

# TOBIAS SMOLLETT

THE ADVENTURES OF  
FERDINAND COUNT  
FATHOM. COMPLETE

Tobias Smollett

**The Adventures of Ferdinand  
Count Fathom. Complete**

«Public Domain»

**Smollett T.**

The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom. Complete /  
T. Smollett — «Public Domain»,

## Содержание

PART I	5
INTRODUCTION	6
TO DOCTOR –	9
CHAPTER ONE	11
CHAPTER TWO	14
CHAPTER THREE	16
CHAPTER FOUR	18
CHAPTER FIVE	21
CHAPTER SIX	24
CHAPTER SEVEN	27
CHAPTER EIGHT	30
CHAPTER NINE	33
CHAPTER TEN	35
CHAPTER ELEVEN	37
CHAPTER TWELVE	39
CHAPTER THIRTEEN	42
CHAPTER FOURTEEN	45
CHAPTER FIFTEEN	47
CHAPTER SIXTEEN	50
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN	53
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN	57
CHAPTER NINETEEN	60
CHAPTER TWENTY	63
CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE	66
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	68

**Tobias Smollett**  
**The Adventures of Ferdinand**  
**Count Fathom – Complete**

**PART I**

**With the Author's Preface, and an Introduction by G. H.  
Maynadier, Ph.D. Department of English, Harvard University**

## INTRODUCTION

The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom, Smollett's third novel, was given to the world in 1753. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, writing to her daughter, the Countess of Bute, over a year later [January 1st, 1755], remarked that "my friend Smollett . . . has certainly a talent for invention, though I think it flags a little in his last work." Lady Mary was both right and wrong. The inventive power which we commonly think of as Smollett's was the ability to work over his own experience into realistic fiction. Of this, Ferdinand Count Fathom shows comparatively little. It shows relatively little, too, of Smollett's vigorous personality, which in his earlier works was present to give life and interest to almost every chapter, were it to describe a street brawl, a ludicrous situation, a whimsical character, or with venomous prejudice to gibbet some enemy. This individuality—the peculiar spirit of the author which can be felt rather than described—is present in the dedication of Fathom to Doctor —, who is no other than Smollett himself, and a candid revelation of his character, by the way, this dedication contains. It is present, too, in the opening chapters, which show, likewise, in the picture of Fathom's mother, something of the author's peculiar "talent for invention." Subsequently, however, there is no denying that the Smollett invention and the Smollett spirit both flag. And yet, in a way, Fathom displays more invention than any of the author's novels; it is based far less than any other on personal experience. Unfortunately such thorough-going invention was not suited to Smollett's genius. The result is, that while uninteresting as a novel of contemporary manners, Fathom has an interest of its own in that it reveals a new side of its author. We think of Smollett, generally, as a rambling storyteller, a rational, unromantic man of the world, who fills his pages with his own oddly-metamorphosed acquaintances and experiences. The Smollett of Count Fathom, on the contrary, is rather a forerunner of the romantic school, who has created a tolerably organic tale of adventure out of his own brain. Though this is notably less readable than the author's earlier works, still the wonder is that when the man is so far "off his beat," he should yet know so well how to meet the strange conditions which confront him. To one whose idea of Smollett's genius is formed entirely by *Random* and *Pickle* and *Humphry Clinker*, Ferdinand Count Fathom will offer many surprises.

The first of these is the comparative lifelessness of the book. True, here again are action and incident galore, but generally unaccompanied by that rough Georgian hurly-burly, common in Smollett, which is so interesting to contemplate from a comfortable distance, and which goes so far towards making his fiction seem real. Nor are the characters, for the most part, life-like enough to be interesting. There is an apparent exception, to be sure, in the hero's mother, already mentioned, the hardened camp-follower, whom we confidently expect to become vitalised after the savage fashion of Smollett's characters. But, alas! we have no chance to learn the lady's style of conversation, for the few words that come from her lips are but partially characteristic; we have only too little chance to learn her manners and customs. In the fourth chapter, while she is making sure with her dagger that all those on the field of battle whom she wishes to rifle are really dead, an officer of the hussars, who has been watching her lucrative progress, unfeelingly puts a brace of bullets into the lady's brain, just as she raises her hand to smite him to the heart. Perhaps it is as well that she is thus removed before our disappointment at the non-fulfilment of her promise becomes poignant. So far as we may judge from the other personages of Count Fathom, even this interesting Amazon would sooner or later have turned into a wooden figure, with a label giving the necessary information as to her character.

Such certainly is her son, Fathom, the hero of the book. Because he is placarded, "Shrewd villain of monstrous inhumanity," we are fain to accept him for what his creator intended; but seldom in word or deed is he a convincingly real villain. His friend and foil, the noble young Count de Melvil, is no more alive than he; and equally wooden are Joshua, the high-minded, saint-like Jew, and that tedious, foolish Don Diego. Neither is the heroine alive, the peerless Monimia, but then, in her case, want of vitality is not surprising; the presence of it would amaze us. If she were a woman throbbing

with life, she would be different from Smollett's other heroines. The "second lady" of the melodrama, *Mademoiselle de Melvil*, though by no means vivified, is yet more real than her sister-in-law.

The fact that they are mostly inanimate figures is not the only surprise given us by the personages of *Count Fathom*. It is a surprise to find few of them strikingly whimsical; it is a surprise to find them in some cases far more distinctly conceived than any of the people in *Roderick Random* or *Peregrine Pickle*. In the second of these, we saw Smollett beginning to understand the use of incident to indicate consistent development of character. In *Count Fathom*, he seems fully to understand this principle of art, though he has not learned to apply it successfully. And so, in spite of an excellent conception, *Fathom*, as I have said, is unreal. After all his villainies, which he perpetrates without any apparent qualms of conscience, it is incredible that he should honestly repent of his crimes. We are much inclined to doubt when we read that "his vice and ambition was now quite mortified within him," the subsequent testimony of Matthew Bramble, Esq., in *Humphry Clinker*, to the contrary, notwithstanding. Yet *Fathom* up to this point is consistently drawn, and drawn for a purpose:—to show that cold-blooded roguery, though successful for a while, will come to grief in the end. To heighten the effect of his scoundrel, Smollett develops parallel with him the virtuous *Count de Melvil*. The author's scheme of thus using one character as the foil of another, though not conspicuous for its originality, shows a decided advance in the theory of constructive technique. Only, as I have said, Smollett's execution is now defective.

"But," one will naturally ask, "if *Fathom* lacks the amusing, and not infrequently stimulating, hurly-burly of Smollett's former novels; if its characters, though well-conceived, are seldom divertingly fantastic and never thoroughly animate; what makes the book interesting?" The surprise will be greater than ever when the answer is given that, to a large extent, the plot makes *Fathom* interesting. Yes, Smollett, hitherto indifferent to structure, has here written a story in which the plot itself, often clumsy though it may be, engages a reader's attention. One actually wants to know whether the young Count is ever going to receive consolation for his sorrows and inflict justice on his basely ungrateful pensioner. And when, finally, all turns out as it should, one is amazed to find how many of the people in the book have helped towards the designed conclusion. Not all of them, indeed, nor all of the adventures, are indispensable, but it is manifest at the end that much, which, for the time, most readers think irrelevant—such as *Don Diego's* history—is, after all, essential.

It has already been said that in *Count Fathom* Smollett appears to some extent as a romanticist, and this is another fact which lends interest to the book. That he had a powerful imagination is not a surprise. Any one versed in Smollett has already seen it in the remarkable situations which he has put before us in his earlier works. These do not indicate, however, that Smollett possessed the imagination which could excite romantic interest; for in *Roderick Random* and in *Peregrine Pickle*, the wonderful situations serve chiefly to amuse. In *Fathom*, however, there are some designed to excite horror; and one, at least, is eminently successful. The hero's night in the wood between *Bar-le-duc* and *Chalons* was no doubt more blood-curdling to our eighteenth-century ancestors than it is to us, who have become acquainted with scores of similar situations in the small number of exciting romances which belong to literature, and in the greater number which do not. Still, even to-day, a reader, with his taste jaded by trashy novels, will be conscious of Smollett's power, and of several thrills, likewise, as he reads about *Fathom's* experience in the loft in which the beldame locks him to pass the night.

This situation is melodramatic rather than romantic, as the word is used technically in application to eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature. There is no little in *Fathom*, however, which is genuinely romantic in the latter sense. Such is the imprisonment of the Countess in the castle-tower, whence she waves her handkerchief to the young Count, her son and would-be rescuer. And especially so is the scene in the church, when *Renaldo* (the very name is romantic) visits at midnight the supposed grave of his lady-love. While he was waiting for the sexton to open the door, his "soul . . . was wound up to the highest pitch of enthusiastic sorrow. The uncommon darkness, . . . the solemn silence, and lonely situation of the place, conspired with the occasion of his coming, and

the dismal images of his fancy, to produce a real rapture of gloomy expectation, which the whole world could not have persuaded him to disappoint. The clock struck twelve, the owl screeched from the ruined battlement, the door was opened by the sexton, who, by the light of a glimmering taper, conducted the despairing lover to a dreary aisle, and stamped upon the ground with his foot, saying, 'Here the young lady lies interred.'"

We have here such an amount of the usual romantic machinery of the "grave-yard" school of poets—that school of which Professor W. L. Phelps calls Young, in his *Night Thoughts*, the most "conspicuous exemplar"—that one is at first inclined to think Smollett poking fun at it. The context, however, seems to prove that he was perfectly serious. It is interesting, then, as well as surprising, to find traces of the romantic spirit in his fiction over ten years before Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*. It is also interesting to find so much melodramatic feeling in him, because it makes stronger the connection between him and his nineteenth-century disciple, Dickens.

From all that I have said, it must not be thought that the usual Smollett is always, or almost always, absent from *Count Fathom*. I have spoken of the dedication and of the opening chapters as what we might expect from his pen. There are, besides, true Smollett strokes in the scenes in the prison from which Melvil rescues Fathom, and there is a good deal of the satirical Smollett fun in the description of Fathom's ups and downs, first as the petted beau, and then as the fashionable doctor. In chronicling the latter meteoric career, Smollett had already observed the peculiarity of his countrymen which Thackeray was fond of harping on in the next century—"the maxim which universally prevails among the English people . . . to overlook, . . . on their return to the metropolis, all the connexions they may have chanced to acquire during their residence at any of the medical wells. And this social disposition is so scrupulously maintained, that two persons who live in the most intimate correspondence at Bath or Tunbridge, shall, in four-and-twenty hours . . . meet in St. James's Park, without betraying the least token of recognition." And good, too, is the way in which, as Dr. Fathom goes rapidly down the social hill, he makes excuses for his declining splendour. His chariot was overturned "with a hideous crash" at such danger to himself, "that he did not believe he should ever hazard himself again in any sort of wheel carriage." He turned off his men for maids, because "men servants are generally impudent, lazy, debauched, or dishonest." To avoid the din of the street, he shifted his lodgings into a quiet, obscure court. And so forth and so on, in the true Smollett vein.

But, after all, such of the old sparks are struck only occasionally. Apart from its plot, which not a few nineteenth-century writers of detective-stories might have improved, *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* is less interesting for itself than any other piece of fiction from Smollett's pen. For a student of Smollett, however, it is highly interesting as showing the author's romantic, melodramatic tendencies, and the growth of his constructive technique.

G. H. MAYNADIER



## TO DOCTOR –

You and I, my good friend, have often deliberated on the difficulty of writing such a dedication as might gratify the self-complacency of a patron, without exposing the author to the ridicule or censure of the public; and I think we generally agreed that the task was altogether impracticable.—Indeed, this was one of the few subjects on which we have always thought in the same manner. For, notwithstanding that deference and regard which we mutually pay to each other, certain it is, we have often differed, according to the predominancy of those different passions, which frequently warp the opinion, and perplex the understanding of the most judicious.

In dedication, as in poetry, there is no medium; for, if any one of the human virtues be omitted in the enumeration of the patron's good qualities, the whole address is construed into an affront, and the writer has the mortification to find his praise prostituted to very little purpose.

On the other hand, should he yield to the transports of gratitude or affection, which is always apt to exaggerate, and produce no more than the genuine effusions of his heart, the world will make no allowance for the warmth of his passion, but ascribe the praise he bestows to interested views and sordid adulation.

Sometimes too, dazzled by the tinsel of a character which he has no opportunity to investigate, he pours forth the homage of his admiration upon some false Maecenas, whose future conduct gives the lie to his eulogium, and involves him in shame and confusion of face. Such was the fate of a late ingenious author [the Author of the "Seasons"], who was so often put to the blush for the undeserved incense he had offered in the heat of an enthusiastic disposition, misled by popular applause, that he had resolved to retract, in his last will, all the encomiums which he had thus prematurely bestowed, and stigmatise the unworthy by name—a laudable scheme of poetical justice, the execution of which was fatally prevented by untimely death.

Whatever may have been the fate of other dedicators, I, for my own part, sit down to write this address, without any apprehension of disgrace or disappointment; because I know you are too well convinced of my affection and sincerity to repine at what I shall say touching your character and conduct. And you will do me the justice to believe, that this public distinction is a testimony of my particular friendship and esteem.

Not that I am either insensible of your infirmities, or disposed to conceal them from the notice of mankind. There are certain foibles which can only be cured by shame and mortification; and whether or not yours be of that species, I shall have the comfort to think my best endeavours were used for your reformation.

Know then, I can despise your pride, while I honour your integrity, and applaud your taste, while I am shocked at your ostentation.—I have known you trifling, superficial, and obstinate in dispute; meanly jealous and awkwardly reserved; rash and haughty in your resentments; and coarse and lowly in your connexions. I have blushed at the weakness of your conversation, and trembled at the errors of your conduct—yet, as I own you possess certain good qualities, which overbalance these defects, and distinguish you on this occasion as a person for whom I have the most perfect attachment and esteem, you have no cause to complain of the indelicacy with which your faults are reprehended. And as they are chiefly the excesses of a sanguine disposition and looseness of thought, impatient of caution or control, you may, thus stimulated, watch over your own intemperance and infirmity with redoubled vigilance and consideration, and for the future profit by the severity of my reproof.

These, however, are not the only motives that induce me to trouble you with this public application. I must not only perform my duty to my friends, but also discharge the debt I owe to my own interest. We live in a censorious age; and an author cannot take too much precaution to anticipate the prejudice, misapprehension, and temerity of malice, ignorance, and presumption.

I therefore think it incumbent upon me to give some previous intimation of the plan which I have executed in the subsequent performance, that I may not be condemned upon partial evidence; and to whom can I with more propriety appeal in my explanation than to you, who are so well acquainted with all the sentiments and emotions of my breast?

A novel is a large diffused picture, comprehending the characters of life, disposed in different groups, and exhibited in various attitudes, for the purposes of an uniform plan, and general occurrence, to which every individual figure is subservient. But this plan cannot be executed with propriety, probability, or success, without a principal personage to attract the attention, unite the incidents, unwind the clue of the labyrinth, and at last close the scene, by virtue of his own importance.

Almost all the heroes of this kind, who have hitherto succeeded on the English stage, are characters of transcendent worth, conducted through the vicissitudes of fortune, to that goal of happiness, which ever ought to be the repose of extraordinary desert.—Yet the same principle by which we rejoice at the remuneration of merit, will teach us to relish the disgrace and discomfiture of vice, which is always an example of extensive use and influence, because it leaves a deep impression of terror upon the minds of those who were not confirmed in the pursuit of morality and virtue, and, while the balance wavers, enables the right scale to preponderate.

In the drama, which is a more limited field of invention, the chief personage is often the object of our detestation and abhorrence; and we are as well pleased to see the wicked schemes of a Richard blasted, and the perfidy of a Maskwell exposed, as to behold a Bevil happy, and an Edward victorious.

The impulses of fear, which is the most violent and interesting of all the passions, remain longer than any other upon the memory; and for one that is allured to virtue, by the contemplation of that peace and happiness which it bestows, a hundred are deterred from the practice of vice, by that infamy and punishment to which it is liable, from the laws and regulations of mankind.

Let me not, therefore, be condemned for having chosen my principal character from the purlieus of treachery and fraud, when I declare my purpose is to set him up as a beacon for the benefit of the unexperienced and unwary, who, from the perusal of these memoirs, may learn to avoid the manifold snares with which they are continually surrounded in the paths of life; while those who hesitate on the brink of iniquity may be terrified from plunging into that irremediable gulf, by surveying the deplorable fate of Ferdinand Count Fathom.

That the mind might not be fatigued, nor the imagination disgusted, by a succession of vicious objects, I have endeavoured to refresh the attention with occasional incidents of a different nature; and raised up a virtuous character, in opposition to the adventurer, with a view to amuse the fancy, engage the affection, and form a striking contrast which might heighten the expression, and give a relief to the moral of the whole.

If I have not succeeded in my endeavours to unfold the mysteries of fraud, to instruct the ignorant, and entertain the vacant; if I have failed in my attempts to subject folly to ridicule, and vice to indignation; to rouse the spirit of mirth, wake the soul of compassion, and touch the secret springs that move the heart; I have, at least, adorned virtue with honour and applause, branded iniquity with reproach and shame, and carefully avoided every hint or expression which could give umbrage to the most delicate reader—circumstances which (whatever may be my fate with the public) will with you always operate in favour of,

Dear sir, your very affectionate friend and servant,  
THE AUTHOR.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **SOME SAGE OBSERVATIONS THAT NATURALLY INTRODUCE OUR IMPORTANT HISTORY**

Cardinal de Retz very judiciously observes, that all historians must of necessity be subject to mistakes, in explaining the motives of those actions they record, unless they derive their intelligence from the candid confession of the person whose character they represent; and that, of consequence, every man of importance ought to write his own memoirs, provided he has honesty enough to tell the truth, without suppressing any circumstance that may tend to the information of the reader. This, however, is a requisite that, I am afraid, would be very rarely found among the number of those who exhibit their own portraits to the public. Indeed, I will venture to say, that, how upright soever a man's intentions may be, he will, in the performance of such a task, be sometimes misled by his own phantasy, and represent objects, as they appeared to him, through the mists of prejudice and passion.

An unconcerned reader, when he peruses the history of two competitors, who lived two thousand years ago, or who perhaps never had existence, except in the imagination of the author, cannot help interesting himself in the dispute, and espousing one side of the contest, with all the zeal of a warm adherent. What wonder, then, that we should be heated in our own concerns, review our actions with the same self-approbation that they had formerly acquired, and recommend them to the world with all the enthusiasm of paternal affection?

Supposing this to be the case, it was lucky for the cause of historical truth, that so many pens have been drawn by writers, who could not be suspected of such partiality; and that many great personages, among the ancients as well as moderns, either would not or could not entertain the public with their own memoirs. From this want of inclination or capacity to write, in our hero himself, the undertaking is now left to me, of transmitting to posterity the remarkable adventures of FERDINAND COUNT FATHOM; and by the time the reader shall have glanced over the subsequent sheets, I doubt not but he will bless God that the adventurer was not his own historian.

This mirror of modern chivalry was none of those who owe their dignity to the circumstances of their birth, and are consecrated from the cradle for the purposes of greatness, merely because they are the accidental children of wealth. He was heir to no visible patrimony, unless we reckon a robust constitution, a tolerable appearance, and an uncommon capacity, as the advantages of inheritance. If the comparison obtains in this point of consideration, he was as much as any man indebted to his parent; and pity it was, that, in the sequel of his fortune, he never had an opportunity of manifesting his filial gratitude and regard. From this agreeable act of duty to his sire, and all those tendernesses that are reciprocally enjoyed betwixt the father and the son, he was unhappily excluded by a small circumstance; at which, however, he was never heard to repine. In short, had he been brought forth in the fabulous ages of the world, the nature of his origin might have turned to his account; he might, like other heroes of antiquity, have laid claim to divine extraction, without running the risk of being claimed by an earthly father. Not that his parents had any reason to disown or renounce their offspring, or that there was anything preternatural in the circumstances of his generation and birth; on the contrary, he was, from the beginning, a child of promising parts, and in due course of nature ushered into the world amidst a whole cloud of witnesses. But, that he was acknowledged by no mortal sire, solely proceeded from the uncertainty of his mother, whose affections were so dissipated among a number of admirers, that she could never pitch upon the person from whose loins our hero sprung.

Over and above this important doubt under which he was begotten, other particularities attended his birth, and seemed to mark him out as something uncommon among the sons of men. He was brought forth in a waggon, and might be said to be literally a native of two different countries; for, though he first saw the light in Holland, he was not born till after the carriage arrived in Flanders; so

that, all these extraordinary circumstances considered, the task of determining to what government he naturally owed allegiance, would be at least as difficult as that of ascertaining the so much contested birthplace of Homer.

Certain it is, the Count's mother was an Englishwoman, who, after having been five times a widow in one campaign, was, in the last year of the renowned Marlborough's command, numbered among the baggage of the allied army, which she still accompanied, through pure benevolence of spirit, supplying the ranks with the refreshing streams of choice Geneva, and accommodating individuals with clean linen, as the emergency of their occasions required. Nor was her philanthropy altogether confined to such ministration; she abounded with "the milk of human kindness," which flowed plentifully among her fellow-creatures; and to every son of Mars who cultivated her favour, she liberally dispensed her smiles, in order to sweeten the toils and dangers of the field.

And here it will not be amiss to anticipate the remarks of the reader, who, in the chastity and excellency of his conception, may possibly exclaim, "Good Heaven! will these authors never reform their imaginations, and lift their ideas from the obscene objects of low life? Must the public be again disgusted with the grovelling adventures of a waggon? Will no writer of genius draw his pen in the vindication of taste, and entertain us with the agreeable characters, the dignified conversation, the poignant repartee, in short, the genteel comedy of the polite world?"

