

## Chapter 25

I had written several letters for him, and directed them as usual, and found two or three of them had been called for, but not the rest. I wrote again in a more pressing manner than ever, and in one of them let him know, that I must be forced to wait on him myself, representing my circumstances, the rent of lodgings to pay, and the provision for the child wanting, and my own deplorable condition, destitute of subsistence for his most solemn engagement to take care of and provide for me. I took a copy of this letter, and finding it lay at the house near a month and was not called for, I found means to have the copy of it put into his own hands at a coffee-house, where I had by inquiry found he used to go.

This letter forced an answer from him, by which, though I found I was to be abandoned, yet I found he had sent a letter to me some time before, desiring me to go down to the Bath again. Its contents I shall come to presently.

It is true that sick-beds are the time when such correspondences as this are looked on with different countenances, and seen with other eyes than we saw them with, or than they appeared with before. My lover had been at the gates of death, and at the very brink of eternity; and, it seems, had been struck with a due remorse, and with sad reflections upon his past life of gallantry and levity; and among the rest, criminal correspondence with me, which was neither more nor less than a long-continued life of adultery, and represented itself as it really was, not as it had been formerly thought by

him to be, and he looked upon it now with a just and religious abhorrence.

I cannot but observe also, and leave it for the direction of my sex in such cases of pleasure, that whenever sincere repentance succeeds such a crime as this, there never fails to attend a hatred of the object; and the more the affection might seem to be before, the hatred will be the more in proportion. It will always be so, indeed it can be no otherwise; for there cannot be a true and sincere abhorrence of the offence, and the love to the cause of it remain; there will, with an abhorrence of the sin, be found a detestation of the fellow-sinner; you can expect no other.

I found it so here, though good manners and justice in this gentleman kept him from carrying it on to any extreme but the short history of his part in this affair was thus: he perceived by my last letter, and by all the rest, which he went for after, that I was not gone to Bath, that his first letter had not come to my hand; upon which he write me this following:--

'MADAM,--I am surprised that my letter, dated the 8th of last month, did not come to your hand; I give you my word it was delivered at your lodgings, and to the hands of your maid.

'I need not acquaint you with what has been my condition for some time past; and how, having been at the edge of the grave, I am, by the unexpected and undeserved mercy of Heaven, restored again. In the condition I have

been in, it cannot be strange to you that our unhappy correspondence had not been the least of the burthens which lay upon my conscience. I need say no more; those things that must be repented of, must be also reformed.

I wish you would thing of going back to the Bath. I enclose you here a bill for #50 for clearing yourself at your lodgings, and carrying you down, and hope it will be no surprise to you to add, that on this account only, and not for any offence given me on your side, I can see you no more. I will take due care of the child; leave him where he is, or take him with you, as you please. I wish you the like reflections, and that they may be to your advantage.--I am,' etc.

I was struck with this letter as with a thousand wounds, such as I cannot describe; the reproaches of my own conscience were such as I cannot express, for I was not blind to my own crime; and I reflected that I might with less offence have continued with my brother, and lived with him as a wife, since there was

no crime in our marriage on that score, neither of us knowing it.

But I never once reflected that I was all this while a married woman, a wife to Mr. ---- the linen-draper, who, though he had left me by the necessity of his circumstances, had no power to discharge me from the marriage contract which was between us, or to give me a legal liberty to marry again;

so that I had been no less than a whore and an adulteress all this while. I then reproached myself with the liberties I had taken, and how I had been a snare to this gentleman, and that indeed I was principal in the crime; that now he was mercifully snatched out of the gulf by a convincing work upon his mind, but that I was left as if I was forsaken of God's grace, and abandoned by Heaven to a continuing in my wickedness.

Under these reflections I continued very pensive and sad for near month, and did not go down to the Bath, having no inclination to be with the woman whom I was with before; lest, as I thought, she should prompt me to some wicked course of life again, as she had done; and besides, I was very loth she should know I was cast off as above.

And now I was greatly perplexed about my little boy. It was death to me to part with the child, and yet when I considered the danger of being one time or other left with him to keep without a maintenance to support him, I then resolved to leave him where he was; but then I concluded also to be near him myself too, that I then might have the satisfaction of seeing him, without the care of providing for him.

I sent my gentleman a short letter, therefore, that I had obeyed his orders in all things but that of going back to the Bath, which I could not think of for many reasons; that however parting from him was a wound to me that I could never recover, yet that I was fully satisfied his reflections were just,

and would be very far from desiring to obstruct his reformation or repentance.

Then I represented my own circumstances to him in the most moving terms that I was able. I told him that those unhappy distresses which first moved him to a generous and an honest friendship for me, would, I hope, move him to a little concern for me now, though the criminal part of our correspondence, which I believed neither of us intended to fall into at the time, was broken off; that I desired to repent as sincerely as he had done, but entreated him to put me in some condition that I might not be exposed to the temptations which the devil never fails to excite us to from the frightful prospect of poverty and distress; and if he had the least apprehensions of my being troublesome to him, I begged he would put me in a posture to go back to my mother in Virginia, from when he knew I came, and that would put an end to all his fears on that account. I concluded, that if he would send me #50 more to facilitate my going away, I would send him back a general release, and would promise never to disturb him more with any importunities; unless it was to hear of the well-doing of the child, whom, if

I found my mother living and my circumstances able, I would send for to come over to me, and take him also effectually off his hands.

This was indeed all a cheat thus far, viz. that I had no intention to go to

Virginia, a the account of my former affairs there may convince anybody of; but the business was to get this last #50 of him, if possible, knowing well enough it would be the last penny I was ever to expect.

However, the argument I used, namely, of giving him a general release, and never troubling him any more, prevailed effectually with him, and he sent me a bill for the money by a person who brought with him a general release for me to sign, and which I frankly signed, and received the money; and thus, though full sore against my will, a final end was put to this affair.

And here I cannot but reflect upon the unhappy consequence of too great freedoms between persons stated as we were, upon the pretence of innocent intentions, love of friendship, and the like; for the flesh has generally so great a share in those friendships, that is great odds but inclination prevails at last over the most solemn resolutions; and that vice breaks in at the breaches of decency, which really innocent friendship ought to preserve with the greatest strictness. But I leave the readers of these things to their own just reflections, which they will be more able to make effectual than I, who so soon forgot myself, and am therefore but a very indifferent monitor.

I was now a single person again, as I may call myself; I was loosed from all the obligations either of wedlock or mistress-ship in the world, except my husband the linen-draper, whom, I having not now heard from in almost fifteen years, nobody could blame me for thinking myself entirely freed from;

seeing also he had at his going away told me, that if I did not hear frequently from him, I should conclude he was dead, and I might freely marry again to whom I pleased.

I now began to cast up my accounts. I had by many letters and much importunity, and with the intercession of my mother too, had a second return of some goods from my brother (as I now call him) in Virginia, to make up the damage of the cargo I brought away with me, and this too was upon the condition of my sealing a general release to him, and to send it him by his correspondent at Bristol, which, though I thought hard of, yet I was obliged to promise to do. However, I managed so well in this case, that I got my goods away before the release was signed, and then I always found something or other to say to evade the thing, and to put off the signing it at all; till at length I pretended I must write to my brother, and have his answer, before I could do it.

Including this recruit, and before I got the last #50, I found my strength to amount, put all together, to about #400, so that with that I had about #450. I had saved above #100 more, but I met with a disaster with that, which was this--that a goldsmith in whose hands I had trusted it, broke, so I lost #70