

Chapter 6

afternoon; which, by the way, he had contrived on purpose.

He had scarce done speaking to them, and giving me my errand, but his man came up to tell him that Sir W---- H----'s coach stopped at the door; so he runs down, and comes up again immediately. 'Alas!' says he aloud, 'there's all my mirth spoiled at once; sir W---- has sent his coach for me, and desires to speak with me upon some earnest business.' It seems this Sir W-- - was a gentleman who lived about three miles out of town, to whom he had spoken on purpose the day before, to lend him his chariot for a particular occasion, and had appointed it to call for him, as it did, about three o'clock.

Immediately he calls for his best wig, hat, and sword, and ordering his man to go to the other place to make his excuse--

that was to say, he made an excuse to send his man away--he prepares to go into the coach. As he was going, he stopped a while, and speaks mighty earnestly to me about his business, and finds an opportunity to say very softly to me, 'Come away, my dear, as soon as ever you can.' I said nothing, but made a curtsy, as if I had done so to what he said in public. In about a quarter of an hour I went out too; I had no dress other than before, except that I had a hood, a mask, a fan, and a pair of gloves in my pocket; so that there was not the least suspicion in the house. He waited for me in the coach in a back-lane, which he knew I must pass by, and had directed the

coachman whither to go, which was to a certain place, called Mile End, where lived a confidant of his, where we went in, and where was all the convenience in the world to be as wicked as we pleased.

When we were together he began to talk very gravely to me, and to tell me he did not bring me there to betray me; that his passion for me would not suffer him to abuse me; that he resolved to marry me as soon as he came to his estate; that in the meantime, if I would grant his request, he would maintain me very honourably; and made me a thousand protestations of his sincerity and of his affection to me; and that he would never abandon me, and as I may say, made a thousand more preambles than he need to have done.

However, as he pressed me to speak, I told him I had no reason to question the sincerity of his love to me after so many protestations, but--and there I stopped, as if I left him to guess the rest. 'But what, my dear?' says he. 'I guess what you mean: what if you should be with child? Is not that it? Why, then,' says he, 'I'll take care of you and provide for you, and the child too; and that you may see I am not in jest,' says he, 'here's an earnest for you,' and with that he pulls out a silk purse, with an hundred guineas in it, and gave it me. 'And I'll give you such another,' says he, 'every year till I marry you.'

My colour came and went, at the sight of the purse and with the fire of his

proposal together, so that I could not say a word, and he easily perceived it; so putting the purse into my bosom,

I made no more resistance to him, but let him do just what he

pleased, and as often as he pleased; and thus I finished my own destruction at once, for from this day, being forsaken of my virtue and my modesty, I had nothing of value left to recommend me, either to God's blessing or man's assistance.

But things did not end here. I went back to the town, did the business he publicly directed me to, and was at home before anybody thought me long. As for my gentleman, he stayed out, as he told me he would, till late at night, and there was not the least suspicion in the family either on his account or on mine.

We had, after this, frequent opportunities to repeat our crime --chiefly by his contrivance--especially at home, when his mother and the young ladies went abroad a-visiting, which he watched so narrowly as never to miss; knowing always beforehand when they went out, and then failed not to catch me all alone, and securely enough; so that we took our fill of our wicked pleasure for near half a year; and yet, which was the most to my satisfaction, I was not with child.

But before this half-year was expired, his younger brother, of whom I have made some mention in the beginning of the story, falls to work with me; and he, finding me alone in the garden one evening, begins a story of the same kind to me, made good honest professions of being in love with me, and in short, proposes fairly and honourably to marry me, and that before he made any other offer to me at all.

I was now confounded, and driven to such an extremity as the like was never known; at least not to me. I resisted the proposal with obstinacy; and now I began to arm myself with arguments. I laid before him the inequality of the match; the treatment I should meet with in the family; the ingratitude it would be to his good father and mother, who had taken me into their house upon such generous principles, and when I was in such a low condition; and, in short, I said everything to dissuade him from his design that I could imagine, except telling him the truth, which would indeed have put an end to it all, but that I durst not think of mentioning.

