

pleased at this opportunity of confronting them; the more, because

Melinda was robbed of all her admirers by my wife, who happened that

night to outshine her sister both in beauty and dress. She was piqued

at Narcissa’s victory, tossed her head a thousand different ways,

flirted her fan, looked at us with disdain, then whispered to her

husband, and broke out into an affected giggle; but all her arts proved

ineffectual, either to discompose Mrs. Random, or to conceal her own

mortification, which at length forced her away long before the play was

done. The news of our marriage being spread, with many circumstances to

our disadvantage, by the industry of this malignant creature, a certain

set of persons fond of scandal began to inquire into the particulars of

my fortune, which they no sooner understood to be independent, than the

tables were turned, and our acquaintance was courted as much as it had

been despised before: but she had too much dignity of pride to

encourage this change of conduct, especially in her relations, whom she

could never be prevailed upon to see, after the malicious reports they

had raised to her prejudice.

CHAPTER LXIX

My father intends to revisit the Place of his Nativity—we propose to

accompany him—my Uncle renews his will in my favour, determining to go

to sea again—we set out for Scotland—arrive at Edinburgh—purchase our

paternal Estate—proceed to it—halt at the Town where I was

educated—take up my bond to Crab—the Behaviour of Potion and his Wife,

and one of our Female Cousins—our Reception at the Estate—Strap marries

Miss Williams, and is settled by my Father to his own satisfaction—I am

more and more happy.

My father intending to revisit his native country, and pay the tribute

of a few tears at my mother’s grave, Narcissa and I resolved to

accompany him in the execution of his pious office, and accordingly

prepared for the journey, in which, however, my uncle would not engage,

being resolved to try his fortune once more at sea. In the meantime he

renewed his will in favour of my wife and me, and deposited it in the

hands of his brother-in-law: while I (that I might not be wanting to my

own interest) summoned the squire to produce his father’s will at

Doctors’ Commons, and employed a proctor to manage the affair in my

absence.

Everything being thus settled, we took leave of all our friends in

London, and set out for Scotland, Don Rodrigo, Narcissa, Miss Williams,

and I, in the coach, and Strap, with two men in livery, on horseback;

as we made easy stages, my charmer held it out very well, till we

arrived at Edinburgh, where we proposed to rest ourselves some weeks.

Here Don Rodrigo having intelligence that the foxhunter had spoilt his

estate, which was to be exposed to sale by public auction, he

determined to make a purchase of the spot where he was born, and

actually bought all the land that belonged to his father.

In a few days after this bargain was made, we left Edinburgh, in order

to go and take possession; and by the way halted one night in that town

where I was educated. Upon inquiry, I found that Mr. Crab was dead;

whereupon I sent for his executor, paid the sum I owed with interest,

and took up my bond. Mr. Potion and his wife, hearing of my arrival,

had the assurance to come to the inn where we lodged, and send up their

names, with the desire of being permitted to pay their respects to my

father and me: but their sordid behaviour towards me, when I was an

orphan, had made too deep an impression on my mind to be effaced by

this mean mercenary piece of condescension: I therefore rejected their

message with disdain, and bade Strap tell them, that my father and I

desired to have no communication with such low-minded wretches as they

were.

They had not been gone half-an-hour, when a woman, without any

ceremony, opened the door of the room where we sat, and, making towards

my father, accosted him with, “Uncle, your servant—I am glad to see

you.” This was no other than one of my female cousins, mentioned in the

first part of my memoirs, to whom Don Rodrigo replied, “Pray, who are

you, madam?” “Oh!” cried she, “my cousin Rory there knows me very well.

Don’t you remember me, Rory?” “Yes, madam,” said I; “for my own part, I

shall never forget you. Sir, this is one of the young ladies, who (as I

have formerly told you) treated me so humanely in my childhood!” When I

pronounced these words, my father’s resentment glowed in his visage,

and he ordered her to be gone, with such a commanding aspect, that she

retired in a fright, muttering curses as she went downstairs. We

afterwards learned that she was married to an ensign, who had already

spent all her fortune; and that her sister had borne a child to her

mother’s footman, who is now her husband, and keeps a petty alehouse in

the country.

