

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### IN WHICH IS CONTINUED THE NOVEL OF "THE ILL-ADVISED CURIOSITY"

"It is commonly said that an army looks ill without its general and a castle without its castellan, and I say that a young married woman looks still worse without her husband unless there are very good reasons for it. I find myself so ill at ease without you, and so incapable of enduring this separation, that unless you return quickly I shall have to go for relief to my parents' house, even if I leave yours without a protector; for the one you left me, if indeed he deserved that title, has, I think, more regard to his own pleasure than to what concerns you: as you are possessed of discernment I need say no more to you, nor indeed is it fitting I should say more."

Anselmo received this letter, and from it he gathered that Lothario had already begun his task and that Camilla must have replied to him as he would have wished; and delighted beyond measure at such intelligence he sent word to her not to leave his house on any account, as he would very shortly return. Camilla was astonished at Anselmo's reply, which placed her in greater perplexity than before, for she neither dared to remain in her own house, nor yet to go to her parents'; for in remaining her virtue was imperilled, and in going she was opposing her husband's commands. Finally she decided upon what was the worse course for her, to remain, resolving not to fly from the presence of Lothario, that she might not give food for gossip to her servants; and she now began to regret having

written as she had to her husband, fearing he might imagine that Lothario had perceived in her some lightness which had impelled him to lay aside the respect he owed her; but confident of her rectitude she put her trust in God and in her own virtuous intentions, with which she hoped to resist in silence all the solicitations of Lothario, without saying anything to her husband so as not to involve him in any quarrel or trouble; and she even began to consider how to excuse Lothario to Anselmo when he should ask her what it was that induced her to write that letter. With these resolutions, more honourable than judicious or effectual, she remained the next day listening to Lothario, who pressed his suit so strenuously that Camilla's firmness began to waver, and her virtue had enough to do to come to the rescue of her eyes and keep them from showing signs of a certain tender compassion which the tears and appeals of Lothario had awakened in her bosom. Lothario observed all this, and it inflamed him all the more. In short he felt that while Anselmo's absence afforded time and opportunity he must press the siege of the fortress, and so he assailed her self-esteem with praises of her beauty, for there is nothing that more quickly reduces and levels the castle towers of fair women's vanity than vanity itself upon the tongue of flattery. In fact with the utmost assiduity he undermined the rock of her purity with such engines that had Camilla been of brass she must have fallen. He wept, he entreated, he promised, he flattered, he importuned, he pretended with so much feeling and apparent sincerity, that he overthrew the virtuous resolves of Camilla and won the triumph he least expected and most longed for. Camilla yielded, Camilla fell; but what wonder if the friendship of Lothario could not stand firm? A clear proof to us that the passion of love is to be conquered only by flying from it, and that no one should

engage in a struggle with an enemy so mighty; for divine strength is needed to overcome his human power. Leonela alone knew of her mistress's weakness, for the two false friends and new lovers were unable to conceal it. Lothario did not care to tell Camilla the object Anselmo had in view, nor that he had afforded him the opportunity of attaining such a result, lest she should undervalue his love and think that it was by chance and without intending it and not of his own accord that he had made love to her.

A few days later Anselmo returned to his house and did not perceive what it had lost, that which he so lightly treated and so highly prized. He went at once to see Lothario, and found him at home; they embraced each other, and Anselmo asked for the tidings of his life or his death.

"The tidings I have to give thee, Anselmo my friend," said Lothario, "are that thou dost possess a wife that is worthy to be the pattern and crown of all good wives. The words that I have addressed to her were borne away on the wind, my promises have been despised, my presents have been refused, such feigned tears as I shed have been turned into open ridicule. In short, as Camilla is the essence of all beauty, so is she the treasure-house where purity dwells, and gentleness and modesty abide with all the virtues that can confer praise, honour, and happiness upon a woman. Take back thy money, my friend; here it is, and I have had no need to touch it, for the chastity of Camilla yields not to things so base as gifts or promises. Be content, Anselmo, and refrain from making further proof; and as thou hast passed dryshod through the sea of those doubts and suspicions that are and may be entertained of women, seek not to

plunge again into the deep ocean of new embarrassments, or with another pilot make trial of the goodness and strength of the bark that Heaven has granted thee for thy passage across the sea of this world; but reckon thyself now safe in port, moor thyself with the anchor of sound reflection, and rest in peace until thou art called upon to pay that debt which no nobility on earth can escape paying."

