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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CLARISSA HARLOWE; OR THE HISTORY OF A YOUNG
LADY — VOLUME 4 ***

CLARISSA HARLOWE
or the
HISTORY OF A YOUNG LADY

By Samuel Richardson

**Nine Volumes
Volume IV.**

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DETAILED CONTENTS

LETTER I. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—

Likes her lodgings; but not greatly the widow. Chides Miss Howe for her rash, though friendly vow. Catalogue of good books she finds in her closet. Utterly dissatisfied with him for giving out to the women below that they were privately married. Has a strong debate with him on this subject. He offers matrimony to her, but in such a manner that she could not close with his offer. Her caution as to doors, windows, and seals of letters.

LETTER II. Miss Howe to Clarissa.—

Her expedient to correspond with each other every day. Is glad she had thoughts of marrying him had he repeated his offer. Wonders he did not.

LETTER III. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—

Breakfasts with him and the widow, and her two nieces. Observations upon their behaviour and looks. He makes a merit of leaving her, and hopes, ON HIS RETURN, that she will name his happy day. She is willing to make the best constructions in his favour.

In his next letter (extracts from which are only given) he triumphs on the points he has carried. Stimulated by the women, he resumes his resolution to try her to the utmost.

LETTER IV. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—

Lovelace returns the next day. She thinks herself meanly treated, and is angry. He again urges marriage; but before she can return his answer makes another proposal; yet she suspects not that he means a studied delay. He is in treaty for Mrs. Fretchville's house. Description of it.

An inviting opportunity offers for him to propose matrimony to her. She wonders he let it slip. He is very urgent for her company at a collation he is to give to four of his select friends, and Miss Partington. He gives an account who Miss Partington is.

In Mr. Lovelace's next letter he invites Belford, Mowbray, Belton, and Tourville, to his collation. His humourous instructions for their behaviour before the lady. Has two views in getting her into their company.

LETTER V. Lovelace to Belford.—

Has been at church with Clarissa. The sabbath a charming institution. The text startles him. Nathan the prophet he calls a good ingenious fellow. She likes the women better than she did at first. She reluctantly consents to honour his collation with her presence. Longs to have their opinions of his fair prize. Describes her to great advantage.

LETTER VI. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—

She praises his good behaviour at St. Paul's. Is prevailed on to dine with Mrs. Sinclair and her nieces. Is better pleased with them than she thought she should be. Blames herself for her readiness to censure, where reputation is concerned. Her charitable allowances on this head. This day an agreeable day. Interprets ever thing she can fairly interpret in Mr. Lovelace's favour. She could prefer him to all the men she ever knew, if he would always be what he had been that day. Is determined, as much as possible, by true merit, and by deeds. Dates again, and is offended at Miss Partington's being introduced to her, and at his making her yield to be present at his intended collation.

LETTER VII. From the same.—

Disgusted wit her evening. Characterizes his four companions. Likes not Miss Partington's behaviour.

LETTER VIII. From the same.—

An attempt to induce her to admit Miss Partington to a share in her bed for that night. She refuses. Her reasons. Is highly dissatisfied.

LETTER IX. From the same.—

Has received an angry letter from Mrs. Howe, forbidding her to correspond with her daughter. She advises compliance, though against herself; and, to induce her to it, makes the best of her present prospects.

LETTER X. Miss Howe. In answer.—

Flames out upon this step of her mother. Insists upon continuing the correspondence. Her menaces if Clarissa write not. Raves against Lovelace. But blames her for not obliging Miss Partington: and why. Advises her to think of settlements. Likes Lovelace's proposal of Mrs.

Fretchville's house.

LETTER XI. Clarissa. In reply.—

Terrified at her menaces, she promises to continue writing. Beseeches her to learn to subdue her passions. Has just received her clothes.

LETTER XII. Mr. Hickman to Clarissa.—

Miss Howe, he tells her, is uneasy for the vexation she has given her. If she will write on as before, Miss Howe will not think of doing what she is so apprehensive of. He offers her his most faithful services.

LETTER XIII. XIV. Lovelace to Belford.—

Tells him how much the lady dislikes the confraternity; Belford as well as the rest. Has a warm debate with her in her behalf. Looks upon her refusing a share in her bed to Miss Partington as suspecting and defying him. Threatens her.—Savagely glories in her grief, on receiving Miss Howe's prohibitory letter: which appears to be instigated by himself.

LETTER XV. Belford to Lovelace.—

His and his compeer's high admiration of Clarissa. They all join to entreat him to do her justice.

LETTER XVI. XVII. Lovelace. In answer.—

He endeavours to palliate his purposes by familiar instances of cruelty to birds, &c.—Farther characteristic reasonings in support of his wicked designs. The passive condition to which he wants to bring the lady.

LETTER XVIII. Belford. In reply.—

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LETTER XIX. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—

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Encloses the letter. In which her cousin (swayed by the representations of her brother) pleads in behalf of Solmes, and the family-views; and sets before her, in strong and just lights, the character of a libertine.

Her heavy reflections upon the contents. Her generous prayer.

LETTER XX. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—

He presses her to go abroad with him; yet mentions not the ceremony that should give propriety to his urgency. Cannot bear the life she lives.

Wishes her uncle Harlowe to be sounded by Mr. Hickman, as to a reconciliation. Mennell introduced to her. Will not take another step with Lovelace till she know the success of the proposed application to her uncle.

Substance of two letters from Lovelace to Belford; in which he tells him who Mennell is, and gives an account of many new contrivances and precautions. Women's pockets ballast-bags. Mrs. Sinclair's wardrobe. Good order observed in her house. The lady's caution, he says, warrants his contrivances.

LETTER XXI. Lovelace to Belford.—

Will write a play. The title of it, The Quarrelsome Lovers.

Perseverance his glory; patience his hand-maid. Attempts to get a letter the lady had dropt as she sat. Her high indignation upon it. Farther plots. Paul Wheatly, who; and for what employed. Sally Martin's reproaches. Has overplotted himself. Human nature a well-known rogue.

LETTER XXII. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—

Acquaints her with their present quarrel. Finds it imprudent to stay with him. Re-urges the application to her uncle. Cautions her sex with regard to the danger of being misled by the eye.

LETTER XXIII. Miss Howe. In answer.—

Approves of her leaving Lovelace. New stories of his wickedness. Will have her uncle sounded. Comforts her. How much her case differs from that of any other female fugitive. She will be an example, as well as a warning. A picture of Clarissa's happiness before she knew Lovelace. Brief sketches of her exalted character. Adversity her shining time.

LETTER XXIV. Clarissa. In reply.—

Has a contest with Lovelace about going to church. He obliges her again to accept of his company to St. Paul's.

LETTER XXV. Miss Howe to Mrs. Norton.—

Desiring her to try to dispose Mrs. Harlowe to forward a reconciliation.

LETTER XXVI. Mrs. Norton. In answer.

LETTER XXVII. Miss Howe. In reply.

LETTER XXVIII. Mrs. Harlowe's pathetic letter to Mrs. Norton.

LETTER XXIX. Miss Howe to Clarissa.—

Fruitless issue of Mr. Hickman's application to her uncle. Advises her how to proceed with, and what to say to, Lovelace. Endeavours to account for his teasing ways. Who knows, she says, but her dear friend was permitted to swerve, in order to bring about his reformation? Informs her of her uncle Antony's intended address to her mother.

LETTER XXX. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—

Hard fate to be thrown upon an ungenerous and cruel man. Reasons why she cannot proceed with Mr. Lovelace as she advises. Affecting apostrophe to Lovelace.

LETTER XXXI. From the same.—

Interesting conversation with Lovelace. He frightens her. He mentions settlements. Her modest encouragements of him. He evades. True generosity what. She requires his proposals of settlements in writing. Examines herself on her whole conduct to Lovelace. Maidenly niceness not her motive for the distance she has kept him at. What is. Invites her correction if she deceive herself.

LETTER XXXII. From the same.—

With Mr. Lovelace's written proposals. Her observations on the cold conclusion of them. He knows not what every wise man knows, of the prudence and delicacy required in a wife.

LETTER XXXIII. From the same.—

Mr. Lovelace presses for the day; yet makes a proposal which must necessarily occasion a delay. Her unreserved and pathetic answer to it. He is affected by it. She rejoices that he is penetrable. He presses for her instant resolution; but at the same time insinuates delay. Seeing her displeas'd, he urges for the morrow: but, before she can answer, gives her the alternative of other days. Yet, wanting to reward himself, as if he had oblig'd her, she repulses him on a liberty he would have taken. He is enraged. Her melancholy reflections on her future prospects with such a man. The moral she deduces from her story. [A note, defending her conduct from the censure which passed upon her as over nice.]

Extracts from four of his letters: in which he glories in his cruelty.

Hardheartedness he owns to be an essential of the libertine character.

Enjoys the confusion of a fine woman. His apostrophe to virtue. Ashamed of being visibly affected. Enraged against her for repulsing him. Will steel his own heart, that he may cut through a rock of ice to her's. The women afresh instigate him to attempt her virtue.

LETTER XXXIV. Miss Howe to Clarissa.—

Is enraged at his delays. Will think of some scheme to get her out of his hands. Has no notion that he can or dare to mean her dishonour. Women do not naturally hate such men as Lovelace.

LETTER XXXV. Belford to Lovelace.—

Warmly espouses the lady's cause. Nothing but vanity and nonsense in the wild pursuits of libertines. For his own sake, for his family's sake, and for the sake of their common humanity, he beseeches him to do this lady justice.

LETTER XXXVI. Lord M. to Mr. Belford.—

A proverbial letter in the lady's favour.

LETTER XXXVII. Lovelace to Belford.—

He ludicrously turns Belford's arguments against him. Resistance inflames him. Why the gallant is preferred to the husband. Gives a piece of advice to married women. Substance of his letter to Lord M. desiring him to give the lady to him in person. His view in this letter.

Ridicules Lord M. for his proverbs. Ludicrous advice to Belford in relation to his dying uncle. What physicians should do when a patient is given over.

LETTER XXXVIII. Belford to Lovelace.—

Sets forth the folly, the inconvenience, the impolicy of KEEPING, and the preference of MARRIAGE, upon the foot of their own principles, as libertines.

LETTER XXXIX. Lovelace to Belford.—

Affects to mistake the intention of Belford's letter, and thanks him for approving his present scheme. The seduction progress is more delightful to him, he says, than the crowning act.

LETTER XL. From the same.—

All extremely happy at present. Contrives a conversation for the lady to overhear. Platonic love, how it generally ends. Will get her to a play; likes not tragedies. Has too much feeling. Why men of his cast prefer comedy to tragedy. The nymphs, and Mrs. Sinclair, and all their acquaintances, of the same mind. Other artifices of his. Could he have been admitted in her hours of dishabille and heedlessness, he had been long ago master of his wishes. His view in getting her to a play: a play, and a collation afterwards, greatly befriended a lover's designs; and why. She consents to go with him to see the tragedy of Venice Preserved.

LETTER XLI. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—

Gives the particulars of the overheard conversation. Thinks her prospects a little mended. Is willing to compound for tolerable appearances, and to hope, when reason for hope offers.

LETTER XLII. Miss Howe to Clarissa.—

Her scheme of Mrs. Townsend. Is not for encouraging dealers in prohibited goods; and why. Her humourous treatment of Hickman on consulting him upon Lovelace's proposals of settlements.

LETTER XLIII. From the same.—

Her account of Antony Harlowe's address to her mother, and of what passed on her mother's communicating it to her. Copy of Mrs. Howe's answer to his letter.

LETTER XLIV. XLV. Lovelace to Belford.—

Comes at several letters of Miss Howe. He is now more assured of Clarissa than ever; and why. Sparkling eyes, what they indicate. She keeps him at distance. Repeated instigations from the women. Account of the letters he has come at. All rage and revenge upon the contents of them. Menaces Hickman. Wishes Miss Howe had come up to town, as she threatened.

LETTER XLVI. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—Is terrified by him. Disclaims prudery. Begs of Miss Howe to perfect her scheme, that she may leave him. She thinks her temper changed for the worse. Trembles to look back upon his encroachments. Is afraid, on the close self-examination which her calamities have caused her to make, that even in the best actions of her past life she has not been quite free from secret pride, &c. Tears almost in two the answer she had written to his proposals. Intends to go out next day, and not to return. Her farther intentions.

LETTER XLVII. Lovelace to Belford.—

Meets the lady at breakfast. Flings the tea-cup and saucer over his head. The occasion. Alarms and terrifies her by his free address. Romping, the use of it by a lover. Will try if she will not yield to nightly surprises. A lion-hearted lady where her honour is concerned. Must have recourse to his master-strokes. Fable of the sun and north wind. Mrs. Fretchville's house an embarrass. He gives that pretended lady the small-pox. Other contrivances in his head to bring Clarissa back, if she should get away. Miss Howe's scheme of Mrs. Townsend is, he says, a sword hanging over his head. He must change his measures to render it abortive. He is of the true lady-make. What that is. Another conversation between them. Her apostrophe to her father. He is temporarily moved. Dorcas gives him notice of a paper she has come at, and is transcribing. In order to detain the lady, he presses for the day. Miss Howe he fancies in love with him; and why. He sees Clarissa does not hate him.

LETTER XLVIII. From the same.—

Copy of the transcribed paper. It proves to be her torn answer to his proposals. Meekness the glory of a woman. Ludicrous image of a termagant wife. He had better never to have seen this paper. Has very strong remorse. Paints them in lively colours. Sets forth the lady's transcendent virtue, and greatness of mind. Surprised into these arguments in her favour by his conscience. Puts it to flight.

LETTER XLIX. From the same.—

Mennell scruples to aid him farther in his designs. Vapourish people the physical tribe's milch-cows. Advice to the faculty. Has done with the project about Mrs. Fretchville's house. The lady suspects him. A seasonable letter for him from his cousin Charlotte. Sends up the letter to the lady. She writes to Miss Howe, upon perusing it, to suspend for the present her application to Mrs. Townsend.

LETTER L. From the same.—

An interview all placid and agreeable. Now is he in a train. All he now waits for is a letter from Lord M. Inquires after their marriage by a stranger of good appearance. The lady alarmed at them.

LETTER LI. Lovelace to Belford.—

Curses his uncle for another proverbial letter he has sent him. Permits the lady to see it. Nine women in ten that fall, fall, he says, through their own fault.

LETTER LII. Lord M.'s characteristic letter.

LETTER LIII. Lovelace to Belford.—

The lady now comes to him at the first word. Triumphs in her sweetness of temper, and on her patience with him. Puts his writings into counsellor Williams's hands, to prepare settlements. Shall now be doubly armed. Boasts of his contrivances in petto. Brings patterns to her. Proposes jewels. Admires her for her prudence with regard to what he puts her upon doing for her Norton. What his wife must do and be. She declines a public wedding. Her dutiful reasons. She is willing to dispense with Lord M.'s presence. He writes to Lord M. accordingly.

Extract from a letter from Clarissa.—

After giving Miss Howe an account of the present favourable appearances, she desires her to keep herself all such of the particulars which she has communicated to her as may discredit Mr. Lovelace.

LETTER LIV. Lovelace to Belford.—

His projected plot to revenge himself upon Miss Howe.
LETTER LV. From the same.—
Fresh contrivances crowd in upon him. He shall be very sick on the morrow; and why. Women below impertinently reproachful. He will be no man's successor. Will not take up with harlots.—History of the French marquis.

THE HISTORY OF CLARISSA HARLOWE

VOLUME FOUR

LETTER I

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 26.

At length, my dearest Miss Howe, I am in London, and in my new lodgings. They are neatly furnished, and the situation, for the town, is pleasant.

But I think you must not ask me how I like the old gentlewoman. Yet she seems courteous and obliging.—Her kinswomen just appeared to welcome me at my alighting. They seemed to be genteel young women. But more of their aunt and them, as I shall see more.

Miss Sorlings has an uncle at Barnet, whom she found so very ill, that her uneasiness, on that account, (having large expectations from him,) made me comply with her desire to stay with him. Yet I wished, as her uncle did not expect her, that she would see me settled in London; and Mr. Lovelace was still more earnest that she would, offering to send her back again in a day or two, and urging that her uncle's malady threatened not a sudden change. But leaving the matter to her choice, after she knew what would have been mine, she made me not the expected compliment. Mr. Lovelace, however, made her a handsome present at parting.

His genteel spirit, on all occasions, makes me often wish him more consistent.

As soon as he arrived, I took possession of my apartment. I shall make good use of the light closet in it, if I stay here any time.

One of his attendants returns in the morning to The Lawn; and I made writing to you by him an excuse for my retiring.

And now give me leave to chide you, my dearest friend, for your rash, and I hope revocable resolution not to make Mr. Hickman the happiest man in the world, while my happiness is in suspense. Suppose I were to be unhappy, what, my dear, would this resolution of yours avail me? Marriage is the highest state of friendship: if happy, it lessens our cares, by dividing them, at the same time that it doubles our pleasures by a mutual participation. Why, my dear, if you love me, will you not rather give another friend to one who has not two she is sure of? Had you married on your mother's last birth-day, as she would have had you, I should not, I dare say, have wanted a refuge; that would have saved me many mortifications, and much disgrace.

Here I was broke in upon by Mr. Lovelace; introducing the widow leading in a kinswoman of her's to attend me, if I approved of her, till my Hannah should come, or till I had provided myself with some other servant. The widow gave her many good qualities; but said, that she had one great defect; which was, that she could not write, nor read writing; that part of her education having been neglected when she was young; but for discretion, fidelity, obligingness, she was not to be out-done by any body. So commented her likewise for her skill at the needle.

As for her defect, I can easily forgive that. She is very likely and genteel—too genteel indeed, I think, for a servant. But what I like least of all in her, she has a strange sly eye. I never saw such an eye; half-confident, I think. But indeed Mrs. Sinclair herself, (for that is the widow's name,) has an odd winking eye; and her respectfulness seems too much studied, methinks, for the London ease and freedom. But people can't help their looks, you know; and after all she is extremely civil and obliging,—and as for the young woman, (Dorcas is her name,) she will not be long with me.

I accepted her: How could I do otherwise, (if I had had a mind to make objections, which, in my present situation, I had not,) her aunt present, and the young woman also present; and Mr. Lovelace officious in his introducing them, to oblige me? But, upon their leaving me, I told him, (who seemed inclinable to begin a conversation with me,) that I desired that this apartment might be considered as my retirement: that when I saw him it might be in the dining-room, (which is up a few stairs; for this back-house, being once two, the rooms do not all of them very conveniently communicate with each other,) and that I might be as little broken in upon as possible, when I am here. He withdrew very respectfully to the door, but there stopt; and asked for my company then in the dining-room. If he were about setting out for other lodgings, I would go with him

now, I told him; but, if he did not just then go, I would first finish my letter to Miss Howe.

I see he has no mind to leave me if he can help it. My brother's scheme may give him a pretence to try to engage me to dispense with his promise. But if I now do I must acquit him of it entirely.

My approbation of his tender behaviour in the midst of my grief, has given him a right, as he seems to think, of addressing me with all the freedom of an approved lover. I see by this man, that when once a woman embarks with this sex, there is no receding. One concession is but the prelude to another with them. He has been ever since Sunday last continually complaining of the distance I keep him at; and thinks himself entitled now to call in question my value for him; strengthening his doubts by my former declared readiness to give him up to a reconciliation with my friends; and yet has himself fallen off from that obsequious tenderness, if I may couple the words, which drew from me the concessions he builds upon.

While we were talking at the door, my new servant came up with an invitation to us both to tea. I said he might accept of it, if he pleased: but I must pursue my writing; and not choosing either tea or supper, I desired him to make my excuses below, as to both; and inform them of my choice to be retired as much as possible; yet to promise for me my attendance on the widow and her nieces at breakfast in the morning.

He objected particularly in the eye of strangers as to avoiding supper.

You know, said I, and you can tell them, that I seldom eat suppers. My spirits are low. You must never urge me against a declared choice. Pray, Mr. Lovelace, inform them of all my particularities. If they are obliging, they will allow for them—I come not hither to make new acquaintance.

I have turned over the books I found in my closet; and am not a little pleased with them; and think the better of the people of the house for their sakes.

Stanhope's Gospels; Sharp's, Tillotson's, and South's Sermons; Nelson's Feasts and Fasts; a Sacramental Piece of the Bishop of Man, and another of Dr. Gauden, Bishop of Exeter; and Inett's Devotions, are among the devout books:—and among those of a lighter turn, the following not ill-chosen ones: A Telemachus, in French; another in English; Steel's, Rowe's, and Shakespeare's Plays; that genteel Comedy of Mr. Cibber, The Careless Husband, and others of the same author; Dryden's Miscellanies; the Tatlers, Spectators, and Guardians; Pope's, and Swift's, and Addison's Works.

In the blank leaves of the Nelson and Bishop Gauden, is Mrs. Sinclair's name; and in those of most of the others, either Sarah Martin, or Mary Horton, the names of the two nieces.

I am exceedingly out of humour with Mr. Lovelace: and have great reason to be so, as you will allow, when you have read the conversation I am going to give you an account of; for he would not let me rest till I gave him my company in the dining-room.

He began with letting me know, that he had been out to inquire after the character of the widow, which was the more necessary, he said, as he supposed that I would expect his frequent absence.

I did, I said; and that he would not think of taking up his lodging in the same house with me. But what, said I, is the result of your inquiry?

Why, indeed, the widow's character was, in the main, what he liked well enough. But as it was Miss Howe's opinion, as I had told him, that my brother had not given over his scheme; as the widow lived by letting lodgings, and had others to let in the same part of the house, which might be taken by an enemy; he knew no better way than for him to take them all, as it could not be for a long time, unless I would think of removing to others.

So far was well enough. But as it was easy for me to see, that he spoke the slighter of the widow, in order to have a pretence to lodge here himself, I asked him his intention in that respect. And he frankly owned, that if I chose to stay here, he could not, as matters stood, think of leaving me for six hours together; and he had prepared the widow to expect, that we should be here but for a few days; only till we could fix ourselves in a house suitable to our condition; and this, that I might be under the less embarrassment, if I pleased to remove.

Fix our-selves in a house, and we, and our, Mr. Lovelace—Pray, in what light—

He interrupted me—Why, my dearest life, if you will hear me with patience—yet, I am half afraid that I have been too forward, as I have not consulted you upon it—but as my friends in town, according to what Mr. Doleman has written, in the letter you have seen, conclude us to be married—

Surely, Sir, you have not presumed—

Hear me out, my dearest creature—you have received with favour, my addresses: you have made me hope for the honour of your consenting hand: yet, by declining my most fervent tender of myself to you at Mrs. Surlings's, have given me apprehensions of delay: I would not for the world be thought so ungenerous a wretch, now you have honoured me with your confidence, as to wish to precipitate you. Yet your brother's schemes are not given up. Singleton, I am afraid, is actually in town; his vessel lies at Rotherhithe—your brother is absent from Harlowe- place; indeed not with Singleton yet, as I can hear. If you are known to be mine, or if you are but thought to be so, there will probably be an end of your brother's contrivances. The widow's character may be as worthy as it is said to be. But the worthier she is, the more danger, if your brother's agent should find us out; since she may be persuaded, that she ought in conscience to take a parent's part against a child who stands in opposition to them. But if she believes us married, her good character will stand us instead, and give her a reason why two apartments are requisite for us at the hour of retirement.

I perfectly raved at him. I would have flung from him in resentment; but he would not let me: and what could I do? Whither go, the evening advanced?

I am astonished at you! said I.—If you are a man of honour, what need of all this strange obliquity? You delight in crooked ways—let me know, since I must stay in your company (for he held my hand), let me know all you have said to the people below.—Indeed, indeed, Mr. Lovelace, you are a very unaccountable man.

My dearest creature, need I to have mentioned any thing of this? and could I not have taken up my lodgings

in this house unknown to you, if I had not intended to make you the judge of all my proceedings?—But this is what I have told the widow before her kinswomen, and before your new servant—"That indeed we were privately married at Hertford; but that you had preliminarily bound me under a solemn vow, which I am most religiously resolved to keep, to be contented with separate apartments, and even not to lodge under the same roof, till a certain reconciliation shall take place, which is of high consequence to both." And further that I might convince you of the purity of my intentions, and that my whole view in this was to prevent mischief, I have acquainted them, "that I have solemnly promised to behave to you before every body, as if we were only betrothed, and not married; not even offering to take any of those innocent freedoms which are not refused in the most punctilious loves."

And then he solemnly vowed to me the strictest observance of the same respectful behaviour to me.

I said, that I was not by any means satisfied with the tale he had told, nor with the necessity he wanted to lay me under of appearing what I was not: that every step he took was a wry one, a needless wry one: and since he thought it necessary to tell the people below any thing about me, I insisted that he should unsay all he had said, and tell them the truth.

What he had told them, he said, was with so many circumstances, that he could sooner die than contradict it. And still he insisted upon the propriety of appearing to be married, for the reasons he had given before—And, dearest creature, said he, why this high displeasure with me upon so well-intended an expedient? You know, that I cannot wish to shun your brother, or his Singleton, but upon your account. The first step I would take, if left to myself, would be to find them out. I have always acted in this manner, when any body has presumed to give out threatenings against it.

'Tis true I would have consulted you first, and had your leave. But since you dislike what I have said, let me implore you, dearest Madam, to give the only proper sanction to it, by naming an early day. Would to Heaven that were to be to-morrow!—For God's sake, let it be to-morrow! But, if not, [was it his business, my dear, before I spoke (yet he seemed to be afraid of me) to say, if not?] let me beseech you, Madam, if my behaviour shall not be to your dislike, that you will not to-morrow, at breakfast-time, discredit what I have told them. The moment I give you cause to think that I take any advantage of your concession, that moment revoke it, and expose me, as I shall deserve.—And once more, let me remind you, that I have no view either to serve or save myself by this expedient. It is only to prevent a probable mischief, for your own mind's sake; and for the sake of those who deserve not the least consideration from me.

What could I say? What could I do?—I verily think, that had he urged me again, in a proper manner, I should have consented (little satisfied as I am with him) to give him a meeting to-morrow morning at a more solemn place than in the parlour below.

But this I resolve, that he shall not have my consent to stay a night under this roof. He has now given me a stronger reason for this determination than I had before.

Alas! my dear, how vain a thing to say, what we will, or what we will not do, when we have put ourselves into the power of this sex!—He went down to the people below, on my desiring to be left to myself; and staid till their supper was just ready; and then, desiring a moment's audience, as he called it, he besought my leave to stay that one night, promising to set out either for Lord M.'s, or for Edgeware, to his friend Belford's, in the morning, after breakfast. But if I were against it, he said, he would not stay supper; and would attend me about eight next day—yet he added, that my denial would have a very particular appearance to the people below, from what he had told them; and the more, as he had actually agreed for all the vacant apartments, (indeed only for a month,) for the reasons he before hinted at: but I need not stay here two days, if, upon conversing with the widow and her nieces in the morning, I should have any dislike to them.

I thought, notwithstanding my resolution above-mentioned, that it would seem too punctilious to deny him, under the circumstances he had mentioned: having, besides, no reason to think he would obey me; for he looked as if he were determined to debate the matter with me. And now, as I see no likelihood of a reconciliation with my friends, and as I have actually received his addresses, I thought I would not quarrel with him, if I could help it, especially as he asked to stay but for one night, and could have done so without my knowing it; and you being of opinion, that the proud wretch, distrusting his own merits with me, or at least my regard for him, will probably bring me to some concessions in his favour—for all these reasons, I thought proper to yield this point: yet I was so vexed with him on the other, that it was impossible for me to comply with that grace which a concession should be made with, or not made at all.

This was what I said—What you will do, you must do, I think. You are very ready to promise; very ready to depart from your promise. You say, however, that you will set out to-morrow for the country. You know how ill I have been. I am not well enough now to debate with you upon your encroaching ways. I am utterly dissatisfied with the tale you have told below. Nor will I promise to appear to the people of the house to-morrow what I am not.

He withdrew in the most respectful manner, beseeching me only to favour him with such a meeting in the morning as might not make the widow and her nieces think he had given me reason to be offended with him.

I retired to my own apartment, and Dorcas came to me soon after to take my commands. I told her, that I required very little attendance, and always dressed and undressed myself.

She seemed concerned, as if she thought I had repulsed her; and said, it should be her whole study to oblige me.

I told her, that I was not difficult to be pleased: and should let her know from time to time what assistance I should expect from her. But for that night I had no occasion for her further attendance.

She is not only genteel, but is well bred, and well spoken—she must have had what is generally thought to be the polite part of education: but it is strange, that fathers and mothers should make so light, as they generally do, of that preferable part, in girls, which would improve their minds, and give a grace to all the rest.

As soon as she was gone, I inspected the doors, the windows, the wainscot, the dark closet as well as the

light one; and finding very good fastenings to the door, and to all the windows, I again had recourse to my pen.

Mrs. Sinclair is just now gone from me. Dorcas, she told me, had acquainted her, that I had dismissed her for the night. She came to ask me how I liked my apartment, and to wish me good rest. She expressed her concern, that they could not have my company at supper. Mr. Lovelace, she said, had informed them of my love of retirement. She assured me, that I should not be broken in upon. She highly extolled him, and gave me a share in the praise as to person. But was sorry, she said, that she was likely to lose us so soon as Mr. Lovelace talked of.

I answered her with suitable civility; and she withdrew with great tokens of respect. With greater, I think, than should be from distance of years, as she was the wife of a gentleman; and as the appearance of every thing about her, as well house as dress, carries the marks of such good circumstances, as require not abasement.

If, my dear, you will write, against prohibition, be pleased to direct, To Miss Laetitia Beaumont; to be left till called for, at Mr. Wilson's, in Pall Mall.

Mr. Lovelace proposed this direction to me, not knowing of your desire that your letters should pass by a third hand. As his motive for it was, that my brother might not trace out where we are, I am glad, as well from this instance as from others, that he seems to think he has done mischief enough already.

Do you know how my poor Hannah does?

Mr. Lovelace is so full of his contrivances and expedients, that I think it may not be amiss to desire you to look carefully to the seals of my letters, as I shall to those of yours. If I find him base in this particular, I shall think him capable of any evil; and will fly him as my worst enemy.

LETTER II

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [WITH HER TWO LAST LETTERS, NO. LVIII. LIX. OF VOL. III., ENCLOSED.] THURSDAY NIGHT, APRIL 27.

I have your's; just brought me. Mr. Hickman has helped me to a lucky expedient, which, with the assistance of the post, will enable me to correspond with you every day. An honest higgler, [Simon Collins his name,] by whom I shall send this, and the two enclosed, (now I have your direction whither,) goes to town constantly on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; and can bring back to me from Mr. Wilson's what you shall have caused to be left for me.

I congratulate you on your arrival in town, so much amended in spirits. I must be brief. I hope you'll have no cause to repent returning my Norris. It is forthcoming on demand.

I am sorry your Hannah can't be with you. She is very ill still; but not dangerously.

I long for your account of the women you are with. If they are not right people, you will find them out in one breakfasting.

I know not what to write upon his reporting to them that you are actually married. His reasons for it are plausible. But he delights in odd expedients and inventions.

Whether you like the people or not, do not, by your noble sincerity and plain dealing, make yourself enemies. You are in the real world now you know.

I am glad you had thoughts of taking him at his offer, if he had re-urged it. I wonder he did not. But if he do not soon, and in such a way as you can accept of it, don't think of staying with him.

Depend upon it, my dear, he will not leave you, either night or day, if he can help it, now he has got footing.

I should have abhorred him for his report of your marriage, had he not made it with such circumstances as leave it still in your power to keep him at distance. If once he offer at the least familiarity—but this is needless to say to you. He can have, I think, no other design but what he professes; because he must needs think, that his report of being married to you must increase your vigilance.

You may depend upon my looking narrowly into the sealings of your letters. If, as you say, he be base in that point, he will be so in every thing. But to a person of your merit, of your fortune, of your virtue, he cannot be base. The man is no fool. It is his interest, as well with regard to his expectations from his own friends, as from you, to be honest. Would to Heaven, however, you were really married! This is now the predominant wish of

Your ANNA HOWE.

LETTER III

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE THURSDAY MORNING, EIGHT O'CLOCK.

I am more and more displeas'd with Mr. Lovelace, on reflection, for his boldness in hoping to make me, though but passively, as I may say, testify to his great untruth. And I shall like him still less for it, if his view in it does not come out to be the hope of accelerating my resolution in his favour, by the difficulty it will lay me under as to my behaviour to him. He has sent me his compliments by Dorcas, with a request that I will

permit him to attend me in the dining-room,—meet him in good humour, or not: but I have answered, that as I shall see him at breakfast-time I desired to be excused.

TEN O'CLOCK.

I tried to adjust my countenance, before I went down, to an easier air than I had a heart, and was received with the highest tokens of respect by the widow and her two nieces: agreeable young women enough in their persons; but they seemed to put on an air of reserve; while Mr. Lovelace was easy and free to all, as if he were of long acquaintance with them: gracefully enough, I cannot but say; an advantage which travelled gentlemen have over other people.

The widow, in the conversation we had after breakfast, gave us an account of the military merit of the Colonel her husband, and, upon this occasion, put her handkerchief to her eyes twice or thrice. I hope for the sake of her sincerity, she wetted it, because she would be thought to have done so; but I saw not that she did. She wished that I might never know the loss of a husband so dear to me, as her beloved Colonel was to her: and she again put the handkerchief to her eyes.

It must, no doubt, be a most affecting thing to be separated from a good husband, and to be left in difficult circumstances besides, and that not by his fault, and exposed to the insults of the base and ungrateful, as she represented her case to be at his death. This moved me a good deal in her favour.

You know, my dear, that I have an open and free heart; and naturally have as open and free a countenance; at least my complimenters have told me so. At once, where I like, I mingle minds without reserve, encouraging reciprocal freedoms, and am forward to dissipate diffidences. But with these two nieces of the widow I never can be intimate—I don't know why.

Only that circumstances, and what passed in conversation, encouraged not the notion, or I should have been apt to think, that the young ladies and Mr. Lovelace were of longer acquaintance than of yesterday. For he, by stealth as it were, cast glances sometimes at them, when they returned; and, on my ocular notice, their eyes fell, as I may say, under my eye, as if they could not stand its examination.

The widow directed all her talk to me, as to Mrs. Lovelace; and I, with a very ill grace bore it. And once she expressed more forwardly than I thanked her for, her wonder that any vow, any consideration, however weighty, could have force enough with so charming a couple, as she called him and me, to make us keep separate beds.

Their eyes, upon this hint, had the advantage of mine. Yet was I not conscious of guilt. How know I then, upon recollection, that my censures upon theirs are not too rash? There are, no doubt, many truly modest persons (putting myself out of the question) who, by blushes at an injurious charge, have been suspected, by those who cannot distinguish between the confusion which guilt will be attended with, and the noble consciousness that overspreads the face of a fine spirit, to be thought but capable of an imputed evil.

The great Roman, as we read, who took his surname from one part in three (the fourth not then discovered) of the world he had triumphed over, being charged with a great crime to his soldiery, chose rather to suffer exile (the punishment due to it, had he been found guilty) than to have it said, that Scipio was questioned in public, on so scandalous a charge. And think you, my dear, that Scipio did not blush with indignation, when the charge was first communicated to him?

Mr. Lovelace, when the widow expressed her forward wonder, looked sly and leering, as if to observe how I took it: and said, they might take notice that his regard for my will and pleasure (calling me his dear creature) had greater force upon him than the oath by which he had bound himself.

Rebuking both him and the widow, I said, it was strange to me to hear an oath or vow so lightly treated, as to have it thought but of second consideration, whatever were the first.

The observation was just, Miss Martin said; for that nothing could excuse the breaking of a solemn vow, be the occasion of making it what it would.

I asked her after the nearest church; for I have been too long a stranger to the sacred worship. They named St. James's, St. Anne's, and another in Bloomsbury; and the two nieces said they oftenest went to St. James's church, because of the good company, as well as for the excellent preaching.

Mr. Lovelace said, the Royal Chapel was the place he oftenest went to, when he was in town. Poor man! little did I expect to hear he went to any place of devotion. I asked, if the presence of the visible king of, comparatively, but a small territory, did not take off, too generally, the requisite attention to the service of the invisible King and Maker of a thousand worlds?

He believed this might be so with such as came for curiosity, when the royal family were present. But otherwise, he had seen as many contrite faces at the Royal Chapel, as any where else: and why not? Since the people about court have as deep scores to wipe off, as any people whatsoever.

He spoke this with so much levity, that I could not help saying, that nobody questioned but he knew how to choose his company.

Your servant, my dear, bowing, were his words; and turning to them, you will observe upon numberless occasions, ladies, as we are further acquainted, that my beloved never spares me upon these topics. But I admire her as much in her reproofs, as I am fond of her approbation.

Miss Horton said, there was a time for every thing. She could not but say, that she thought innocent mirth was mighty becoming in young people.

Very true, joined in Miss Martin. And Shakespeare says well, that youth is the spring of life, the bloom of gaudy years [with a theatrical air, she spoke it:] and for her part, she could not but admire in my spouse that charming vivacity which so well suited his time of life.

Mr. Lovelace bowed. The man is fond of praise. More fond of it, I doubt, than of deserving it. Yet this sort of praise he does deserve. He has, you know, an easy free manner, and no bad voice: and this praise so expanded his gay heart, that he sung the following lines from Congreve, as he told us they were:

*Youth does a thousand pleasures bring,
Which from decrepid age will fly;*

And this for a compliment, as he said, to the two nieces. Nor was it thrown away upon them. They encored it; and his compliance fixed them in my memory.

We had some talk about meals, and the widow very civilly offered to conform to any rules I would set her. I told her how easily I was pleased, and how much I chose to dine by myself, and that from a plate sent me from any single dish. But I will not trouble you, my dear, with such particulars.

They thought me very singular; and with reason: but as I liked them not so very well as to forego my own choice in compliment to them, I was the less concerned for what they thought.—And still the less, as Mr. Lovelace had put me very much out of humour with him.

They, however, cautioned me against melancholy. I said, I should be a very unhappy creature if I could not bear my own company.

Mr. Lovelace said, that he must let the ladies into my story, and then they would know how to allow for my ways. But, my dear, as you love me, said the confident wretch, give as little way to melancholy as possible. Nothing but the sweetness of your temper, and your high notions of a duty that never can be deserved where you place it, can make you so uneasy as you are.—Be not angry, my dear love, for saying so, [seeing me frown, I suppose:] and snatched my hand and kissed it.—I left him with them; and retired to my closet and my pen.

Just as I have written thus far, I am interrupted by a message from him, that he is setting out on a journey, and desires to take my commands.—So here I will leave off, to give him a meeting in the dining-room.

I was not displeased to see him in his riding-dress.

He seemed desirous to know how I liked the gentlewomen below. I told him, that although I did not think them very exceptionable; yet as I wanted not, in my present situation, new acquaintance, I should not be fond of cultivating theirs.

He urged me still farther on this head.

I could not say, I told him, that I greatly liked either of the young gentlewomen, any more than their aunt: and that, were my situation ever so happy, they had much too gay a turn for me.

He did not wonder, he said, to hear me say so. He knew not any of the sex, who had been accustomed to show themselves at the town diversions and amusements, that would appear tolerable to me. Silences and blushes, Madam, are now no graces with our fine ladies in town. Hardened by frequent public appearances, they would be as much ashamed to be found guilty of these weaknesses, as men.

Do you defend these two gentlewomen, Sir, by reflections upon half the sex? But you must second me, Mr. Lovelace, (and yet I am not fond of being thought particular,) in my desire of breakfasting and supping (when I do sup) by myself.

If I would have it so, to be sure it should be so. The people of the house were not of consequence enough to be apologized to, in any point where my pleasure was concerned. And if I should dislike them still more on further knowledge of them, he hoped I would think of some other lodgings.

He expressed a good deal of regret at leaving me, declaring, that it was absolutely in obedience to my commands: but that he could not have consented to go, while my brother's schemes were on foot, if I had not done him the credit of my countenance in the report he had made that we were married; which, he said, had bound all the family to his interest, so that he could leave me with the greater security and satisfaction.

He hoped, he said, that on his return I would name his happy day; and the rather, as I might be convinced, by my brother's projects, that no reconciliation was to be expected.

I told him, that perhaps I might write one letter to my uncle Harlowe. He once loved me. I should be easier when I had made one direct application. I might possibly propose such terms, in relation to my grandfather's estate, as might procure me their attention; and I hoped he would be long enough absent to give me time to write to him, and receive an answer from him.

That, he must beg my pardon, he could not promise. He would inform himself of Singleton's and my brother's motions; and if on his return he found no reason for apprehension, he would go directly for Berks, and endeavour to bring up with him his cousin Charlotte, who, he hoped, would induce me to give him an earlier day than at present I seemed to think of.—I seemed to think of, my dear, very acquiescent, as I should imagine!

I told him, that I should take that young lady's company for a great favour.

I was the more pleased with this motion, as it came from himself, and with no ill grace.

He earnestly pressed me to accept of a bank note: but I declined it. And then he offered me his servant William for my attendant in his absence; who, he said, might be dispatched to him, if any thing extraordinary fell out. I consented to that.

He took his leave of me in the most respectful manner, only kissing my hand. He left the bank note, unobserved by me, upon the table. You may be sure, I shall give it him back at his return.

I am in a much better humour with him than I was.

Where doubts of any person are removed, a mind not ungenerous is willing, by way of amends for having conceived those doubts, to construe every thing that happens, capable of a good instruction, in that person's favour. Particularly, I cannot but be pleased to observe, that although he speaks of the ladies of his family with the freedom of relationship, yet it is always of tenderness. And from a man's kindness to his relations of the sex, a woman has some reason to expect his good behaviour to herself, when married, if she be willing to deserve it from him.

And thus, my dear, am I brought to sit down satisfied with this man, where I find room to infer that he is not by nature a savage. But how could a creature who (treating herself unpolitely) gave a man an opportunity to run away with her, expect to be treated by that man with a very high degree of politeness?

But why, now, when fairer prospects seem to open, why these melancholy reflections? will my beloved friend ask of her Clarissa?

Why? Can you ask why, my dearest Miss Howe, of a creature, who, in the world's eye, had enrolled her name among the giddy and inconsiderate; who labours under a parent's curse, and the cruel uncertainties, which must arise from reflecting, that, equally against duty and principle, she has thrown herself into the power of a man, and that man an immoral one?— Must not the sense she has of her inconsideration darken her most hopeful prospects? Must it not even rise strongest upon a thoughtful mind, when her hopes are the fairest? Even her pleasures, were the man to prove better than she expects, coming to her with an abatement, like that which persons who are in possession of ill-gotten wealth must then most poignantly experience (if they have reflecting and unseared minds) when, all their wishes answered, (if answered,) they sit down in hopes to enjoy what they have unjustly obtained, and find their own reflections their greatest torment.

May you, my dear friend, be always happy in your reflections, prays

Your ever affectionate CL. HARLOWE.

[Mr. Lovelace, in his next letter, triumphs on his having carried his two great points of making the Lady yield to pass for his wife to the people of the house, and to his taking up his lodging in it, though but for one night. He is now, he says, in a fair way, and doubts not but that he shall soon prevail, if not by persuasion, by surprise. Yet he pretends to have some little remorse, and censures himself as to acting the part of the grand tempter. But having succeeded thus far, he cannot, he says, forbear trying, according to the resolution he had before made, whether he cannot go farther.]

He gives the particulars of their debates on the above-mentioned subjects, to the same effect as in the Lady's last letters.

It will by this time be seen that his whole merit, with regard to the Lady, lies in doing justice to her excellencies both of mind and person, though to his own condemnation. Thus he begins his succeeding letter:]

And now, Belford, will I give thee an account of our first breakfast- conversation.

All sweetly serene and easy was the lovely brow and charming aspect of my goddess, on her descending among us; commanding reverence from every eye, a courtesy from every knee, and silence, awful silence, from every quivering lip: while she, armed with conscious worthiness and superiority, looked and behaved as an empress would look and behave among her vassals; yet with a freedom from pride and haughtiness, as if born to dignity, and to a behaviour habitually gracious.

[He takes notice of the jealousy, pride, and vanity of Sally Martin and Polly Horton, on his respectful behaviour to the Lady: creatures who, brought up too high for their fortunes, and to a taste of pleasure, and the public diversions, had fallen an easy prey to his seducing arts (as will be seen in the conclusion of this work:) and who, as he observed, 'had not yet got over that distinction in their love, which makes a woman prefer one man to another.']

How difficult is it, says he, to make a woman subscribe to a preference against herself, though ever so visible; especially where love is concerned! This violent, this partial little devil, Sally, has the insolence to compare herself with my angel—yet owns her to be an angel. I charge you, Mr. Lovelace, say she, show none of your extravagant acts of kindness before me to this sullen, this gloomy beauty—I cannot bear it. Then was I reminded of her first sacrifice.

What a rout do these women make about nothing at all! Were it not for what the learned Bishop, in his Letter from Italy, calls the entanglements of amour, and I the delicacies of intrigue, what is there, Belford, in all they can do for us?

How do these creatures endeavour to stimulate me! A fallen woman is a worse devil than ever a profligate man. The former is incapable of remorse: that am not I—nor ever shall they prevail upon me, though aided by all the powers of darkness, to treat this admirable creature with indignity—so far, I mean, as indignity can be separated from the trials which will prove her to be either woman or angel.

Yet with them I am a craven. I might have had her before now, if I would. If I would treat her as flesh and blood, I should find her such. They thought I knew, if any man living did, that if a man made a goddess of a woman, she would assume the goddess; that if power were given to her, she would exert that power to the giver, if to nobody else. And D—r's wife is thrown into my dish, who, thou knowest, kept her ceremonious husband at haughty distance, and whined in private to her insulting footman. O how I cursed the blasphemous wretches! They will make me, as I tell them, hate their house, and remove from it. And by my soul, Jack, I am ready at times to think that I should not have brought her hither, were it but on Sally's account. And yet, without knowing either Sally's heart, or Polly's, the dear creature resolves against having any conversation with them but such as she can avoid. I am not sorry for this, thou mayest think; since jealousy in a woman is not to be concealed from woman. And Sally has no command of herself.

What dost think!—Here this little devil Sally, not being able, as she told me, to support life under my displeasure, was going into a fit: but when I saw her preparing for it, I went out of the room; and so she thought it would not be worth her while to show away.

[In this manner he mentions what his meaning was in making the Lady the compliment of his absence:]

As to leaving her: if I go but for one night, I have fulfilled my promise: and if she think not, I can mutter and grumble, and yield again, and make a merit of it; and then, unable to live out of her presence, soon return. Nor are women ever angry at bottom for being disobeyed through excess of love. They like an uncontrollable

passion. They like to have every favour ravished from them, and to be eaten and drunk quite up by a voracious lover. Don't I know the sex?—Not so, indeed, as yet, my Clarissa: but, however, with her my frequent egresses will make me look new to her, and create little busy scenes between us. At the least, I may surely, without exception, salute her at parting, and at return; and will not those occasional freedoms (which civility will warrant) by degrees familiarize my charmer to them?

But here, Jack, what shall I do with my uncle and aunts, and all my loving cousins? For I understand that they are more in haste to have me married than I am myself.

LETTER IV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE FRIDAY, APRIL 28.

Mr. Lovelace is returned already. My brother's projects were his pretence. I could not but look upon this short absence as an evasion of his promise; especially as he had taken such precautions with the people below; and as he knew that I proposed to keep close within-doors. I cannot bear to be dealt meanly with; and angrily insisted that he should directly set out for Berkshire, in order to engage his cousin, as he had promised.

O my dearest life, said he, why will you banish me from your presence? I cannot leave you for so long a time as you seem to expect I should. I have been hovering about town ever since I left you. Edgware was the farthest place I went to, and there I was not able to stay two hours, for fear, at this crisis, any thing should happen. Who can account for the workings of an apprehensive mind, when all that is dear and valuable to it is at stake? You may spare yourself the trouble of writing to any of your friends, till the solemnity has passed that shall entitle me to give weight to your application. When they know we are married, your brother's plots will be at an end; and your father and mother, and uncles, must be reconciled to you. Why then should you hesitate a moment to confirm my happiness? Why, once more, would you banish me from you? Why will you not give the man who has brought you into difficulties, and who so honourably wishes to extricate you from them, the happiness of doing so?

He was silent. My voice failed to second the inclination I had to say something not wholly discouraging to a point so warmly pressed.

I'll tell you, my angel, resumed he, what I propose to do, if you approve of it. I will instantly go out to view some of the handsome new squares or fine streets round them, and make a report to you of any suitable house I find to be let. I will take such a one as you shall choose, and set up an equipage befitting our condition. You shall direct the whole. And on some early day, either before, or after we fix, [it must be at your own choice], be pleased to make me the happiest of men. And then will every thing be in a desirable train. You shall receive in your own house (if it can be so soon furnished as I wish) the compliments of all my relations. Charlotte shall visit you in the interim: and if it take up time, you shall choose whom you will honour with your company, first, second, or third, in the summer months; and on your return you shall find all that was wanting in your new habitation supplied, and pleasures in a constant round shall attend us. O my angel, take me to you, instead of banishing me from you, and make me your's for ever.

You see, my dear, that here was no day pressed for. I was not uneasy about that, and the sooner recovered myself, as there was not. But, however, I gave him no reason to upbraid me for refusing his offer of going in search of a house.

He is accordingly gone out for this purpose. But I find that he intends to take up his lodging here tonight; and if to-night, no doubt on other nights, while he is in town. As the doors and windows of my apartment have good fastenings; as he has not, in all this time, given me cause for apprehension; as he has the pretence of my brother's schemes to plead; as the people below are very courteous and obliging, Miss Horton especially, who seems to have taken a great liking to me, and to be of a gentler temper and manners than Miss Martin; and as we are now in a tolerable way; I imagine it would look particular to them all, and bring me into a debate with a man, who (let him be set upon what he will) has always a great deal to say for himself, if I were to insist upon his promise: on all these accounts, I think, I will take no notice of his lodging here, if he don't.—Let me know, my dear, your thoughts of every thing.

You may believe I gave him back his bank note the moment I saw him.

FRIDAY EVENING.

Mr. Lovelace has seen two or three houses, but none to his mind. But he has heard of one which looks promising, he says, and which he is to inquire about in the morning.

SATURDAY MORNING.

He has made his inquiries, and actually seen the house he was told of last night. The owner of it is a young widow lady, who is inconsolable for the death of her husband; Fretchville her name. It is furnished quite in taste, every thing being new within these six months. He believes, if I like not the furniture, the use of it may be agreed for, with the house, for a time certain: but, if I like it, he will endeavour to take the one, and purchase the other, directly.

The lady sees nobody; nor are the best apartments above-stairs to be viewed, till she is either absent, or gone into the country; which she talks of doing in a fortnight, or three weeks, at farthest, and to live there retired.

What Mr. Lovelace saw of the house (which were the saloon and two parlours) was perfectly elegant; and he was assured all is of a piece. The offices are also very convenient; coach-house and stables at hand.

He shall be very impatient, he says, till I see the whole; nor will he, if he finds he can have it, look farther till I have seen it, except any thing else offer to my liking. The price he values not.

He now does nothing but talk of the ceremony, but not indeed of the day. I don't want him to urge that—but I wonder he does not.

He has just now received a letter from Lady Betty Lawrance, by a particular hand; the contents principally relating to an affair she has in chancery. But in the postscript she is pleased to say very respectful things of me.

They are all impatient, she says, for the happy day being over; which they flatter themselves will ensure his reformation.

He hoped, he told me, that I would soon enable him to answer their wishes and his own.

But, my dear, although the opportunity was so inviting, he urged not for the day. Which is the more extraordinary, as he was so pressing for marriage before we came to town.

He was very earnest with me to give him, and four of his friends, my company on Monday evening, at a little collation. Miss Martin and Miss Horton cannot, he says, be there, being engaged in a party of their own, with two daughters of Colonel Solcombe, and two nieces of Sir Anthony Holmes, upon an annual occasion. But Mrs. Sinclair will be present, and she gave him hope of the company of a young lady of very great fortune and merit (Miss Partington), an heiress to whom Colonel Sinclair, it seems, in his lifetime was guardian, and who therefore calls Mrs. Sinclair Mamma.

I desired to be excused. He had laid me, I said, under a most disagreeable necessity of appearing as a married person, and I would see as few people as possible who were to think me so.

He would not urge it, he said, if I were much averse: but they were his select friends; men of birth and fortune, who longed to see me. It was true, he added, that they, as well as his friend Doleman, believed we were married: but they thought him under the restrictions that he had mentioned to the people below. I might be assured, he told me, that his politeness before them should be carried into the highest degree of reverence.

