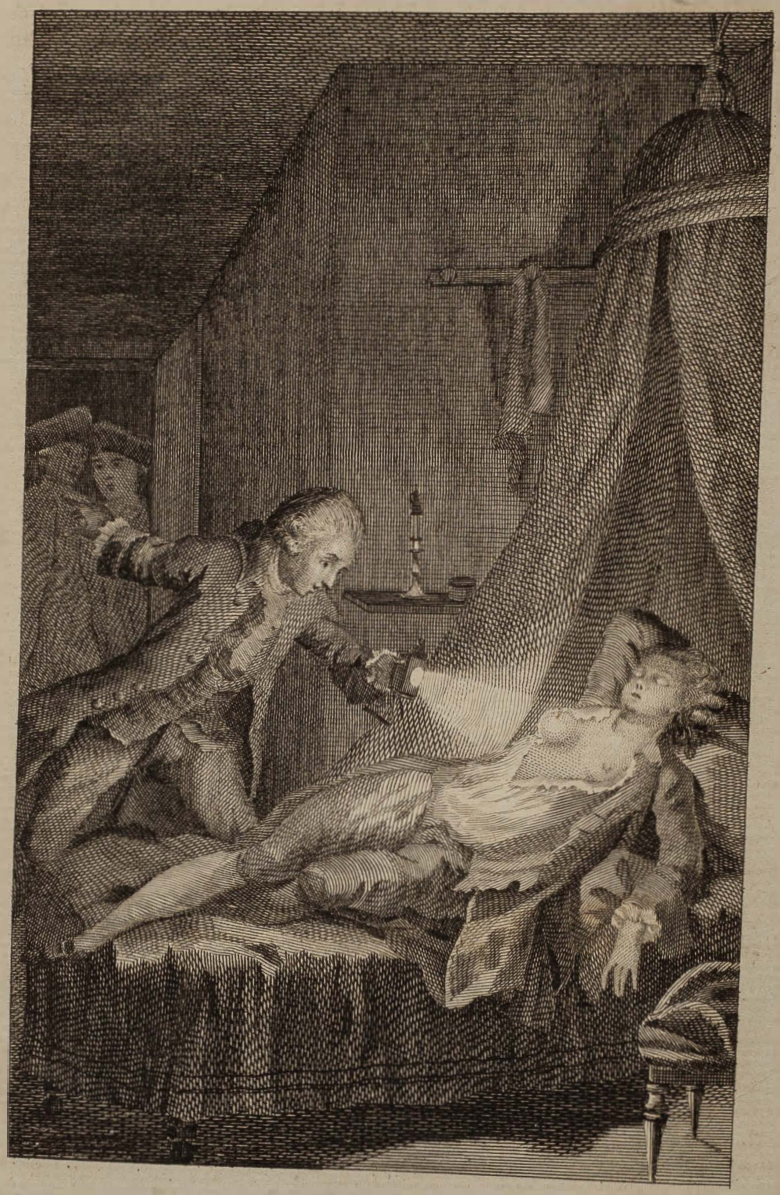
THE METAMORPHOSIS.



Heavens! 'tis a Woman!

THE METAMORPHOSIS.

I DO not pretend to give my reader an history of some Tribades, who have rendered themselves famous in wearing men's apparel, and in assuming their manners and conduct. I am of the same sentiment with Voltaire, who preferred the gentle and amiable Agnes Sorel, to the martial and masculine Joan of Arc, or the celebrated Maid of Orleans. Nor am I ambitious of relating the memoirs of that virago who fell in love with a grenadier, who served in the same regiment, and who was not discovered till the supposed soldier was in the straw: and still less that Bearded lady of Tonnerre, whom Europe still ought to call the Chevalier Deon*.—The subject of this little tale, is a timid, delicate beauty, who has no pretensions to heroism, or to pride in qualities unworthy of her sex.