Anselmo was completely satisfied by the words of Lothario, and believed them as fully as if they had been spoken by an oracle; nevertheless he begged of him not to relinquish the undertaking, were it but for the sake of curiosity and amusement; though thenceforward he need not make use of the same earnest endeavours as before; all he wished him to do was to write some verses to her, praising her under the name of Chloris, for he himself would give her to understand that he was in love with a lady to whom he had given that name to enable him to sing her praises with the decorum due to her modesty; and if Lothario were unwilling to take the trouble of writing the verses he would compose them himself.

"That will not be necessary," said Lothario, "for the muses are not such enemies of mine but that they visit me now and then in the course of the year. Do thou tell Camilla what thou hast proposed about a pretended amour of mine; as for the verses will make them, and if not as good as the subject deserves, they shall be at least the best I can produce." An agreement to this effect was made between the friends, the ill-advised one and the treacherous, and Anselmo returning to his house asked Camilla the question she already wondered he had not asked before--what it was that had caused her to write the letter she had sent him. Camilla replied

that it had seemed to her that Lothario looked at her somewhat more freely than when he had been at home; but that now she was undeceived and believed it to have been only her own imagination, for Lothario now avoided seeing her, or being alone with her. Anselmo told her she might be quite easy on the score of that suspicion, for he knew that Lothario was in love with a damsel of rank in the city whom he celebrated under the name of Chloris, and that even if he were not, his fidelity and their great friendship left no room for fear. Had not Camilla, however, been informed beforehand by Lothario that this love for Chloris was a pretence, and that he himself had told Anselmo of it in order to be able sometimes to give utterance to the praises of Camilla herself, no doubt she would have fallen into the despairing toils of jealousy; but being forewarned she received the startling news without uneasiness.

The next day as the three were at table Anselmo asked Lothario to recite something of what he had composed for his mistress Chloris; for as Camilla did not know her, he might safely say what he liked.

"Even did she know her," returned Lothario, "I would hide nothing, for when a lover praises his lady's beauty, and charges her with cruelty, he casts no imputation upon her fair name; at any rate, all I can say is that yesterday I made a sonnet on the ingratitude of this Chloris, which goes thus:

#### SONNET

At midnight, in the silence, when the eyes

Of happier mortals balmy slumbers close,  
The weary tale of my unnumbered woes  
To Chloris and to Heaven is wont to rise.  
And when the light of day returning dyes  
The portals of the east with tints of rose,  
With undiminished force my sorrow flows  
In broken accents and in burning sighs.  
And when the sun ascends his star-girt throne,  
And on the earth pours down his midday beams,  
Noon but renews my wailing and my tears;  
And with the night again goes up my moan.  
Yet ever in my agony it seems  
To me that neither Heaven nor Chloris hears."

The sonnet pleased Camilla, and still more Anselmo, for he praised it and said the lady was excessively cruel who made no return for sincerity so manifest. On which Camilla said, "Then all that love-smitten poets say is true?"

"As poets they do not tell the truth," replied Lothario; "but as lovers they are not more defective in expression than they are truthful."

"There is no doubt of that," observed Anselmo, anxious to support and uphold Lothario's ideas with Camilla, who was as regardless of his design as she was deep in love with Lothario; and so taking delight in anything that was his, and knowing that his thoughts and writings had her for their object, and that she herself was the real Chloris, she asked him to

repeat some other sonnet or verses if he recollected any.

"I do," replied Lothario, "but I do not think it as good as the first one, or, more correctly speaking, less bad; but you can easily judge, for it is this.

#### SONNET

I know that I am doomed; death is to me  
As certain as that thou, ungrateful fair,  
Dead at thy feet shouldst see me lying, ere  
My heart repented of its love for thee.  
If buried in oblivion I should be,  
Bereft of life, fame, favour, even there  
It would be found that I thy image bear  
Deep graven in my breast for all to see.  
This like some holy relic do I prize  
To save me from the fate my truth entails,  
Truth that to thy hard heart its vigour owes.  
Alas for him that under lowering skies,  
In peril o'er a trackless ocean sails,  
Where neither friendly port nor pole-star shows."