When he is set upon any thing, there is no knowing, as I have said heretofore, what one can do.* But I will not, if I can help it, be made a show of; especially to men of whose character and principles I have no good opinion. I am, my dearest friend,

Your ever affectionate CL. HARLOWE.

* See Letter I. of this volume. See also Vol. II. Letter XX.

[Mr. Lovelace, in his next letter, gives an account of his quick return: of his reasons to the Lady for it: of her displeasure upon it: and of her urging his absence from the safety she was in from the situation of the house, except she were to be traced out by his visits.]

I was confoundedly puzzled, says he, on this occasion, and on her insisting upon the execution of a too-ready offer which I made her to go down to Berks, to bring up my cousin Charlotte to visit and attend her. I made miserable excuses; and fearing that they would be mortally resented, as her passion began to rise upon my saying Charlotte was delicate, which she took strangely wrong, I was obliged to screen myself behind the most solemn and explicit declarations.

[He then repeats those declarations, to the same effect with the account she gives of them.]

I began, says he, with an intention to keep my life of honour in view, in the declaration I made her; but, as it has been said of a certain orator in the House of Commons, who more than once, in a long speech, convinced himself as he went along, and concluded against the side he set out intending to favour, so I in earnest pressed without reserve for matrimony in the progress of my harangue, which state I little thought of urging upon her with so much strength and explicitness.

[He then values himself upon the delay that his proposal of taking and furnishing a house must occasion.]

He wavers in his resolutions whether to act honourable or not by a merit so exalted.

He values himself upon his own delicacy, in expressing his indignation against her friends, for supposing what he pretends his heart rises against them for presuming to suppose.]

But have I not reason, says he, to be angry with her for not praising me for this my delicacy, when she is so ready to call me to account for the least failure in punctilio?—However, I believe I can excuse her too, upon this generous consideration, [for generous I am sure it is, because it is against myself,] that her mind being the essence of delicacy, the least want of it shocks her; while the meeting with what is so very extraordinary to me, is too familiar to her to obtain her notice, as an extraordinary.

[He glories in the story of the house, and of the young widow possessor of it, Mrs. Fretchville he calls her; and leaves it doubtful to Mr. Belford, whether it be a real or a fictitious story.]

He mentions his different proposals in relation to the ceremony, which he so earnestly pressed for; and owns his artful intention in avoiding to name the day.]

And now, says he, I hope soon to have an opportunity to begin my operations; since all is halcyon and security.

It is impossible to describe the dear creature's sweet and silent confusion, when I touched upon the matrimonial topics.

She may doubt. She may fear. The wise in all important cases will doubt, and will fear, till they are sure. But her apparent willingness to think well of a spirit so inventive, and so machinating, is a happy prognostic

for me. O these reasoning ladies!—How I love these reasoning ladies!—'Tis all over with them, when once love has crept into their hearts: for then will they employ all their reasoning powers to excuse rather than to blame the conduct of the doubted lover, let appearances against him be ever so strong.

Mowbray, Belton, and Tourville, long to see my angel, and will be there. She has refused me; but must be present notwithstanding. So generous a spirit as mine is cannot enjoy its happiness without communication. If I raise not your envy and admiration both at once, but half-joy will be the joy of having such a charming fly entangled in my web. She therefore must comply. And thou must come. And then I will show thee the pride and glory of the Harlowe family, my implacable enemies; and thou shalt join with me in my triumph over them all.

I know not what may still be the perverse beauty's fate: I want thee, therefore, to see and admire her, while she is serene and full of hope: before her apprehensions are realized, if realized they are to be; and if evil apprehensions of me she really has; before her beamy eyes have lost their lustre; while yet her charming face is surrounded with all its virgin glories; and before the plough of disappointment has thrown up furrows of distress upon every lovely feature.

If I can procure you this honour you will be ready to laugh out, as I have often much ado to forbear, at the puritanical behaviour of the mother before this lady. Not an oath, not a curse, nor the least free word, escapes her lips. She minces in her gait. She prims up her horse-mouth. Her voice, which, when she pleases, is the voice of thunder, is sunk into an humble whine. Her stiff hams, that have not been bent to a civility for ten years past, are now limbered into courtesies three deep at ever word. Her fat arms are crossed before her; and she can hardly be prevailed upon to sit in the presence of my goddess.

I am drawing up instructions for ye all to observe on Monday night.

SATURDAY NIGHT.

Most confoundedly alarmed!—Lord, Sir, what do you think? cried Dorcas —My lady is resolved to go to church to-morrow! I was at quadrille with the women below.—To church! said I, and down I laid my cards. To church! repeated they, each looking upon the other. We had done playing for that night.

Who could have dreamt of such a whim as this?—Without notice, without questions! Her clothes not come! No leave asked!—Impossible she should think of being my wife!—Besides, she don't consider, if she go to church, I must go too!—Yet not to ask for my company! Her brother and Singleton ready to snap her up, as far as she knows!—Known by her clothes—her person, her features, so distinguished!—Not such another woman in England!—To church of all places! Is the devil in the girl? said I, as soon as I could speak.

Well, but to leave this subject till to-morrow morning, I will now give you the instructions I have drawn up for your's and your companions' behaviour on Monday night.

Instructions to be observed by John Belford, Richard Mowbray, Thomas Belton, and James Tourville, Esquires of the Body to General Robert Lovelace, on their admission to the presence of his Goddess.

Ye must be sure to let it sink deep into your heavy heads, that there is no such lady in the world as Miss Clarissa Harlowe; and that she is neither more nor less than Mrs. Lovelace, though at present, to my shame be it spoken, a virgin.

Be mindful also, that your old mother's name, after that of her mother when a maid, is Sinclair: that her husband was a lieutenant-colonel, and all that you, Belford, know from honest Doleman's letter of her,* that let your brethren know.

* See Letter XXXVIII. Vol. III.

Mowbray and Tourville, the two greatest blunderers of the four, I allow to be acquainted with the widow and nieces, from the knowledge they had of the colonel. They will not forbear familiarities of speech to the mother, as of longer acquaintance than a day. So I have suited their parts to their capacities.

They may praise the widow and the colonel for people of great honour—but not too grossly; nor to labour the point so as to render themselves suspected.

The mother will lead ye into her own and the colonel's praises! and Tourville and Mowbray may be both her vouchers—I, and you, and Belton, must be only hearsay confirmers.

As poverty is generally suspectible, the widow must be got handsomely aforehand; and no doubt but she is. The elegance of her house and furniture, and her readiness to discharge all demands upon her, which she does with ostentation enough, and which makes her neighbours, I suppose, like her the better, demonstrate this. She will propose to do handsome things by her two nieces. Sally is near marriage—with an eminent woollen-drapeer in the Strand, if ye have a mind to it; for there are five or six of them there.

The nieces may be inquired after, since they will be absent, as persons respected by Mowbray and Tourville, for their late worthy uncle's sake.

Watch ye diligently every turn of my countenance, every motion of my eye; for in my eye, and in my countenance will ye find a sovereign regulator. I need not bid you respect me mightily: your allegiance obliges you to that: And who that sees me, respects me not?

Priscilla Partington (for her looks so innocent, and discretion so deep, yet seeming so softly) may be greatly relied upon. She will accompany the mother, gorgeously dressed, with all her Jew's extravagance flaming out upon her; and first induce, then countenance, the lady. She has her cue, and I hope will make her acquaintance coveted by my charmer.

Miss Partington's history is this: the daughter of Colonel Sinclair's brother-in-law: that brother-in-law may have been a Turkey-merchant, or any merchant, who died confoundedly rich: the colonel one of her guardians [collateral credit in that to the old one:] whence she always calls Mrs. Sinclair Mamma, though not succeeding to the trust.

She is just come to pass a day or two, and then to return to her surviving guardian's at Barnet.

Miss Partington has suitors a little hundred (her grandmother, an alderman's dowager, having left her a

great additional fortune,) and is not trusted out of her guardian's house without an old governante, noted for discretion, except to her Mamma Sinclair, with whom now-and-then she is permitted to be for a week together.

Pris. will Mamma-up Mrs. Sinclair, and will undertake to court her guardian to let her pass a delightful week with her—Sir Edward Holden he may as well be, if your shallow pates will not be clogged with too many circumstantial. Lady Holden, perhaps, will come with her; for she always delighted in her Mamma Sinclair's company, and talks of her, and her good management, twenty times a day.

Be it principally thy part, Jack, who art a parading fellow, and aimest at wisdom, to keep thy brother-varlets from blundering; for, as thou must have observed from what I have written, we have the most watchful and most penetrating lady in the world to deal with; a lady worth deceiving! but whose eyes will piece to the bottom of your shallow souls the moment she hears you open. Do you therefore place thyself between Mowbray and Tourville: their toes to be played upon and commanded by thine, if they go wrong: thy elbows to be the ministers of approbation.

As to your general behaviour; no hypocrisy!—I hate it: so does my charmer. If I had studied for it, I believe I could have been an hypocrite: but my general character is so well known, that I should have been suspected at once, had I aimed at making myself too white. But what necessity can there be for hypocrisy, unless the generality of the sex were to refuse us for our immoralities? The best of them love to have the credit for reforming us. Let the sweet souls try for it: if they fail, their intent was good. That will be a consolation to them. And as to us, our work will be the easier; our sins the fewer: since they will draw themselves in with a very little of our help; and we shall save a parcel of cursed falsehoods, and appear to be what we are both to angels and men.—Mean time their very grandmothers will acquit us, and reproach them with their self-do, self-have, and as having erred against knowledge, and ventured against manifest appearances. What folly, therefore, for men of our character to be hypocrites!

Be sure to instruct the rest, and do thou thyself remember, not to talk obscenely. You know I never permitted any of you to talk obscenely. Time enough for that, when ye grow old, and can ONLY talk. Besides, ye must consider Prisc.'s affected character, my goddess's real one. Far from obscenity, therefore, do not so much as touch upon the double entendre. What! as I have often said, cannot you touch a lady's heart without wounding her ear?

It is necessary that ye should appear worse men than myself. You cannot help appearing so, you'll say. Well, then, there will be the less restraint upon you—the less restraint, the less affectation.—And if Belton begins his favourite subject in behalf of keeping, it may make me take upon myself to oppose him: but fear not; I shall not give the argument all my force.

She must have some curiosity, I think, to see what sort of men my companions are: she will not expect any of you to be saints. Are you not men born to considerable fortunes, although ye are not all of you men of parts? Who is it in this mortal life that wealth does not mislead? And as it gives people the power of being mischievous, does it not require great virtue to forbear the use of that power? Is not the devil said to be the god of this world? Are we not children of this world? Well, then! let me tell thee my opinion—It is this, that were it not for the poor and the middling, the world would probably, long ago, have been destroyed by fire from Heaven. Ungrateful wretches the rest, thou wilt be apt to say, to make such sorry returns, as they generally do make, to the poor and the middling!

This dear lady is prodigiously learned in theories. But as to practices, as to experimentals, must be, as you know from her tender years, a mere novice. Till she knew me, I dare say, she did not believe, whatever she had read, that there were such fellows in the world, as she will see in you four. I shall have much pleasure in observing how she'll stare at her company, when she finds me the politest man of the five.

And so much for instructions general and particular for your behaviour on Monday night.

And let me add, that you must attend to every minute circumstance, whether you think there be reason for it, or not. Deep, like golden ore, frequently lies my meaning, and richly worth digging for. The hint of least moment, as you may imagine it, is often pregnant with events of the greatest. Be implicit. Am I not your general? Did I ever lead you on that I brought you not off with safety and success?—Sometimes to your own stupid astonishment.

And now, methinks, thou art curious to know, what can be my view in risquing the displeasure of my fair-one, and alarming her fears, after four or five halcyon days have gone over our heads? I'll satisfy thee.

The visiters of the two nieces will crowd the house.—Beds will be scarce:—Miss Partington, a sweet, modest, genteel girl, will be prodigiously taken with my charmer;—will want to begin a friendship with her—a share in her bed, for one night only, will be requested. Who knows, but on that very Monday night I may be so unhappy as to give mortal offence to my beloved? The shyest birds may be caught napping. Should she attempt to fly me upon it, cannot I detain her? Should she actually fly, cannot I bring her back, by authority civil or uncivil, if I have evidence upon evidence that she acknowledged, though but tacitly, her marriage? And should I, or should I not succeed, and she forgive me, or if she but descend to expostulate, or if she bear me in her sight, then will she be all my own. All delicacy is my charmer. I long to see how such a delicacy, on any of these occasions, will behave, and in my situation it behoves me to provide against every accident.

I must take care, knowing what an eel I have to do with, that the little riggling rogue does not slip through my fingers. How silly should I look, staring after her, when she had shot from me into the muddy river, her family, from which with so much difficulty I have taken her!

Well then, here are—let me see—How many persons are there who, after Monday night, will be able to swear that she has gone by my name, answered to my name, had no other view in leaving her friends but to go by my name? her own relations neither able nor willing to deny it.— First, here are my servants, her servant, Dorcas, Mrs. Sinclair, Mrs. Sinclair's two nieces, and Miss Partington.

But for fear these evidences should be suspected, here comes the jet of the business—'No less than four worthy gentlemen of fortune and family, who were all in company such a night particularly, at a collation to which they were invited by Robert Lovelace, of Sandoun-hall, in the county of Lancaster, esquire, in company with Magdalen Sinclair, widow, and Priscilla Partington, spinster, and the lady complainant, when the said

Robert Lovelace addressed himself to the said lady, on a multitude of occasions, as his wife; as they and others did, as Mrs. Lovelace; every one complimenting and congratulating her upon her nuptials; and that she received such their compliments and congratulations with no other visible displeasure or repugnance, than such as a young bride, full of blushes and pretty confusion, might be supposed to express upon such contemplative revolvings as those compliments would naturally inspire.' Nor do thou rave at me, Jack, nor rebel. Dost think I brought the dear creature hither for nothing?

And here's a faint sketch of my plot.—Stand by, varlets—tanta-ra-ra-ra! —Veil your bonnets, and confess your master!

LETTER V

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SUNDAY.

Have been at church, Jack—behaved admirably well too! My charmer is pleased with me now: for I was exceedingly attentive to the discourse, and very ready in the auditor's part of the service.—Eyes did not much wander. How could they, when the loveliest object, infinitely the loveliest in the whole church, was in my view!

Dear creature! how fervent, how amiable, in her devotions! I have got her to own that she prayed for me. I hope a prayer from so excellent a mind will not be made in vain.

There is, after all, something beautifully solemn in devotion. The Sabbath is a charming institution to keep the heart right, when it is right. One day in seven, how reasonable!—I think I'll go to church once a day often. I fancy it will go a great way towards making me a reformed man. To see multitudes of well-appearing people all joining in one reverend act. An exercise how worthy of a rational being! Yet it adds a sting or two to my former stings, when I think of my projects with regard to this charming creature. In my conscience, I believe, if I were to go constantly to church, I could not pursue them.

I had a scheme come into my head while there; but I will renounce it, because it obtruded itself upon me in so good a place. Excellent creature! How many ruins has she prevented by attaching me to herself —by engrossing my whole attention.

But let me tell thee what passed between us in my first visit of this morning; and then I will acquaint thee more largely with my good behaviour at church.

I could not be admitted till after eight. I found her ready prepared to go out. I pretended to be ignorant of her intention, having charged Dorcas not to own that she had told me of it.

Going abroad, Madam?—with an air of indifference.

Yes, Sir: I intend to go to church.

I hope, Madam, I shall have the honour to attend you.

No: she designed to take a chair, and go to the next church.

This startled me:—A chair to carry her to the next church from Mrs. Sinclair's, her right name not Sinclair, and to bring her back hither in the face of people who might not think well of the house!—There was no permitting that. Yet I was to appear indifferent. But said, I should take it for a favour, if she would permit me to attend her in a coach, as there was time for it, to St. Paul's.

She made objections to the gaiety of my dress; and told me, that if she went to St. Paul's, she could go in a coach without me.

I objected Singleton and her brother, and offered to dress in the plainest suit I had.

I beg the favour of attending you, dear Madam, said I. I have not been at church a great while; we shall sit in different stalls, and the next time I go, I hope it will be to give myself a title to the greatest blessing I can receive.

She made some further objections: but at last permitted me the honour of attending her.

I got myself placed in her eye, that the time might not seem tedious to me, for we were there early. And I gained her good opinion, as I mentioned above, by my behaviour.

The subject of the discourse was particular enough: It was about a prophet's story or parable of an ewe-lamb taken by a rich man from a poor one, who dearly loved it, and whose only comfort it was: designed to strike remorse into David, on his adultery with Uriah's wife Bathsheba, and his murder of the husband. These women, Jack, have been the occasion of all manner of mischief from the beginning! Now, when David, full of indignation, swore [King David would swear, Jack: But how shouldst thou know who King David was?—The story is in the Bible,] that the rich man should surely die; Nathan, which was the prophet's name, and a good ingenious fellow, cried out, (which were the words of the text,) Thou art the man! By my soul I thought the parson looked directly at me; and at that moment I cast my eye full on my ewe-lamb.—But I must tell thee too, that, that I thought a good deal of my Rosebud.—A better man than King David, in that point, however, thought I!

When we came home we talked upon the subject; and I showed my charmer my attention to the discourse, by letting her know where the Doctor made the most of his subject, and where it might have been touched to greater advantage: for it is really a very affecting story, and has as pretty a contrivance in it as ever I read. And this I did in such a grave way, that she seemed more and more pleased with me; and I have no doubt, that I shall get her to favour me to-morrow night with her company at my collation.

SUNDAY EVENING.

We all dined together in Mrs. Sinclair's parlour:—All excessively right! The two nieces have topped their parts—Mrs. Sinclair her's. Never was so easy as now!—She really thought a little oddly of these people at

first, she said! Mrs. Sinclair seemed very forbidding! Her nieces were persons with whom she could not wish to be acquainted. But really we should not be too hasty in our censures. Some people improve upon us. The widow seems tolerable.' She went no farther than tolerable.—'Miss Martin and Miss Horton are young people of good sense, and have read a great deal. What Miss Martin particularly said of marriage, and of her humble servant, was very solid. She believes with such notions she cannot make a bad wife.' I have said Sally's humble servant is a woolen- draper of great reputation; and she is soon to be married.

I have been letting her into thy character, and into the characters of my other three esquires, in hopes to excite her curiosity to see you to-morrow night. I have told her some of the worst, as well as best parts of your characters, in order to exalt myself, and to obviate any sudden surprizes, as well as to teach her what sort of men she may expect to see, if she will oblige me with her company.

By her after-observation upon each of you, I shall judge what I may or may not do to obtain or keep her good opinion; what she will like, or what not; and so pursue the one or avoid the other, as I see proper. So, while she is penetrating into your shallow heads, I shall enter her heart, and know what to bid my own to hope for.

The house is to be taken in three weeks.—All will be over in three weeks, or bad will be my luck!—Who knows but in three days?—Have I not carried that great point of making her pass for my wife to the people below? And that other great one, of fixing myself here night and day? —What woman ever escaped me, who lodged under one roof with me?—The house too, THE house; the people—people after my own heart; her servants, Will. and Dorcas, both my servants.—Three days, did I say! Pho! Pho! Pho!—three hours!

I have carried my third point: but so extremely to the dislike of my charmer, that I have been threatened, for suffering Miss Partington to be introduced to her without her leave. Which laid her under a necessity to deny or comply with the urgent request of so fine a young lady; who had engaged to honour me at my collation, on condition that my beloved would be present at it.

To be obliged to appear before my friends as what she was not! She was for insisting, that I should acquaint the women here with the truth of the matter; and not go on propagating stories for her to countenance, making her a sharer in my guilt.

But what points will not perseverance carry? especially when it is covered over with the face of yielding now, and, Parthian-like, returning to the charge anon. Do not the sex carry all their points with their men by the same methods? Have I conversed with them so freely as I have done, and learnt nothing of them? Didst thou ever know that a woman's denial of any favour, whether the least or the greatest, that my heart was set upon, stood her in any stead? The more perverse she, the more steady I—that is my rule.

But the point thus so much against her will carried, I doubt thou will see in her more of a sullen than of an obliging charmer: for, when Miss Partington was withdrawn, 'What was Miss Partington to her? In her situation she wanted no new acquaintances. And what were my four friends to her in her present circumstances? She would assure me, if ever again' —And there she stopped, with a twirl of her hand.

When we meet, I will, in her presence, tipping thee a wink, show thee the motion, for it was a very pretty one. Quite new. Yet have I seen an hundred pretty passionate twirls too, in my time, from other fair-ones. How universally engaging is it to put a woman of sense, to whom a man is not married, in a passion, let the reception given to every ranting scene in our plays testify. Take care, my charmer, now thou art come to delight me with thy angry twirls, that thou temptest me not to provoke a variety of them from one, whose every motion, whose every air, carries in it so much sense and soul.

But, angry or pleased, this charming creature must be all loveliness. Her features are all harmony, and made for one another. No other feature could be substituted in the place of any one of her's but most abate of her perfection: And think you that I do not long to have your opinion of my fair prize?

If you love to see features that glow, though the heart is frozen, and never yet was thawed; if you love fine sense, and adages flowing through teeth of ivory and lips of coral; an eye that penetrates all things; a voice that is harmony itself; an air of grandeur, mingled with a sweetness that cannot be described; a politeness that, if ever equaled, was never excelled—you'll see all these excellencies, and ten times more, in this my GLORIANA.

*Mark her majestic fabric!—She's a temple,
Sacred by birth, and built by hands divine;
Her soul the deity that lodges there:
Nor is the pile unworthy of the god.*

Or, to describe her in a softer style with Rowe,

*The bloom of op'ning flow'rs, unsully'd beauty,
Softness, and sweetest innocence she wears,
And looks like nature in the world's first spring.*

Adieu, varlets four!—At six, on Monday evening, I expect ye all.

LETTER VI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE SUNDAY, APRIL 30.

[Mr. Lovelace, in his last letters, having taken notice of the most material passages contained in this letter, the following extracts from it are only inserted.

She gives pretty near the same account that he does of what passed

between them on her resolution to go to church; and of his proposal of St. Paul's, and desire of attending her.—She praises his good behaviour there; as also the discourse, and the preacher.—Is pleased with its seasonableness.—Gives particulars of the conversation between them afterwards, and commends the good observations he makes upon the sermon.]

I am willing, says she, to have hopes of him: but am so unable to know how to depend upon his seriousness for an hour together, that all my favourable accounts of him in this respect must be taken with allowance.

Being very much pressed, I could not tell how to refuse dining with the widow and her nieces this day. I am better pleased with them than I ever thought I should be. I cannot help blaming myself for my readiness to give severe censures where reputation is concerned. People's ways, humours, constitutions, education, and opportunities allowed for, my dear, many persons, as far as I know, may appear blameless, whom others, of different humours and educations, are too apt to blame; and who, from the same fault, may be as ready to blame them. I will therefore make it a rule to myself for the future—Never to judge peremptorily on first appearances: but yet I must observe that these are not people I should choose to be intimate with, or whose ways I can like: although, for the stations they are in, they may go through the world with tolerable credit.

Mr. Lovelace's behaviour has been such as makes me call this, so far as it is passed, an agreeable day. Yet, when easiest as to him, my situation with my friends takes place in my thoughts, and causes me many a tear.

I am the more pleased with the people of the house, because of the persons of rank they are acquainted with, and who visits them.

SUNDAY EVENING.

I am still well pleased with Mr. Lovelace's behaviour. We have had a good deal of serious discourse together. The man has really just and good notions. He confesses how much he is pleased with this day, and hopes for many such. Nevertheless, he ingenuously warned me, that his unlucky vivacity might return: but, he doubted not, that he should be fixed at last by my example and conversation.

He has given me an entertaining account of the four gentlemen he is to meet to-morrow night.—Entertaining, I mean for his humorous description of their persons, manners, &c. but such a description as is far from being to their praise. Yet he seemed rather to design to divert my melancholy by it than to degrade them. I think at bottom, my dear, that he must be a good-natured man; but that he was spoiled young, for want of check or controul.

I cannot but call this, my circumstances considered, an happy day to the end of it. Indeed, my dear, I think I could prefer him to all the men I ever knew, were he but to be always what he has been this day. You see how ready I am to own all you have charged me with, when I find myself out. It is a difficult thing, I believe, sometimes, for a young creature that is able to deliberate with herself, to know when she loves, or when she hates: but I am resolved, as much as possible, to be determined both in my hatred and love by actions, as they make the man worthy or unworthy.

[She dates again Monday, and declares herself highly displeas'd at Miss Partington's being introduc'd to her: and still more for being oblig'd to promise to be present at Mr. Lovelace's collation. She foresees, she says, a murder'd evening.]

LETTER VII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE MONDAY NIGHT, MAY 1.

I have just escaped from a very disagreeable company I was oblig'd, so much against my will, to be in. As a very particular relation of this evening's conversation would be painful to me, you must content yourself with what you shall be able to collect from the outlines, as I may call them, of the characters of the persons; assisted by the little histories Mr. Lovelace gave me of each yesterday.

The names of the gentlemen are Belton, Mowbray, Tourville, and Belford. These four, with Mrs. Sinclair, Miss Partington, the great heiress mentioned in my last, Mr. Lovelace, and myself, made up the company.

I gave you before the favourable side of Miss Partington's character, such as it was given to me by Mrs. Sinclair, and her nieces. I will now add a few words from my own observation upon her behaviour in this company.

In better company perhaps she would have appeared to less disadvantage: but, notwithstanding her innocent looks, which Mr. Lovelace also highly praised, he is the last person whose judgment I would take upon real modesty. For I observed, that, upon some talk from the gentlemen, not free enough to be easily censured, yet too indecent in its implication to come from well-bred persons, in the company of virtuous people [sic], this young lady was very ready to apprehend; and yet, by smiles and simperings, to encourage, rather than discourage, the culpable freedoms of persons, who, in what they went out of their way to say, must either be guilty of absurdity, meaning nothing, or meaning something of rudeness.*

* Mr. Belford, in Letter XIII. of Vol. V. reminds Mr. Lovelace of some particular topics which passed in their conversation, extremely to the Lady's honour.

But, indeed, I have seen no women, of whom I had a better opinion than I can say of Mrs. Sinclair, who have allowed gentlemen, and themselves too, in greater liberties of this sort than I had thought consistent with that purity of manners which ought to be the distinguishing characteristic of our sex: For what are words, but the body and dress of thought? And is not the mind of a person strongly indicated by outward dress?

But to the gentlemen—as they must be called in right of their ancestors, it seems; for no other do they

appear to have:—

Mr. BELTON has had university education, and was designed for the gown; but that not suiting with the gaiety of his temper, and an uncle dying, who devised to him a good estate, he quitted the college, came up to town, and commenced fine gentleman. He is said to be a man of sense.— Mr. Belton dresses gaily, but not quite foppishly; drinks hard; keeps all hours, and glories in doing so; games, and has been hurt by that pernicious diversion: he is about thirty years of age: his face is a fiery red, somewhat bloated and pimply; and his irregularities threaten a brief duration to the sensual dream he is in: for he has a short consumption cough, which seems to denote bad lungs; yet makes himself and his friends merry by his stupid and inconsiderate jests upon very threatening symptoms which ought to make him more serious.

Mr. MOWBRAY has been a great traveller; speaks as many languages as Mr. Lovelace himself, but not so fluently: is of a good family: seems to be about thirty-three or thirty-four: tall and comely in his person: bold and daring in his look: is a large-boned, strong man: has a great scar in his forehead, with a dent, as if his skull had been beaten in there, and a seamed scar in his right cheek: he likewise dresses very gaily: has his servants always about him, whom he is continually calling upon, and sending on the most trifling messages—half a dozen instances of which we had in the little time I was among them; while they seem to watch the turn of his fierce eye, to be ready to run, before they have half his message, and serve him with fear and trembling. Yet to his equals the man seems tolerable: he talks not amiss upon public entertainments and diversions, especially upon those abroad: yet has a romancing air, and avers things strongly which seem quite improbable. Indeed he doubts nothing but what he ought to believe; for he jests upon sacred things; and professes to hate the clergy of all religions. He has high notions of honour, a world hardly ever out of his mouth; but seems to have no great regard to morals.

Mr. TOURVILLE occasionally told his age; just turned of thirty-one. He is also of an ancient family; but, in his person and manners, more of what I call the coxcomb than any of his companions. He dresses richly; would be thought elegant in the choice and fashion of what he wears; yet, after all, appears rather tawdry than fine.—One sees by the care he takes of his outside, and the notice he bespeaks from every one by his own notice of himself, that the inside takes up the least of his attention. He dances finely, Mr. Lovelace says; is a master of music, and singing is one of his principal excellencies. They prevailed upon him to sing, and he obliged them both in Italian and French; and, to do him justice, his songs in both were decent. They were all highly delighted with his performance; but his greatest admirers were, Mrs. Sinclair, Miss Partington, and himself. To me he appeared to have a great deal of affectation.

Mr. Tourville's conversation and address are insufferably full of those really gross affronts upon the understanding of our sex, which the moderns call compliments, and are intended to pass for so many instances of good breeding, though the most hyperbolic, unnatural stuff that can be conceived, and which can only serve to show the insincerity of the complimenter, and the ridiculous light in which the complimented appears in his eyes, if he supposes a woman capable of relishing the romantic absurdities of his speeches.

He affects to introduce into his common talk Italian and French words; and often answers an English question in French, which language he greatly prefers to the barbarously hissing English. But then he never fails to translate into this his odious native tongue the words and the sentences he speaks in the other two—lest, perhaps, it should be questioned whether he understands what he says.

He loves to tell stories: always calls them merry, facetious, good, or excellent, before he begins, in order to bespeak the attention of the hearers, but never gives himself concern in the progress or conclusion of them, to make good what he promises in his preface. Indeed he seldom brings any of them to a conclusion; for if his company have patience to hear him out, he breaks in upon himself by so many parenthetical intrusions, as one may call them, and has so many incidents springing in upon him, that he frequently drops his own thread, and sometimes sits down satisfied half way; or, if at other times he would resume it, he applies to his company to help him in again, with a Devil fetch him if he remembers what he was driving at—but enough, and too much of Mr. Tourville.

Mr. BELFORD is the fourth gentleman, and one of whom Mr. Lovelace seems more fond than any of the rest; for he is a man of tried bravery, it seems; and this pair of friends came acquainted upon occasion of a quarrel, (possibly about a woman,) which brought on a challenge, and a meeting at Kensington Gravel-pits; which ended without unhappy consequences, by the mediation of three gentlemen strangers, just as each had made a pass at the other.

Mr. Belford, it seems, is about seven or eight and twenty. He is the youngest of the five, except Mr. Lovelace, and they are perhaps the wickedest; for they seem to lead the other three as they please. Mr. Belford, as the others, dresses gaily; but has not those advantages of person, nor from his dress, which Mr. Lovelace is too proud of. He has, however, the appearance and air of a gentleman. He is well read in classical authors, and in the best English poets and writers; and, by his means, the conversation took now and then a more agreeable turn. And I, who endeavoured to put the best face I could upon my situation, as I passed for Mrs. Lovelace with them, made shift to join in it, at such times, and received abundance of compliments from all the company, on the observations I made.*

* See Letter XIII. of Vol. V. above referred to.

Mr. Belford seems good-natured and obliging; and although very complaisant, not so fulsomely so as Mr. Tourville; and has a polite and easy manner of expressing his sentiments on all occasions. He seems to delight in a logical way of argumentation, as also does Mr. Belton. These two attacked each other in this way; and both looked at us women, as if to observe whether we did not admire this learning, or when they had said a smart thing, their wit. But Mr. Belford had visibly the advantage of the other, having quicker parts, and by taking the worst side of the argument, seemed to think he had. Upon the whole of his behaviour and conversation, he put me in mind of that character of Milton:—

—His tongue

Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear

The better reason, to perplex and dash

Matuarest counsels; for his thoughts were low;

How little soever matters in general may be to our liking, we are apt, when hope is strong enough to permit it, to endeavour to make the best we can of the lot we have drawn; and I could not but observe often, how much Mr. Lovelace excelled all his four friends in every thing they seemed desirous to excel in. But as to wit and vivacity, he had no equal there. All the others gave up to him, when his lips began to open. The haughty Mowbray would call upon the prating Tourville for silence, when Lovelace was going to speak. And when he had spoken, the words, Charming fellow! with a free word of admiration or envy, fell from every mouth.

He has indeed so many advantages in his person and manner, that what would be inexcusable in another, would, if one watched not over one's self, and did not endeavour to distinguish what is the essence of right and wrong, look becoming in him.

Mr. Belford, to my no small vexation and confusion, with the forwardness of a favoured and intrusted friend, singled me out, on Mr. Lovelace's being sent for down, to make me congratulatory compliments on my supposed nuptials; which he did with a caution, not to insist too long on the rigorous vow I had imposed upon a man so universally admired—

'See him among twenty men,' said he, 'all of distinction, and nobody is regarded but Mr. Lovelace.'

It must, indeed, be confessed, that there is, in his whole deportment, a natural dignity, which renders all insolent or imperative demeanour as unnecessary as inexcusable. Then that deceiving sweetness which appears in his smiles, in his accent, in his whole aspect, and address, when he thinks it worth his while to oblige, or endeavour to attract, how does this show that he was born innocent, as I may say; that he was not naturally the cruel, the boisterous, the impetuous creature, which the wicked company he may have fallen into have made him! For he has, besides, as open, and, I think, an honest countenance. Don't you think so, my dear? On all these specious appearances, have I founded my hopes of seeing him a reformed man.

But it is amazing to me, I own, that with so much of the gentleman, such a general knowledge of books and men, such a skill in the learned as well as modern languages, he can take so much delight as he does in the company of such persons as I have described, and in subjects of frothy impertinence, unworthy of his talents, and his natural and acquired advantages. I can think but of one reason for it, and that must argue a very low mind,—his vanity; which makes him desirous of being considered as the head of the people he consorts with.—A man to love praise, yet to be content to draw it from such contaminated springs!

One compliment passed from Mr. Belford to Mr. Lovelace, which hastened my quitting the shocking company—'You are a happy man, Mr. Lovelace,' said he, upon some fine speeches made him by Mrs. Sinclair, and assented to by Miss Partington:—'You have so much courage, and so much wit, that neither man nor woman can stand before you.'

Mr. Belford looked at me when he spoke: yes, my dear, he smilingly looked at me; and he looked upon his complimented friend; and all their assenting, and therefore affronting eyes, both men's and women's, were turned upon your Clarissa; at least, my self-reproaching heart made me think so; for that would hardly permit my eye to look up.

Oh! my dear, were but a woman, who gives reason to the world to think her to be in love with a man, [And this must be believed to be my case; or to what can my supposed voluntary going off with Mr. Lovelace be imputed?] to reflect one moment on the exaltation she gives him, and the disgrace she brings upon herself,—the low pity, the silent contempt, the insolent sneers and whispers, to which she makes herself obnoxious from a censuring world of both sexes,—how would she despise herself! and how much more eligible would she think death itself than such a discovered debasement!

What I have thus in general touched upon, will account to you why I could not more particularly relate what passed in this evening's conversation: which, as may be gathered from what I have written, abounded with approbatory accusations, and supposed witty retorts.

LETTER VIII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE MONDAY MIDNIGHT.

I am very much vexed and disturbed at an odd incident. Mrs. Sinclair has just now left me; I believe in displeasure, on my declining to comply with a request she made me: which was, to admit Miss Partington to a share in my bed, her house being crowded by her nieces's guests and by their attendants, as well as by those of Miss Partington.

There might be nothing in it; and my denial carried a stiff and ill-natured appearance. But instantly, upon her making the request, it came into my thought, 'that I was in a manner a stranger to every body in the house: not so much as a servant I could call my own, or of whom I had any great opinion: that there were four men of free manners in the house, avowed supporters of Mr. Lovelace in matters of offence; himself a man of enterprise; all, as far as I knew, (and as I had reason to think by their noisy mirth after I left them,) drinking deeply: that Miss Partington herself is not so bashful a person as she was represented to me to be: that officious pains were taken to give me a good opinion of her: and that Mrs. Sinclair made a greater parade in prefacing the request, than such a request needed. To deny, thought I, can carry only an appearance of singularity to people who already think me singular. To consent may possibly, if not probably, be attended with inconveniences. The consequences of the alternative so very disproportionate, I thought it more prudent to incur the censure, than to risque the inconvenience.'

I told her that I was writing a long letter: that I should choose to write till I were sleepy, and that a companion would be a restraint upon me, and I upon her.

She was loth, she said, that so delicate a young creature, and so great a fortune as Miss Partington, should be put to lie with Dorcas in a press-bed. She should be very sorry, if she had asked an improper thing. She had never been so put to it before. And Miss would stay up with her till I had done writing.

Alarmed at this urgency, and it being easier to persist in a denial given, than to give it at first, I said, Miss Partington should be welcome to my whole bed, and I would retire into the dining-room, and there, locking myself in, write all the night.

The poor thing, she said, was afraid to lie alone. To be sure Miss Partington would not put me to such an inconvenience.

She then withdrew,—but returned—begged my pardon for returning, but the poor child, she said, was in tears.—Miss Partington had never seen a young lady she so much admired, and so much wished to imitate as me. The dear girl hoped that nothing had passed in her behaviour to give me dislike to her.—Should she bring her to me?

I was very busy, I said: the letter I was writing was upon a very important subject. I hoped to see the young lady in the morning, when I would apologize to her for my particularity. And then Mrs. Sinclair hesitating, and moving towards the door, (though she turned round to me again,) I desired her, (lighting her,) to take care how she went down.

Pray, Madam, said she, on the stairs-head, don't give yourself all this trouble. God knows my heart, I meant no affront: but, since you seem to take my freedom amiss, I beg you will not acquaint Mr. Lovelace with it; for he perhaps will think me bold and impertinent.

Now, my dear, is not this a particular incident, either as I have made it, or as it was designed? I don't love to do an uncivil thing. And if nothing were meant by the request, my refusal deserves to be called uncivil. Then I have shown a suspicion of foul usage by it, which surely dare not be meant. If just, I ought to apprehend every thing, and fly the house and the man as I would an infection. If not just, and if I cannot contrive to clear myself of having entertained suspicions, by assigning some other plausible reason for my denial, the very staying here will have an appearance not at all reputable to myself.

I am now out of humour with him,—with myself,—with all the world, but you. His companions are shocking creatures. Why, again I repeat, should he have been desirous to bring me into such company? Once more I like him not.—Indeed I do not like him!

LETTER IX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE TUESDAY, MAY 2.

With infinite regret I am obliged to tell you, that I can no longer write to you, or receive letters from you.—Your mother has sent me a letter enclosed in a cover to Mr. Lovelace, directed for him at Lord M.'s, (and which was brought him just now,) reproaching me on this subject in very angry terms, and forbidding me, 'as I would not be thought to intend to make her and you unhappy, to write to you without her leave.'

This, therefore, is the last you must receive from me, till happier days. And as my prospects are not very bad, I presume we shall soon have leave to write again; and even to see each other: since an alliance with a family so honourable as Mr. Lovelace's is will not be a disgrace.

She is pleased to write, 'That if I would wish to inflame you, I should let you know her written prohibition: but if otherwise, find some way of my own accord (without bringing her into the question) to decline a correspondence, which I must know she has for some time past forbidden.' But all I can say is, to beg of you not to be inflamed: to beg of you not to let her know, or even by your behaviour to her, on this occasion, guess, that I have acquainted you with my reason for declining to write to you. For how else, after the scruples I have heretofore made on this very subject, yet proceeding to correspond, can I honestly satisfy you about my motives for this sudden stop? So, my dear, I choose, you see, rather to rely upon your discretion, than to feign reasons with which you would not be satisfied, but with your usual active penetration, sift to the bottom, and at last find me to be a mean and low qualifier; and that with an implication injurious to you, that I supposed you had not prudence enough to be trusted with the naked truth.

I repeat, that my prospects are not bad. 'The house, I presume, will soon be taken. The people here are very respectful, notwithstanding my nicety about Miss Partington. Miss Martin, who is near marriage with an eminent tradesman in the Strand, just now, in a very respectful manner, asked my opinion of some patterns of rich silks for the occasion. The widow has a less forbidding appearance than at first. Mr. Lovelace, on my declared dislike of his four friends, has assured me that neither they nor any body else shall be introduced to me without my leave.'

These circumstances I mention (as you will suppose) that your kind heart may be at ease about me; that you may be induced by them to acquiesce with your mother's commands, (cheerfully acquiesce,) and that for my sake, lest I should be thought an inflamer; who am, with very contrary intentions, my dearest and best beloved friend,

Your ever obliged and affectionate, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER X

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE WEDN MAY 3.

I am astonished that my mother should take such a step—purely to exercise an unreasonable act of authority; and to oblige the most remorseless hearts in the world. If I find that I can be of use to you, either by advice or information, do you think I will not give it!—Were it to any other person, much less dear to me than you are, do you think, in such a case, I would forbear giving it?

Mr. Hickman, who pretends to a little casuistry in such nice matters, is of opinion that I ought not to decline such a correspondence thus circumstanced. And it is well he is; for my mother having set me up, I must have somebody to quarrel with.

This I will come into if it will make you easy—I will forbear to write to you for a few days, if nothing extraordinary happen, and till the rigour of her prohibition is abated. But be assured that I will not dispense with your writing to me. My heart, my conscience, my honour, will not permit it.

But how will I help myself?—How!—easily enough. For I do assure you that I want but very little farther provocation to fly privately to London. And if I do, I will not leave you till I see you either honourably married, or absolutely quit of the wretch: and, in this last case, I will take you down with me, in defiance of the whole world: or, if you refuse to go with me, stay with you, and accompany you as your shadow whithersoever you go.

Don't be frightened at this declaration. There is but one consideration, and but one hope, that withhold me, watched as I am in all my retirements; obliged to read to her without a voice; to work in her presence without fingers; and to lie with her every night against my will. The consideration is, lest you should apprehend that a step of this nature would look like a doubling of your fault, in the eyes of such as think your going away a fault. The hope is, that things will still end happily, and that some people will have reason to take shame to themselves for the sorry part they have acted. Nevertheless I am often balancing—but your resolving to give up the correspondence at this crisis will turn the scale. Write, therefore, or take the consequence.

A few words upon the subject of your last letters. I know not whether your brother's wise project be given up or not. A dead silence reigns in your family. Your brother was absent three days; then at home one; and is now absent: but whether with Singleton, or not, I cannot find out.

By your account of your wretch's companions, I see not but they are a set of infernals, and he the Beelzebub. What could he mean, as you say, by his earnestness to bring you into such company, and to give you such an opportunity to make him and them reflecting-glasses to one another? The man's a fool, to be sure, my dear—a silly fellow, at least—the wretches must put on their best before you, no doubt—Lords of the creation!— noble fellows these!—Yet who knows how many poor despicable souls of our sex the worst of them has had to whine after him!

You have brought an inconvenience upon yourself, as you observe, by your refusal of Miss Partington for your bedfellow. Pity you had not admitted her! watchful as you are, what could have happened? If violence were intended, he would not stay for the night. You might have sat up after her, or not gone to bed. Mrs. Sinclair pressed it too far. You was over-scrupulous.

If any thing happen to delay your nuptials, I would advise you to remove: but, if you marry, perhaps you may think it no great matter to stay where you are till you take possession of your own estate. The knot once tied, and with so resolute a man, it is my opinion your relations will soon resign what they cannot legally hold: and, were even a litigation to follow, you will not be able, nor ought you to be willing, to help it: for your estate will then be his right; and it will be unjust to wish it to be withheld from him.

One thing I would advise you to think of; and that is, of proper settlements: it will be to the credit of your prudence and of his justice (and the more as matters stand) that something of this should be done before you marry. Bad as he is, nobody accounts him a sordid man. And I wonder he has been hitherto silent on that subject.

I am not displeas'd with his proposal about the widow lady's house. I think it will do very well. But if it must be three weeks before you can be certain about it, surely you need not put off his day for that space: and he may bespeak his equipages. Surprising to me, as well as to you, that he could be so acquiescent!

I repeat—continue to write to me. I insist upon it; and that as minutely as possible: or, take the consequence. I send this by a particular hand. I am, and ever will be,

Your most affectionate, ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE THURSDAY, MAY 4.

I forego every other engagement, I suspend every wish, I banish every other fear, to take up my pen, to beg of you that you will not think of being guilty of such an act of love as I can never thank you for; but must for ever regret. If I must continue to write to you, I must. I know full well your impatience of control, when you have the least imagination that your generosity or friendship is likely to be wondered at.

My dearest, dearest creature, would you incur a maternal, as I have a paternal, malediction? Would not the world think there was an infection in my fault, if it were to be followed by Miss Howe? There are some points so flagrantly wrong that they will not bear to be argued upon. This is one of them. I need not give reasons against such a rashness. Heaven forbid that it should be known that you had it but once in your thought, be your motives ever so noble and generous, to follow so bad an example, the rather, as that you would, in such a case, want the extenuations that might be pleaded in my favour; and particularly that one of being surprised into the unhappy step!

The restraint your mother lays you under would not have appeared heavy to you but on my account. Would

you had once thought it a hardship to be admitted to a part of her bed?—How did I use to be delighted with such a favour from my mother! how did I love to work in her presence!—So did you in the presence of your's once. And to read to her in winter evenings I know was one of your joys.—Do not give me cause to reproach myself on the reason that may be assigned for the change in you.

Learn, my dear, I beseech you, learn to subdue your own passions. Be the motives what they will, excess is excess. Those passions in our sex, which we take pains to subdue, may have one and the same source with those infinitely-blacker passions, which we used so often to condemn in the violent and headstrong of the other sex; and which may only be heightened in them by custom, and their freer education. Let us both, my dear, ponder well this thought: look into ourselves, and fear.

If I write, as I find I must, I insist upon your forbearing to write. Your silence to this shall be the sign to me that you will not think of the rashness you threaten me with: and that you will obey your mother as to your own part of the correspondence, however; especially as you can inform or advise me in every weighty case by Mr. Hickman's pen.

My trembling writing will show you, my dear impetuous creature, what a trembling heart you have given to
Your ever obliged, Or, if you take so rash a step, Your for ever disobliged, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

My clothes were brought to me just now. But you have so much discomposed me, that I have no heart to look into the trunks. Why, why, my dear, will you fright me with your flaming love? discomposure gives distress to a weak heart, whether it arise from friendship or enmity.

A servant of Mr. Lovelace carries this to Mr. Hickman for dispatch-sake. Let that worthy man's pen relieve my heart from this new uneasiness.

LETTER XII

MR. HICKMAN, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [SENT TO WILSON'S BY A PARTICULAR HAND.] FRIDAY, MAY 5.

MADAM,

I have the honour of dear Miss Howe's commands to acquaint you, without knowing the occasion, 'That she is excessively concerned for the concern she has given you in her last letter: and that, if you will but write to her, under cover as before, she will have no thoughts of what you are so very apprehensive about.'—Yet she bid me write, 'That if she had but the least imagination that she can serve you, and save you,' those are her words, 'all the censures of the world will be but of second consideration with her.' I have great temptations, on this occasion, to express my own resentments upon your present state; but not being fully apprized of what that is—only conjecturing from the disturbance upon the mind of the dearest lady in the world to me, and the most sincere of friends to you, that that is not altogether so happy as were to be wished; and being, moreover, forbid to enter into the cruel subject; I can only offer, as I do, my best and faithfullest services! and wish you a happy deliverance from all your troubles. For I am,

Most excellent young lady, Your faithful and most obedient servant, CH. HICKMAN.

LETTER XIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY, MAY 2.

Mercury, as the fabulist tells us, having the curiosity to know the estimation he stood in among mortals, descended in disguise, and in a statuary's shop cheapened a Jupiter, then a Juno, then one, then another, of the dii majores; and, at last, asked, What price that same statue of Mercury bore? O Sir, says the artist, buy one of the others, and I'll throw you in that for nothing.

How sheepish must the god of thieves look upon this rebuff to his vanity!

So thou! a thousand pounds wouldst thou give for the good opinion of this single lady—to be only thought tolerably of, and not quite unworthy of her conversation, would make thee happy. And at parting last night, or rather this morning, thou madest me promise a few lines to Edgware, to let thee know what she thinks of thee, and of thy brethren.

Thy thousand pounds, Jack, is all thy own: for most heartily does she dislike ye all—thee as much as any of the rest.

I am sorry for it too, as to thy part; for two reasons—one, that I think thy motive for thy curiosity was fear of consciousness: whereas that of the arch-thief was vanity, intolerable vanity: and he was therefore justly sent away with a blush upon his cheeks to heaven, and could not brag—the other, that I am afraid, if she dislikes thee, she dislikes me: for are we not birds of a feather?

I must never talk of reformation, she told me, having such companions, and taking such delight, as I seemed to take, in their frothy conversation.

I, no more than you, Jack, imagined she could possibly like ye: but then, as my friends, I thought a person of her education would have been more sparing of her censures.

I don't know how it is, Belford; but women think themselves entitled to take any freedoms with us; while we are unpolite, forsooth, and I can't tell what, if we don't tell a pack of cursed lies, and make black white, in their favour—teaching us to be hypocrites, yet stigmatizing us, at other times, for deceivers.

I defended ye all as well as I could: but you know there was no attempting aught but a palliative defence, to one of her principles.

I will summarily give thee a few of my pleas.

'To the pure, every little deviation seemed offensive: yet I saw not, that there was any thing amiss the whole evening, either in the words or behaviour of any of my friends. Some people could talk but upon one or two subjects: she upon every one: no wonder, therefore, they talked to what they understood best; and to mere objects of sense. Had she honoured us with more of her conversation, she would have been less disgusted with ours; for she saw how every one was prepared to admire her, whenever she opened her lips. You, in particular, had said, when she retired, that virtue itself spoke when she spoke, but that you had such an awe upon you, after she had favoured us with an observation or two on a subject started, that you should ever be afraid in her company to be found most exceptionable, when you intended to be least so.'

Plainly, she said, she neither liked my companions nor the house she was in.

I liked not the house any more than she: though the people were very obliging, and she had owned they were less exceptionable to herself than at first: And were we not about another of our own?

She did not like Miss Partington—let her fortune be what it would, and she had heard a great deal said of her fortune, she should not choose an intimacy with her. She thought it was a hardship to be put upon such a difficulty as she was put upon the preceding night, when there were lodgers in the front-house, whom they had reason to be freer with, than, upon so short an acquaintance, with her.

I pretended to be an utter stranger as to this particular; and, when she explained herself upon it, condemned Mrs. Sinclair's request, and called it a confident one.

She, artfully, made lighter of her denial of the girl for a bedfellow, than she thought of it, I could see that; for it was plain, she supposed there was room for me to think she had been either over-nice, or over-cautious.

I offered to resent Mrs. Sinclair's freedom.

No; there was no great matter in it. It was best to let it pass. It might be thought more particular in her to deny such a request, than in Mrs. Sinclair to make it, or in Miss Partington to expect it to be complied with. But as the people below had a large acquaintance, she did not know how often she might indeed have her retirements invaded, if she gave way. And indeed there were levities in the behaviour of that young lady, which she could not so far pass over as to wish an intimacy with her.

I said, I liked Miss Partington as little as she could. Miss Partington was a silly young creature; who seemed to justify the watchfulness of her guardians over her.—But nevertheless, as to her own, that I thought the girl (for girl she was, as to discretion) not exceptionable; only carrying herself like a free good-natured creature who believed herself secure in the honour of her company.

It was very well said of me, she replied: but if that young lady were so well satisfied with her company, she must needs say, that I was very kind to suppose her such an innocent—for her own part, she had seen nothing of the London world: but thought, she must tell me plainly, that she never was in such company in her life; nor ever again wished to be in such.

There, Belford!—Worse off than Mercury!—Art thou not?

I was nettled. Hard would be the lot of more discreet women, as far as I knew, that Miss Partington, were they to be judged by so rigid a virtue as hers.

Not so, she said: but if I really saw nothing exceptionable to a virtuous mind, in that young person's behaviour, my ignorance of better behaviour was, she must needs tell me, as pitiable as hers: and it were to be wished, that minds so paired, for their own sakes should never be separated.

See, Jack, what I get by my charity!

I thanked her heartily. But said, that I must take the liberty to observe, that good folks were generally so uncharitable, that, devil take me, if I would choose to be good, were the consequence to be that I must think hardly of the whole world besides.

She congratulated me upon my charity; but told me, that to enlarge her own, she hoped it would not be expected of her to approve of the low company I had brought her into last night.

No exception for thee, Belford!—Safe is thy thousand pounds.