But here happened a circumstance that I did not expect indeed, which put me to my shifts; for this young gentleman, as he was plain and honest, so he pretended to nothing with me but what was so too; and, knowing his own innocence, he was not so careful to make his having a kindness for Mrs. Betty a secret in the house, as his brother was. And though he did not let them know that he had talked to me about it, yet he said enough to let his sisters perceive he loved me, and his mother saw it too, which, though they

took no notice of it to me, yet they did to him, and immediately I found their carriage to me altered, more than ever before.

I saw the cloud, though I did not foresee the storm. It was easy, I say, to see that their carriage to me was altered, and that it grew worse and worse every day; till at last I got information among the servants that I should, in a very little while, be desired to remove.

I was not alarmed at the news, having a full satisfaction that I should be otherwise provided for; and especially considering that I had reason every day to expect I should be with child, and that then I should be obliged to remove without any pretences for it.

After some time the younger gentleman took an opportunity to tell me that the kindness he had for me had got vent in the family. He did not charge me with it, he said, for he knew well enough which way it came out. He told me his plain way of talking had been the occasion of it, for that he did not make his respect for me so much a secret as he might have done, and the reason was, that he was at a point, that if I would consent to have him, he would tell them all openly that he loved me, and that he intended to marry me; that it was true his father and mother might resent it, and be unkind, but that he was now in a way to live, being bred to the law, and he did not fear maintaining me agreeable to what I should expect; and that, in short, as he believed I would not be ashamed of him, so he was resolved not to be

ashamed of me, and that he scorned to be afraid to own me now, whom he resolved to own after I was his wife, and therefore I had nothing to do but to give him my hand, and he would answer for all the rest.

I was now in a dreadful condition indeed, and now I repented heartily my easiness with the eldest brother; not from any reflection of conscience, but from a view of the happiness I might have enjoyed, and had now made impossible; for though I had no great scruples of conscience, as I have said, to struggle with, yet I could not think of being a whore to one brother and a wife to the other. But then it came into my thoughts that the first brother had promised to make me his wife when he came to his estate; but I presently remembered what I had often thought of, that he had never spoken a word of having me for a wife after he had conquered me for a mistress; and indeed, till now, though I said I thought of it often, yet it gave me no disturbance at all, for as he did not seem in the least to lessen his affection to me, so neither did he lessen his bounty, though he had the discretion himself to desire me not to lay out a penny of what he gave me in clothes, or to make the least show extraordinary, because it would necessarily give jealousy in the family, since everybody know I could come at such things no manner of ordinary way, but by some private friendship, which they would presently have suspected.

But I was now in a great strait, and knew not what to do. The main difficulty was this: the younger brother not only laid close siege to me, but suffered it

to be seen. He would come into his sister's room, and his mother's room, and sit down, and talk a thousand kind things of me, and to me, even before their faces, and when they were all there. This grew so public that the whole house talked of it, and his mother reproved him for it, and their carriage to me appeared quite altered. In short, his mother had let fall some speeches, as if she intended to put me out of the family; that is, in English, to turn me out of doors. Now I was sure this could not be a secret to his brother, only that he might not think, as indeed nobody else yet did, that the youngest brother had made any proposal to me about it; but as I easily could see that it would go farther, so I saw likewise there was an absolute necessity to speak of it to him, or that he would speak of it to me, and which to do first I knew not; that is, whether I should break it to him or let it alone till he should break it to me.

Upon serious consideration, for indeed now I began to consider things very seriously, and never till now; I say, upon serious consideration, I resolved to tell him of it first; and it was not long before I had an opportunity, for the very next day his brother went to London upon some business, and the family being out a-visiting, just as it had happened before, and as indeed was often the case, he came according to his custom, to spend an hour or two with Mrs. Betty.