In the North of England lived a young and lovely creature the daughter of a country gentleman, whose estate was reduced to an humble hundred pounds a year. In this confined state of his finances, he was obliged to support a wife of a noble extraction, a son, and two daughters. Henry was at the university, and his two daughters as rich in their mental and personal charms as they were poor in fortune. The eldest in particular, Armida Fenworth, was the most beautiful. The elegance of her shape, the expression of her eyes, the bewitching smile, the auburn curls that floated down her ivory neck, her magical little mouth, &c. beggared all description.

A certain son of a newly created baronet, whose ancestry and mode of enriching himself, had entailed disgrace on his country, became enamoured of the portrait just sketched. The father, weary of his confined mode of life, and thinking that money alone was true nobility, received this demi-satyr with the greatest distinction, and admitted him to pay his addresses to his daughter. Armida looked upon her lover with a contempt mixed with a kind of horror. She recalled the virtuous precepts she had been taught from her earliest infancy, and the abject state of those who from the dregs of the people, had arisen to opulence by fraud, rapine or treachery. The unworthy baronet wore in his countenance the strong language of insolence, ignorance, cunning and duplicity; his lady was one of those Old Cats, who delighted in nothing but pride and scandal; and the daughters were the highest patterns of ugliness and affectation. Armida contemplated this ennobled family, and shuddered at the idea of being the victim of her father's ill-timed cupidity. She dared not to open her bosom, and yet the preparatives were advancing. In this predicament she consulted a few of her chosen intimates to know if it were possible that a virtuous young woman, without friends or money could make her way in the capital? she even interrogated the sisters, who dwelt with a kind of extacy on those popular beauties who shine in all public places; they made the panegyric of those men who have the reputation of living in a certain ton, and are liberal with their purses. Above all, those who figured on the Theatre were considered the most enviable of every other situation in the world.

But, are there none others in the capital respected than kept mistresses and actresses? said Armida.

Perhaps, there may be a few, but we do not know them. There are in fact many gentlewomen to be found, but they are all rich, or are the daughters of bankers, brokers, or newly returned nabobs. But a beauty with every human accomplishment, without money or friends, how is she to make her way in a capital! she must either become a milliner or a menial servant; but both of those conditions are infinitely beneath those who have decent incomes for their attentions to men of rank and fortune. Her other acquaintances gave such a frightful picture of the seductions and misery attending mere personal attractions, that she hesitated on what to resolve, except that of the necessity of quitting her father's house. Armida saw that it was too dangerous to venture into town in the dress appropriated to her sex. The idea suggested a plan; and a few days previous to the nuptials, she procured a male dress, and in this disguise, bad adieu to the spot that had now become intolerable.

In three days, Armida reached London; and her first object was to put an advertisement in the Daily Advertiser in quality of a footman. Among the number of

* It is thus that her name ought to be written.

letters ſhe received, ſhe ſingled out ſuch as ſhe thought moſt eligible for the better concealment of her perſon. Armida waited upon Lady C. who wanted a ſmart genteel footman; but ſhe found the advertiſer too young.

He will grow older, Madam, replied a female viſitant.

How long have you been in town?

I arrived but a few days ſince, madam.

A few days! cried the lady,—then you are totally unacquainted with this city?

Truth compels me to ſay yes.

Madam, ſaid the ſtrange lady, let me however adviſe you to try him. If, added ſhe, after a few weeks you do not find he will ſuit you, I will take him into my ſervice. The ſame evening, Armida was introduced into the kitchen, and inſtalled into the rights and privileges of the lady's own ſervant, by the ſtile and title of Mr. Thomas; and in a few weeks Mr. Thomas was promoted to the rank of groom of the chamber, and kept conſtantly about his lady's perſon.

The chatterings of Mr. Thomas were ſo pleaſing to the lady, and his manner ſo intereſting, that ſhe could not help remarking the propriety of his obſervations, and the elegant arrangements of his words and phraſes. This induced her to ſuſpect that Mr. Thomas had received too good an education for the line in which he was embarked.