I saw not, I said, begging her pardon, that she liked any body.—[Plain dealing for plain dealing, Jack!—Why then did she abuse my friends?] However, let me but know whom and what she did or did not like; and, if possible, I would like and dislike the very same persons and things.

She bid me then, in a pet, dislike myself.

Cursed severe!—Does she think she must not pay for it one day, or one night?—And if one, many; that's my comfort.

I was in such a train of being happy, I said, before my earnestness to procure her to favour my friends with her company, that I wished the devil had had as well my friends as Miss Partington—and yet, I must say, that I saw not how good people could answer half their end, which is to reform the wicked by precept as well as example, were they to accompany only with the good.

I had the like to have been blasted by two or three flashes of lightning from her indignant eyes; and she turned scornfully from me, and retired to her own apartment.

Once more, Jack, safe, as thou seest, is thy thousand pounds.

She says, I am not a polite man. But is she, in the instance before us, more polite for a woman?

And now, dost thou not think that I owe my charmer some revenge for her cruelty in obliging such a fine young creature, and so vast a fortune, as Miss Partington, to crowd into a press-bed with Dorcas the maid-servant of the proud refuser?—Miss Partington too (with tears) declared, by Mrs. Sinclair, that would Mrs. Lovelace do her the honour of a visit at Barnet, the best bed and best room in her guardian's house should be at her service. Thinkest thou that I could not guess at her dishonourable fears of me?—that she apprehended,

that the supposed husband would endeavour to take possession of his own?—and that Miss Partington would be willing to contribute to such a piece of justice?

Thus, then, thou both remindest, and defiest me, charmer!—And since thou reliest more on thy own precaution than upon my honour; be it unto thee, fair one, as thou apprehendest.

And now, Jack, let me know, what thy opinion, and the opinions of thy brother varlets, are of my Gloriana.

I have just now heard, that Hannah hopes to be soon well enough to attend her young lady, when in London. It seems the girl has had no physician. I must send her one, out of pure love and respect to her mistress. Who knows but medicine may weaken nature, and strengthen the disease?—As her malady is not a fever, very likely it may do so.—But perhaps the wench's hopes are too forward. Blustering weather in this month yet.—And that is bad for rheumatic complaints.

LETTER XIV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY, MAY 2.

Just as I had sealed up the enclosed, comes a letter to my beloved, in a cover to me, directed to Lord M.'s. From whom, thinkest thou?—From Mrs. Howe!

And what the contents?

How should I know, unless the dear creature had communicated them to me? But a very cruel letter I believe it is, by the effect it had upon her. The tears ran down her cheeks as she read it; and her colour changed several times. No end of her persecutions, I think!

'What a cruelty in my fate!' said the sweet lamenter.—'Now the only comfort of my life must be given up!'

Miss Howe's correspondence, no doubt.

But should she be so much grieved at this? This correspondence was prohibited before, and that, to the daughter, in the strongest terms: but yet carried on by both; although a brace of impeccables, an't please ye. Could they expect, that a mother would not vindicate her authority? —and finding her prohibition ineffectual with her perverse daughter, was it not reasonable to suppose she would try what effect it would have upon her daughter's friend?—And now I believe the end will be effectually answered: for my beloved, I dare say, will make a point of conscience of it.

I hate cruelty, especially in women; and should have been more concerned for this instance of it in Mrs. Howe, had I not had a stronger instance of the same in my beloved to Miss Partington: For how did she know, since she was so much afraid for herself, whom Dorcas might let in to that innocent and less watchful young lady? But nevertheless I must needs own, that I am not very sorry for this prohibition, let it originally come from the Harlowes, or from whom it will; because I make no doubt, that it is owing to Miss Howe, in a great measure, that my beloved is so much upon her guard, and thinks so hardly of me. And who can tell, as characters here are so tender, and some disguises so flimsy, what consequences might follow this undutiful correspondence?—I say, therefore, I am not sorry for it: now will she not have any body to compare notes with: any body to alarm her: and I may be saved the guilt and disobligation of inspecting into a correspondence that has long made me uneasy.

How every thing works for me!—Why will this charming creature make such contrivances necessary, as will increase my trouble, and my guilt too, as some will account it? But why, rather I should ask, will she fight against her stars?

LETTER XV

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. EDGWARE, TUESDAY NIGHT, MAY 2.

Without staying for the promised letter from you to inform us what the lady says of us, I write to tell you, that we are all of one opinion with regard to her; which is, that there is not of her age a finer woman in the world, as to her understanding. As for her person, she is at the age of bloom, and an admirable creature; a perfect beauty: but this poorer praise, a man, who has been honoured with her conversation, can hardly descend to give; and yet she was brought amongst us contrary to her will.

Permit me, dear Lovelace, to be a mean of saving this excellent creature from the dangers she hourly runs from the most plotting heart in the world. In a former, I pleaded your own family, Lord M.'s wishes particularly; and then I had not seen her: but now, I join her sake, honour's sake, motives of justice, generosity, gratitude, and humanity, which are all concerned in the preservation of so fine a woman. Thou knowest not the anguish I should have had, (whence arising, I cannot devise,) had I not known before I set out this morning, that the incomparable creature had disappointed thee in thy cursed view of getting her to admit the specious Partington for a bed-fellow.

I have done nothing but talk of this lady ever since I saw her. There is something so awful, and yet so sweet, in her aspect, that were I to have the virtues and the graces all drawn in one piece, they should be taken, every one of them, from different airs and attributes in her. She was born to adorn the age she was given to, and would be an ornament to the first dignity. What a piercing, yet gentle eye; every glance I thought mingled with love and fear of you! What a sweet smile darting through the cloud that overspread her fair face, demonstrating that she had more apprehensions and grief at her heart than she cared to express!

You may think what I am going to write too flighty: but, by my faith, I have conceived such a profound reverence for her sense and judgment, that, far from thinking the man excusable who should treat her basely, I am ready to regret that such an angel of a woman should even marry. She is in my eye all mind: and were she to meet with a man all mind likewise, why should the charming qualities she is mistress of be endangered? Why should such an angel be plunged so low as into the vulgar offices of a domestic life? Were she mine, I should hardly wish to see her a mother, unless there were a kind of moral certainty, that minds like hers could be propagated. For why, in short, should not the work of bodies be left to mere bodies? I know, that you yourself have an opinion of her little less exalted. Belton, Mowbray, Tourville, are all of my mind; are full of her praises; and swear, it would be a million of pities to ruin a woman in whose fall none but devils can rejoice.

What must that merit and excellence be which can extort this from us, freelivers, like yourself, and all of your just resentments against the rest of her family, and offered our assistance to execute your vengeance on them? But we cannot think it reasonable that you should punish an innocent creature, who loves you so well, and who is in your protection, and has suffered so much for you, for the faults of her relations.

And here let me put a serious question or two. Thinkest thou, truly admirable as this lady is, that the end thou proposest to thyself, if obtained, is answerable to the means, to the trouble thou givest thyself, and to the perfidies, tricks, stratagems, and contrivances thou has already been guilty of, and still meditatest? In every real excellence she surpasses all her sex. But in the article thou seekest to subdue her for, a mere sensualist, a Partington, a Horton, a Martin, would make a sensualist a thousand times happier than she either will or can.

Sweet are the joys that come with willingness.

And wouldst thou make her unhappy for her whole life, and thyself not happy for a single moment?

Hitherto, it is not too late; and that perhaps is as much as can be said, if thou meanest to preserve her esteem and good opinion, as well as person; for I think it is impossible she can get out of thy hands now she is in this accursed house. O that damned hypocritical Sinclair, as thou callest her! How was it possible she should behave so speciously as she did all the time the lady staid with us!—Be honest, and marry; and be thankful that she will condescend to have thee. If thou dost not, thou wilt be the worst of men; and wilt be condemned in this world and the next: as I am sure thou oughtest, and shouldst too, wert thou to be judged by one, who never before was so much touched in a woman's favour; and whom thou knowest to be

Thy partial friend, J. BELFORD.

Our companions consented that I should withdraw to write to the above effect. They can make nothing of the characters we write in; and so I read this to them. They approve of it; and of their own motion each man would set his name to it. I would not delay sending it, for fear of some detestable scheme taking place.

THOMAS BELTON,
RICHARD MOWBRAY,
JAMES TOURVILLE.

Just now are brought me both yours. I vary not my opinion, nor forbear my earnest prayers to you in her behalf, notwithstanding her dislike of me.

LETTER XVI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. WEDNESDAY, MAY 3.

When I have already taken pains to acquaint thee in full with regard to my views, designs, and resolutions, with regard to this admirable woman, it is very extraordinary that thou shouldst vapour as thou dost in her behalf, when I have made no trial, no attempt: and yet, givest it as thy opinion in a former letter, that advantage may be taken of the situation she is in; and that she may be overcome.

Most of thy reflections, particularly that which respects the difference as to the joys to be given by the virtuous and libertine of her sex, are fitter to come in as after-reflections than as antecedencies.

I own with thee, and with the poet, that sweet are the joys that come with willingness—But is it to be expected, that a woman of education, and a lover of forms, will yield before she is attacked? And have I so much as summoned this to surrender? I doubt not but I shall meet with difficulty. I must therefore make my first effort by surprise. There may possibly be some cruelty necessary: but there may be consent in struggle; there may be yielding in resistance. But the first conflict over, whether the following may not be weaker and weaker, till willingness ensue, is the point to be tried. I will illustrate what I have said by the simile of a bird new caught. We begin, when boys, with birds; and when grown up, go on to women; and both perhaps, in turn, experience our sportive cruelty.

Hast thou not observed, the charming gradations by which the ensnared volatile has been brought to bear with its new condition? how, at first, refusing all sustenance, it beats and bruises itself against its wires, till it makes its gay plumage fly about, and over-spread its well-secured cage. Now it gets out its head; sticking only at its beautiful shoulders: then, with difficulty, drawing back its head, it gasps for breath, and erectly perched, with meditating eyes, first surveys, and then attempts, its wired canopy. As it gets its pretty head and sides, bites the wires, and pecks at the fingers of its delighted tamer. Till at last, finding its efforts ineffectual, quite tired and breathless, it lays itself down, and pants at the bottom of the cage, seeming to bemoan its cruel fate and forfeited liberty. And after a few days, its struggles to escape still diminishing as it finds it to no purpose to attempt it, its new habitation becomes familiar; and it hops about from perch to perch, resumes its wonted cheerfulness, and every day sings a song to amuse itself and reward its keeper.

Now let me tell thee, that I have known a bird actually starve itself, and die with grief, at its being caught and caged. But never did I meet with a woman who was so silly.—Yet have I heard the dear souls most vehemently threaten their own lives on such an occasion. But it is saying nothing in a woman's favour, if we do not allow her to have more sense than a bird. And yet we must all own, that it is more difficult to catch a bird than a lady.

To pursue the comparison—If the disappointment of the captivated lady be very great, she will threaten, indeed, as I said: she will even refuse her sustenance for some time, especially if you entreat her much, and she thinks she gives you concern by her refusal. But then the stomach of the dear sullen one will soon return. 'Tis pretty to see how she comes to by degrees: pressed by appetite, she will first steal, perhaps, a weeping morsel by herself; then be brought to piddle and sigh, and sigh and piddle before you; now-and-then, if her viands be unsavoury, swallowing with them a relishing tear or two: then she comes to eat and drink, to oblige you: then resolves to live for your sake: her exclamations will, in the next place, be turned into blandishments; her vehement upbraidings into gentle murmuring—how dare you, traitor!—into how could you, dearest! She will draw you to her, instead of pushing you from her: no longer, with unsheathed claws, will she resist you; but, like a pretty, playful, wanton kitten, with gentle paws, and concealed talons, tap your cheek, and with intermingled smiles, and tears, and caresses, implore your consideration for her, and your constancy: all the favour she then has to ask of you!—And this is the time, were it given to man to confine himself to one object, to be happier every day than another.

Now, Belford, were I to go no farther than I have gone with my beloved Miss Harlowe, how shall I know the difference between her and another bird? To let her fly now, what a pretty jest would that be!—How do I know, except I try, whether she may not be brought to sing me a fine song, and to be as well contented as I have brought other birds to be, and very shy ones too?

But now let us reflect a little upon the confounded partiality of us human creatures. I can give two or three familiar, and if they were not familiar, they would be shocking, instances of the cruelty both of men and women, with respect to other creatures, perhaps as worthy as (at least more innocent than) themselves. By my soul, Jack, there is more of the savage on human nature than we are commonly aware of. Nor is it, after all, so much amiss, that we sometimes avenge the more innocent animals upon our own species.

To particulars:

How usual a thing is it for women as well as men, without the least remorse, to ensnare, to cage, and torment, and even with burning knitting-needles to put out the eyes of the poor feather'd songster [thou seest I have not yet done with birds]; which however, in proportion to its bulk, has more life than themselves (for a bird is all soul;) and of consequence has as much feeling as the human creature! when at the same time, if an honest fellow, by the gentlest persuasion, and the softest arts, has the good luck to prevail upon a mew'd-up lady, to countenance her own escape, and she consents to break cage, and be set a flying into the all-cheering air of liberty, mercy on us! what an outcry is generally raised against him!

Just like what you and I once saw raised in a paltry village near Chelmsford, after a poor hungry fox, who, watching his opportunity, had seized by the neck, and shouldered a sleek-feathered goose: at what time we beheld the whole vicinage of boys and girls, old men, and old women, all the furrows and wrinkles of the latter filled up with malice for the time; the old men armed with prongs, pitch-forks, clubs, and catsticks; the old women with mops, brooms, fire-shovels, tongs, and pokers; and the younger fry with dirt, stones, and brickbats, gathering as they ran like a snowball, in pursuit of the wind-outstripping prowler; all the mongrel curs of the circumjacentcies yelp, yelp, yelp, at their heels, completing the horrid chorus.

Rememebrest thou not this scene? Surely thou must. My imagination, inflamed by a tender sympathy for the danger of the adventurous marauder, represents it to my eye as if it were but yesterday. And dost thou not recollect how generously glad we were, as if our own case, that honest reynard, by the help of a lucky stile, over which both old and young tumbled upon one another, and a winding course, escaped their brutal fury, and flying catsticks; and how, in fancy, we followed him to his undiscovered retreat; and imagined we beheld the intrepid thief enjoying his dear-earned purchase with a delight proportioned to his past danger?

I once made a charming little savage severely repent the delight she took in seeing her tabby favourite make cruel sport with a pretty sleek bead- eyed mouse, before she devoured it. Egad, my love, said I to myself, as I sat meditating the scene, I am determined to lie in wait for a fit opportunity to try how thou wilt like to be tost over my head, and be caught again: how thou wilt like to be parted from me, and pulled to me. Yet will I rather give life than take it away, as this barbarous quadruped has at last done by her prey. And after all was over between my girl and me, I reminded her of the incident to which my resolution was owing.

Nor had I at another time any mercy upon the daughter of an old epicure, who had taught the girl, without the least remorse, to roast lobsters alive; to cause a poor pig to be whipt to death; to scrape carp the contrary way of the scales, making them leap in the stew-pan, and dressing them in their own blood for sauce. And this for luxury-sake, and to provoke an appetite; which I had without stimulation, in my way, and that I can tell thee a very ravenous one.

Many more instances of the like nature could I give, were I to leave nothing to thyself, to shew that the best take the same liberties, and perhaps worse, with some sort of creatures, that we take with others; all creatures still! and creatures too, as I have observed above, replete with strong life, and sensible feeling!—If therefore people pretend to mercy, let mercy go through all their actions. I have heard somewhere, that a merciful man is merciful to his beast.

So much at present for those parts of thy letter in which thou urgest to me motives of compassion for the lady.

But I guess at thy principal motive in this thy earnestness in behalf of this charming creature. I know that thou correspondest with Lord M. who is impatient, and has long been desirous to see me shackled. And thou wantest to make a merit with the uncle, with a view to one of his nieces. But knowest thou not, that my consent will be wanting to complete thy wishes?—And what a commendation will it be of thee to such a girl as Charlotte, when I shall acquaint her with the affront thou putttest upon the whole sex, by asking, Whether I think my reward, when I have subdued the most charming woman in the world, will be equal to my trouble?—

Which, thinkest thou, will a woman of spirit soonest forgive; the undervaluing varlet who can put such a question; or him, who prefers the pursuit and conquest of a fine woman to all the joys of life? Have I not known even a virtuous woman, as she would be thought, vow everlasting antipathy to a man who gave out that she was too old for him to attempt? And did not Essex's personal reflection on Queen Elizabeth, that she was old and crooked, contribute more to his ruin than his treason?

But another word or two, as to thy objection relating to my trouble and reward.

Does not the keen fox-hunter endanger his neck and his bones in pursuit of a vermin, which, when killed, is neither fit food for men nor dogs?

Do not the hunters of the noble game value the venison less than the sport?

Why then should I be reflected upon, and the sex affronted, for my patience and perseverance in the most noble of all chases; and for not being a poacher in love, as thy question be made to imply?

Learn of thy master, for the future, to treat more respectfully a sex that yields us our principal diversions and delights.

Proceed anon.

LETTER XVII

MR. LOVELACE [IN CONTINUATION.]

Well sayest thou, that mine is the most plotting heart in the world. Thou dost me honour; and I thank thee heartily. Thou art no bad judge. How like Boileau's parson I strut behind my double chin! Am I not obliged to deserve thy compliment? And wouldst thou have me repent of a murder before I have committed it?

'The Virtues and Graces are this Lady's handmaids. She was certainly born to adorn the age she was given to.'—Well said, Jack—'And would be an ornament to the first dignity.' But what praise is that, unless the first dignity were adorned with the first merit?—Dignity! gew-gaw!— First dignity! thou idiot!—Art thou, who knowest me, so taken with ermine and tinsel?—I, who have won the gold, am only fit to wear it. For the future therefore correct thy style, and proclaim her the ornament of the happiest man, and (respecting herself and sex) the greatest conqueror in the world.

Then, that she loves me, as thou imaginest, by no means appears clear to me. Her conditional offers to renounce me; the little confidence she places in me; entitle me to ask, What merit can she have with a man, who won her in spite of herself; and who fairly, in set and obstinate battle, took her prisoner?

As to what thou inferrest from her eye when with us, thou knowest nothing of her heart from that, if thou imaginest there was one glance of love shot from it. Well did I note her eye, and plainly did I see, that it was all but just civil disgust to me and to the company I had brought her into. Her early retiring that night, against all entreaty, might have convinced thee, that there was very little of the gentle in her heart for me. And her eye never knew what it was to contradict her heart.

She is, thou sayest, all mind. So say I. But why shouldst thou imagine that such a mind as hers, meeting with such a one as mine, and, to dwell upon the word, meeting with an inclination in hers, should not propagate minds like her own?

Were I to take thy stupid advice, and marry; what a figure should I make in rakish annals! The lady in my power: yet not have intended to put herself in my power: declaring against love, and a rebel to it: so much open-eyed caution: no confidence in my honour: her family expecting the worst hath passed: herself seeming to expect that the worst will be attempted: [Priscilla Partington for that!] What! wouldst thou not have me act in character?

But why callest thou the lady innocent? And why sayest thou she loves me?

By innocent, with regard to me, and not taken as a general character, I must insist upon it she is not innocent. Can she be innocent, who, by wishing to shackle me in the prime and glory of my youth, with such a capacity as I have for noble mischief,* would make my perdition more certain, were I to break, as I doubt I should, the most solemn vow I could make? I say no man ought to take even a common oath, who thinks he cannot keep it. This is conscience! This is honour!—And when I think I can keep the marriage-vow, then will it be time to marry.

* See Vol. III. Letter XXIII. Paragr. 4.

No doubt of it, as thou sayest, the devils would rejoice in the fall of such a woman. But this is my confidence, that I shall have it in my power to marry when I will. And if I do her this justice, shall I not have a claim of her gratitude? And will she not think herself the obliged, rather than the obliger? Then let me tell thee, Belford, it is impossible so far to hurt the morals of this lady, as thou and thy brother varlets have hurt others of the sex, who now are casting about the town firebrands and double death. Take ye that thistle to mumble upon.

A short interruption. I now resume.

That the morals of this lady cannot fail, is a consideration that will lessen the guilt on both sides. And if, when subdued, she knows but how to middle the matter between virtue and love, then will she be a wife for me: for already I am convinced that there is not a woman in the world that is love-proof and plot-proof, if she be not the person.

And now imagine (the charmer overcome) thou seest me sitting supinely cross-kneed, reclining on my sofa, the god of love dancing in my eyes, and rejoicing in every mantling feature; the sweet rogue, late such a proud rogue, wholly in my power, moving up slowly to me, at my beck, with heaving sighs, half-pronounced

upbraidings from murmuring lips, her finger in her eye, and quickening her pace at my Come hither, dearest!

One hand stuck in my side, the other extended to encourage her bashful approach—Kiss me, love!—sweet, as Jack Belford says, are the joys that come with willingness.

She tenders her purple mouth [her coral lips will be purple then, Jack!]: sigh not so deeply, my beloved!—Happier hours await thy humble love, than did thy proud resistance.

Once more bent to my ardent lips the swanny glossiness of a neck late so stately.—

There's my precious!

Again!

Obliging loveliness!

O my ever-blooming glory! I have tried thee enough. To-morrow's sun—

Then I rise, and fold to my almost-talking heart the throbbing-bosom'd charmer.

And now shall thy humble pride confess its obligation to me!

To-morrow's sun—and then I disengage myself from the bashful passive, and stalk about the room—to-morrow's sun shall gild the altar at which my vows shall be paid thee!

Then, Jack, the rapture! then the darted sun-beams from her gladdened eye, drinking up, at one sip, the precious distillation from the pearl- dropt cheek! Then hands ardently folded, eyes seeming to pronounce, God bless my Lovelace! to supply the joy-locked tongue: her transports too strong, and expression too weak, to give utterance to her grateful meanings!—All—all the studies—all the studies of her future life vowed and devoted (when she can speak) to acknowledge and return the perpetual obligation!

If I could bring my charmer to this, would it not be the eligible of eligibles?—Is it not worth trying for?—As I said, I can marry her when I will. She can be nobody's but mine, neither for shame, nor by choice, nor yet by address: for who, that knows my character, believes that the worst she dreads is now to be dreaded?

I have the highest opinion that man can have (thou knowest I have) of the merit and perfections of this admirable woman; of her virtue and honour too, although thou, in a former, art of opinion that she may be overcome.* Am I not therefore obliged to go further, in order to contradict thee, and, as I have often urged, to be sure that she is what I really think her to be, and, if I am ever to marry her, hope to find her?

* See Vol. III. Letter LI. Paragr. 9.

Then this lady is a mistress of our passions: no one ever had to so much perfection the art of moving. This all her family know, and have equally feared and revered her for it. This I know too; and doubt not more and more to experience. How charmingly must this divine creature warble forth (if a proper occasion be given) her melodious elegiacs!—Infinite beauties are there in a weeping eye. I first taught the two nymphs below to distinguish the several accents of the lamentable in a new subject, and how admirably some, more than others, become their distresses.

But to return to thy objections—Thou wilt perhaps tell me, in the names of thy brethren, as well as in thy own name, that, among all the objects of your respective attempts, there was not one of the rank and merit of my charming Miss Harlowe.

But let me ask, Has it not been a constant maxim with us, that the greater the merit on the woman's side, the nobler the victory on the man's? And as to rank, sense of honour, sense of shame, pride of family, may make rifled rank get up, and shake itself to rights: and if any thing come of it, such a one may suffer only in her pride, by being obliged to take up with a second-rate match instead of a first; and, as it may fall out, be the happier, as well as the more useful, for the misadventure; since (taken off of her public gaddings, and domesticated by her disgrace) she will have reason to think herself obliged to the man who has saved her from further reproach; while her fortune and alliance will lay an obligation upon him; and her past fall, if she have prudence and consciousness, will be his present and future security.

But a poor girl [such a one as my Rosebud for instance] having no recalls from education; being driven out of every family that pretends to reputation; persecuted most perhaps by such as have only kept their secret better; and having no refuge to fly to—the common, the stews, the street, is the fate of such a poor wretch; penury, want, and disease, her sure attendants; and an untimely end perhaps closes the miserable scene.

And will you not now all join to say, that it is more manly to attach a lion than a sheep?—Thou knowest, that I always illustrated my eagleship, by aiming at the noblest quarries; and by disdaining to make a stoop at wrens, phyl-tits,* and wag-tails.

* Phyl-tits, q. d. Phyllis-tits, in opposition to Tom-tits. It needs not now be observed, that Mr. Lovelace, in this wanton gaiety of his heart, often takes liberties of coining words and phrases in his letters to this his familiar friend. See his ludicrous reason for it in Vol. III. Letter XXV. Paragr. antepenult.

The worst respecting myself, in the case before me, is that my triumph, when completed, will be so glorious a one, that I shall never be able to keep up to it. All my future attempts must be poor to this. I shall be as unhappy, after a while, from my reflections upon this conquest, as Don Juan of Austria was in his, on the renowned victory of Lepanto, when he found that none of future achievements could keep pace with his early glory.

I am sensible that my pleas and my reasoning may be easily answered, and perhaps justly censured; But by whom censured? Not by any of the confraternity, whose constant course of life, even long before I became your general, to this hour, has justified what ye now in a fit of squeamishness, and through envy, condemn. Having, therefore, vindicated myself and my intentions to YOU, that is all I am at present concerned for.

Be convinced, then, that I (according to our principles) am right, thou wrong; or, at least, be silent. But I command thee to be convinced. And in thy next be sure to tell me that thou art.

LETTER XVIII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. EDGEWARE, THURSDAY, MAY 4.

I know that thou art so abandoned a man, that to give thee the best reasons in the world against what thou hast once resolved upon will be but acting the madman whom once we saw trying to buffet down a hurricane with his hat. I hope, however, that the lady's merit will still avail her with thee. But, if thou persistest; if thou wilt avenge thyself on this sweet lamb which thou hast singled out from a flock thou hatest, for the faults of the dogs who kept it: if thou art not to be moved by beauty, by learning, by prudence, by innocence, all shining out in one charming object; but she must fall, fall by the man whom she has chosen for her protector; I would not for a thousand worlds have thy crime to answer for.

Upon my faith, Lovelace, the subject sticks with me, notwithstanding I find I have not the honour of the lady's good opinion. And the more, when I reflect upon her father's brutal curse, and the villainous hard-heartedness of all her family. But, nevertheless, I should be desirous to know (if thou wilt proceed) by what gradations, arts, and contrivances thou effectest thy ingrateful purpose. And, O Lovelace, I conjure thee, if thou art a man, let not the specious devils thou has brought her among be suffered to triumph over her; yield to fair seductions, if I may so express myself! if thou canst raise a weakness in her by love, or by arts not inhuman; I shall the less pity her: and shall then conclude, that there is not a woman in the world who can resist a bold and resolute lover.

A messenger is just now arrived from my uncle. The mortification, it seems, is got to his knee; and the surgeons declare that he cannot live many days. He therefore sends for me directly, with these shocking words, that I will come and close his eyes. My servant or his must of necessity be in town every day on his case, or other affairs; and one of them shall regularly attend you for any letter or commands. It will be charity to write to me as often as you can. For although I am likely to be a considerable gainer by the poor man's death, yet I cannot say that I at all love these scenes of death and the doctor so near me. The doctor and death I should have said; for that is the natural order, and generally speaking, the one is but the harbinger to the other.

If, therefore, you decline to oblige me, I shall think you are displeased with my freedom. But let me tell you, at the same, that no man has a right to be displeased at freedoms taken with him for faults he is not ashamed to be guilty of.

J. BELFORD.

LETTER XIX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE

I thank you and Mr. Hickman for his letter, sent me with such kind expedition; and proceed to obey my dear menacing tyranness.

[She then gives the particulars of what passed between herself and Mr. Lovelace on Tuesday morning, in relation to his four friends, and to Miss Partington, pretty much to the same effect as in Mr. Lovelace's Letter, No. XIII. And then proceeds:]

He is constantly accusing me of over-scrupulousness. He says, 'I am always out of humour with him: that I could not have behaved more reservedly to Mr. Solmes: and that it is contrary to all his hopes and notions, that he should not, in so long a time, find himself able to inspire the person, whom he hoped so soon to have the honour to call his, with the least distinguishing tenderness for him before-hand.'

Silly and partial encroacher! not to know to what to attribute the reserve I am forced to treat him with! But his pride has eaten up his prudence. It is indeed a dirty low pride, that has swallowed up the true pride which should have set him above the vanity that has overrun him.

Yet he pretends that he has no pride but in obliging me: and is always talking of his reverence and humility, and such sort of stuff: but of this I am sure that he has, as I observed the first time I saw him,* too much regard to his own person, greatly to value that of his wife, marry he whom he will: and I must be blind, if I did not see that he is exceedingly vain of his external advantages, and of that address, which, if it has any merit in it to an outward eye, is perhaps owing more to his confidence that [sic] to any thing else.

* See Vol. I. Letter III.

Have you not beheld the man, when I was your happy guest, as he walked to his chariot, looking about him, as if to observe what eyes his specious person and air had attracted?

But indeed we had some homely coxcombs as proud as if they had persons to be proud of; at the same time that it was apparent, that the pains they took about themselves but the more exposed their defects.

The man who is fond of being thought more or better than he is, as I have often observed, but provokes a scrutiny into his pretensions; and that generally produces contempt. For pride, as I believe I have heretofore said, is an infallible sign of weakness; of something wrong in the head or in both. He that exalts himself insults his neighbour; who is provoked to question in him even that merit, which, were he modest, would perhaps be allowed to be his due.

You will say that I am very grave: and so I am. Mr. Lovelace is extremely sunk in my opinion since Monday night: nor see I before me any thing that can afford me a pleasing hope. For what, with a mind so unequal as his, can be my best hope?

I think I mentioned to you, in my former, that my clothes were brought me. You fluttered me so, that I am not sure I did. But I know I designed to mention that they were. They were brought me on Thursday; but neither my few guineas with them, nor any of my books, except a Drexelius on Eternity, the good old Practice of Piety, and a Francis Spira. My brother's wit, I suppose. He thinks he does well to point out death and despair to me. I wish for the one, and every now-and-then am on the brink of the other.

You will the less wonder at my being so very solemn, when, added to the above, and to my uncertain situation, I tell you, that they have sent me with these books a letter from my cousin Morden. It has set my heart against Mr. Lovelace. Against myself too. I send it enclosed. If you please, my dear, you may read it here:

COL. MORDEN, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE

Florence, April 13.

I am extremely concerned to hear of a difference betwixt the rest of a family so near and dear to me, and you still dearer to than any of the rest.

My cousin James has acquainted me with the offers you have had, and with your refusals. I wonder not at either. Such charming promises at so early an age as when I left England; and those promises, as I have often heard, so greatly exceeded, as well in your person as mind; how much must you be admired! how few must there be worthy of you!

Your parents, the most indulgent in the world, to a child the most deserving, have given way it seems to your refusal of several gentlemen. They have contented themselves at last to name one with earnestness to you, because of the address of another whom they cannot approve.

They had not reason, it seems, from your behaviour, to think you greatly averse: so they proceeded: perhaps too hastily for a delicacy like your's. But when all was fixed on their parts, and most extraordinary terms concluded in your favour; terms, which abundantly show the gentleman's just value for you; you flew off with a warmth and vehemence little suited to that sweetness which gave grace to all your actions.

I know very little of either of the gentlemen: but of Mr. Lovelace I know more than of Mr. Solmes. I wish I could say more to his advantage than I can. As to every qualification but one, your brother owns there is no comparison. But that one outweighs all the rest together. It cannot be thought that Miss Clarissa Harlowe will dispense with MORALS in a husband.

What, my dearest cousin, shall I plead first to you on this occasion? Your duty, your interest, your temporal and your eternal welfare, do, and may all, depend upon this single point, the morality of a husband. A woman who hath a wicked husband may find it difficult to be good, and out of her power to do good; and is therefore in a worse situation than the man can be in, who hath a bad wife. You preserve all your religious regards, I understand. I wonder not that you do. I should have wondered had you not. But what can you promise yourself, as to perseverance in them, with an immoral husband?

If your parents and you differ in sentiment on this important occasion, let me ask you, my dear cousin, who ought to give way? I own to you, that I should have thought there could not any where have been a more suitable match for you than Mr. Lovelace, had he been a moral man. I should have very little to say against a man, of whose actions I am not to set up myself as a judge, did he not address my cousin. But, on this occasion, let me tell you, my dear Clarissa, that Mr. Lovelace cannot possibly deserve you. He may reform, you'll say: but he may not. Habit is not soon or easily shaken off. Libertines, who are libertines in defiance of talents, of superior lights, of conviction, hardly ever reform but by miracle, or by incapacity. Well do I know mine own sex. Well am I able to judge of the probability of the reformation of a licentious young man, who has not been fastened upon by sickness, by affliction, by calamity: who has a prosperous run of fortune before him: his spirits high: his will uncontrollable: the company he keeps, perhaps such as himself, confirming him in all his courses, assisting him in all his enterprises.

As to the other gentleman, suppose, my dear cousin, you do not like him at present, it is far from being unlikely that you will hereafter: perhaps the more for not liking him now. He can hardly sink lower in your opinion: he may rise. Very seldom is it that high expectations are so much as tolerably answered. How indeed can they, when a fine and extensive imagination carries its expectation infinitely beyond reality, in the highest of our sublunary enjoyments? A woman adorned with such an imagination sees no defect in a favoured object, (the less, if she be not conscious of any wilful fault in herself,) till it is too late to rectify the mistakes occasioned by her generous credulity.

But suppose a person of your talents were to marry a man of inferior talents; Who, in this case, can be so happy in herself as Miss Clarissa Harlowe? What delight do you take in doing good! How happily do you devote the several portions of the day to your own improvement, and to the advantage of all that move within your sphere!—And then, such is your taste, such are your acquirements in the politer studies, and in the politer amusements; such your excellence in all the different parts of economy fit for a young lady's inspection and practice, that your friends would wish you to be taken off as little as possible by regards that may be called merely personal.

But as to what may be the consequence respecting yourself, respecting a young lady of your talents, from the preference you are suspected to give to a libertine, I would have you, my dear cousin, consider what that may be. A mind so pure, to mingle with a mind impure! And will not such a man as this engross all your solitudes? Will he not perpetually fill you with anxieties for him and for yourself?—The divine and civil powers defied, and their sanctions broken through by him, on every not merely accidental but meditated occasion. To be agreeable to him, and to hope to preserve an interest in his affections, you must probably be obliged to abandon all your own laudable pursuits. You must enter into his pleasures and distastes. You must give up your virtuous companions for his profligate ones—perhaps be forsaken by your's, because of the scandal he daily gives. Can you hope, cousin, with such a man as this to be long so good as you now are? If not, consider which of your present laudable delights you would choose to give up! which of his culpable ones to follow him in! How could you brook to go backward, instead of forward, in those duties which you now so exemplarily perform? and how do you know, if you once give way, where you shall be suffered, where you shall be able, to stop?

Your brother acknowledges that Mr. Solmes is not near so agreeable in person as Mr. Lovelace. But what is person with such a lady as I have the honour to be now writing to? He owns likewise that he has not the address of Mr. Lovelace: but what a mere personal advantage is a plausible address, without morals? A woman had better take a husband whose manners she were to fashion, than to find them ready-fashioned to her hand, at the price of her morality; a price that is often paid for travelling accomplishments. O my dear cousin, were you but with us here at Florence, or at Rome, or at Paris, (where also I resided for many months,) to see the gentlemen whose supposed rough English manners at setting out are to be polished, and what their improvement are in their return through the same places, you would infinitely prefer the man in his first stage to the same man in his last. You find the difference on their return—a fondness for foreign fashions, an attachment to foreign vices, a supercilious contempt of his own country and countrymen; (himself more despicable than the most despicable of those he despises;) these, with an unblushing effrontery, are too generally the attainments that concur to finish the travelled gentleman!

Mr. Lovelace, I know, deserves to have an exception made in his favour; for he really is a man of parts and learning: he was esteemed so both here and at Rome; and a fine person, and a generous turn of mind, gave him great advantages. But you need not be told that a libertine man of sense does infinitely more mischief than a libertine of weak parts is able to do. And this I will tell you further, that it was Mr. Lovelace's own fault that he was not still more respected than he was among the literati here. There were, in short, some liberties in which he indulged himself, that endangered his person and his liberty; and made the best and most worthy of those who honoured him with their notice give him up, and his stay both at Florence and at Rome shorter than he designed.

This is all I choose to say of Mr. Lovelace. I had much rather have had reason to give him a quite contrary character. But as to rakes or libertines in general, I, who know them well, must be allowed, because of the mischiefs they have always in their hearts, and too often in their power, to do your sex, to add still a few more words upon this topic.

A libertine, my dear cousin, a plotting, an intriguing libertine, must be generally remorseless—unjust he must always be. The noble rule of doing to others what he would have done to himself is the first rule he breaks; and every day he breaks it; the oftener, the greater his triumph. He has great contempt for your sex. He believes no woman chaste, because he is a profligate. Every woman who favours him confirms him in his wicked incredulity. He is always plotting to extend the mischiefs he delights in. If a woman loves such a man, how can she bear the thought of dividing her interest in his affections with half the town, and that perhaps the dregs of it? Then so sensual!—How will a young lady of your delicacy bear with so sensual a man? a man who makes a jest of his vows? and who perhaps will break your spirit by the most unmanly insults. To be a libertine, is to continue to be every thing vile and inhuman. Prayers, tears, and the most abject submission, are but fuel to his pride: wagering perhaps with lewd companions, and, not improbably, with lewder women, upon instances which he boasts of to them of your patient sufferings, and broken spirit, and bringing them home to witness both.

I write what I know has been.

I mention not fortunes squandered, estates mortgaged or sold, and posterity robbed—nor yet a multitude of other evils, too gross, too shocking, to be mentioned to a person of your delicacy.

All these, my dear cousin, to be shunned, all the evils I have named to be avoided; the power of doing all the good you have been accustomed to, preserved, nay, increased, by the separate provision that will be made for you: your charming diversions, and exemplary employments, all maintained; and every good habit perpetuated: and all by one sacrifice, the fading pleasure of the eye! who would not, (since every thing is not to be met with in one man, who would not,) to preserve so many essentials, give up to light, so unpermanent a pleasure!

Weigh all these things, which I might insist upon to more advantage, did I think it needful to one of your prudence—weigh them well, my beloved cousin; and if it be not the will of your parents that you should continue single, resolve to oblige them; and let it not be said that the powers of fancy shall (as in many others of your sex) be too hard for your duty and your prudence. The less agreeable the man, the more obliging the compliance. Remember, that he is a sober man—a man who has reputation to lose, and whose reputation therefore is a security for his good behaviour to you.

You have an opportunity offered you to give the highest instance that can be given of filial duty. Embrace it. It is worthy of you. It is expected from you; however, for your inclination-sake, we may be sorry that you are called upon to give it. Let it be said that you have been able to lay an obligation upon your parents, (a proud word, my cousin!) which you could not do, were it not laid against your inclination!—upon parents who have laid a thousand upon you: who are set upon this point: who will not give it up: who have given up many points to you, even of this very nature: and in their turn, for the sake of their own authority, as well as judgment, expect to be obliged.

I hope I shall soon, in person, congratulate you upon this your meritorious compliance. To settle and give up my trusteeship is one of the principal motives of my leaving these parts. I shall be glad to settle it to every one's satisfaction; to yours particularly.

If on my arrival I find a happy union, as formerly, reign in a family so dear to me, it will be an unspeakable pleasure to me; and I shall perhaps so dispose my affairs, as to be near you for ever.

I have written a very long letter, and will add no more, than that I am, with the greatest respect, my dearest cousin,

Your most affectionate and faithful servant, WM. MORDEN.

I will suppose, my dear Miss Howe, that you have read my cousin's letter. It is now in vain to wish it had come sooner. But if it had, I might perhaps have been so rash as to give Mr. Lovelace the fatal meeting, as I little thought of going away with him.

But I should hardly have given him the expectation of so doing, previous to the meeting, which made him

come prepared; and the revocation of which he so artfully made ineffectual.

Persecuted as I was, and little expecting so much condescension, as my aunt, to my great mortification, has told me (and you confirm) I should have met with, it is, however, hard to say what I should or should not have done as to meeting him, had it come in time: but this effect I verily believe it would have had—to have made me insist with all my might on going over, out of all their ways, to the kind writer of the instructive letter, and on making a father (a protector, as well as a friend) of a kinsman, who is one of my trustees. This, circumstanced as I was, would have been a natural, at least an unexceptionable protection! —But I was to be unhappy! and how it cuts me to the heart to think, that I can already subscribe to my cousin's character of a libertine, so well drawn in the letter which I suppose you now to have read!

That a man of a character which ever was my abhorrence should fall to my lot!—But, depending on my own strength; having no reason to apprehend danger from headstrong and disgraceful impulses; I too little perhaps cast up my eyes to the Supreme Director: in whom, mistrusting myself, I ought to have placed my whole confidence—and the more, when I saw myself so perseveringly addressed by a man of this character.

Inexperience and presumption, with the help of a brother and sister who have low ends to answer in my disgrace, have been my ruin!—A hard word, my dear! but I repeat it upon deliberation: since, let the best happen which now can happen, my reputation is destroyed; a rake is my portion: and what that portion is my cousin Morden's letter has acquainted you.

Pray keep it by you till called for. I saw it not myself (having not the heart to inspect my trunks) till this morning. I would not for the world this man should see it; because it might occasion mischief between the most violent spirit, and the most settled brave one in the world, as my cousin's is said to be.

This letter was enclosed (opened) in a blank cover. Scorn and detest me as they will, I wonder that one line was not sent with it—were it but to have more particularly pointed the design of it, in the same generous spirit that sent me the spira.

The sealing of the cover was with black wax. I hope there is no new occasion in the family to give reason for black wax. But if there were, it would, to be sure, have been mentioned, and laid at my door—perhaps too justly!

I had begun a letter to my cousin; but laid it by, because of the uncertainty of my situation, and expecting every day for several days past to be at a greater certainty. You bid me write to him some time ago, you know. Then it was I began it: for I have great pleasure in obeying you in all I may. So I ought to have; for you are the only friend left me. And, moreover, you generally honour me with your own observance of the advice I take the liberty to offer you: for I pretend to say, I give better advice than I have taken. And so I had need. For, I know not how it comes about, but I am, in my own opinion, a poor lost creature: and yet cannot charge myself with one criminal or faulty inclination. Do you know, my dear, how this can be?

Yet I can tell you how, I believe—one devious step at setting out!— that must be it:—which pursued, has led me so far out of my path, that I am in a wilderness of doubt and error; and never, never, shall find my way out of it: for, although but one pace awry at first, it has led me hundreds and hundreds of miles out of my path: and the poor stray has not one kind friend, nor has met with one direct passenger, to help her to recover it.

But I, presumptuous creature! must rely so much upon my own knowledge of the right path!—little apprehending that an ignis fatuus with its false fires (and ye I had heard enough of such) would arise to mislead me! And now, in the midst of fens and quagmires, it plays around me, and around me, throwing me back again, whenever I think myself in the right track. But there is one common point, in which all shall meet, err widely as they may. In that I shall be laid quietly down at last: and then will all my calamities be at an end.

But how I stray again; stray from my intention! I would only have said, that I had begun a letter to my cousin Morden some time ago: but that now I can never end it. You will believe I cannot: for how shall I tell him that all his compliments are misbestowed? that all his advice is thrown away? all his warnings vain? and that even my highest expectation is to be the wife of that free-liver, whom he so pathetically warns me to shun?

Let me own, however, have your prayers joined with my own, (my fate depending, as it seems, upon the lips of such a man) 'that, whatever shall be my destiny, that dreadful part of my father's malediction, that I may be punished by the man in whom he supposes I put my confidence, may not take place! that this for Mr. Lovelace's own sake, and for the sake of human nature, may not be! or, if it be necessary, in support of the parental authority, that I should be punished by him, that it may not be by his premeditated or wilful baseness; but that I may be able to acquit his intention, if not his action!' Otherwise, my fault will appear to be doubled in the eye of the event-judging world. And yet, methinks, I would be glad that the unkindness of my father and uncles, whose hearts have already been too much wounded by my error, may be justified in every article, excepting in this heavy curse: and that my father will be pleased to withdraw that before it be generally known: at least the most dreadful part of it which regards futurity!

I must lay down my pen. I must brood over these reflections. Once more, before I close my cousin's letter, I will peruse it. And then I shall have it by heart.

LETTER XX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE SUNDAY NIGHT, MAY 7.

When you reflect upon my unhappy situation, which is attended with so many indelicate and even shocking circumstances, some of which my pride will not let me think of with patience; all aggravated by the contents of my cousin's affecting letter; you will not wonder that the vapourishness which has laid hold of my heart should rise to my pen. And yet it would be more kind, more friendly in me, to conceal from you, who take

such a generous interest in my concerns, that worst part of my griefs, which communication and complaint cannot relieve.

But to whom can I unbosom myself but to you: when the man who ought to be my protector, as he has brought upon me all my distresses, adds to my apprehensions; when I have not even a servant on whose fidelity I can rely, or to whom I can break my griefs as they arise; and when his bountiful temper and gay heart attach every one to him; and I am but a cipher, to give him significance, and myself pain!—These griefs, therefore, do what I can, will sometimes burst into tears; and these mingling with my ink, will blot my paper. And I know you will not grudge me the temporary relief.

But I shall go on in the strain I left off with in my last, when I intended rather to apologize for my melancholy. But let what I have above written, once for all, be my apology. My misfortunes have given you a call to discharge the noblest offices of the friendship we have vowed to each other, in advice and consolation; and it would be an injury to it, and to you, to suppose it needed even that call.

[She then tells Miss Howe, that now her clothes are come, Mr. Lovelace is continually teasing her to go abroad with him in a coach, attended by whom she pleases of her own sex, either for the air, or to the public diversions.

She gives the particulars of a conversation that has passed between them on that subject, and his several proposals. But takes notice, that he says not the least word of the solemnity which he so much pressed for before they came to town; and which, as she observes, was necessary to give propriety to his proposals.]

Now, my dear, she says, I cannot bear the life I live. I would be glad at my heart to be out of his reach. If I were, he should soon find the difference. If I must be humbled, it had better be by those to whom I owe duty, than by him. My aunt writes in her letter,* that SHE dare not propose any thing in my favour. You tell me, that upon inquiry, you find,* that, had I not been unhappily seduced away, a change of measures was actually resolved upon; and that my mother, particularly, was determined to exert herself for the restoration of the family peace; and, in order to succeed the better, had thoughts of trying to engage my uncle Harlowe in her party.

* See Vol. III. Letter LII. ** Ibid. Letter VIII.

Let me build on these foundations. I can but try, my dear. It is my duty to try all probable methods to restore the poor outcast to favour. And who knows but that once indulgent uncle, who has very great weight in the family, may be induced to interpose in my behalf? I will give up all right and title to my grandfather's devises and bequests, with all my heart and soul, to whom they please, in order to make my proposal palatable to my brother. And that my surrender may be effectual, I will engage never to marry.

What think you, my dear, of this expedient? Surely, they cannot resolve to renounce me for ever. If they look with impartial eyes upon what has happened, they will have something to blame themselves for, as well as me.

I presume, that you will be of opinion that this expedient is worth trying. But here is my difficulty: If I should write, my hard-hearted brother has so strongly confederated them all against me, that my letter would be handed about from one to another, till he had hardened every one to refuse my request; whereas could my uncle be engaged to espouse my cause, as from himself, I should have some hope, as I presume to think he would soon have my mother and my aunt of his party.

What, therefore, I am thinking of, is this—'Suppose Mr. Hickman, whose good character has gained him every body's respect, should put himself in my uncle Harlowe's way? And (as if from your knowledge of the state of things between Mr. Lovelace and me) assure him not only of the above particulars, but that I am under no obligations that shall hinder me from taking his directions?'

I submit the whole to your consideration, whether to pursue it at all, or in what manner. But if it be pursued, and if my uncle refuses to interest himself in my favour upon Mr. Hickman's application as from you, (for so, for obvious reasons, it must be put,) I can then have no hope; and my next step, in the mind I am in, shall be to throw myself into the protection of the ladies of his family.

It were an impiety to adopt the following lines, because it would be throwing upon the decrees of Providence a fault too much my own. But often do I revolve them, for the sake of the general similitude which they bear to my unhappy, yet undersigned error.

*To you, great gods! I make my last appeal:
Or clear my virtue, or my crimes reveal.
If wand'ring in the maze of life I run,
And backward tread the steps I sought to shun,
Impute my error to your own decree:
My FEET are guilty: but my HEART is free.*

[The Lady dates again on Monday, to let Miss Howe know, that Mr. Lovelace, on observing her uneasiness, had introduced to her Mr. Mennell, Mrs. Fretchville's kinsman, who managed all her affairs. She calls him a young officer of sense and politeness, who gave her an account of the house and furniture, to the same effect that Mr. Lovelace had done before; as also of the melancholy way Mrs. Fretchville is in.*

* See Letter IV. of this volume.

She tells Miss Howe how extremely urgent Mr. Lovelace was with the gentleman, to get his spouse (as he now always calls her before company) a sight of the house: and that Mr. Mennell undertook that very afternoon to show her all of it, except the apartment Mrs. Fretchville should be in when she went. But that she chose not to take another step till she knew how she approved of her scheme to have her uncle sounded, and with what success, if tried, it would be attended.

Mr. Lovelace, in his humourous way, gives his friend an account of the Lady's peevishness and dejection, on receiving a letter with her clothes. He regrets that he has lost her confidence; which he attributes to his bringing her into the company of his four companions. Yet he thinks he must excuse them, and censure her for over-niceness; for that he never saw men behave better, at least not them.

Mentioning his introducing Mr. Mennell to her,]

Now, Jack, says he, was it not very kind of Mr. Mennell [Captain Mennell I sometimes called him; for among the military there is no such officer, thou knowest, as a lieutenant, or an ensign—was it not very kind in him] to come along with me so readily as he did, to satisfy my beloved about the vapourish lady and the house?

But who is Capt. Mennell? methinks thou askest: I never heard of such a man as Captain Mennell.

Very likely. But knowest thou not young Newcomb, honest Doleman's newpew?

O-ho! Is it he?

It is. And I have changed his name by virtue of my own single authority. Knowest thou not, that I am a great name-father? Preferment I bestow, both military and civil. I give estates, and take them away at my pleasure. Quality too I create. And by a still more valuable prerogative, I degrade by virtue of my own imperial will, without any other act of forfeiture than my own convenience. What a poor thing is a monarch to me!

But Mennell, now he has seen this angel of a woman, has qualms; that's the devil!—I shall have enough to do to keep him right. But it is the less wonder, that he should stagger, when a few hours' conversation with the same lady could make four much more hardened varlets find hearts— only, that I am confident, that I shall at least reward her virtue, if her virtue overcome me, or I should find it impossible to persevere—for at times I have confounded qualms myself. But say not a word of them to the confraternity: nor laugh at me for them thyself.

In another letter, dated Monday night, he writes as follows:

This perverse lady keeps me at such a distance, that I am sure something is going on between her and Miss Howe, notwithstanding the prohibition from Mrs. Howe to both: and as I have thought it some degree of merit in myself to punish others for their transgressions, I am of opinion that both these girls are punishable for their breach of parental injunctions. And as to their letter-carrier, I have been inquiring into his way of living; and finding him to be a common poacher, a deer-stealer, and warren-robber, who, under pretence of haggling, deals with a set of customers who constantly take all he brings, whether fish, fowl, or venison, I hold myself justified (since Wilson's conveyance must at present be sacred) to have him stripped and robbed, and what money he has about him given to the poor; since, if I take not money as well as letters, I shall be suspected.

To serve one's self, and punish a villain at the same time, is serving public and private. The law was not made for such a man as me. And I must come at correspondences so disobediently carried on.

But, on second thoughts, if I could find out that the dear creature carried any of her letters in her pockets, I can get her to a play or to a concert, and she may have the misfortune to lose her pockets.

But how shall I find this out; since her Dorcas knows no more of her dressing and undressing than her Lovelace? For she is dressed for the day before she appears even to her servant. Vilely suspicious! Upon my soul, Jack, a suspicious temper is a punishable temper. If a woman suspects a rogue in an honest man, is it not enough to make the honest man who knows it a rogue?

But, as to her pockets, I think my mind hankers after them, as the less mischievous attempt. But they cannot hold all the letters I should wish to see. And yet a woman's pockets are half as deep as she is high. Tied round the sweet levities, I presume, as ballast-bags, lest the wind, as they move with full sail, from whale-ribbed canvass, should blow away the gypsies.