Anselmo praised this second sonnet too, as he had praised the first; and so he went on adding link after link to the chain with which he was binding himself and making his dishonour secure; for when Lothario was doing most to dishonour him he told him he was most honoured; and thus

each step that Camilla descended towards the depths of her abasement, she mounted, in his opinion, towards the summit of virtue and fair fame.

It so happened that finding herself on one occasion alone with her maid, Camilla said to her, "I am ashamed to think, my dear Leonela, how lightly I have valued myself that I did not compel Lothario to purchase by at least some expenditure of time that full possession of me that I so quickly yielded him of my own free will. I fear that he will think ill of my pliancy or lightness, not considering the irresistible influence he brought to bear upon me."

"Let not that trouble you, my lady," said Leonela, "for it does not take away the value of the thing given or make it the less precious to give it quickly if it be really valuable and worthy of being prized; nay, they are wont to say that he who gives quickly gives twice."

"They say also," said Camilla, "that what costs little is valued less."

"That saying does not hold good in your case," replied Leonela, "for love, as I have heard say, sometimes flies and sometimes walks; with this one it runs, with that it moves slowly; some it cools, others it burns; some it wounds, others it slays; it begins the course of its desires, and at the same moment completes and ends it; in the morning it will lay siege to a fortress and by night will have taken it, for there is no power that can resist it; so what are you in dread of, what do you fear, when the same must have befallen Lothario, love having chosen the absence of my lord as the instrument for subduing you? and it was absolutely



necessary to complete then what love had resolved upon, without affording the time to let Anselmo return and by his presence compel the work to be left unfinished; for love has no better agent for carrying out his designs than opportunity; and of opportunity he avails himself in all his feats, especially at the outset. All this I know well myself, more by experience than by hearsay, and some day, senora, I will enlighten you on the subject, for I am of your flesh and blood too. Moreover, lady Camilla, you did not surrender yourself or yield so quickly but that first you saw Lothario's whole soul in his eyes, in his sighs, in his words, his promises and his gifts, and by it and his good qualities perceived how worthy he was of your love. This, then, being the case, let not these scrupulous and prudish ideas trouble your imagination, but be assured that Lothario prizes you as you do him, and rest content and satisfied that as you are caught in the noose of love it is one of worth and merit that has taken you, and one that has not only the four S's that they say true lovers ought to have, but a complete alphabet; only listen to me and you will see how I can repeat it by rote. He is to my eyes and thinking, Amiable, Brave, Courteous, Distinguished, Elegant, Fond, Gay, Honourable, Illustrious, Loyal, Manly, Noble, Open, Polite, Quickwitted, Rich, and the S's according to the saying, and then Tender, Veracious: X does not suit him, for it is a rough letter; Y has been given already; and Z Zealous for your honour."

Camilla laughed at her maid's alphabet, and perceived her to be more experienced in love affairs than she said, which she admitted, confessing to Camilla that she had love passages with a young man of good birth of the same city. Camilla was uneasy at this, dreading lest it might prove

the means of endangering her honour, and asked whether her intrigue had gone beyond words, and she with little shame and much effrontery said it had; for certain it is that ladies' imprudences make servants shameless, who, when they see their mistresses make a false step, think nothing of going astray themselves, or of its being known. All that Camilla could do was to entreat Leonela to say nothing about her doings to him whom she called her lover, and to conduct her own affairs secretly lest they should come to the knowledge of Anselmo or of Lothario. Leonela said she would, but kept her word in such a way that she confirmed Camilla's apprehension of losing her reputation through her means; for this abandoned and bold Leonela, as soon as she perceived that her mistress's demeanour was not what it was wont to be, had the audacity to introduce her lover into the house, confident that even if her mistress saw him she would not dare to expose him; for the sins of mistresses entail this mischief among others; they make themselves the slaves of their own servants, and are obliged to hide their laxities and depravities; as was the case with Camilla, who though she perceived, not once but many times, that Leonela was with her lover in some room of the house, not only did not dare to chide her, but afforded her opportunities for concealing him and removed all difficulties, lest he should be seen by her husband. She was unable, however, to prevent him from being seen on one occasion, as he sallied forth at daybreak, by Lothario, who, not knowing who he was, at first took him for a spectre; but, as soon as he saw him hasten away, muffling his face with his cloak and concealing himself carefully and cautiously, he rejected this foolish idea, and adopted another, which would have been the ruin of all had not Camilla found a remedy. It did not occur to Lothario that this man he had seen issuing at such an