Mr. Thomas had already made no ſmall progreſs in the affections of the waiting maid. This was a lively animated young creature, who was ſoon reduced to the alternative of being jealous, or giving up her whole ſoul to the enchanting infatuation. Mademoiſelle preferred the latter as a penchant more pleaſing and more natural. Mr. Thomas was however an object of envy and detraction by the other ſervants; and in order to remove the evil which became every day more and more painful, they concerted meaſures how to make him quit his elevation. They began with a journal of what they called Mr. Thomas's liberties with their miſtreſs, and ſome of the charges were to the following effect.

This day Aug. 2. our effeminate coxcomb (Mr. Thomas) has laced my lady's ſtays inſtead of her woman. His airs and rudeneſs merited a box on the ear, but my lady can ſee nothing.

Aug. 3. Our puppy took into his head that he could dreſs my lady's hair better than her woman—and what is really aſtoniſhing, ſhe not only ſuffered him, but was highly pleaſed with his officiouſneſs.

Aug. 4. I dare not ſay what I ſaw this morning. The inſolent monkey took my lady's fan and gloves and kiſſed them without being noticed.

Aug. 5. Our coxcomb, more and more inſolent. He dared to ſtay in my lady's apartment, and talked to her with the greateſt aſſurance and familiarity.

This ſpecimen will give an idea of this curious journal, which was afterwards ſo pregnant with apparent miſchief. But before we enter into the incidents that it occaſioned, it might be neceſſary to ſay that his lady was become extremely partial to Mr. Thomas's addreſs and notions. She was induced to think that her groom of the chamber had made an impreſſion that bordered on love. She could ſcarce aſk herſelf the queſtion without trembling. At all events her pride ſilenced her feelings for the moment; ſhe reſolved to keep the impreſſion a ſecret, and to ſtudy how to render the object more reſpectable, if not more happy. In order to cure her own want of delicacy ſhe was diſpoſed to favour the partiality ſhe had diſcovered in her woman. This was indeed to act like a woman of the laſt century; but thoſe who know Lady C. are not inſenſible to her virtues. On the other ſide, mademoiſelle, who had not the ſame ſcruples, made a more rapid progreſs, and drank large portions of the ſweet intoxication. The delirium at laſt knew no bounds, ſhe hit upon an expedient which ſhall be preſently explained.

The lacquey one morning begged his maſter to give him a few minutes attention, and preſented the journal in queſtion. His lordſhip had no ſooner peruſed it, than another of his accomplices was introduced to confirm the truth of what had been written. This had the deſired effect, Lord C's. head was deranged, and thought he had been guilty of an unpardonable fault in ſuffering a domeſtic about her perſon, who had the dangerous talent of pleaſing. But in order to conceal his ſuſpicions from his lady and his humility from Mr. Thomas, he reſolved to get rid of this rival in a manner as ſecret as it would be expeditious. He was determined the ſame night that his ſcheme ſhould be put into execution. Mademoiſelle had alſo at the ſame time planned her meaſures; but her lady diſcovering her project, was determined to interrupt it before matters were brought to extremity. The reader ſees the plot haſtens to its denouement.

ment—he is right in his conjecture. The ſame evening therefore was devoted to different projects, while Mr. Thomas remained in a ſtate of tranquillity, and ignorant of the good and bad with which he was ſurrounded.

At midnight Lord C. had prepared a preſs gang to take Mr. Thomas into another ſervice. Mademoiſelle was impatient to put my lady to bed, in order to repair to the apartment of her adored Adonis. In this interval Lady C. was watching an opportunity of ſurprizing the lovers. All theſe matters were executed at the ſame moment.