[He then, in apprehension that something is meditating between the two ladies, or that something may be set on foot to get Miss Harlowe out of his hands, relates several of his contrivances, and boasts of his instructions given in writing to Dorcas, and to his servant Will. Summers; and says, that he has provided against every possible accident, even to bring her back if she should escape, or in case she should go abroad, and then refuse to return; and hopes so to manage, as that, should he make an attempt, whether he succeeded in it or not, he may have a pretence to detain her.]

He then proceeds as follows:

I have ordered Dorcas to cultivate by all means her lady's favour; to lament her incapacity as to writing and reading; to shew letters to her lady, as from pretended country relations; to beg her advice how to answer them, and to get them answered; and to be always aiming at scrawling with a pen, lest inky fingers should give suspicion. I have moreover given the wench an ivory-leafed pocket-book, with a silver pencil, that she may make memoranda on occasion.

And, let me tell thee, that the lady has already (at Mrs. Sinclair's motion) removed her clothes out of the trunks they came in, into an ample mahogany repository, where they will lie at full length, and which has drawers in it for linen. A repository, that used to hold the richest suits which some of the nymphs put on, when they are to be dressed out, to captivate, or to ape quality. For many a countess, thou knowest, has our mother equipped; nay, two or three duchesses, who live upon quality- terms with their lords. But this to such as will come up to her price, and can make an appearance like quality themselves on the occasion: for the reputation of persons of birth must not lie at the mercy of every under-degreed sinner.

A master-key, which will open every lock in this chest, is put into Dorcas's hands; and she is to take care, when she searches for papers, before she removes any thing, to observe how it lies, that she may replace all to a hair. Sally and Polly can occasionally help to transcribe. Slow and sure with such an Argus-eyed charmer must be all my movements.

It is impossible that one so young and so inexperienced as she is can have all her caution from herself; the

behaviour of the women so unexceptionable; no revellings, no company ever admitted into this inner-house; all genteel, quiet, and easy in it; the nymphs well-bred, and well-read; her first disgusts to the old one got over.—It must be Miss Howe, therefore, [who once was in danger of being taken in by one of our class, by honest Sir George Colmar, as thou hast heard,] that makes my progress difficult.

Thou seest, Belford, by the above precautionaries, that I forget nothing. As the song says, it is not to be imagined

*On what slight strings
Depend these things
On which men build their glory!*

So far, so good. I shall never rest till I have discovered in the first place, where the dear creature puts her letters; and in the next till I have got her to a play, to a concert, or to take an airing with me out of town for a day or two.

I gave thee just now some of my contrivances. Dorcas, who is ever attentive to all her lady's motions, has given me some instances of her mistress's precautions. She wafers her letters, it seems, in two places; pricks the wafers; and then seals upon them. No doubt but the same care is taken with regard to those brought to her, for she always examines the seals of the latter before she opens them.

I must, I must come at them. This difficulty augments my curiosity. Strange, so much as she writes, and at all hours, that not one sleepy or forgetful moment has offered in our favour!

A fair contention, thou seest: nor plead thou in her favour her youth, her beauty, her family, her fortune, CREDULITY, she has none; and with regard to her TENDER YEARS, Am I not a young fellow myself? As to BEAUTY; pr'ythee, Jack, do thou, to spare my modesty, make a comparison between my Clarissa for a woman, and thy Lovelace for a man. For her FAMILY; that was not known to its country a century ago: and I hate them all but her. Have I not cause?—For her FORTUNE; fortune, thou knowest, was ever a stimulus with me; and this for reasons not ignoble. Do not girls of fortune adorn themselves on purpose to engage our attention? Seek they not to draw us into their snares? Depend they not, generally, upon their fortunes, in the views they have upon us, more than on their merits? Shall we deprive them of the benefit of their principal dependence?—Can I, in particular, marry every girl who wishes to obtain my notice? If, therefore, in support of the libertine principles for which none of the sweet rogues hate us, a woman of fortune is brought to yield homage to her emperor, and any consequences attend the subjugation, is not such a one shielded by her fortune, as well from insult and contempt, as from indigence—all, then, that admits of debate between my beloved and me is only this—which of the two has more wit, more circumspection—and that remains to be tried.

A sad life, however, this life of doubt and suspense, for the poor lady to live, as well as for me; that is to say, if she be not naturally jealous—if she be, her uneasiness is constitutional, and she cannot help it; nor will it, in that case, hurt her. For a suspicious temper will make occasion for doubt, if none were to offer to its hand. My fair one therefore, if naturally suspicious, is obliged to me for saving her the trouble of studying for these occasions—but, after all, the plainest paths in our journeys through life are the safest and best I believe, although it is not given me to choose them; I am not, however, singular in the pursuit of the more intricate paths; since there are thousands, and ten thousands, who had rather fish in troubled waters than in smooth.

LETTER XXI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY, MAY 9.

I am a very unhappy man. This lady is said to be one of the sweetest-tempered creatures in the world: and so I thought her. But to me she is one of the most perverse. I never was supposed to be an ill-natured mortal neither. How can it be? I imagined, for a long while, that we were born to make each other happy: but quite the contrary; we really seem to be sent to plague each other.

I will write a comedy, I think: I have a title already; and that's half the work. The Quarrelsome Lovers. 'Twill do. There's something new and striking in it. Yet, more or less, all lovers quarrel. Old Terence has taken notice of that; and observes upon it, That lovers falling out occasions lovers falling in; and a better understanding of course. 'Tis natural that it should be so. But with us, we fall out so often, without falling in once; and a second quarrel so generally happens before a first is made up; that it is hard to guess what event our loves will be attended with. But perseverance is my glory, and patience my handmaid, when I have in view an object worthy of my attempts. What is there in an easy conquest? Hudibras questions well,

*—What mad lover ever dy'd
To gain a soft and easy bride?
Or, for a lady tender-hearted,
In purling streams, or hemp, departed?*

But I will lead to the occasion of this preamble.

I had been out. On my return, meeting Dorcas on the stairs—Your lady in her chamber, Dorcas? In the dining-room, sir: and if ever you hope for an opportunity to come at a letter, it must be now. For at her feet I saw one lie, which, as may be seen by its open fold, she had been reading, with a little parcel of others she is now busied with—all pulled out of her pocket, as I believe: so, Sir, you'll know where to find them another time.

I was ready to leap for joy, and instantly resolved to bring forward an expedient which I had held in petto; and entering the dining-room with an air of transport, I boldly clasped my arms about her, as she sat; she

huddling up her papers in her handkerchief all the time; the dropped paper unseen. O my dearest life, a lucky expedient have Mr. Mennell and I hit upon just now. In order to hasten Mrs. Fretchville to quit the house, I have agreed, if you approve of it, to entertain her cook, her housemaid, and two men-servants, (about whom she was very solicitous,) till you are provided to your mind. And, that no accommodations may be wanted, I have consented to take the household linen at an appraisement.

I am to pay down five hundred pounds, and the remainder as soon as the bills can be looked up, and the amount of them adjusted. Thus will you have a charming house entirely ready to receive you. Some of the ladies of my family will soon be with you: they will not permit you long to suspend my happy day. And that nothing may be wanting to gratify your utmost punctilio, I will till then consent to stay here at Mrs. Sinclair's while you reside at your new house; and leave the rest to your own generosity. O my beloved creature, will not this be agreeable to you? I am sure it will—it must—and clasping her closer to me, I gave her a more fervent kiss than ever I had dared to give her before. I permitted not my ardour to overcome my discretion, however; for I took care to set my foot upon the letter, and scraped it farther from her, as it were behind her chair.

She was in a passion at the liberty I took. Bowing low, I begged her pardon; and stooping still lower, in the same motion took up the letter, and whipt it into my bosom.

Pox on me for a puppy, a fool, a blockhead, a clumsy varlet, a mere Jack Belford!—I thought myself a much cleverer fellow than I am!—Why could I not have been followed in by Dorcas, who might have taken it up, while I addressed her lady?

For here, the letter being unfolded, I could not put it in my bosom without alarming her ears, as my sudden motion did her eyes—Up she flew in a moment: Traitor! Judas! her eyes flashing lightning, and a perturbation in her eager countenance, so charming!—What have you taken up?—and then, what for both my ears I durst not have done to her, she made no scruple to seize the stolen letter, though in my bosom.

What was to be done on so palpable a detection?—I clasped her hand, which had hold of the ravished paper, between mine: O my beloved creature! said I, can you think I have not some curiosity? Is it possible you can be thus for ever employed; and I, loving narrative letter-writing above every other species of writing, and admiring your talent that way, should not (thus upon the dawn of my happiness, as I presume to hope) burn with a desire to be admitted into so sweet a correspondence?

Let go my hand!—stamping with her pretty foot; How dare you, Sir!—At this rate, I see—too plainly I see—And more she could not say: but, gasping, was ready to faint with passion and affright; the devil a bit of her accustomed gentleness to be seen in her charming face, or to be heard in her musical voice.

Having gone thus far, loth, very loth, was I to lose my prize—once more I got hold of the rumpled-up letter!—Impudent man! were her words: stamping again. For God's sake, then it was. I let go my prize, lest she should faint away: but had the pleasure first to find my hand within both hers, she trying to open my reluctant fingers. How near was my heart at that moment to my hand, throbbing to my fingers' ends, to be thus familiarly, although angrily, treated by the charmer of my soul!

When she had got it in her possession, she flew to the door. I threw myself in her way, shut it, and, in the humblest manner, besought her to forgive me. And yet do you think the Harlowe-hearted charmer (notwithstanding the agreeable annunciation I came in with) would forgive me?—No, truly; but pushing me rudely from the door, as if I had been nothing, [yet do I love to try, so innocently to try, her strength too!] she gained that force through passion, which I had lost through fear, out she shot to her own apartment; [thank my stars she could fly no farther!] and as soon as she entered it, in a passion still, she double-locked and double-bolted herself in. This my comfort, on reflection, that, upon a greater offence, it cannot be worse.

I retreated to my own apartment, with my heart full: and, my man Will not being near me, gave myself a plaguy knock on the forehead with my double fist.

And now is my charmer shut up from me: refusing to see me, refusing her meals. She resolves not to see me; that's more:—never again, if she can help it; and in the mind she is in—I hope she has said.

The dear creatures, whenever they quarrel with their humble servants, should always remember this saving clause, that they may not be forsworn.

But thinkest thou that I will not make it the subject of one of my first plots to inform myself of the reason why all this commotion was necessary on so slight an occasion as this would have been, were not the letters that pass between these ladies of a treasonable nature?

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

No admission to breakfast, any more than to supper. I wish this lady is not a simpleton, after all.

I have sent up in Captain Mennell's name.

A message from Captain Mennell, Madam.

It won't do. She is of baby age. She cannot be—a Solomon, I was going to say, in every thing. Solomon, Jack, was the wisest man. But didst ever hear who was the wisest woman? I want a comparison for this lady. Cunning women and witches we read of without number. But I fancy wisdom never entered into the character of a woman. It is not a requisite of the sex. Women, indeed, make better sovereigns than men: but why is that?—because the women-sovereigns are governed by men; the men-sovereigns by women.—Charming, by my soul! For hence we guess at the rudder by which both are steered.

But to putting wisdom out of the question, and to take cunning in; that is to say, to consider woman as a woman; what shall we do, if this lady has something extraordinary in her head? Repeated charges has she given to Wilson, by a particular messenger, to send any letter directed for her the moment it comes.

I must keep a good look-out. She is not now afraid of her brother's plot. I shan't be at all surprised, if Singleton calls upon Miss Howe, as the only person who knows, or is likely to know, where Miss Harlowe is; pretending to have affairs of importance, and of particular service to her, if he can but be admitted to her speech—Of compromise, who knows, from her brother?

Then will Miss Howe warn her to keep close. Then will my protection be again necessary. This will do, I

believe. Any thing from Miss Howe must.

Joseph Leman is a vile fellow with her, and my implement. Joseph, honest Joseph, as I call him, may hang himself. I have played him off enough, and have very little further use for him. No need to wear one plot to the stumps, when I can find new ones every hour.

Nor blame me for the use I make of my talents. Who, that hath such, will let 'em be idle?

Well, then, I will find a Singleton; that's all I have to do.

Instantly find one!—Will!

Sir—

This moment call me hither thy cousin Paul Wheatly, just come from sea, whom thou wert recommending to my service, if I were to marry, and keep a pleasure-boat.

Presto—Will's gone—Paul will be here presently. Presently to Mrs. Howe's. If Paul be Singleton's mate, coming from his captain, it will do as well as if it were Singleton himself.

Sally, a little devil, often reproaches me with the slowness of my proceedings. But in a play does not the principal entertainment lie in the first four acts? Is not all in a manner over when you come to the fifth? And what a vulture of a man must he be, who souses upon his prey, and in the same moment trusses and devours?

But to own the truth. I have overplotted myself. To my make my work secure, as I thought, I have frightened the dear creature with the sight of my four Hottentots, and I shall be a long time, I doubt, before I can recover my lost ground. And then this cursed family at Harlowe-place have made her out of humour with me, with herself, and with all the world, but Miss Howe, who, no doubt, is continually adding difficulties to my other difficulties.

I am very unwilling to have recourse to measures which these demons below are continually urging me to take; because I am sure, that, at last, I shall be brought to make her legally mine.

One complete trial over, and I think I will do her noble justice.

Well, Paul's gone—gone already—has all his lessons. A notable fellow! —Lord W.'s necessary-man was Paul before he went to sea. A more sensible rogue Paul than Joseph! Not such a pretender to piety neither as the other. At what a price have I bought that Joseph! I believe I must punish the rascal at last: but must let him marry first: then (though that may be punishment enough) I shall punish two at once in the man and his wife. And how richly does Betty deserve punishment for her behaviour to my goddess!

But now I hear the rusty hinges of my beloved's door give me creaking invitation. My heart creaks and throbs with respondent trepidations: Whimsical enough though! for what relation has a lover's heart to a rusty pair of hinges? But they are the hinges that open and shut the door of my beloved's bed-chamber. Relation enough in that.

I hear not the door shut again. I shall receive her commands I hope anon. What signifies her keeping me thus at a distance? she must be mine, let me do or offer what I will. Courage whenever I assume, all is over: for, should she think of escaping from hence, whither can she fly to avoid me? Her parents will not receive her. Her uncles will not entertain her. Her beloved Norton is in their direction, and cannot. Miss Howe dare not. She has not one friend in town but me—is entirely a stranger to the town. And what then is the matter with me, that I should be thus unaccountably over-awed and tyrannized over by a dear creature who wants only to know how impossible it is that she should escape me, in order to be as humble to me as she is to her persecuting relations!

Should I ever make the grand attempt, and fail, and should she hate me for it, her hatred can be but temporary. She has already incurred the censure of the world. She must therefore choose to be mine, for the sake of soldering up her reputation in the eye of that impudent world. For, who that knows me, and knows that she has been in my power, though but for twenty-four hours, will think her spotless as to fact, let her inclination be what it will? And then human nature is such a well-known rogue, that every man and woman judges by what each knows of him or herself, that inclination is no more to be trusted, where an opportunity is given, than I am; especially where a woman, young and blooming, loves a man well enough to go off with him; for such will be the world's construction in the present case.

She calls her maid Dorcas. No doubt, that I may hear her harmonious voice, and to give me an opportunity to pour out my soul at her feet; to renew all my vows; and to receive her pardon for the past offence: and then, with what pleasure shall I begin upon a new score, and afterwards wipe out that; and begin another, and another, till the last offence passes; and there can be no other! And once, after that, to be forgiven, will be to be forgiven for ever.

The door is again shut. Dorcas tells me, that her lady denies to admit me to dine with her; a favour I had ordered the wench to beseech her to grant me, the next time she saw her—not uncivilly, however, denies—coming-to by degrees! Nothing but the last offence, the honest wench tells me, in the language of her principals below, will do with her. The last offence is meditating. Yet this vile recreant heart of mine plays me booty.

But here I conclude; though the tyranness leaves me nothing to do but to read, write, and fret.

Subscription is formal between us. Besides, I am so much her's, that I cannot say how much I am thine or any other person's.

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE TUESDAY, MAY 9.

If, my dear, you approve of the application to my uncle Harlowe, I wish it to be made as soon as possible. We are quite out again. I have shut myself up from him. The offence indeed not so very great—and yet it is too. He had like to have got a letter. One of your's. But never will I write again, or re-peruse my papers, in an apartment where he thinks himself entitled to come. He did not read a line of it. Indeed he did not. So don't be uneasy. And depend upon future caution.

Thus it was. The sun being upon my closet, and Mr. Lovelace abroad—

She then gives Miss Howe an account of his coming by surprise upon her: of his fluttering speech: of his bold address: of her struggle with him for the letter, &c.

And now, my dear, proceeds she, I am more and more convinced, that I am too much in his power to make it prudent to stay with him. And if my friends will but give me hope, I will resolve to abandon him for ever.

O my dear! he is a fierce, a foolish, an insolent creature!—And, in truth, I hardly expect that we can accommodate. How much unhappier am I already with him than my mother ever was with my father after marriage! since (and that without any reason, any pretence in the world for it) he is for breaking my spirit before I am his, and while I am, or ought to be [O my folly, that I am not!] in my own power.

Till I can know whether my friends will give me hope or not, I must do what I never studied to do before in any case; that is, try to keep this difference open: and yet it will make me look little in my own eyes; because I shall mean by it more than I can own. But this is one of the consequences of all engagements, where the minds are unpaired—dispaired, in my case, I must say.

Let this evermore be my caution to individuals of my sex—Guard your eye: 'twill ever be in a combination against your judgment. If there are two parts to be taken, it will be for ever, traitor as it is, taking the wrong one.

If you ask me, my dear, how this caution befits me? let me tell you a secret which I have but very lately found out upon self-examination, although you seem to have made the discovery long ago: That had not my foolish eye been too much attached, I had not taken the pains to attempt, so officiously as I did, the prevention of mischief between him and some of my family, which first induced the correspondence between us, and was the occasion of bringing the apprehended mischief with double weight upon himself. My vanity and conceit, as far as I know, might have part in the inconsiderate measure: For does it not look as if I thought myself more capable of obviating difficulties than anybody else of my family?

But you must not, my dear, suppose my heart to be still a confederate with my eye. That deluded eye now clearly sees its fault, and the misled heart despises it for it. Hence the application I am making to my uncle: hence it is, that I can say (I think truly) that I would atone for my fault at any rate, even by the sacrifice of a limb or two, if that would do.

Adieu, my dearest friend!—May your heart never know the hundredth part of the pain mine at present feels! prays

Your CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER XXIII

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE WEDNESDAY, MAY 10.

I WILL write! No man shall write for me.* No woman shall hinder me from writing. Surely I am of age to distinguish between reason and caprice. I am not writing to a man, am I?—If I were carrying on a correspondence with a fellow, of whom my mother disapproved, and whom it might be improper for me to encourage, my own honour and my duty would engage my obedience. But as the case is so widely different, not a word more on this subject, I beseech you!

* Clarissa proposes Mr. Hickman to write for Miss Howe. See Letter XI. of this volume, Paragr. 5, & ult.

I much approve of your resolution to leave this wretch, if you can make it up with your uncle.

I hate the man—most heartily do I hate him, for his teasing ways. The very reading of your account of them teases me almost as much as they can you. May you have encouragement to fly the foolish wretch!

I have other reasons to wish you may: for I have just made an acquaintance with one who knows a vast deal of his private history. The man is really a villain, my dear! an execrable one! if all be true that I have heard! And yet I am promised other particulars. I do assure you, my dear friend, that, had he a dozen lives, he might have forfeited them all, and been dead twenty crimes ago.

If ever you condescend to talk familiarly with him again, ask him after Miss Betterton, and what became of her. And if he shuffle and prevaricate as to her, question him about Miss Lockyer.—O my dear, the man's a villain!

I will have your uncle sounded, as you desire, and that out of hand. But yet I am afraid of the success; and this for several reasons. 'Tis hard to say what the sacrifice of your estate would do with some people: and yet I must not, when it comes to the test, permit you to make it.

As your Hannah continues ill, I would advise you to try to attach Dorcas to your interest. Have you not been impolitically shy of her?

I wish you could come at some of his letters. Surely a man of his negligent character cannot be always guarded. If he be, and if you cannot engage your servant, I shall suspect them both. Let him be called upon at a short warning when he is writing, or when he has papers lying about, and so surprise him into negligence.

Such inquiries, I know, are of the same nature with those we make at an inn in traveling, when we look into

every corner and closet, for fear of a villain; yet should be frightened out of our wits, were we to find one. But 'tis better to detect such a one when awake and up, than to be attacked by him when in bed and asleep.

I am glad you have your clothes. But no money! No books but a Spira, a Drexelius, and a Practice of Piety! Those who sent the latter ought to have kept it for themselves—But I must hurry myself from this subject.

You have exceedingly alarmed me by what you hint of his attempt to get one of my letters. I am assured by my new informant, that he is the head of a gang of wretched (those he brought you among, no doubt, were some of them) who join together to betray innocent creatures, and to support one another afterwards by violence; and were he to come at the knowledge of the freedoms I take with him, I should be afraid to stir out without a guard.

I am sorry to tell you, that I have reason to think, that your brother has not laid aside his foolish plot. A sunburnt, sailor-looking fellow was with me just now, pretending great service to you from Captain Singleton, could he be admitted to your speech. I pleaded ignorance as to the place of your abode. The fellow was too well instructed for me to get any thing out of him.

I wept for two hours incessantly on reading your's, which enclosed that from your cousin Morden.* My dearest creature, do not desert yourself. Let your Anna Howe obey the call of that friendship which has united us as one soul, and endeavour to give you consolation.

* See Letter XIX. of this volume.

I wonder not at the melancholy reflections you so often cast upon yourself in your letters, for the step you have been forced upon on one hand, and tricked into on the other. A strange fatality! As if it were designed to show the vanity of all human prudence. I wish, my dear, as you hint, that both you and I have not too much prided ourselves in a perhaps too conscious superiority over others. But I will stop—how apt are weak minds to look out for judgments in any extraordinary event! 'Tis so far right, that it is better, and safer, and juster, to arraign ourselves, or our dearest friends, than Providence; which must always have wise ends to answer its dispensations.

But do not talk, as if one of your former, of being a warning only*—you will be as excellent an example as ever you hoped to be, as well as a warning: and that will make your story, to all that shall come to know it, of double efficacy: for were it that such a merit as yours could not ensure to herself noble and generous usage from a libertine heart, who will expect any tolerable behaviour from men of his character?

* See Vol. III. Letter XXVIII.

If you think yourself inexcusable for taking a step that put you into the way of delusion, without any intention to go off with him, what must those giddy creatures think of themselves, who, without half your provocations and inducements, and without any regard to decorum, leap walls, drop from windows, and steal away from their parents' house, to the seducer's bed, in the same day?

Again, if you are so ready to accuse yourself for dispensing with the prohibitions of the most unreasonable parents, which yet were but half-prohibitions at first, what ought those to do, who wilfully shut their ears to the advice of the most reasonable; and that perhaps, where apparent ruin, or undoubted inconvenience, is the consequence of the predetermined rashness?

And lastly, to all who will know your story, you will be an excellent example of watchfulness, and of that caution and reserve by which a prudent person, who has been supposed to be a little misled, endeavours to mend her error; and, never once losing sight of her duty, does all in her power to recover the path she has been rather driven out of than chosen to swerve from.

Come, come, my dearest friend, consider but these things; and steadily, without desponding, pursue your earnest purposes to amend what you think has been amiss; and it may not be a misfortune in the end that you have erred; especially as so little of your will was in your error.

And indeed I must say that I use the words misled, and error, and such-like, only in compliment to your own too-ready self-accusations, and to the opinion of one to whom I owe duty: for I think in my conscience, that every part of your conduct is defensible: and that those only are blamable who have no other way to clear themselves but by condemning you.

I expect, however, that such melancholy reflections as drop from your pen but too often will mingle with all your future pleasures, were you to marry Lovelace, and were he to make the best of husbands.

You was immensely happy, above the happiness of a mortal creature, before you knew him: every body almost worshipped you: envy itself, which has of late reared up its venomous head against you, was awed, by your superior worthiness, into silence and admiration. You was the soul of every company where you visited. Your elders have I seen declining to offer their opinions upon a subject till you had delivered yours; often, to save themselves the mortification of retracting theirs, when they heard yours. Yet, in all this, your sweetness of manners, your humility and affability, caused the subscription every one made to your sentiments, and to your superiority, to be equally unfeigned, and unhesitating; for they saw that their applause, and the preference they gave you to themselves, subjected not themselves to insults, nor exalted you into any visible triumph over them; for you had always something to say on every point you carried that raised the yielding heart, and left every one pleased and satisfied with themselves, though they carried not off the palm.

Your works were showed or referred to wherever fine works were talked of. Nobody had any but an inferior and second-hand praise for diligence, for economy, for reading, for writing, for memory, for facility in learning every thing laudable, and even for the more envied graces of person and dress, and an all-surpassing elegance in both, where you were known, and those subjects talked of.

The poor blessed you every step you trod: the rich thought you their honour, and took a pride that they were not obliged to descend from their own class for an example that did credit to it.

Though all men wished for you, and sought you, young as you were; yet, had not those who were brought to address you been encouraged out of sordid and spiteful views, not one of them would have dared to lift up his eyes to you.

Thus happy in all about you, thus making happy all within your circle, could you think that nothing would happen to you, to convince you that you were not to be exempted from the common lot?—To convince you,

that you were not absolutely perfect; and that you must not expect to pass through life without trial, temptation, and misfortune?

Indeed, it must be owned that no trial, no temptation, worthy of your virtue, and of your prudence, could well have attacked you sooner, because of your tender years, and more effectually, than those heavy ones under which you struggle; since it must be allowed, that your equanimity and foresight made you superior to common accidents; for are not most of the troubles that fall to the lot of common mortals brought upon themselves either by their too large desires, or too little deserts?—Cases, both, from which you stood exempt.—It was therefore to be some man, or some worse spirit in the shape of one, that, formed on purpose, was to be sent to invade you; while as many other such spirits as there are persons in your family were permitted to take possession, severally, in one dark hour, of the heart of every one of it, there to sit perching, perhaps, and directing every motion to the motions of the seducer without, in order to irritate, to provoke, to push you forward to meet him.

Upon the whole, there seems, as I have often said, to have been a kind of fate in your error, if it were an error; and this perhaps admitted for the sake of a better example to be collected from your SUFFERINGS, than could have been given, had you never erred: for my dear, the time of ADVERSITY is your SHINING-TIME. I see it evidently, that adversity must call forth graces and beauties which could not have been brought to light in a run of that prosperous fortune which attended you from your cradle till now; admirably as you became, and, as we all thought, greatly as you deserved that prosperity.

All the matter is, the trial must be grievous to you. It is to me: it is to all who love you, and looked upon you as one set aloft to be admired and imitated, and not as a mark, as you have lately found, for envy to shoot its shafts at.

Let what I have written above have its due weight with you, my dear; and then, as warm imaginations are not without a mixture of enthusiasm, your Anna Howe, who, on re-perusal of it, imagines it to be in a style superior to her usual style, will be ready to flatter herself that she has been in a manner inspired with the hints that have comforted and raised the dejected heart of her suffering friend; who, from such hard trials, in a bloom so tender, may find at times her spirits sunk too low to enable her to pervade the surrounding darkness, which conceals from her the hopeful dawning of the better day which awaits her.

I will add no more at present, than that I am Your ever faithful and affectionate ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XXIV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE FRIDAY, MAY 12.

I must be silent, my exalted friend, under praises that oppress my heart with a consciousness of not deserving them; at the same time that the generous design of those praises raises and comforts it: for it is a charming thing to stand high in the opinion of those we love; and to find that there are souls that can carry their friendships beyond accidents, beyond body and ties of blood. Whatever, my dearest creature, is my shining-time, the time of a friend's adversity is yours. And it would be almost a fault in me to regret those afflictions, which give you an opportunity so gloriously to exert those qualities, which not only ennoble our sex, but dignify human nature.

But let me proceed to subjects less agreeable.

I am sorry you have reason to think Singleton's projects are not at an end. But who knows what the sailor had to propose?—Yet had any good been intended me, this method would hardly have been fallen upon.

Depend upon it, my dear, your letters shall be safe.

I have made a handle of Mr. Lovelace's bold attempt and freedom, as I told you I would, to keep him ever since at a distance, that I may have an opportunity to see the success of the application to my uncle, and to be at liberty to embrace any favourable overtures that may arise from it. Yet he has been very importunate, and twice brought Mr. Mennell from Mrs. Fretchvill to talk about the house.—If I should be obliged to make up with him again, I shall think I am always doing myself a spite.

As to what you mention of his newly-detected crimes; and your advice to attach Dorcas to my interest; and to come at some of his letters; these things will require more or less of my attention, as I may hope favour or not from my uncle Harlowe.

I am sorry that my poor Hannah continues ill. Pray, my dear, inform yourself, and let me know, whether she wants any thing that befits her case.

I will not close this letter till to-morrow is over; for I am resolved to go to church; and this as well for the sake of my duty, as to see if I am at liberty to go out when I please without being attended or accompanied.

SUNDAY, MAY 14.

I have not been able to avoid a short debate with Mr. Lovelace. I had ordered a coach to the door. When I had noticed that it was come, I went out of my chamber to go to it; but met him dressed on the stairs head, with a book in his hand, but without his hat and sword. He asked, with an air very solemn yet respectful, if I were going abroad. I told him I was. He desired leave to attend me, if I were going to church. I refused him. And then he complained heavily of my treatment of him; and declared that he would not live such another week as the past, for the world.

I owned to him very frankly, that I had made an application to my friends; and that I was resolved to keep myself to myself till I knew the issue of it.

He coloured, and seemed surprised. But checking himself in something he was going to say, he pleaded my danger from Singleton, and again desired to attend me.

And then he told me, that Mrs. Fretchville had desired to continue a fortnight longer in the house. She

found, said he, that I was unable to determine about entering upon it; and now who knows when such a vapourish creature will come to a resolution? This, Madam, has been an unhappy week; for had I not stood upon such bad terms with you, you might have been new mistress of that house; and probably had my cousin Montague, if not Lady Betty, actually with you.

And so, Sir, taking all you say for granted, your cousin Montague cannot come to Mrs. Sinclair's? What, pray, is her objection to Mrs. Sinclair's? Is this house fit for me to live in a month or two, and not fit for any of your relations for a few days?—And Mrs. Fretchville has taken more time too!—Then, pushing by him, I hurried down stairs.

He called to Dorcas to bring him his sword and hat; and following me down into the passage, placed himself between me and the door; and again desired leave to attend me.

Mrs. Sinclair came out at that instant, and asked me, if I did not choose a dish of chocolate?

I wish, Mrs. Sinclair, said I, you would take this man in with you to your chocolate. I don't know whether I am at liberty to stir out without his leave or not.

Then turning to him, I asked, if he kept me there his prisoner?

Dorcas just then bringing him his sword and hat, he opened the street-door, and taking my reluctant hand, led me, in a very obsequious manner, to the coach. People passing by, stopped, stared, and whispered—But he is so graceful in his person and dress, that he generally takes every eye.

I was uneasy to be so gazed at; and he stepped in after me, and the coachman drove to St. Paul's.

He was very full of assiduities all the way; while I was as reserved as possible: and when I returned, dined, as I had done the greatest part of the week, by myself.

He told me, upon my resolving to do so, that although he would continue his passive observance till I knew the issue of my application, yet I must expect, that then I should not rest one moment till I had fixed his happy day: for that his very soul was fretted with my slights, resentments, and delays.

A wretch! when can I say, to my infinite regret, on a double account, that all he complains of is owing to himself!

O that I may have good tidings from my uncle!

Adieu, my dearest friend—This shall lie ready for an exchange (as I hope for one to-morrow from you) that will decide, as I may say, the destiny of

Your CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER XXV

MISS HOWE, TO MRS. JUDITH NORTON THURSDAY, MAY 11.

GOOD MRS. NORTON,

Cannot you, without naming me as an adviser, who am hated by the family, contrive a way to let Mrs. Harlowe know, that in an accidental conversation with me, you had been assured that my beloved friend pines after a reconciliation with her relations? That she has hitherto, in hopes of it, refused to enter into any obligation that shall be in the least a hinderance [sic] to it: that she would fain avoid giving Mr. Lovelace a right to make her family uneasy in relation to her grandfather's estate: that all she wishes for still is to be indulged in her choice of a single life, and, on that condition, would make her father's pleasure her's with regard to that estate: that Mr. Lovelace is continually pressing her to marry him; and all his friends likewise: but that I am sure she has so little liking to the man, because of his faulty morals, and of the antipathy of her relations to him, that if she had any hope given her of a reconciliation, she would forego all thoughts of him, and put herself into her father's protection. But that their resolution must be speedy; for otherwise she would find herself obliged to give way to his pressing entreaties; and it might then be out of her power to prevent disagreeable litigations.

I do assure you, Mrs. Norton, upon my honour, that our dearest friend knows nothing of this procedure of mine: and therefore it is proper to acquaint you, in confidence, with my grounds for it.—These are they:

She had desired me to let Mr. Hickman drop hints to the above effect to her uncle Harlowe; but indirectly, as from himself, lest, if the application should not be attended with success, and Mr. Lovelace (who already takes it ill that he has so little of her favour) come to know it, she may be deprived of every protection, and be perhaps subjected to great inconveniencies from so haughty a spirit.

Having this authority from her, and being very solicitous about the success of the application, I thought, that if the weight of so good a wife, mother, and sister, as Mrs. Harlowe is known to be, were thrown into the same scale with that of Mr. John Harlowe (supposing he could be engaged) it could hardly fail of making a due impression.

Mr. Hickman will see Mr. John Harlowe to-morrow: by that time you may see Mrs. Harlowe. If Mr. Hickman finds the old gentleman favourable, he will tell him, that you will have seen Mrs. Harlowe upon the same account; and will advise him to join in consultation with her how best to proceed to melt the most obdurate heart in the world.

This is the fair state of the matter, and my true motive for writing to you. I leave all, therefore, to your discretion; and most heartily wish success to it; being of opinion that Mr. Lovelace cannot possibly deserve our admirable friend: nor indeed know I the man who does.

Pray acquaint me by a line of the result of your interposition. If it prove not such as may be reasonably hoped for, our dear friend shall know nothing of this step from me; and pray let her not from you. For, in that case, it would only give deeper grief to a heart already too much afflicted. I am, dear and worthy Mrs.

Norton,

Your true friend, ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XXVI

MRS. NORTON, TO MISS HOWE SATURDAY, MAY 13.

DEAR MADAM,

My heart is almost broken, to be obliged to let you know, that such is the situation of things in the family of my ever-dear Miss Harlowe, that there can be at present no success expected from any application in her favour. Her poor mother is to be pitied. I have a most affecting letter from her; but must not communicate it to you; and she forbids me to let it be known that she writes upon the subject; although she is compelled, as it were, to do it, for the ease of her own heart. I mention it therefore in confidence.

I hope in God that my beloved young lady has preserved her honour inviolate. I hope there is not a man breathing who could attempt a sacrilege so detestable. I have no apprehension of a failure in a virtue so established. God for ever keep so pure a heart out of the reach of surprises and violence! Ease, dear Madam, I beseech you, my over-anxious heart, by one line, by the bearer, although but one line, to acquaint me (as surely you can) that her honour is unsullied.—If it be not, adieu to all the comforts this life can give: since none will it be able to afford

To the poor JUDITH NORTON.

LETTER XXVII

MISS HOWE, TO MRS. JUDITH NORTON SATURDAY EVENING, MAY 13.

DEAR, GOOD WOMAN,

Your beloved's honour is inviolate!—Must be inviolate! and will be so, in spite of men and devils. Could I have had hope of a reconciliation, all my view was, that she should not have had this man.—All that can be said now, is, she must run the risk of a bad husband: she of whom no man living is worthy!

You pity her mother—so do not I! I pity no mother that puts it out of her power to show maternal love, and humanity, in order to patch up for herself a precarious and sorry quiet, which every blast of wind shall disturb.

I hate tyrants in ever form and shape: but paternal and maternal tyrants are the worst of all: for they can have no bowels.

I repeat, that I pity none of them. Our beloved friend only deserves pity. She had never been in the hands of this man, but for them. She is quite blameless. You don't know all her story. Were I to tell you that she had no intention to go off with this man, it would avail her nothing. It would only deserve to condemn, with those who drove her to extremities, him who now must be her refuge. I am

Your sincere friend and servant, ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XXVIII

MRS. HARLOWE, TO MRS. NORTON [NOT COMMUNICATED TILL THE LETTERS CAME TO BE COLLECTED.] SATURDAY, MAY 13.

I return an answer in writing, as I promised, to your communication. But take no notice either to my Bella's Betty, (who I understand sometimes visits you,) or to the poor wretch herself, nor to any body, that I do write. I charge you don't. My heart is full: writing may give some vent to my griefs, and perhaps I may write what lies most upon my heart, without confining myself strictly to the present subject.

You know how dear this ungrateful creature ever was to us all. You know how sincerely we joined with every one of those who ever had seen her, or conversed with her, to praise and admire her; and exceeded in our praise even the bounds of that modesty, which, because she was our own, should have restrained us; being of opinion, that to have been silent in the praise of so apparent a merit must rather have argued blindness or affectation in us, than that we should incur the censure of vain partiality to our own.

When therefore any body congratulated us on such a daughter, we received their congratulations without any diminution. If it was said, you are happy in this child! we owned, that no parents ever were happier in a child. If, more particularly, they praised her dutiful behaviour to us, we said, she knew not how to offend. If it were said, Miss Clarissa Harlowe has a wit and penetration beyond her years; we, instead of disallowing it, would add—and a judgment no less extraordinary than her wit. If her prudence was praised, and a forethought, which every one saw supplied what only years and experience gave to others—nobody need to scruple taking lessons from Clarissa Harlowe, was our proud answer.

Forgive me, O forgive me, my dear Norton—But I know you will; for yours, when good, was this child, and your glory as well as mine.

But have you not heard strangers, as she passed to and from church, stop to praise the angel of a creature, as they called her; when it was enough for those who knew who she was, to cry, Why, it is Miss Clarissa Harlowe! —as if every body were obliged to know, or to have heard of Clarissa Harlowe, and of her excellencies. While, accustomed to praise, it was too familiar to her, to cause her to alter either her look or

her pace.

For my own part, I could not stifle a pleasure that had perhaps a faulty vanity for its foundation, whenever I was spoken of, or addressed to, as the mother of so sweet a child: Mr. Harlowe and I, all the time, loving each other the better for the share each had in such a daughter.

Still, still indulge the fond, the overflowing heart of a mother! I could dwell for ever upon the remembrance of what she was, would but that remembrance banish from my mind what she is!

In her bosom, young as she was, could I repose all my griefs—sure of receiving from her prudence and advice as well as comfort; and both insinuated in so dutiful a manner, that it was impossible to take those exceptions which the distance of years and character between a mother and a daughter would have made one apprehensive of from any other daughter. She was our glory when abroad, our delight when at home. Every body was even covetous of her company; and we grudged her to our brothers Harlowe, and to our sister and brother Hervey. No other contention among us, then, but who should be next favoured by her. No chiding ever knew she from us, but the chiding of lovers, when she was for shutting herself up too long together from us, in pursuit of those charming amusements and useful employments, for which, however, the whole family was the better.

Our other children had reason (good children as they always were) to think themselves neglected. But they likewise were so sensible of their sister's superiority, and of the honour she reflected upon the whole family, that they confessed themselves eclipsed, without envying the eclipser. Indeed, there was not any body so equal with her, in their own opinions, as to envy what all aspired but to emulate. The dear creature, you know, my Norton, gave an eminence to us all!

Then her acquirements. Her skill in music, her fine needle-works, her elegance in dress; for which she was so much admired, that the neighbouring ladies used to say, that they need not fetch fashions from London; since whatever Miss Clarissa Harlowe wore was the best fashion, because her choice of natural beauties set those of art far behind them. Her genteel ease, and fine turn of person; her deep reading, and these, joined to her open manners, and her cheerful modesty—O my good Norton, what a sweet child was once my Clary Harlowe!

This, and more, you knew her to be: for many of her excellencies were owing to yourself; and with the milk you gave her, you gave her what no other nurse in the world could give her.

And do you think, my worthy woman, do you think, that the wilful lapse of such a child is to be forgiven? Can she herself think that she deserves not the severest punishment for the abuse of such talents as were intrusted to her?

Her fault was a fault of premeditation, of cunning, of contrivance. She had deceived every body's expectations. Her whole sex, as well as the family she sprung from, is disgraced by it.

Would any body ever have believed that such a young creature as this, who had by her advice saved even her over-lively friend from marrying a fop, and a libertine, would herself have gone off with one of the vilest and most notorious of libertines? A man whose character she knew; and knew it to be worse than the character of him from whom she saved her friend; a man against whom she was warned: one who had her brother's life in her hands; and who constantly set our whole family at defiance.

Think for me, my good Norton; think what my unhappiness must be both as a wife and a mother. What restless days, what sleepless nights; yet my own rankling anguish endeavoured to be smoothed over, to soften the anguish of fiercer spirits, and to keep them from blazing out to further mischief! O this naughty, naughty girl, who knew so well what she did; and who could look so far into consequences, that we thought she would have died rather than have done as she had done!

Her known character for prudence leaves her absolutely without excuse. How then can I offer to plead for her, if, through motherly indulgence, I would forgive her myself?—And have we not moreover suffered all the disgrace that can befall us? Has not she?

If now she has so little liking to his morals, has she not reason before to have as little? Or has she suffered by them in her own person?—O my good woman, I doubt—I doubt—Will not the character of the man make one doubt an angel, if once in his power? The world will think the worst. I am told it does. So likewise her father fears; her brother hears; and what can I do?

Our antipathy to him she knew before, as well as his character. These therefore cannot be new motives without a new reason.—O my dear Mrs. Norton, how shall I, how can you, support ourselves under the apprehensions to which these thoughts lead!

He continually pressing her, you say, to marry him: his friends likewise. She has reason, no doubt she has reason, for this application to us: and her crime is glossed over, to bring her to us with new disgrace! Whither, whither, does one guilty step lead the misguided heart!—And now, truly, to save a stubborn spirit, we are only to be sounded, that the application may be occasionally retracted or denied!

Upon the whole: were I inclined to plead for her, it is now the most improper of all times. Now that my brother Harlowe has discouraged (as he last night came hither on purpose to tell us) Mr. Hickman's insinuated application; and been applauded for it. Now, that my brother Antony is intending to carry his great fortune, through her fault, into another family:—she expecting, no doubt, herself to be put into her grandfather's estate, in consequence of a reconciliation, and as a reward for her fault: and insisting still upon the same terms which she offered before, and which were rejected—Not through my fault, I am sure, rejected!

From all these things you will return such an answer as the case requires. It might cost me the peace of my whole life, at this time, to move for her. God forgive her! If I do, nobody else will. And let it, for your own sake, as well as mine, be a secret that you and I have entered upon this subject. And I desire you not to touch upon it again but by particular permission: for, O my dear, good woman, it sets my heart a bleeding in as many streams as there are veins in it!

Yet think me not impenetrable by a proper contrition and remorse—But what a torment is it to have a will without a power!

Adieu! adieu! God give us both comfort; and to the once dear—the ever- dear creature (for can a mother forget her child?) repentance, deep repentance! and as little suffering as may befit his blessed will, and her grievous fault, prays

Your real friend, CHARLOTTE HARLOWE.

LETTER XXIX

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE SUNDAY, MAY 14.

How it is now, my dear, between you and Mr. Lovelace, I cannot tell. But, wicked as the man is, I am afraid he must be your lord and master.

I called him by several very hard names in my last. I had but just heard of some of his vilenesses, when I sat down to write; so my indignation was raised. But on inquiry, and recollection, I find that the facts laid to his charge were all of them committed some time ago—not since he has had strong hopes of your favour.

This is saying something for him. His generous behaviour to the innkeeper's daughter is a more recent instance to his credit; to say nothing of the universal good character he has as a kind landlord. And then I approve much of the motion he made to put you in possession of Mrs. Fretchville's house, while he continues at the other widow's, till you agree that one house shall hold you. I wish this were done. Be sure you embrace this offer, (if you do not soon meet at the altar,) and get one of his cousins with you.

Were you once married, I should think you cannot be very unhappy, though you may not be so happy with him as you deserve to be. The stake he has in his country, and his reversions; the care he takes of his affairs; his freedom from obligation; nay, his pride, with your merit, must be a tolerable security for you, I should think. Though particulars of his wickedness, as they come to my knowledge, hurt and incense me; yet, after all, when I give myself time to reflect, all that I have heard of him to his disadvantage was comprehended in the general character given of him long ago, by Lord M.'s and his own dismissed bailiff,* and which was confirmed to me by Mrs. Fortescue, as I heretofore told you,** and to you by Mrs. Greme.***

* See Vol. I. Letter IV. ** Ibid. Letter XII. *** See Vol. III. Letter VI.

You can have nothing, therefore, I think, to be deeply concerned about, but his future good, and the bad example he may hereafter set to his own family. These indeed are very just concerns: but were you to leave him now, either with or without his consent, his fortunes and alliances so considerable, his person and address so engaging, (every one excusing you now on those accounts, and because of your relations' follies,) it would have a very ill appearance for your reputation. I cannot, therefore, on the most deliberate consideration, advise you to think of that, while you have no reason to doubt his honour. May eternal vengeance pursue the villain, if he give room for an apprehension of this nature!

Yet his teasing ways are intolerable; his acquiescence with your slight delays, and his resignedness to the distance you now keep him at, (for a fault so much slighter, as he must think, than the punishment,) are unaccountable: He doubts your love of him, that is very probable; but you have reason to be surprised at his want of ardour; a blessing so great within his reach, as I may say.

By the time you have read to this place, you will have no doubt of what has been the issue of the conference between the two gentlemen. I am equally shocked, and enraged against them all. Against them all, I say; for I have tried your good Norton's weight with your mother, (though at first I did not intend to tell you so,) to the same purpose as the gentleman sounded your uncle. Never were there such determined brutes in the world! Why should I mince the matter? Yet would I fain, methinks, make an exception for your mother.

Your uncle will have it that you are ruined. 'He can believe every thing bad of a creature, he says, who could run away with a man; with such a one especially as Lovelace. They expected applications from you, when some heavy distress had fallen upon you. But they are all resolved not to stir an inch in your favour; no, not to save your life!'

My dearest soul, resolve to assert your right. Claim your own, and go and live upon it, as you ought. Then, if you marry not, how will the wretches creep to you for your reversionsary dispositions!

You were accused (as in your aunt's letter) 'of premeditation and contrivance in your escape.' Instead of pitying you, the mediating person was called upon 'to pity them; who once, your uncle said, doated upon you: who took no joy but in your presence: who devoured your words as you spoke them: who trod over again your footsteps, as you walked before them.'—And I know not what of this sort.

Upon the whole, it is now evident to me, and so it must be to you, when you read this letter, that you must be his. And the sooner you are so the better. Shall we suppose that marriage is not in your power?—I cannot have patience to suppose that.

I am concerned, methinks, to know how you will do to condescend, (now you see you must be his,) after you have kept him at such a distance; and for the revenge his pride may put him upon taking for it. But let me tell you, that if my going up, and sharing fortunes with you, will prevent such a noble creature from stooping too low; much more, were it likely to prevent your ruin, I would not hesitate a moment about it. What is the whole world to me, weighed against such a friend as you are? Think you, that any of the enjoyments of this life could be enjoyments to me, were you involved in calamities, from which I could either alleviate or relieve you, by giving up those enjoyments? And what in saying this, and acting up to it, do I offer you, but the fruits of a friendship your worth has created?

Excuse my warmth of expression. The warmth of my heart wants none. I am enraged at your relations; for, bad as what I have mentioned is, I have not told you all; nor now, perhaps, ever will. I am angry at my own mother's narrowness of mind, and at her indiscriminate adherence to old notions. And I am exasperated against your foolish, your low-vanity'd Lovelace. But let us stoop to take the wretch as he is, and make the

best of him, since you are destined to stoop, to keep grovellers and worldlings in countenance. He had not been guilty of a direct indecency to you. Nor dare he—not so much of a devil as that comes to neither. Had he such villainous intentions, so much in his power as you are, they would have shewn themselves before now to such a penetrating and vigilant eye, and to such a pure heart as yours. Let us save the wretch then, if we can, though we soil our fingers in lifting him up his dirt.

There is yet, to a person of your fortune and independence, a good deal to do, if you enter upon those terms which ought to be entered upon. I don't find that he has once talked of settlements; nor yet of the license. A foolish wretch!—But as your evil destiny has thrown you out of all other protection and mediation, you must be father, mother, uncle, to yourself; and enter upon the requisite points for yourself. It is hard upon you; but indeed you must. Your situation requires it. What room for delicacy now?—Or would you have me write to him? yet that would be the same thing as if you were to write yourself. Yet write you should, I think, if you cannot speak. But speaking is certainly best: for words leave no traces; they pass as breath; and mingle with air; and may be explained with latitude. But the pen is a witness on record.

I know the gentleness of your spirit; I know the laudable pride of your heart; and the just notion you have of the dignity of our sex in these delicate points. But once more, all this in nothing now: your honour is concerned that the dignity I speak of should not be stood upon.

'Mr. Lovelace,' would I say; yet hate the foolish fellow for his low, his stupid pride, in wishing to triumph over the dignity of his own wife;— 'I am by your means deprived of every friend I have in the world. In what light am I to look upon you? I have well considered every thing. You have made some people, much against my liking, think me a wife: others know I am not married; nor do I desire any body should believe I am: Do you think your being here in the same house with me can be to my reputation? You talked to me of Mrs. Fretchville's house.' This will bring him to renew his last discourse on the subject, if he does not revive it of himself. 'If Mrs. Fretchville knows not her own mind, what is her house to me? You talked of bringing up your cousin Montague to bear me company: if my brother's schemes be your pretence for not going yourself to fetch her, you can write to her. I insist upon bringing these two points to an issue: off or on ought to be indifferent to me, if so to them.'

Such a declaration must bring all forward. There are twenty ways, my dear, that you would find out for another in your circumstances. He will disdain, from his native insolence, to have it thought he has any body to consult. Well then, will he not be obliged to declare himself? And if he does, no delays on your side, I beseech you. Give him the day. Let it be a short one. It would be derogating from your own merit, not to be so explicit as he ought to be, to seem but to doubt his meaning; and to wait for that explanation for which I should ever despise him, if he makes it necessary. Twice already have you, my dear, if not oftener modesty'd away such opportunities as you ought not to have slipped. As to settlements, if they come not in naturally, e'en leave them to his own justice, and to the justice of his family, And there's an end of the matter.

This is my advice: mend it as circumstances offer, and follow your own. But indeed, my dear, this, or something like it, would I do. And let him tell me afterwards, if he dared or would, that he humbled down to his shoe-buckles the person it would have been his glory to exalt.

Support yourself, mean time, with reflections worthy of yourself. Though tricked into this man's power, you are not meanly subjugated to it. All his reverence you command, or rather, as I may say, inspire; since it was never known, that he had any reverence for aught that was good, till you was with him: and he professes now and then to be so awed and charmed by your example, as that the force of it shall reclaim him.

I believe you will have a difficult task to keep him to it; but the more will be your honour, if you effect his reformation: and it is my belief, that if you can reclaim this great, this specious deceiver, who has, morally speaking, such a number of years before him, you will save from ruin a multitude of innocents; for those seem to me to have been the prey for which he has spread his wicked snares. And who knows but, for this very purpose, principally, a person may have been permitted to swerve, whose heart or will never was in her error, and who has so much remorse upon her for having, as she thinks, erred at all? Adieu, my dearest friend.

ANNA HOWE. ENCLOSED IN THE ABOVE.

I must trouble you with my concerns, though your own are so heavy upon you. A piece of news I have to tell you. Your uncle Antony is disposed to marry. With whom, think you? with my mother. True indeed. Your family knows it. All is laid with redoubled malice at your door. And there the old soul himself lays it.

Take no notice of this intelligence, not so much as in your letters to me, for fear of accidents.

I think it can't do. But were I to provoke my mother, that might afford a pretence. Else, I should have been with you before now, I fancy.

The first likelihood that appears to me of encouragement, I dismiss Hickman, that's certain. If my mother disoblige me in so important an article, I shan't think of obliging her in such another. It is impossible, surely, that the desire of popping me off to that honest man can be with such a view.