Have a little patience, gentle, delicate, sublime critic; you, I doubt not, are one of those consummate connoisseurs, who, in their purifications, let humour evaporate, while they endeavour to preserve decorum, and polish wit, until the edge of it is quite worn off. Or, perhaps, of that class, who, in the sapience of taste, are disgusted with those very flavours in the productions of their own country which have yielded infinite delectation to their faculties, when imported from another clime; and deem an author in despite of all precedent and prescription;—who extol the writings of Petronius Arbiter, read with rapture the amorous sallies of Ovid's pen, and chuckle over the story of Lucian's ass; yet, if a modern author presumes to relate the progress of a simple intrigue, are shocked at the indecency and immorality of the scene;—who delight in following Guzman d'Alfarache, through all the mazes of squalid beggary; who with pleasure accompany Don Quixote and his squire, in the lowest paths of fortune; who are diverted with the adventures of Scarron's ragged troop of strollers, and highly entertained with the servile situations of Gil Blas; yet, when a character in humble life occasionally occurs in a performance of our own growth, exclaim, with an air of disgust, "Was ever anything so mean! sure, this writer must have been very conversant with the lowest scenes of life;"—who, when Swift or Pope represents a coxcomb in the act of swearing, scruple not to laugh at the ridiculous execrations; but, in a less reputed author, condemn the use of such profane expletives;—who eagerly explore the jakes of Rabelais, for amusement, and even extract humour from the dean's description of a lady's dressing-room; yet in a production of these days, unstamped with such venerable names, will stop their noses, with all the signs of loathing and abhorrence, at a bare mention of the china chamber-pot;—who applauded Catullus, Juvenal, Persius, and Lucan, for their spirit in lashing the greatest names of antiquity; yet, when a British satirist, of this generation, has courage enough to call in question the talents of a pseudo-patron in power, accuse him of insolence, rancour, and scurrility.

If such you be, courteous reader, I say again, have a little patience; for your entertainment we are about to write. Our hero shall, with all convenient despatch, be gradually sublimed into those splendid connexions of which you are enamoured; and God forbid, that, in the meantime, the nature of his extraction should turn to his prejudice in a land of freedom like this, where individuals are every day ennobled in consequence of their own qualifications, without the least retrospective regard to the rank or merit of their ancestors. Yes, refined reader, we are hastening to that goal of perfection, where satire dares not show her face; where nature is castigated, almost even to still life; where humour turns changeling, and slavers in an insipid grin; where wit is volatilised into a mere vapour; where decency, divested of all substance, hovers about like a fantastic shadow; where the salt of genius,

escaping, leaves nothing but pure and simple phlegm; and the inoffensive pen for ever drops the mild manna of soul-sweetening praise.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A SUPERFICIAL VIEW OF OUR HERO'S INFANCY

Having thus bespoken the indulgence of our guests, let us now produce the particulars of our entertainment, and speedily conduct our adventurer through the stage of infancy, which seldom teems with interesting incidents.

As the occupations of his mother would not conveniently permit her to suckle this her firstborn at her own breast, and those happy ages were now no more, in which the charge of nursing a child might be left to the next goat or she-wolf, she resolved to improve upon the ordinances of nature, and foster him with a juice much more energetic than the milk of goat, wolf, or woman; this was no other than that delicious nectar, which, as we have already hinted, she so cordially distributed from a small cask that hung before her, depending from her shoulders by a leathern zone. Thus determined, ere he was yet twelve days old, she enclosed him in a canvas knapsack, which being adjusted to her neck, fell down upon her back, and balanced the cargo that rested on her bosom.

There are not wanting those who affirm, that, while her double charge was carried about in this situation, her keg was furnished with a long and slender flexible tube, which, when the child began to be clamorous, she conveyed into his mouth, and straight he stilled himself with sucking; but this we consider as an extravagant assertion of those who mix the marvellous in all their narrations, because we cannot conceive how the tender organs of an infant could digest such a fiery beverage, which never fails to discompose the constitutions of the most hardy and robust. We therefore conclude that the use of this potation was more restrained, and that it was with simple element diluted into a composition adapted to his taste and years. Be this as it will, he certainly was indulged in the use of it to such a degree as would have effectually obstructed his future fortune, had not he been happily cloyed with the repetition of the same fare, for which he conceived the utmost detestation and abhorrence, rejecting it with loathing and disgust, like those choice spirits, who, having been crammed with religion in their childhood, renounce it in their youth, among other absurd prejudices of education.

While he was thus dangled in a state of suspension, a German trooper was transiently smitten with the charms of his mother, who listened to his honourable addresses, and once more received the silken bonds of matrimony; the ceremony having been performed as usual at the drum-head. The lady had no sooner taken possession of her new name, than she bestowed it upon her son, who was thenceforward distinguished by the appellation of Ferdinand de Fathom; nor was the husband offended at this presumption in his wife, which he not only considered as a proof of her affection and esteem, but also as a compliment, by which he might in time acquire the credit of being the real father of such a hopeful child.

Notwithstanding this new engagement with a foreigner, our hero's mother still exercised the virtues of her calling among the English troops, so much was she biassed by that laudable partiality, which, as Horace observes, the natale solum generally inspires. Indeed this inclination was enforced by another reason, that did not fail to influence her conduct in this particular; all her knowledge of the High Dutch language consisted in some words of traffic absolutely necessary for the practice of her vocation, together with sundry oaths and terms of reproach, that kept her customers in awe; so that, except among her own countrymen, she could not indulge that propensity to conversation, for which she had been remarkable from her earliest years. Nor did this instance of her affection fail of turning to her account in the sequel. She was promoted to the office of cook to a regimental mess of officers; and, before the peace of Utrecht, was actually in possession of a sutling-tent, pitched for the accommodation of the gentlemen in the army.

Meanwhile, Ferdinand improved apace in the accomplishments of infancy; his beauty was conspicuous, and his vigour so uncommon, that he was with justice likened unto Hercules in the cradle. The friends of his father-in-law dandled him on their knees, while he played with their

whiskers, and, before he was thirteen months old, taught him to suck brandy impregnated with gunpowder, through the touch-hole of a pistol. At the same time, he was caressed by divers serjeants of the British army, who severally and in secret contemplated his qualifications with a father's pride, excited by the artful declaration with which the mother had flattered each apart.

Soon as the war was (for her unhappily) concluded, she, as in duty bound, followed her husband into Bohemia; and his regiment being sent into garrison at Prague, she opened a cabaret in that city, which was frequented by a good many guests of the Scotch and Irish nations, who were devoted to the exercise of arms in the service of the Emperor. It was by this communication that the English tongue became vernacular to young Ferdinand, who, without such opportunity, would have been a stranger to the language of his forefathers, in spite of all his mother's loquacity and elocution; though it must be owned, for the credit of her maternal care, that she let slip no occasion of making it familiar to his ear and conception; for, even at those intervals in which she could find no person to carry on the altercation, she used to hold forth in earnest soliloquies upon the subject of her own situation, giving vent to many opprobrious invectives against her husband's country, between which and Old England she drew many odious comparisons; and prayed, without ceasing, that Europe might speedily be involved in a general war, so as that she might have some chance of re-enjoying the pleasures and emoluments of a Flanders campaign.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **HE IS INITIATED IN A MILITARY LIFE, AND HAS THE GOOD FORTUNE TO ACQUIRE A GENEROUS PATRON**

While she wearied Heaven with these petitions, the flame of war broke out betwixt the houses of Ottoman and Austria, and the Emperor sent forth an army into Hungary, under the auspices of the renowned Prince Eugene. On account of this expedition, the mother of our hero gave up housekeeping, and cheerfully followed her customers and husband into the field; having first provided herself with store of those commodities in which she had formerly merchandised. Although the hope of profit might in some measure affect her determination, one of the chief motives for her visiting the frontiers of Turkey, was the desire of initiating her son in the rudiments of his education, which she now thought high time to inculcate, he being, at this period, in the sixth year of his age; he was accordingly conducted to the camp, which she considered as the most consummate school of life, and proposed for the scene of his instruction; and in this academy he had not continued many weeks, when he was an eye-witness of that famous victory, which, with sixty thousand men, the Imperial general obtained over an army of one hundred and fifty thousand Turks.

His father-in-law was engaged, and his mother would not be idle on this occasion. She was a perfect mistress of all the camp qualifications, and thought it a duty incumbent on her to contribute all that lay in her power towards distressing the enemy. With these sentiments she hovered about the skirts of the army, and the troops were no sooner employed in the pursuit, than she began to traverse the field of battle with a poignard and a bag, in order to consult her own interest, annoy the foe, and exercise her humanity at the same time. In short, she had, with amazing prowess, delivered some fifty or threescore disabled Mussulmen of the pain under which they groaned, and made a comfortable booty of the spoils of the slain, when her eyes were attracted by the rich attire of an Imperial officer, who lay bleeding on the plain, to all appearance in the agonies of death.

She could not in her heart refuse that favour to a friend and Christian she had so compassionately bestowed upon so many enemies and infidels, and therefore drew near with the sovereign remedy, which she had already administered with such success. As she approached this deplorable object of pity, her ears were surprised with an ejaculation in the English tongue, which he fervently pronounced, though with a weak and languid voice, recommending his soul to God, and his family to the protection of Heaven. Our Amazon's purpose was staggered by this providential incident; the sound of her native language, so unexpectedly heard, and so pathetically delivered, had a surprising effect upon her imagination; and the faculty of reflection did not forsake her in such emergency. Though she could not recollect the features of this unhappy officer, she concluded, from his appearance, that he was some person of distinction in the service, and foresaw greater advantage to herself in attempting to preserve his life, than she could possibly reap from the execution of her first resolve. "If," said she to herself, "I can find means of conveying him to his tent alive, he cannot but in conscience acknowledge my humanity with some considerable recompense; and, should he chance to survive his wounds, I have everything to expect from his gratitude and power."

Fraught with these prudential suggestions, she drew near the unfortunate stranger, and, in a softened accent of pity and condolence, questioned him concerning his name, condition, and the nature of his mischance, at the same time making a gentle tender of her service. Agreeably surprised to hear himself accosted in such a manner, by a person whose equipage seemed to promise far other designs, he thanked her in the most grateful terms for her humanity, with the appellation of kind countrywoman; gave her to understand that he was colonel of a regiment of horse; that he had fallen in consequence of a shot he received in his breast at the beginning of the action; and, finally, entreated her to procure some carriage on which he might be removed to his tent. Perceiving him faint and



exhausted with loss of blood, she raised up his head, and treated him with that cordial which was her constant companion. At that instant, espying a small body of hussars returning to the camp with the plunder they had taken, she invoked their assistance, and they forthwith carried the officer to his own quarters, where his wound was dressed, and his preserver carefully tended him until his recovery was completed.

In return for these good offices, this gentleman, who was originally of Scotland, rewarded her for the present with great liberality, assured her of his influence in promoting her husband, and took upon himself the charge of young Ferdinand's education; the boy was immediately taken into his protection, and entered as a trooper in his own regiment; but his good intentions towards his father-in-law were frustrated by the death of the German, who, in a few days after this disposition, was shot in the trenches before Temiswaer.

This event, over and above the conjugal affliction with which it invaded the lady's quiet, would have involved her in infinite difficulty and distress, with regard to her temporal concerns, by leaving her unprotected in the midst of strangers, had not she been thus providentially supplied with an effectual patron in the colonel, who was known by the appellation of Count Melvil. He no sooner saw her, by the death of her husband, detached from all personal connexions with a military life, than he proposed that she should quit her occupation in the camp, and retire to his habitation in the city of Presburg, where she would be entertained in ease and plenty during the remaining part of her natural life. With all due acknowledgments of his generosity, she begged to be excused from embracing his proposal, alleging she was so much accustomed to her present way of life, and so much devoted to the service of the soldiery, that she should never be happy in retirement, while the troops of any prince in Christendom kept the field.

The Count, finding her determined to prosecute her scheme, repeated his promise of befriending her upon all occasions; and in the meantime admitted Ferdinand into the number of his domestics, resolving that he should be brought up in attendance upon his own son, who was a boy of the same age. He kept him, however, in his tent, until he should have an opportunity of revisiting his family in person; and, before that occasion offered, two whole years elapsed, during which the illustrious Prince Eugene gained the celebrated battle of Belgrade, and afterwards made himself master of that important frontier.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **HIS MOTHER'S PROWESS AND DEATH; TOGETHER WITH SOME INSTANCES OF HIS OWN SAGACITY**

It would have been impossible for the mother of our adventurer, such as she hath been described, to sit quietly in her tent, while such an heroic scene was acting. She was no sooner apprised of the general's intention to attack the enemy, than she, as usual, packed up her moveables in a waggon, which she committed to the care of a peasant in the neighbourhood, and put herself in motion with the troops; big with the expectation of re-acting that part in which she had formerly acquitted herself so much to her advantage.—Nay, she by this time looked upon her own presence as a certain omen of success to the cause which she espoused; and, in their march to battle, actually encouraged the ranks with repeated declarations, importing, that she had been eye-witness of ten decisive engagements, in all of which her friends had been victorious, and imputing such uncommon good fortune to some supernatural quality inherent in her person.

Whether or not this confidence contributed to the fortune of the day, by inspiring the soldiers to an uncommon pitch of courage and resolution, I shall not pretend to determine. But, certain it is, the victory began from that quarter in which she had posted herself; and no corps in the army behaved with such intrepidity as that which was manifested by those who were favoured with her admonitions and example; for she not only exposed her person to the enemy's fire, with the indifference and deliberation of a veteran, but she is said to have achieved a very conspicuous exploit by the prowess of her single arm. The extremity of the line to which she had attached herself, being assaulted in flank by a body of the spahis, wheeled about, in order to sustain the charge, and received them with such a seasonable fire, as brought a great number of turbans to the ground; among those who fell, was one of the chiefs or agas, who had advanced before the rest, with a view to signalise his valour.

Our English Penthesilea no sooner saw this Turkish leader drop, than, struck with the magnificence of his own and horse's trappings, she sprung forward to seize them as her prize, and found the aga not dead, though in a good measure disabled by his misfortune, which was entirely owing to the weight of his horse, that, having been killed by a musket-ball, lay upon his leg, so that he could not disengage himself. Nevertheless, perceiving the virago approach with fell intent, he brandished his symitar, and tried to intimidate his assailant with a most horrible exclamation; but it was not the dismal yell of a dismounted cavalier, though enforced with a hideous ferocity of countenance, and the menacing gestures with which he waited her approach, that could intimidate such an undaunted she-campaigner; she saw him writhing in the agonies of a situation from which he could not move; and, running towards him with the nimbleness and intrepidity of a Camilla, described a semicircle in the progress of her assault, and attacking him on one side, plunged her well-tried dagger in his throat. The shades of death encompassed him, his life-blood issued at the wound, he fell prone upon the earth, he bit the dust, and having thrice invoked the name of Allah! straight expired.

While his destiny was thus fulfilled, his followers began to reel; they seemed dismayed at the fate of their chief, beheld their companions drop like the leaves in autumn, and suddenly halted in the midst of their career. The Imperialists, observing the confusion of the enemy, redoubled their fire; and, raising a dreadful shout, advanced in order to improve the advantage they had gained. The spahis durst not wait the shock of such an encounter; they wheeled to the right-about, and clapping spurs to their horses, fled in the utmost disorder. This was actually the circumstance that turned the scale of battle. The Austrians pursued their good fortune with uncommon impetuosity, and in a few minutes left the field clear for the mother of our hero, who was such an adept in the art of stripping, that in the twinkling of an eye the bodies of the aga and his Arabian lay naked to the skin. It would have been happy for her, had she been contented with these first-fruits, reaped from the fortune of

the day, and retired with her spoils, which were not inconsiderable; but, intoxicated with the glory she had won, enticed by the glittering caparisons that lay scattered on the plain, and without doubt prompted by the secret instinct of her fate, she resolved to seize opportunity by the forelock, and once for all indemnify herself for the many fatigues, hazards, and sorrows she had undergone.

Thus determined, she reconnoitred the field, and practised her address so successfully, that in less than half an hour she was loaded with ermine and embroidery, and disposed to retreat with her burden, when her regards were solicited by a splendid bundle, which she descried at some distance lying on the ground. This was no other than an unhappy officer of hussars; who, after having the good fortune to take a Turkish standard, was desperately wounded in the thigh, and obliged to quit his horse; finding himself in such a helpless condition, he had wrapped his acquisition round his body, that whatever might happen, he and his glory should not be parted; and thus shrouded, among the dying and the dead, he had observed the progress of our heroine, who stalked about the field, like another Atropos, finishing, wherever she came, the work of death. He did not at all doubt, that he himself would be visited in the course of her peregrinations, and therefore provided for her reception, with a pistol ready cocked in his hand, while he lay perdue beneath his covert, in all appearance bereft of life. He was not deceived in his prognostic; she no sooner eyed the golden crescent than, inflamed with curiosity or cupidity, she directed thitherward her steps, and discerning the carcass of a man, from which, she thought, there would be a necessity for disengaging it, she lifted up her weapon, in order to make sure of her purchase; and in the very instant of discharging her blow, received a brace of bullets in her brain.

Thus ended the mortal pilgrimage of this modern Amazon; who, in point of courage, was not inferior to Semiramis, Tomyris, Zenobia, Thalestris, or any boasted heroine of ancient times. It cannot be supposed that this catastrophe made a very deep impression upon the mind of young Ferdinand, who had just then attained the ninth year of his age, and been for a considerable time weaned from her maternal caresses; especially as he felt no wants nor grievances in the family of the Count, who favoured him with a particular share of indulgence, because he perceived in him a spirit of docility, insinuation, and sagacity, far above his years. He did not, however, fail to lament the untimely fate of his mother, with such filial expressions of sorrow, as still more intimately recommended him to his patron; who, being himself a man of extraordinary benevolence, looked upon the boy as a prodigy of natural affection, and foresaw in his future services a fund of gratitude and attachment, that could not fail to render him a valuable acquisition to his family.

In his own country, he had often seen connexions of that sort, which having been planted in the infancy of the adherent, had grown up to a surprising pitch of fidelity and friendship, that no temptation could bias, and no danger dissolve. He therefore rejoiced in the hope of seeing his own son accommodated with such a faithful attendant, in the person of young Fathom, on whom he resolved to bestow the same education he had planned for the other, though conveyed in such a manner as should be suitable to the sphere in which he was ordained to move. In consequence of these determinations, our young adventurer led a very easy life, in quality of page to the Count, in whose tent he lay upon a pallet, close to his field-bed, and often diverted him with his childish prattle in the English tongue, which the more seldom his master had occasion to speak, he the more delighted to hear. In the exercise of his function, the boy was incredibly assiduous and alert; far from neglecting the little particulars of his duty, and embarking in the mischievous amusements of the children belonging to the camp, he was always diligent, sedate, agreeably officious and anticipating; and in the whole of his behaviour seemed to express the most vigilant sense of his patron's goodness and generosity; nay, to such a degree had these sentiments, in all appearance, operated upon his reflection, that one morning, while he supposed the Count asleep, he crept softly to his bedside, and gently kissing his hand, which happened to be uncovered, pronounced, in a low voice, a most fervent prayer in his behalf, beseeching Heaven to shower down blessings upon him, as the widow's friend and the orphan's father. This benediction was not lost upon the Count, who chanced to be awake,

and heard it with admiration; but what riveted Ferdinand in his good graces, was a discovery that our youth made, while his master was upon duty in the trenches before Belgrade.

Two foot soldiers, standing sentry near the door of the tent, were captivated with the sight of some valuable moveables belonging to it; and supposing, in their great wisdom, that the city of Belgrade was too well fortified to be taken during that campaign, they came to a resolution of withdrawing themselves from the severe service of the trenches, by deserting to the enemy, after they should have rifled Count Melvil's tent of the furniture by which they were so powerfully allured. The particulars of this plan were concerted in the French language, which, they imagined, would screen them from all risk of being detected, in case they should be overheard, though, as there was no living creature in sight, they had no reason to believe that any person was privy to their conversation. Nevertheless, they were mistaken in both these conjectures. The conference reached the ears of Fathom, who was at the other end of the tent, and had perceived the eager looks with which they considered some parts of the furniture. He had penetration enough to suspect their desire, and, alarmed by that suspicion, listened attentively to their discourse; which, from a slender knowledge in the French tongue, he had the good fortune partly to understand.

This important piece of intelligence he communicated to the Count at his return, and measures were immediately taken to defeat the design, and make an example of the authors, who being permitted to load themselves with the booty, were apprehended in their retreat, and punished with death according to their demerits.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A BRIEF DETAIL OF HIS EDUCATION

Nothing could have more seasonably happened to confirm the good opinion which the colonel entertained of Ferdinand's principles. His intentions towards the boy grew every day more and more warm; and, immediately after the peace of Passarowitz, he retired to his own house at Presburg, and presented young Fathom to his lady, not only as the son of a person to whom he owed his life, but also as a lad who merited his peculiar protection and regard by his own personal virtue. The Countess, who was an Hungarian, received him with great kindness and affability, and her son was ravished with the prospect of enjoying such a companion. In short, fortune seemed to have provided for him an asylum, in which he might be safely trained up, and suitably prepared for more important scenes of life than any of his ancestors had ever known.

He was not, in all respects, entertained on the footing of his young master; yet he shared in all his education and amusements, as one whom the old gentleman was fully determined to qualify for the station of an officer in the service; and, if he did not eat with the Count, he was every day regaled with choice bits from his table; holding, as it were, a middle place between the rank of a relation and favourite domestic. Although his patron maintained a tutor in the house, to superintend the conduct of his heir, he committed the charge of his learning to the instructions of a public school; where he imagined the boy would imbibe a laudable spirit of emulation among his fellows, which could not fail of turning out to the advantage of his education. Ferdinand was entered in the same academy; and the two lads proceeded equally in the paths of erudition; a mutual friendship and intimacy soon ensued, and, notwithstanding the levity and caprice commonly discernible in the behaviour of such boys, very few or rather no quarrels happened in the course of their communication. Yet their dispositions were altogether different, and their talents unlike. Nay, this dissimilarity was the very bond of their union; because it prevented that jealousy and rivalry which often interrupts the harmony of two warm contemporaries.