The evening being very ſultry, Mr. Thomas had thrown himſelf upon the bed, his waiſtcoat unbuttoned, and his two arms ſerved inſtead of pillows. Two glowing breaſts of alabaſter were now expoſed to view—when Lord C. attended by two of his creatures, with dark lanthorn in one hand and a gag in the other, entered. He directed the light towards the bed; he perceived—and no ſooner perceived, than he made a ſign for the attendants to retire, and approached the object which had caught hold of his ſenſes. "Heavens, exclaimed he, 'tis a woman!" At that inſtant he heard the foot of ſome one approaching. He immediately concealed himſelf in order to gratify his curioſity, when Mademoiſelle entered the apartment with a taper. She had no ſooner extinguiſhed it than ſhe approached her lover. She began by imprinting a kiſs upon the roſy lips of her lover. Mr. Thomas awoke. Who is this? Who is this? Dear Mr. Thomas, it is I—it is Lucy who loves you to diſtraction, and who cannot live without you.

Ah! is it you, Lucy—if you love me, —I love you from the bottom of my heart. O Mr. Thomas! what have I ſuffered by being tormented with an unceaſing jealouſy! for I ſee plainly my lady loves you, and that you cannot reſiſt adoring her.—Dear Lucy, I do adore her, but not ſo as to injure thoſe ſentiments I have for your friendſhip.

Theſe words were ſcarce uttered, when Lady C. made her approach, and darting into the apartment, ſhe exclaimed, Lucy! what do you here!

Mademoiſelle threw herſelf upon her knees. Pardon my Lady.—If your ladyſhip knew—

Retire this inſtant.—And as for you, Thomas, I muſt ſee you in the morning.

Suſpend my lady your ſuſpicions, and be perſuaded that nothing is more eaſy than my juſtification; deign but to hear me—at this inſtant Lady C. left the room in apparent anger.

Mr. Thomas was no ſooner alone, than he got up, lighted a candle, and began to reflect on the incident that had juſt occurred. In the midſt of a profound reverie, he articulated——

What can this poſſibly mean? Lucy—my lady. If I loſe the good graces of Lady C. I ſhall never be conſoled—what an unhappy mortal!—muſt I diſcover to her my ſex—muſt I inform her of my family?—Yes; Lady C. has her ſuſpicious, ſhe will have a bad opinion of Lucy—I ſee I muſt. Immediately Mr. Thomas was metamorphoſed into a lovely woman; while Lord C. was an eye witneſs to her irreſiſtible charms—but prudence dictated, and he retired the moment he was able with the greateſt precipitation.

The next day Lord C. appeared in vaſt ſpirits and an unuſual gaiety. He looked and ſpoke the expreſſions of an enamoured ſoul—Lady C. was not a little ſurprized at this change of behaviour, and was totally at a loſs to divine the cauſe; but the apology of Mr. Thomas ſoon led to an eclairciſſement.

"Pardon me," ſaid he, "in confeſſing that I have diſguiſed my ſex and ſtation. My father was determined to marry me to a man I deteſted; there was no remedy but in flight, nor any other expedient more ſecure than that I have ſuggeſted. I have therefore to implore your protection, and that you will permit me to carry on my diſguiſe a little longer; otherwiſe, my inexorable father will find me out, and compel me to an act, that muſt inevitably render me the moſt unhappy of women."

The requeſt of Armida was to be complied with, and the ſecret ſtill remained even to Mademoiſelle, who was burning with the flames of love. Lord C. who had plotted to ſend Mr. Thomas into his majeſty's ſervice, was enraged to think that his perſonal charms ſhould have excited admiration in his lady; yet as ſoon as he was informed of Mr. Thomas's real ſex, he was extravagant in his eulogiums. He watched every occaſion to find Armida alone; and in thoſe opportunities he gave her a thouſand marks of his confidence and friendſhip. Theſe tête-à-têtes were faithfully related to Lady C. and his lordſhip often diverted them both by his exceſſive folly and ill-placed profeſſions. And in order to carry on the jeſt at his lordſhip's expence, Lady C.