untimely hour from Anselmo's house could have entered it on Leonela's account, nor did he even remember there was such a person as Leonela; all he thought was that as Camilla had been light and yielding with him, so she had been with another; for this further penalty the erring woman's sin brings with it, that her honour is distrusted even by him to whose overtures and persuasions she has yielded; and he believes her to have surrendered more easily to others, and gives implicit credence to every suspicion that comes into his mind. All Lothario's good sense seems to have failed him at this juncture; all his prudent maxims escaped his memory; for without once reflecting rationally, and without more ado, in his impatience and in the blindness of the jealous rage that gnawed his heart, and dying to revenge himself upon Camilla, who had done him no wrong, before Anselmo had risen he hastened to him and said to him, "Know, Anselmo, that for several days past I have been struggling with myself, striving to withhold from thee what it is no longer possible or right that I should conceal from thee. Know that Camilla's fortress has surrendered and is ready to submit to my will; and if I have been slow to reveal this fact to thee, it was in order to see if it were some light caprice of hers, or if she sought to try me and ascertain if the love I began to make to her with thy permission was made with a serious intention. I thought, too, that she, if she were what she ought to be, and what we both believed her, would have ere this given thee information of my addresses; but seeing that she delays, I believe the truth of the promise she has given me that the next time thou art absent from the house she will grant me an interview in the closet where thy jewels are kept (and it was true that Camilla used to meet him there); but I do not wish thee to rush precipitately to take vengeance, for the sin is as yet

only committed in intention, and Camilla's may change perhaps between this and the appointed time, and repentance spring up in its place. As hitherto thou hast always followed my advice wholly or in part, follow and observe this that I will give thee now, so that, without mistake, and with mature deliberation, thou mayest satisfy thyself as to what may seem the best course; pretend to absent thyself for two or three days as thou hast been wont to do on other occasions, and contrive to hide thyself in the closet; for the tapestries and other things there afford great facilities for thy concealment, and then thou wilt see with thine own eyes and I with mine what Camilla's purpose may be. And if it be a guilty one, which may be feared rather than expected, with silence, prudence, and discretion thou canst thyself become the instrument of punishment for the wrong done thee."

Anselmo was amazed, overwhelmed, and astounded at the words of Lothario, which came upon him at a time when he least expected to hear them, for he now looked upon Camilla as having triumphed over the pretended attacks of Lothario, and was beginning to enjoy the glory of her victory. He remained silent for a considerable time, looking on the ground with fixed gaze, and at length said, "Thou hast behaved, Lothario, as I expected of thy friendship: I will follow thy advice in everything; do as thou wilt, and keep this secret as thou seest it should be kept in circumstances so unlooked for."

Lothario gave him his word, but after leaving him he repented altogether of what he had said to him, perceiving how foolishly he had acted, as he might have revenged himself upon Camilla in some less cruel and degrading

way. He cursed his want of sense, condemned his hasty resolution, and knew not what course to take to undo the mischief or find some ready escape from it. At last he decided upon revealing all to Camilla, and, as there was no want of opportunity for doing so, he found her alone the same day; but she, as soon as she had the chance of speaking to him, said, "Lothario my friend, I must tell thee I have a sorrow in my heart which fills it so that it seems ready to burst; and it will be a wonder if it does not; for the audacity of Leonela has now reached such a pitch that every night she conceals a gallant of hers in this house and remains with him till morning, at the expense of my reputation; inasmuch as it is open to anyone to question it who may see him quitting my house at such unseasonable hours; but what distresses me is that I cannot punish or chide her, for her privity to our intrigue bridles my mouth and keeps me silent about hers, while I am dreading that some catastrophe will come of it."