I repeat, that it cannot come to any thing. But these widows—Then such a love in us all, both old and young, of being courted and admired!—and so irresistible to their elderships to be flattered, that all power is not over with them; but that they may still class and prank it with their daughters.—It vexed me heartily to have her tell me of this proposal with self-complaisant simperings; and yet she affected to speak of it as if she had no intention to encourage it.

These antiquated bachelors (old before they believe themselves to be so) imagine that when they have once persuaded themselves to think of the state, they have nothing more to do than to make their minds known to the woman.

Your uncle's overgrown fortune is indeed a bait; a tempting one. A saucy daughter to be got rid of! The memory of the father of that daughter not precious enough to weigh much!—But let him advance if he dare—let her encourage—but I hope she won't.

Excuse me, my dear. I am nettled. They have fearfully rumbled my gorget. You'll think me faulty. So, I won't put my name to this separate paper. Other hands may resemble mine. You did not see me write it.

LETTER XXX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE MONDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 15.

Now indeed it is evident, my best, my only friend, that I have but one choice to make. And now I do find that I have carried my resentment against this man too far; since now I am to appear as if under an obligation to his patience with me for a conduct, which perhaps he will think (if not humoursome and childish) plainly demonstrative of my little esteem of him; of but a secondary esteem at least, where before, his pride, rather than his merit, had made him expect a first. O my dear! to be cast upon a man that is not a generous man; that is indeed a cruel man! a man that is capable of creating a distress to a young creature, who, by her evil destiny is thrown into his power; and then of enjoying it, as I may say! [I verily think I may say so, of this savage!]
—What a fate is mine!

You give me, my dear, good advice, as to the peremptory manner in which I ought to treat him: But do you consider to whom it is that you give it?— And then should I take it, and should he be capable of delay, I unprotected, desolate, nobody to fly to, in what a wretched light must I stand in his eyes; and, what is still as bad, in my own! O my dear, see you not, as I do, that the occasion for this my indelicate, my shocking situation should never have been given by me, of all creatures; since I am unequal, utterly unequal, to the circumstances to which my inconsideration has reduced me?—What! I to challenge a man for a husband!—I to exert myself to quicken the delayer in his resolutions! and, having as you think lost an opportunity, to begin to try to recall it, as from myself, and for myself! to threaten him, as I may say, into the marriage state! —O my dear! if this be right to be done, how difficult is it, where modesty and self (or where pride, if you please) is concerned, to do that right? or, to express myself in your words, to be father, mother, uncle, to myself!—especially where one thinks a triumph over one is intended.

You say, you have tried Mrs. Norton's weight with my mother—bad as the returns are which my application by Mr. Hickman has met with, you tell me, 'that you have not acquainted me with all the bad, nor now, perhaps, ever will.' But why so, my dear? What is the bad, what can be the bad, which now you will never tell me of?—What worse, than renounce me! and for ever! 'My uncle, you say, believes me ruined: he declares that he can believe every thing bad of a creature who could run away with a man: and they have all made a resolution not to stir an inch in my favour; no, not to save my life!'—Have you worse than this, my dear, behind?—Surely my father has not renewed his dreadful malediction!—Surely, if so, my mother has not joined in it! Have my uncles given their sanction, and made it a family act? And themselves thereby more really faulty, than ever THEY suppose me to be, though I the cause of that greater fault in them?—What, my dear, is the worst, that you will leave for ever unrevealed?

O Lovelace! why comest thou not just now, while these black prospects are before me? For now, couldst thou look into my heart, wouldst thou see a distress worthy of thy barbarous triumph!

I was forced to quit my pen. And you say you have tried Mrs. Norton's weight with my mother?

What is done cannot be remedied: but I wish you had not taken a step of this importance to me without first consulting me. Forgive me, my dear, but I must tell you that that high-soul'd and noble friendship which you have ever avowed with so obliging and so uncommon a warmth, although it has been always the subject of my grateful admiration, has been often the ground of my apprehension, because of its unbridled fervour.

Well, but now to look forward, you are of opinion that I must be his: and that I cannot leave him with reputation to myself, whether with or without his consent. I must, if so, make the best of the bad matter.

He went out in the morning; intending not to return to dinner, unless (as he sent me word) I would admit him to dine with me.

I excused myself. The man, whose anger is now to be of such high importance to me, was, it seems, displeased.

As he (as well as I) expected that I should receive a letter from you this day by Collins, I suppose he will not be long before he returns; and then, possibly, he is to be mighty stately, mighty mannish, mighty coy, if you please! And then must I be very humble, very submissive, and try to insinuate myself into his good graces: with downcast eye, if not by speech, beg his forgiveness for the distance I have so perversely kept him at?—Yes, I warrant!—But I shall see how this behaviour will sit upon me!—You have always rallied me upon my meekness, I think: well then, I will try if I can be still meeker, shall I!—O my dear!—

But let me sit with my hands before me, all patience, all resignation; for I think I hear him coming up. Or shall I roundly accost him, in the words, in the form, which you, my dear, prescribed?

He is come in. He has sent to me, all impatience, as Dorcas says, by his aspect.—But I cannot, cannot see him!

MONDAY NIGHT.

The contents of your letter, and my own heavy reflections, rendered me incapable of seeing this expecting man. The first word he asked Dorcas, was, If I had received a letter since he had been out? She told me this; and her answer, that I had; and was fasting, and had been in tears ever since.

He sent to desire an interview with me.

I answered by her, That I was not very well. In the morning, if better, I would see him as soon as he pleased.

Very humble! was it not, my dear? Yet he was too royal to take it for humility; for Dorcas told me, he rubbed one side of his face impatiently; and said a rash word, and was out of humour; stalking about the room.

Half an hour later, he sent again; desiring very earnestly, that I should admit him to supper with me. He

would enter upon no subjects of conversation but what I should lead to.

So I should have been at liberty, you see, to court him!

I again desired to be excused.

Indeed, my dear, my eyes were swelled: I was very low spirited; and could not think of entering all at once, after the distance I had kept him at for several days, into the freedom of conversation which the utter rejection I have met with from my relations, as well as your advice, has made necessary.

He sent up to tell me, that as he heard I was fasting, if I would promise to eat some chicken which Mrs. Sinclair had ordered for supper, he would acquiesce.—Very kind in his anger! Is he not?

I promised that I would. Can I be more preparatively condescending?—How happy, I'll warrant, if I may meet him in a kind and forgiving humour!

I hate myself! But I won't be insulted. Indeed I won't, for all this.

LETTER XXXI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE TUESDAY, MAY 16.

I think once more we seem to be in a kind of train; but through a storm. I will give you the particulars.

I heard him in the dining-room at five in the morning. I had rested very ill, and was up too. But opened not my door till six: when Dorcas brought me his request for my company.

He approached me, and taking my hand, as I entered the dining-room, I went not to bed, Madam, till two, said he; yet slept not a wink. For God's sake, torment me not, as you have done for a week past.

He paused. I was silent.

At first, proceeded he, I thought your resentment of a curiosity, in which I had been disappointed, could not be deep; and that it would go off of itself: But, when I found it was to be kept up till you knew the success of some new overtures which you had made, and which, complied with, might have deprived me of you for ever, how, Madam, could I support myself under the thoughts of having, with such an union of interests, made so little impression upon your mind in my favour?

He paused again. I was still silent. He went on.

I acknowledge that I have a proud heart, Madam. I cannot but hope for some instances of previous and preferable favour from the lady I am ambitious to call mine; and that her choice of me should not appear, not flagrantly appear, directed by the perverseness of her selfish persecutors, who are my irreconcilable enemies.

More to the same purpose he said. You know, my dear, the room he had given me to recriminate upon him in twenty instances. I did not spare him.

Every one of these instances, said I, (after I had enumerated them) convinces me of your pride indeed, Sir, but not of your merit. I confess, that I have as much pride as you can have, although I hope it is of another kind than that you so readily avow. But if, Sir, you have the least mixture in yours of that pride which may be expected, and thought laudable, in a man of your birth, alliances, and fortune, you should rather wish, I will presume to say, to promote what you call my pride, than either to suppress it, or to regret that I have it. It is this my acknowledged pride, proceeded I, that induces me to tell you, Sir, that I think it beneath me to disown what have been my motives for declining, for some days past, any conversation with you, or visit from Mr. Mennell, that might lead to points out of my power to determine upon, until I heard from my uncle Harlowe; whom, I confess, I have caused to be sounded, whether I might be favoured with his interest to obtain for me a reconciliation with my friends, upon terms which I had caused to be proposed.

I know not, said he, and suppose must not presume to ask, what those terms were. But I can but too well guess at them; and that I was to have been the preliminary sacrifice. But you must allow me, Madam, to say, That as much as I admire the nobleness of your sentiments in general, and in particular that laudable pride which you have spoken of, I wish that I could compliment you with such an uniformity in it, as had set you as much above all submission to minds implacable and unreasonable, (I hope I may, without offence, say, that your brother's and sister's are such,) as it has above all favour and condescension to me.

Duty and nature, Sir, call upon me to make the submissions you speak of: there is a father, there is a mother, there are uncles in the one case, to justify and demand those submissions. What, pray, Sir, can be pleaded for the condescension, as you call it? Will you say, your merits, either with regard to them, or to myself, may?

This, Madam, to be said, after the persecutions of those relations! After what you have suffered! After what you have made me hope! Let me, my dearest creature, ask you, (we have been talking of pride,) What sort of pride must his be, which can dispense with inclination and preference in the lady whom he adores?—What must that love—

Love, Sir! who talks of love?—Was not merit the thing we were talking of?—Have I ever professed, have I ever required of you professions of a passion of that nature?—But there is no end of these debating; each so faultless, each so full of self—

I do not think myself faultless, Madam:—but—

But what, Sir!—Would you ever more argue with me, as if you were a child?—Seeking palliations, and making promises?—Promises of what, Sir? Of being in future the man it is a shame a gentleman is not?—Of being the man—

Good God! interrupted he, with eyes lifted up, if thou wert to be thus severe—

Well, well, Sir! [impatiently] I need only to observe, that all this vast difference in sentiment shows how

unpaired our minds are—so let us—

Let us what, Madam?—My soul is rising into tumults! And he looked so wildly, that I was a good deal terrified—Let us what, Madam?—

I was, however, resolved not to desert myself—Why, Sir! let us resolve to quit every regard for each other.—Nay, flame not out—I am a poor weak-minded creature in some things: but where what I should be, or not deserve to live, if I am not is in the question, I have a great and invincible spirit, or my own conceit betrays me—let us resolve to quit every regard for each other that is more than civil. This you may depend upon: I will never marry any other man. I have seen enough of your sex; at least of you.—A single life shall ever be my choice: while I will leave you at liberty to pursue your own.

Indifference, worse than indifference! said he, in a passion—

Interrupting him—Indifference let it be—you have not (in my opinion at least) deserved that it should be other: if you have in your own, you have cause (at least your pride has) to hate me for misjudging you.

Dearest, dearest creature! snatching my hand with fierceness, let me beseech you to be uniformly noble! Civil regards, Madam!—Civil regards! —Can you so expect to narrow and confine such a passion as mine?

Such a passion as yours, Mr. Lovelace, deserves to be narrowed and confined. It is either the passion you do not think it, or I do not. I question whether your mind is capable of being so narrowed and so widened, as is necessary to make it be what I wish it to be. Lift up your hands and your eyes, Sir, in silent wonder, if you please; but what does that wonder express, what does it convince me of, but that we are not born for one another.

By my soul, said he, and grasped my hand with an eagerness that hurt it, we were born for one another: you must be mine—you shall be mine [and put his other hand round me] although my damnation were to be the purchase!

I was still more terrified—let me leave you, Mr. Lovelace, said I; or do you be gone from me. Is the passion you boast of to be thus shockingly demonstrated?

You must not go, Madam!—You must not leave me in anger—

I will return—I will return—when you can be less violent—less shocking.

And he let me go.

The man quite frightened me; insomuch, that when I got into my chamber, I found a sudden flow of tears a great relief to me.

In half an hour, he sent a little billet, expressing his concern for the vehemence of his behaviour, and prayed to see me.

I went. Because I could not help myself, I went.

He was full of excuses—O my dear, what would you, even you, do with such a man as this; and in my situation?

It was very possible for him now, he said, to account for the workings of a beginning phrensy. For his part, he was near distraction. All last week to suffer as he had suffered; and now to talk of civil regards only, when he had hoped, from the nobleness of my mind—

Hope what you will, interrupted I, I must insist upon it, that our minds are by no means suited to each other. You have brought me into difficulties. I am deserted by every friend but Miss Howe. My true sentiments I will not conceal—it is against my will that I must submit to owe protection from a brother's projects, which Miss Howe thinks are not given over, to you, who have brought me into these straits: not with my own concurrence brought me into them; remember that—

I do remember that, Madam!—So often reminded, how can I forget it?—

Yet I will owe to you this protection, if it be necessary, in the earnest hope that you will shun, rather than seek mischief, if any further inquiry after me be made. But what hinders you from leaving me?—Cannot I send to you? The widow Fretchville, it is plain, knows not her own mind: the people here are more civil to me every day than other: but I had rather have lodgings more agreeable to my circumstances. I best know what will suit them; and am resolved not to be obliged to any body. If you leave me, I will privately retire to some one of the neighbouring villages, and there wait my cousin Morden's arrival with patience.

I presume, Madam, replied he, from what you have said, that your application to Harlowe-place has proved unsuccessful: I therefore hope that you will now give me leave to mention the terms in the nature of settlements, which I have long intended to propose to you; and which having till now delayed to do, through accidents not proceeding from myself, I had thoughts of urging to you the moment you entered upon your new house; and upon your finding yourself as independent in appearance as you are in fact. Permit me, Madam, to propose these matters to you— not with an expectation of your immediate answer; but for your consideration.

Were not hesitation, a self-felt glow, a downcast eye, encouragement more than enough? and yet you will observe (as I now do on recollection) that he was in no great hurry to solicit for a day; since he had no thoughts of proposing settlements till I had got into my new house; and now, in his great complaisance to me, he desired leave to propose his terms, not with an expectation of my immediate answer; but for my consideration only—Yet, my dear, your advice was too much in my head at this time. I hesitated.

He urged on upon my silence; he would call God to witness to the justice, nay to the generosity of his intentions to me, if I would be so good as to hear what he had to propose to me, as to settlements.

Could not the man have fallen into the subject without this parade? Many a point, you know, is refused, and ought to be refused, if leave be asked to introduce it; and when once refused, the refusal must in honour be adhered to—whereas, had it been slid in upon one, as I may say, it might have merited further consideration. If such a man as Mr. Lovelace knows not this, who should?

But he seemed to think it enough that he had asked my leave to propose his settlements. He took no advantage of my silence, as I presume men as modest as Mr. Lovelace would have done in a like case: yet, gazing in my face very confidently, and seeming to expect my answer, I thought myself obliged to give the

subject a more diffuse turn, in order to save myself the mortification of appearing too ready in my compliance, after such a distance as had been between us; and yet (in pursuance of your advice) I was willing to avoid the necessity of giving him such a repulse as might again throw us out of the course—a cruel alternative to be reduced to!

You talk of generosity, Mr. Lovelace, said I; and you talk of justice; perhaps, without having considered the force of the words, in the sense you use them on this occasion.—Let me tell you what generosity is, in my sense of the word—TRUE GENEROSITY is not confined to pecuniary instances: it is more than politeness: it is more than good faith: it is more than honour; it is more than justice; since all of these are but duties, and what a worthy mind cannot dispense with. But TRUE GENEROSITY is greatness of soul. It incites us to do more by a fellow-creature than can be strictly required of us. It obliges us to hasten to the relief of an object that wants relief; anticipating even such a one's hope or expectation. Generosity, Sir, will not surely permit a worthy mind to doubt of its honourable and beneficent intentions: much less will it allow itself to shock, to offend any one; and, least of all, a person thrown by adversity, mishap, or accident, into its protection.

What an opportunity had he to clear his intentions had he been so disposed, from the latter part of this home observation!—but he ran away with the first, and kept to that.

Admirably defined! he said—But who, at this rate, Madam, can be said to be generous to you?—Your generosity I implore, while justice, as it must be my sole merit, shall be my aim. Never was there a woman of such nice and delicate sentiments!

It is a reflection upon yourself, Sir, and upon the company you have kept, if you think these notions either nice or delicate. Thousands of my sex are more nice than I; for they would have avoided the devious path I have been surprised into; the consequences of which surprise have laid me under the sad necessity of telling a man, who has not delicacy enough to enter into those parts of the female character which are its glory and distinction, what true generosity is.

His divine mistress, he called me. He would endeavour to form his manners (as he had often promised) by my example. But he hoped I would now permit him to mention briefly the justice he proposed to do me, in the terms of the settlements; a subject so proper, before now, to have entered upon; and which would have been entered upon long ago, had not my frequent displeasure [I am ever in fault, my dear!] taken from him the opportunity he had often wished for: but now, having ventured to lay hold of this, nothing should divert him from improving it.

I have no spirits, just now, Sir, to attend such weighty points. What you have a mind to propose, write to me: and I shall know what answer to return. Only one thing let me remind you of, that if you touch upon a subject, in which my father has a concern, I shall judge by your treatment of the father what value you have for the daughter.

He looked as if he would choose rather to speak than write: but had he said so, I had a severe return to have made upon him; as possibly he might see by my looks.

In this way are we now: a sort of calm, as I said, succeeding a storm. What may happen next, whether a storm or a calm, with such a spirit as I have to deal with, who can tell?

But, be that as it will, I think, my dear, I am not meanly off: and that is a great point with me; and which I know you will be glad to hear: if it were only, that I can see this man without losing any of that dignity [What other word can I use, speaking of myself, that betokens decency, and not arrogance?] which is so necessary to enable me to look up, or rather with the mind's eye, I may say, to look down upon a man of this man's cast.

Although circumstance have so offered, that I could not take your advice as to the manner of dealing with him; yet you gave me so much courage by it, as has enabled me to conduct things to this issue; as well as determined me against leaving him: which, before, I was thinking to do, at all adventures. Whether, when it came to the point, I should have done so, or not, I cannot say, because it would have depended upon his behaviour at the time.

But let his behaviour be what it will, I am afraid, (with you,) that should any thing offer at last to oblige me to leave him, I shall not mend my situation in the world's eye; but the contrary. And yet I will not be treated by him with indignity while I have any power to help myself.

You, my dear, have accused me of having modesty'd away, as you phrase it, several opportunities of being—Being what, my dear?—Why, the wife of a libertine: and what a libertine and his wife are my cousin Morden's letter tells us.—Let me here, once for all, endeavour to account for the motives of behavior to this man, and for the principles I have proceeded upon, as they appear to me upon a close self-examination.

Be pleased to allow me to think that my motives on this occasion rise not altogether from maidenly niceness; nor yet from the apprehension of what my present tormenter, and future husband, may think of a precipitate compliance, on such a disagreeable behaviour as his: but they arise principally from what offers to my own heart; respecting, as I may say, its own rectitude, its own judgment of the fit and the unfit; as I would, without study, answer for myself to myself, in the first place; to him, and to the world, in the second only. Principles that are in my mind; that I found there; implanted, no doubt, by the first gracious Planter: which therefore impel me, as I may say, to act up to them, that thereby I may, to the best of my judgment, be enabled to comport myself worthily in both states, (the single and the married), let others act as they will by me.

I hope, my dear, I do not deceive myself, and, instead of setting about rectifying what is amiss in my heart, endeavour to find excuses for habits and peculiarities, which I am unwilling to cast off or overcome. The heart is very deceitful: do you, my dear friend, lay mine open, [but surely it is always open before you!] and spare me not, if you think it culpable.

This observation, once for all, as I said, I thought proper to make, to convince you that, to the best of my judgment, my errors, in matters as well of lesser moment as of greater, shall rather be the fault of my judgment than of my will.

I am, my dearest friend, Your ever obliged, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER XXXII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE TUESDAY NIGHT, MAY 16.

Mr. Lovelace has sent me, by Dorcas, his proposals, as follow:

'To spare a delicacy so extreme, and to obey you, I write: and the rather that you may communicate this paper to Miss Howe, who may consult any of her friends you shall think proper to have intrusted on this occasion. I say intrusted; because, as you know, I have given it out to several persons, that we are actually married.

'In the first place, Madam, I offer to settle upon you, by way of jointure, your whole estate: and moreover to vest in trustees such a part of mine in Lancashire, as shall produce a clear four hundred pounds a year, to be paid to your sole and separate use quarterly.

'My own estate is a clear not nominal 2000*l.* per annum. Lord M. proposes to give me possession either of that which he has in Lancashire, [to which, by the way, I think I have a better title than he has himself,] or that we call The Lawn, in Hertfordshire, upon my nuptials with a lady whom he so greatly admires; and to make that I shall choose a clear 1000*l.* per annum.

'My too great contempt of censure has subjected me to much slander. It may not therefore be improper to assure you, on the word of a gentleman, that no part of my estate was ever mortgaged: and that although I lived very expensively abroad, and made large draughts, yet that Midsummer-day next will discharge all that I owe in the world. My notions are not all bad ones. I have been thought, in pecuniary cases, generous. It would have deserved another name, had I not first been just.

'If, as your own estate is at present in your father's hands, you rather choose that I should make a jointure out of mine, tantamount to yours, be it what it will, it shall be done. I will engage Lord M. to write to you, what he proposes to do on the happy occasion: not as your desire or expectation, but to demonstrate, that no advantage is intended to be taken of the situation you are in with your own family.

'To shew the beloved daughter the consideration I have for her, I will consent that she shall prescribe the terms of agreement in relation to the large sums, which must be in her father's hands, arising from her grandfather's estate. I have no doubt, but he will be put upon making large demands upon you. All those it shall be in your power to comply with, for the sake of your own peace. And the remainder shall be paid into your hands, and be entirely at your disposal, as a fund to support those charitable donations, which I have heard you so famed for out of your family, and for which you have been so greatly reflected upon in it.

'As to clothes, jewels, and the like, against the time you shall choose to make your appearance, it will be my pride that you shall not be beholden for such of these, as shall be answerable to the rank of both, to those who have had the stupid folly to renounce a daughter they deserved not. You must excuse me, Madam: you would mistrust my sincerity in the rest, could I speak of these people without asperity, though so nearly related to you.

'These, Madam, are my proposals. They are such as I always designed to make, whenever you would permit me to enter into the delightful subject. But you have been so determined to try every method for reconciling yourself to your relations, even by giving me absolutely up for ever, that you seemed to think it but justice to keep me at a distance, till the event of that your predominant hope could be seen. It is now seen! —and although I have been, and perhaps still am, ready to regret the want of that preference I wished for from you as Miss Clarissa Harlowe, yet I am sure, as the husband of Mrs. Lovelace, I shall be more ready to adore than to blame you for the pangs you have given to a heart, the generosity, or rather, the justice of which, my implacable enemies have taught you to doubt: and this still the readier, as I am persuaded that those pangs never would have been given by a mind so noble, had not the doubt been entertained (perhaps with too great an appearance of reason); and as I hope I shall have it to reflect, that the moment the doubt shall be overcome, the indifference will cease.

'I will only add, that if I have omitted any thing, that would have given you farther satisfaction; or if the above terms be short of what you would wish; you will be pleased to supply them as you think fit. And when I know your pleasure, I will instantly order articles to be drawn up conformably, that nothing in my power may be wanting to make you happy.

'You will now, dearest Madam, judge, how far all the rest depends upon yourself.'

You see, my dear, what he offers. You see it is all my fault, that he has not made these offers before. I am a strange creature!—to be to blame in every thing, and to every body; yet neither intend the ill at the time, nor know it to be the ill too late, or so nearly too late, that I must give up all the delicacy he talks of, to compound for my fault!

I shall now judge how far the rest depends upon myself! So coldly concludes he such warm, and, in the main, unobjectionably proposals: Would you not, as you read, have supposed, that the paper would conclude with the most earnest demand of a day?—I own, I had that expectation so strong, resulting naturally, as I may say, from the premises, that without studying for dissatisfaction, I could not help being dissatisfied when I came to the conclusion.

But you say there is no help. I must perhaps make further sacrifices. All delicacy it seems is to be at an end with me!—but, if so, this man knows not what every wise man knows, that prudence, and virtue, and delicacy of mind in a wife, do the husband more real honour in the eye of the world, than the same qualities (were she destitute of them) in himself, do him: as the want of them in her does him more dishonour: For are not the wife's errors the husband's reproach? how justly his reproach, is another thing.

I will consider this paper; and write to it, if I am able: for it seems now, all the rest depends upon myself.

LETTER XXXIII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE WEDNESDAY MORNING, MAY 17.

Mr. Lovelace would fain have engaged me last night. But as I was not prepared to enter upon the subject of his proposals, (intending to consider them maturely,) and was not highly pleased with his conclusion, I desired to be excused seeing him till morning; and the rather, as there is hardly any getting from him in tolerable time overnight.

Accordingly, about seven o'clock we met in the dining-room.

I find he was full of expectation that I should meet him with a very favourable, who knows but with a thankful, aspect? and I immediately found by his sullen countenance, that he was under no small disappointment that I did not.

My dearest love, are you well? Why look you so solemn upon me? Will your indifference never be over? If I have proposed terms in any respect short of your expectation—

I told him, that he had very considerably mentioned my shewing his proposals to Miss Howe; and as I should have a speedy opportunity to send them to her by Collins, I desired to suspend any talk upon that subject till I had her opinion upon them.

Good God!—If there was but the least loop-hole! the least room for delay!—But he was writing a letter to Lord M. to give him an account of his situation with me, and could not finish it so satisfactorily, either to my Lord or to himself, as if I would condescend to say, whether the terms he had proposed were acceptable, or not.

Thus far, I told him, I could say, that my principal point was peace and reconciliation with my relations. As to other matters, the gentleness of his own spirit would put him upon doing more for me than I should ask, or expect. Wherefore, if all he had to write about was to know what Lord M. would do on my account, he might spare himself the trouble, for that my utmost wishes, as to myself, were much more easily gratified than he perhaps imagined.

He asked me then, if I would so far permit him to touch upon the happy day, as to request the presence of Lord M. on the occasion, and to be my father?

Father had a sweet and venerable sound with it, I said. I should be glad to have a father who would own me!

Was not this plain speaking, think you, my dear? Yet it rather, I must own, appears so to me on reflection, than was designed freely at the time. For I then, with a sigh from the bottom of my heart, thought of my own father; bitterly regretting, that I am an outcast from him and from my mother.

Mr. Lovelace I thought seemed a little affected at the manner of my speaking, and perhaps at the sad reflection.

I am but a very young creature, Mr. Lovelace, said I, [and wiped my eyes as I turned away my face,] although you have kindly, and in love to me, introduced so much sorry to me already: so you must not wonder, that the word father strikes so sensibly upon the heart of a child ever dutiful till she knew you, and whose tender years still require the paternal wing.

He turned towards the window—[rejoice with me, my dear, since I seem to be devoted to him, that the man is not absolutely impenetrable!] His emotion was visible; yet he endeavoured to suppress it. Approaching me again; again he was obliged to turn from me; angelic something, he said: but then, obtaining a heart more suitable to his wish, he once more approached me.—For his own part, he said, as Lord M. was so subject to gout, he was afraid, that the compliment he had just proposed to make him, might, if made, occasion a larger suspension than he could bear to think of; and if it did, it would vex him to the heart that he had made it.

I could not say a single word to this, you know, my dear. But you will guess at my thoughts of what he said—so much passionate love, lip-deep! so prudent, and so dutifully patient at heart to a relation he had till now so undutifully despised!—Why, why, am I thrown upon such a man, thought I!

He hesitated, as if contending with himself; and after taking a turn or two about the room, He was at a great loss what to determine upon, he said, because he had not the honour of knowing when he was to be made the happiest of men—Would to God it might that very instant be resolved upon!

He stopped a moment or two, staring in his usual confident way, in my downcast face, [Did I not, O my beloved friend, think you, want a father or a mother just then?] But if he could not, so soon as he wished, procure my consent to a day; in that case, he thought the compliment might as well be made to Lord M. as not, [See, my dear!] since the settlements might be drawn and engrossed in the intervenient time, which would pacify his impatience, as no time would be lost.

You will suppose how I was affected by this speech, by repeating the substance of what he said upon it; as follows.

But, by his soul, he knew not, so much was I upon the reserve, and so much latent meaning did my eye import, whether, when he most hoped to please me, he was not farthest from doing so. Would I vouchsafe to say, whether I approved of his compliment to Lord M. or not?

To leave it to me, to choose whether the speedy day he ought to have urged for with earnestness, should be accelerated or suspended!—Miss Howe, thought I, at that moment, says, I must not run away from this man!

To be sure, Mr. Lovelace, if this matter be ever to be, it must be agreeable to me to have the full approbation of one side, since I cannot have that of the other.

If this matter be ever to be! Good God! what words are these at this time of day! and full approbation of one

side! Why that word approbation? when the greatest pride of all my family is, that of having the honour of so dear a creature for their relation? Would to heaven, my dearest life, added he, that, without complimenting any body, to-morrow might be the happiest day of my life!—What say you, my angel? with a trembling impatience, that seemed not affected—What say you for to-morrow?

It was likely, my dear, I could say much to it, or name another day, had I been disposed to the latter, with such an hinted delay from him.

I was silent.

Next day, Madam, if not to-morrow?—

Had he given me time to answer, it could not have been in the affirmative, you must think—but, in the same breath, he went on—Or the day after that?—and taking both my hands in his, he stared me into a half-confusion—Would you have had patience with him, my dear?

No, no, said I, as calmly as possible, you cannot think that I should imagine there can be reason for such a hurry. It will be most agreeable, to be sure, for my Lord to be present.

I am all obedience and resignation, returned the wretch, with a self-pluming air, as if he had acquiesced to a proposal made by me, and had complimented me with a great piece of self denial.

Is it not plain, my dear, that he designs to vex and tease me? Proud, yet mean and foolish man, if so!—But you say all punctilio is at an end with me. Why, why, will he take pains to make a heart wrap itself up in reserve, that wishes only, and that for his sake as well as my own, to observe due decorum?

Modesty, I think, required of me, that it should pass as he had put it: Did it not?—I think it did. Would to heaven—but what signifies wishing?

But when he would have rewarded himself, as he had heretofore called it, for this self-supposed concession, with a kiss, I repulsed him with a just and very sincere disdain.

He seemed both vexed and surprised, as one who had made the most agreeable proposals and concessions, and thought them ungratefully returned. He plainly said, that he thought our situation would entitle him to such an innocent freedom: and he was both amazed and grieved to be thus scornfully repulsed.

No reply could be made by me on such a subject.

I abruptly broke from him. I recollect, as I passed by one of the pier-glasses, that I saw in it his clenched hand offered in wrath to his forehead: the words, Indifference, by his soul, next to hatred, I heard him speak; and something of ice he mentioned: I heard not what.

Whether he intends to write to my Lord, or Miss Montague, I cannot tell. But, as all delicacy ought to be over with me now, perhaps I am to blame to expect it from a man who may not know what it is. If he does not, and yet thinks himself very polite, and intends not to be otherwise, I am rather to be pitied, than he to be censured.

And after all, since I must take him as I find him, I must: that is to say, as a man so vain and so accustomed to be admired, that, not being conscious of internal defect, he has taken no pains to polish more than his outside: and as his proposals are higher than my expectations; and as, in his own opinion, he has a great deal to bear from me, I will (no new offence preventing) sit down to answer them; and, if possible, in terms as unobjectionable to him, as his are to me.

But after all, see you not, my dear, more and more, the mismatch that there is in our minds?

However, I am willing to compound for my fault, by giving up, (if that may be all my punishment) the expectation of what is deemed happiness in this life, with such a husband as I fear he will make. In short, I will content myself to be a suffering person through the state to the end of my life.—A long one it cannot be!

This may qualify him (as it may prove) from stings of conscience from misbehaviour to a first wife, to be a more tolerable one to a second, though not perhaps a better deserving one: while my story, to all who shall know it, will afford these instructions: That the eye is a traitor, and ought ever to be mistrusted: that form is deceitful: in other words; that a fine person is seldom paired by a fine mind: and that sound principle and a good heart, are the only bases on which the hopes of a happy future, either with respect to this world, or the other, can be built.

And so much at present for Mr. Lovelace's proposals: Of which I desire your opinion.*

* We cannot forbear observing in this place, that the Lady has been particularly censured, even by some of her own sex, as over-nice in her part of the above conversations: but surely this must be owing to want of attention to the circumstances she was in, and to her character, as well as to the character of the man she had to deal with: for, although she could not be supposed to know so much of his designs as the reader does by means of his letters to Belford, yet she was but too well convinced of his faulty morals, and of the necessity there was, from the whole of his behaviour to her, to keep such an encroacher, as she frequently calls him, at a distance. In Letter XXXIII. of Vol. III. the reader will see, that upon some favourable appearances she blames herself for her readiness to suspect him. But his character, his principles, said she, are so faulty!—He is so light, so vain, so various.—Then, my dear, I have no guardian to depend upon. In Letter IX. of Vol. III. Must I not with such a man, says she, be wanting to myself, were I not jealous and vigilant?

By this time the reader will see, that she had still greater reason for her jealousy and vigilance. And Lovelace will tell the sex, as he does in Letter XI. of Vol. V., that the woman who resents not initiatory freedoms, must be lost. Love is an encroacher, says he: loves never goes backward. Nothing but the highest act of love can satisfy an indulged love.

But the reader perhaps is too apt to form a judgment of Clarissa's conduct in critical cases by Lovelace's complaints of her coldness; not considering his views upon her; and that she is proposed as an example; and therefore in her trials and distresses must not be allowed to dispense with those rules which perhaps some others of the sex, in her delicate situation, would not have thought themselves so strictly bound to observe; although, if she had not observed them, a Lovelace would have carried all his points.

[Four letters are written by Mr. Lovelace from the date of his last, giving the state of affairs between him and the Lady, pretty much the

same as in hers in the same period, allowing for the humour in his, and for his resentments expressed with vehemence on her resolution to leave him, if her friends could be brought to be reconciled to her.— A few extracts from them will be only given.]

What, says he, might have become of me, and of my projects, had not her father, and the rest of the implacables, stood my friends?

[After violent threatenings of revenge, he says,]

'Tis plain she would have given me up for ever: nor should I have been able to prevent her abandoning of me, unless I had torn up the tree by the roots to come at the fruit; which I hope still to bring down by a gentle shake or two, if I can but have patience to stay the ripening seasoning.

[Thus triumphing in his unpolite cruelty, he says,]

After her haughty treatment of me, I am resolved she shall speak out. There are a thousand beauties to be discovered in the face, in the accent, in the bush-beating hesitations of a woman who is earnest about a subject she wants to introduce, yet knows not how. Silly fellows, calling themselves generous ones, would value themselves for sparing a lady's confusion: but they are silly fellows indeed; and rob themselves of prodigious pleasure by their forwardness; and at the same time deprive her of displaying a world of charms, which can only be manifested on these occasions.

I'll tell thee beforehand, how it will be with my charmer in this case— she will be about it, and about it, several times: but I will not understand her: at least, after half a dozen hem—ings, she will be obliged to speak out—I think, Mr. Lovelace—I think, Sir—I think you were saying some days ago—Still I will be all silence—her eyes fixed upon my shoe-buckles, as I sit over-against her—ladies when put to it thus, always admire a man's shoe-buckles, or perhaps some particular beauties in the carpet. I think you said that Mrs. Fretchville—Then a crystal tear trickles down each crimson cheek, vexed to have her virgin pride so little assisted. But, come, my meaning dear, cry I to myself, remember what I have suffered for thee, and what I have suffered by thee! Thy tearful pausings shall not be helped out by me. Speak out, love!—O the sweet confusion! Can I rob myself of so many conflicting beauties by the precipitate charmer-pitying folly, by which a politer man [thou knowest, lovely, that I am no polite man!] betrayed by his own tenderness, and unused to female tears, would have been overcome? I will feign an irresolution of mind on the occasion, that she may not quite abhor me—that her reflections on the scene in my absence may bring to her remembrance some beauties in my part of it: an irresolution that will be owing to awe, to reverence, to profound veneration; and that will have more eloquence in it than words can have. Speak out then, love, and spare not.

Hard-heartedness, as it is called, is an essential of the libertine's character. Familiarized to the distresses he occasions, he is seldom betrayed by tenderness into a complaisant weakness unworthy of himself.

[Mentioning the settlements, he says,]

I am in earnest as to the terms. If I marry her, [and I have no doubt that I shall, after my pride, my ambition, my revenge, if thou wilt, is gratified,] I will do her noble justice. The more I do for such a prudent, such an excellent economist, the more shall I do for myself.— But, by my soul, Belford, her haughtiness shall be brought down to own both love and obligation to me. Nor will this sketch of settlements bring us forwarder than I would have it. Modesty of sex will stand my friend at any time. At the very altar, our hands joined, I will engage to make this proud beauty leave the parson and me, and all my friends who should be present, though twenty in number, to look like fools upon one another, while she took wing, and flew out of the church door, or window, (if that were open, and the door shut); and this only by a single word.

[He mentions his rash expression, That she should be his, although his damnation was to be the purchase.]

At that instant, says he, I was upon the point of making a violent attempt, but was checked in the very moment, and but just in time to save myself, by the awe I was struck with on again casting my eye upon her terrified but lovely face, and seeing, as I thought, her spotless heart in every line of it.

O virtue, virtue! proceeds he, what is there in thee, that can thus against his will affect the heart of a Lovelace!—Whence these involuntary tremors, and fear of giving mortal offence?—What art thou, that acting in the breast of a feeble woman, which never before, no, not in my first attempt, young as I then was, and frightened at my own boldness (till I found myself forgiven,) had such an effect upon me!

[He paints in lively colours, that part of the scene between him and the Lady, where she says, The word father has a sweet and venerable sound with it.]

I was exceedingly affected, says he, upon the occasion, but was ashamed to be surprised into such a fit of unmanly weakness—so ashamed, that I was resolved to subdue it at the instant, and to guard against the like for the future. Yet, at that moment, I more than half regretted that I could not permit her to enjoy a triumph which she so well deserved to glory in—her youth, her beauty, her artless innocence, and her manner, equally beyond comparison or description. But her indifference, Belford! —That she could resolve to sacrifice me to the malice of my enemies; and carry on the design in so clandestine a manner—and yet love her, as I do, to phrensy!—revere her, as I do, to adoration!—These were the recollections with which I fortified my recreant heart against her!—Yet, after all, if she persevere, she must conquer!—Coward, as she has made me, that never was a coward before!

[He concludes his fourth letter in a vehement rage, upon her repulsing him, when he offered to salute her; having supposed, as he owns, that she would have been all condescension on his proposals to her.]

This, says he, I will for ever remember against her, in order to steel my heart, that I may cut through a rock of ice to hers; and repay her for the disdain, the scorn, which glowed in her countenance, and was apparent in her air, at her abrupt departure for me, after such obliging behaviour on my side, and after I had so earnestly pressed her for an early day. The women below say she hates me; she despises me!—And 'tis true: she does; she must.—And why cannot I take their advice? I will not long, my fair-one, be despised by thee,

and laughed at by them!

Let me acquaint thee, Jack, adds he, by way of postscript, that this effort of hers to leave me, if she could have been received; her sending for a coach on Sunday; no doubt, resolving not to return, if she had gone out without me, (for did she not declare that she had thoughts to retire to some of the villages about town, where she could be safe and private?) have, all together, so much alarmed me, that I have been adding to the written instructions for my fellow and the people below how to act in case she should elope in my absence: particularly letting Will. know what he shall report to strangers in case she shall throw herself upon any such with a resolution to abandon me. To these instructions I shall further add as circumstances offer.

LETTER XXXIV

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE THURSDAY, MAY 18.

I have neither time nor patience, my dear friend, to answer every material article in your last letters just now received. Mr. Lovelace's proposals are all I like of him. And yet (as you do) I think, that he concludes them not with the warmth and earnestness which we might naturally have expected from him. Never in my life did I hear or read of so patient a man, with such a blessing in his reach. But wretches of his cast, between you and me, my dear, have not, I fancy, the ardors that honest men have. Who knows, as your Bell once spitefully said, but he may have half a dozen creatures to quit his hands of before he engages for life?—Yet I believe you must not expect him to be honest on this side of his grand climacteric.

He, to suggest delay from a compliment to be made to Lord M. and to give time for settlements! He, a part of whose character it is, not to know what complaisance to his relations is—I have no patience with him! You did indeed want an interposing friend on the affecting occasion which you mention in yours of yesterday morning. But, upon my word, were I to have been that moment in your situation, and been so treated, I would have torn his eyes out, and left it to his own heart, when I had done, to furnish the reason for it.

Would to Heaven to-morrow, without complimenting any body, might be his happy day!—Villain! After he had himself suggested the compliment!—And I think he accuses YOU of delaying!—Fellow, that he is!—How my heart is wrung—

But as matters now stand betwixt you, I am very unseasonable in expressing my resentments against him.—Yet I don't know whether I am or not, neither; since it is the most cruel of fates, for a woman to be forced to have a man whom her heart despises. You must, at least, despise him; at times, however. His clenched fist offered to his forehead on your leaving him in just displeasure—I wish it had been a pole-axe, and in the hand of his worst enemy.

I will endeavour to think of some method, of some scheme, to get you from him, and to fix you safely somewhere till your cousin Morden arrives—A scheme to lie by you, and to be pursued as occasion may be given. You are sure, that you can go abroad when you please? and that our correspondence is safe? I cannot, however (for the reasons heretofore mentioned respecting your own reputation,) wish you to leave him while he gives you not cause to suspect his honour. But your heart I know would be the easier, if you were sure of some asylum in case of necessity.

Yet once more, I say, I can have no notion that he can or dare mean your dishonour. But then the man is a fool, my dear—that's all.

However, since you are thrown upon a fool, marry the fool at the first opportunity; and though I doubt that this man will be the most ungovernable of fools, as all witty and vain fools are, take him as a punishment, since you cannot as a reward: in short, as one given to convince you that there is nothing but imperfection in this life.

And what is the result of all I have written, but this—Either marry, my dear, or get from them all, and from him too.

You intend the latter, you'll say, as soon as you have opportunity. That, as above hinted, I hope quickly to furnish you with: and then comes on a trial between you and yourself.

These are the very fellows that we women do not naturally hate. We don't always know what is, and what is not, in our power to do. When some principal point we have long had in view becomes so critical, that we must of necessity choose or refuse, then perhaps we look about us; are affrighted at the wild and uncertain prospect before us; and, after a few struggles and heart-aches, reject the untried new; draw in your horns, and resolve to snail-on, as we did before, in a track we are acquainted with.

I shall be impatient till I have your next. I am, my dearest friend,
Your ever affectionate and faithful ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XXXV

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. WEDNESDAY, MAY 17.

I cannot conceal from you any thing that relates to yourself so much as the enclosed does. You will see what the noble writer apprehends from you, and wishes of you, with regard to Miss Harlowe, and how much at heart all your relations have it that you do honourably by her. They compliment me with an influence over you, which I wish with all my soul you would let me have in this article.

Let me once more entreat thee, Lovelace, to reflect, before it be too late (before the mortal offence be given) upon the graces and merits of this lady. Let thy frequent remorse at last end in one effectual remorse. Let not pride and wantonness of heart ruin the fairer prospects. By my faith, Lovelace, there is nothing but vanity, conceit, and nonsense, in our wild schemes. As we grow older, we shall be wiser, and looking back upon our foolish notions of the present hour, (our youth dissipated,) shall certainly despise ourselves when we think of the honourable engagements we might have made: thou, more especially, if thou lettest such a matchless creature slide through thy fingers. A creature pure from her cradle. In all her actions and sentiments uniformly noble. Strict in the performance of all her even unrewarded duties to the most unreasonable of fathers; what a wife will she make the man who shall have the honour to call her his!

What apprehensions wouldst thou have had reason for, had she been prevailed upon by giddy or frail motives, for which one man, by importunity, might prevail, as well as another?

We all know what an inventive genius thou art master of: we are all sensible, that thou hast a head to contrive, and a heart to execute. Have I not called thine the plotting'st heart in the universe? I called it so upon knowledge. What wouldst thou more? Why should it be the most villainous, as well as the most able?—Marry the lady; and, when married, let her know what a number of contrivances thou hadst in readiness to play off. Beg of her not to hate thee for the communication; and assure her, that thou gavest them up for remorse, and in justice to her extraordinary merit: and let her have the opportunity of congratulating herself for subduing a heart so capable of what thou callest glorious mischief. This will give her room for triumph; and even thee no less: she, for hers over thee; thou, for thine over thyself.

Reflect likewise upon her sufferings for thee. Actually at the time thou art forming schemes to ruin her, (at least in her sense of the word,) is she not labouring under a father's curse laid upon her by thy means, and for thy sake? and wouldst thou give operation and completion to that curse, which otherwise cannot have effect?

And what, Lovelace, all the time is thy pride?—Thou that vainly imaginest that the whole family of the Harlowes, and that of the Howes too, are but thy machines, unknown to themselves, to bring about thy purposes, and thy revenge, what art thou more, or better, than the instrument even of her implacable brother, and envious sister, to perpetuate the disgrace of the most excellent of sisters, to which they are moved by vilely low and sordid motives?—Canst thou bear, Lovelace, to be thought the machine of thy inveterate enemy James Harlowe?—Nay, art thou not the cully of that still viler Joseph Leman, who serves himself as much by thy money, as he does thee by the double part he acts by thy direction?—And further still, art thou not the devil's agent, who only can, and who certainly will, suitably reward thee, if thou proceedest, and if thou effectest thy wicked purpose?

Could any man but thee put together upon paper the following questions with so much unconcern as thou seemest to have written them?—give them a reperusal, O heart of adamant! 'Whither can she fly to avoid me? Her parents will not receive her. Her uncles will not entertain her. Her beloved Norton is in their direction, and cannot. Miss Howe dare not. She has not one friend in town but ME—is entirely a stranger to the town.'*—What must that heart be that can triumph in a distress so deep, into which she has been plunged by thy elaborate arts and contrivances? And what a sweet, yet sad reflection was that, which had like to have had its due effect upon thee, arising from thy naming Lord M. for her nuptial father? her tender years inclining her to wish for a father, and to hope a friend.—O my dear Lovelace, canst thou resolve to be, instead of the father thou hast robbed her of, a devil?

* See Letter XXI. of this volume.

Thou knowest, that I have no interest, that I can have no view, in wishing thee to do justice to this admirable creature. For thy own sake, once more I conjure thee, for thy family's sake, and for the sake of our common humanity, let me beseech thee to be just to Miss Clarissa Harlowe.

No matter whether these expostulations are in character from me, or not. I have been and am bad enough. If thou takest my advice, which is (as the enclosed will shew thee) the advice of all thy family, thou wilt perhaps have it to reproach me (and but perhaps neither) that thou art not a worse man than myself. But if thou dost not, and if thou ruinest such a virtue, all the complicated wickedness of ten devils, let loose among the innocent with full power over them, will not do so much vile and base mischief as thou wilt be guilty of.

It is said that the prince on his throne is not safe, if a mind so desperate can be found, as values not its own life. So may it be said, that the most immaculate virtue is not safe, if a man can be met with who has no regard to his own honour, and makes a jest of the most solemn vows and protestations.

Thou mayest by trick, chicane, and false colours, thou who art worse than a pickeroon in love, overcome a poor lady so entangled as thou hast entangled her; so unprotected as thou hast made her: but consider, how much more generous and just to her, and noble to thyself, it is, to overcome thyself.

Once more, it is no matter whether my past or future actions countenance my preachment, as perhaps thou'lt call what I have written: but this I promise thee, that whenever I meet with a woman of but one half of Miss Harlowe's perfections, who will favour me with her acceptance, I will take the advice I give, and marry. Nor will I offer to try her honour at the hazard of my own.

In other words, I will not degrade an excellent creature in her own eyes, by trials, when I have no cause for suspicion. And let me add, with respect to thy eagleship's manifestation, of which thou boastest, in thy attempts upon the innocent and uncorrupted, rather than upon those whom thou humourously comparest to wrens, wagtails, and phyl-tits, as thou callest them,* that I hope I have it not once to reproach myself, that I ruined the morals of any one creature, who otherwise would have been uncorrupted. Guilt enough in contributing to the continued guilt of other poor wretches, if I am one of those who take care she shall never rise again, when she has once fallen.

* See Letter XVII. of this volume.

Whatever the capital devil, under whose banner thou hast listed, will let thee do, with regard to this incomparable woman, I hope thou wilt act with honour in relation to the enclosed, between Lord M. and me; since his Lordship, as thou wilt see, desires, that thou mayest not know he wrote on the subject; for reasons, I think, very far from being creditable to thyself: and that thou wilt take as meant, the honest zeal for thy service, of

LETTER XXXVI

LORD M., TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. [ENCLOSED IN THE PRECEDING.] M. HALL, MONDAY, MAY 15.
SIR,

If any man in the world has power over my nephew, it is you. I therefore write this, to beg you to interfere in the affair depending between him and the most accomplished of women, as every one says; and what every one says must be true.

I don't know that he has any bad designs upon her; but I know his temper too well, not to be apprehensive upon such long delays: and the ladies here have been for some time in fear for her: Lady Sarah in particular, who (as you must know) is a wise woman, says, that these delays, in the present case, must be from him, rather than from the lady.

He had always indeed a strong antipathy to marriage, and may think of playing his dog's tricks by her, as he has by so many others. If there's any danger of this, 'tis best to prevent it in time: for when a thing is done, advice comes too late.

He has always had the folly and impertinence to make a jest of me for using proverbs: but as they are the wisdom of whole nations and ages collected into a small compass, I am not to be shamed out of sentences that often contain more wisdom in them than the tedious harangues of most of our parsons and moralists. Let him laugh at them, if he pleases: you and I know better things, Mr. Belford—Though you have kept company with a wolf, you have not learnt to howl of him.

But nevertheless, you must let him know that I have written to you on this subject. I am ashamed to say it; but he has ever treated me as if I were a man of very common understanding; and would, perhaps, think never the better of the best advice in the world for coming from me. Those, Mr. Belford, who most love, are least set by.—But who would expect velvet to be made out of a sow's ear?

I am sure he has no reason however to slight me as he does. He may and will be the better for me, if he outlives me; though he once told me to my face, that I might do as I would with my estate; for that he, for his part, loved his liberty as much as he despised money. And at another time, twitting me with my phrases, that the man was above controul, who wanted not either to borrow or flatter. He thought, I suppose, that I could not cover him with my wings, without pecking at him with my bill; though I never used to be pecking at him, without very great occasion: and, God knows, he might have my very heart, if he would but endeavour to oblige me, by studying his own good; for that is all I desire of him. Indeed, it was his poor mother that first spoiled him; and I have been but too indulgent to him since. A fine grateful disposition, you'll say, to return evil for good! but that was always his way. It is a good saying, and which was verified by him with a witness—Children when little, make their parents fools; when great, mad. Had his parents lived to see what I have seen of him, they would have been mad indeed.

This match, however, as the lady has such an extraordinary share of wisdom and goodness, might set all to rights; and if you can forward it, I would enable him to make whatever settlements he could wish; and should not be unwilling to put him in possession of another pretty estate besides. I am no covetous man, he knows. And, indeed, what is a covetous man to be likened to so fitly, as to a dog in a wheel which roasts meat for others? And what do I live for, (as I have often said,) but to see him and my two nieces well married and settled. May Heaven settle him down to a better mind, and turn his heart to more of goodness and consideration!

If the delays are on his side, I tremble for the lady; and, if on hers, (as he tells my niece Charlotte,) I could wish she were apprized that delays are dangerous. Excellent as she is, she ought not to depend on her merits with such a changeable fellow, and such a profest marriage-hater, as he has been. Desert and reward, I can assure her, seldom keep company together.

But let him remember, that vengeance though it comes with leaden feet, strikes with iron hands. If he behaves ill in this case, he may find it so. What a pity it is, that a man of his talents and learning should be so vile a rake! Alas! alas! Une poignée de bonne vie vaut mieux que plein muy de clergée; a handful of good life is better than a whole bushel of learning.

You may throw in, too, as a friend, that, should he provoke me, it may not be too late for me to marry. My old friend Wycherly did so, when he was older than I am, on purpose to plague his nephew: and, in spite of this gout, I might have a child or two still. I have not been without some thoughts that way, when he has angered me more than ordinary: but these thoughts have gone off again hitherto, upon my considering, that the children of very young and very old men (though I am not so very old neither) last not long; and that old men, when they marry young women, are said to make much of death: Yet who knows but that matrimony might be good against the gouty humours I am troubled with?