The young Count made extraordinary progress in the exercises of the school, though he seemed to take very little pains in the cultivation of his studies; and became a perfect hero in all the athletic diversions of his fellow-scholars; but, at the same time, exhibited such a bashful appearance and uncouth address, that his mother despaired of ever seeing him improved into any degree of polite behaviour. On the other hand, Fathom, who was in point of learning a mere dunce, became, even in his childhood, remarkable among the ladies for his genteel deportment and vivacity; they admired the proficiency he made under the directions of his dancing-master, the air with which he performed his obeisance at his entrance and exit; and were charmed with the agreeable assurance and lively sallies of his conversation; while they expressed the utmost concern and disgust at the boorish demeanour of his companion, whose extorted bows resembled the pawings of a mule, who hung his head in silence like a detected sheep-stealer, who sat in company under the most awkward expressions of constraint, and whose discourse never exceeded the simple monosyllables of negation and assent.

In vain did all the females of the family propose to him young Fathom, as a pattern and reproach. He remained unaltered by all their efforts and expostulations, and allowed our adventurer to enjoy the triumph of his praise, while he himself was conscious of his own superiority in those qualifications which seemed of more real importance than the mere exteriors and forms of life. His present ambition was not to make a figure at his father's table, but to eclipse his rivals at school, and to acquire an influence and authority among these confederates. Nevertheless, Fathom might possibly have fallen under his displeasure or contempt, had not that pliant genius found means to retain his friendship by seasonable compliances and submission; for the sole study, or at least the chief aim of Ferdinand, was to make himself necessary and agreeable to those on whom his dependence was placed. His talent was in this particular suited to his inclination; he seemed to have inherited it from his mother's womb;

and, without all doubt, would have raised upon it a most admirable superstructure of fortune and applause, had not it been inseparably yoked with a most insidious principle of self-love, that grew up with him from the cradle, and left no room in his heart for the least particle of social virtue. This last, however, he knew so well how to counterfeit, by means of a large share of ductility and dissimulation, that, surely, he was calculated by nature to dupe even the most cautious, and gratify his appetites, by levying contributions on all mankind.

So little are the common instructors of youth qualified to judge the capacities of those who are under their tutelage and care, that Fathom, by dint of his insinuating arts, made shift to pass upon the schoolmaster as a lad of quick parts, in despite of a natural inaptitude to retain his lessons, which all his industry could never overcome. In order to remedy, or rather to cloak this defect in his understanding, he had always recourse to the friendship of the young Count, who freely permitted him to transcribe his exercises, until a small accident happened, which had well-nigh put a stop to these instances of his generosity.—The adventure, inconsiderable as it is, we shall record, as the first overt act of Ferdinand's true character, as well as an illustration of the opinion we have advanced touching the blind and injudicious decisions of a right pedagogue.

Among other tasks imposed by the pedant upon the form to which our two companions belonged, they were one evening ordered to translate a chapter of Caesar's Commentaries. Accordingly the young Count went to work, and performed the undertaking with great elegance and despatch. Fathom, having spent the night in more effeminate amusements, was next morning so much hurried for want of time, that in his transcription he neglected to insert a few variations from the text, these being the terms on which he was allowed to use it; so that it was verbatim a copy of the original. As those exercises were always delivered in a heap, subscribed with the several names of the boys to whom they belonged, the schoolmaster chanced to peruse the version of Ferdinand, before he looked into any of the rest, and could not help bestowing upon it particular marks of approbation. The next that fell under his examination was that of the young Count, when he immediately perceived the sameness, and, far from imputing it to the true cause, upbraided him with having copied the exercise of our adventurer, and insisted upon chastising him upon the spot for his want of application.

Had not the young gentleman thought his honour was concerned, he would have submitted to the punishment without murmuring; but he inherited, from his parents, the pride of two fierce nations, and, being overwhelmed with reproaches for that which he imagined ought to have redounded to his glory, he could not brook the indignity, and boldly affirmed, that he himself was the original, to whom Ferdinand was beholden for his performance. The schoolmaster, nettled to find himself mistaken in his judgment, resolved that the Count should have no cause to exult in the discovery he had made, and, like a true flogger, actually whipped him for having allowed Fathom to copy his exercise. Nay, in the hope of vindicating his own penetration, he took an opportunity of questioning Ferdinand in private concerning the circumstances of the translation, and our hero, perceiving his drift, gave him such artful and ambiguous answers, as persuaded him that the young Count had acted the part of a plagiarist, and that the other had been restrained from doing himself justice, by the consideration of his own dependence.

This profound director did not fail, in honour of his own discernment, to whisper about the misrepresentation, as an instance of the young Count's insolence, and Fathom's humility and good sense. The story was circulated among the servants, especially the maids belonging to the family, whose favour our hero had acquired by his engaging behaviour; and at length it reached the ears of his patron, who, incensed at his son's presumption and inhospitality, called him to a severe account, when the young gentleman absolutely denied the truth of the allegation, and appealed to the evidence of Fathom himself. Our adventurer was accordingly summoned by the father, and encouraged to declare the truth, with an assurance of his constant protection; upon which Ferdinand very wisely fell upon his knees, and, while the tears gushed from his eyes, acquitted the young Count of the imputation,

and expressed his apprehension, that the report had been spread by some of his enemies, who wanted to prejudice him in the opinion of his patron.

The old gentleman was not satisfied of his son's integrity by this declaration; being naturally of a generous disposition, highly prepossessed in favour of the poor orphan, and chagrined at the unpromising appearance of his heir, he suspected that Fathom was overawed by the fear of giving offence, and that, notwithstanding what he had said, the case really stood as it had been represented. In this persuasion, he earnestly exhorted his son to resist and combat with any impulse he might feel within himself, tending to selfishness, fraud, or imposition; to encourage every sentiment of candour and benevolence, and to behave with moderation and affability to all his fellow-creatures. He laid upon him strong injunctions, not without a mixture of threats, to consider Fathom as the object of his peculiar regard; to respect him as the son of the Count's preserver, as a Briton, a stranger, and, above all, an helpless orphan, to whom the rights of hospitality were doubly due.

Such admonitions were not lost upon the youth, who, under the rough husk of his personal exhibition, possessed a large share of generous sensibility. Without any formal professions to his father, he resolved to govern himself according to his remonstrances; and, far from conceiving the least spark of animosity against Fathom, he looked upon the poor boy as the innocent cause of his disgrace, and redoubled his kindness towards him, that his honour might never again be called in question, upon the same subject. Nothing is more liable to misconstruction than an act of uncommon generosity; one half of the world mistake the motive, from want of ideas to conceive an instance of beneficence that soars so high above the level of their own sentiments; and the rest suspect it of something sinister or selfish, from the suggestions of their own sordid and vicious inclinations. The young Count subjected himself to such misinterpretation, among those who observed the increased warmth of civility and complaisance in his behaviour to Ferdinand. They ascribed it to his desire of still profiting by our adventurer's superior talents, by which alone they supposed him enabled to maintain any degree of reputation at school; or to the fear of being convicted by him of some misdemeanour of which he knew himself guilty. These suspicions were not effaced by the conduct of Ferdinand, who, when examined on the subject, managed his answers in such a manner, as confirmed their conjectures, while he pretended to refute them, and at the same time acquired to himself credit for his extraordinary discretion and self-denial.

If he exhibited such a proof of sagacity in the twelfth year of his age, what might not be expected from his finesse in the maturity of his faculties and experience? Thus secured in the good graces of the whole family, he saw the days of his puerility glide along in the most agreeable elapse of caresses and amusement. He never fairly plunged into the stream of school-education, but, by floating on the surface, imbibed a small tincture of those different sciences which his master pretended to teach. In short, he resembled those vagrant swallows that skim along the level of some pool or river, without venturing to wet one feather in their wings, except in the accidental pursuit of an inconsiderable fly. Yet, though his capacity or inclination was unsuited for studies of this kind, he did not fail to manifest a perfect genius in the acquisition of other more profitable arts. Over and above the accomplishments of address, for which he hath been already celebrated, he excelled all his fellows in his dexterity at fives and billiards; was altogether unrivalled in his skill at draughts and backgammon; began, even at these years, to understand the moves and schemes of chess; and made himself a mere adept in the mystery of cards, which he learned in the course of his assiduities and attention to the females of the house.

## CHAPTER SIX

### HE MEDITATES SCHEMES OF IMPORTANCE

It was in these parties that he attracted the notice and friendship of his patron's daughter, a girl by two years older than himself, who was not insensible to his qualifications, and looked upon him with the most favourable eyes of prepossession. Whether or not he at this period of his life began to project plans for availing himself of her susceptibility, is uncertain; but, without all doubt, he cultivated her esteem with as obsequious and submissive attention as if he had already formed the design, which, in his advanced age, he attempted to put in execution.

Divers circumstances conspired to promote him in the favour of this young lady; the greenness of his years secured him from any appearance of fallacious aim; so that he was indulged in frequent opportunities of conversing with his young mistress, whose parents encouraged this communication, by which they hoped she would improve in speaking the language of her father. Such connexions naturally produce intimacy and friendship. Fathom's person was agreeable, his talents calculated for the meridian of those parties, and his manners so engaging, that there would have been no just subject for wonder, had he made an impression upon the tender unexperienced heart of Mademoiselle de Melvil, whose beauty was not so attractive as to extinguish his hope, in raising up a number of formidable rivals; though her expectations of fortune were such as commonly lend additional lustre to personal merit.

All these considerations were so many steps towards the success of Ferdinand's pretensions; and though he cannot be supposed to have perceived them at first, he in the sequel seemed perfectly well apprised of his advantages, and used them to the full extent of his faculties. Observing that she delighted in music, he betook himself to the study of that art, and, by dint of application and a tolerable ear, learned of himself to accompany her with a German flute, while she sung and played upon the harpsichord. The Count, seeing his inclination, and the progress he had made, resolved that his capacity should not be lost for want of cultivation; and accordingly provided him with a master, by whom he was instructed in the principles of the art, and soon became a proficient in playing upon the violin.

In the practice of these improvements and avocations, and in attendance upon his young master, whom he took care never to disoblige or neglect, he attained to the age of sixteen, without feeling the least abatement in the friendship and generosity of those upon whom he depended; but, on the contrary, receiving every day fresh marks of their bounty and regard. He had before this time been smit with the ambition of making a conquest of the young lady's heart, and foresaw manifold advantages to himself in becoming son-in-law to Count Melvil, who, he never doubted, would soon be reconciled to the match, if once it could be effectuated without his knowledge. Although he thought he had great reason to believe that Mademoiselle looked upon him with an eye of peculiar favour, his disposition was happily tempered with an ingredient of caution, that hindered him from acting with precipitation; and he had discerned in the young lady's deportment certain indications of loftiness and pride, which kept him in the utmost vigilance and circumspection; for he knew, that, by a premature declaration, he should run the risk of forfeiting all the advantages he had gained, and blasting those expectations that now blossomed so gaily in his heart.

Restricted by these reflections, he acted at a wary distance, and determined to proceed by the method of sap, and, summoning all his artifice and attractions to his aid, employed them under the insidious cover of profound respect, in order to undermine those bulwarks of haughtiness or discretion, which otherwise might have rendered his approaches to her impracticable. With a view to enhance the value of his company, and sound her sentiments at the same time, he became more reserved than usual, and seldomer engaged in her parties of music and cards; yet, in the midst of his reserve, he never failed in those demonstrations of reverence and regard, which he knew perfectly



well how to express, but devised such excuses for his absence, as she could not help admitting. In consequence of this affected shyness, she more than once gently chid him for his neglect and indifference, observing, with an ironical air, that he was now too much of a man to be entertained with such effeminate diversions; but her reproofs were pronounced with too much ease and good-humour to be agreeable to our hero, who desired to see her ruffled and chagrined at his absence, and to hear himself rebuked with an angry affectation of disdain. This effort, therefore, he reinforced with the most captivating carriage he could assume, in those hours which he now so sparingly bestowed upon his mistress. He regaled her with all the entertaining stories he could learn or invent, particularly such as he thought would justify and recommend the levelling power of love, that knows no distinctions of fortune. He sung nothing but tender airs and passionate complaints, composed by desponding or despairing swains; and, to render his performances of this kind the more pathetic, interlarded them with some seasonable sighs, while the tears, which he had ever at command, stood collected in either eye.

It was impossible for her to overlook such studied emotions; she in a jocose manner taxed him with having lost his heart, rallied the excess of his passion, and in a merry strain undertook to be an advocate for his love. Her behaviour was still wide of his wish and expectation. He thought she would, in consequence of her discovery, have betrayed some interested symptom; that her face would have undergone some favourable suffusion; that her tongue would have faltered, her breast heaved, and her whole deportment betokened internal agitation and disorder, in which case, he meant to profit by the happy impression, and declare himself, before she could possibly recollect the dictates of her pride.—Baffled however in his endeavours, by the serenity of the young lady, which he still deemed equivocal, he had recourse to another experiment, by which he believed he should make a discovery of her sentiments beyond all possibility of doubt. One day, while he accompanied Mademoiselle in her exercise of music, he pretended all of a sudden to be taken ill, and counterfeited a swoon in her apartment. Surprised at this accident, she screamed aloud, but far from running to his assistance, with the transports and distraction of a lover, she ordered her maid, who was present, to support his head, and went in person to call for more help. He was accordingly removed to his own chamber, where, willing to be still more certified of her inclinations, he prolonged the farce, and lay groaning under the pretence of a severe fever.

The whole family was alarmed upon this occasion; for, as we have already observed, he was an universal favourite. He was immediately visited by the old Count and his lady, who expressed the utmost concern at his distemper, ordered him to be carefully attended, and sent for a physician without loss of time. The young gentleman would scarce stir from his bedside, where he ministered unto him with all the demonstrations of brotherly affection; and Miss exhorted him to keep up his spirits, with many expressions of unreserved sympathy and regard. Nevertheless, he saw nothing in her behaviour but what might be naturally expected from common friendship, and a compassionate disposition, and was very much mortified at his disappointment.

Whether the miscarriage actually affected his constitution, or the doctor happened to be mistaken in his diagnostics, we shall not pretend to determine; but the patient was certainly treated *secundum artem*, and all his complaints in a little time realised; for the physician, like a true graduate, had an eye to the apothecary in his prescriptions; and such was the concern and scrupulous care with which our hero was attended, that the orders of the faculty were performed with the utmost punctuality. He was blooded, vomited, purged, and blistered, in the usual forms (for the physicians of Hungary are generally as well skilled in the arts of their occupation as any other leeches under the sun), and swallowed a whole dispensary of bolusses, draughts, and apozems, by which means he became fairly delirious in three days, and so untractable, that he could be no longer managed according to rule; otherwise, in all likelihood, the world would never have enjoyed the benefit of these adventures. In short, his constitution, though unable to cope with two such formidable antagonists as the doctor and the disease he had conjured up, was no sooner rid of the one, than it easily got the

better of the other; and though Ferdinand, after all, found his grand aim unaccomplished, his malady was productive of a consequence, which, though he had not foreseen it, he did not fail to convert to his own use and advantage.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **ENGAGES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH A FEMALE ASSOCIATE, IN ORDER TO PUT HIS TALENTS IN ACTION**

While he displayed his qualifications in order to entrap the heart of his young mistress, he had unwittingly enslaved the affections of her maid. This attendant was also a favourite of the young lady, and, though her senior by two or three good years at least, unquestionably her superior in point of personal beauty; she moreover possessed a good stock of cunning and discernment, and was furnished by nature with a very amorous complexion. These circumstances being premised, the reader will not be surprised to find her smitten by those uncommon qualifications which we have celebrated in young Fathom. She had in good sooth long sighed in secret, under the powerful influence of his charms, and practised upon him all those little arts, by which a woman strives to attract the admiration, and ensnare the heart of a man she loves; but all his faculties were employed upon the plan which he had already projected; that was the goal of his whole attention, to which all his measures tended; and whether or not he perceived the impression he had made upon Teresa, he never gave her the least reason to believe he was conscious of his victory, until he found himself baffled in his design upon the heart of her mistress.—She therefore persevered in her distant attempts to allure him, with the usual coquetries of dress and address, and, in the sweet hope of profiting by his susceptibility, made shift to suppress her feelings, and keep her passion within bounds, until his supposed danger alarmed her fears, and raised such a tumult within her breast, that she could no longer conceal her love, but gave a loose to her sorrow in the most immoderate expressions of anguish and affliction, and, while his delirium lasted, behaved with all the agitation of a despairing shepherdess.

Ferdinand was, or pretended to be, the last person in the family who understood the situation of her thoughts; when he perceived her passion, he entered into deliberation with himself, and tasked his reflection and foresight, in order to discover how best he might convert this conquest to his own advantage. Here, then, that we may neglect no opportunity of doing justice to our hero, it will be proper to observe, that, howsoever unapt his understanding might be to receive and retain the usual culture of the schools, he was naturally a genius self-taught, in point of sagacity and invention.—He dived into the characters of mankind, with a penetration peculiar to himself, and, had he been admitted as a pupil in any political academy, would have certainly become one of the ablest statesmen in Europe.

Having revolved all the probable consequences of such a connexion, he determined to prosecute an amour with the lady whose affection he had subdued; because he hoped to interest her as an auxiliary in his grand scheme upon Mademoiselle, which he did not as yet think proper to lay aside; for he was not more ambitious in the plan, than indefatigable in the prosecution of it. He knew it would be impossible to execute his aims upon the Count's daughter under the eye of Teresa, whose natural discernment would be whetted with jealousy, and who would watch his conduct, and thwart his progress with all the vigilance and spite of a slighted maiden. On the other hand, he did not doubt of being able to bring her over to his interest, by the influence he had already gained, or might afterwards acquire over her passions; in which case, she would effectually espouse his cause, and employ her good offices with her mistress in his behalf; besides, he was induced by another motive, which, though secondary, did not fail in this case to have an effect upon his determination. He looked upon Teresa with the eyes of appetite, which he longed to gratify; for he was not at all dead to the instigations of the flesh, though he had philosophy enough to resist them, when he thought they interfered with his interest. Here the case was quite different. His desire happened to be upon the side of his advantage, and therefore, resolving to indulge it, he no sooner found himself in a condition to manage such an

adventure, than he began to make gradual advances in point of warmth and particular complacency to the love-sick maid.

He first of all thanked her, in the most grateful terms, for the concern she had manifested at his distemper, and the kind services he had received from her during the course of it; he treated her upon all occasions with unusual affability and regard, assiduously courted her acquaintance and conversation, and contracted an intimacy that in a little time produced a declaration of love. Although her heart was too much intendered to hold out against all the forms of assault, far from yielding at discretion, she stood upon honourable terms, with great obstinacy of punctilio, and, while she owned he was master of her inclinations, gave him to understand, with a peremptory and resolute air, that he should never make a conquest of her virtue; observing, that, if the passion he professed was genuine, he would not scruple to give such a proof of it as would at once convince her of his sincerity; and that he could have no just cause to refuse her that satisfaction, she being his equal in point of birth and situation; for, if he was the companion and favourite of the young Count, she was the friend and confidant of Mademoiselle.

He acknowledged the strength of her argument, and that her condescension was greater than his deserts, but objected against the proposal, as infinitely prejudicial to the fortunes of them both. He represented the state of dependence in which they mutually stood; their utter incapacity to support one another under the consequences of a precipitate match, clandestinely made, without the consent and concurrence of their patrons. He displayed, with great eloquence, all those gay expectations they had reason to entertain, from that eminent degree of favour which they had already secured in the family; and set forth, in the most alluring colours, those enchanting scenes of pleasure they might enjoy in each other, without that disagreeable consciousness of a nuptial chain, provided she would be his associate in the execution of a plan which he had projected for their reciprocal convenience.

Having thus inflamed her love of pleasure and curiosity, he, with great caution, hinted his design upon the young lady's fortune, and, perceiving her listening with the most greedy attention, and perfectly ripe for the conspiracy, he disclosed his intention at full length, assuring her, with the most solemn protestations of love and attachment, that, could he once make himself legal possessor of an estate which Mademoiselle inherited by the will of a deceased aunt, his dear Teresa should reap the happy fruits of his affluence, and wholly engross his time and attention.

Such a base declaration our hero would not have ventured to make, had he not implicitly believed the damsel was as great a latitudinarian as himself, in point of morals and principle; and been well assured, that, though he should be mistaken in her way of thinking, so far as to be threatened with a detection of his purpose, he would always have it in his power to refute her accusation as mere calumny, by the character he had hitherto maintained, and the circumspection of his future conduct.

He seldom or never erred in his observations on the human heart. Teresa, instead of disapproving, relished the plan in general, with demonstrations of singular satisfaction. She at once conceived all the advantageous consequences of such a scheme, and perceived in it only one flaw, which, however, she did not think incurable. This defect was no other than a sufficient bond of union, by which they might be effectually tied down to their mutual interest. She foresaw, that, in case Ferdinand should obtain possession of the prize, he might, with great ease, deny their contract, and disavow her claim of participation. She therefore demanded security, and proposed, as a preliminary of the agreement, that he should privately take her to wife, with a view to dispel all her apprehensions of his inconstancy or deceit, as such a previous engagement would be a check upon his behaviour, and keep him strictly to the letter of their contract.

He could not help subscribing to the righteousness of this proposal, which, nevertheless, he would have willingly waived, on the supposition that they could not possibly be joined in the bands of wedlock with such secrecy as the nature of the case absolutely required. This would have been a difficulty soon removed, had the scene of the transaction been laid in the metropolis of England, where passengers are plied in the streets by clergymen, who prostitute their characters and consciences

for hire, in defiance of all decency and law; but in the kingdom of Hungary, ecclesiastics are more scrupulous in the exercise of their function, and the objection was, or supposed to be, altogether insurmountable; so that they were fain to have recourse to an expedient, with which, after some hesitation, our she-adventurer was satisfied. They joined hands in the sight of Heaven, which they called to witness, and to judge the sincerity of their vows, and engaged, in a voluntary oath, to confirm their union by the sanction of the church, whenever a convenient opportunity for so doing should occur.