and one of her intimates agreed to dreſs Armida in her true character. A few days were allotted for a feigned diſpoſition, and Armida was privately conveyed to Mrs. B——'s beautiful villa on the banks of the Thames. A large company was invited, and Armida was introduced as a relation of that family. It is impoſſible to paint the grace and elegance of Armida's figure. Lord C. however ſoon diſcovered the ſtratagem, and was highly delighted with the metamorphoſis. Mrs. B—— in giving ſo readily into this ſcheme had not reflected on the conſequences. She had a ſon, ſcarce of age, who was ſenſibly captivated with the charms of his unknown relation. He tormented his mother with reiterated interrogatories concerning his fair couſin, and began to ſuſpect ſome myſtery. He was jealous of the attentions ſhewn her by Lord C. and his curioſity carried him ſo far, as to find the following memorandums written by Armida, which ſerved for the ground work of this *petite Hiſtoire*.

May 6. 17—. I left my father's houſe diſguiſed in men's apparel, in order to avoid an odious marriage. I never ſlept for three days till I reached town.

10. This day I entered into the ſervice of Lady C.

11. Her ladyſhip expreſſed much ſatiſfaction, and employed me in many articles that more properly belonged to her waiting maid than her ſuppoſed groom of the chamber.

12. I dreſſed my miſtreſs's hair—I was tempted to throw off my diſguiſe, but I wanted courage.

13. Lady C.'s affability and great good nature charms me. I muſt tell her who I am.

14. A hiſtory follows here.

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* * *

But to return to Lord C. He took the generous reſolution of reſtoring Armida to the boſom of her family, by effecting a reconciliation between her and her father. Being thus furniſhed with a proper clue he ſet out for Fenworth hall, and after a minute information reſpecting Armida, he inſiſted upon Mr. Fenworth's accompanying him. Proud of his ſucceſs, he was determined to bring on the denouement with an eclat, eſpecially ſince the adventure would turn out greatly to his credit: beſides, he thought it would likely render Armida extremely popular, and inſure her a choice of lovers. The next day he invited all his moſt intimate friends, and requeſted that Armida would once more gratify him in aſſuming the character of Mr. Thomas, and appear in the drawing room to ſerve the Coffee. Lady C. was very much ſurprized at this requeſt, and was totally at a loſs to divine his reaſons for a whim of this nature. Mr. Thomas was preſenting his lordſhip with a diſh of coffee, when he exclaimed, "One Hebe was thought ſufficient at the feaſt of the Gods—we have this day imitated their example." Mr. Thomas bluſhed, and caſting her timid eyes upon the company, ſaw her own father in an agitation not to be expreſſed. The ſcene became too intereſting, and to the aſtoniſhment of the company they heard his lordſhip articulate:

"Have courage Armida, your father has forgiven you; but before I preſent you to him, let the company ſee you in your proper dreſs and character." Armida retired with trembling and confuſion; and the moment ſhe aſſumed the dreſs of Miſs Armida Fenworth, ſhe came into the drawing-room, and threw herſelf at the feet of her father, who, with tears of joy, embraced her with the greateſt affection. Mrs. B.'s ſon was in raptures, and at the ſame moment ſollicited the permiſſion of paying his addreſſes to our heroine. As every one in the company ſeemed intereſted in the fate of the two lovers; they ſo ſucceſsfully ſeconded the ſollicitation, that the conſent of all parties were obtained. In a word, this adventure brought on a ſpeedy marriage, which was celebrated with unuſual ſplendor and feſtivity.

An Account of the late EARTHQUAKES in Calabria, Sicily, &c. Communicated to the Royal Society by Sir William Hamilton.

Naples, May 23. 1783.

I AM happy now to have it in my power to give you, and my brethren of the Royal Society, ſome little idea of the infinite damage done, and of the various phænomena exhibited, by the earthquakes (which began the 5th of Feb. laſt, and continue to be ſenſibly felt to this day) in the Two Calabrias, at Meſſina, and in the parts of Sicily neareſt to the Continent. From the moſt authentic reports, and accounts received at the offices of his