As Camilla said this Lothario at first imagined it was some device to delude him into the idea that the man he had seen going out was Leonela's lover and not hers; but when he saw how she wept and suffered, and begged him to help her, he became convinced of the truth, and the conviction completed his confusion and remorse; however, he told Camilla not to distress herself, as he would take measures to put a stop to the insolence of Leonela. At the same time he told her what, driven by the fierce rage of jealousy, he had said to Anselmo, and how he had arranged to hide himself in the closet that he might there see plainly how little she preserved her fidelity to him; and he entreated her pardon for this madness, and her advice as to how to repair it, and escape safely from

the intricate labyrinth in which his imprudence had involved him. Camilla was struck with alarm at hearing what Lothario said, and with much anger, and great good sense, she reproved him and rebuked his base design and the foolish and mischievous resolution he had made; but as woman has by nature a nimbler wit than man for good and for evil, though it is apt to fail when she sets herself deliberately to reason, Camilla on the spur of the moment thought of a way to remedy what was to all appearance irremediable, and told Lothario to contrive that the next day Anselmo should conceal himself in the place he mentioned, for she hoped from his concealment to obtain the means of their enjoying themselves for the future without any apprehension; and without revealing her purpose to him entirely she charged him to be careful, as soon as Anselmo was concealed, to come to her when Leonela should call him, and to all she said to him to answer as he would have answered had he not known that Anselmo was listening. Lothario pressed her to explain her intention fully, so that he might with more certainty and precaution take care to do what he saw to be needful.

"I tell you," said Camilla, "there is nothing to take care of except to answer me what I shall ask you;" for she did not wish to explain to him beforehand what she meant to do, fearing lest he should be unwilling to follow out an idea which seemed to her such a good one, and should try or devise some other less practicable plan.

Lothario then retired, and the next day Anselmo, under pretence of going to his friend's country house, took his departure, and then returned to conceal himself, which he was able to do easily, as Camilla and Leonela

took care to give him the opportunity; and so he placed himself in hiding in the state of agitation that it may be imagined he would feel who expected to see the vitals of his honour laid bare before his eyes, and found himself on the point of losing the supreme blessing he thought he possessed in his beloved Camilla. Having made sure of Anselmo's being in his hiding-place, Camilla and Leonela entered the closet, and the instant she set foot within it Camilla said, with a deep sigh, "Ah! dear Leonela, would it not be better, before I do what I am unwilling you should know lest you should seek to prevent it, that you should take Anselmo's dagger that I have asked of you and with it pierce this vile heart of mine? But no; there is no reason why I should suffer the punishment of another's fault. I will first know what it is that the bold licentious eyes of Lothario have seen in me that could have encouraged him to reveal to me a design so base as that which he has disclosed regardless of his friend and of my honour. Go to the window, Leonela, and call him, for no doubt he is in the street waiting to carry out his vile project; but mine, cruel it may be, but honourable, shall be carried out first."

"Ah, senora," said the crafty Leonela, who knew her part, "what is it you want to do with this dagger? Can it be that you mean to take your own life, or Lothario's? for whichever you mean to do, it will lead to the loss of your reputation and good name. It is better to dissemble your wrong and not give this wicked man the chance of entering the house now and finding us alone; consider, senora, we are weak women and he is a man, and determined, and as he comes with such a base purpose, blind and urged by passion, perhaps before you can put yours into execution he may do what will be worse for you than taking your life. Ill betide my

master, Anselmo, for giving such authority in his house to this shameless fellow! And supposing you kill him, senora, as I suspect you mean to do, what shall we do with him when he is dead?"

"What, my friend?" replied Camilla, "we shall leave him for Anselmo to bury him; for in reason it will be to him a light labour to hide his own infamy under ground. Summon him, make haste, for all the time I delay in taking vengeance for my wrong seems to me an offence against the loyalty I owe my husband."