The scruples of Teresa being thus removed, she admitted Ferdinand to the privileges of a husband, which he enjoyed in stolen interviews, and readily undertook to exert her whole power in promoting his suit with her young mistress, because she now considered his interest as inseparably connected with her own. Surely nothing could be more absurd or preposterous than the articles of this covenant, which she insisted upon with such inflexibility. How could she suppose that her pretended lover would be restrained by an oath, when the very occasion of incurring it was an intention to act in violation of all laws human and divine? and yet such ridiculous conjuration is commonly the cement of every conspiracy, how dark, how treacherous, how impious soever it may be: a certain sign that there are some remains of religion left in the human mind, even after every moral sentiment hath abandoned it; and that the most execrable ruffian finds means to quiet the suggestions of his conscience, by some reversionary hope of Heaven's forgiveness.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **THEIR FIRST ATTEMPT; WITH A DIGRESSION WHICH SOME READERS MAY THINK IMPERTINENT**

Be this as it will, our lovers, though real voluptuaries, amidst the first transports of their enjoyment did not neglect the great political aim of their conjunction. Teresa's bedchamber, to which our hero constantly repaired at midnight, was the scene of their deliberations, and there it was determined that the damsel, in order to avoid suspicion, should feign herself irritated at the indifference of Ferdinand, her passion for whom was by this time no secret in the family; and that, with a view to countenance this affectation, he should upon all occasions treat her with an air of loftiness and disdain.

So screened from all imputation of fraud, she was furnished by him with artful instructions how to sound the inclinations of her young mistress, how to recommend his person and qualifications by the sure methods of contradiction, comparisons, revilings, and reproach; how to watch the paroxysms of her disposition, inflame her passions, and improve, for his advantage, those moments of frailty from which no woman is exempted. In short, this consummate politician taught his agent to poison the young lady's mind with insidious conversation, tending to inspire her with the love of guilty pleasure, to debauch her sentiments, and confound her ideas of dignity and virtue. After all, the task is not difficult to lead the unpractised heart astray, by dint of those opportunities her seducer possessed. The seeds of insinuation seasonably sown upon the warm luxuriant soil of youth, could hardly fail of shooting up into such intemperate desires as he wanted to produce, especially when cultured and cherished in her unguarded hours, by that stimulating discourse which familiarity admits, and the looser passions, ingrafted in every breast, are apt to relish and excuse.

Fathom had previously reconnoitred the ground, and discovered some marks of inflammability in Mademoiselle's constitution; her beauty was not such as to engage her in those gaieties of amusement which could flatter her vanity and dissipate her ideas; and she was of an age when the little loves and young desires take possession of the fancy; he therefore concluded, that she had the more leisure to indulge these enticing images of pleasure that youth never fails to create, particularly in those who, like her, were addicted to solitude and study.

Teresa, full fraught with the wily injunctions of her confederate, took the field, and opened the campaign with such remarkable sourness in her aspect when Ferdinand appeared, that her young lady could not help taking notice of her affected chagrin, and asked the reason of such apparent alteration in her way of thinking. Prepared for this question, the other replied, in a manner calculated for giving Mademoiselle to understand, that, whatever impressions Ferdinand might have formerly made on her heart, they were now altogether effaced by the pride and insolence with which he had received her advances; and that her breast now glowed with all the revenge of a slighted lover.

To evince the sincerity of this declaration, she bitterly inveighed against him, and even affected to depreciate those talents, in which she knew his chief merit to consist; hoping, by these means, to interest Mademoiselle's candour in his defence. So far the train succeeded. That young lady's love for truth was offended at the calumnies that were vented against Ferdinand in his absence. She chid her woman for the rancour of her remarks, and undertook to refute the articles of his dispraise. Teresa supported her own assertions with great obstinacy, and a dispute ensued, in which her mistress was heated into some extravagant commendations of our adventurer.

His supposed enemy did not fail to make a report of her success, and to magnify every advantage they had gained; believing, in good earnest, that her lady's warmth was the effect of a real passion for the fortunate Mr. Fathom. But he himself viewed the adventure in a different light, and rightly imputed the violence of Mademoiselle's behaviour to the contradiction she had sustained from her

maid, or to the fire of her natural generosity glowing in behalf of innocence traduced. Nevertheless, he was perfectly well pleased with the nature of the contest; because, in the course of such debates, he foresaw that he should become habitually her hero, and that, in time, she would actually believe those exaggerations of his merit, which she herself had feigned, for the honour of her own arguments.

This presage, founded upon that principle of self-respect, without which no individual exists, may certainly be justified by manifold occurrences in life. We ourselves have known a very pregnant example, which we shall relate, for the emolument of the reader. A certain needy author having found means to present a manuscript to one of those sons of fortune who are dignified with the appellation of patrons, instead of reaping that applause and advantage with which he had regaled his fancy, had the mortification to find his performance treated with infinite irreverence and contempt, and, in high dudgeon and disappointment, appealed to the judgment of another critic, who, he knew, had no veneration for the first.

This common consolation, to which all baffled authors have recourse, was productive of very happy consequences to our bard; for, though the opinions of both judges concerning the piece were altogether the same, the latter, either out of compassion to the appellant, or desire of rendering his rival ridiculous in the eye of taste, undertook to repair the misfortune, and in this manner executed the plan. In a meeting of literati, to which both these wits belonged, he who had espoused the poet's cause, having previously desired another member to bring his composition on the carpet, no sooner heard it mentioned, than he began to censure it with flagrant marks of scorn, and, with an ironical air, looking at its first condemner, observed, that he must be furiously infected with the rage of patronising, who could take such a deplorable performance into his protection. The sarcasm took effect.

The person against whom it was levelled, taking umbrage at his presumption, assumed an aspect of disdain, and replied with great animosity, that nothing was more easily supported than the character of a Zoilus, because no production was altogether free from blemishes; and any man might pronounce against any piece by the lump, without interesting his own discernment; but to perceive the beauties of a work, it was requisite to have learning, judgment, and taste; and therefore he did not wonder that the gentleman had overlooked a great many in the composition which he so contemptuously decried. A rejoinder succeeded this reply, and produced a long train of altercation, in which the gentleman, who had formerly treated the book with such disrespect, now professed himself its passionate admirer, and held forth in praise of it with great warmth and elocution.

Not contented with having exhibited this instance of regard, he next morning sent a message to the owner, importing, that he had but superficially glanced over the manuscript, and desiring the favour of perusing it a second time. Being indulged in this request, he recommended it in terms of rapture to all his friends and dependants, and, by dint of unwearied sollicitation, procured a very ample subscription for the author.

But, to resume the thread of our story. Teresa's practices were not confined to simple defamation. Her reproaches were contrived so as to imply some intelligence in favour of the person she reviled. In exemplifying his pertness and arrogance, she repeated his witty repartee; on pretence of blaming his ferocity, she recounted proofs of his spirit and prowess; and, in explaining the source of his vanity, gave her mistress to understand, that a certain young lady of fashion was said to be enamoured of his person. Nor did this well-instructed understrapper omit those other parts of her cue which the principal judged necessary for the furtherance of his scheme. Her conversation became less guarded, and took a freer turn than usual; she seized all opportunities of introducing little amorous stories, the greatest part of which were invented for the purposes of warming her passions, and lowering the price of chastity in her esteem; for she represented all the young lady's contemporaries in point of age and situation, as so many sensualists, who, without scruple, indulged themselves in the stolen pleasures of youth.

Meanwhile, Ferdinand seconded these endeavours with his whole industry and address. He redoubled, if possible, his deference and respect, whetting his assiduity to the keenest edge of

attention; and, in short, regulated his dress, conversation, and deportment, according to the fancy, turn, and prevailing humour of his young mistress. He, moreover, attempted to profit by her curiosity, which he knew to be truly feminine; and having culled from the library of his patron certain dangerous books, calculated to debauch the minds of young people, left them occasionally upon the table in his apartment, after having directed Teresa to pick them up, as if by accident, in his absence, and carry them off for the entertainment of Mademoiselle; nay, this crafty projector found means to furnish his associate with some mischievous preparations, which were mingled in her chocolate, tea, or coffee, as provocations to warm her constitution; yet all these machinations, ingenious as they were, failed, not only in fulfilling their aim, but even in shaking the foundations of her virtue or pride, which stood their assaults unmoved, like a strong tower built upon a rock, impregnable to all the tempestuous blasts of heaven.

Not but that the conspirators were more than once mistaken in the effects of their artifices, and disposed to applaud themselves on the progress they had made. When at any time she expressed a desire to examine those performances which were laid before her as snares to entrap her chastity, they attributed that, which was no other than curiosity, to a looseness of sentiment; and when she discovered no aversion to hear those anecdotes concerning the frailty of her neighbours, they imputed to abatement of chastity that satisfaction which was the result of self-congratulation on her own superior virtue.

So far did the treacherous accomplice of Fathom presume upon these misconstructions, that she at length divested her tongue of all restraint, and behaved in such a manner, that the young lady, confounded and incensed at her indecency and impudence, rebuked her with great severity, and commanded her to reform her discourse, on pain of being dismissed with disgrace from her service.



## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **THE CONFEDERATES CHANGE THEIR BATTERY, AND ACHIEVE A REMARKABLE ADVENTURE**

Thunderstruck at this disappointment, the confederates held a council, in order to deliberate upon the next measures that should be taken; and Ferdinand, for the present, despairing of accomplishing his grand aim, resolved to profit in another manner, by the conveniency of his situation. He represented to his helpmate, that it would be prudent for them to make hay while the sun shone, as their connexion might be sooner or later discovered, and an end put to all those opportunities which they now so happily enjoyed. All principles of morality had been already excluded from their former plan; consequently he found it an easy task to interest Teresa in any other scheme tending to their mutual advantage, howsoever wicked and perfidious it might be. He therefore persuaded her to be his auxiliary in defrauding Mademoiselle at play, and gave her suitable directions for that purpose; and even tutored her how to abuse the trust reposed in her, by embezzling the young lady's effects, without incurring the suspicion of dishonesty.

On the supposition that every servant in the house was not able to resist such temptation, the purse of her mistress, to which the maid had always access, was dropped in a passage which the domestics had occasion to frequent; and Fathom posted himself in a convenient place, in order to observe the effect of his stratagem. Here he was not disappointed in his conjecture. The first person who chanced to pass that way, was one of the chambermaids, with whom Teresa had lived for some time in a state of inveterate enmity, because the wench had failed in that homage and respect which was paid to her by the rest of the servants.

Ferdinand had, in his heart, espoused the quarrel of his associate, and longed for an occasion to deliver her from the malicious observance of such an antagonist. When he, therefore, saw her approach, his heart throbbed with joyful expectations; but, when she snatched up the purse, and thrust it in her bosom, with all the eagerness and confusion of one determined to appropriate the windfall to her own use, his transports were altogether unspeakable. He traced her to her own apartment, whither she immediately retreated with great trepidation, and then communicated the discovery to Teresa, together with instructions how to behave in the sequel.

In conformity with these lessons, she took the first opportunity of going to Mademoiselle, and demanding money for some necessary expense, that the loss might be known before the finder could have leisure to make any fresh conveyance of the prize; and, in the meantime, Ferdinand kept a strict eye upon the motions of the chambermaid. The young lady, having rummaged her pockets in vain, expressed some surprise at the loss of her purse; upon which her attendant gave indications of extreme amazement and concern. She said, it could not possibly be lost; entreated her to search her escritoir, while she herself ran about the room, prying into every corner, with all the symptoms of fear and distraction. Having made this unsuccessful inquiry, she pretended to shed a flood of tears, bewailing her own fate, in being near the person of any lady who met with such a misfortune, by which, she observed, her character might be called in question. She produced her own keys, and begged upon her knees, that her chamber and boxes might be searched without delay.

In a word, she demeaned herself so artfully upon this occasion, that her mistress, who never entertained the least doubt of her integrity, now looked upon her as a miracle of fidelity and attachment, and was at infinite pains to console her for the accident which had happened; protesting that, for her own part, the loss of the money should never affect her with a moment's uneasiness, if she could retrieve a certain medal which she had long kept in her purse, as a remembrance of her deceased aunt, from whom she received it in a present.

Fathom entered accidentally into the midst of this well-acted scene, and, perceiving the agitation of the maid, and the concern of the mistress, desired, in a respectful manner, to know the cause of their disorder. Before the young lady had time to make him acquainted with the circumstances of the case, his accomplice exclaimed, in an affected passion, "Mr. Fathom, my lady has lost her purse; and, as no persons in the family are so much about her as you and I, you must give me leave, in my own justification, to insist upon Mademoiselle's ordering the apartments of us both to be searched without loss of time. Here are my pockets and my keys, and you cannot scruple to give her the same satisfaction; for innocence has nothing to fear."

Miss Melvil reprimanded her sharply for her unmannerly zeal; and Ferdinand eyeing her with a look of disdain, "Madam," said he, "I approve of your proposal; but, before I undergo such mortification, I would advise Mademoiselle to subject the two chambermaids to such inquiry; as they also have access to the apartments, and are, I apprehend, as likely as you or I to behave in such a scandalous manner."

The young lady declared that she was too well satisfied of Teresa's honesty and Ferdinand's honour, to harbour the least suspicion of either, and that she would sooner die than disgrace them so far as to comply with the proposal the former had made; but as she saw no reason for exempting the inferior servants from that examination which Fathom advised, she would forthwith put it in execution. The chambermaids being accordingly summoned, she calmly asked if either of them had accidentally found the purse she had dropped? and both replying in the negative, she assumed an air of severity and determination, and demanding their keys, threatened to examine their trunks on the instant.

The guilty Abigail, who, though an Hungarian, was not inferior, in point of effrontery, to any one of the sisterhood in England, no sooner heard this menace, than she affected an air of affronted innocence, thanked God she had lived in many reputable families, and been trusted with untold gold, but was never before suspected of theft; that the other maid might do as she should think proper, and be mean-spirited enough to let her things be tumbled topsy-turvy and exposed; but, for her own part, if she should be used in that inhuman and disgraceful manner, she would not stay another hour in the house; and in conclusion said, that Mademoiselle had more reason to look sharp after those who enjoyed the greatest share of her favour, than believe their malicious insinuations against innocent people whom they were well known to hate and defame.

This declaration, implying an hint to the prejudice of Teresa, far from diverting Miss Melvil from her purpose, served only to enhance the character of the accused in her opinion, and to confirm her suspicion of the accuser, of whom she again demanded her keys, protesting that, should she prove refractory, the Count himself should take cognisance of the affair, whereas, if she would deal ingenuously, she should have no cause to repent of her confession. So saying, she desired our adventurer to take the trouble of calling up some of the men-servants; upon which the conscious criminal began to tremble, and, falling upon her knees, acknowledged her guilt, and implored the forgiveness of her young mistress.

Teresa, seizing this occasion to signalise her generosity, joined in the request, and the offender was pardoned, after having restored the purse, and promised in the sight of Heaven, that the devil should never again entice her to the commission of such a crime. This adventure fully answered all the purposes of our politician; it established the opinion of his fellow-labourer's virtue, beyond the power of accident or information to shake, and set up a false beacon to mislead the sentiments of Mademoiselle, in case she should for the future meet with the like misfortune.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **THEY PROCEED TO LEVY CONTRIBUTIONS WITH GREAT SUCCESS, UNTIL OUR HERO SETS OUT WITH THE YOUNG COUNT FOR VIENNA, WHERE HE ENTERS INTO LEAGUE WITH ANOTHER ADVENTURER**

Under this secure cover, Teresa levied contributions upon her mistress with great success. Some trinket was missing every day; the young lady's patience began to fail; the faithful attendant was overwhelmed with consternation, and, with the appearance of extreme chagrin, demanded her dismissal, affirming that these things were certainly effected by some person in the family, with a view of murdering her precious reputation. Miss Melvil, not without difficulty, quieted her vexation with assurances of inviolable confidence and esteem, until a pair of diamond earrings vanished, when Teresa could no longer keep her affliction within bounds. Indeed, this was an event of more consequence than all the rest which had happened, for the jewels were valued at five hundred florins.

Mademoiselle was accordingly alarmed to such a degree, that she made her mother acquainted with her loss, and that good lady, who was an excellent economist, did not fail to give indications of extraordinary concern. She asked, if her daughter had reason to suspect any individual in the family, and if she was perfectly confident of her own woman's integrity? Upon which Mademoiselle, with many encomiums on the fidelity and attachment of Teresa, recounted the adventure of the chambermaid, who immediately underwent a strict inquiry, and was even committed to prison, on the strength of her former misdemeanour. Our adventurer's mate insisted upon undergoing the same trial with the rest of the domestics, and, as usual, comprehended Fathom in her insinuations; while he seconded the proposal, and privately counselled the old lady to introduce Teresa to the magistrate of the place. By these preconcerted recriminations, they escaped all suspicion of collusion. After a fruitless inquiry, the prisoner was discharged from her confinement, and turned out of the service of the Count, in whose private opinion the character of no person suffered so much, as that of his own son, whom he suspected of having embezzled the jewels, for the use of a certain innamorata, who, at that time, was said to have captivated his affections.

The old gentleman felt upon this occasion all that internal anguish which a man of honour may be supposed to suffer, on account of a son's degeneracy; and, without divulging his sentiments, or even hinting his suspicions to the youth himself, determined to detach him at once from such dangerous connexions, by sending him forthwith to Vienna, on pretence of finishing his exercises at the academy, and ushering him into acquaintance with the great world. Though he would not be thought by the young gentleman himself to harbour the least doubt of his morals, he did not scruple to unbosom himself on that subject to Ferdinand, whose sagacity and virtue he held in great veneration. This indulgent patron expressed himself in the most pathetic terms, on the untoward disposition of his son; he told Fathom, that he should accompany Renaldo (that was the youth's name) not only as a companion, but a preceptor and pattern; conjured him to assist his tutor in superintending his conduct, and to reinforce the governor's precepts by his own example; to inculcate upon him the most delicate punctilios of honour, and decoy him into extravagance, rather than leave the least illiberal sentiment in his heart.

Our crafty adventurer, with demonstrations of the utmost sensibility, acknowledged the great goodness of the Count in reposing such confidence in his integrity; which, as he observed, none but the worst of villains could abuse; and fervently wished that he might no longer exist, than he should continue to remember and resent the obligations he owed to his kind benefactor. While preparations were making for their departure, our hero held a council with his associate, whom he enriched with

many sage instructions touching her future operations; he at the same time disburdened her of all or the greatest part of the spoils she had won, and after having received divers marks of bounty from the Count and his lady, together with a purse from his young mistress, he set out for Vienna, in the eighteenth year of his age, with Renaldo and his governor, who were provided with letters of recommendation to some of the Count's friends belonging to the Imperial court.

Such a favourable introduction could not fail of being advantageous to a youth of Ferdinand's specious accomplishments; for he was considered as the young Count's companion, admitted into his parties, and included in all the entertainments to which Renaldo was invited. He soon distinguished himself by his activity and address, in the course of those exercises that were taught at the academy of which he was pupil; his manners were so engaging as to attract the acquaintance of his fellow-students, and his conversation being sprightly and inoffensive, grew into very great request; in a word, he and the young Count formed a remarkable contrast, which, in the eye of the world, redounded to his advantage.

They were certainly, in all respects, the reverse of each other. Renaldo, under a total defect of exterior cultivation, possessed a most excellent understanding, with every virtue that dignifies the human heart; while the other, beneath a most agreeable outside, with an inaptitude and aversion to letters, concealed an amazing fund of villany and ingratitude. Hitherto his observation had been confined to a narrow sphere, and his reflections, though surprisingly just and acute, had not attained to that maturity which age and experience give; but now, his perceptions began to be more distinct, and extended to a thousand objects which had never before come under his cognisance.

He had formerly imagined, but was now fully persuaded, that the sons of men preyed upon one another, and such was the end and condition of their being. Among the principal figures of life, he observed few or no characters that did not bear a strong analogy to the savage tyrants of the wood. One resembled a tiger in fury and rapaciousness; a second prowled about like an hungry wolf, seeking whom he might devour; a third acted the part of a jackal, in beating the bush for game to his voracious employer; and the fourth imitated the wily fox, in practising a thousand crafty ambuscades for the destruction of the ignorant and unwary. This last was the department of life for which he found himself best qualified by nature and inclination; and he accordingly resolved that his talent should not rust in his possession. He was already pretty well versed in all the sciences of play; but he had every day occasion to see these arts carried to such a surprising pitch of finesse and dexterity, as discouraged him from building his schemes on that foundation.

He therefore determined to fascinate the judgment, rather than the eyes of his fellow-creatures, by a continual exercise of that gift of deceiving, with which he knew himself endued to an unrivalled degree; and to acquire unbounded influence with those who might be subservient to his interest, by an assiduous application to their prevailing passions. Not that play was altogether left out in the projection of his economy.— Though he engaged himself very little in the executive part of gaming, he had not been long in Vienna, when he entered into league with a genius of that kind, whom he distinguished among the pupils of the academy, and who indeed had taken up his habitation in that place with a view to pillage the provincials on their first arrival in town, before they could be armed with proper circumspection to preserve their money, or have time to dispose of it in any other shape.

Similar characters naturally attract each other, and people of our hero's principles are, of all others, the most apt to distinguish their own likeness wheresoever it occurs; because they always keep the faculty of discerning in full exertion. It was in consequence of this mutual alertness, that Ferdinand and the stranger, who was a native of Tyrol, perceived themselves reflected in the dispositions of each other, and immediately entered into an offensive and defensive alliance; our adventurer undertaking for the articles of intelligence, countenance, and counsel, and his associate charging himself with the risk of execution.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### FATHOM MAKES VARIOUS EFFORTS IN THE WORLD OF GALLANTRY

Thus connected, they began to hunt in couples; and Fathom, in order to profit by the alliance with a good grace, contrived a small scheme that succeeded to his wish. Renaldo being one night intoxicated in the course of a merry-making with his fellow-pupils, from which Fathom had purposely absented himself, was by the Tyrolese so artfully provoked to play, that he could not resist the temptation, but engaged at passdice with that fell adversary, who, in less than an hour, stripped him of a pretty round sum. Next day, when the young gentleman recovered the use of his reflection, he was sensibly chagrined at the folly and precipitation of his own conduct, an account of which he communicated in confidence to our hero, with demonstrations of infinite shame and concern.