No man is every thing—you, Mr. Belford, are a learned man. I am a peer. And do you (as you best know how) inculcate upon him the force of these wise sayings which follow, as well as those which went before; but yet so indiscreetly, as that he may not know that you borrow your darts from my quiver. These be they—Happy is the man who knows his follies in his youth. He that lives well, lives long. Again, He that lives ill one year, will sorrow for it seven. And again, as the Spaniards have it—Who lives well, sees afar off! Far off indeed; for he sees into eternity, as a man may say. Then that other fine saying, He who perishes in needless dangers, is the Devil's martyr. Another proverb I picked up at Madrid, when I accompanied Lord Lexington in his embassy to Spain, which might teach my nephew more mercy and compassion than is in his nature I doubt to shew; which is this, That he who pities another, remembers himself. And this that is going to follow, I am sure he has proved the truth of a hundred times, That he who does what he will seldom does what he

ought. Nor is that unworthy of his notice, Young men's frolics old men feel. My devilish gout, God help me—but I will not say what I was going to say.

I remember, that you yourself, complimenting me for my taste in pithy and wise sentences, said a thing that gave me a high opinion of you; and it was this: 'Men of talents,' said you, 'are sooner to be convinced by short sentences than by long preachments, because the short sentences drive themselves into the heart and stay there, while long discourses, though ever so good, tire the attention; and one good thing drives out another, and so on till all is forgotten.'

May your good counsel, Mr. Belford, founded upon these hints which I have given, pierce his heart, and incite him to do what will be so happy for himself, and so necessary for the honour of that admirable lady whom I long to see his wife; and, if I may, I will not think of one for myself.

Should he abuse the confidence she has placed in him, I myself shall pray, that vengeance may fall upon his head—Raro—I quite forget all my Latin; but I think it is, Raro antecedentem scelestum deseruit pede pæan claudo: where vice goes before, vengeance (sooner or later) will follow. But why do I translate these things for you?

I shall make no apologies for this trouble. I know how well you love him and me; and there is nothing in which you could serve us both more importantly, than in forwarding this match to the utmost of your power. When it is done, how shall I rejoice to see you at M. Hall! Mean time, I shall long to hear that you are likely to be successful with him; and am,

Dear Sir, Your most faithful friend and servant, M.

[Mr. Lovelace having not returned an answer to Mr. Belford's expostulatory letter so soon as Mr. Belford expected, he wrote to him, expressing his apprehension that he had disobliged him by his honest freedom. Among other things, he says—]

I pass my time here at Watford, attending my dying uncle, very heavily. I cannot therefore, by any means, dispense with thy correspondence. And why shouldst thou punish me, for having more conscience and more remorse than thyself? Thou who never thoughtest either conscience or remorse an honour to thee. And I have, besides, a melancholy story to tell thee, in relation to Belton and his Thomasine; and which may afford a lesson to all the keeping-class.

I have a letter from each of our three companions in the time. They have all the wickedness that thou hast, but not the wit. Some new rogueries do two of them boast of, which, I think, if completed, deserve the gallows.

I am far from hating intrigue upon principle. But to have awkward fellows plot, and commit their plots to paper, destitute of the seasonings, of the acumen, which is thy talent, how extremely shocking must their letters be!—But do thou, Lovelace, whether thou art, or art not, determined upon thy measures with regard to the fine lady in thy power, enliven my heavy heart by thy communications; and thou wilt oblige

Thy melancholy friend, J. BELFORD.

LETTER XXXVII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY NIGHT, MAY 19.

When I have opened my view to thee so amply as I have done in my former letters; and have told thee, that my principal design is but to bring virtue to a trial, that, if virtue, it need not be afraid of; and that the reward of it will be marriage (that is to say, if, after I have carried my point, I cannot prevail upon her to live with me the life of honour;* for that thou knowest is the wish of my heart); I am amazed at the repetition of thy wambling nonsense.

* See Vol. III. Letter XVIII.

I am of opinion with thee, that some time hence, when I am grown wiser, I shall conclude, that there is nothing but vanity, conceit, and nonsense, in my present wild schemes. But what is this saying, but that I must be first wiser?

I do not intend to let this matchless creature slide through my fingers.

Art thou able to say half the things in her praise, that I have said, and am continually saying or writing?

Her gloomy father cursed the sweet creature, because she put it out of his wicked power to compel her to have the man she hated. Thou knowest how little merit she has with me on this score.—And shall I not try the virtue I intended, upon full proof, to reward, because her father is a tyrant?—Why art thou thus eternally reflecting upon so excellent a woman, as if thou wert assured she would fail in the trial?—Nay, thou declarest, every time thou writest on the subject, that she will, that she must yield, entangled as she is: and yet makest her virtue the pretence of thy solicitude for her.

An instrument of the vile James Harlowe, dost thou call me?—O Jack! how could I curse thee!—I am instrument of that brother! of that sister! But mark the end—and thou shalt see what will become of that brother, and of that sister!

Play not against me my own acknowledged sensibilities, I desire thee. Sensibilities, which at the same time that they contradict thy charge of an adamant heart in thy friend, thou hadst known nothing of, had I not communicated them to thee.

If I ruin such a virtue, sayest thou!—Eternal monotonist!—Again; the most immaculate virtue may be ruined by men who have no regard to their honour, and who make a jest of the most solemn oaths, &c. What must be the virtue that will be ruined without oaths? Is not the world full of these deceptions? And are not lovers'

oaths a jest of hundreds of years' standing? And are not cautions against the perfidy of our sex a necessary part of the female education?

I do intend to endeavour to overcome myself; but I must first try, if I cannot overcome this lady. Have I not said, that the honour of her sex is concerned that I should try?

Whenever thou meetest with a woman of but half her perfections, thou wilt marry—Do, Jack.

Can a girl be degraded by trials, who is not overcome?

I am glad that thou takest crime to thyself, for not endeavouring to convert the poor wretches whom others have ruined. I will not recriminate upon thee, Belford, as I might, when thou flatterest thyself that thou never ruinedst the morals of any young creature, who otherwise would not have been corrupted—the palliating consolation of an Hottentot heart, determined rather to gluttonize on the garbage of other foul feeders than to reform.—But tell me, Jack, wouldst thou have spared such a girl as my Rosebud, had I not, by my example, engaged thy generosity? Nor was my Rosebud the only girl I spared:—When my power was acknowledged, who more merciful than thy friend?

*It is resistance that inflames desire,
Sharpens the darts of love, and blows its fire.
Love is disarm'd that meets with too much ease;
He languishes, and does not care to please.*

The women know this as well as the men. They love to be addressed with spirit:

*And therefore 'tis their golden fruit they guard
With so much care, to make profession hard.*

Whence, for a by-reflection, the ardent, the complaisant gallant is so often preferred to the cold, the unadoring husband. And yet the sex do not consider, that variety and novelty give the ardour and the obsequiousness; and that, were the rake as much used to them as the husband is, he would be [and is to his own wife, if married] as indifferent to their favours, as their husbands are; and the husband, in his turn, would, to another woman, be the rake. Let the women, upon the whole, take this lesson from a Lovelace—'Always to endeavour to make themselves as new to a husband, and to appear as elegant and as obliging to him, as they are desirous to appear to a lover, and actually were to him as such; and then the rake, which all women love, will last longer in the husband, than it generally does.'

But to return:—If I have not sufficiently cleared my conduct to thee in the above; I refer thee once more to mine of the 13th of last month.* And pr'ythee, Jack, lay me not under a necessity to repeat the same things so often. I hope thou readest what I write more than once.

* See Vol. II. Letter XIV.

I am not displeas'd that thou art so apprehensive of my resentment, that I cannot miss a day without making thee uneasy. Thy conscience, 'tis plain, tells thee, that thou has deserved my displeasure: and if it has convinc'd thee of that, it will make thee afraid of repeating thy fault. See that this be the consequence. Else, now that thou hast told me how I can punish thee, it is very likely that I do punish thee by my silence, although I have as much pleasure in writing on this charming subject, as thou canst have in reading what I write.

When a boy, if a dog ran away from me through fear, I generally looked about for a stone, or a stick; and if neither offer'd to my hand, I skinn'd my hat after him to make him afraid for something. What signifies power, if we do not exert it?

Let my Lord know, that thou hast scribbled to me. But give him not the contents of thy epistle. Though a parcel of crude stuff, he would think there was something in it. Poor arguments will do, when brought in favour of what we like. But the stupid peer little thinks that this lady is a rebel to Love. On the contrary, not only he, but all the world believe her to be a volunteer in his service.—So I shall incur blame, and she will be pitied, if any thing happen amiss.

Since my Lord's heart is set upon this match, I have written already to let him know, 'That my unhappy character had given my beloved an ungenerous diffidence of me. That she is so mother-sick and father-fond, that she had rather return to Harlowe-place than marry. That she is even apprehensive that the step she has taken of going off with me will make the ladies of a family of such rank and honour as ours think slightly of her. That therefore I desire his Lordship (though this hint, I tell him, must be very delicately touch'd) to write me such a letter as I can shew her; (let him treat me in it ever so freely, I shall not take it amiss, I tell him, because I know his Lordship takes pleasure in writing to me in a corrective style). That he may make what offers he pleases on the marriage. That I desire his presence at the ceremony; that I may take from his hand the greatest blessing that mortal man can give me.'

I have not absolutely told the lady that I would write to his Lordship to this effect; yet have given her reason to think I will. So that without the last necessity I shall not produce the answer I expect from him: for I am very loth, I own, to make use of any of my family's names for the furthering of my designs. And yet I must make all secure, before I pull off the mask. Was not this my motive for bringing her hither?

Thus thou seest that the old peer's letter came very seasonably. I thank thee for that. But as to his sentences, they cannot possibly do me good. I was early suffocated with his wisdom of nations. When a boy, I never ask'd anything of him, but out flew a proverb; and if the tendency of that was to deny me, I never could obtain the least favour. This gave me so great an aversion to the very word, that, when a child, I made it a condition with my tutor, who was an honest parson, that I would not read my Bible at all, if he would not excuse me one of the wisest books in it: to which, however, I had no other objection, than that it was call'd The Proverbs. And as for Solomon, he was then a hated character with me, not because of his polygamy, but because I had conceiv'd him to be such another musty old fellow as my uncle.

Well, but let us leave old saws to old me. What signifies thy tedious whining over thy departing relation? Is it not generally agreed that he cannot recover? Will it not be kind in thee to put him out of his misery? I hear that he is pestered still with visits from doctors, and apothecaries, and surgeons; that they cannot cut so deep as the mortification has gone; and that in every visit, in every scarification, inevitable death is pronounced

upon him. Why then do they keep tormenting him? Is it not to take away more of his living fleece than of his dead flesh?—When a man is given over, the fee should surely be refused. Are they not now robbing his heirs?—What has thou to do, if the will be as thou'dst have it?—He sent for thee [did he not?] to close his eyes. He is but an uncle, is he?

Let me see, if I mistake not, it is in the Bible, or some other good book: can it be in Herodotus?—O I believe it is in Josephus, a half- sacred, and half-profane author. He tells us of a king of Syria put out of his pain by his prime minister, or one who deserved to be so for his contrivance. The story says, if I am right, that he spread a wet cloth over his face, which killing him, he reigned in his place. A notable fellow! Perhaps this wet cloth in the original, is what we now call laudanum; a potion that overspreads the faculties, as the wet cloth did the face of the royal patient; and the translator knew not how to render it.

But how like forlorn varlet thou subscribest, 'Thy melancholy friend, J. BELFORD!' Melancholy! For what? To stand by, and see fair play between an old man and death? I thought thou hadst been more of a man; that thou art not afraid of an acute death, a sword's point, to be so plagily hip'd at the consequences of a chronical one!—What though the scarificators work upon him day by day? It's only upon a caput mortuum: and pr'ythee go to, to use the stylum veterum, and learn of the royal butchers; who, for sport, (an hundred times worse men than thy Lovelace,) widow ten thousand at a brush, and make twice as many fatherless—learn of them, I say, how to support a single death.

But art thou sure, Jack, it is a mortification?—My uncle once gave promises of such a root-and-branch distemper: but, alas! it turned to a smart gout-fit; and I had the mortification instead of him.—I have heard that bark, in proper doses, will arrest a mortification in its progress, and at last cure it. Let thy uncle's surgeon know, that it is worth more than his ears, if he prescribe one grain of the bark.

I wish my uncle had given me the opportunity of setting thee a better example: thou shouldst have seen what a brave fellow I had been. And had I had occasion to write, my conclusion would have been this: 'I hope the old Trojan's happy. In that hope, I am so; and

'Thy rejoicing friend, 'R. LOVELACE.'

Dwell not always, Jack, upon one subject. Let me have poor Belton's story. The sooner the better. If I can be of service to him, tell him he may command me either in purse or person. Yet the former with a freer will than the latter; for how can I leave my goddess? But I'll issue my commands to my other vassals to attend thy summons.

If ye want head, let me know. If not, my quota, on this occasion, is money.

LETTER XXXVIII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. SATURDAY, MAY 20.

Not one word will I reply to such an abandoned wretch, as thou hast shewn thyself to be in thine of last night. I will leave the lady to the protection of that Power who only can work miracles; and to her own merits. Still I have hopes that these will save her.

I will proceed, as thou desirest, to poor Belton's case; and the rather, as it has thrown me into such a train of thinking upon our past lives, our present courses, and our future views, as may be of service to us both, if I can give due weight to the reflections that arise from it.

The poor man made me a visit on Thursday, in this my melancholy attendance. He began with complaints of his ill health and spirits, his hectic cough, and his increased malady of spitting blood; and then led to his story.

A confounded one it is; and which highly aggravates his other maladies: for it has come out, that his Thomasine, (who, truly, would be new christened, you know, that her name might be nearer in sound to the christian name of the man whom she pretended to doat upon) has for many years carried on an intrigue with a fellow who had been hostler to her father (an innkeeper at Darking); of whom, at the expense of poor Belton, she has made a gentleman; and managed it so, that having the art to make herself his cashier, she has been unable to account for large sums, which he thought forthcoming at demand, and had trusted to her custody, in order to pay off a mortgage upon his parental estate in Kent, which his heart has run upon leaving clear, but which now cannot be done, and will soon be foreclosed. And yet she has so long passed for his wife, that he knows not what to resolve upon about her; nor about the two boys he was so fond of, supposing them to be his; whereas now he begins to doubt his share in them.

So KEEPING don't do, Lovelace. 'Tis not the eligible wife. 'A man must keep a woman, said the poor fellow to me, but not his estate!—Two interests!—Then, my tottering fabric!' pointing to his emaciated carcass.

We do well to value ourselves upon our liberty, or to speak more properly, upon the liberties we take. We had need to run down matrimony as we do, and to make that state the subject of our frothy jests; when we frequently render ourselves (for this of Tom's is not a singular case) the dupes and tools of women who generally govern us (by arts our wise heads penetrate not) more absolutely than a wife would attempt to do.

Let us consider this point a little; and that upon our own principles, as libertines, setting aside what is exacted from us by the laws of our country, and its customs; which, nevertheless, we cannot get over, till we have got over almost all moral obligations, as members of society.

In the first place, let us consider (we, who are in possession of estates by legal descent) how we should have liked to have been such naked destitute varlets, as we must have been, had our fathers been as wise as ourselves; and despised matrimony as we do—and then let us ask ourselves, if we ought not to have the same

regard for our posterity, as we are glad our fathers had for theirs?

But this, perhaps, is too moral a consideration.—To proceed therefore to those considerations which will be more striking to us: How can we reasonably expect economy or frugality (or anything indeed but riot and waste) from creatures who have an interest, and must therefore have views, different from our own?

They know the uncertain tenure (our fickle humours) by which they hold: And is it to be wondered at, supposing them to be provident harlots, that they should endeavour, if they have the power, to lay up against a rainy day? or, if they have not the power, that they should squander all they can come at, when they are sure of nothing but the present hour; and when the life they live, and the sacrifices they have made, put conscience and honour out of the question?

Whereas a wife, having the same family-interest with her husband, lies not under either the same apprehensions or temptations; and has not broken through (of necessity, at least, has not) those restraints which education has fastened upon her: and if she makes a private purse, which we are told by anti-matrimonialists, all wives love to do, and has children, it goes all into the same family at the long-run.

Then as to the great article of fidelity to your bed—Are not women of family, who are well-educated, under greater restraints, than creatures, who, if they ever had reputation, sacrifice it to sordid interest, or to more sordid appetite, the moment they give it up to you? Does not the example you furnish, of having succeeded with her, give encouragement for others to attempt her likewise? For with all her blandishments, can any man be so credulous, or so vain, as to believe, that the woman he could persuade, another may not prevail upon?

Adultery is so capital a guilt, that even rakes and libertines, if not wholly abandoned, and as I may say, invited by a woman's levity, disavow and condemn it: but here, in a state of KEEPING, a woman is in no danger of incurring (legally, at least) that guilt; and you yourself have broken through and overthrown in her all the fences and boundaries of moral honesty, and the modesty and reserves of her sex: And what tie shall hold her against inclination, or interest? And what shall deter an attempter?

While a husband has this security from legal sanctions, that if his wife be detected in a criminal conversation with a man of fortune, (the most likely by bribes to seduce her,) he may recover very great damages, and procure a divorce besides: which, to say nothing of the ignominy, is a consideration that must have some force upon both parties. And a wife must be vicious indeed, and a reflection upon a man's own choice, who, for the sake of change, and where there are no qualities to seduce, nor affluence to corrupt, will run so many hazards to injure her husband in the tenderest of all points.

But there are difficulties in procuring a divorce—[and so there ought]— and none, says the rake, in parting with a mistress whenever you suspect her; or whenever you are weary of her, and have a mind to change her for another.

But must not the man be a brute indeed, who can cast off a woman whom he has seduced, [if he take her from the town, that's another thing,] without some flagrant reason; something that will better justify him to himself, as well as to her, and to the world, than mere power and novelty?

But I don't see, if we judge by fact, and by the practice of all we have been acquainted with of the keeping-class, that we know how to part with them when we have them.

That we know we can if we will, is all we have for it: and this leads us to bear many things from a mistress, which we would not from a wife. But, if we are good-natured and humane: if the woman has art: [and what woman wants it, who has fallen by art? and to whose precarious situation art is so necessary?] if you have given her the credit of being called by your name: if you have a settled place of abode, and have received and paid visits in her company, as your wife: if she has brought you children —you will allow that these are strong obligations upon you in the world's eye, as well as to your own heart, against tearing yourself from such close connections. She will stick to you as your skin: and it will be next to flaying yourself to cast her off.

Even if there be cause for it, by infidelity, she will have managed ill, if she have not her defenders. Nor did I ever know a cause or a person so bad, as to want advocates, either from ill-will to the one, or pity to the other: and you will then be thought a hard-hearted miscreant: and even were she to go off without credit to herself, she will leave you as little; especially with all those whose good opinion a man would wish to cultivate.

Well, then, shall this poor privilege, that we may part with a woman if we will, be deemed a balance for the other inconveniencies? Shall it be thought by us, who are men of family and fortune, an equivalent for giving up equality of degree; and taking for the partner of our bed, and very probably more than the partner in our estates, (to the breach of all family-rule and order,) a low-born, a low-educated creature, who has not brought any thing into the common stock; and can possibly make no returns for the solid benefits she receives, but those libidinous ones, which a man cannot boast of, but to his disgrace, nor think of, but to the shame of both?

Moreover, as the man advances in years, the fury of his libertinism will go off. He will have different aims and pursuits, which will diminish his appetite to ranging, and make such a regular life as the matrimonial and family life, palatable to him, and every day more palatable.

If he has children, and has reason to think them his, and if his lewd courses have left him any estate, he will have cause to regret the restraint his boasted liberty has laid him under, and the valuable privilege it has deprived him of; when he finds that it must descend to some relation, for whom, whether near or distant, he cares not one farthing; and who perhaps (if a man of virtue) has held him in the utmost contempt for his dissolute life.

And were we to suppose his estate in his power to bequeath as he pleases; why should a man resolve, for the gratifying of his foolish humour only, to bastardize his race? Why should he wish to expose his children to the scorn and insults of the rest of the world? Why should he, whether they are sons or daughters, lay them under the necessity of complying with proposals of marriage, either inferior as to fortune, or unequal as to age? Why should he deprive the children he loves, who themselves may be guilty of no fault, of the respect they would wish to have, and to deserve; and of the opportunity of associating themselves with proper, that is

to say, with reputable company? and why should he make them think themselves under obligation to every person of character, who will vouchsafe to visit them? What little reason, in a word, would such children have to bless their father's obstinate defiance of the laws and customs of his country; and for giving them a mother, of whom they could not think with honour; to whose crime it was that they owed their very beings, and whose example it was their duty to shun?

If the education and morals of these children are left to chance, as too generally they are, (for the man who has humanity and a feeling heart, and who is capable of fondness for his offspring, I take it for granted will marry,) the case is still worse; his crime is perpetuated, as I may say, by his children: and the sea, the army, perhaps the highway, for the boys; the common for the girls; too often point out the way to a worse catastrophe.

What therefore, upon the whole, do we get by treading in these crooked paths, but danger, disgrace, and a too-late repentance?

And after all, do we not frequently become the cullies of our own libertinism; sliding into the very state with those half-worn-out doxies, which perhaps we might have entered into with their ladies; at least with their superiors both in degree and fortune? and all the time lived handsomely like ourselves; not sneaking into holes and corners; and, when we crept abroad with our women, looking about us, and at ever one that passed us, as if we were confessedly accountable to the censures of all honest people.

My cousin Tony Jenyns, thou knewest. He had not the actively mischievous spirit, that thou, Belton, Mowbray, Tourville, and myself, have: but he imbibed the same notions we do, and carried them into practice.

How did he prate against wedlock! how did he strut about as a wit and a smart! and what a wit and a smart did all the boys and girls of our family (myself among the rest, then an urchin) think him, for the airs he gave himself?—Marry! No, not for the world; what man of sense would bear the insolences, the petulances, the expensiveness of a wife! He could not for the heart of him think it tolerable, that a woman of equal rank and fortune, and, as it might happen, superior talents to his own, should look upon herself to have a right to share the benefit of that fortune which she brought him.

So, after he had fluttered about the town for two or three years, in all which time he had a better opinion of himself than any body else had, what does he do, but enter upon an affair with his fencing-master's daughter?

He succeeds; takes private lodgings for her at Hackney; visits her by stealth; both of them tender of reputations that were extremely tender, but which neither had quite given up; for rakes of either sex are always the last to condemn or cry down themselves: visited by nobody, nor visiting: the life of a thief, or of a man bested by creditors, afraid to look out of his own house, or to be seen abroad with her. And thus went on for twelve years, and, though he had a good estate, hardly making both ends meet; for though no glare, there was no economy; and, beside, he had ever year a child, and very fond of his children was he. But none of them lived above three years. And being now, on the death of the dozenth, grown as dully sober, as if he had been a real husband, his good Mrs. Thomas (for he had not permitted her to take his own name) prevailed upon him to think the loss of their children a judgment upon the parents for their wicked way of life; [a time will come, Lovelace, if we live to advanced years, in which reflection will take hold of the enfeebled mind;] and then it was not difficult for his woman to induce him, by way of compounding with Heaven, to marry her. When this was done, he had leisure to sit down, and contemplate; an to recollect the many offers of persons of family and fortune to which he had declined in the prime of life: his expenses equal at least: his reputation not only less, but lost: his enjoyments stolen: his partnership unequal, and such as he had always been ashamed of. But the woman said, that after twelve or thirteen years' cohabitation, Tony did an honest thing by her. And that was all my poor cousin got by making his old mistress his new wife—not a drum, not a trumpet, not a fife, not a tabret, nor the expectation of a new joy, to animate him on!

What Belton will do with his Thomasine I know not! nor care I to advise him: for I see the poor fellow does not like that any body should curse her but himself. This he does very heartily. And so low is he reduced, that he blubbers over the reflection upon his past fondness for her cubs, and upon his present doubts of their being his: 'What a damn'd thing is it, Belford, if Tom and Hal should be the hostler dog's puppies and not mine!'

Very true! and I think the strong health of the chubby-faced muscular whelps confirms the too great probability.

But I say not so to him.

You, he says, are such a gay, lively mortal, that this sad tale would make no impression upon you: especially now, that your whole heart is engaged as it is. Mowbray would be too violent upon it: he has not, he says, a feeling heart. Tourville has no discretion: and, a pretty jest! although he and his Thomasine lived without reputation in the world, (people guessing that they were not married, notwithstanding she went by his name,) yet 'he would not too much discredit the cursed ingrate neither!'

Could a man act a weaker part, had he been really married; and were he sure he was going to separate from the mother of his own children?

I leave this as a lesson upon thy heart, without making any application: only with this remark, 'That after we libertines have indulged our licentious appetites, reflecting, (in the conceit of our vain hearts,) both with our lips and by our lives, upon our ancestors and the good old ways, we find out, when we come to years of discretion, if we live till then (what all who knew us found out before, that is to say, we found out), our own despicable folly; that those good old ways would have been best for us, as well as for the rest of the world; and that in every step we have deviated from them we have only exposed our vanity and our ignorance at the same time.'

J. BELFORD.

LETTER XXXIX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SATURDAY, MAY 20.

I am pleased with the sober reflection with which thou concludest thy last; and I thank thee for it. Poor Belton!—I did not think his Thomasine would have proved so very a devil. But this must everlastingly be the risk of a keeper, who takes up with a low-bred girl. This I never did. Nor had I occasion to do it. Such a one as I, Jack, needed only, till now, to shake the stateliest tree, and the mellowed fruit dropt into my mouth:—always of Montaigne's taste thou knowest:—thought it a glory to subdue a girl of family.—More truly delightful to me the seduction- progress than the crowned act: for that's a vapour, a bubble! and most cordially do I thank thee for thy indirect hint, that I am right in my pursuit.

From such a woman as Miss Harlowe, a man is secured from all the inconveniencies thou expatiatest upon.

Once more, therefore, do I thank thee, Belford, for thy approbation!—A man need not, as thou sayest, sneak into holes and corners, and shun the day, in the company of such a woman as this. How friendly in thee, thus to abet the favourite purpose of my heart!—nor can it be a disgrace to me, to permit such a lady to be called by my name!—nor shall I be at all concerned about the world's censure, if I live to the years of discretion, which thou mentionest, should I be taken in, and prevailed upon to tread with her the good old path of my ancestors.

A blessing on thy heart, thou honest fellow! I thought thou wert in jest, and but acquitting thyself of an engagement to Lord M. when thou wert pleading for matrimony in behalf of this lady!—It could not be principle, I knew, in thee: it could not be compassion—a little envy indeed I suspected!—But now I see thee once more thyself: and once more, say I, a blessing on thy heart, thou true friend, and very honest fellow!

Now will I proceed with courage in all my schemes, and oblige thee with the continued narrative of my progressions towards bringing them to effect!—but I could not forbear to interrupt my story, to show my gratitude.

LETTER XL

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

And now will I favour thee with a brief account of our present situation.

From the highest to the lowest we are all extremely happy.—Dorcas stands well in her lady's graces. Polly has asked her advice in relation to a courtship-affair of her own. No oracle ever gave better. Sally has had a quarrel with her woollen-draper; and made my charmer lady-chancellor in it. She blamed Sally for behaving tyrannically to a man who loves her. Dear creature! to stand against a glass, and to shut her eyes because she will not see her face in it!—Mrs. Sinclair has paid her court to so unerring a judge, by requesting her advice with regard to both nieces.

This the way we have been in for several days with the people below. Yet sola generally at her meals, and seldom at other times in their company. They now, used to her ways, [perseverance must conquer,] never press her; so when they meet, all is civility on both sides. Even married people, I believe, Jack, prevent abundance of quarrels, by seeing one another but seldom.

But how stands it between thyself and the lady, methinks thou askest, since her abrupt departure from thee, and undutiful repulse of Wednesday morning?

Why, pretty well in the main. Nay, very well. For why? the dear saucy- face knows not how to help herself. Can fly to no other protection. And has, besides, overheard a conversation [who would have thought she had been so near?] which passed between Mrs. Sinclair, Miss Martin, and myself, that very Wednesday afternoon; which has set her heart at ease with respect to several doubtful points.

Such as, particularly, 'Mrs. Fretchville's unhappy state of mind—most humanely pitied by Miss Martin, who knows her very well—the husband she has lost, and herself, (as Sally says,) lovers from their cradles. Pity from one begets pity from another, be the occasion for it either strong or weak; and so many circumstances were given to poor Mrs. Fretchville's distress, that it was impossible but my beloved must extremely pity her whom the less tender-hearted Miss Martin greatly pitied.

'My Lord M.'s gout his only hindrance from visiting my spouse. Lady Betty and Miss Montague soon expected in town.

'My earnest desire signified to have my spouse receive those ladies in her own house, if Mrs. Fretchville would but know her own mind; and I pathetically lamented the delay occasioned by her not knowing it.

'My intention to stay at Mrs. Sinclair's, as I said I had told them before, while my spouse resides in her own house, (when Mrs. Fretchville could be brought to quit it,) in order to gratify her utmost punctilio.

'My passion for my beloved (which, as I told them in a high and fervent accent, was the truest that man could have for woman) I boasted of. It was, in short, I said, of the true platonic kind; or I had no notion of what platonic love was.'

So it is, Jack; and must end as platonic love generally does end.

'Sally and Mrs. Sinclair next praised, but not grossly, my beloved. Sally particularly admired her purity; called it exemplary; yet (to avoid suspicion) expressed her thoughts that she was rather over-nice, if she might presume to say so before me. But nevertheless she applauded me for the strict observation I made of my vow.

'I more freely blamed her reserves to me; called her cruel; inveighed against her relations; doubted her

love. Every favour I asked of her denied me. Yet my behaviour to her as pure and delicate when alone, as when before them. Hinted at something that had passed between us that very day, that shewed her indifference to me in so strong a light, that I could not bear it. But that I would ask her for her company to the play of Venice Preserved, given out for Sunday night as a benefit-play; the prime actors to be in it; and this, to see if I were to be denied every favour.—Yet, for my own part, I loved not tragedies; though she did, for the sake of the instruction, the warning, and the example generally given in them.

'I had too much feeling, I said. There was enough in the world to make our hearts sad, without carrying grief in our diversions, and making the distresses of others our own.'

True enough, Belford; and I believe, generally speaking, that all the men of our cast are of my mind—They love not any tragedies but those in which they themselves act the parts of tyrants and executioners; and, afraid to trust themselves with serious and solemn reflections, run to comedies, in order to laugh away compunction on the distresses they have occasioned, and to find examples of men as immoral as themselves. For very few of our comic performances, as thou knowest, give us good ones.— I answer, however, for myself—yet thou, I think, on recollection, lovest to deal in the lamentable.

Sally answered for Polly, who was absent; Mrs. Sinclair for herself, and for all her acquaintance, even for Miss Partington, in preferring the comic to the tragic scenes.—And I believe they are right; for the devil's in it, if a confided-in rake does not give a girl enough of tragedy in his comedy.

'I asked Sally to oblige my fair-one with her company. She was engaged, [that was right, thou'lt suppose]. I asked Mrs. Sinclair's leave for Polly. To be sure, she answered, Polly would think it an honour to attend Mrs. Lovelace: but the poor thing was tender-hearted; and as the tragedy was deep, would weep herself blind.

'Sally, meantime, objected Singleton, that I might answer the objection, and save my beloved the trouble of making it, or debating the point with me; and on this occasion I regretted that her brother's projects were not laid aside; since, if they had been given up, I would have gone in person to bring up the ladies of my family to attend my spouse.

'I then, from a letter just before received from one in her father's family, warned them of a person who had undertaken to find us out, and whom I thus in writing [having called for pen and ink] described, that they might arm all the family against him—"A sun-burnt, pock-fretten sailor, ill-looking, big-boned; his stature about six foot; an heavy eye, an overhanging brow, a deck-treading stride in his walk; a couteau generally by his side; lips parched from his gums, as if by staring at the sun in hot climates; a brown coat; a coloured handkerchief about his neck; an oaken plant in his hand near as long as himself, and proportionately thick."

'No questions asked by this fellow must be answered. They should call me to him. But not let my beloved know a tittle of this, so long as it could be helped. And I added, that if her brother or Singleton came, and if they behaved civilly, I would, for her sake, be civil to them: and in this case, she had nothing to do but to own her marriage, and there could be no pretence for violence on either side. But most fervently I swore, that if she was conveyed away, either by persuasion or force, I would directly, on missing her but one day, go to demand her at Harlowe-place, whether she were there or not; and if I recovered not a sister, I would have a brother; and should find out a captain of a ship as well as he.'

And now, Jack, dost thou think she'll attempt to get from me, do what I will?

'Mrs. Sinclair began to be afraid of mischief in her house—I was apprehensive that she would over-do the matter, and be out of character. I therefore winked at her. She primed; nodded, to show she took me; twanged out a high-ho through her nose, lapped one horse-lip over the other, and was silent.'

Here's preparation, Belford!—Dost think I will throw it all away for any thing thou canst say, or Lord M. write?—No, indeed—as my charmer says, when she bridles.

And what must necessarily be the consequence of all this with regard to my beloved's behaviour to me? Canst thou doubt, that it was all complaisance next time she admitted me into her presence?

Thursday we were very happy. All the morning extremely happy. I kissed her charming hand.—I need not describe to thee her hand and arm. When thou sawest her, I took notice that thy eyes dwelt upon them whenever thou couldst spare them from that beauty spot of wonders, her face—fifty times kissed her hand, I believe—once her cheek, intending her lip, but so rapturously, that she could not help seeming angry.

Had she not thus kept me at arms-length; had she not denied me those innocent liberties which our sex, from step to step, aspire to; could I but have gained access to her in her hours of heedlessness and dishabille, [for full dress creates dignity, augments consciousness, and compels distance;] we had familiarized to each other long ago. But keep her up ever so late, meet her ever so early, by breakfast-time she is dressed for the day, and at her earliest hour, as nice as others dressed. All her forms thus kept up, wonder not that I have made so little progress in the proposed trial.—But how must all this distance stimulate!

Thursday morning, as I said, we were extremely happy—about noon, she numbered the hours she had been with me; all of them to be but as one minute; and desired to be left to herself. I was loth to comply: but observing the sun-shine began to shut in, I yielded.

I dined out. Returning, I talked of the house, and of Mrs. Fretchville— had seen Mennell—had pressed him to get the widow to quit: she pitied Mrs. Fretchville [another good effect of the overheard conversation]—had written to Lord M., expected an answer soon from him. I was admitted to sup with her. I urged for her approbation or correction of my written terms. She again promised an answer as soon as she had heard from Miss Howe.

Then I pressed for her company to the play on Saturday night. She made objections, as I had foreseen: her brother's projects, warmth of the weather, &c. But in such a manner, as if half afraid to disoblige me [another happy effect of the overheard conversation]. I soon got over these, therefore; and she consented to favour me.

Friday passed as the day before.

Here were two happy days to both. Why cannot I make every day equally happy? It looks as if it were in my power to do so. Strange, I should thus delight in teasing a woman I so dearly love! I must, I doubt, have something in my temper like Miss Howe, who loves to plague the man who puts himself in her power.—But I

could not do thus by such an angel as this, did I not believe that, after her probation time shall be expired, and if she be not to be brought to cohabitation, (my darling view,) I shall reward her as she wishes.

Saturday is half over. We are equally happy—preparing for the play. Polly has offered her company, and is accepted. I have directed her where to weep: and this not only to show her humanity, [a weeping eye indicates a gentle heart,] but to have a pretence to hide her face with a fan or handkerchief.—Yet Polly is far from being every man's girl; and we shall sit in the gallery green-box.

The woes of others, so well represented as those of Belvidera particularly will be, must, I hope, unlock and open my charmer's heart. Whenever I have been able to prevail upon a girl to permit me to attend her to a play, I have thought myself sure of her. The female heart (all gentleness and harmony by nature) expands, and forgets its forms, when its attention is carried out of itself at an agreeable or affecting entertainment—music, and perhaps a collation afterwards, co-operating.

Indeed, I have no hope of such an effect here; but I have more than one end to answer by getting her to a play. To name but one.—Dorcas has a master-key, as I have told thee.—But it were worth while to carry her to the play of Venice Preserved, were it but to show her, that there have been, and may be, much deeper distresses than she can possibly know.

Thus exceedingly happy are we at present. I hope we shall not find any of Nat. Lee's left-handed gods at work, to dash our bowl of joy with wormwood.

R. LOVELACE.

LETTER XLI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE FRIDAY, MAY 19.

I would not, if I could help it, be so continually brooding over the dark and gloomy face of my condition [all nature, you know, my dear, and every thing in it, has a bright and a gloomy side] as to be thought unable to enjoy a more hopeful prospect. And this, not only for my own sake, but for yours, who take such generous concern in all that befalls me.

Let me tell you then, my dear, that I have known four-and-twenty hours together not unhappy ones, my situation considered.

[She then gives the particulars of the conversation which she had overheard between Mr. Lovelace, Mrs. Sinclair, and Miss Martin; but accounts more minutely than he had done for the opportunity she had of overhearing it, unknown to them.]

She gives the reasons she has to be pleased with what she heard from each: but is shocked at the measure he is resolved to take, if he misses her but for one day. Yet is pleased that he proposes to avoid aggressive violence, if her brother and he meet in town.]

Even Dorcas, says she, appears less exceptionable to me than before; and I cannot but pity her for her neglected education, as it is matter of so much regret to herself: else, there would not be much in it; as the low and illiterate are the most useful people in the common-wealth (since such constitute the labouring part of the public); and as a lettered education but too generally sets people above those servile offices by which the businesses of the world is carried on. Nor have I any doubt but there are, take the world through, twenty happy people among the unlettered, to one among those who have had a school-education.

This, however, concludes not against learning or letters; since one would wish to lift to some little distinction, and more genteel usefulness, those who have capacity, and whose parentage one respects, or whose services one would wish to reward.

Were my mind quite at ease, I could enlarge, perhaps not unusefully, upon this subject; for I have considered it with as much attention as my years, and little experience and observation, will permit.

But the extreme illiterateness and indocility of this maid are surprising, considering that she wants not inquisitiveness, appears willing to learn, and, in other respects, has quick parts. This confirms to me what I have heard remarked, That there is a docible season, a learning-time, as I may say, for every person, in which the mind may be led, step by step, from the lower to the higher, (year by year,) to improvement. How industriously ought these seasons, as they offer, to be taken hold of by tutors, parents, and other friends, to whom the cultivation of the genius of children and youth is committed; since, once elapsed, and no foundation laid, they hardly ever return!—And yet it must be confessed, that there are some geniuses, which, like some fruits, ripen not till late. And industry and perseverance will do prodigious things—but for a learner to have those first rudiments to master at twenty years of age, suppose, which others are taught, and they themselves might have attained, at ten, what an uphill labour!

These kind of observations you have always wished me to intersperse, as they arise to my thoughts. But it is a sign that my prospects are a little mended, or I should not, among so many more interesting ones that my mind has been of late filled with, have had heart's ease enough to make them.

Let me give you my reflections on my more hopeful prospects.

I am now, in the first place, better able to account for the delays about the house than I was before—Poor Mrs. Fretchville!—Though I know her not, I pity her!—Next, it looks well, that he had apprized the women (before this conversation with them), of his intention to stay in this house, after I was removed to the other. By the tone of his voice he seemed concerned for the appearance of this new delay would have with me.

So handsomely did Miss Martin express herself of me, that I am sorry, methinks, that I judged so hardly of her, when I first came hither—free people may go a great way, but not all the way: and as such are generally

unguarded, precipitate, and thoughtless, the same quickness, changeableness, and suddenness of spirit, as I may call it, may intervene (if the heart be not corrupted) to recover them to thought and duty.

His reason for declining to go in person to bring up the ladies of his family, while my brother and Singleton continue their machinations, carries no bad face with it; and one may the rather allow for their expectations, that so proud a spirit as his should attend them for this purpose, as he speaks of them sometimes as persons of punctilio.

Other reasons I will mention for my being easier in my mind than I was before I overheard this conversation.

Such as, the advice he had received in relation to Singleton's mate; which agrees but too well with what you, my dear, wrote to me in your's of May the 10th.*

* See Letter XXIII. of this volume.

His not intending to acquaint me with it.

His cautions to the servants about the sailor, if he should come and make inquiries about us.

His resolution to avoid violence, were he to fall in either with my brother, or this Singleton; and the easy method he has chalked out, in this case, to prevent mischief; since I need only not to deny my being his. But yet I should be driven into such a tacit acknowledgement to any new persons, till I am so, although I have been led (so much against my liking) to give countenance to the belief of the persons below that we are married.

I think myself obliged, from what passed between Mr. Lovelace and me on Wednesday, and from what I overheard him say, to consent to go with him to the play; and the rather, as he had the discretion to propose one of the nieces to accompany me.

I cannot but acknowledge that I am pleased to find that he has actually written to Lord M.

I have promised to give Mr. Lovelace an answer to his proposals as soon as I have heard from you, my dear, on the subject.

I hope that in my next letter I shall have reason to confirm these favourable appearances. Favourable I must think them in the wreck I have suffered.

I hope, that in the trial which you hint may happen between me and myself, (as you* express it,) if he should so behave as to oblige me to leave him, I shall be able to act in such a manner as to bring no discredit upon myself in your eye; and that is all now that I have to wish for. But, if I value him so much as you are pleased to suppose I do, the trial, which you imagine will be so difficult to me, will not, I conceive, be upon getting from him, when the means to affect my escape are lent me; but how I shall behave when got from him; and if, like the Israelites of old, I shall be so weak as to wish to return to my Egyptian bondage.

* See Letter XXXIV. of this volume.

I think it will not be amiss, notwithstanding the present favourable appearances, that you should perfect the scheme (whatever it be) which you tell me* you have thought of, in order to procure for me an asylum, in case of necessity. Mr. Lovelace is certainly a deep and dangerous man; and it is therefore but prudence to be watchful, and to be provided against the worst. Lord bless me, my dear, how I am reduced!—Could I ever have thought to be in such a situation, as to be obliged to stay with a man, of whose honour by me I could have but the shadow of a doubt! —But I will look forward, and hope the best.

* Ibid.

I am certain that your letters are safe. Be perfectly easy, therefore, on that head.

Mr. Lovelace will never be out of my company by his good will, otherwise I have no doubt that I am mistress of my goings-out and comings-in; and did I think it needful, and were I not afraid of my brother and Captain Singleton, I would oftener put it to trial.

LETTER XLII

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE SATURDAY, MAY 20.

I did not know, my dear, that you deferred giving an answer to Mr. Lovelace's proposals till you had my opinion of them. A particular hand, occasionally going to town, will leave this at Wilson's, that no delay may be made on that account.

I never had any doubt of the man's justice and generosity in matters of settlement; and all his relations are as noble in their spirits as in their descent; but now, it may not be amiss for you to wait, to see what returns my Lord makes to his letter of invitation.

The scheme I think of is this:

There is a person, whom I believe you have seen with me, her name Townsend, who is a great dealer in Indian silks, Brussels and French laces, cambricks, linen, and other valuable goods; which she has a way of coming at duty-free; and has a great vend for them (and for other curiosities which she imports) in the private families of the gentry round us.

She has her days of being in town, and then is at a chamber she rents at an inn in Southwark, where she keeps patterns of all her silks, and much of her portable goods, for the conveniency of her London customers. But her place of residence, and where she has her principal warehouse, is at Depford, for the opportunity of getting her goods on shore.

She was first brought to me by my mother, to whom she was recommended on the supposal of my speedy marriage, 'that I might have an opportunity to be as fine as a princess,' was my mother's expression, 'at a moderate expense.'

Now, my dear, I must own, that I do not love to encourage these contraband traders. What is it, but bidding defiance to the laws of our country, when we do, and hurting fair traders; and at the same time robbing our prince of his legal due, to the diminution of those duties which possibly must be made good by new levities upon the public?

But, however, Mrs. Townsend and I, though I have not yet had dealings with her, are upon a very good foot of understanding. She is a sensible woman; she has been abroad, and often goes abroad in the way of her business, and gives very entertaining accounts of all she has seen.

And having applied to me to recommend her to you, (as it is her view to be known to young ladies who are likely to change their condition,) I am sure I can engage her to give you protection at her house at Deptford; which she says is a populous village, and one of the last, I should think, in which you would be sought for. She is not much there, you will believe, by the course of her dealings, but, no doubt, must have somebody on the spot, in whom she can confide: and there, perhaps, you might be safe till your cousin comes. And I should not think it amiss that you write to him out of hand. I cannot suggest to you what you should write. That must be left to your own discretion. For you will be afraid, no doubt, of the consequence of a variance between the two men.

But, notwithstanding all this, and were I sure of getting you safely out of his hands, I will nevertheless forgive you, were you to make all up with him, and marry to-morrow. Yet I will proceed with my projected scheme in relation to Mrs. Townsend; though I hope there will be no occasion to prosecute it, since your prospects seem to be changed, and since you have had twenty-four not unhappy hours together. How my indignation rises for this poor consolation in the courtship [courtship must I call it?] of such a woman! let me tell you, my dear, that were you once your own absolute and independent mistress, I should be tempted, notwithstanding all I have written, to wish you to be the wife of any man in the world, rather than the wife either of Lovelace or of Solmes.

Mrs. Townsend, as I have recollected, has two brothers, each a master of a vessel; and who knows, as she and they have concerns together, but that, in case of need, you may have a whole ship's crew at your devotion? If Lovelace give you cause to leave him, take no thought for the people at Harlowe-place. Let them take care of one another. It is a care they are used to. The law will help to secure them. The wretch is no assassin, no night-murderer. He is an open, because a fearless enemy; and should he attempt any thing that would make him obnoxious to the laws of society, you might have a fair riddance of him, either by flight or the gallows; no matter which.

Had you not been so minute in your account of the circumstances that attended the opportunity you had of overhearing the dialogue between Mr. Lovelace and two of the women, I should have thought the conference contrived on purpose for your ear.

I showed Mr. Lovelace's proposals to Mr. Hickman, who had chambers once in Lincoln's-inn, being designed for the law, had his elder brother lived. He looked so wise, so proud, and so important, upon the occasion; and wanted to take so much consideration about them—Would take them home if I pleased—and weigh them well—and so forth—and the like—and all that—that I had no patience with him, and snatched them back with anger.

O dear!—to be so angry, an't please me, for his zeal!—

Yes, zeal without knowledge, I said—like most other zeals—if there were no objections that struck him at once, there were none.

So hasty, dearest Madam—

And so slow, un-dearest Sir, I could have said—But SURELY, said I, with a look that implied, Would you rebel, Sir!

He begged my pardon—Saw no objection, indeed!—But might he be allowed once more—

No matter—no matter—I would have shown them to my mother, I said, who, though of no inn of court, knew more of these things than half the lounging lubbers of them; and that at first sight—only that she would have been angry at the confession of our continued correspondence.

But, my dear, let the articles be drawn up, and engrossed; and solemnize upon them; and there's no more to be said.

Let me add, that the sailor-fellow has been tampering with my Kitty, and offered a bribe, to find where to direct to you. Next time he comes, I will have him laid hold of; and if I can get nothing out of him, will have him drawn through one of our deepest fishponds. His attempt to corrupt a servant of mine will justify my orders.

I send this letter away directly. But will follow it by another; which shall have for its subject only my mother, myself, and your uncle Antony. And as your prospects are more promising than they have been, I will endeavour to make you smile upon the occasion. For you will be pleased to know, that my mother has had a formal tender from that grey goose, which may make her skill in settlements useful to herself, were she to encourage it.

May your prospects be still more and more happy, prays

Your own, ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XLIII

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE SAT. SUNDAY, MAY 20, 21.

Now, my dear, for the promised subject. You must not ask me how I came by the originals [such they really are] that I am going to present you with: for my mother would not read to me those parts of your uncle's

letter which bore hard upon myself, and which leave him without any title to mercy from me: nor would she let me hear but what she pleased of her's in answer; for she has condescended to answer him—with a denial, however; but such a denial as no one but an old bachelor would take from a widow.

Any body, except myself, who could have been acquainted with such a fal-lal courtship as this must have been had it proceeded, would have been glad it had gone on: and I dare say, but for the saucy daughter, it had. My good mamma, in that case, would have been ten years the younger for it, perhaps: and, could I but have approved of it, I should have been considered by her as if ten years older than I am: since, very likely, it would have been: 'We widows, my dear, know not how to keep men at a distance—so as to give them pain, in order to try their love.—You must advise me, child: you must teach me to be cruel—yet not too cruel neither—so as to make a man heartless, who has no time, God wot, to throw away.'—Then would my behaviour to Mr. Hickman have been better liked; and my mother would have bridled like her daughter.

O my dear, how might we have been diverted by the practisings for the recovery of the long forgottens! could I have been sure that it would have been in my power to have put them asunder, in the Irish style, before they had come together. But there's no trusting to the widow whose goods and chattels are in her own hands, addressed by an old bachelor who has fine things, and offers to leave her ten thousand pounds better than he found her, and sole mistress, besides, of all her notables! for these, as you will see by-and-by, are his proposals.

The old Triton's address carries the writer's marks upon the very subscription—To the equally amiable and worthy admired [there's for you!] Mrs. ANABELLA HOWE, widow, the last word added, I suppose as Esquire to a man, as a word of honour; or for fear the bella to Anna, should not enough distinguish the person meant from the spinster: [vain hussy you'll call me, I know:] And then follows;—These humbly present. —Put down as a memorandum, I presume, to make a leg, and behave handsomely at presenting it, he intending, very probably, to deliver it himself.

And now stand by—to see

ENTER OLD NEPTUNE.

His head adorned with sea-weed, and a crown of cockle-shells; as we see him decked out in Mrs. Robinson's grotto.

MONDAY, MAY 15. MADAM,

I did make a sort of resolution ten years ago never to marry. I saw in other families, where they lived best, you will be pleased to mark that, queernesses I could not away with. Then liked well enough to live single for the sake of my brother's family; and for one child in it more than the rest. But that girl has turned us all off the hinges: and why should I deny myself any comforts for them, as will not thank me for so doing, I don't know.

So much for my motives as from self and family: but the dear Mrs. Howe makes me go farther.

I have a very great fortune, I bless God for it, all of my own getting, or most of it; you will be pleased to mark that; for I was the youngest brother of three. You have also, God be thanked, a great estate, which you have improved by your own frugality and wise management. Frugality, let me stop to say, is one of the greatest virtues in this mortal life, because it enables us to do justice to all, and puts it in our power to benefit some by it, as we see they deserve.

You have but one child; and I am a bachelor, and have never a one—all bachelors cannot say so: wherefore your daughter may be the better for me, if she will keep up with my humour; which was never thought bad: especially to my equals. Servants, indeed, I don't matter being angry with, when I please; they are paid for bearing it, and too-too often deserve it; as we have frequently taken notice of to one another. And, moreover, if we keep not servants at distance, they will be familiar. I always made it a rule to find fault, whether reasonable or not, that so I might have no reason to find fault. Young women and servants in general (as worthy Mr. Solmes observes) are better governed by fear than love. But this my humour as to servants will not effect either you or Miss, you know.

I will make very advantageous settlements; such as any common friend shall judge to be so. But must have all in my own power, while I live: because, you know, Madam, it is as creditable to the wife, as to the husband, that it should be so.

I am not at fine words. We are not children; though it is hoped we may have some; for I am a very healthy sound man. I bless God for it: and never brought home from my voyages and travels a worsor constitution than I took out with me. I was none of those, I will assure you. But this I will undertake, that, if you are the survivor, you shall be at the least ten thousand pounds the better for me. What, in the contrary case, I shall be the better for you, I leave to you, as you shall think my kindness to you shall deserve.

But one thing, Madam, I shall be glad of, that Miss Howe might not live with us then—[she need not know I write thus]—but go home to Mr. Hickman, as she is upon the point of marriage, I hear: and if she behaves dutifully, as she should do, to us both, she shall be the better; for I said so before.

You shall manage all things, both mine and your own; for I know but little of land-matters. All my opposition to you shall be out of love, when I think you take too much upon you for your health.

It will be very pretty for you, I should think, to have a man of experience, in a long winter's evening, to sit down by you, and tell you stories of foreign parts, and the customs of the nations he has consorted with. And I have fine curiosities of the Indian growth, such as ladies love, and some that even my niece Clary, when she was good, never saw. These, one by one, as you are kind to me, (which I make no question of, because I shall be kind to you,) shall be all yours. Prettier entertainment by much, than sitting with a too smartish daughter, sometimes out of humour; and thwarting, and vexing, as daughters will, (when women-grown especially, as I have heard you often observe;) and thinking their parents old, without paying them the reverence due to years; when, as in your case, I make no sort of doubt, they are young enough to wipe their noses. You understand me, Madam.