Anselmo was listening to all this, and every word that Camilla uttered made him change his mind; but when he heard that it was resolved to kill Lothario his first impulse was to come out and show himself to avert such a disaster; but in his anxiety to see the issue of a resolution so bold and virtuous he restrained himself, intending to come forth in time to prevent the deed. At this moment Camilla, throwing herself upon a bed that was close by, swooned away, and Leonela began to weep bitterly, exclaiming, "Woe is me! that I should be fated to have dying here in my arms the flower of virtue upon earth, the crown of true wives, the pattern of chastity!" with more to the same effect, so that anyone who heard her would have taken her for the most tender-hearted and faithful handmaid in the world, and her mistress for another persecuted Penelope.

Camilla was not long in recovering from her fainting fit and on coming to herself she said, "Why do you not go, Leonela, to call hither that friend, the falsest to his friend the sun ever shone upon or night concealed? Away, run, haste, speed! lest the fire of my wrath burn itself



out with delay, and the righteous vengeance that I hope for melt away in menaces and maledictions."

"I am just going to call him, senora," said Leonela; "but you must first give me that dagger, lest while I am gone you should by means of it give cause to all who love you to weep all their lives."

"Go in peace, dear Leonela, I will not do so," said Camilla, "for rash and foolish as I may be, to your mind, in defending my honour, I am not going to be so much so as that Lucretia who they say killed herself without having done anything wrong, and without having first killed him on whom the guilt of her misfortune lay. I shall die, if I am to die; but it must be after full vengeance upon him who has brought me here to weep over audacity that no fault of mine gave birth to."

Leonela required much pressing before she would go to summon Lothario, but at last she went, and while awaiting her return Camilla continued, as if speaking to herself, "Good God! would it not have been more prudent to have repulsed Lothario, as I have done many a time before, than to allow him, as I am now doing, to think me unchaste and vile, even for the short time I must wait until I undeceive him? No doubt it would have been better; but I should not be avenged, nor the honour of my husband vindicated, should he find so clear and easy an escape from the strait into which his depravity has led him. Let the traitor pay with his life for the temerity of his wanton wishes, and let the world know (if haply it shall ever come to know) that Camilla not only preserved her allegiance to her husband, but avenged him of the man who dared to wrong

him. Still, I think it might be better to disclose this to Anselmo. But then I have called his attention to it in the letter I wrote to him in the country, and, if he did nothing to prevent the mischief I there pointed out to him, I suppose it was that from pure goodness of heart and trustfulness he would not and could not believe that any thought against his honour could harbour in the breast of so staunch a friend; nor indeed did I myself believe it for many days, nor should I have ever believed it if his insolence had not gone so far as to make it manifest by open presents, lavish promises, and ceaseless tears. But why do I argue thus? Does a bold determination stand in need of arguments? Surely not. Then traitors avaunt! Vengeance to my aid! Let the false one come, approach, advance, die, yield up his life, and then befall what may. Pure I came to him whom Heaven bestowed upon me, pure I shall leave him; and at the worst bathed in my own chaste blood and in the foul blood of the falsest friend that friendship ever saw in the world;" and as she uttered these words she paced the room holding the unsheathed dagger, with such irregular and disordered steps, and such gestures that one would have supposed her to have lost her senses, and taken her for some violent desperado instead of a delicate woman.

Anselmo, hidden behind some tapestries where he had concealed himself, beheld and was amazed at all, and already felt that what he had seen and heard was a sufficient answer to even greater suspicions; and he would have been now well pleased if the proof afforded by Lothario's coming were dispensed with, as he feared some sudden mishap; but as he was on the point of showing himself and coming forth to embrace and undeceive his wife he paused as he saw Leonela returning, leading Lothario. Camilla

when she saw him, drawing a long line in front of her on the floor with the dagger, said to him, "Lothario, pay attention to what I say to thee: if by any chance thou darest to cross this line thou seest, or even approach it, the instant I see thee attempt it that same instant will I pierce my bosom with this dagger that I hold in my hand; and before thou answerest me a word desire thee to listen to a few from me, and afterwards thou shalt reply as may please thee. First, I desire thee to tell me, Lothario, if thou knowest my husband Anselmo, and in what light thou regardest him; and secondly I desire to know if thou knowest me too. Answer me this, without embarrassment or reflecting deeply what thou wilt answer, for they are no riddles I put to thee."