Ferdinand, having moralised upon the subject with great sagacity, and sharply inveighed against the Tyrolese, for the unfair advantage he had taken, retired to his closet, and wrote the following billet, which was immediately sent to his ally:—

“The obligations I owe, and the attachments I feel, to the Count de Melvil, will not suffer me to be an idle spectator of the wrongs offered to his son, in the dishonourable use, I understand, you made last night of his unguarded hours. I therefore insist upon your making immediate restitution of the booty which you so unjustly got; otherwise I expect you will meet me upon the ramparts, near the bastion de la Port Neuve, to-morrow morning at daybreak, in order to justify, with your sword, the finesse you have practised upon the friend of FERDINAND DE FATHOM.”

The gamester no sooner received this intimation, than, according to the plan which had been preconcerted betwixt the author and him, he went to the apartment of Renaldo, and presenting the sum of money which he had defrauded him of the preceding night, told him, with a stern countenance, that, though it was a just acquisition, he scorned to avail himself of his good fortune against any person who entertained the smallest doubt of his honour.

The young Count, surprised at this address, rejected his offer with disdain, and desired to know the meaning of such an unexpected declaration. Upon which, the other produced Ferdinand's billet, and threatened, in very high terms, to meet the stripling according to his invitation, and chastise him severely for his presumption. The consequence of this explanation is obvious. Renaldo, imputing the officiousness of Fathom to the zeal of his friendship, interposed in the quarrel, which was amicably compromised, not a little to the honour of our adventurer, who thus obtained an opportunity of displaying his courage and integrity, without the least hazard to his person; while, at the same time, his confederate recommended himself to the esteem of the young Count, by his spirited behaviour on this occasion; so that Renaldo being less shy of his company for the future, the Tyrolese had the fairer opportunities to prosecute his designs upon the young gentleman's purse.

It would be almost superfluous to say, that these were not neglected. The son of Count Melvil was not deficient in point of penetration; but his whole study was at that time engrossed by the care of his education, and he had sometimes recourse to play as an amusement by which he sought to unbend the severity of his attention. No wonder then that he fell a prey to an artful gamester, who had been regularly trained to the profession, and made it the sole study of his life; especially as the Hungarian was remarkable for a warmth of temper, which a knight of the post always knows how to manage for his own advantage.

In the course of these operations, Fathom was a very useful correspondent. He instructed the Tyrolese in the peculiarities of Renaldo's disposition, and made him acquainted with the proper seasons for profiting by his dexterity. Ferdinand, for example, who, by the authority derived to him from the injunctions of the old Count, sometimes took upon himself the office of an adviser,

cunningly chose to counsel the son at those conjunctures when he knew him least able to bear such expostulation. Advice improperly administered generally acts in diametrical opposition to the purpose for which it is supposed to be given; at least this was the case with the young gentleman, who, inflamed by the reproof of such a tutor, used to obey the dictates of his resentment in an immediate repetition of that conduct which our adventurer had taken the liberty to disapprove; and the gamester was always at hand to minister unto his indignation. By these means he was disencumbered of divers considerable remittances, with which his father cheerfully supplied him, on the supposition that they were spent with taste and liberality, under the direction of our adventurer.

But Ferdinand's views were not confined to the narrow field of this alliance. He attempted divers enterprises in the world of gallantry, conscious of his own personal qualifications, and never doubting that he could insinuate himself into the good graces of some married lady about court, or lay an opulent dowager under contribution. But he met with an obstacle in his endeavours of this kind, which all his art was unable to surmount. This was no other than the obscurity of his birth, and the want of a title, without which no person in that country lays claim to the privileges of a gentleman. Had he foreseen this inconvenience he might have made shift to obviate the consequences, by obtaining permission to appear in the character of the Count's kinsman; though, in all probability, such an expedient would not have been extremely agreeable to the old gentleman, who was very tenacious of the honour of his family; nevertheless, his generosity might have been prevailed upon to indulge Fathom with such a pretext, in consideration of the youth's supposed attachment, and the obligations for which he deemed himself indebted to his deceased mother.

True it is, Ferdinand, upon his first arrival at Vienna, had been admitted into fashionable company, on the footing of Renaldo's companion, because nobody suspected the defect of his pedigree; and even after a report had been circulated to the prejudice of his extraction, by the industry of a lacquey who attended the young Count, there were not wanting many young people of distinction who still favoured him with their countenance and correspondence; but he was no longer invited to private families, in which only he could expect to profit by his address among the ladies, and had the mortification of finding himself frequently excepted from parties which were expressly calculated for the entertainment of the young Count. Luckily, his spirit was so pliant as to sustain these slights without being much dejected; instead of repining at the loss of that respect which had been paid to him at first, he endeavoured, with all his might, to preserve the little that still remained, and resolved to translate into a humbler sphere that gallantry which he had no longer opportunities of displaying in the world of rank and fashion.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### HE EFFECTS A LODGMENT IN THE HOUSE OF A RICH JEWELLER

In consequence of this determination, he to the uttermost exerted his good-humour among the few friends of consequence his fortune had left, and even carried his complaisance so far as to become the humble servant of their pleasures, while he attempted to extend his acquaintance in an inferior path of life, where he thought his talents would shine more conspicuous than at the assemblies of the great, and conduce more effectually to the interest of all his designs. Nor did he find himself disappointed in that expectation, sanguine as it was. He soon found means to be introduced to the house of a wealthy bourgeois, where every individual was charmed with his easy air and extraordinary qualifications. He accommodated himself surprisingly to the humours of the whole family; smoked tobacco, swallowed wine, and discoursed of stones with the husband, who was a rich jeweller; sacrificed himself to the pride and loquacity of the wife; and played upon the violin, and sung alternately, for the amusement of his only daughter, a buxom lass, nearly of his own age, the fruit of a former marriage.

It was not long before Ferdinand had reason to congratulate himself on the footing he had gained in this society. He had expected to find, and in a little time actually discovered, that mutual jealousy and rancour which almost always subsist between a daughter and her step-dame, inflamed with all the virulence of female emulation; for the disparity in their ages served only to render them the more inveterate rivals in the desire of captivating the other sex. Our adventurer having deliberated upon the means of converting this animosity to his own advantage, saw no method for this purpose so feasible as that of making his approaches to the hearts of both, by ministering to each in private, food for their reciprocal envy and malevolence; because he well knew that no road lies so direct and open to a woman's heart as that of gratifying her passions of vanity and resentment.

When he had an opportunity of being particular with the mother, he expressed his concern for having unwittingly incurred the displeasure of Mademoiselle, which, he observed, was obvious in every circumstance of her behaviour towards him; protesting he was utterly innocent of all intention of offending her; and that he could not account for his disgrace any other way, than by supposing she took umbrage at the direction of his chief regards towards her mother-in-law, which, he owned, was altogether involuntary, being wholly influenced by that lady's superior charms and politeness.

Such a declaration was perfectly well calculated for the meridian of a dame like her, who with all the intoxications of unenlightened pride, and an increased appetite for pleasure, had begun to find herself neglected, and even to believe that her attractions were actually on the wane. She very graciously consoled our gallant for the mishap of which he complained, representing Wilhelmina (that was the daughter's name) as a pert, illiterate, envious baggage, of whose disgust he ought to make no consideration; then she recounted many instances of her own generosity to that young lady, with the returns of malice and ingratitude she had made; and, lastly, enumerated all the imperfections of her person, education, and behaviour; that he might see with what justice the gypsy pretended to vie with those who had been distinguished by the approbation and even gallantry of the best people in Vienna.

Having thus established himself her confidant and gossip, he knew his next step of promotion would necessarily be to the degree of her lover; and in that belief resolved to play the same game with Mademoiselle Wilhelmina, whose complexion was very much akin to that of her stepmother; indeed they resembled each other too much to live upon any terms of friendship or even decorum. Fathom, in order to enjoy a private conversation with the young lady, never failed to repeat his visit every afternoon, till at length he had the pleasure of finding her disengaged, the jeweller being occupied among his workmen, and his wife gone to assist at a lying-in.

Our adventurer and the daughter had already exchanged their vows, by the expressive language of the eyes; he had even declared himself in some tender ejaculations which had been softly whispered in her ear, when he could snatch an opportunity of venting them unperceived; nay, he had upon divers occasions gently squeezed her fair hand, on pretence of tuning her harpsichord, and been favoured with returns of the same cordial pressure; so that, instead of accosting her with the fearful hesitation and reserve of a timid swain, he told her, after the exercise of the *doux-yeux*, that he was come to confer with her upon a subject that nearly concerned her peace; and asked if she had not observed of late an evident abatement of friendship in her mother's behaviour to him, whom she had formerly treated with such marks of favour and respect. Mademoiselle would not pay so ill a compliment to her own discernment as to say she had not perceived the alteration; which, on the contrary, she owned was extremely palpable; nor was it difficult to divine the cause of such estranged looks. This remark was accompanied with an irresistible glance; she smiled enchanting, the colour deepened on her cheeks, her breast began to heave, and her whole frame underwent a most agreeable confusion.

Ferdinand was not a man to let such a favourable conjuncture pass unregarded. "Yes, charming Wilhelmina!" exclaimed the politician in an affected rapture, "the cause is as conspicuous as your attractions. She hath, in spite of all my circumspection, perceived that passion which it is not in my power to conceal, and in consequence of which I now declare myself your devoted adorer; or, conscious of your superior excellence, her jealousy hath taken the alarm, and, though stung with conjecture only, repines at the triumph of your perfections. How far this spirit of malignity may be inflamed to my prejudice, I know not. Perhaps, as this is the first, it may be also the last opportunity I shall have of avowing the dearest sentiments of my heart to the fair object that inspired them; in a word, I may be for ever excluded from your presence. Excuse me, then, divine creature! from the practice of those unnecessary forms, which I should take pride in observing, were I indulged with the ordinary privileges of an honourable lover; and, once for all, accept the homage of an heart overflowing with love and admiration. Yes, adorable Wilhelmina! I am dazzled with your supernatural beauty; your other accomplishments strike me with wonder and awe. I am enchanted by the graces of your deportment, ravished with the charms of your conversation; and there is a certain tenderness of benevolence in that endearing aspect, which, I trust, will not fail to melt with sympathy at the emotions of a faithful slave like me."

So saying, he threw himself upon his knees, and, seizing her plump hand, pressed it to his lips with all the violence of real transport. The nymph, whose passions nature had filled to the brim, could not hear such a rhapsody unmoved. Being an utter stranger to addresses of this kind, she understood every word of it in the literal acceptation; she believed implicitly in the truth of the encomiums he had bestowed, and thought it reasonable he should be rewarded for the justice he had done to her qualifications, which had hitherto been almost altogether overlooked. In short, her heart began to thaw, and her face to hang out the flag of capitulation; which was no sooner perceived by our hero, than he renewed his attack with redoubled fervour, pronouncing in a most vehement tone, "Light of my eyes, and empress of my soul! behold me prostrate at your feet, waiting with the most pious resignation, for that sentence from your lips, on which my future happiness or misery must altogether depend. Not with more reverence does the unhappy bashaw kiss the sultan's letter that contains his doom, than I will submit to your fatal determination. Speak then, angelic sweetness! for never, ah! never will I rise from this suppliant posture, until I am encouraged to live and hope. No! if you refuse to smile upon my passion, here shall I breathe the last sighs of a despairing lover; here shall this faithful sword do the last office to its unfortunate master, and shed the blood of the truest heart that ever felt the cruel pangs of disappointed love."

The young lady, well-nigh overcome by this effusion, which brought the tears into her eyes, "Enough, enough," cried she, interrupting him, "sure you men were created for the ruin of our sex."—"Ruin!" re-echoed Fathom, "talk not of ruin and Wilhelmina! let these terms be for ever parted, far as the east and west asunder! let ever smiling peace attend her steps, and love and joy still



wanton in her train! Ruin, indeed, shall wait upon her enemies, if such there be, and those love-lorn wretches who pine with anguish under her disdain. Grant me, kind Heaven, a more propitious boon; direct her genial regards to one whose love is without example, and whose constancy is unparalleled. Bear witness to my constancy and faith, ye verdant hills, ye fertile plains, ye shady groves, ye purling streams; and if I prove untrue, ah! let me never find a solitary willow or a bubbling brook, by help of which I may be enabled to put a period to my wretched life.”

Here this excellent actor began to sob most piteously, and the tender-hearted Wilhelmina, unable longer to withstand his moving tale, with a repetition of the interjection, ah! gently dropped into his arms. This was the beginning of a correspondence that soon rose to a very interesting pitch; and they forthwith concerted measures for carrying it on without the knowledge or suspicion of her mother-in-law. Nevertheless, the young lady, vanquished as she was, and unskilled in the ways of men, would not all at once yield at discretion; but insisted upon those terms, without which no woman’s reputation can be secured. Our lover, far from seeking to evade the proposal, assented to it in terms of uncommon satisfaction, and promised to use his whole industry in finding a priest upon whose discretion they could rely; nay, he certainly resolved to comply with her request in good earnest, rather than forfeit the advantages which he foresaw in their union. His good fortune, however, exempted him from the necessity of taking such a step, which at best must have been disagreeable; for so many difficulties occurred in the inquiry which was set on foot, and so artfully did Fathom in the meantime manage the influence he had already gained over her heart, that, before her passion could obtain a legal gratification, she surrendered to his wish, without any other assurance, than his solemn profession of sincerity and truth, on which she reposed herself with the most implicit confidence and faith.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### HE IS EXPOSED TO A MOST PERILOUS INCIDENT IN THE COURSE OF HIS INTRIGUE WITH THE DAUGHTER

He was rejoiced to find her so easily satisfied in such a momentous concern, for the principal aim of the intrigue was to make her necessary to his interested views, and even, if possible, an associate in the fraudulent plans he had projected upon her father; consequently he considered this relaxation in her virtue as an happy omen of his future success. All the obstacles to their mutual enjoyment being thus removed, our adventurer was by his mistress indulged with an assignation in her own chamber, which, though contiguous to that of her stepmother, was provided with a door that opened into a common staircase, to which he had access at all hours of the night.

He did not neglect the rendezvous, but, presenting himself at the appointed time, which was midnight, made the signal they had agreed upon, and was immediately admitted by Wilhelmina, who waited for him with a lover's impatience. Fathom was not deficient in those expressions of rapture that are current on those occasions; but, on the contrary, became so loud in the transports of self-congratulation, that his voice reached the ears of the vigilant stepmother, who wakening the jeweller from his first nap, gave him to understand that some person was certainly in close conversation with his daughter; and exhorted him to rise forthwith, and vindicate the honour of his family.

The German, who was naturally of a phlegmatic habit, and never went to bed without a full dose of the creature, which added to his constitutional drowsiness, gave no ear to his wife's intimation, until she had repeated it thrice, and used other means to rouse him from the arms of slumber. Meanwhile Fathom and his inamorata overheard her information, and our hero would have made his retreat immediately, through the port by which he entered, had not his intention been overruled by the remonstrances of the young lady, who observed that the door was already fast bolted, and could not possibly be opened without creating a noise that would confirm the suspicion of her parents; and that over and above this objection he would, in sallying from that door, run the risk of being met by her father, who in all probability would present himself before it, in order to hinder our hero's escape. She therefore conveyed him softly into her closet, where she assured him he might remain with great tranquillity, in full confidence that she would take such measures as would effectually screen him from detection.

He was fain to depend upon her assurance, and accordingly ensconced himself behind her dressing-table; but he could not help sweating with apprehension, and praying fervently to God for his deliverance, when he heard the jeweller thundering at the door, and calling to his daughter for admittance. Wilhelmina, who was already undressed, and had purposely extinguished the light, pretended to be suddenly waked from her sleep, and starting up, exclaimed in a tone of surprise and affright, "Jesu, Maria! what is the matter?"—"Hussy!" replied the German in a terrible accent, "open the door this instant; there is a man in your bedchamber, and, by the lightning and thunder! I will wash away the stain he has cast upon my honour with the schellum's heart's-blood."

Not at all intimidated by this boisterous threat, she admitted him without hesitation, and, with a shrillness of voice peculiar to herself, began to hold forth upon her own innocence and his unjust suspicion, mingling in her harangue sundry oblique hints against her mother-in-law, importing, that some people were so viciously inclined by their own natures, that she did not wonder at their doubting the virtue of other people; but that these people despised the insinuations of such people, who ought to be more circumspect in their own conduct, lest they themselves should suffer reprisals from those people whom they had so maliciously slandered.

Having uttered these flowers of rhetoric, which were calculated for the hearing of her step-dame, who stood with a light at her husband's back, the young lady assumed an ironical air, and

admonished her father to search every corner of her apartment. She even affected to assist his inquiry; with her own hands pulled out a parcel of small drawers, in which her trinkets were contained; desired him to look into her needlecase and thimble, and, seeing his examination fruitless, earnestly intreated him to rummage her closet also, saying, with a sneer, that, in all probability, the dishonourer would be found in that lurking-place. The manner in which she pretended to ridicule his apprehensions made an impression upon the jeweller, who was very well disposed to retreat into his own nest, when his wife, with a certain slyness in her countenance, besought him to comply with his daughter's request, and look into that same closet, by which means Wilhelmina's virtue would obtain a complete triumph.

Our adventurer, who overheard the conversation, was immediately seized with a palsy of fear. He trembled at every joint, the sweat trickled down his forehead, his teeth began to chatter, his hair to stand on end; and he, in his heart, bitterly cursed the daughter's petulance, the mother's malice, together with his own precipitation, by which he was involved in an adventure so pregnant with danger and disgrace. Indeed, the reader may easily conceive his disorder, when he heard the key turning in the lock, and the German swearing that he would make him food for the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air.

Fathom had come unprepared with weapons of defence, was naturally an economist of his person, and saw himself on the brink of forfeiting not only the promised harvest of his double intrigue, but also the reputation of a man of honour, upon which all his future hopes depended. His agony was therefore unspeakable, when the door flew open; and it was not till after a considerable pause of recollection, that he perceived the candle extinguished by the motion of the air produced from the German's sudden irruption. This accident, which disconcerted him so much as to put a full stop to his charge, was very favourable to our hero, who, summoning all his presence of mind, crept up into the chimney, while the jeweller stood at the door, waiting for his wife's return with another light; so that, when the closet was examined, there was nothing found to justify the report which the stepmother had made; and the father, after having made a slight apology to Wilhelmina for his intrusion, retired with his yoke-fellow into their own chamber.

The young lady, who little thought that her papa would have taken her at her word, was overwhelmed with confusion and dismay, when she saw him enter the closet; and, had her lover been discovered, would, in all probability, have been the loudest in his reproach, and, perhaps, have accused him of an intention to rob the house; but she was altogether astonished when she found he had made shift to elude the inquiry of her parents, because she could not conceive the possibility of his escaping by the window, which was in the third storey, at a prodigious distance from the ground; and how he should conceal himself in the apartment, was a mystery which she could by no means unfold. Before her father and mother retired, she lighted her lamp, on pretence of being afraid to be in the dark, after the perturbation of spirits she had undergone; and her room was no sooner evacuated of such troublesome visitants, than she secured the doors, and went in quest of her lover.

Accordingly, every corner of the closet underwent a new search, and she called upon his name with a soft voice, which she thought no other person would overhear. But Ferdinand did not think proper to gratify her impatience, because he could not judge of the predicament in which he stood by the evidence of all his senses, and would not relinquish his post, until he should be better certified that the coast was clear. Meanwhile, his Dulcinea, having performed her inquiry to no purpose, imagined there was something preternatural in the circumstance of his vanishing so unaccountably, and began to cross herself with great devotion. She returned to her chamber, fixed the lamp in the fireplace, and, throwing herself upon the bed, gave way to the suggestions of her superstition, which were reinforced by the silence that prevailed, and the gloomy glimmering of the light. She reflected upon the trespass she had already committed in her heart, and, in the conjectures of her fear, believed that her lover was no other than the devil himself, who had assumed the appearance of Fathom, in order to tempt and seduce her virtue.

While her imagination teemed with those horrible ideas, our adventurer, concluding, from the general stillness, that the jeweller and his wife were at last happily asleep, ventured to come forth from his hiding-place, and stood before his mistress all begrimed with soot. Wilhelmina, lifting up her eyes, and seeing this sable apparition, which she mistook for Satan in propria persona, instantly screamed, and began to repeat her pater-noster with an audible voice. Upon which Ferdinand, foreseeing that her parents would be again alarmed, would not stay to undeceive her and explain himself, but, unlocking the door with great expedition, ran downstairs, and luckily accomplished his escape. This was undoubtedly the wisest measure he could have taken; for he had not performed one half of his descent toward the street, when the German was at his daughter's bedside, demanding to know the cause of her exclamation. She then gave him an account of what she had seen, with all the exaggerations of her own fancy, and, after having weighed the circumstances of her story, he interpreted the apparition into a thief, who had found means to open the door that communicated with the stair; but, having been scared by Wilhelmina's shriek, had been obliged to retreat before he could execute his purpose.

Our hero's spirits were so wofully disturbed by this adventure, that, for a whole week, he felt no inclination to visit his inamorata, and was not without apprehension that the affair had terminated in an explanation very little to his advantage. He was, however, delivered from this disagreeable suspense, by an accidental meeting with the jeweller himself, who kindly chid him for his long absence, and entertained him in the street with an account of the alarm which his family had sustained, by a thief who broke into Wilhelmina's apartment. Glad to find his apprehension mistaken, he renewed his correspondence with the family, and, in a little time, found reason to console himself for the jeopardy and panic he had undergone.

