

## Chapter 34

I expected, as is usually the case among such people, that the servant she sent me would have been some imprudent brazen wench of Drury Lane breeding, and I was very uneasy at having her with me upon that account; so I would not let her lie in that house the first night by any means, but had my eyes about me as narrowly as if she had been a public thief.

My gentlewoman guessed presently what was the matter, and sent her back with a short note, that I might depend upon the honesty of her maid; that she would be answerable for her upon all accounts; and that she took no servants into her house without very good security for their fidelity. I was then perfectly easy; and indeed the maid's behaviour spoke for itself, for a modester, quieter, soberer girl never came into anybody's family, and I found her so afterwards.

As soon as I was well enough to go abroad, I went with the maid to see the house, and to see the apartment I was to have; and everything was so handsome and so clean and well, that, in short, I had nothing to say, but was wonderfully pleased and satisfied with what I had met with, which, considering the melancholy circumstances I was in, was far beyond what I looked for.

It might be expected that I should give some account of the nature of the wicked practices of this woman, in whose hands I was now fallen; but it

would be too much encouragement to the vice, to let the world see what easy measures were here taken to rid the women's unwelcome burthen of a child clandestinely gotten. This grave matron had several sorts of practice, and this was one particular, that if a child was born, though not in her house (for she had occasion to be called to many private labours), she had people at hand, who for a piece of money would take the child off their hands, and off from the hands of the parish too; and those children, as she said, were honestly provided for and taken care of. What should become of them all, considering so many, as by her account she was concerned with, I cannot conceive.

I had many times discourses upon that subject with her; but she was full of this argument, that she save the life of many an innocent lamb, as she called them, which would otherwise perhaps have been murdered; and of many women who, made desperate by the misfortune, would otherwise be tempted to destroy their children, and bring themselves to the gallows. I granted her that this was true, and a very commendable thing, provided the poor children fell into good hands afterwards, and were not abused, starved, and neglected by the nurses that bred them up. She answered, that she always took care of that, and had no nurses in her business but what were very good, honest people, and such as might be depended upon.

I could say nothing to the contrary, and so was obliged to say, 'Madam, I do not question you do your part honestly, but what those people do afterwards

is the main question'; and she stopped my mouth again with saying that she took the utmost care about it.

The only thing I found in all her conversation on these subjects that gave me any distaste, was, that one time in discouraging about my being far gone with child, and the time I expected to come, she said something that looked as if she could help me off with my burthen sooner, if I was willing; or, in English, that she could give me something to make me miscarry, if I had a desire to put an end to my troubles that way; but I soon let her see that I abhorred the thoughts of it; and, to do her justice, she put it off so cleverly, that I could not say she really intended it, or whether she only mentioned the practice as a horrible thing; for she couched her words so well, and took my meaning so quickly, that she gave her negative before I could explain myself.

To bring this part into as narrow a compass as possible, I quitted my lodging at St. Jones's and went to my new governess, for so they called her in the house, and there I was indeed treated with so much courtesy, so carefully looked to, so handsomely provided, and everything so well, that I was surprised at it, and could not at first see what advantage my governess made of it; but I found afterwards that she professed to make no profit of lodgers' diet, nor indeed could she get much by it, but that her profit lay in the other articles of her management, and she made enough that way, I assure you; for 'tis scarce credible what practice she had, as well abroad as

at home, and yet all upon the private account, or, in plain English, the whoring account.

While I was in her house, which was near four months, she had no less than twelve ladies of pleasure brought to bed within the doors, and I think she had two-and-thirty, or thereabouts, under her conduct without doors, whereof one, as nice as she was with me, was lodged with my old landlady at St. Jones's.

This was a strange testimony of the growing vice of the age, and such a one, that as bad as I had been myself, it shocked my very senses. I began to nauseate the place I was in and, about all, the wicked practice; and yet I must say that I never saw, or do I believe there was to be seen, the least indecency in the house the whole time I was there.