Lothario was not so dull but that from the first moment when Camilla directed him to make Anselmo hide himself he understood what she intended to do, and therefore he fell in with her idea so readily and promptly that between them they made the imposture look more true than truth; so he answered her thus: "I did not think, fair Camilla, that thou wert calling me to ask questions so remote from the object with which I come; but if it is to defer the promised reward thou art doing so, thou mightst have put it off still longer, for the longing for happiness gives the more distress the nearer comes the hope of gaining it; but lest thou shouldst say that I do not answer thy questions, I say that I know thy husband Anselmo, and that we have known each other from our earliest years; I will not speak of what thou too knowest, of our friendship, that I may not compel myself to testify against the wrong that love, the mighty excuse for greater errors, makes me inflict upon him. Thee I know and hold in the same estimation as he does, for were it not so I had not

for a lesser prize acted in opposition to what I owe to my station and the holy laws of true friendship, now broken and violated by me through that powerful enemy, love."

"If thou dost confess that," returned Camilla, "mortal enemy of all that rightly deserves to be loved, with what face dost thou dare to come before one whom thou knowest to be the mirror wherein he is reflected on whom thou shouldst look to see how unworthily thou him? But, woe is me, I now comprehend what has made thee give so little heed to what thou owest to thyself; it must have been some freedom of mine, for I will not call it immodesty, as it did not proceed from any deliberate intention, but from some heedlessness such as women are guilty of through inadvertence when they think they have no occasion for reserve. But tell me, traitor, when did I by word or sign give a reply to thy prayers that could awaken in thee a shadow of hope of attaining thy base wishes? When were not thy professions of love sternly and scornfully rejected and rebuked? When were thy frequent pledges and still more frequent gifts believed or accepted? But as I am persuaded that no one can long persevere in the attempt to win love unsustained by some hope, I am willing to attribute to myself the blame of thy assurance, for no doubt some thoughtlessness of mine has all this time fostered thy hopes; and therefore will I punish myself and inflict upon myself the penalty thy guilt deserves. And that thou mayest see that being so relentless to myself I cannot possibly be otherwise to thee, I have summoned thee to be a witness of the sacrifice I mean to offer to the injured honour of my honoured husband, wronged by thee with all the assiduity thou wert capable of, and by me too through want of caution in avoiding every occasion, if I have given any, of

encouraging and sanctioning thy base designs. Once more I say the suspicion in my mind that some imprudence of mine has engendered these lawless thoughts in thee, is what causes me most distress and what I desire most to punish with my own hands, for were any other instrument of punishment employed my error might become perhaps more widely known; but before I do so, in my death I mean to inflict death, and take with me one that will fully satisfy my longing for the revenge I hope for and have; for I shall see, wheresoever it may be that I go, the penalty awarded by inflexible, unswerving justice on him who has placed me in a position so desperate."

As she uttered these words, with incredible energy and swiftness she flew upon Lothario with the naked dagger, so manifestly bent on burying it in his breast that he was almost uncertain whether these demonstrations were real or feigned, for he was obliged to have recourse to all his skill and strength to prevent her from striking him; and with such reality did she act this strange farce and mystification that, to give it a colour of truth, she determined to stain it with her own blood; for perceiving, or pretending, that she could not wound Lothario, she said, "Fate, it seems, will not grant my just desire complete satisfaction, but it will not be able to keep me from satisfying it partially at least;" and making an effort to free the hand with the dagger which Lothario held in his grasp, she released it, and directing the point to a place where it could not inflict a deep wound, she plunged it into her left side high up close to the shoulder, and then allowed herself to fall to the ground as if in a faint.