## **CHAPTER FOURTEEN**

### **HE IS REDUCED TO A DREADFUL DILEMMA, IN CONSEQUENCE OF AN ASSIGNATION WITH THE WIFE**

Nor was his whole care and attention engrossed by the execution of this scheme upon the daughter. While he managed his concerns in that quarter with incredible ardour and application, he was not the less indefatigable in the prosecution of his design upon the mother-in-law, which he forwarded with all his art during those opportunities he enjoyed in the absence of Wilhelmina, who was frequently called away by the domestic duties of the house. The passions of the jeweller's wife were in such a state of exaltation, as exempted our hero from the repulses and fatigue attending a long siege.

We have already observed how cunningly he catered for the gratification of her ruling appetite, and have exhibited pregnant proofs of his ability in gaining upon the human heart; the reader will not therefore be surprised at the rapidity of his conquest over the affections of a lady whose complexion was perfectly amorous, and whose vanity laid her open to all the attempts of adulation. In a word, matters were quickly brought to such a mutual understanding, that, one evening, while they amused themselves at lansquenet, Fathom conjured her to give him the rendezvous next day at the house of any third person of her own sex, in whose discretion she could confide; and, after a few affected scruples on her side, which he well knew how to surmount, she complied with his request, and the circumstances of the appointment were settled accordingly. After this treaty, their satisfaction rose to such a warmth, and the conversation became so reciprocally endearing, that our gallant expressed his impatience of waiting so long for the accomplishment of his wishes, and, with the most eager transport, begged she would, if possible, curtail the term of his expectation, that his brain might not suffer by his standing so many tedious hours on the giddy verge of rapture.

The dame, who was naturally compassionate, sympathised with his condition, and, unable to resist his pathetic supplications, gave him to understand that his desire could not be granted, without subjecting them both to some hazard, but that she was disposed to run any risk in behalf of his happiness and peace. After this affectionate preamble, she told him that her husband was then engaged in a quarterly meeting of the jewellers, from whence he never failed to return quite overwhelmed with wine, tobacco, and the phlegm of his own constitution; so that he would fall fast asleep as soon as his head should touch the pillow, and she be at liberty to entertain the lover without interruption, provided he could find means to deceive the jealous vigilance of Wilhelmina, and conceal himself in some corner of the house, unsuspected and unperceived.

Our lover, remembering his adventure with the daughter, would have willingly dispensed with this expedient, and began to repent of the eagerness with which he had preferred his solicitation; but, seeing there was now no opportunity of retracting with honour, he affected to enter heartily into the conversation, and, after much canvassing, it was determined, that, while Wilhelmina was employed in the kitchen, the mother should conduct our adventurer to the outer door, where he should pay the compliment of parting, so as to be overheard by the young lady; but, in the meantime, glide softly into the jeweller's bedchamber, which was a place they imagined least liable to the effects of a daughter's prying disposition, and conceal himself in a large press or wardrobe, that stood in one corner of the apartment. The scene was immediately acted with great success, and our hero cooped up in his cage, where he waited so long, that his desires began to subside, and his imagination to aggravate the danger of his situation.

"Suppose," said he to himself, "this brutal German, instead of being stupefied with wine, should come home inflamed with brandy, to the use of which he is sometimes addicted, far from feeling any inclination to sleep, he will labour under the most fretful anxiety of watching; every irascible particle

in his disposition will be exasperated; he will be offended with every object that may present itself to his view; and, if there is the least ingredient of jealousy in his temper, it will manifest itself in riot and rage. What if his frenzy should prompt him to search his wife's chamber for gallants? this would certainly be the first place to which he would direct his inquiry; or, granting this supposition chimerical, I may be seized with an irresistible inclination to cough, before he is oppressed with sleep; he may be waked by the noise I shall make in disengaging myself from this embarrassed situation; and, finally, I may find it impracticable to retire unseen or unheard, after everything else shall have succeeded to my wish."

These suggestions did not at all contribute to the quiet of our adventurer, who, having waited three whole hours in the most uncomfortable suspense, heard the jeweller brought into the room in that very condition which his fears had prognosticated. He had, it seems, quarrelled over his cups with another tradesman, and received a salutation on the forehead with a candlestick, which not only left an ignominious and painful mark upon his countenance, but even disordered his brain to a very dangerous degree of delirium; so that, instead of allowing himself quietly to be undressed and put to bed by his wife, he answered all her gentle admonitions and caresses with the most opprobrious invectives and obstreperous behaviour; and, though he did not tax her with infidelity to his bed, he virulently accused her of extravagance and want of economy; observed, her expensive way of living would bring him to a morsel of bread; and unfortunately recollecting the attempt of the supposed thief, started up from his chair, swearing by G—'s mother that he would forthwith arm himself with a brace of pistols, and search every apartment in the house. "That press," said he, with great vociferation, "may, for aught I know, be the receptacle of some ruffian."

So saying, he approached the ark in which Fathom was embarked, and exclaiming, "Come forth, Satan," applied his foot to the door of it, with such violence as threw him from the centre of gravity, and laid him sprawling on his back. This address made such an impression upon our adventurer, that he had well-nigh obeyed the summons, and burst from his concealment, in a desperate effort to escape, without being recognised by the intoxicated German; and indeed, had the application been repeated, he in all likelihood would have tried the experiment, for by this time his terrors had waxed too strong to be much longer suppressed. From this hazardous enterprise he was, however, exempted by a lucky accident that happened to his disturber, whose head chancing to pitch upon the corner of a chair in his fall, he was immediately lulled into a trance, during which the considerate lady, guessing the disorder of her gallant, and dreading further interruption, very prudently released him from his confinement, after she had put out the light, and in the dark conveyed him to the door, where he was comforted with the promise that she would punctually remember the rendezvous of next day.

She then invoked the assistance of the servants, who, being waked for the purpose, lifted up their master, and tumbled him into bed, while Ferdinand hied him home in an universal sweat, blessing himself from any future achievement of that sort in a house where he had been twice in such imminent danger of life and reputation. Nevertheless, he did not fail to honour the assignation, and avail himself of the disposition his mistress manifested to make him all the recompense in her power for the disappointment and chagrin which he had undergone.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN BUT AT LENGTH SUCCEEDS IN HIS ATTEMPT UPON BOTH

Having thus gained a complete victory over the affections of these two ladies, he began to convert his good fortune to the purposes of that principle, from which his view was never, no, not for a moment, detached. In other words, he used them as ministers and purveyors to his avarice and fraud. As for the mother-in-law, she was of herself so liberal as to anticipate the wishes of any moderate adventurer, and presented him with sundry valuable jewels, as memorials of her esteem; nor was the daughter backward in such expressions of regard; she already considered his interest as her own, and took frequent opportunities of secreting for his benefit certain stray trinkets that she happened to pick up in her excursions within doors.

All these gratifications he received with demonstrations of infinite constraint and reluctance, and, in the midst of his rapacious extortion, acted so cunningly as to impose himself upon both for a miracle of disinterested integrity. Yet, not contented with what he thus could earn, and despairing of being able to steer the bark of his fortune for any length of time between two such dangerous quicksands, he resolved to profit by the occasion while it lasted, and strike some considerable stroke at once. A plan was formed in consequence of this determination, and, at an appointment with the mother in the house of their female friend, our adventurer appeared with an air of dejection, which he veiled with a thin cover of forced pleasantry, that his mistress might suppose he endeavoured to conceal some mortal chagrin that preyed upon his heart.

The stratagem succeeded to his wish. She observed his countenance between whiles overcast, took notice of the involuntary sighs he heaved; and, with the most tender expressions of sympathy, conjured him to make her acquainted with the cause of his affliction. Instead of gratifying her request immediately, he evaded her questions with a respectful reserve, implying, that his love would not suffer him to make her a partner in his sorrow; and this delicacy on his part whetted her impatience and concern to such a degree, that, rather than keep her in such an agony of doubt and apprehension, he was prevailed upon to tell her, that he had been, the preceding night, engaged with a company of his fellow-students, where he had made too free with the champagne, so that his caution forsook him, and he had been decoyed into play by a Tyrolese gamester, who stripped him of all his ready money, and obtained from him an obligation for two hundred florins, which he could not possibly pay without having recourse to his relation the Count de Melvil, who would have just cause to be incensed at his extravagance.

This information he concluded, by declaring that, cost what it would, he was resolved to make a candid confession of the truth, and throw himself entirely upon the generosity of his patron, who could inflict no other punishment than that of discarding him from his favour and protection,—a misfortune which, how grievous soever it might be, he should be able to sustain with fortitude, could he fall upon some method of satisfying the Tyrolese, who was very importunate and savage in his demand. His kind mistress no sooner found out the source of his inquietude, than she promised to dry it up, assuring him that next day, at the same hour, she would enable him to discharge the debt; so that he might set his heart at ease, and recollect that gaiety which was the soul of her enjoyment.

He expressed the utmost astonishment at this generous proffer, which, however, he declined, with an affected earnestness of refusal, protesting, that he should be extremely mortified, if he thought she looked upon him as one of those mercenary gallants who could make such a sordid use of a lady's affection. "No, madam," cried our politician in a pathetic strain, "whatever happens, I shall never part with that internal consolation, that conscious honour never fails to yield in the deepest scenes of solitary distress. The attachment I have the honour to profess for your amiable person, is

not founded on such inglorious motives, but is the genuine result of that generous passion which none but the noble-minded feel, and the only circumstance of this misfortune that I dread to encounter, is the necessity of withdrawing myself for ever from the presence of her whose genial smiles could animate my soul against all the persecution of adverse fortune.”

This declamation, accompanied with a profound sigh, served only to inflame her desire of extricating him from the difficulty in which he was involved. She exhausted all her eloquence in attempting to persuade him that his refusal was an outrage against her affection. He pretended to refute her arguments, and remained unshaken by all the power of her solicitations, until she had recourse to the most passionate remonstrances of love, and fell at his feet in the posture of a forlorn shepherdess. What he refused to her reason, he granted to her tears, because his heart was melted by her affliction, and next day condescended to accept of her money, out of pure regard to her happiness and peace.

Encouraged by the success of this achievement, he resolved to practise the same experiment upon Wilhelmina, in hope of extracting an equal share of profit from her simplicity and attachment, and, at their very next nocturnal rendezvous in her chamber, reacted the farce already rehearsed, with a small variation, which he thought necessary to stimulate the young lady in his behalf. He rightly concluded, that she was by no means mistress of such a considerable sum as he had already extorted from her mother, and therefore thought proper to represent himself in the most urgent predicament, that her apprehension, on his account, might be so alarmed as to engage her in some enterprise for his advantage, which otherwise she would never have dreamed of undertaking. With this view, after having described his own calamitous situation, in consequence of her pressing entreaties, which he affected to evade, he gave her to understand, that there was no person upon earth to whom he would have recourse in this emergency; for which reason he was determined to rid himself of all his cares at once, upon the friendly point of his own faithful sword.

Such a dreadful resolution could not fail to operate upon the tender passions of his Dulcinea; she was instantly seized with an agony of fear and distraction. Her grief manifested itself in a flood of tears, while she hung round his neck, conjuring him in the most melting terms, by their mutual love, in which they had been so happy, to lay aside that fatal determination, which would infallibly involve her in the same fate; for, she took Heaven to witness, that she would not one moment survive the knowledge of his death.

He was not deficient in expressions of reciprocal regard. He extolled her love and tenderness with a most extravagant eulogium, and seemed wrung with mortal anguish at the prospect of parting for ever from his lovely Wilhelmina; but his honour was a stern and rigid creditor, that could not be appeased, except with his blood; and all the boon she could obtain, by dint of the most woful supplication, was a promise to defer the execution of his baleful purpose for the space of four-and-twenty hours, during which she hoped Heaven would compassionate her sufferings, and inspire her with some contrivance for their mutual relief. Thus he yielded to her fervent request, rather with a view to calm the present transports of her sorrow, than with any expectation of seeing himself redeemed from his fate by her interposition; such at least were his professions when he took his leave, assuring her, that he would not quit his being before he should have devoted a few hours to another interview with the dear object of his love.

Having thus kindled the train, he did not doubt that the mine of his craft would take effect, and repaired to his own lodging, in full persuasion of seeing his aim accomplished, before the time fixed for their last assignation. His prognostic was next morning verified by the arrival of a messenger, who brought to him a small parcel, to which was cemented, with sealing wax, the following epistle:—

“JEWEL OF MY SOUL!—Scarce had you, last night, quitted my disconsolate arms, when I happily recollected that there was in my possession a gold chain, of value more than sufficient to answer the exigence of your present occasions. It was pledged to my grandfather for two hundred crowns by a knight of Malta, who soon after perished in a sea engagement with the enemies of our



faith, so that it became the property of our house, and was bequeathed to me by the old gentleman, as a memorial of his particular affection. Upon whom can I more properly bestow it, than him who is already master of my heart! Receive it, therefore, from the bearer of this billet, and convert it, without scruple, to that use which shall be most conducive to your ease and satisfaction; nor seek, from a true romantic notion of honour, which I know you entertain, to excuse yourself from accepting this testimony of my affection. For I have already sworn before an image of our blessed Lady, that I will no longer own you as the sovereign of my heart, nor even indulge you with another interview, if you reject this mark of tenderness and concern from your ever faithful WILHELMINA.”

The heart of our adventurer began to bound with joy when he surveyed the contents of this letter; and his eyes sparkled with transport at sight of the chain, which he immediately perceived to be worth twice the sum she had mentioned. Nevertheless, he would not avail himself, without further question, of her generosity; but, that same night, repairing to her apartment at the usual hour of meeting, he prostrated himself before her, and counterfeiting extreme agitation of spirit, begged, in the most urgent terms, not even unaccompanied with tears, that she would take back the present, which he tendered for her acceptance, and spare him the most insufferable mortification of thinking himself exposed to the imputation of being mercenary in his love. Such, he said, was the delicacy of his passion, that he could not possibly exist under the apprehension of incurring a censure so unworthy of his sentiments; and he would a thousand times sooner undergo the persecution of his rancorous creditor, than bear the thought of being in the smallest consideration lessened in her esteem; nay, so far did he carry his pretensions to punctilio, as to protest, that, should she refuse to quiet the scruples of his honour on this score, her unyielding beneficence would serve only to hasten the execution of his determined purpose, to withdraw himself at once from a life of vanity and misfortune.

The more pathetically he pleaded for her compliance, the more strenuously did she resist his remonstrances. She advanced all the arguments her reason, love, and terror could suggest, reminded him of her oath, from which he could not suppose she would recede, whatever the consequence might be; and in conclusion vowed to Heaven, with great solemnity and devotion, that she would not survive the news of his death. Thus the alternative she offered was either to retain the chain and be happy in her affection, or forfeit all title to her love, and die in the conviction of having brought his innocent mistress to an untimely grave.

His fortitude was not proof against this last consideration. “My savage honour,” said he, “would enable me to endure the pangs of eternal separation in the confidence of being endowed with the power of ending these tortures by the energy of my own hand; but the prospect of Wilhelmina’s death, and that too occasioned by my inflexibility, disarms my soul of all her resolution, swallows up the dictates of my jealous pride, and fills my bosom with such a gush of tenderness and sorrow, as overwhelms the whole economy of my purpose! Yes, enchanting creature! I sacrifice my glory to that irresistible reflection; and, rather than know myself the cruel instrument of robbing the world of such perfection, consent to retain the fatal testimony of your love.”

So saying, he pocketed the chain, with an air of ineffable mortification, and was rewarded for his compliance with the most endearing caresses of his Dulcinea, who, amidst the tumults of her joy, ejaculated a thousand acknowledgments to Heaven for having blessed her with the affection of such a man, whose honour was unrivalled by anything but his love.

## **CHAPTER SIXTEEN**

### **HIS SUCCESS BEGETS A BLIND SECURITY, BY WHICH HE IS ONCE AGAIN WELL-NIGH ENTRAPPED IN HIS DULCINEA'S APARTMENT**

In this manner did the crafty Fathom turn to account those ingratiating qualifications he inherited from nature, and maintain, with incredible assiduity and circumspection, an amorous correspondence with two domestic rivals, who watched the conduct of each other with the most indefatigable virulence of envious suspicion, until an accident happened, which had well-nigh overturned the bark of his policy, and induced him to alter the course, that he might not be shipwrecked on the rocks that began to multiply in the prosecution of his present voyage.

The jeweller, who, as a German, wanted neither pride nor ostentation, never failed to celebrate the anniversary of his birth by an annual feast granted to his neighbours and friends; and on these occasions was accustomed to wear that chain which, though bequeathed to his daughter, he considered as an ornament appertaining to the family, whereof he himself was head. Accordingly, when the time of this festival revolved, he, as usual, ordered Wilhelmina to surrender it for the day. This injunction, the reader will perceive, our young lady was in no condition to obey; she had, however, foreseen the demand, and contrived a scheme of behaviour for the occasion, which she forthwith put in execution.

With an air of uncommon cheerfulness, purposely assumed, she retired to her closet, on pretence of complying with his desire, and, having employed a few minutes in rummaging her drawers and disordering her moveables, uttered a loud shriek, that brought her father instantly into the apartment, where he found his daughter tossing about her clothes and trinkets with violent demonstrations of disorder and affright, and heard her, in a lamentable strain, declare that she was robbed of her chain, and for ever undone. This was so far from being an agreeable intimation to the jeweller, that he was struck dumb with astonishment and vexation, and it was not till after a long pause that he pronounced the word *Sacrament!* with an emphasis denoting the most mortifying surprise.

Soon as that exclamation escaped from his lips, he flew to the *escritoire* as if instinctively, and, joining Wilhelmina in her occupation, tumbled its whole contents upon the floor in a trice.

While he was thus employed, in the most expressive silence, the wife of his bosom chanced to pass that way, and seeing them both occupied with such violence and trepidation, believed at first that they were certainly actuated by the spirit of frenzy; but, when she interposed, by asking, with great earnestness, the cause of such transports and distracted behaviour, and heard her husband reply, with an accent of despair, “The chain! the chain of my forefathers is no more!” she immediately justified his emotion, by undergoing the same alarm, and, without further hesitation, engaged herself in the search, beginning with a song, which might be compared to the hymn of battle among the Greeks, or rather more aptly to that which the Spartan females sung round the altar of Diana, surnamed *Orthian*; for it was attended with strange gesticulations, and, in the course of utterance, became so loud and shrill, that the guests, who were by this time partly assembled, being confounded at the clamour, rushed towards the place from whence it seemed to proceed, and found their landlord, with his wife and daughter, in the attitudes of distraction and despair.

When they understood the nature of the case, they condoled the family on their misfortune, and would have retired, on the supposition that it would defeat the mirthful intent of their meeting; but the jeweller, mustering up his whole temper and hospitality, entreated them to excuse his disorder, and favour him with their company, which, he observed, was now more than ever wanted, to dispel the melancholy ideas inspired by his loss. Notwithstanding this apology, and the efforts he made in the sequel to entertain his friends with jollity and good-humour, his heart was so linked to the chain,

that he could not detach himself from the thoughts of it, which invaded him at short intervals in such qualms as effectually spoiled his appetite, and hindered his digestion.

He revolved within himself the circumstances of his disaster, and, in canvassing all the probable means by which the chain would be stolen, concluded that the deed must have been done by some person in the family, who, in consequence of having access to his daughter's chamber, had either found the drawer left open by her carelessness and neglect, or found means to obtain a false key, by some waxen impression; for the locks of the escritoire were safe and uninjured. His suspicion being thus confined within his own house, sometimes pitched upon his workmen, and sometimes upon his wife, who, he thought, was the more likely to practise such finesse, as she considered Wilhelmina in the light of a daughter-in-law, whose interest interfered with her own, and who had often harangued to him in private on the folly of leaving this very chain in the young lady's possession.

The more he considered this subject, he thought he saw the more reason to attribute the damage he had sustained to the machinations of his spouse, who, he did not doubt, was disposed to feather her own nest, at the expense of him and his heirs, and who, with the same honest intention, had already secreted, for her private use, those inconsiderable jewels which of late had at different times been missing. Aroused by these sentiments, he resolved to retaliate her own schemes, by contriving means to visit her cabinet in secret, and, if possible, to rob the robber of the spoils she had gathered to his prejudice, without coming to any explanation, which might end in domestic turmoils and eternal disquiet.

While the husband exercised his reflection in this manner, his innocent mate did not allow the powers of her imagination to rest in idleness and sloth. Her observations touching the loss of the chain were such as a suspicious woman, biassed by hatred and envy, would naturally make. To her it seemed highly improbable, that a thing of such value, so carefully deposited, should vanish without the connivance of its keeper, and without much expense of conjecture, divined the true manner in which it was conveyed. The sole difficulty that occurred in the researches of her sagacity, was to know the gallant who had been favoured with such a pledge of Wilhelmina's affection; for, as the reader will easily imagine, she never dreamed of viewing Ferdinand in that odious perspective. In order to satisfy her curiosity, discover this happy favourite, and be revenged on her petulant rival, she prevailed upon the jeweller to employ a scout, who should watch all night upon the stair, without the knowledge of any other person in the family, alleging, that in all likelihood, the housemaid gave private admittance to some lover who was the author of all the losses they had lately suffered, and that they might possibly detect him in his nocturnal adventures; and observing that it would be imprudent to intimate their design to Wilhelmina, lest, through the heedlessness and indiscretion of youth, she might chance to divulge the secret, so as to frustrate their aim.

A Swiss, in whose honesty the German could confide, being hired for this purpose, was posted in a dark corner of the staircase, within a few paces of the door, which he was directed to watch, and actually stood sentinel three nights, without perceiving the least object of suspicion; but, on the fourth, the evil stars of our adventurer conducted him to the spot, on his voyage to the apartment of his Dulcinea, with whom he had preconcerted the assignation. Having made the signal, which consisted of two gentle taps on her door, he was immediately admitted; and the Swiss no sooner saw him fairly housed, than he crept softly to the other door, that was left open for the purpose, and gave immediate intimation of what he had perceived. This intelligence, however, he could not convey so secretly, but the lovers, who were always vigilant upon these occasions, overheard a sort of commotion in the jeweller's chamber, the cause of which their apprehension was ingenious enough to comprehend.