Not a man was ever seen to come upstairs, except to visit the lying-in ladies within their month, nor then without the old lady with them, who made it a piece of honour of her management that no man should touch a woman, no, not his own wife, within the month; nor would she permit any man to lie in the house upon any pretence whatever, no, not though she was sure it was with his own wife; and her general saying for it was, that she cared not how many children were born in her house, but she would have none got there if she could help it.

It might perhaps be carried further than was needful, but it was an error of the right hand if it was an error, for by this she kept up the reputation, such as it was, of her business, and obtained this character, that though she did take care of the women when they were debauched, yet she was not instrumental to their being debauched at all; and yet it was a wicked trade she drove too.

While I was there, and before I was brought to bed, I received a letter from my trustee at the bank, full of kind, obliging things, and earnestly pressing me to return to London. It was near a fortnight old when it came to me, because it had been first sent into Lancashire, and then returned to me. He concludes with telling me that he had obtained a decree, I think he called it, against his wife, and that he would be ready to make good his engagement to me, if I would accept of him, adding a great many protestations of kindness and affection, such as he would have been far from offering if he had known the circumstances I had been in, and which as it was I had been very far from deserving.

I returned an answer to his letter, and dated it at Liverpool, but sent it by messenger, alleging that it came in cover to a friend in town. I gave him joy of his deliverance, but raised some scruples at the lawfulness of his marrying again, and told him I supposed he would consider very seriously upon that point before he resolved on it, the consequence being too great for a man of his judgment to venture rashly upon a thing of that nature; so

concluded, wishing him very well in whatever he resolved, without letting him into anything of my own mind, or giving any answer to his proposal of my coming to London to him, but mentioned at a distance my intention to return the latter end of the year, this being dated in April.

I was brought to bed about the middle of May and had another brave boy, and myself in as good condition as usual on such occasions. My governess did her part as a midwife with the greatest art and dexterity imaginable, and far beyond all that ever I had had any experience of before.

Her care of me in my travail, and after in my lying in, was such, that if she had been my own mother it could not have been better. Let none be encouraged in their loose practices from this dexterous lady's management, for she is gone to her place, and I dare say has left nothing behind her that can or will come up on it.

I think I had been brought to bed about twenty-two days when I received another letter from my friend at the bank, with the surprising news that he had obtained a final sentence of divorce against his wife, and had served her with it on such a day, and that he had such an answer to give to all my scruples about his marrying again, as I could not expect, and as he had no desire of; for that his wife, who had been under some remorse before for her usage of him, as soon as she had the account that he had gained his point, had very unhappily destroyed herself that same evening.

He expressed himself very handsomely as to his being concerned at her disaster, but cleared himself of having any hand in it, and that he had only done himself justice in a case in which he was notoriously injured and abused. However, he said that he was extremely afflicted at it, and had no view of any satisfaction left in his world, but only in the hope that I would come and relieve him by my company; and then he pressed me violently indeed to give him some hopes that I would at least come up to town and let him see me, when he would further enter into discourse about it.

I was exceedingly surprised at the news, and began now seriously to reflect on my present circumstances, and the inexpressible misfortune it was to me to have a child upon my hands, and what to do in it I knew not. At last I opened my case at a distance to my governess. I appeared melancholy and uneasy for several days, and she lay at me continually to know what trouble me. I could not for my life tell her that I had an offer of marriage, after I had so often told her that I had a husband, so that I really knew not what to say to her. I owned I had something which very much troubled me, but at the same time told her I could not speak of it to any one alive.

She continued importuning me several days, but it was impossible, I told her, for me to commit the secret to anybody. This, instead of being an answer to her, increased her importunities; she urged her having been trusted with the greatest secrets of this nature, that it was her business to

conceal everything, and that to discover things of that nature would be her ruin. She asked me if ever I had found her tattling to me of other people's affairs, and how could I suspect her? She told me, to unfold myself to her was telling it to nobody; that she was silent as death; that it must be a very strange case indeed that she could not help me out of; but to conceal it was to deprive myself of all possible help, or means of help, and to deprive her of the opportunity of serving me. In short, she had such a bewitching eloquence, and so great a power of persuasion that there was no concealing anything from her.