

## Chapter 65

I could not conceal my disorder so much from the woman but that she perceived it, and thought I was not well, which I was obliged to pretend was true; upon which she pressed me to rise, the ground being damp and dangerous, which I did accordingly, and walked away.

As I was going back again, and still talking of this gentleman and his son, a new occasion of melancholy offered itself thus. The woman began, as if she would tell me a story to divert me: 'There goes,' says she, 'a very odd tale among the neighbours where this gentleman formerly live.' 'What was that?' said I. 'Why,' says she, 'that old gentleman going to England, when he was a young man, fell in love with a young lady there, one of the finest women that ever was seen, and married her, and brought her over hither to his mother who was then living. He lived here several years with her,' continued she, 'and had several children by her, of which the young gentleman that was with him now was one; but after some time, the old gentlewoman, his mother, talking to her of something relating to herself when she was in England, and of her circumstances in England, which were bad enough, the daughter-in-law began to be very much surprised and uneasy; and, in short, examining further into things, it appeared past all contradiction that the old gentlewoman was her own mother, and that consequently that son was his wife's own brother, which struck the whole family with horror, and put them into such confusion that it had almost ruined them all. The young woman would not live with him; the son, her brother and husband, for a time went

distracted; and at last the young woman went away for England, and has never been heard of since.'

It is easy to believe that I was strangely affected with this story, but 'tis impossible to describe the nature of my disturbance. I seemed astonished at the story, and asked her a thousand questions about the particulars, which I found she was

thoroughly acquainted with. At last I began to inquire into the circumstances of the family, how the old gentlewoman, I mean my mother, died, and how she left what she had; for my mother had promised me very solemnly, that when she died she would do something for me, and leave it so, as that, if I was living, I should one way or other come at it, without its being in the power of her son, my brother and husband, to prevent it. She told me she did not know exactly how it was ordered, but she had been told that my mother had left a sum of money, and had tied her plantation for the payment of it, to be made good to the daughter, if ever she could be heard of, either in England or elsewhere; and that the trust was left with this son, who was the person that we saw with his father.

This was news too good for me to make light of, and, you may be sure, filled my heart with a thousand thoughts, what course I should take, how, and when, and in what manner I should make myself known, or whether I should ever make myself known or no.

Here was a perplexity that I had not indeed skill to manage myself in, neither knew I what course to take. It lay heavy upon my mind night and day. I could neither sleep nor converse, so that my husband perceived it, and wondered what ailed me, strove to divert me, but it was all to no purpose. He pressed me to tell him what it was troubled me, but I put it off, till at last, importuning me continually, I was forced to form a story, which yet had a plain truth to lay it upon too. It told him I was troubled because I found we must shift our quarters and alter our scheme of settling, for that I found I should be known if I stayed in that part of the country; for that my mother being dead, several of my relations were come into that part where we then was, and that I must either discover myself to them, which in our present circumstances was not proper on many accounts, or remove; and which to do I knew not, and that this it was that made me so melancholy and so thoughtful.

He joined with me in this, that it was by no means proper for me to make myself known to anybody in the circumstances in which we then were; and therefore he told me he would be willing to remove to any other part of the country, or even to any other country if I thought fit. But now I had another difficulty, which was, that if I removed to any other colony, I put myself out of the way of ever making a due search after those effects which my mother had left. Again I could never so much as think of breaking the secret of my former marriage to my new husband; it was not a story, as I thought, that

would bear telling, nor could I tell what might be the consequences of it; and it was impossible to search into the bottom of the thing without making it public all over the country, as well who I was, as what I now was also.

In this perplexity I continued a great while, and this made my spouse very uneasy; for he found me perplexed, and yet thought

I was not open with him, and did not let him into every part of my grievance; and he would often say, he wondered what he had done that I would not trust him with whatever it was, especially if it was grievous and afflicting. The truth is, he ought to have been trusted with everything, for no man in the world could deserve better of a wife; but this was a thing I knew not how to open to him, and yet having nobody to disclose any part of it to, the burthen was too heavy for my mind; for let them say what they please of our sex not being able to keep a secret, my life is a plain conviction to me of the contrary; but be it our sex, or the man's sex, a secret of moment should always have a confidant, a bosom friend, to whom we may communicate the joy of it, or the grief of it, be it which it will, or it will be a double weight upon the spirits, and perhaps become even insupportable in itself; and this I appeal to all human testimony for the truth of.

And this is the cause why many times men as well as women, and men of the greatest and best qualities other ways, yet have found themselves weak in this part, and have not been able to bear the weight of a secret joy or of a

secret sorrow, but have been obliged to disclose it, even for the mere giving vent to themselves, and to unbend the mind oppressed with the load and weights which attended it. Nor was this any token of folly or thoughtlessness at all, but a natural consequence of the thing;

and such people, had they struggled longer with the oppression, would certainly have told it in their sleep, and disclosed the secret, let it have been of what fatal nature soever, without regard to the person to whom it might be exposed. This necessity of nature is a thing which works sometimes with such vehemence in the minds of those who are guilty of any atrocious villainy, such as secret murder in particular, that they have been obliged to discover it, though the consequence would necessarily be their own destruction. Now, though it may be true that the divine justice ought to have the glory of all those discoveries and confessions, yet 'tis as certain that Providence, which ordinarily works by the hands of nature, makes use here of the same natural causes to produce those extraordinary effects.

I could give several remarkable instances of this in my long conversation with crime and with criminals. I knew one fellow that, while I was in prison in Newgate, was one of those they called then night-fliers. I know not what other word they may have understood it by since, but he was one who by connivance was admitted to go abroad every evening, when he played his pranks, and furnished those honest people they call thief-catchers with business to find out the next day, and restore for a reward what they had

stolen the evening before. This fellow was as sure to tell in his sleep all that he had done, and every step he had taken, what he had stolen, and where, as sure as if he had engaged to tell it waking, and that there was no harm or danger in it, and therefore he was obliged, after he had been out, to lock himself up, or be locked up by some of the keepers that had him in fee, that nobody should hear him; but, on the other hand, if he had told all the particulars, and given a full account of his rambles and success, to any comrade, any brother thief, or to his employers, as I may justly call them, then all was well with him, and he slept as quietly as other people.

As the publishing this account of my life is for the sake of the just moral of very part of it, and for instruction, caution, warning, and improvement to every reader, so this will not pass, I hope, for an unnecessary digression concerning some people being obliged to disclose the greatest secrets either of their own or other people's affairs.

Under the certain oppression of this weight upon my mind, I laboured in the case I have been naming; and the only relief I found for it was to let my husband into so much of it as I thought would convince him of the necessity there was for us to think of settling in some other part of the world; and the next consideration before us was, which part of the English settlements we should go to. My husband was a perfect stranger to the country, and had not yet so much as a geographical knowledge of the situation of the several places; and I, that, till I wrote this, did not know what the word geographical

signified, had only a general knowledge from long conversation with people that came from or went to several places; but this I knew, that Maryland, Pennsylvania, East and West Jersey, New York, and New England lay all north of Virginia, and that they were consequently all colder climates, to which for that very reason, I had an aversion. For that as I naturally loved warm weather, so now I grew into years I had a stronger inclination to shun a cold climate. I therefore considered of going to Caroline, which is the only southern colony of the English on the continent of America, and hither I proposed to go; and the rather because I might with great ease come from thence at any time, when it might be proper to inquire after my mother's effects, and to make myself known enough to demand them.