We have formerly observed that our adventurer could not make his retreat by the door, without running a very great risk of being detected, and the expedient of the chimney he had no inclination to repeat; so that he found himself in a very uncomfortable dilemma, and was utterly abandoned by all his invention and address, when his mistress, in a whisper, desired him to begin a dialogue, aloud, in an apology, importing, that he had mistaken the door, and that his intention was to visit her father,

touching a ring belonging to the young Count Melvil, which she knew Fathom had put into his hands, in order to be altered.

Ferdinand, seizing the hint, availed himself of it without delay, and, unbolting the door, pronounced in an audible voice, "Upon my honour, Mademoiselle, you wrong my intention, if you imagine I came hither with any disrespectful or dishonourable motive. I have business with your father, which cannot be delayed till to-morrow, without manifest prejudice to my friend and myself; therefore I took the liberty of visiting him at these untimely hours, and it has been my misfortune to mistake the door in the dark. I beg pardon for my involuntary intrusion, and again assure you, that nothing was farther from my thoughts than any design to violate that respect which I have always entertained for you and your father's family."

To this remonstrance, which was distinctly heard by the German and his wife, who by this time stood listening at the door, the young lady replied, in a shrill accent of displeasure, "Sir, I am bound to believe that all your actions are conducted by honour; but you must give me leave to tell you, that your mistake is a little extraordinary, and your visit, even to my father, at this time of the night, altogether unseasonable, if not mysterious. As for the interruption I have suffered in my repose, I impute it to my own forgetfulness, in leaving my door unlocked, and blame myself so severely for the omission, that I shall, to-morrow, put it out of my own power to be guilty of the like for the future, by ordering the passage to be nailed up; meanwhile, if you would persuade me of your well-meaning, you will instantly withdraw, lest my reputation should suffer by your continuance in my apartment."

"Madam," answered our hero, "I will not give you an opportunity to repeat the command, which I shall forthwith obey, after having entreated you once more to forgive the disturbance I have given." So saying, he gently opened the door, and, at sight of the German and his wife, who, he well knew, waited for his exit, started back, and gave tokens of confusion, which was partly real and partly affected. The jeweller, fully satisfied with Fathom's declaration to his daughter, received him with a complaisant look, and, in order to alleviate his concern, gave him to understand, that he already knew the reason of his being in that apartment, and desired to be informed of what had procured him the honour to see him at such a juncture.

"My dear friend," said our adventurer, pretending to recollect himself with difficulty, "I am utterly ashamed and confounded to be discovered in this situation; but, as you have overheard what passed between Mademoiselle and me, I know you will do justice to my intention, and forgive my mistake. After begging pardon for having intruded upon your family at these hours, I must now tell you that my cousin, Count Melvil, was some time ago so much misrepresented to his mother by certain malicious informers, who delight in sowing discord in private families, that she actually believed her son an extravagant spendthrift, who had not only consumed his remittances in the most riotous scenes of disorder, but also indulged a pernicious appetite for gaming, to such a degree, that he had lost all his clothes and jewels at play. In consequence of such false information, she expostulated with him in a severe letter, and desired he would transmit to her that ring which is in your custody, it being a family stone, for which she expressed an inestimable value. The young gentleman, in his answer to her reproof, endeavoured to vindicate himself from the aspersions which had been cast upon his character, and, with regard to the ring, told her it was at present in the hands of a jeweller, in order to be new set according to her own directions, and that, whenever it should be altered, he would send it home to her by some safe conveyance. This account the good lady took for an evasion, and upon that supposition has again written to him, in such a provoking style, that, although the letter arrived but half an hour ago, he is determined to despatch a courier before morning with the mischievous ring, for which, in compliance with the impetuosity of his temper, I have taken the freedom to disturb you at this unseasonable hour."

The German paid implicit faith to every circumstance of his story, which indeed could not well be supposed to be invented extempore; the ring was immediately restored, and our adventurer took his leave, congratulating himself upon his signal deliverance from the snare in which he had fallen.

## **CHAPTER SEVENTEEN**

### **THE STEP-DAME'S SUSPICIONS BEING AWAKENED, SHE LAYS A SNARE FOR OUR ADVENTURER, FROM WHICH HE IS DELIVERED BY THE INTERPOSITION OF HIS GOOD GENIUS**

Though the husband swallowed the bait without further inquiry, the penetration of the wife was not so easily deceived. That same dialogue in Wilhelmina's apartment, far from allaying, rather inflamed her suspicion; because, in the like emergency, she herself had once profited by the same, or nearly the same contrivance. Without communicating her doubts to the father, she resolved to double her attention to the daughter's future conduct, and keep such a strict eye over the behaviour of our gallant, that he should find it very difficult, if not impossible, to elude her observation. For this purpose she took into her pay an old maiden, of the right sour disposition, who lived in a house opposite to her own, and directed her to follow the young lady in all her outings, whenever she should receive from the window a certain signal, which the mother-in-law agreed to make for the occasion. It was not long before this scheme succeeded to her wish. The door of communication betwixt Wilhelmina's apartment and the staircase being nailed up by the jeweller's express order, our adventurer was altogether deprived of those opportunities he had hitherto enjoyed, and was not at all mortified to find himself so restricted in a correspondence which began to be tiresome and disagreeable. But the case was far otherwise with his Dulcinea, whose passion, the more it was thwarted, raged with greater violence, like a fire, that, from the attempts that are made to extinguish it, gathers greater force, and flames with double fury.

Upon the second day of her misfortune, she had written a very tender billet, lamenting her unhappiness in being deprived of those meetings which constituted the chief joy of her life, and entreating him to contrive some means of renewing the delicious commerce in an unsuspected place. This intimation she proposed to convey privately into the hand of her lover, during his next visit to the family; but both were so narrowly eyed by the mother, that she found the execution of her design impracticable; and next forenoon, on pretence of going to church, repaired to the house of a companion, who, being also her confidant, undertook to deliver the billet with her own hand.

The she-dragon employed by her mother, in obedience to the sign which was displayed from the window immediately put on her veil, and followed Wilhelmina at a distance, until she saw her fairly housed. She would not even then return from her excursion, but hovered about in sight of the door, with a view of making further observations. In less than five minutes after the young lady disappeared, the scout perceived her coming out, accompanied by her comrade, from whom she instantly parted, and bent her way towards the church in good earnest, while the other steered her course in another direction. The duenna, after a moment's suspense and consideration, divined the true cause of this short visit, and resolved to watch the motions of the confidant, whom she traced to the academy in which our hero lodged, and from which she saw her return, after the supposed message was delivered.

Fraught with this intelligence, the rancorous understrapper hied her home to the jeweller's wife, and made a faithful recital of what she had seen, communicating at the same time her own conjectures on that subject. Her employer was equally astonished and incensed at this information. She was seized with all that frenzy which takes possession of a slighted woman, when she finds herself supplanted by a detested rival; and, in the first transports of her indignation, devoted them as sacrifices to her vengeance. Nor was her surprise so much the effect of his dissimulation, as of his want of taste and discernment. She inveighed against him, not as the most treacherous lover, but as the most abject wretch, in courting the smiles of such an awkward dowdy, while he enjoyed the favours of a woman

who had numbered princes in the train of her admirers. For the brilliancy of her attractions, such as they at present shone, she appealed to the decision of her minister, who consulted her own satisfaction and interest, by flattering the other's vanity and resentment; and so unaccountable did the depravity of our hero's judgment appear to this conceited dame, that she began to believe there was some mistake in the person, and to hope that Wilhelmina's gallant was not in reality her professed admirer, Mr. Fathom, but rather one of his fellow-lodgers, whose passion he favoured with his mediation and assistance.

On this notion, which nothing but mere vanity could have inspired, in opposition to so many more weighty presumptions, she took the resolution of bringing the affair to a fuller explanation, before she would concert any measures to the prejudice of our adventurer, and forthwith despatched her spy back to his lodgings, to solicit, on the part of Wilhelmina, an immediate answer to the letter he had received. This was an expedition with which the old maiden would have willingly dispensed, because it was founded upon an uncertainty, which might be attended with troublesome consequences; but, rather than be the means of retarding a negotiation so productive of that sort of mischief which is particularly agreeable to all of her tribe, she undertook to manage and effect the discovery, in full confidence of her own talents and experience.

With such a fund of self-sufficiency and instigation, she repaired to the academy on the instant, and inquiring for Mr. Fathom, was introduced to his apartment, where she found him in the very act of writing a billet to the jeweller's daughter. The artful agent having asked, with the mysterious air of an expert go-between, if he had not lately received a message from a certain young lady, and, being answered in the affirmative, gave him to understand, that she herself was a person favoured with the friendship and confidence of Wilhelmina, whom she had known from her cradle, and often dandled on her knee; then, in the genuine style of a prattling dry nurse, she launched out in encomiums on his Dulcinea's beauty and sweetness of temper, recounting many simple occurrences of her infancy and childhood; and, finally, desiring a more circumstantial answer to that which she had sent to him by her friend Catherina. In the course of her loquacity she had also, according to her instructions, hinted at the misfortune of the door; and, on the whole, performed her cue with such dexterity and discretion that our politician was actually overreached, and, having finished his epistle, committed it to her care, with many verbal expressions of eternal love and fidelity to his charming Wilhelmina.

The messenger, doubly rejoiced at her achievement, which not only recommended her ministry, but also gratified her malice, returned to her principal with great exultation, and, delivering the letter, the reader will easily conceive the transports of that lady when she read the contents of it in these words:—

“ANGELIC WILHELMINA!—To forget those ecstatic scenes we have enjoyed together, or even live without the continuation of that mutual bliss, were to quit all title to perception, and resign every hope of future happiness. No! my charmer, while my head retains the least spark of invention, and my heart glows with the resolution of a man, our correspondence shall not be cut off by the machinations of an envious stepmother, who never had attractions to inspire a generous passion; and, now that age and wrinkles have destroyed what little share of beauty she once possessed, endeavours, like the fiend in paradise, to blast those joys in others, from which she is herself eternally excluded. Doubt not, dear sovereign of my soul! that I will study, with all the eagerness of desiring love, how to frustrate her malicious intention, and renew those transporting moments, the remembrance of which now warms the breast of your ever constant FATHOM.”

Had our hero murdered her father, or left her a disconsolate widow, by effecting the death of her dear husband, there might have been a possibility of her exerting the Christian virtues of resignation and forgiveness; but such a personal outrage as that contained in this epistle precluded all hope of pardon, and rendered penitence of no signification. His atrocious crime being now fully ascertained, this virago gave a loose to her resentment, which became so loud and tempestuous, that her informer

shuddered at the storm she had raised, and began to repent of having communicated the intelligence which seemed to have such a violent effect upon her brain.

She endeavoured, however, to allay the agitation, by flattering her fancy with the prospect of revenge, and gradually soothed her into a state of deliberate ire; during which she determined to take ample vengeance on the delinquent. In the zenith of her rage, she would have had immediate recourse to poison or steel, had she not been diverted from her mortal purpose by her counsellor, who represented the danger of engaging in such violent measures, and proposed a more secure scheme, in the execution of which she would see the perfidious wretch sufficiently punished, without any hazard to her own person or reputation. She advised her to inform the jeweller of Fathom's efforts to seduce her conjugal fidelity, and impart to him a plan, by which he would have it in his power to detect our adventurer in the very act of practising upon her virtue.

The lady relished her proposal, and actually resolved to make an assignation with Ferdinand, as usual, and give notice of the appointment to her husband, that he might personally discover the treachery of his pretended friend, and inflict upon him such chastisement as the German's brutal disposition should suggest, when inflamed by that species of provocation. Had this project been brought to bear, Ferdinand, in all likelihood, would have been disqualified from engaging in any future intrigue; but fate ordained that the design should be defeated, in order to reserve him for more important occasions.

Before the circumstances of the plan could be adjusted, it was his good fortune to meet his Dulcinea in the street, and, in the midst of their mutual condolence on the interruption they had suffered in their correspondence, he assured her, that he would never give his invention respite, until he should have verified the protestations contained in the letter he had delivered to her discreet agent. This allusion to a billet she had never received, did not fail to alarm her fears, and introduce a very mortifying explanation, in which he so accurately described the person of the messenger, that she forthwith comprehended the plot, and communicated to our hero her sentiments on that subject.

Though he expressed infinite anxiety and chagrin at this misfortune, which could not fail to raise new obstacles to their love, his heart was a stranger to the uneasiness he affected; and rather pleased with the occasion, which would furnish him with pretences to withdraw himself gradually from an intercourse by this time become equally cloying and unprofitable. Being well acquainted with the mother's temperament, he guessed the present situation of her thoughts, and concluding she would make the jeweller a party in her revenge, he resolved from that moment to discontinue his visits, and cautiously guard against any future interview with the lady whom he had rendered so implacable.

It was well for our adventurer that his good fortune so seasonably interposed; for that same day, in the afternoon, he was favoured with a billet from the jeweller's wife, couched in the same tender style she had formerly used, and importing an earnest desire of seeing him next day at the wonted rendezvous. Although his penetration was sufficient to perceive the drift of this message, or at least to discern the risk he should run in complying with her request, yet he was willing to be more fully certified of the truth of his suspicion, and wrote an answer to the billet, in which he assured her, that he would repair to the place of appointment with all the punctuality of an impatient lover. Nevertheless, instead of performing this promise, he, in the morning, took post in a public-house opposite to the place of assignation, in order to reconnoitre the ground, and about noon had the pleasure of seeing the German, wrapped in a cloak, enter the door of his wife's she-friend, though the appointment was fixed at five in the evening. Fathom blessed his good angel for having conducted him clear of this conspiracy, and kept his station with great tranquillity till the hour of meeting, when he beheld his enraged Thalestris take the same route, and enjoyed her disappointment with ineffable satisfaction.

Thus favoured with a pretext, he took his leave of her, in a letter, giving her to understand, that he was no stranger to the barbarous snare she had laid for him; and upbraiding her with having made such an ungrateful return for all his tenderness and attachment. She was not backward in conveying a reply to this expostulation, which seemed to have been dictated in all the distraction of a proud woman

who sees her vengeance baffled, as well as her love disdained. Her letter was nothing but a succession of reproaches, menaces, and incoherent execrations. She taxed him with knavery, insensibility, and dissimulation; imprecated a thousand curses upon his head, and threatened not only to persecute his life with all the arts that hell and malice could inspire, but also to wound him in the person of her daughter-in-law, who should be enclosed for life in a convent, where she should have leisure to repent of those loose and disorderly practices which he had taught her to commit, and of which she could not pretend innocence, as they had it in their power to confront her with the evidence of her lover's own confession. Yet all this denunciation was qualified with an alternative, by which he was given to understand, that the gates of mercy were still open, and that penitence was capable of washing out the deepest stain of guilt.

Ferdinand read the whole remonstrance with great composure and moderation, and was content to incur the hazard of her hate, rather than put her to the trouble of making such an effort of generosity, as would induce her to forgive the heinous offence he had committed; nor did his apprehension for Wilhelmina in the least influence his behaviour on this occasion. So zealous was he for her spiritual concerns, that he would have been glad to hear she had actually taken the veil; but he knew such a step was not at all agreeable to her disposition, and that no violence would be offered to her inclinations on that score, unless her stepmother should communicate to the father that letter of Fathom's which she had intercepted, and by which the German would be convinced of his daughter's backsliding; but this measure, he rightly supposed, the wife would not venture to take, lest the husband, instead of taking her advice touching the young lady, should seek to compromise the affair, by offering her in marriage to her debaucher, a proffer which, if accepted, would overwhelm the mother with vexation and despair. He therefore chose to trust to the effects of lenient time, which he hoped would gradually weaken the resentment of this Penthesilea, and dissolve his connexion with the other parts of the family, from which he longed to be totally detached.

How well soever he might have succeeded in his attempts to shake off the yoke of the mother, who by her situation in life was restrained from prosecuting those measures her resentment had planned against his fortitude and indifference, he would have found greater difficulty than he had foreseen, in disengaging himself from the daughter, whose affections he had won under the most solemn professions of honour and fidelity, and who, now she was debarred of his company and conversation, and in danger of losing him for ever, had actually taken the resolution of disclosing the amour to her father, that he might interpose in behalf of her peace and reputation, and secure her happiness by the sanction of the church.



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### OUR HERO DEPARTS FROM VIENNA, AND QUILTS THE DOMAIN OF VENUS FOR THE ROUGH FIELD OF MARS

Luckily for our adventurer, before she adhered to this determination, the young Count de Melvil was summoned to Presburg by his father, who desired to see him, before he should take the field, in consequence of a rupture between the Emperor and the French King; and Fathom of course quitted Vienna, in order to attend his patron, after he and Renaldo had resided two whole years in that capital, where the former had made himself perfect in all the polite exercises, become master of the French tongue, and learned to speak the Italian with great facility; over and above those other accomplishments in which we have represented him as an inimitable original.

As for the young Count, his exteriors were so much improved by the company to which he had access, since his departure from his father's house, that his parents were equally surprised and overjoyed at the alteration. All that awkwardness and rusticity, which hung upon his deportment, was, like the rough coat of a diamond, polished away; the connexion and disposition of his limbs seemed to have been adjusted anew; his carriage was become easy, his air perfectly genteel, and his conversation gay and unrestrained. The merit of this reformation was in a great measure ascribed to the care and example of Mr. Fathom, who was received by the old Count and his lady with marks of singular friendship and esteem; nor was he overlooked by Mademoiselle, who still remained in a state of celibacy, and seemed to have resigned all hope of altering her condition; she expressed uncommon satisfaction at the return of her old favourite, and readmitted him into the same degree of familiarity with which he had been honoured before his departure.

The joy of Teresa was so excessive at his arrival, that she could scarce suppress her raptures, so as to conceal them from the notice of the family; and our hero, upon this occasion, performed the part of an exquisite actor, in dissembling those transports which his bosom never knew. So well had this pupil retained the lessons of her instructor, that, in the midst of those fraudulent appropriations, which she still continued to make, she had found means to support her interest and character with Mademoiselle, and even to acquire such influence in the family, that no other servant, male or female, could pretend to live under the same roof, without paying incessant homage to this artful waiting-woman, and yielding the most abject submission to her will.

The young gentlemen having tarried at Presburg about six weeks, during which a small field equipage was prepared for Renaldo, they repaired to the camp at Heilbron, under the auspices of Count Melvil, in whose regiment they carried arms as volunteers, with a view to merit promotion in the service by their own personal behaviour. Our adventurer would have willingly dispensed with this occasion of signalling himself, his talents being much better adapted to another sphere of life; nevertheless, he affected uncommon alacrity at the prospect of gathering laurels in the field, and subscribed to his fortune with a good grace; foreseeing, that even in a campaign, a man of his art and ingenuity might find means to consult his corporal safety, without any danger to his reputation. Accordingly, before he had lived full three weeks in camp, the damp situation, and sudden change in his way of life, had such a violent effect upon his constitution, that he was deprived of the use of all his limbs, and mourned, without ceasing, his hard fate, by which he found himself precluded from all opportunity of exerting his diligence, courage, and activity, in the character of a soldier, to which he now aspired.

Renaldo, who was actually enamoured of a martial life, and missed no occasion of distinguishing himself, consoled his companion with great cordiality, encouraged him with the hope of seeing his constitution familiarised to the inconveniences of a camp, and accommodated him with everything which he thought would alleviate the pain of his body, as well as the anxiety of his mind.

The old Count, who sincerely sympathised with his affliction, would have persuaded him to retire into quarters, where he could be carefully nursed, and provided with everything necessary to a person in his condition; but such was his desire of glory, that he resisted his patron's importunities with great constancy, till at length, seeing the old gentleman obstinately determined to consult his health by removing him from the field, he gradually suffered himself to recover the use of his hands, made shift to sit up in his bed, and amuse himself with cards or backgammon, and, notwithstanding the feeble condition of his legs, ventured to ride out on horseback to visit the lines, though the Count and his son would never yield to his solicitations so far, as to let him accompany Renaldo in those excursions and reconnoitring parties, by which a volunteer inures himself to toil and peril, and acquires that knowledge in the operations of war, which qualifies him for a command in the service.

Notwithstanding this exemption from all duty, our adventurer managed matters so as to pass for a youth of infinite mettle, and even rendered his backwardness and timidity subservient to the support of that character, by expressing an impatience of lying inactive, and a desire of signalling his prowess, which even the disabled condition of his body could scarce restrain. He must be a man of very weak nerves and excessive irresolution, who can live in the midst of actual service, without imbibing some portion of military fortitude: danger becomes habitual, and loses a great part of its terror; and as fear is often caught by contagion, so is courage communicated among the individuals of an army. The hope of fame, desire of honours and preferment, envy, emulation, and the dread of disgrace, are motives which co-operate in suppressing that aversion to death or mutilation, which nature hath implanted in the human mind; and therefore it is not to be wondered at, if Fathom, who was naturally chicken-hearted, gained some advantages over his disposition before the end of the campaign, which happened to be neither perilous nor severe.

During the winter, while both armies remained in quarters, our adventurer attended his patron to Presburg, and, before the troops were in motion, Renaldo obtained a commission, in consequence of which he went into garrison at Philipsburg, whither he was followed by our hero, while the old Count's duty called him to the field in a different place. Ferdinand for some time had no reason to be dissatisfied with this disposition, by which he was at once delivered from the fatigues of a campaign, and the inspection of a severe censor, in the person of Count Melvil; and his satisfaction was still increased by an accidental meeting with the Tyrolese who had been his confederate at Vienna, and now chanced to serve in garrison on the same footing with himself. These two knights-errant renewed their former correspondence, and, as all soldiers are addicted to gaming, levied contributions upon all those officers who had money to lose, and temerity to play.