As for me myself, it will be very happy, and I am delighted with the thinking of it, to have, after a pleasant ride, or so, a lady of like experience with myself to come home to, and but one interest betwixt us: to reckon

up our comings-in together; and what this day and this week has produced—O how this will increase love!—most mightily will it increase it!—and I believe I shall never love you enough, or be able to show you all my love.

I hope, Madam, there need not be such maiden niceties and hangings-off, as I may call them, between us, (for hanging-off sake,) as that you will deny me a line or two to this proposal, written down, although you would not answer me so readily when I spoke to you; your daughter being, I suppose, hard by; for you looked round you, as if not willing to be overheard. So I resolved to write: that my writing may stand as upon record for my upright meaning; being none of your Lovelaces; you will mark that, Madam; but a downright, true, honest, faithful Englishman. So hope you will not disdain to write a line or two to this my proposal: and I shall look upon it as a great honour, I will assure you, and be proud thereof. What can I say more?—for you are your own mistress, as I am my own master: and you shall always be your own mistress, be pleased to mark that; for so a lady of your prudence and experience ought to be.

This is a long letter. But the subject requires it; because I would not write twice where once would do. So would explain my sense and meaning at one time.

I have had writing in my head two whole months very near; but hardly knew how (being unpracticed in these matters) to begin to write. And now, good lady, be favourable to

Your most humble lover, and obedient servant, ANT. HARLOWE.

Here's a letter of courtship, my dear!—and let me subjoin to it, that if now, or hereafter, I should treat this hideous lover, who is so free with me to my mother, with asperity, and you should be disgusted at it, I shall think you don't give me that preference in your love which you have in mine.

And now, which shall I first give you; the answer of my good mamma; or the dialogue that passed between the widow mother, and the pert daughter, upon her letting the latter know that she had a love-letter?

I think you shall have the dialogue. But let me promise one thing; that if you think me too free, you must not let it run in your head that I am writing of your uncle, or of my mother; but of a couple of old lovers, no matter whom. Reverence is too apt to be forgotten by children, where the reverends forget first what belongs to their own characters. A grave remark, and therefore at your service, my dear.

Well then, suppose my mamma, (after twice coming into my closet to me, and as often going out, with very meaning features, and lips ready to burst open, but still closed, as if by compulsion, a speech going off in a slight cough, that never went near the lungs,) grown more resolute the third time of entrance, and sitting down by me, thus begin:

Mother. I have a very serious matter to talk with you upon, Nancy, when you are disposed to attend to matters within ourselves, and not let matters without ourselves wholly engross you.

A good selve-ish speech!—But I thought that friendship, gratitude, and humanity, were matters that ought to be deemed of the most intimate concern to us. But not to dwell upon words.

Daughter. I am now disposed to attend to every thing my mamma is disposed to say to me.

M. Why then, child—why then, my dear—[and the good lady's face looked so plump, so smooth, and so shining!—I see you are all attention, Nancy!—But don't be surprised!—don't be uneasy!—But I have—I have—Where is it?—[and yet it lay next her heart, never another near it—so no difficulty to have found it]—I have a letter, my dear!—[And out from her bosom it came: but she still held it in her hand]—I have a letter, child.—It is—it is—it is from—from a gentleman, I assure you!— [lifting up her head, and smiling.]

There is no delight to a daughter, thought I, in such surprises as seem to be collecting. I will deprive my mother of the satisfaction of making a gradual discovery.

D. From Mr. Antony Harlowe, I suppose, Madam?

M. [Lips drawn closer: eye raised] Why, my dear!—I cannot but own— But how, I wonder, could you think of Mr. Anthony Harlowe?

D. How, Madam, could I think of any body else?

M. How could you think of any body else?—[angry, and drawing back her face]. But do you know the subject, Nancy?

D. You have told it, Madam, by your manner of breaking it to me. But, indeed, I question not that he had two motives in his visits—both equally agreeable to me; for all that family love me dearly.

M. No love lost, if so, between you and them. But this [rising] is what I get—so like your papa!—I never could open my heart to him!

D. Dear Madam, excuse me. Be so good as to open your heart to me.— I don't love the Harlowes—but pray excuse me.

M. You have put me quite out with your forward temper! [angrily sitting down again.]

D. I will be all patience and attention. May I be allowed to read his letter?

M. I wanted to advise with you upon it.—But you are such a strange creature!—you are always for answering one before one speaks!

D. You'll be so good as to forgive me, Madam.—But I thought every body (he among the rest) knew that you had always declared against a second marriage.

M. And so I have. But then it was in the mind I was in. Things may offer—

I stared.

M. Nay, don't be surprised!—I don't intend—I don't intend—

D. Not, perhaps, in the mind you are in, Madam.

M. Pert creature! [rising again]—We shall quarrel, I see!—There's no—

D. Once more, dear Madam, I beg your excuse. I will attend in silence. —Pray, Madam, sit down again—pray do [she sat down.]—May I see the letter?

No; there are some things in it you won't like.—Your temper is known, I find, to be unhappy. But nothing bad against you; intimations, on the contrary, that you shall be the better for him, if you oblige him.

Not a living soul but the Harlowes, I said, thought me ill-tempered: and I was contented that they should, who could do as they had done by the most universally acknowledged sweetness in the world.

Here we broke out a little; but at last she read me some of the passages in the letter. But not the most mightily ridiculous: yet I could hardly keep my countenance neither, especially when she came to that passage which mentions his sound health; and at which she stopped; she best knew why—But soon resuming:

M. Well now, Nancy, tell me what you think of it.

D. Nay, pray, Madam, tell me what you think of it.

M. I expect to be answered by an answer; not by a question! You don't use to be so shy to speak your mind.

D. Not when my mamma commands me to do so.

M. Then speak it now.

D. Without hearing the whole of the letter?

M. Speak to what you have heard.

D. Why then, Madam—you won't be my mamma HOWE, if you give way to it.

M. I am surprised at your assurance, Nancy!

D. I mean, Madam, you will then be my mamma Harlowe.

M. O dear heart!—But I am not a fool.

And her colour went and came.

D. Dear Madam, [but, indeed, I don't love a Harlowe—that's what I mean,] I am your child, and must be your child, do what you will.

M. A very pert one, I am sure, as ever mother bore! And you must be my child, do what I will!—as much as to say, you would not, if you could help it, if I—

D. How could I have such a thought!—It would be forward, indeed, if I had—when I don't know what your mind is as to the proposal:—when the proposal is so very advantageous a one too.

M. [Looking a little less discomposed] why, indeed, ten thousand pounds—

D. And to be sure of outliving him, Madam!

M. Sure!—nobody can be sure—but it is very likely that—

D. Not at all, Madam. You was going to read something (but stopped) about his constitution: his sobriety is well known—Why, Madam, these gentlemen who have used the sea, and been in different climates, and come home to relax from cares in a temperate one, and are sober—are the likeliest to live long of any men in the world. Don't you see that his very skin is a fortification of buff?

M. Strange creature!

D. God forbid, that any body I love and honour should marry a man in hopes to bury him—but suppose, Madam, at your time of life—

M. My time of life?—Dear heart!—What is my time of life, pray?

D. Not old, Madam; and that you are not, may be your danger!

As I hope to live (my dear) my mother smiled, and looked not displeas'd with me.

M. Why, indeed, child—why, indeed, I must needs say—and then I should choose to do nothing (forward as you are sometimes) to hurt you.

D. Why, as to that, Madam, I can't expect that you should deprive yourself of any satisfaction—

M. Satisfaction, my dear!—I don't say it would be a satisfaction—but could I do any thing that would benefit you, it would perhaps be an inducement to hold one conference upon the subject.

D. My fortune already will be more considerable than my match, if I am to have Mr. Hickman.

M. Why so?—Mr. Hickman has fortune enough to entitle him to your's.

D. If you think so, that's enough.

M. Not but I should think the worse of myself, if I desired anybody's death; but I think, as you say, Mr. Antony Harlowe is a healthy man, and bids fair for a long life.

Bless me, thought I, how shall I do to know whether this be an objection or a recommendation!

D. Will you forgive me, Madam?

M. What would the girl say? [looking as if she was half afraid to hear what.]

D. Only, that if you marry a man of his time of life, you stand two chances instead of one, to be a nurse at your time of life.

M. Saucebox!

D. Dear Madam!—What I mean is only that these healthy old men sometimes fall into lingering disorders all at once. And I humbly conceive, that the infirmities of age are uneasily borne with, where the remembrance of the pleasanter season comes not in to relieve the healthier of the two.

M. A strange girl!—Yet his healthy constitution an objection just now! —But I have always told you, that you know either too much to be argued with, or too little for me to have patience with you.

D. I can't but say, I should be glad of your commands, Madam, how to behave myself to Mr. Antony Harlowe next time he comes.

M. How to behave yourself!—Why, if you retire with contempt of him, when he comes next, it will be but as you have been used to do of late.

D. Then he is to come again, Madam?

M. And suppose he be?

D. I can't help it, if it be your pleasure, Madam. He desires a line in answer to his fine letter. If he come, it will be in pursuance of that line, I presume?

M. None of your arch and pert leers, girl!—You know I won't bear them. I had a mind to hear what you would say to this matter. I have not written; but I shall presently.

D. It is mighty good of you, Madam, (I hope the man will think so,) to answer his first application by letter.—Pity he should write twice, if once will do.

M. That fetch won't let you into my intention as to what I shall write. It is too saucily put.

D. Perhaps I can guess at your intention, Madam, were it to become me so to do.

M. Perhaps I would not make Mr. Hickman of any man; using him the worse for respecting me.

D. Nor, perhaps, would I, Madam, if I liked his respects.

M. I understand you. But, perhaps, it is in your power to make me hearken, or not, to Mr. Harlowe.

D. Young men, who have probably a good deal of time before them need not be in haste for a wife. Mr. Hickman, poor man! must stay his time, or take his remedy.

M. He bears more from you than a man ought.

D. Then, I doubt, he gives a reason for the treatment he meets with.

M. Provoking creature!

D. I have but one request to make to you, Madam.

M. A dutiful one, I suppose. What is it, pray?

D. That if you marry, I may be permitted to live single.

M. Perverse creature, I'm sure!

D. How can I expect, Madam, that you should refuse such terms? Ten thousand pounds!—At the least ten thousand pounds!—A very handsome proposal!—So many fine things too, to give you one by one!—Dearest Madam, forgive me!—I hope it is not yet so far gone, that rallying this man will be thought want of duty to you.

M. Your rallying of him, and your reverence to me, it is plain, have one source.

D. I hope not, Madam. But ten thousand pounds—

M. Is no unhandsome proposal.

D. Indeed I think so. I hope, Madam, you will not be behind-hand with him in generosity.

M. He won't be ten thousand pounds the better for me, if he survive me.

D. No, Madam; he can't expect that, as you have a daughter, and as he is a bachelor, and has not a child!—Poor old soul!

M. Old soul, Nancy!—And thus to call him for being a bachelor, not having a child!—Does this become you?

D. Not old soul for that, Madam—but half the sum; five thousand pounds; you can't engage for less, Madam.

M. That sum has your approbation then? [Looking as if she'd be even with me].

D. As he leaves it to your generosity, Madam, to reward his kindness to you, it can't be less.—Do, dear Madam, permit me, without incurring your displeasure, to call him poor old soul again.

M. Never was such a whimsical creature!—[turning away to hide her involuntary smile, for I believe I looked very archly; at least I intended to do so]—I hate that wicked sly look. You give yourself very free airs—don't you?

D. I snatched her hand, and kissed it—My dear Mamma, be not angry with your girl!—You have told me, that you was very lively formerly.

M. Formerly! Good lack!—But were I to encourage his proposals, you may be sure, that for Mr. Hickman's sake, as well as your's, I should make a wise agreement.

D. You have both lived to years of prudence, Madam.

M. Yes, I suppose I am an old soul too.

D. He also is for making a wise agreement, or hinting at one, at least.

M. Well, the short and the long I suppose is this: I have not your consent to marry.

D. Indeed, Madam, you have not my wishes to marry.

M. Let me tell you, that if prudence consists in wishing well to one's self, I see not but the young flirts are as prudent as the old souls.

D. Dear Madam, would you blame me, if to wish you not to marry Mr. Antony Harlowe, is to wish well to myself?

M. You are mighty witty. I wish you were as dutiful.

D. I am more dutiful, I hope, than witty; or I should be a fool as well as a saucybox.

M. Let me be judge of both—Parents are only to live for their children, let them deserve it or not. That's their dutiful notion!

D. Heaven forbid that I should wish, if there be two interests between my mother and me, that my mother postpone her own for mine!—or give up any thing that would add to the real comforts of her life to oblige me!—Tell me, my dear Mamma, if you think the closing with this proposal will?

M. I say, that ten thousand pounds is such an acquisition to one's family, that the offer of it deserves a civil return.

D. Not the offer, Madam: the chance only!—if indeed you have a view to an increase of family, the money may provide—

M. You can't keep within tolerable bounds!—That saucy fleer I cannot away with—

D. Dearest, dearest Madam, forgive me; but old soul ran in my head again!—Nay, indeed, and upon my

word, I will not be robbed of that charming smile! And again I kissed her hand.

M. Away, bold creature! Nothing can be so provoking as to be made to smile when one would choose, and ought, to be angry.

D. But, dear Madam, if it be to be, I presume you won't think of it before next winter.

M. What now would the pert one be at?

D. Because he only proposes to entertain you with pretty stories of foreign nations in a winter's evening.—Dearest, dearest Madam, let me have all the reading of his letter through. I will forgive him all he says about me.

M. It may be a very difficult thing, perhaps, for a man of the best sense to write a love-letter that may not be cavilled at.

D. That's because lovers in their letters hit not the medium. They either write too much nonsense, or too little. But do you call this odd soul's letter [no more will I call him old soul, if I can help it] a love-letter?

M. Well, well, I see you are averse to this matter. I am not to be your mother; you will live single, if I marry. I had a mind to see if generosity govern you in your views. I shall pursue my own inclinations; and if they should happen to be suitable to yours, pray let me for the future be better rewarded by you than hitherto I have been.

And away she flung, without staying for a reply.—Vexed, I dare say, that I did not better approve of the proposal—were it only that the merit of denying might have been all her own, and to lay the stronger obligation upon her saucy daughter.

She wrote such a widow-like refusal when she went from me, as might not exclude hope in any other wooer; whatever it may do in Mr. Tony Harlowe.

It will be my part, to take care to beat her off the visit she half-promises to make him (as you will see in her answer) upon condition that he will withdraw his suit. For who knows what effect the old bachelor's exotics [far-fetched and dear-bought you know is a proverb] might otherwise have upon a woman's mind, wanting nothing but unnecessaries, gewgaws, and fineries, and offered such as are not easily to be met with, or purchased?

Well, but now I give you leave to read here, in this place, the copy of my mother's answer to your uncle's letter. Not one comment will I make upon it. I know my duty better. And here, therefore, taking the liberty to hope, that I may, in your present less disagreeable, though not wholly agreeable situation, provoke a smile from you, I conclude myself,

Your ever affectionate and faithful, ANNA HOWE.

MRS. ANNABELLA HOWE, TO ANTONY HARLY, ESQ.

MR. ANTONY HARLOWE, FRIDAY, MAY 19.

SIR,

It is not usual I believe for our sex to answer by pen and ink the first letter on these occasions. The first letter! How odd is that! As if I expected another; which I do not. But then I think, as I do not judge proper to encourage your proposal, there is no reason why I should not answer in civility, where so great a civility is intended. Indeed, I was always of opinion that a person was entitled to that, and not to ill usage, because he had a respect for me. And so I have often and often told my daughter.

A woman I think makes but a poor figure in a man's eye afterwards, and does no reputation to her sex neither, when she behaves like a tyrant to him beforehand.

To be sure, Sir, if I were to change my condition, I know not a gentleman whose proposal could be more agreeable. Your nephew and your nieces have enough without you: my daughter has a fine fortune without me, and I should take care to double it, living or dying, were I to do such a thing: so nobody need to be the worse for it. But Nancy would not think so.

All the comfort I know of in children, is, that when young they do with us what they will, and all is pretty in them to their very faults; and when they are grown up, they think their parents must live for them only; and deny themselves every thing for their sakes. I know Nancy could not bear a father-in-law. She would fly at the very thought of my being in earnest to give her one. Not that I stand in fear of my daughter neither. It is not fit I should. But she has her poor papa's spirit. A very violent one that was. And one would not choose, you know, Sir, to enter into any affair, that, one knows, one must renounce a daughter for, or she a mother—except indeed one's heart were much in it; which, I bless God, mine is not.

I have now been a widow these ten years; nobody to controul me: and I am said not to bear controul: so, Sir, you and I are best as we are, I believe: nay, I am sure of it: for we want not what either has; having both more than we know what to do with. And I know I could not be in the least accountable for any of my ways.

My daughter indeed, though she is a fine girl, as girls go, (she has too much sense indeed for one of her sex, and knows she has it,) is more a check to me than one would wish a daughter to be: for who would choose to be always snapping at each other? But she will soon be married; and then, not living together, we shall only come together when we are pleased, and stay away when we are not; and so, like other lovers, never see any thing but the best sides of each other.

I own, for all this, that I love her dearly; and she me, I dare say: so would not wish to provoke her to do otherwise. Besides, the girl is so much regarded every where, that having lived so much of my prime a widow, I would not lay myself open to her censures, or even to her indifference, you know.

Your generous proposal requires all this explicitness. I thank you for your good opinion of me. When I know you acquiesce with this my civil refusal [and indeed, Sir, I am as much in earnest in it, as if I had spoken broader] I don't know but Nancy and I may, with your permission, come to see your fine things; for I am a great admirer of rarities that come from abroad.

So, Sir, let us only converse occasionally as we meet, as we used to do, without any other view to each other than good wishes: which I hope may not be lessened for this declining. And then I shall always think myself

Your obliged servant, ANNABELLA HOWE.

P.S. I sent word by Mrs. Lorimer, that I would write an answer: but would take time for consideration. So hope, Sir, you won't think it a slight, I did not write sooner.

LETTER XLIV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SUNDAY, MAY 21.

I am too much disturbed in my mind to think of any thing but revenge; or I did intend to give thee an account of Miss Harlowe's observations on the play. Miss Harlowe's I say. Thou knowest that I hate the name of Harlowe; and I am exceedingly out of humour with her, and with her saucy friend.

What's the matter now? thou'lt ask.

Matter enough; for while we were at the play, Dorcas, who had her orders, and a key to her lady's chamber, as well as a master-key to her drawers and mahogany chest, closet-key and all, found means to come at some of Miss Howe's last-written letters. The vigilant wench was directed to them by seeing her lady take a letter out of her stays, and put it to the others, before she went out with me—afraid, as the women upbraidingly tell me, that I should find it there.

Dorcas no sooner found them, than she assembled three ready writers of the non-apparents; and Sally, and she, and they employed themselves with the utmost diligence, in making extracts, according to former directions, from these cursed letters, for my use. Cursed, may I well call them— Such abuses!—Such virulence!—O this little fury Miss Howe!—Well might her saucy friend (who has been equally free with me, or the occasion could not have been given) be so violent as she lately was, at my endeavouring to come at one of these letters.

I was sure, that this fair-one, at so early an age, with a constitution so firm, health so blooming, eyes so sparkling, expectations therefore so lively, and hope so predominating, could not be absolutely, and from her own vigilance, so guarded, and so apprehensive, as I have found her to be.

Sparkling eyes, Jack, when the poetical tribe have said all they can for them, are an infallible sign of a rogue, or room for a rogue, in the heart.

Thou mayest go on with thy preachments, and Lord M. with his wisdom of nations, I am now more assured of her than ever. And now my revenge is up, and joined with my love, all resistance must fall before it. And most solemnly do I swear, that Miss Howe shall come in for her snack.

And here, just now, is another letter brought from the same little virulent devil. I hope to procure scripts from that too, very speedily, if it be put to the test; for the saucy fair-one is resolved to go to church this morning; no so much from a spirit of devotion, I have reason to think, as to try whether she can go out without check, controul, or my attention.

I have been denied breakfasting with her. Indeed she was a little displeas'd with me last night: because, on our return from the play, I obliged her to pass the rest of the night with the women and me, in their parlour, and to stay till near one. She told me at parting, that she expected to have the whole next day to herself. I had not read the extracts then; so I had resolv'd to begin a new course, and, if possible, to banish all jealousy and suspicion from her heart: and yet I had no reason to be much troubled at her past suspicions; since, if a woman will continue with a man whom she suspects, when she can get from him, or thinks she can, I am sure it is a very hopeful sign.

She is gone. Slipt down before I was aware. She had order'd a chair, on purpose to exclude my personal attendance. But I had taken proper precautions. Will. attend'd her by consent; Peter, the house-servant, was within Will.'s call.

I had, by Dorcas, represent'd her danger from Singleton, in order to dissuade her from going at all, unless she allow'd me to attend her; but I was answer'd, with her usual saucy smartness, that if there were no cause of fear of being met with at the playhouse, when there were but two playhouses, surely there was less at church, when there were so many churches. The chairmen were order'd to carry her to St. James's Church.

But she would not be so careless of obliging me, if she knew what I have already come at, and how the women urge me on; for they are continually complaining of the restraint they lie under in their behaviour; in their attendance; neglecting all their concerns in the front house; and keeping this elegant back one entirely free from company, that she may have no suspicion of them. They doubt not my generosity, they say: But why for my own sake, in Lord M.'s style, should I make so long a harvest of so little corn?

Women, ye reason well. I think I will begin my operations the moment she comes in.

I have come at the letter brought her from Miss Howe to-day. Plot, conjuration, sorcery, witchcraft, all going forward! I shall not be able to see this Miss Harlowe with patience. As the nymphs below ask, so do I, Why is night necessary? And Sally and Polly upbraidingly remind me of my first attempts upon themselves. Yet force answers not my end—and yet it may, if there be truth in that part of the libertine's creed, That once subdued, is always subdued! And what woman answers affirmatively to the question?

She is return'd: But refuses to admit me: and insists upon having the day to herself. Dorcas tells me, that

she believes her denial is from motives of piety.—Oons, Jack, is there impiety in seeing me?—Would it not be the highest act of piety to reclaim me? And is this to be done by her refusing to see me when she is in a devouter frame than usual?—But I hate her, hate her heartily! She is old, ugly, and deformed.—But O the blasphemy! yet she is a Harlowe: and I do and can hate her for that.

But since I must not see her, [she will be mistress of her own will, and of her time, truly!] let me fill up my time, by telling thee what I have come at.

The first letter the women met with, is dated April 27.* Where can she have put the preceding ones!—It mentions Mr. Hickman as a busy fellow between them. Hickman had best take care of himself. She says in it, 'I hope you have no cause to repent returning my Norris—it is forthcoming on demand.' Now, what the devil can this mean!—Her Norris forthcoming on demand!—the devil take me, if I am out-Norris'd!—If such innocents can allow themselves to plot (to Norris), well may I.

* See Vol. IV. Letter II.

She is sorry, that 'her Hannah can't be with her.'—And what if she could?—What could Hannah do for her in such a house as this?

'The women in the house are to be found out in one breakfasting.' The women are enraged at both the correspondents for this; and more than ever make a point of my subduing her. I had a good mind to give Miss Howe to them in full property. Say but the word, Jack, and it shall be done.

'She is glad that Miss Harlowe had thoughts of taking me at my word. She wondered I did not offer again.' Advises her, if I don't soon, 'not to stay with me.' Cautions her, 'to keep me at a distance; not to permit the least familiarity.'—See, Jack! see Belford!—Exactly as I thought!— Her vigilance all owing to a cool friend; who can sit down quietly, and give that advice, which in her own case she could not take. What an encouragement to me to proceed in my devices, when I have reason to think that my beloved's reserves are owing more to Miss Howe's cautions than to her own inclinations! But 'it is my interest to be honest,' Miss Howe tells her.—INTEREST, fools!—I thought these girls knew, that my interest was ever subservient to my pleasure.

What would I give to come at the copies of the letters to which those of Miss Howe are answers!

The next letter is dated May 3.* In this the little termagant expresses her astonishment, that her mother should write to Miss Harlowe, to forbid her to correspond with her daughter. Mr. Hickman, she says, is of opinion, 'that she ought not to obey her mother.' How the creeping fellow trims between both! I am afraid, that I must punish him, as well as this virago; and I have a scheme rumbling in my head, that wants but half an hour's musing to bring into form, that will do my business upon both. I cannot bear, that the parental authority should be thus despised, thus trampled under foot. But observe the vixen, 'Tis well he is of her opinion; for her mother having set her up, she must have somebody to quarrel with.'—Could a Lovelace have allowed himself a greater license? This girl's a devilish rake in her heart. Had she been a man, and one of us, she'd have outdone us all in enterprise and spirit.

* See Vol. IV. Letter X.

'She wants but very little farther provocation,' she says, 'to fly privately to London. And if she does, she will not leave her till she sees her either honourably married, or quit of the wretch.' Here, Jack, the transcriber Sally has added a prayer—'For the Lord's sake, dear Mr. Lovealce, get this fury to London!'—Her fate, I can tell thee, Jack, if we had her among us, should not be so long deciding as her friend's. What a gantelope would she run, when I had done with her, among a dozen of her own pitiless sex, whom my charmer shall never see!—But more of this anon.

I find by this letter, that my saucy captive has been drawing the characters of every varlet of ye. Nor am I spared in it more than you. 'The man's a fool, to be sure, my dear.' Let me perish, if they either of them find me one!—'A silly fellow, at least.' Cursed contemptible!— 'I see not but they are a set of infernals!' There's one for thee, Lovelace! and yet she would have her friend marry a Beelzebub.—And what have any of us done, (within the knowledge of Miss Harlowe,) that she should give such an account of us, as should excuse so much abuse from Miss Howe!—But the occasion that shall warrant this abuse is to come!

She blames her, for 'not admitting Miss Partington to her bed—watchful, as you are, what could have happened?—If violence were intended, he would not stay for the night.' I am ashamed to have this hinted to me by this virago. Sally writes upon this hint—'See, Sir, what is expected from you. An hundred, and an hundred times have we told you of this.'— And so they have. But to be sure, the advice from them was not half the efficacy as it will be from Miss Howe.—'You might have sat up after her, or not gone to bed,' proceeds she.

But can there be such apprehensions between them, yet the one advise her to stay, and the other resolve to wait my imperial motion for marriage? I am glad I know that.

She approves of my proposal of Mrs. Fretchville's house. She puts her upon expecting settlements; upon naming a day: and concludes with insisting upon her writing, notwithstanding her mother's prohibitions; or bids her 'take the consequence.' Undutiful wretches! How I long to vindicate against them both the insulted parental character!

Thou wilt say to thyself, by this time, And can this proud and insolent girl be the same Miss Howe, who sighed for an honest Sir George Colmar; and who, but for this her beloved friend, would have followed him in all his broken fortunes, when he was obliged to quit the kingdom?

Yes, she is the very same. And I always found in others, as well as in myself, that a first passion thoroughly subdued, made the conqueror of it a rover; the conqueress a tyrant.

Well, but now comes mincing in a letter, from one who has 'the honour of dear Miss Howe's commands'* to acquaint Miss Harlowe, that Miss Howe is 'excessively concerned for the concern she has given her.'

* See Vol. IV. Letter XII.

'I have great temptations, on this occasion,' says the prim Gothamite, 'to express my own resentments upon your present state.'

'My own resentments!'—And why did he not fall into this temptation? —Why, truly, because he knew not what that state was which gave him so tempting a subject—only by a conjecture, and so forth.

He then dances in his style, as he does in his gait! To be sure, to be sure, he must have made the grand tour, and come home by way of Tipperary.

'And being moreover forbid,' says the prancer, 'to enter into the cruel subject.'—This prohibition was a mercy to thee, friend Hickman!—But why cruel subject, if thou knowest not what it is, but conjecturest only from the disturbance it gives to a girl, that is her mother's disturbance, will be thy disturbance, and the disturbance, in turn, of every body with whom she is intimately acquainted, unless I have the humbling of her?

In another letter,* the little fury professes, 'that she will write, and that no man shall write for her,' as if some medium of that kind had been proposed. She approves of her fair friend's intention 'to leave me, if she can be received by her relations. I am a wretch, a foolish wretch. She hates me for my teasing ways. She has just made an acquaintance with one who knows a vast deal of my private history.' A curse upon her, and upon her historiographer!—'The man is really a villain, an execrable one.' Devil take her!—'Had I a dozen lives, I might have forfeited them all twenty crimes ago.' An odd way of reckoning, Jack!

* See Letter XXIII. of this volume.

Miss Betterton, Miss Lockyer, are named—the man, (she irreverently repeats) she again calls a villain. Let me perish, I repeat, if I am called a villain for nothing!—She 'will have her uncle,' as Miss Harlowe requests, 'sounded about receiving her. Dorcas is to be attached to her interest: my letters are to be come at by surprise or trick'—

What thinkest thou of this, Jack?

Miss Howe is alarmed at my attempt to come at a letter of hers.

'Were I to come at the knowledge of her freedoms with my character,' she says, 'she should be afraid to stir out without a guard.' I would advise the vixen to get her guard ready.

'I am at the head of a gang of wretches,' [thee, Jack, and thy brother varlets, she owns she means,] 'who join together to betray innocent creatures, and to support one another in their villainies.'—What sayest thou to this, Belford?

'She wonders not at her melancholy reflections for meeting me, for being forced upon me, and tricked by me.'—I hope, Jack, thou'lt have done preaching after this!

But she comforts her, 'that she will be both a warning and an example to all her sex.' I hope the sex will thank me for this!

The nymphs had not time, they say, to transcribe all that was worthy of my resentment in this letter: so I must find an opportunity to come at it myself. Noble rant, they say, it contains—But I am a seducer, and a hundred vile fellows, in it.—'And the devil, it seems, took possession of my heart, and of the hearts of all her friends, in the same dark hour, in order to provoke her to meet me.' Again, 'There is a fate in her error,' she says—Why then should she grieve?—'Adversity is her shining time,' and I can't tell what; yet never to thank the man to whom she owes the shine!

In the next letter,* wicked as I am, 'she fears I must be her lord and master.'

* See Letter XXIX. of this volume.

I hope so.

She retracts what she said against me in her last.—My behaviour to my Rosebud; Miss Harlowe to take possession of Mrs. Fretchville's house; I to stay at Mrs. Sinclair's; the stake I have in my country; my reversions; my economy; my person; my address; [something like in all this!] are brought in my favour, to induce her now not to leave me. How do I love to puzzle these long-sighted girls!

Yet 'my teasing ways,' it seems, 'are intolerable.'—Are women only to tease, I trow? The sex may thank themselves for teaching me to out-tease them. So the headstrong Charles XII. of Sweden taught the Czar Peter to beat him, by continuing a war with the Muscovites against the ancient maxims of his kingdom.

'May eternal vengeance PURSUE the villain, [thank heaven, she does not say overtake,] if he give room to doubt his honour!'—Women can't swear, Jack—sweet souls! they can only curse.

I am said, to doubt her love—Have I not reason? And she, to doubt my ardour—Ardour, Jack!—why, 'tis very right—women, as Miss Howe says, and as every rake knows, love ardours!

She apprizes her, of the 'ill success of the application made to her uncle.'—By Hickman no doubt!—I must have this fellow's ears in my pocket, very quickly I believe.

She says, 'she is equally shocked and enraged against all her family: Mrs. Norton's weight has been tried upon Mrs. Harlowe, as well as Mr. Hickman's upon the uncle: but never were there,' says the vixen, 'such determined brutes in the world. Her uncle concludes her ruined already.' Is not that a call upon me, as well as a reproach?—'They all expected applications from her when in distress—but were resolved not to stir an inch to save her life.' Miss Howe 'is concerned,' she tells her, 'for the revenge my pride may put me upon taking for the distance she has kept me at'—and well she may.—It is now evident to her, that she must be mine (for her cousin Morden, it seems, is set against her too)—an act of necessity, of convenience!—thy friend, Jack, to be already made a woman's convenience! Is this to be borne by a Lovelace?

I shall make great use of this letter. From Miss Howe's hints of what passed between her uncle Harlowe and Hickman, [it must be Hickman,] I can give room for my invention to play; for she tells her, that 'she will not reveal all.' I must endeavour to come at this letter myself. I must have the very words: extracts will not do. This letter, when I have it, must be my compass to steer by.

The fire of friendship then blazes and crackles. I never before imagined that so fervent a friendship could subsist between two sister-beauties, both toasts. But even here it may be inflamed by opposition, and by that contradiction which gives vigour to female spirits of a warm and romantic turn.

She raves about 'coming up, if by doing so she could prevent so noble a creature from stooping too low, or save her from ruin.'—One reed to support another! I think I will contrive to bring her up.

How comes it to pass, that I cannot help being pleased with this virago's spirit, though I suffer by it? Had I her but here, I'd engage, in a week's time, to teach her submission without reserve. What pleasure should I have in breaking such a spirit! I should wish for her but for one month, I think. She would be too tame and spiritless for me after that. How sweetly pretty to see the two lovely friends, when humbled and tame, both sitting in the darkest corner of a room, arm in arm, weeping and sobbing for each other!—and I their emperor, their then acknowledged emperor, reclined at my ease in the same room, uncertain to which I should first, grand signor like, throw out my handkerchief!

Again mind the girl: 'She is enraged at the Harlowes;' she is 'angry at her own mother;' she is exasperated against her foolish and low-vanity'd Lovelace.' FOOLISH, a little toad! [God forgive me for calling such a virtuous girl a toad!]
—'Let us stoop to lift the wretch out of his dirt, though we soil our fingers in doing it! He has not been guilty of direct indecency to you.' It seems extraordinary to Miss Howe that I have not. —'Nor dare he!' She should be sure of that. If women have such things in their heads, why should not I in my heart? Not so much of a devil as that comes to neither. Such villainous intentions would have shown themselves before now if I had them.—Lord help them!—

She then puts her friend upon urging for settlements, license, and so forth.—'No room for delicacy now,' she says; and tells her what she shall say, 'to bring all forward from me.' Is it not as clear to thee, Jack, as it is to me, that I should have carried my point long ago, but for this vixen?—She reproaches her for having MODESTY'D away, as she calls it, more than one opportunity, that she ought not to have slipt.— Thus thou seest, that the noblest of the sex mean nothing in the world by their shyness and distance, but to pound the poor fellow they dislike not, when he comes into their purlieus.

Though 'tricked into this man's power,' she tells her, she is 'not meanly subjugated to it.' There are hopes of my reformation, it seems, 'from my reverence for her; since before her I never had any reverence for what was good!' I am 'a great, a specious deceiver.' I thank her for this, however. A good moral use, she says, may be made of my 'having prevailed upon her to swerve.' I am glad that any good may flow from my actions.

Annexed to this letter is a paper the most saucy that ever was written of a mother by a daughter. There are in it such free reflections upon widows and bachelors, that I cannot but wonder how Miss Howe came by her learning. Sir George Colmar, I can tell thee, was a greater fool than thy friend, if she had it all for nothing.

The contents of this paper acquaint Miss Harlowe, that her uncle Antony has been making proposals of marriage to her mother.

The old fellow's heart ought to be a tough one, if he succeed; or she who broke that of a much worthier man, the late Mr. Howe, will soon get rid of him.

But be this as it may, the stupid family is made more irreconcilable than ever to their goddess-daughter for old Antony's thoughts of marrying: so I am more secure of her than ever. And yet I believe at last, that my tender heart will be moved in her favour. For I did not wish that she should have nothing but persecution and distress.—But why loves she the brutes, as Miss Howe justly calls them, so much; me so little?

I have still more unpardonable transcripts from other letters.

LETTER XLV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

The next letter is of such a nature, that, I dare say, these proud rouges would not have had it fall into my hands for the world.*

* See Letter XXXIV. of this volume.

I see by it to what her displeasure with me, in relation to my proposals, was owing. They were not summed up, it seems, with the warmth, with the ardour, which she had expected.

This whole letter was transcribed by Dorcas, to whose lot it fell. Thou shalt have copies of them all at full length shortly.

'Men of our cast,' this little devil says, 'she fancies, cannot have the ardours that honest men have.' Miss Howe has very pretty fancies, Jack. Charming girl! Would to Heaven I knew whether my fair-one answers her as freely as she writes! 'Twould vex a man's heart, that this virago should have come honestly by her fancies.

Who knows but I may have half a dozen creatures to get off my hands, before I engage for life?—Yet, lest this should mean me a compliment, as if I would reform, she adds her belief, that she 'must not expect me to be honest on this side my grand climacteric.' She has an high opinion of her sex, to think they can charm so long a man so well acquainted with their identicalness.

'He to suggest delays,' she says, 'from a compliment to be made to Lord M.'—Yes, I, my dear.—Because a man has not been accustomed to be dutiful, must he never be dutiful?—In so important a case as this too! the hearts of his whole family are engaged in it!—'You did, indeed,' says she, 'want an interposing friend—but were I to have been in your situation, I would have torn his eyes out, and left it to his heart to furnish the reason for it.' See! See! What sayest thou to this, Jack?

'Villain—fellow that he is!' follow. And for what? Only for wishing that the next day were to be my happy one; and for being dutiful to my nearest relation.

'It is the cruelest of fates,' she says, 'for a woman to be forced to have a man whom her heart despises.'—That is what I wanted to be sure of.—I was afraid, that my beloved was too conscious of her talents; of her superiority! I was afraid that she indeed despises me.—And I cannot bear to think that she does. But, Belford, I do not intend that this lady shall be bound down to so cruel a fate. Let me perish if I marry a woman who has given her most intimate friend reason to say, she despises me!—A Lovelace to be despised, Jack!

'His clenched fist to his forehead on your leaving him in just displeasure'—that is, when she was not satisfied with my ardours, if it please ye!—I remember the motion: but her back was towards me at the time.* Are these watchful ladies all eye?—But observe what follows; 'I wish it had been a poll-axe, and in the hands of his worst enemy.'—

* She tells Miss Howe, that she saw this motion in the pier-glass. See Letter XXXIII. of this volume.

I will have patience, Jack; I will have patience! My day is at hand.— Then will I steel my heart with these remembrances.

But here is a scheme to be thought of, in order to 'get my fair prize out of my hands, in case I give her reason to suspect me.'

This indeed alarms me. Now the contention becomes arduous. Now wilt thou not wonder, if I let loose my plotting genius upon them both. I will not be out-Norris'd, Belford.

But once more, 'She has no notion,' she says, 'that I can or dare to mean her dishonour. But then the man is a fool—that's all.'—I should indeed be a fool, to proceed as I do, and mean matrimony!—'However, since you are thrown upon a fool,' says she, 'marry the fool at the first opportunity; and though I doubt that this man will be the most unmanageable of fools, as all witty and vain fools are, take him as a punishment, since you cannot as a reward.'—Is there any bearing this, Belford?

But, 'such men as myself, are the men that women do not naturally hate.' —True as the gospel, Jack!—The truth is out at last. Have I not always told thee so? Sweet creatures and true christians these young girls! They love their enemies. But rakes in their hearts all of them! Like turns to like; that's the thing. Were I not well assured of the truth of this observation of the vixen, I should have thought it worth while, if not to be a good man, to be more of an hypocrite, than I found it needful to be.

But in the letter I came at to-day, while she was at church, her scheme is further opened; and a cursed one it is.

[Mr. Lovelace then transcribes, from his short-hand notes, that part of Miss Howe's letter, which relates to the design of engaging Mrs. Townsend (in case of necessity) to give her protection till Colonel Morden come: and repeats his vows of revenge; especially for these words; 'That should he attempt any thing that would make him obnoxious to the laws of society, she might have a fair riddance of him, either by flight or the gallows, no matter which.' He then adds]—*

* See Letter XLII. of this volume.

'Tis my pride to subdue girls who know too much to doubt their knowledge; and to convince them, that they know too little, to defend themselves from the inconveniencies of knowing too much.

How passion drives a man on! (proceeds he).—I have written a prodigious quantity in a very few hours! Now my resentments are warm, I will see, and perhaps will punish, this proud, this double-armed beauty. I have sent to tell her, that I must be admitted to sup with her. We have neither of us dined. She refused to drink tea in the afternoon: and I believe neither of us will have much stomach to our supper.

LETTER XLVI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE SUNDAY MORNING, SEVEN O'CLOCK.

I was at the play last night with Mr. Lovelace and Miss Horton. It is, you know, a deep and most affecting tragedy in the reading. You have my remarks upon it, in the little book you made me write upon the principal acting-plays. You will not wonder, that Miss Horton, as well as I, was greatly moved at the representation, when I tell you, and have some pleasure in telling you, that Mr. Lovelace himself was very sensibly touched with some of the most affecting scenes. I mention this in praise of the author's performance; for I take Mr. Lovelace to be one of the most hard-hearted men in the world. Upon my word, my dear, I do.

His behaviour, however, on this occasion, and on our return, was unexceptionable; only that he would oblige me to stay to supper with the women below, when we came back, and to sit up with him and them till near one o'clock this morning. I was resolved to be even with him; and indeed I am not very sorry to have the pretence; for I love to pass the Sundays by myself.

To have the better excuse to avoid his teasing, I am ready dressed to go to church this morning. I will go only to St. James's church, and in a chair; that I may be sure I can go out and come in when I please, without being intruded upon by him, as I was twice before.

*** NEAR NINE O'CLOCK.

I have your kind letter of yesterday. He knows I have. And I shall expect, that he will be inquisitive next time I see him after your opinions of his proposals. I doubted not your approbation of them, and had written an answer on that presumption; which is ready for him. He must study for occasions of procrastination, and to disoblige me, if now any thing happens to set us at variance again.

He is very importunate to see me. He has desired to attend me to church. He is angry that I have declined to breakfast with him. I am sure that I should not have been at my own liberty if I had. I bid Dorcas tell him, that I desired to have this day to myself. I would see him in the morning as early as he pleased. She says, she knows not what ails him, but that he is out of humour with every body.

He has sent again in a peremptory manner. He warns me of Singleton. I sent him word, that if he was not afraid of Singleton at the playhouse last night, I need not at church to-day: so many churches to one playhouse. I have accepted of his servant's proposed attendance. But he is quite displeas'd, it seems. I don't care. I will not be perpetually at his insolent beck.—Adieu my dear, till I return. The chair waits. He won't

stop me, sure, as I go down to it.

I did not see him as I went down. He is, it seems, excessively out of humour. Dorcas says, not with me neither, she believes: but something has vexed him. This is perhaps to make me dine with him. But I will not, if I can help it. I shan't get rid of him for the rest of the day, if I do.

He was very earnest to dine with me. But I was resolved to carry this one small point; and so denied to dine myself. And indeed I was endeavouring to write to my cousin Morden; and had begun three different times, without being able to please myself.

He was very busy in writing, Dorcas says; and pursued it without dining, because I denied him my company.

He afterwards demanded, as I may say, to be admitted to afternoon-tea with me: and appealed by Dorcas to his behaviour to me last night; as if I sent him word by her, he thought he had a merit in being unexceptionable. However, I repeated my promise to meet him as early as he pleased in the morning, or to breakfast with him.

Dorcas says, he raved: I heard him loud, and I heard his servant fly from him, as I thought. You, my dearest friend, say, in one of yours,* that you must have somebody to be angry at, when your mother sets you up. I should be very loth to draw comparisons; but the workings of passion, when indulged, are but too much alike, whether in man or woman.

* See Letter X. of this volume, Parag. 2.

He has just sent me word, that he insists upon supping with me. As we had been in a good train for several days past, I thought it not prudent to break with him for little matters. Yet, to be, in a manner, threatened into his will, I know not how to bear that.

While I was considering, he came up, and, tapping at my door, told me, in a very angry tone, he must see me this night. He could not rest, till he had been told what he had done to deserve the treatment I gave him.

Treatment I gave him! a wretch! Yet perhaps he has nothing new to say to me. I shall be very angry with him.

[As the Lady could not know what Mr. Lovelace's designs were, nor the cause of his ill humour, it will not be improper to pursue the subject from his letter.

Having described his angry manner of demanding, in person, her company at supper, he proceeds as follows:]

"Tis hard, answered the fair perverse, that I am to be so little my own mistress. I will meet you in the dining-room half an hour hence.

'I went down to wait the half hour. All the women set me hard to give her cause for this tyranny. They demonstrated, as well from the nature of the sex, as of the case, that I had nothing to hope for from my tameness, and could meet with no worse treatment, were I to be guilty of the last offence. They urge me vehemently to try at least what effect some greater familiarities than I had ever taken with her would have: and their arguments being strengthened by my just resentments on the discoveries I had made, I was resolved to take some liberties, as they were received, to take still greater, and lay all the fault upon her tyranny. In this humour I went up, and never had paralytic so little command of his joints, as I had, while I walked about the dining-room, attending her motions.

'With an erect mien she entered, her face averted, her lovely bosom swelling, and the more charmingly protuberant for the erectness of her mien. O Jack! that sullenness and reserve should add to the charms of this haughty maid! but in every attitude, in every humour, in every gesture, is beauty beautiful. By her averted face, and indignant aspect, I saw the dear insolent was disposed to be angry—but by the fierceness of mine, as my trembling hand seized hers, I soon made fear her predominant passion. And yet the moment I beheld her, my heart was dastardized; and my reverence for the virgin purity, so visible in her whole deportment, again took place. Surely, Belford, this is an angel. And yet, had she not been known to be a female, they would not from babyhood have dressed her as such, nor would she, but upon that conviction, have continued the dress.

'Let me ask you, Madam, I beseech you tell me, what I have done to deserve this distant treatment?

'And let me ask you, Mr. Lovelace, why are my retirements to be thus invaded?—What can you have to say to me since last night, that I went with you so much against my will to the play? and after sitting up with you, equally against my will, till a very late hour?

'This I have to say, Madam, that I cannot bear to be kept at this distance from you under the same roof.

'Under the same roof, Sir!—How came you—

'Hear me out, Madam—[letting go her trembling hands, and snatching them back again with an eagerness that made her start]—I have a thousand things to say, to talk of, relating to our present and future prospects; but when I want to open my whole soul to you, you are always contriving to keep me at a distance. You make me inconsistent with myself. Your heart is set upon delays. You must have views that you will not own. Tell me, Madam, I conjure you to tell me, this moment, without subterfuge or reserve, in what light am I to appear to you in future? I cannot bear this distance. The suspense you hold me in I cannot bear.

'In what light, Mr. Lovelace! [visibly terrified.] In no bad light, I hope.—Pray, Mr. Lovelace, do not grasp my hands so hard [endeavouring to withdraw them.] Pray let me go.—

'You hate me, Madam—

'I hate nobody, Sir—

'You hate me, Madam, repeated I.

'Instigated and resolved, as I came up, I wanted some new provocation. The devil indeed, as soon as my angel made her appearance, crept out of my heart; but he had left the door open, and was no farther off than my elbow.

'You come up in no good temper, I see, Mr. Lovelace.—But pray be not violent—I have done you no hurt.—Pray be not violent—

'Sweet creature! and I clasped one arm about her, holding one hand in my other.—You have done me no hurt.—I could have devoured her—but restraining myself—You have done me the greatest hurt!—In what have I deserved the distance you keep me at?—I knew not what to say.

'She struggled to disengage herself.—Pray, Mr. Lovelace, let me withdraw. I know not why this is. I know not what I have done to offend you. I see you are come with a design to quarrel with me. If you would not terrify me by the ill humour you are in, permit me to withdraw. I will hear all you have to say another time—to-morrow morning, as I sent you word.—But indeed you frighten me—I beseech you, if you have any value for me, permit me to withdraw.

'Night, mid-night, is necessary, Belford. Surprise, terror, must be necessary to the ultimate trial of this charming creature, say the women below what they will. I could not hold my purposes. This was not the first time that I had intended to try if she could forgive.

'I kissed her hand with a fervour, as if I would have left my lips upon it.—Withdraw, then, dearest, and ever-dear creature. Indeed I entered in a very ill humour. I cannot bear the distance at which you so causelessly keep me. Withdraw, Madam, since it is your will to withdraw; and judge me generously; judge me but as I deserve to be judged; and let me hope to meet you to-morrow morning early in such a temper as becomes our present situation, and my future hopes.

'And so saying, I conducted her to the door, and left her there. But, instead of going down to the women, I went into my own chamber, and locked myself in; ashamed of being awed by her majestic loveliness, and apprehensive virtue, into so great a change of purpose, notwithstanding I had such just provocations from the letters of her saucy friend, formed on her own representations of facts and situations between herself and me.

[The Lady (dated Sunday night) thus describes her terrors, and Mr. Lovelace's behaviour, on the occasion.]

On my entering the dining-room, he took my hand in his, in such a humour, I saw plainly he was resolved to quarrel with me—And for what?—What had I done to him?—I never in my life beheld in any body such wild, such angry, such impatient airs. I was terrified; and instead of being as angry as I intended to be, I was forced to be all mildness. I can hardly remember what were his first words, I was so frightened. But you hate me, Madam! you hate me, Madam! were some of them—with such a fierceness—I wished myself a thousand miles distant from him. I hate nobody, said I: I thank God I hate nobody—You terrify me, Mr. Lovelace—let me leave you.—The man, my dear, looked quite ugly—I never saw a man look so ugly as passion made him look—and for what?—And so he grasped my hands!—fierce creature;—he so grasped my hands! In short, he seemed by his looks, and by his words (once putting his arms about me) to wish me to provoke him. So that I had nothing to do but to beg of him (which I did repeatedly) to permit me to withdraw: and to promise to meet him at his own time in the morning.

It was with a very ill grace that he complied, on that condition; and at parting he kissed my hand with such a savageness, that a redness remains upon it still.

Do you not think, my dear, that I have reason to be incensed at him, my situation considered? Am I not under a necessity, as it were, of quarrelling with him; at least every other time I see him? No prudery, no coquetry, no tyranny in my heart, or in my behaviour to him, that I know of. No affected procrastination. Aiming at nothing but decorum. He as much concerned, and so he ought to think, as I, to have that observed. Too much in his power: cast upon him by the cruelty of my relations. No other protection to fly to but his. One plain path before us; yet such embarrasses, such difficulties, such subjects for doubt, for cavil, for uneasiness; as fast as one is obviated, another to be introduced, and not by myself—know not how introduced—What pleasure can I propose to myself in meeting such a wretch?

Perfect for me, my dearest Miss Howe, perfect for me, I beseech you, your kind scheme with Mrs. Townsend; and I will then leave this man.

My temper, I believe, is changed. No wonder if it be. I question whether ever it will be what it was. But I cannot make him half so uneasy by the change, as I am myself. See you not how, from step to step, he grows upon me?—I tremble to look back upon his encroachments. And now to give me cause to apprehend more evil from him, than indignation will permit me to express!—O my dear, perfect your scheme, and let me fly from so strange a wretch!

Yet, to be first an eloper from my friends to him, as the world supposes; and now to be so from him [to whom I know not!] how hard to one who ever endeavoured to shun intricate paths! But he must certainly have views in quarrelling with me thus, which he dare not own!—Yet what can they be?—I am terrified but to think of what they may be!

Let me but get from him!—As to my reputation, if I leave him—that is already too much wounded for me, now, to be careful about any thing, but how to act so as that my own heart shall not reproach me. As to the world's censure, I must be content to suffer that—an unhappy composition, however.—What a wreck have my fortunes suffered, to be obliged to throw overboard so many valuables, to preserve, indeed, the only valuable!—A composition that once it would have half broken my heart to think there would have been the least danger that I should be obliged to submit to.

You, my dear, could not be a stranger to my most secret failings, although you would not tell me of them. What a pride did I take in the applause of every one!—What a pride even in supposing I had not that pride!—Which concealed itself from my unexamining heart under the specious veil of humility, doubling the merit to

myself by the supposed, and indeed imputed, gracefulness in the manner of conferring benefits, when I had not a single merit in what I did, vastly overpaid by the pleasure of doing some little good, and impelled, as I may say, by talents given me—for what!—Not to be proud of.

So, desirous, in short, to be considered as an example! A vanity which my partial admirers put into my head!—And so secure in my own virtue!

I am punished enough, enough mortified, for this my vanity—I hope, enough, if it so please the all-gracious inflictor: since now, I verily think, I more despise myself for my presumptuous self-security, as well as vanity, than ever I secretly vaunted myself on my good inclinations: secretly, I say, however; for, indeed, I had not given myself leisure to reflect, till I was thus mortified, how very imperfect I was; nor how much truth there is in what divines tell us, that we sin in our best performances.