Leonela and Lothario stood amazed and astounded at the catastrophe, and seeing Camilla stretched on the ground and bathed in her blood they were still uncertain as to the true nature of the act. Lothario, terrified and breathless, ran in haste to pluck out the dagger; but when he saw how slight the wound was he was relieved of his fears and once more admired the subtlety, coolness, and ready wit of the fair Camilla; and the better to support the part he had to play he began to utter profuse and doleful lamentations over her body as if she were dead, invoking maledictions not only on himself but also on him who had been the means of placing him in such a position: and knowing that his friend Anselmo heard him he spoke in such a way as to make a listener feel much more pity for him than for Camilla, even though he supposed her dead. Leonela took her up in her arms and laid her on the bed, entreating Lothario to go in quest of some one to attend to her wound in secret, and at the same time asking his advice and opinion as to what they should say to Anselmo about his lady's wound if he should chance to return before it was healed. He replied they might say what they liked, for he was not in a state to give advice that would be of any use; all he could tell her was to try and stanch the blood, as he was going where he should never more be seen; and with every appearance of deep grief and sorrow he left the house; but when he found himself alone, and where there was nobody to see him, he crossed himself unceasingly, lost in wonder at the adroitness of Camilla and the consistent acting of Leonela. He reflected how convinced Anselmo would be that he had a second Portia for a wife, and he looked forward anxiously to meeting him in order to rejoice together over falsehood and truth the most craftily veiled that could be imagined.

Leonela, as he told her, stanch'd her lady's blood, which was no more than sufficed to support her deception; and washing the wound with a little wine she bound it up to the best of her skill, talking all the time she was tending her in a strain that, even if nothing else had been said before, would have been enough to assure Anselmo that he had in Camilla a model of purity. To Leonela's words Camilla added her own, calling herself cowardly and wanting in spirit, since she had not enough at the time she had most need of it to rid herself of the life she so much loathed. She asked her attendant's advice as to whether or not she ought to inform her beloved husband of all that had happened, but the other bade her say nothing about it, as she would lay upon him the obligation of taking vengeance on Lothario, which he could not do but at great risk to himself; and it was the duty of a true wife not to give her husband provocation to quarrel, but, on the contrary, to remove it as far as possible from him.

Camilla replied that she believed she was right and that she would follow her advice, but at any rate it would be well to consider how she was to explain the wound to Anselmo, for he could not help seeing it; to which Leonela answered that she did not know how to tell a lie even in jest.

"How then can I know, my dear?" said Camilla, "for I should not dare to forge or keep up a falsehood if my life depended on it. If we can think of no escape from this difficulty, it will be better to tell him the plain truth than that he should find us out in an untrue story."

"Be not uneasy, senora," said Leonela; "between this and to-morrow I will

think of what we must say to him, and perhaps the wound being where it is it can be hidden from his sight, and Heaven will be pleased to aid us in a purpose so good and honourable. Compose yourself, senora, and endeavour to calm your excitement lest my lord find you agitated; and leave the rest to my care and God's, who always supports good intentions."

Anselmo had with the deepest attention listened to and seen played out the tragedy of the death of his honour, which the performers acted with such wonderfully effective truth that it seemed as if they had become the realities of the parts they played. He longed for night and an opportunity of escaping from the house to go and see his good friend Lothario, and with him give vent to his joy over the precious pearl he had gained in having established his wife's purity. Both mistress and maid took care to give him time and opportunity to get away, and taking advantage of it he made his escape, and at once went in quest of Lothario, and it would be impossible to describe how he embraced him when he found him, and the things he said to him in the joy of his heart, and the praises he bestowed upon Camilla; all which Lothario listened to without being able to show any pleasure, for he could not forget how deceived his friend was, and how dishonourably he had wronged him; and though Anselmo could see that Lothario was not glad, still he imagined it was only because he had left Camilla wounded and had been himself the cause of it; and so among other things he told him not to be distressed about Camilla's accident, for, as they had agreed to hide it from him, the wound was evidently trifling; and that being so, he had no cause for fear, but should henceforward be of good cheer and rejoice with him, seeing that by his means and adroitness he found himself raised to the



greatest height of happiness that he could have ventured to hope for, and desired no better pastime than making verses in praise of Camilla that would preserve her name for all time to come. Lothario commended his purpose, and promised on his own part to aid him in raising a monument so glorious.

And so Anselmo was left the most charmingly hoodwinked man there could be in the world. He himself, persuaded he was conducting the instrument of his glory, led home by the hand him who had been the utter destruction of his good name; whom Camilla received with averted countenance, though with smiles in her heart. The deception was carried on for some time, until at the end of a few months Fortune turned her wheel and the guilt which had been until then so skilfully concealed was published abroad, and Anselmo paid with his life the penalty of his ill-advised curiosity.