However, they had not long pursued this branch of traffic, when their success was interrupted by a very serious occurrence, that for the present entirely detached the gentlemen in the garrison from such amusements. The French troops invested Fort Kehl, situated on the Rhine, opposite to Strasburg; and the Imperialists, dreading that the next storm would fall upon Philipsburg, employed themselves with great diligence to put that important fortress in a proper posture of defence. If the suspension of play was displeasing to our hero, the expectation of being besieged was by no means more agreeable. He knew the excellence of the French engineers, the power of their artillery, and the perseverance of their general. He felt, by anticipation, the toils of hard duty upon the works, the horrors of night-alarms, cannonading, bombardment, sallies, and mines blown up; and deliberated with himself whether or not he should privately withdraw, and take refuge among the besiegers; but, when he reflected that such a step, besides the infamy that must attend it, would be like that of running upon Scylla, seeking to avoid Charybdis, as he would be exposed to more danger and inconvenience in the trenches than he could possibly undergo in the town, and after all run the risk of being taken and treated as a deserter; upon these considerations he resolved to submit himself to his destiny, and endeavoured to mitigate the rigour of his fate by those arts he had formerly practised with success. He accordingly found means to enjoy a very bad state of health during the whole siege, which lasted

about six weeks after the trenches were opened; and then the garrison marched out by capitulation, with all the honours of war.

## **CHAPTER NINETEEN**

### **HE PUTS HIMSELF UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF HIS ASSOCIATE, AND STUMBLES UPON THE FRENCH CAMP, WHERE HE FINISHES HIS MILITARY CAREER**

Nothing else of moment was transacted during that campaign; and in the winter our adventurer, with the young Count, and his friend the Tyrolese, were disposed in quarters of cantonment, where Ferdinand made himself amends for the chagrin he had undergone, by the exercise of those talents in which he excelled. Not that he was satisfied with the sphere of life in which he acted; though he knew himself consummate in the art of play, he was not at all ambitious of a gamester's name; nor did he find himself disposed to hazard those discoveries and explanations to which heroes of that class are sometimes necessarily exposed. His aim was to dwell among the tents of civil life, undisturbed by quarrels and the din of war, and render mankind subservient to his interest, not by stratagems which irritate, but by that suppleness of insinuation, which could not fail to soothe the temper of those on whom he meant to prey.

He saw that all his expectations of Count Melvil's future favour were connected with his choice of a military life; and that his promotion in the service would, in a great measure, depend upon his personal behaviour in such emergencies as he did not at all wish to encounter. On the other hand, he confided so much in his own dexterity and address, that he never doubted of being able to rear a splendid fortune for himself, provided he could once obtain a fixed and firm foundation. He had in fancy often enjoyed a prospect of England, not only as his native country, to which, like a true citizen, he longed to be united; but also as the land of promise, flowing with milk and honey, and abounding with subjects on which he knew his talents would be properly exercised.

These reflections never occurred, without leaving a strong impression upon the mind of our adventurer, which influenced his deliberations in such a manner, as at length amounted to a perfect resolution of withdrawing himself privately from a service that teemed with disagreeable events, and of transporting himself into the country of his ancestors, which he considered as the Canaan of all able adventurers. But, previous to his appearance on that stage, he was desirous of visiting the metropolis of France, in which he hoped to improve himself in the knowledge of men and things, and acquire such intelligence as would qualify him to act a more important part upon the British scene. After having for some time indulged these prospects in secret, he determined to accommodate himself with the company and experience of the Tyrolese, whom, under the specious title of an associate, he knew he could convert into a very serviceable tool, in forwarding the execution of his own projects.

Accordingly, the inclination of this confederate was sounded by distant hints, and being found apt, our hero made him privy to his design of decamping without beat of drum; though, at the same time, he begged his advice touching the method of their departure, that he might retire with as much delicacy as the nature of such a step would permit. Divers consultations were held upon this subject, before they adhered to the resolution of making their escape from the army, after it should have taken the field in the spring; because, in that case, they would have frequent opportunities of going abroad on foraging parties, and, during one of these excursions, might retire in such a manner as to persuade their companions that they had fallen into the enemy's hands.

Agreeable to this determination, the camp was no sooner formed in Alsace than our associates began to make preparations for their march, and had already taken all the previous measures for their departure, when an accident happened, which our hero did not fail to convert to his own advantage. This was no other than the desertion of Renaldo's valet, who, in consequence of a gentle chastisement, which he had richly merited, thought proper to disappear, after having plundered his master's portmanteau, which he had forced open for the purpose. Ferdinand, who was the first person

that discovered the theft, immediately comprehended the whole adventure, and, taking it for granted that the delinquent would never return, resolved to finish what the fugitive had imperfectly performed.

Being favoured with the unreserved confidence of the young Count, he instantly had recourse to his bureau, the locks of which he found means to burst open, and, examining a private drawer, contrived with great art to conceal Renaldo's jewels and cash, made himself master of the contents without hesitation; then cutting open his cloak-bag, and strewing the tent with his linen and clothes, began to raise his voice, and produce such a clamour as alarmed the whole neighbourhood, and brought a great many officers into the tent.

He on this, as on all other occasions, performed his cue to a miracle, expressing confusion and concern so naturally in his gestures and exclamation, that no man could possibly suspect his sincerity; nay, to such a degree of finesse did his cunning amount, that when his friend and patron entered, in consequence of an intimation he soon received of his loss, our adventurer exhibited undoubted signs of distraction and delirium, and, springing upon Renaldo with all the frantic fury of a bedlamite, "Villain," cried he, "restore the effects you have stole from your master, or you shall be immediately committed to the care of the prevot." However mortified M. de Melvil might be at his own misfortune, the condition of his friend seemed to touch him more nearly; he undervalued his own loss as a trifle that could be easily repaired; said everything which he thought would tend to soothe and compose the agitation of Ferdinand; and finally prevailed upon him to retire to rest. The calamity was wholly attributed to the deserter; and Renaldo, far from suspecting the true author, took occasion, from his behaviour on this emergency, to admire him as a mirror of integrity and attachment; in such an exquisite manner did he plan all his designs, that almost every instance of his fraud furnished matter of triumph to his reputation.

Having thus profitably exercised his genius, this subtle politician thought it high time to relinquish his military expectations, and securing all his valuable acquisitions about his own person, rode out with his understrapper, in the midst of fifty dragoons, who went in quest of forage. While the troopers were employed in making up their trusses, the two adventurers advanced towards the skirt of a wood, on pretence of reconnoitring, and the Tyrolese, who undertook to be our hero's guide, directing him to a path which leads towards Strasburg, they suddenly vanished from the eyes of their companions, who in a few minutes hearing the report of several pistols, which the confederates purposely fired, conjectured that they had fallen in with a party of French, by whom they were made prisoners of war.

The Tyrolese had overrated his own knowledge when he took upon himself the charge of conducting our hero; for upon their arrival at a certain place, where two roads crossed each other, he chanced to follow that which not only frustrated their intention, but even led them directly to the French camp; so that, in the twilight, they fell in upon one of the outguards before they were aware of their mistake.

Whatever confusion and perplexity they might undergo, when they heard themselves questioned by the sentinel on the advanced post, certain it is, they betrayed no symptoms of fear or disorder; but while Ferdinand endeavoured to recollect himself, his fellow-traveller, with the appearance of admirable intrepidity and presence of mind, told the soldier that he and his companion were two gentlemen of family, who had quitted the Austrian army, on account of having sustained some ill-usage, which they had no opportunity of resenting in any other way, and that they were come to offer their services to the French general, to whose quarters they desired to be immediately conveyed.

The sentinel, to whom such an instance of desertion was neither rare, nor indeed uncommon, directed them without scruple to the next post, where they found a serjeant's party, from which, at their request, they were transmitted to the officer of the grand guard, and by him next morning introduced to Count Coigny, who very politely received them as volunteers in the army of France. Though this translation was not at all to our hero's liking, he was forced to acquiesce in his fate, glad

to find himself, on these terms, in possession of his effects, of which he would otherwise have been infallibly rifled.

This campaign, however, was the most disagreeable period of his whole life; because the manner in which he had entered into the service subjected him to the particular observation and notice of the French officers; so that he was obliged to be very alert in his duty, and summon all his fortitude to maintain the character he had assumed. What rendered his situation still more unpalatable, was the activity of both armies in the course of this season, during which, over and above sundry fatiguing marches and countermarches, he was personally engaged in the affair of Halleh, which was very obstinate; where, being in the skirts of the detachment, he was actually wounded in the face by the sword of an hussar; but this was, luckily for him, the last time he found himself under the necessity of exerting his military prowess, for a cessation of arms was proclaimed before he was cured of his wound, and peace concluded about the end of the campaign.

During his sojourn in the French camp, he assumed the character of a man of family, who being disgusted at some supercilious treatment he had met with in the German service, and at the same time ambitious of carrying arms under the banners of France, took the opportunity of retreating by stealth from his friends, accompanied only by one with whom he could intrust his intention. In this capacity he had managed his matters to such advantage, that many French officers of rank were very well disposed to contribute their interest in his behalf, had his inclination verged towards promotion in the army; but he thought proper to conceal his real design, under the specious pretext of longing to see the metropolis of France, that centre of pleasure and politeness, in which he proposed to spend some time for the improvement of his address and understanding. These were motives too laudable to be opposed by his new patrons, some of whom furnished him with letters of recommendation to certain noblemen of the first rank at the court of Versailles, for which place he and his companion set out from the banks of the Rhine, very well satisfied with the honourable dismissal they had obtained from a life of inconvenience, danger, and alarm.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### HE PREPARES A STRATAGEM BUT FINDS HIMSELF COUNTERMINED—PROCEEDS ON HIS JOURNEY, AND IS OVERTAKEN BY A TERRIBLE TEMPEST

In the course of this journey, Ferdinand, who was never deficient in his political capacity, held a secret conclave with his own thoughts, not only touching the plan of his own future conduct, but also concerning his associate, of whose fidelity and adherence he began to entertain such doubts as discouraged him from the prosecution of that design in which the Tyrolese had been at first included; for he had lately observed him practise the arts of his occupation among the French officers, with such rapacity and want of caution, as indicated a dangerous temerity of temper, as well as a furious rage of acquiring, which might be some time or other satiated upon his own friends. In other words, our adventurer was afraid that his accomplice would profit by his knowledge of the road and countries through which they travelled, and, after having made free with his most valuable effects, in consequence of the familiarity subsisting between them, leave him some morning without the ceremony of a formal adieu.

Aroused by this suspicion, he resolved to anticipate the supposed intention of the Tyrolese, by taking his own departure in the same abrupt manner; and this scheme he actually put in execution, upon their arrival in Bar-le-duc, where it was agreed they should spend a day to repose and refresh themselves from the fatigue of hard riding. Ferdinand, therefore, taking the advantage of his companion's absence—for the Tyrolese had walked abroad to view the town—found means to hire a peasant, who undertook to conduct him through a by-road as far as Chalons, and with his guide he accordingly set out on horseback, after having discharged the bill, left a blank paper sealed up in form of a letter, directed to his friend, and secured behind his own saddle a pair of leathern bags, in which his jewels and cash were usually contained. So eager was our hero to leave the Tyrolese at a considerable distance behind, that he rode all night at a round pace without halting, and next morning found himself at a village distant thirteen good leagues from any part of the route which he and his companion had at first resolved to pursue.

Here, thinking himself safely delivered from the cause of all his apprehension, he determined to lie incognito for a few days, so as that he might run no risk of an accidental meeting upon the road with the person whose company he had forsaken; and accordingly took possession of an apartment, in which he went to rest, desiring his guide to wake him when dinner should be ready. Having enjoyed a very comfortable refreshment of sleep, with his bags under his pillow, he was summoned, according to his direction, and ate a very hearty meal, with great tranquillity and internal satisfaction. In the afternoon he amused himself with happy presages and ideal prospects of his future fortune, and, in the midst of these imaginary banquets, was seized with an inclination of realising his bliss, and regaling his eyesight with the fruits of that success which had hitherto attended his endeavours. Thus inflamed, he opened the repository, and, O reader! what were his reflections, when, in lieu of Mademoiselle Melvil's ear-rings and necklace, the German's golden chain, divers jewels of considerable value, the spoils of sundry dupes, and about two hundred ducats in ready money, he found neither more nor less than a parcel of rusty nails, disposed in such a manner as to resemble in weight and bulk the moveables he had lost.

It is not to be supposed our adventurer made this discovery without emotion. If the eternal salvation of mankind could have been purchased for the tenth part of his treasure, he would have left the whole species in a state of reprobation, rather than redeem them at that price, unless he had seen in the bargain some evident advantage to his own concerns. One may, therefore, easily conceive with what milkiness of resignation he bore the loss of the whole, and saw himself reduced from such

affluence to the necessity of depending upon about twenty ducats, and some loose silver, which he carried in his pocket, for his expense upon the road. However bitter this pill might be in swallowing, he so far mastered his mortification, as to digest it with a good grace. His own penetration at once pointed out the canal through which this misfortune had flowed upon him; he forthwith placed the calamity to the account of the Tyrolese, and never doubting that he had retired with the booty across the Rhine, into some place to which he knew Fathom would not follow his footsteps, he formed the melancholy resolution of pursuing with all despatch his journey to Paris, that he might, with all convenient expedition, indemnify himself for the discomfiture he had sustained.

With regard to his confederate, his conjecture was perfectly right; that adventurer, though infinitely inferior to our hero in point of genius and invention, had manifestly the advantage of him in the articles of age and experience; he was no stranger to Fathom's qualifications, the happy exertion of which he had often seen. He knew him to be an economist of the most frugal order, consequently concluded his finances were worthy of examination; and, upon the true principles of a sharper, eased him of the encumbrance, taking it for granted, that, in so doing, he only precluded Ferdinand from the power of acting the same tragedy upon him, should ever opportunity concur with his inclination. He had therefore concerted his measures with the dexterity of an experienced conveyancer, and, snatching the occasion, while our hero, travel-tainted, lay sunk in the arms of profound repose, he ripped up the seams of the leather depository, withdrew the contents, introduced the parcel of nails, which he had made up for the purpose, and then repaired the breach with great deliberation.

Had Fathom's good genius prompted him to examine his effects next morning, the Tyrolese, in all probability, would have maintained his acquisition by force of arms; for his personal courage was rather more determined than that of our adventurer, and he was conscious of his own ascendancy in this particular; but his good fortune prevented such explanation. Immediately after dinner, he availed himself of his knowledge, and, betaking himself to a remote part of the town, set out in a post-chaise for Luneville, while our hero was meditating his own escape.

Fathom's conception was sufficient to comprehend the whole of this adventure, as soon as his chagrin would give his sagacity fair play; nor would he allow his resolution to sink under the trial; on the contrary, he departed from the village that same afternoon, under the auspices of his conductor, and found himself benighted in the midst of a forest, far from the habitations of men. The darkness of the night, the silence and solitude of the place, the indistinct images of the trees that appeared on every side, "stretching their extravagant arms athwart the gloom," conspired, with the dejection of spirits occasioned by his loss, to disturb his fancy, and raise strange phantoms in his imagination. Although he was not naturally superstitious, his mind began to be invaded with an awful horror, that gradually prevailed over all the consolations of reason and philosophy; nor was his heart free from the terrors of assassination. In order to dissipate these disagreeable reveries, he had recourse to the conversation of his guide, by whom he was entertained with the history of divers travellers who had been robbed and murdered by ruffians, whose retreat was in the recesses of that very wood.

In the midst of this communication, which did not at all tend to the elevation of our hero's spirits, the conductor made an excuse for dropping behind, while our traveller jogged on in expectation of being joined again by him in a few minutes. He was, however, disappointed in that hope; the sound of the other horse's feet by degrees grew more and more faint, and at last altogether died away. Alarmed at this circumstance, Fathom halted in the middle of the road, and listened with the most fearful attention; but his sense of hearing was saluted with nought but the dismal sighings of the trees, that seemed to foretell an approaching storm. Accordingly, the heavens contracted a more dreary aspect, the lightning began to gleam, and the thunder to roll, and the tempest, raising its voice to a tremendous roar, descended in a torrent of rain.

In this emergency, the fortitude of our hero was almost quite overcome. So many concurring circumstances of danger and distress might have appalled the most undaunted breast; what impression then must they have made upon the mind of Ferdinand, who was by no means a man to set fear



at defiance! Indeed, he had well-nigh lost the use of his reflection, and was actually invaded to the skin, before he could recollect himself so far as to quit the road, and seek for shelter among the thickets that surrounded him. Having rode some furlongs into the forest, he took his station under a tuft of tall trees, that screened him from the storm, and in that situation called a council within himself, to deliberate upon his next excursion. He persuaded himself that his guide had deserted him for the present, in order to give intelligence of a traveller to some gang of robbers with whom he was connected; and that he must of necessity fall a prey to those banditti, unless he should have the good fortune to elude their search, and disentangle himself from the mazes of the wood.

Harrowed with these apprehensions, he resolved to commit himself to the mercy of the hurricane, as of two evils the least, and penetrate straightforwards through some devious opening, until he should be delivered from the forest. For this purpose he turned his horse's head in a line quite contrary to the direction of the high road which he had left, on the supposition that the robbers would pursue that track in quest of him, and that they would never dream of his deserting the highway, to traverse an unknown forest, amidst the darkness of such a boisterous night. After he had continued in this progress through a succession of groves, and bogs, and thorns, and brakes, by which not only his clothes, but also his skin suffered in a grievous manner, while every nerve quivered with eagerness and dismay, he at length reached an open plain, and pursuing his course, in full hope of arriving at some village, where his life would be safe, he descried a rush-light at a distance, which he looked upon as the star of his good fortune, and riding towards it at full speed, arrived at the door of a lone cottage, into which he was admitted by an old woman, who, understanding he was a bewildered traveller, received him with great hospitality.

When he learned from his hostess, that there was not another house within three leagues; that she could accommodate him with a tolerable bed, and his horse with lodging and oats, he thanked Heaven for his good fortune, in stumbling upon this homely habitation, and determined to pass the night under the protection of the old cottager, who gave him to understand, that her husband, who was a faggot-maker, had gone to the next town to dispose of his merchandise; and that, in all probability, he would not return till next morning, on account of the tempestuous night. Ferdinand sounded the beldame with a thousand artful interrogations, and she answered with such appearance of truth and simplicity, that he concluded his person was quite secure; and, after having been regaled with a dish of eggs and bacon, desired she would conduct him into the chamber where she proposed he should take his repose. He was accordingly ushered up by a sort of ladder into an apartment furnished with a standing-bed, and almost half filled with trusses of straw. He seemed extremely well pleased with his lodging, which in reality exceeded his expectation; and his kind landlady, cautioning him against letting the candle approach the combustibles, took her leave, and locked the door on the outside.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE**

### **HE FALLS UPON SCYLLA, SEEKING TO AVOID CHARYBDIS**

Fathom, whose own principles taught him to be suspicious, and ever upon his guard against the treachery of his fellow-creatures, could have dispensed with this instance of her care, in confining her guest to her chamber, and began to be seized with strange fancies, when he observed that there was no bolt on the inside of the door, by which he might secure himself from intrusion. In consequence of these suggestions, he proposed to take an accurate survey of every object in the apartment, and, in the course of his inquiry, had the mortification to find the dead body of a man, still warm, who had been lately stabbed, and concealed beneath several bundles of straw.

Such a discovery could not fail to fill the breast of our hero with unspeakable horror; for he concluded that he himself would undergo the same fate before morning, without the interposition of a miracle in his favour. In the first transports of his dread, he ran to the window, with a view to escape by that outlet, and found his flight effectually obstructed by divers strong bars of iron. Then his heart began to palpitate, his hair to bristle up, and his knees to totter; his thoughts teemed with presages of death and destruction; his conscience rose up in judgment against him, and he underwent a severe paroxysm of dismay and distraction. His spirits were agitated into a state of fermentation that produced a species of resolution akin to that which is inspired by brandy or other strong liquors, and, by an impulse that seemed supernatural, he was immediately hurried into measures for his own preservation.

What upon a less interesting occasion his imagination durst not propose, he now executed without scruple or remorse. He undressed the corpse that lay bleeding among the straw, and, conveying it to the bed in his arms, deposited it in the attitude of a person who sleeps at his ease; then he extinguished the light, took possession of the place from whence the body had been removed, and, holding a pistol ready cocked in each hand, waited for the sequel with that determined purpose which is often the immediate production of despair. About midnight he heard the sound of feet ascending the ladder; the door was softly opened; he saw the shadow of two men stalking towards the bed, a dark lanthorn being unshrouded, directed their aim to the supposed sleeper, and he that held it thrust a poniard to his heart; the force of the blow made a compression on the chest, and a sort of groan issued from the windpipe of the defunct; the stroke was repeated, without producing a repetition of the note, so that the assassins concluded the work was effectually done, and retired for the present with a design to return and rifle the deceased at their leisure.

Never had our hero spent a moment in such agony as he felt during this operation; the whole surface of his body was covered with a cold sweat, and his nerves were relaxed with an universal palsy. In short, he remained in a trance that, in all probability, contributed to his safety; for, had he retained the use of his senses, he might have been discovered by the transports of his fear. The first use he made of his retrieved recollection, was to perceive that the assassins had left the door open in their retreat; and he would have instantly availed himself of this their neglect, by sallying out upon them, at the hazard of his life, had he not been restrained by a conversation he overheard in the room below, importing, that the ruffians were going to set out upon another expedition, in hopes of finding more prey. They accordingly departed, after having laid strong injunctions upon the old woman to keep the door fast locked during their absence; and Ferdinand took his resolution without farther delay. So soon as, by his conjecture, the robbers were at a sufficient distance from the house, he rose from his lurking-place, moved softly towards the bed, and, rummaging the pockets of the deceased, found a purse well stored with ducats, of which, together with a silver watch and a diamond ring, he immediately possessed himself without scruple; then, descending with great care

and circumspection into the lower apartment, stood before the old beldame, before she had the least intimation of his approach.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.