The fame of our flourishing condition having arrived at this place

before us, we got notice that the magistrates intended next day to

compliment us with the freedom of their town; upon which my father,

considering their complaisance in the right point of view, ordered the

horses to the coach early in the morning.

We proceeded to our estate, which lay about twenty miles from this

place; and, when we came within half-a-league of the house, were met by

a prodigious number of poor tenants, men, women, and children, who

testified their joy by loud acclamations, and accompanied our coach to

the gate. As there is no part of the world in which the peasants are

more attached to their lords than in Scotland, we were almost devoured

by their affections. My father had always been their favourite, and now

that he appeared their master, after having been thought dead so long,

their joy broke out into a thousand extravagances. When we entered the

court yard, we were surrounded by a vast number, who crowded together

so closely to see us that several were in danger of being squeezed to

death; those who were near Don Rodrigo fell upon their knees, and

kissed his hand, or the hem of his garment, praying aloud for long life

and prosperity to him; others approached Narcissa and me in the same

manner; while the rest clapped their hands at a distance, and invoked

heaven to shower its choicest blessings on our heads! In short, the

whole scene, though rude, was so affecting, that the gentle partner of

my heart wept over it, and my father himself could not refrain from

dropping a tear.

Having welcomed his daughter and me to his house, he ordered some

bullocks to be killed, and some hogsheads of ale to be brought from the

neighbouring village, to regale these honest people, who had not

enjoyed such a holiday for many years before.

Next day we were visited by the gentlemen in the neighbourhood, most of

them our relations, one of whom brought along my cousin, the foxhunter,

who had stayed at his house since he was obliged to leave his own! My

father was generous enough to receive him kindly, and even promised to

purchase for him a commission in the army, for which he expressed great

thankfulness and joy.

My charming Narcissa was universally admired and loved for her beauty,

affability, and good sense; and so well pleased with the situation of

the place, and the company round, that she has not as yet discovered

the least desire of changing her habitation.

We had not been many days settled, when I prevailed upon my father to

pay a visit to the village where I had been at school. Here we were

received by the principal inhabitants, who entertained us in the

church, where Mr. Syntax the schoolmaster (my tyrant being dead)

pronounced a Latin oration in honour of our family. And none exerted

themselves more than Strap’s father and relations, who looked upon the

honest valet as the first gentleman of their race, and honoured his

benefactors accordingly. Having received the homage of this place, we

retired, leaving forty pounds for the benefit of the poor of the

parish; and that very night, Strap being a little elevated with the

regard that had been shown to him, and to me on his account, ventured

to tell me, that he had a sneaking kindness for Miss Williams, and

that, if his lady and I would use our interest in his behalf, he did

not doubt that she would listen to his addresses. Surprised at this

proposal, I asked if he knew the story of that unfortunate young

gentlewoman; upon which he replied, “Yes, yes, I know what you mean—she

has been unhappy, I grant you—but what of that? I am convinced of her

reformation; or else you and my good lady would not treat her with such

respect. As for the censure of the world, I value it not a fig’s

end—besides, the world knows nothing of the matter.” I commended his

philosophy, and interested Narcissa in his cause; who interceded so

effectually, that in a little time Miss Williams yielded her consent,

and they were married at the approbation of Don Rodrigo, who gave him

five hundred pounds to stock a farm, and made him overseer of his

estate. My generous bedfellow gave her maid the same sum; so that they

live in great peace and plenty within half-a-mile of us, and daily put

up prayers for our preservation.

If there be such a thing as true happiness on earth, I enjoy it. The

impetuous transports of my passion are now settled and mellowed into

endearing fondness and tranquillity of love, rooted by that intimate

connection and interchange of hearts which nought but virtuous wedlock

can produce. Fortune seems determined to make ample amends for her

former cruelty, for my proctor writes that, notwithstanding the clause

in my father-in-law’s will, on which the squire founds his claim, I

shall certainly recover my wife’s fortune, in consequence of a codicil

annexed, which explains that clause, and limits her restriction to the

age of nineteen, after which she was at her own disposal. I would have

set out for London immediately after receiving this piece of

intelligence, but my dear angel has been qualmish of late, and begins

to grow remarkably round in the waist; so that I cannot leave her in

such an interesting situation, which I hope will produce something to

crown my felicity.

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