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A Sentimental Journey Through France And Italy

Yorick, ...

London, 1768

In the Street. Calais.

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IN THE STREET.

CALAIS.

19 14

HAVING, on first sight of the lady, settled the affair in my fancy, “that she was of the better “order of beings”—and then laid it down as a second axiom, as indisputable as the first, That she was a widow, and wore a character of distress—I went no further; I got ground enough for the situation which pleased me—and had she remained close beside my elbow till midnight, I should have held true to my system, and considered her only under that general idea.

She

She had scarce got twenty paces distant from me, ere something within me called out for a more particular inquiry—it brought on the idea of a further separation—I might possibly never see her more—the heart is for saving what it can; and I wanted the traces thro' which my wishes might find their way to her, in case I should never rejoin her myself: in a word, I wish'd to know her name—her family's—her condition; and as I knew the place to which she was going, I wanted to know from whence she came: but there was no coming at all this intelligence: a hundred little delicacies stood in the way. I form'd a score different plans—There was



no such thing as a man's asking her directly—the thing was impossible.

A little French *debonaire* captain, who came dancing down the street, shewed me, it was the easiest thing in the world; for popping in betwixt us, just as the lady was returning back to the door of the Remise, he introduced himself to my acquaintance, and before he had well got announced, begg'd I would do him the honour to present him to the lady—I had not been presented myself—so turning about to her, he did it just as well by asking her, if she had come from Paris?—No: she was going that rout, she said.—*Vous n'etez pas de Londres?*—She was not, she replied.
—Then

—Then Madame must have come thro' Flanders.—*Apparamment vous etes Flammande?* said the French captain.—The lady answered, she was.—*Peutetre, de Lisle?* added he—She said, she was not of Lisle.—Nor Arras?—nor Cambray?—nor Ghent?—nor Bruffels? She answered, she was of Bruffels.

He had had the honour, he said, to be at the bombardment of it last war—that it was finely situated, *pour cela*—and full of nobleffe when the Imperialists were driven out by the French (the lady made a slight curtsy)—so giving her an account of the affair, and of the share he had had in



it—he begg'd the honour to know
her name—so made his bow.

—*Et Madame a son Mari?*—said
he, looking back when he had made
two steps—and without staying for an
answer—danced down the street.

Had I served seven years appren-
ticeship to good breeding, I could
not have done as much.