But I was very young.—But here let me watch over myself again: for in those four words, I was very young, is there not a palliation couched, that were enough to take all efficacy from the discovery and confession?

What strange imperfect beings!—but self here, which is at the bottom of all we do, and of all we wish, is the grand misleader.

I will not apologize to you, my dear, for these grave reflections. Is it not enough to make the unhappy creature look into herself, and endeavour to detect herself, who, from such a high reputation, left to proud and presumptuous self, should by one thoughtless step, be brought to the dreadful situation I am in?

Let me, however, look forward: to despond would be to add sin to sin. And whom have I to raise me up, whom to comfort me, if I desert myself?— Thou, O Father, who, I hope, hast not yet deserted, hast not yet cursed me!—For I am thine!—It is fit that mediation should supply the rest.—

I was so disgusted with him, as well as frightened by him, that on my return to my chamber, in a fit of passionate despair, I tore almost in two the answer I had written to his proposals.

I will see him in the morning, because I promised I would. But I will go out, and that without him, or any attendant. If he account not tolerably for his sudden change of behaviour, and a proper opportunity offer of a private lodging in some creditable house, I will not any more return to this:—at present I think so.—And there will I either attend the perfecting of your scheme; or, by your epistolary mediation, make my own terms with the wretch; since it is your opinion, that I must be his, and cannot help myself: or, perhaps, take a resolution to throw myself at once into Lady Betty's protection; and this will hinder him from making his insolently-threatened visit to Harlowe-place.

[The Lady writes again on Monday evening; and gives her friend an account of all that passed between herself and Mr. Lovelace that day; and of her being terrified out of her purpose, of going out: but Mr. Lovelace's next letters giving a more ample account of all, hers are omitted.]

It is proper, however, to mention, that she re-urges Miss Howe (from the dissatisfaction she has reason for from what passed between Mr. Lovelace and herself) to perfect her scheme in relation to Mrs. Townsend. She concludes this letter in these words:]

I should say something of your last favour (but a few hours ago received) and of your dialogue with your mother—Are you not very whimsical, my dear? I have but two things to wish for on this occasion.—The one, that your charming pleasantries had a better subject than that you find for it in this dialogue—the other, that my situation were not such, as must too often damp that pleasantries in you, and will not permit me to enjoy it, as I used to do. Be, however, happy in yourself, though you cannot in

Your CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER XLVII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. MONDAY MORNING, MAY 22.

No generosity in this lady. None at all. Wouldst thou not have thought, that after I had permitted her to withdraw, primed for mischief as I was, she would meet me next morning early; and that with a smile; making me one of her best courtesies?

I was in the dining-room before six, expecting her. She opened not her door. I went up stairs and down; and hemm'd; and called Will.; called Dorcas; threw the doors hard to; but still she opened not her door. Thus till half an hour after eight, fooled I away my time; and then (breakfast ready) I sent Dorcas to request her company.

But I was astonished, when (following the wench, as she did at the first invitation) I saw her enter dressed, all but her gloves, and those and her fan in her hand; in the same moment bidding Dorcas direct Will. to get her a chair to the door.

Cruel creature, thought I, to expose me thus to the derision of the women below!

Going abroad, Madam!

I am, Sir.

I looked cursed silly, I am sure. You will breakfast first, I hope, Madam; and a very humble strain; yet with an hundred tender looks in my heart.

Had she given me more notice of her intention, I had perhaps wrought myself up to the frame I was in the day before, and begun my vengeance. And immediately came into my head all the virulence that had been transcribed for me from Miss Howe's letters, and in that letter which I had transcribed myself.

Yes, she would drink one dish; and then laid her gloves and fan in the window just by.

I was perfectly disconcerted. I hemm'd, and was going to speak several times; but I knew not in what key. Who's modest now! thought I. Who's insolent now!—How a tyrant of a woman confounds a bashful man! She was acting Miss Howe, I thought; and I the spiritless Hickman.

At last, I will begin, thought I.

She a dish—I a dish.

Sip, her eyes her own, she; like a haughty and imperious sovereign, conscious of dignity, every look a favour.

Sip, like her vassal, I; lips and hands trembling, and not knowing that I sipp'd or tasted.

I was—I was—I sipp'd—(drawing in my breath and the liquor together, though I scalded my mouth with it) I was in hopes, Madam—

Dorcas came in just then.—Dorcas, said she, is a chair gone for?

Damn'd impertinence, thought I, thus to put me out in my speech! And I was forced to wait for the servant's answer to the insolent mistress's question.

William is gone for one, Madam.

This cost me a minute's silence before I could begin again. And then it was with my hopes, and my hopes, and my hopes, that I should have been early admitted to—

What weather is it, Dorcas? said she, as regardless of me as if I had not been present.

A little lowering, Madam—The sun is gone in—it was very fine half an hour ago.

I had no patience. Up I rose. Down went the tea-cup, saucer and all— Confound the weather, the sunshine, and the wench!—Begone for a devil, when I am speaking to your lady, and have so little opportunity given me.

Up rose the saucy-face, half-frighted; and snatched from the window her gloves and fan.

You must not go, Madam!—Seizing her hand—by my soul you must not—

Must not, Sir!—But I must—you can curse your maid in my absence, as well as if I were present——Except—except—you intend for me, what you direct to her.

Dearest creature, you must not go—you must not leave me—Such determined scorn! such contempts!—Questions asked your servant of no meaning but to break in upon me—I cannot bear it!

Detain me not [struggling.] I will not be withheld. I like you not, nor your ways. You sought to quarrel with me yesterday, for no reason in the world that I can think of, but because I was too obliging. You are an ungrateful man; and I hate you with my whole heart, Mr. Lovelace!

Do not make me desperate, Madam. Permit me to say, that you shall not leave me in this humour. Wherever you go, I will attend you. Had Miss Howe been my friend, I had not been thus treated. It is but too plain to whom my difficulties are owing. I have long observed, that every letter you received from her, makes an alteration in your behaviour to me. She would have you treat me, as she treats Mr. Hickman, I suppose: but neither does that treatment become your admirable temper to offer, nor me to receive.

This startled her. She did not care to have me think hardly of Miss Howe.

But recollecting herself, Miss Howe, said she, is a friend to virtue, and to good men. If she like not you, it is because you are not one of those.

Yes, Madam; and therefore to speak of Mr. Hickman and myself, as you both, I suppose, think of each, she treats him as she would not treat a Lovelace.—I challenge you, Madam, to shew me but one of the many letters you have received from her, where I am mentioned.

Miss Howe is just; Miss Howe is good, replied she. She writes, she speaks, of every body as they deserve. If you point me out but any one occasion, upon which you have reason to build a merit to yourself, as either just or good, or even generous, I will look out for her letter on that occasion [if such an occasion there be, I have certainly acquainted her with it]; and will engage it shall be in your favour.

Devilish severe! And as indelicate as severe, to put a modish man upon hunting backward after his own merits.

She would have flung from me: I will not be detained, Mr. Lovelace. I will go out.

Indeed you must not, Madam, in this humour. And I placed myself between her and the door.——And then, fanning, she threw herself into a chair, her sweet face all crimsoned over with passion.

I cast myself at her feet.—Begone, Mr. Lovelace, said she, with a rejecting motion, her fan in her hand; for your own sake leave me!—My soul is above thee, man! with both her hands pushing me from her!—Urge me not to tell thee, how sincerely I think my soul above thee!—Thou hast, in mine, a proud, a too proud heart to contend with!—Leave me, and leave me for ever!—Thou has a proud heart to contend with!

Her air, her manner, her voice, were bewitchingly noble, though her words were so severe.

Let me worship an angel, said I, no woman. Forgive me, dearest creature! —creature if you be, forgive me!—forgive my inadvertencies!—forgive my inequalities!—pity my infirmities!—Who is equal to my Clarissa?

I trembled between admiration and love; and wrapt my arms about her knees, as she sat. She tried to rise at the moment; but my clasping round her thus ardently, drew her down again; and never was woman more affrighted. But free as my clasping emotion might appear to her apprehensive heart, I had not, at the instant, any thought but what reverence inspired. And till she had actually withdrawn [which I permitted under promise of a speedy return, and on her consent to dismiss the chair] all the motions of my heart were as pure as her own.

She kept not her word. An hour I waited before I sent to claim her promise. She could not possibly see me yet, was her answer. As soon as she could, she would.

Dorcas says, she still excessively trembled; and ordered her to give her hartshorn and water.

A strange apprehensive creature! Her terror is too great for the occasion. Evils are often greater in apprehension than in reality. Hast thou never observed, that the terrors of a bird caught, and actually in the

hand, bear no comparison to what we might have supposed those terrors would be, were we to have formed a judgment of the same bird by its shyness before it was taken?

Dear creature!—Did she never romp? Did she never, from girlhood to now, hoyden? The innocent kinds of freedom taken and allowed on these occasions, would have familiarized her to greater. Sacrilege but to touch the hem of her garment!—Excess of delicacy!—O the consecrated beauty! How can she think to be a wife?

But how do I know till I try, whether she may not by a less alarming treatment be prevailed upon, or whether [day, I have done with thee!] she may not yield to nightly surprises? This is still the burden of my song, I can marry her when I will. And if I do, after prevailing (whether by surprise, or by reluctant consent) whom but myself shall I have injured?

It is now eleven o'clock. She will see me as soon as she can, she tells Polly Horton, who made her a tender visit, and to whom she is less reserved than to any body else. Her emotion, she assures her, was not owing to perverseness, to nicety, to ill humour; but to weakness of heart. She has not strength of mind sufficient, she says, to enable her to support her condition.

Yet what a contradiction!—Weakness of heart, says she, with such a strength of will!—O Belford! she is a lion-hearted lady, in every case where her honour, her punctilio rather, calls for spirit. But I have had reason more than once in her case, to conclude, that the passions of the gentle, slower to be moved than those of the quick, are the most flaming, the most irresistible, when raised.—Yet her charming body is not equally organized. The unequal partners pull two ways; and the divinity within her tears her silken frame. But had the same soul informed a masculine body, never would there have been a truer hero.

MONDAY, TWO O'CLOCK.

Not yet visible!—My beloved is not well. What expectations had she from my ardent admiration of her!—More rudeness than revenge apprehended. Yet, how my soul thirsts for revenge upon both these ladies? I must have recourse to my master-strokes. This cursed project of Miss Howe and her Mrs. Townsend (if I cannot contrive to render it abortive) will be always a sword hanging over my head. Upon every little disobligation my beloved will be for taking wing; and the pains I have taken to deprive her of every other refuge or protection, in order to make her absolutely dependent upon me, will be all thrown away. But perhaps I shall find out a smuggler to counterplot Miss Howe.

Thou remembrest the contention between the Sun and the North-wind, in the fable; which should first make an honest traveller throw off his cloak.

Boreas began first. He puffed away most vehemently; and often made the poor fellow curve and stagger; but with no other effect, than to cause him to wrap his surtout the closer about him.

But when it came to Phoebus's turn, he so played upon the traveller with his beams, that he made him first unbutton, and then throw it quite off:—Nor left he, till he obliged him to take to the friendly shade of a spreading beech; where, prostrating himself on the thrown-off cloak, he took a comfortable nap.

The victor-god then laughed outright, both at Boreas and the traveller, and pursued his radiant course, shining upon, and warming and cherishing a thousand new objects, as he danced along: and at night, when he put up his fiery coursers, he diverted his Thetis with the relation of his pranks in the passed day.

I, in like manner, will discard all my boisterous inventions: and if I can oblige my sweet traveller to throw aside, but for one moment, the cloak of her rigid virtue, I shall have nothing to do, but, like the sun, to bless new objects with my rays. But my chosen hours of conversation and repose, after all my peregrinations, will be devoted to my goddess.

And now, Belford, according to my new system, I think this house of Mrs. Fretchville an embarrass upon me. I will get rid of it; for some time at least. Mennell, when I am out, shall come to her, inquiring for me. What for? thou'lt ask. What for—hast thou not heard what has befallen poor Mrs. Fretchville?—Then I'll tell thee.

One of her maids, about a week ago, was taken with the small-pox. The rest kept their mistress ignorant of it till Friday; and then she came to know of it by accident. The greater half of the plagues poor mortals of condition are tormented with, proceed from the servants they take, partly for show, partly for use, and with a view to lessen their cares.

This has so terrified the widow, that she is taken with all the symptoms that threaten an attack from that dreadful enemy of fair faces.—So must not think of removing: yet cannot expect, that we should be further delayed on her account.

She now wishes, with all her heart, that she had known her own mind, and gone into the country at first when I treated about the house. This evil then had not happened! a cursed cross accident for us, too!—Heigh-ho! nothing else, I think, in this mortal life! people need not study to bring crosses upon themselves by their petulancies.

So this affair of the house will be over; at least for one while. But then I can fall upon an expedient which will make amends for this disappointment. I must move slow, in order to be sure. I have a charming contrivance or two in my head, even supposing my beloved should get away, to bring her back again.

But what is become of Lord M. I trow, that he writes not to me, in answer to my invitation? If he would send me such a letter as I could show, it might go a great way towards a perfect reconciliation. I have written to Charlotte about it. He shall soon hear from me, and that in a way he won't like, if he writes not quickly. He has sometimes threatened to disinherit me. But if I should renounce him, it would be but justice, and would vex him ten times more than any thing he can do will vex me. Then, the settlements unavoidably delayed, by his neglect!—How shall I bear such a life of procrastination!—I, who, as to my will, and impatience, and so forth, am of the true lady-make, and can as little bear controul and disappointment as the best of them!

Another letter from Miss Howe. I suppose it is that which she promises in her last to send her relating to

the courtship between old Tony the uncle, and Annabella the mother. I should be extremely rejoiced to see it. No more of the smuggler-plot in it, surely! This letter, it seems, she has put in her pocket. But I hope I shall soon find it deposited with the rest.

MONDAY EVENING.

At my repeated request she condescended to meet me in the dining-room to afternoon-tea, and not before.

She entered with bashfulness, as I thought; in a pretty confusion, for having carried her apprehensions too far. Sullen and slow moved she towards the tea-table.—Dorcas present, busy in tea-cup preparations. I took her reluctant hand, and pressed it to my lips.—Dearest, loveliest of creatures, why this distance? why this displeasure?—How can you thus torture the faithfullest heart in the world?

She disengaged her hand. Again I would have snatched it.

Be quiet, [peevishly withdrawing it.] And down she sat; a gentle palpitation in the beauty of beauties indicating a mingled sullenness and resentment; her snowy handkerchief rising and falling, and a sweet flush overspreading her charming cheeks.

For God's sake, Madam!—[And a third time I would have taken her repulsing hand.]

And for the same sake, Sir, no more teasing.

Dorcas retired; I drew my chair nearer her's, and with the most respectful tenderness took her hand; and told her, that I could not forbear to express my apprehensions (from the distance she was so desirous to keep me at) that if any man in the world was more indifferent to her, to use no harsher word, than another, it was the unhappy wretch before her.

She looked steadily upon me for a moment, and with her other hand, not withdrawing that I held, pulled her handkerchief out of her pocket; and by a twinkling motion urged forward a tear or two, which having arisen in each sweet eye, it was plain by that motion she would rather have dissipated: but answered me only with a sigh, and an averted face.

I urged her to speak; to look up at me; to bless me with an eye more favourable.

I had reason, she told me, for my complaint of her indifference. She saw nothing in my mind that was generous. I was not a man to be obliged or favoured. My strange behaviour to her since Saturday night, for no cause at all that she knew of, convinced her of this. Whatever hopes she had conceived of me were utterly dissipated: all my ways were disgustful to her.

This cut me to the heart. The guilty, I believe, in every case, less patiently bear the detecting truth, than the innocent do the degrading falsehood.

I bespoke her patience, while I took the liberty to account for this change on my part.—I re-acknowledged the pride of my heart, which could not bear the thought of that want of preference in the heart of a lady whom I hoped to call mine, which she had always manifested. Marriage, I said, was a state that was not to be entered upon with indifference on either side.

It is insolence, interrupted she, it is a presumption, Sir, to expect tokens of value, without resolving to deserve them. You have no whining creature before you, Mr. Lovelace, overcome by weak motives, to love where there is no merit. Miss Howe can tell you, Sir, that I never loved the faults of my friend; nor ever wished her to love me for mine. It was a rule with us not to spare each other. And would a man who has nothing but faults (for pray, Sir, what are your virtues?) expect that I should show a value for him? Indeed, if I did, I should not deserve even his value; but ought to be despised by him.

Well have you, Madam, kept up to this noble manner of thinking. You are in no danger of being despised for any marks of tenderness or favour shown to the man before you. You have been perhaps, you'll think, laudably studious of making and taking occasions to declare, that it was far from being owing to your choice, that you had any thoughts of me. My whole soul, Madam, in all its errors, in all its wishes, in all its views, had been laid open and naked before you, had I been encouraged by such a share in your confidence and esteem, as would have secured me against your apprehended worst constructions of what I should from time to time have revealed to you, and consulted you upon. For never was there a franker heart; nor a man so ready to accuse himself. [This, Belford, is true.] But you know, Madam, how much otherwise it has been between us.—Doubt, distance, reserve, on your part, begat doubt, fear, awe, on mine.—How little confidence! as if we apprehended each other to be a plotter rather than a lover. How have I dreaded every letter that has been brought you from Wilson's!—and with reason: since the last, from which I expected so much, on account of the proposals I had made you in writing, has, if I may judge by the effects, and by your denial of seeing me yesterday, (though you could go abroad, and in a chair too, to avoid my attendance on you,) set you against me more than ever.

I was guilty, it seems, of going to church, said the indignant charmer; and without the company of a man, whose choice it would not have been to go, had I not gone—I was guilty of desiring to have the whole Sunday to myself, after I had obliged you, against my will, at a play; and after you had detained me (equally to my dislike) to a very late hour over-night.—These were my faults: for these I was to be punished: I was to be compelled to see you, and to be terrified when I did see you, by the most shocking ill humour that was ever shown to a creature in my circumstances, and not bound to bear it. You have pretended to find free fault with my father's temper, Mr. Lovelace: but the worst that he ever showed after marriage, was not in the least to be compared to what you have shown twenty times beforehand.—And what are my prospects with you, at the very best?—My indignation rises against you, Mr. Lovelace, while I speak to you, when I recollect the many instances, equally ungenerous and unpolite, of your behaviour to one whom you have brought into distress—and I can hardly bear you in my sight.

She turned from me, standing up; and, lifting up her folded hands, and charming eyes swimming in tears, O my father, said the inimitable creature, you might have spared your heavy curse, had you known how I have been punished ever since my swerving feet led me out of your garden-doors to meet this man!—Then, sinking into her chair, a burst of passionate tears forced their way down her glowing cheeks.

My dearest life, [taking her still folded hands in mine,] who can bear an invocation so affecting, though so passionate?

And, as I hope to live, my nose tingled, as I once, when a boy, remember it did (and indeed once more very lately) just before some tears came into my eyes; and I durst hardly trust my face in view of her's.

What have I done to deserve this impatient exclamation?—Have I, at any time, by word, by deeds, by looks, given you cause to doubt my honour, my reverence, my adoration, I may call it, of your virtues? All is owing to misapprehension, I hope, on both sides. Condescend to clear up but your part, as I will mine, and all must speedily be happy.—Would to Heaven I loved that Heaven as I love you! and yet, if I doubted a return in love, let me perish if I should know how to wish you mine!—Give me hope, dearest creature, give me but hope, that I am your preferable choice!— Give me but hope, that you hate me not: that you do not despise me.

O Mr. Lovelace, we have been long enough together to be tired of each other's humours and ways; ways and humours so different, that perhaps you ought to dislike me, as much as I do you.—I think, I think, that I cannot make an answerable return to the value you profess for me. My temper is utterly ruined. You have given me an ill opinion of all mankind; of yourself in particular: and withal so bad a one of myself, that I shall never be able to look up, having utterly and for ever lost all that self-complacency, and conscious pride, which are so necessary to carry a woman through this life with tolerable satisfaction to herself.

She paused. I was silent. By my soul, thought I, this sweet creature will at last undo me!

She proceeded: What now remains, but that you pronounce me free of all obligation to you? and that you hinder me not from pursuing the destiny that shall be allotted me?

Again she paused. I was still silent; meditating whether to renounce all further designs upon her; whether I had not received sufficient evidence of a virtue, and of a greatness of soul, that could not be questioned or impeached.

She went on: Propitious to me be your silence, Mr. Lovelace!—Tell me, that I am free of all obligation to you. You know, I never made you promises. You know, that you are not under any to me.—My broken fortunes I matter not—

She was proceeding—My dearest life, said I, I have been all this time, though you fill me with doubts of your favour, busy in the nuptial preparations. I am actually in treaty for equipage.

Equipage, Sir!—Trappings, tinsel!—What is equipage; what is life; what is any thing; to a creature sunk so low as I am in my own opinion!— Labouring under a father's curse!—Unable to look backward without self-reproach, or forward without terror!—These reflections strengthened by every cross accident!—And what but cross accidents befall me!—All my darling schemes dashed in pieces, all my hopes at an end; deny me not the liberty to refuge myself in some obscure corner, where neither the enemies you have made me, nor the few friends you have left me, may ever hear of the supposed rash-one, till those happy moments are at hand, which shall expiate for all!

I had not a word to say for myself. Such a war in my mind had I never known. Gratitude, and admiration of the excellent creature before me, combating with villanous habit, with resolutions so premeditatedly made, and with view so much gloried in!—An hundred new contrivances in my head, and in my heart, that to be honest, as it is called, must all be given up, by a heart delighting in intrigue and difficulty—Miss Howe's virulences endeavoured to be recollected—yet recollection refusing to bring them forward with the requisite efficacy—I had certainly been a lost man, had not Dorcas come seasonably in with a letter.—On the superscription written—Be pleased, Sir, to open it now.

I retired to the window—opened it—it was from Dorcas herself.—These the contents—'Be pleased to detain my lady: a paper of importance to transcribe. I will cough when I have done.'

I put the paper in my pocket, and turned to my charmer, less disconcerted, as she, by that time, had also a little recovered herself. —One favour, dearest creature—Let me but know, whether Miss Howe approves or disapproves of my proposals? I know her to be my enemy. I was intending to account to you for the change of behaviour you accused me of at the beginning of the conversation; but was diverted from it by your vehemence. Indeed, my beloved creature, you were very vehement. Do you think it must not be matter of high regret to me, to find my wishes so often delayed and postponed in favour of your predominant view to a reconciliation with relations who will not be reconciled to you?—To this was owing your declining to celebrate our nuptials before we came to town, though you were so atrociously treated by your sister, and your whole family; and though so ardently pressed to celebrate by me—to this was owing the ready offence you took at my four friends; and at the unavailing attempt I made to see a dropt letter; little imagining, from what two such ladies could write to each other, that there could be room for mortal displeasure—to this was owing the week's distance you held me at, till you knew the issue of another application.—But, when they had rejected that; when you had sent my cold-received proposals to Miss Howe for her approbation or advice, as indeed I advised; and had honoured me with your company at the play on Saturday night; (my whole behaviour unobjectionable to the last hour;) must not, Madam, the sudden change in your conduct the very next morning, astonish and distress me?—and this persisted in with still stronger declarations, after you had received the impatiently-expected letter from Miss Howe; must I not conclude, that all was owing to her influence; and that some other application or project was meditating, that made it necessary to keep me again at a distance till the result were known, and which was to deprive me of you for ever? For was not that your constantly-proposed preliminary?—Well, Madam, might I be wrought up to a half-phrensy by this apprehension; and well might I charge you with hating me.—And now, dearest creature, let me know, I once more ask you, what is Miss Howe's opinion of my proposals?

Were I disposed to debate with you, Mr. Lovelace, I could very easily answer your fine harangue. But at present, I shall only say, that your ways have been very unaccountable. You seem to me, if your meanings were always just, to have taken great pains to embarrass them. Whether owing in you to the want of a clear head, or a sound heart, I cannot determine; but it is to the want of one of them, I verily think, that I am to ascribe the greatest part of your strange conduct.

Curse upon the heart of the little devil, said I, who instigates you to think so hardly of the faithfullest heart in the world!

How dare you, Sir! And there she stopt; having almost overshot herself; as I designed she should.

How dare I what, Madam? And I looked with meaning. How dare I what?

Vile man—And do you—And there again she stopt.

Do I what, Madam?—And why vile man?

How dare you curse any body in my presence?

O the sweet receder! But that was not to go off so with a Lovelace.

Why then, dearest creature, is there any body that instigates you?—If there be, again I curse them, be they whom they will.

She was in a charming pretty passion. And this was the first time that I had the odds in my favour.

Well, Madam, it is just as I thought. And now I know how to account for a temper that I hope is not natural to you.

Artful wretch! and is it thus you would entrap me? But know, Sir, that I received letters from nobody but Miss Howe. Miss Howe likes some of your ways as little as I do; for I have set every thing before her. Yet she is thus far your enemy, as she is mine. She thinks I could not refuse your offers; but endeavour to make the best of my lot. And now you have the truth. Would to heaven you were capable of dealing with equal sincerity!

I am, Madam. And here, on my knee, I renew my vows, and my supplication, that you will make me your's. Your's for ever. And let me have cause to bless you and Miss Howe in the same breath.

To say the truth, Belford, I had before begun to think that the vixen of a girl, who certainly likes not Hickman, was in love with me.

Rise, Sir, from your too-ready knees; and mock me not!

Too-ready knees, thought I! Though this humble posture so little affects this proud beauty, she knows not how much I have obtained of others of her sex, nor how often I have been forgiven for the last attempts, by kneeling.

Mock you, Madam! And I arose, and re-urged her for the day. I blamed myself, at the same time, for the invitation I had given to Lord M., as it might subject me to delay from his infirmities: but told her, that I would write to him to excuse me, if she had no objection; or to give him the day she would give me, and not wait for him, if he could not come in time.

My day, Sir, said she, is never. Be not surprised. A person of politeness judging between us, would not be surprised that I say so. But indeed, Mr. Lovelace, [and wept through impatience,] you either know not how to treat with a mind of the least degree of delicacy, notwithstanding your birth and education, or you are an ungrateful man; and [after a pause] a worse than ungrateful one. But I will retire. I will see you again to-morrow. I cannot before. I think I hate you. And if, upon a re-examination of my own heart, I find I do, I would not for the world that matters should go on farther between us.

But I see, I see, she does not hate me! How it would mortify my vanity, if I thought there was a woman in the world, much more this, that could hate me! 'Tis evident, villain as she thinks me, that I should not be an odious villain, if I could but at last in one instance cease to be a villain! She could not hold it, determined as she had thought herself, I saw by her eyes, the moment I endeavoured to dissipate her apprehensions, on my too-ready knees, as she calls them. The moment the rough covering my teasing behaviour has thrown over her affections is quite removed, I doubt not to find all silk and silver at the bottom, all soft, bright, and charming.

I was however too much vexed, disconcerted, mortified, to hinder her from retiring. And yet she had not gone, if Dorcas had not coughed.

The wench came in, as soon as her lady had retired, and gave me the copy she had taken. And what should it be but of the answer the truly admirable creature had intended to give to my written proposals in relation to settlements?

I have but just dipt my pen into this affecting paper. Were I to read it attentively, not a wink should I sleep this night. To-morrow it shall obtain my serious consideration.

LETTER XLVIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY MORNING, MAY 23.

The dear creature desires to be excused seeing me till evening. She is not very well, as Dorcas tells me.

Read here, if thou wilt, the paper transcribed by Dorcas. It is impossible that I should proceed with my projects against this admirable woman, were it not that I am resolved, after a few trials more, if as nobly sustained as those she has passed through, to make her (if she really hate me not) legally mine.

TO MR. LOVELACE

'When a woman is married, that supreme earthly obligation requires, that in all instances, where her husband's real honour is concerned, she should yield her own will to his. But, beforehand, I could be glad, conformably to what I have always signified, to have the most explicit assurances, that every possible way should be tried to avoid litigation with my father. Time and patience will subdue all things. My prospects of happiness are extremely contracted. A husband's right will be always the same. In my lifetime I could wish nothing to be done of this sort. Your circumstances, Sir, will not oblige you to extort violently from him what is in his hands. All that depends upon me, either with regard to my person, to my diversions, or to the economy that no married woman, of whatever rank or quality, should be above inspecting, shall be done, to prevent a necessity for such measures being taken. And if there will be no necessity for them, it is to be hoped that motives less excusable will not have force—motives which must be founded in a littleness of mind,

which a woman, who has not that littleness of mind, will be under such temptations, as her duty will hardly be able at all times to check, to despise her husband for having; especially in cases where her own family, so much a part of herself, and which will have obligations upon her (though then but secondary ones) from which she can never be freed, is intimately concerned.

'This article, then, I urge to your most serious consideration, as what lies next my heart. I enter not here minutely into the fatal misunderstanding between them and you: the fault may be in both. But, Sir, your's was the foundation-fault: at least, you gave a too-plausible pretence for my brother's antipathy to work upon. Condescension was no part of your study. You chose to bear the imputations laid to your charge, rather than to make it your endeavour to obviate them.

'But this may lead into hateful recrimination.—Let it be remembered, I will only say, in this place, that, in their eye, you have robbed them of a daughter they doated upon; and that their resentments on this occasion rise but in proportion to their love and their disappointment. If they were faulty in some of the measures they took, while they themselves did not think so, who shall judge for them? You, Sir, who will judge every body as you please, and will let nobody judge you in your own particular, must not be their judge.—It may therefore be expected that they will stand out.

'As for myself, Sir, I must leave it (so seems it to be destined) to your justice, to treat me as you shall think I deserve: but, if your future behaviour to them is not governed by that harsh-sounding implacableness, which you charge upon some of their tempers, the splendour of your family, and the excellent character of some of them (of all indeed, unless your own conscience furnishes you with one only exception) will, on better consideration, do every thing with them: for they may be overcome; perhaps, however, with the more difficulty, as the greatly prosperous less bear controul and disappointment than others: for I will own to you, that I have often in secret lamented, that their great acquirements have been a snare to them; perhaps as great a snare, as some other accidentals have been to you; which being less immediately your own gifts, you have still less reason than they to value yourself upon them.

'Let me only, on this subject, further observe, that condescension is not meanness. There is a glory in yielding, that hardly any violent spirit can judge of. My brother, perhaps, is no more sensible of this than you. But as you have talents, which he has not, (who, however, has, as I hope, that regard for morals, the want of which makes one of his objections to you,) I could wish it may not be owing to you, that your mutual dislikes to each other do not subside! for it is my earnest hope, that in time you may see each other, without exciting the fears of a wife and a sister for the consequence. Not that I should wish you to yield in points that truly concerned your honour: no, Sir; I would be as delicate in such, as you yourself: more delicate, I will venture to say, because more uniformly so. How vain, how contemptible, is that pride, which shows itself in standing upon diminutive observances; and gives up, and makes a jest of, the most important duties!

'This article being considered as I wish, all the rest will be easy. Were I to accept of the handsome separate provision you seem to intend me; added to the considerate sums arisen from my grandfather's estate since his death (more considerable than perhaps you may suppose from your offer); I should think it my duty to lay up for the family good, and for unforeseen events, out of it: for, as to my donations, I would generally confine myself in them to the tenth of my income, be it what it would. I aim at no glare in what I do of that sort. All I wish for, is the power of relieving the lame, the blind, the sick, and the industrious poor, and those whom accident has made so, or sudden distress reduced. The common or bred beggars I leave to others, and to the public provision. They cannot be lower: perhaps they wish not to be higher: and, not able to do for every one, I aim not at works of supererogation. Two hundred pounds a year would do all I wish to do of the separate sort: for all above, I would content myself to ask you; except, mistrusting your own economy, you would give up to my management and keeping, in order to provide for future contingencies, a larger portion; for which, as your steward, I would regularly account.

'As to clothes, I have particularly two suits, which, having been only in a manner tried on, would answer for any present occasion. Jewels I have of my grandmother's, which want only new-setting: another set I have, which on particular days I used to wear. Although these are not sent me, I have no doubt, being merely personals, but they will, when I should send for them in another name: till when I should not choose to wear any.

'As to your complaints of my diffidences, and the like, I appeal to your own heart, if it be possible for you to make my case your own for one moment, and to retrospect some parts of your behaviour, words, and actions, whether I am not rather to be justified than censured: and whether, of all the men in the world, avowing what you avow, you ought not to think so. If you do not, let me admonish you, Sir, from the very great mismatch that then must appear to be in our minds, never to seek, nor so much as to wish, to bring about the most intimate union of interests between yourself and

CLARISSA HARLOWE. MAY 20.'

The original of this charming paper, as Dorcas tells me, was torn almost in two. In one of her pets, I suppose! What business have the sex, whose principal glory is meekness, and patience, and resignation, to be in a passion, I trow?—Will not she who allows herself such liberties as a maiden take greater when married?

And a wife to be in a passion!—Let me tell the ladies, it is an impudent thing, begging their pardon, and as impudent as impudent, for a wife to be in a passion, if she mean not eternal separation, or wicked defiance, by it: For is it not rejecting at once all that expostulatory meekness, and gentle reasoning, mingled with sighs as gentle, and graced with bent knees, supplicating hands, and eyes lifted up to your imperial countenance, just running over, that you should make a reconciliation speedy, and as lasting as speedy? Even suppose the husband is in the wrong, will not this being so give the greater force to her expostulation?

Now I think of it, a man should be in the wrong now-and-then, to make his wife shine. Miss Howe tells my charmer, that adversity is her shining-time. 'Tis a generous thing in a man to make his wife shine at his own expense: to give her leave to triumph over him by patient reasoning: for were he to be too imperial to acknowledge his fault on the spot, she will find the benefit of her duty and submission in future, and in the high opinion he will conceive of her prudence and obligingness—and so, by degrees, she will become her

master's master.

But for a wife to come up with kemboed arm, the other hand thrown out, perhaps with a pointing finger—Look ye here, Sir!—Take notice!—If you are wrong, I'll be wrong!—If you are in a passion, I'll be in a passion!—Rebuff, for rebuff, Sir!—If you fly, I'll tear!—If you swear, I'll curse!—And the same room, and the same bed, shall not hold us, Sir!—For, remember, I am married, Sir!—I am a wife, Sir!—You can't help yourself, Sir!—Your honour, as well as your peace, is in my keeping! And, if you like not this treatment, you may have worse, Sir!

Ah! Jack! Jack! What man, who has observed these things, either implied or expressed, in other families, would wish to be a husband!

Dorcas found this paper in one of the drawers of her lady's dressing-table. She was reperusing it, as she supposes, when the honest wench carried my message to desire her to favour me at the tea-table; for she saw her pop a paper into the drawer as she came in; and there, on her mistress's going to meet me in the dining-room, she found it; and to be this.

But I had better not to have had a copy of it, as far as I know: for, determined as I was before upon my operations, it instantly turned all my resolutions in her favour. Yet I would give something to be convinced that she did not pop it into her drawer before the wench, in order for me to see it; and perhaps (if I were to take notice of it) to discover whether Dorcas, according to Miss Howe's advice, were most my friend, or her's.

The very suspicion of this will do her no good: for I cannot bear to be artfully dealt with. People love to enjoy their own peculiar talents in monopoly, as arguments against me in her behalf. But I know every tittle thou canst say upon it. Spare therefore thy wambling nonsense, I desire thee; and leave this sweet excellence and me to our fate: that will determine for us, as it shall please itself: for as Cowley says,

*An unseen hand makes all our moves:
And some are great, and some are small;
Some climb to good, some from great fortunes fall:
Some wise men, and some fools we call:
Figures, alas! of speech!—For destiny plays us all.*

But, after all, I am sorry, almost sorry (for how shall I do to be quite sorry, when it is not given to me to be so?) that I cannot, until I have made further trials, resolve upon wedlock.

I have just read over again this intended answer to my proposals: and how I adore her for it!

But yet; another yet!—She has not given it or sent it to me.—It is not therefore her answer. It is not written for me, though to me.

Nay, she has not intended to send it to me: she has even torn it, perhaps with indignation, as thinking it too good for me. By this action she absolutely retracts it. Why then does my foolish fondness seek to establish for her the same merit in my heart, as if she avowed it? Pr'ythee, dear Belford, once more, leave us to our fate; and do not thou interpose with thy nonsense, to weaken a spirit already too squeamish, and strengthen a conscience that has declared itself of her party.

Then again, remember thy recent discoveries, Lovelace! Remember her indifference, attended with all the appearance of contempt and hatred. View her, even now, wrapt up in reserve and mystery; meditating plots, as far as thou knowest, against the sovereignty thou hast, by right of conquest, obtained over her. Remember, in short, all thou hast threatened to remember against this insolent beauty, who is a rebel to the power she has listed under.

But yet, how dost thou propose to subdue thy sweet enemy!—Abhorred be force, be the necessity of force, if that can be avoided! There is no triumph in force—no conquest over the will—no prevailing by gentle degrees over the gentle passions!—force is the devil!

My cursed character, as I have often said, was against me at setting out—Yet is she not a woman? Cannot I find one yielding or but half-yielding moment, if she do not absolutely hate me?

But with what can I tempt her?—RICHES she was born to, and despises, knowing what they are. JEWELS and ornaments, to a mind so much a jewel, and so richly set, her worthy consciousness will not let her value. LOVE—if she be susceptible of love, it seems to be so much under the direction of prudence, that one unguarded moment, I fear, cannot be reasonably hoped for: and so much VIGILANCE, so much apprehensiveness, that her fears are ever beforehand with her dangers. Then her LOVE or VIRTUE seems to be principle, native principle, or, if not native, so deeply rooted, that its fibres have struck into her heart, and, as she grew up, so blended and twisted themselves with the strings of life, that I doubt there is no separating of the one without cutting the others asunder.

What then can be done to make such a matchless creature get over the first tests, in order to put her to the grand proof, whether once overcome, she will not be always overcome?

Our mother and her nymphs say, I am a perfect Craven, and no Lovelace: and so I think. But this is no simpering, smiling charmer, as I have found others to be, when I have touched upon affecting subjects at a distance; as once or twice I have tried to her, the mother introducing them (to make sex palliate the freedom to sex) when only we three together. She is above the affectation of not seeming to understand you. She shows by her displeasure, and a fierceness not natural to her eye, that she judges of an impure heart by an impure mouth, and darts dead at once even the embryo hopes of an encroaching lover, however distantly insinuated, before the meaning hint can dawn into double entendre.

By my faith, Jack, as I sit gazing upon her, my whole soul in my eyes, contemplating her perfections, and thinking, when I have seen her easy and serene, what would be her thoughts, did she know my heart as well as I know it; when I behold her disturbed and jealous, and think of the justness of her apprehensions, and that she cannot fear so much as there is room for her to fear; my heart often misgives me.

And must, think I, O creature so divinely excellent, and so beloved of my soul, those arms, those encircling arms, that would make a monarch happy, be used to repel brutal force; all their strength, unavailingly perhaps, exerted to repel it, and to defend a person so delicately framed? Can violence enter into the heart of a wretch, who might entitle himself to all her willing yet virtuous love, and make the blessings he aspires

after, her duty to confer?—Begone, villain-purposes! Sink ye all to the hell that could only inspire ye! And I am then ready to throw myself at her feet, to confess my villainous designs, to avow my repentance, and put it out of my power to act unworthily by such an excellence.

How then comes it, that all these compassionate, and, as some would call them, honest sensibilities go off!—Why, Miss Howe will tell thee: she says, I am the devil.—By my conscience, I think he has at present a great share in me.

There's ingenuousness!—How I lay myself open to thee!—But seest thou not, that the more I say against myself, the less room there is for thee to take me to task?—O Belford, Belford! I cannot, cannot (at least at present) I cannot marry.

Then her family, my bitter enemies—to supple to them, or if I do not, to make her as unhappy as she can be from my attempts—

Then does she not love them too much, me too little?

She now seems to despise me: Miss Howe declares, that she really does despise me. To be despised by a WIFE—What a thought is that!—To be excelled by a WIFE too, in every part of praise-worthy knowledge!—To take lessons, to take instructions, from a WIFE!—More than despise me, she herself has taken time to consider whether she does not hate me:— I hate you, Lovelace, with my whole heart, said she to me but yesterday! My soul is above thee, man!—Urge me not to tell thee how sincerely I think my soul above thee!—How poor indeed was I then, even in my own heart!—So visible a superiority, to so proud a spirit as mine!—And here from below, from BELOW indeed! from these women! I am so goaded on—

Yet 'tis poor too, to think myself a machine in the hands of such wretches.—I am no machine.—Lovelace, thou art base to thyself, but to suppose thyself a machine.

But having gone thus far, I should be unhappy, if after marriage, in the petulance of ill humour, I had it to reproach myself, that I did not try her to the utmost. And yet I don't know how it is, but this lady, the moment I come into her presence, half-assimilates me to her own virtue.— Once or twice (to say nothing of her triumph over me on Sunday night) I was prevailed upon to fluster myself, with an intention to make some advances, which, if obliged to recede, I might lay upon raised spirits: but the instant I beheld her, I was soberized into awe and reverence: and the majesty of her even visible purity first damped, and then extinguished, my double flame.

What a surprisingly powerful effect, so much and so long in my power she! so instigated by some of her own sex, and so stimulated by passion I!— How can this be accounted for in a Lovelace!

But what a heap of stuff have I written!—How have I been run away with! —By what?—Canst thou say by what?—O thou lurking varletless CONSCIENCE! —Is it thou that hast thus made me of party against myself?—How camest thou in?—In what disguise, thou egregious haunter of my more agreeable hours?—Stand thou, with fate, but neuter in this controversy; and, if I cannot do credit to human nature, and to the female sex, by bringing down such an angel as this to class with and adorn it, (for adorn it she does in her very foibles,) then I am all your's, and never will resist you more.

Here I arose. I shook myself. The window was open. Always the troublesome bosom-visiter, the intruder, is flown.—I see it yet!—And now it lessens to my aching eye!—And now the cleft air is closed after it, and it is out of sight!—and once more I am

ROBERT LOVELACE.

LETTER XLIX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY, MAY 23.

Well did I, and but just in time to conclude to have done with Mrs. Fretchville and the house: for here Mennell has declared, that he cannot in conscience and honour go any farther.—He would not for the world be accessory to the deceiving of such a lady!—I was a fool to let either you or him see her; for ever since ye have both had scruples, which neither would have had, were a woman to have been in the question.

Well, I can't help it!

Mennell has, however, though with some reluctance, consented to write me a letter, provided I will allow it to be the last step he shall take in this affair.

I presumed, I told him, that if I could cause Mrs. Fretchville's woman to supply his place, he would have no objection to that.

None, he says—But is it not pity—

A pitiful fellow! Such a ridiculous kind of pity his, as those silly souls have, who would not kill an innocent chicken for the world; but when killed to their hands, are always the most greedy devourers of it.

Now this letter gives the servant the small-pox: and she has given it to her unhappy vapourish lady. Vapourish people are perpetual subjects for diseases to work upon. Name but the malady, and it is theirs in a moment. Ever fitted for inoculation.—The physical tribe's milch-cows. —A vapourish or splenetic patient is a fiddle for the doctors; and they are eternally playing upon it. Sweet music does it make them. All their difficulty, except a case extraordinary happens, (as poor Mrs. Fretchville's, who has realized her apprehensions,) is but to hold their countenance, while their patient is drawing up a bill of indictment against himself;—and when they have heard it, proceed to punish—the right word for prescribe. Why should they not, when the criminal has confessed his guilt?—And punish they generally do with a vengeance.

Yet, silly toads too, now I think of it. For why, when they know they cannot do good, may they not as well endeavour to gratify, as to nauseate, the patient's palate?

Were I a physician, I'd get all the trade to myself: for Malmsey, and Cyprus, and the generous product of the Cape, a little disguised, should be my principal doses: as these would create new spirits, how would the revived patient covet the physic, and adore the doctor!

Give all the paraders of the faculty whom thou knowest this hint.—There could but one inconvenience arise from it. The APOTHECARIES would find their medicines cost them something: but the demand for quantities would answer that: since the honest NURSE would be the patient's taster; perpetually requiring repetitions of the last cordial julap.

Well, but to the letter—Yet what need of further explanation after the hints in my former? The widow can't be removed; and that's enough: and Mennell's work is over; and his conscience left to plague him for his own sins, and not another man's: and, very possibly, plague enough will give him for those.

This letter is directed, To Robert Lovelace, Esq. or, in his absence, to his Lady. She has refused dining with me, or seeing me: and I was out when it came. She opened it: so is my lady by her own consent, proud and saucy as she is.

I am glad at my heart that it came before we entirely make up. She would else perhaps have concluded it to be contrived for a delay: and now, moreover, we can accommodate our old and new quarrels together; and that's contrivance, you know. But how is her dear haughty heart humbled to what it was when I knew her first, that she can apprehend any delays from me; and have nothing to do but to vex at them!

I came in to dinner. She sent me down the letter, desiring my excuse for opening it.—Did it before she was aware. Lady-pride, Belford! recollection, then retrogradation!

I requested to see her upon it that moment.—But she desires to suspend our interview till morning. I will bring her to own, before I have done with her, that she can't see me too often.

My impatience was so great, on an occasion so unexpected, that I could not help writing to tell her, 'how much vexed I was at the accident: but that it need not delay my happy day, as that did not depend upon the house. [She knew that before, she'll think; and so did I.] And as Mrs. Fretchville, by Mr. Mennell, so handsomely expressed her concern upon it, and her wishes that it could suit us to bear with the unavoidable delay, I hoped, that going down to The Lawn for two or three of the summer- months, when I was made the happiest of men, would be favourable to all round.'

The dear creature takes this incident to heart, I believe: She has sent word to my repeated request to see her notwithstanding her denial, that she cannot till the morning: it shall be then at six o'clock, if I please!

To be sure I do please!

Can see her but once a day now, Jack!

Did I tell thee, that I wrote a letter to my cousin Montague, wondering that I heard not from Lord M. as the subject was so very interesting! In it I acquainted her with the house I was about taking; and with Mrs. Fretchville's vapourish delays.

I was very loth to engage my own family, either man or woman, in this affair; but I must take my measures securely: and already they all think as bad of me as they well can. You observe by my Lord M.'s letter to yourself, that the well-manner'd peer is afraid I should play this admirable creature one of my usual dog's tricks.

I have received just now an answer from Charlotte.

Charlot i'n't well. A stomach disorder!

No wonder a girl's stomach should plague her. A single woman; that's it. When she has a man to plague, it will have something besides itself to prey upon. Knowest thou not moreover, that man is the woman's sun; woman is the man's earth?—How dreary, how desolate, the earth, that the suns shines not upon!

Poor Charlotte! But I heard she was not well: that encouraged me to write to her; and to express myself a little concerned, that she had not, of her own accord, thought of a visit in town to my charmer.

Here follows a copy of her letter. Thou wilt see by it that every little monkey is to catechise me. They all depend upon my good-nature.

M. HALL, MAY 22. DEAR COUSIN,

We have been in daily hope for a long time, I must call it, of hearing that the happy knot was tied. My Lord has been very much out of order: and yet nothing would serve him, but he would himself write an answer to your letter. It was the only opportunity he should ever have, perhaps, to throw in a little good advice to you, with the hope of its being of any signification; and he has been several hours in a day, as his gout would let him, busied in it. It wants now only his last revisal. He hopes it will have the greater weight with you, as it appear all in his own hand-writing.

Indeed, Mr. Lovelace, his worthy heart is wrapt up in you. I wish you loved yourself but half as well. But I believe too, that if all the family loved you less, you would love yourself more.

His Lordship has been very busy, at the times he could not write, in consulting Pritchard about those estates which he proposes to transfer to you on the happy occasion, that he may answer your letter in the most acceptable manner; and show, by effects, how kindly he takes your invitation. I assure you he is mighty proud of it.

As for myself, I am not at all well, and have not been for some weeks past, with my old stomach-disorder. I had certainly else before now have done myself the honour you wonder I have not done myself. Lady Betty, who would have accompanied me, (for we have laid it all out,) has been exceedingly busy in her law-affair; her antagonist, who is actually on the spot, having been making proposals for an accommodation. But you may assure yourself, that when our dear relation-elect shall be entered upon the new habitation you tell me of, we will do ourselves the honour of visiting her; and if any delay arises from the dear lady's want of courage, (which considering her man, let me tell you, may very well be,) we will endeavour to inspire her with it, and be sponsors for you;—for, cousin, I believe you have need to be christened over again before you are entitled to so great a blessing. What think you?

Just now, my Lord tells me, he will dispatch a man on purpose with his letter to-morrow: so I needed not to

have written. But now I have, let it go; and by Empson, who sets out directly on his return to town.

My best compliments, and sister's, to the most deserving lady in the world [you will need no other direction to the person meant] conclude me

Your affectionate cousin and servant, CHARL. MONTAGUE.

Thou seest how seasonably this letter comes. I hope my Lord will write nothing but what I may show to my beloved. I have actually sent her up this letter of Charlotte's, and hope for happy effects from it.

R.L. ***

[The Lady, in her next letter, gives Miss Howe an account of what passed between Mr. Lovelace and herself. She resents his behaviour with her usual dignity. But when she comes to mention Mr. Mennell's letter, she re-urges Miss Howe to perfect her scheme for her deliverance; being resolved to leave him. But, dating again, on his sending up to her Miss Montague's letter, she alters her mind, and desires her to suspend for the present her application to Mrs. Townsend.]

I had begun, says she, to suspect all he had said of Mrs. Fretchville and her house; and even Mr. Mennell himself, though so well-appearing a man. But now that I find Mr. Lovelace has apprized his relations of his intent to take it, and had engaged some of the ladies to visit me there, I could hardly forbear blaming myself for censuring him as capable of so vile an imposture. But may he not thank himself for acting so very unaccountably, and taking such needlessly-awry steps, as he had done, embarrassing, as I told him, his own meanings, if they were good?

LETTER L

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. WEDNESDAY, MAY 24.

[He gives his friend an account of their interview that morning; and of the happy effects of his cousin Montague's letter in his favour. Her reserves, however, he tells him, are not absolutely banished. But this he imputes to form.]

It is not in the power of woman, says he, to be altogether sincere on these occasions. But why?—Do they think it so great a disgrace to be found out to be really what they are?

I regretted the illness of Mrs. Fretchville; as the intention I had to fix her dear self in the house before the happy knot was tied, would have set her in that independence in appearance, as well as fact, which was necessary to show to all the world that her choice was free; and as the ladies of my family would have been proud to make their court to her there, while the settlements and our equipages were preparing. But, on any other account, there was no great matter in it; since when my happy day was over, we could, with so much convenience, go down to The Lawn, to my Lord M.'s, and to Lady Sarah's or Lady Betty's, in turn; which would give full time to provide ourselves with servants and other accommodations.

How sweetly the charmer listened!

I asked her, if she had had the small-pox?

Ten thousand pounds the worse in my estimation, thought I, if she has not; for no one of her charming graces can I dispense with.

'Twas always a doubtful point with her mother and Mrs. Norton, she owned. But although she was not afraid of it, she chose not unnecessarily to rush into places where it was.

Right, thought I—Else, I said, it would not have been amiss for her to see the house before she went into the country; for if she liked it not, I was not obliged to have it.

She asked, if she might take a copy of Miss Montague's letter?

I said, she might keep the letter itself, and send it to Miss Howe, if she pleased; for that, I suppose, was her intention.

She bowed her head to me.

There, Jack! I shall have her courtesy to me by-and-by, I question not. What a-devil had I to do, to terrify the sweet creature by my termagant projects!—Yet it was not amiss, I believe, to make her afraid of me. She says, I am an unpolite man. And every polite instance from such a one is deemed a favour.

Talking of the settlements, I told her I had rather that Pritchard (mentioned by my cousin Charlotte) had not been consulted on this occasion. Pritchard, indeed, was a very honest man; and had been for a generation in the family; and knew of the estates, and the condition of them, better than either my Lord or myself: but Pritchard, like other old men, was diffident and slow; and valued himself upon his skill as a draughts-man; and, for the sake of the paltry reputation, must have all his forms preserved, were an imperial crown to depend upon his dispatch.

I kissed her unrepulsing hand no less than five times during this conversation. Lord, Jack, how my generous heart ran over!—She was quite obliging at parting.—She in a manner asked me leave to retire; to reperuse Charlotte's letter.—I think she bent her knees to me; but I won't be sure.—How happy might we both have been long ago, had the dear creature been always as complaisant to me! For I do love respect, and, whether I deserve it or not, always had it, till I knew this proud beauty.

And now, Belford, are we in a train, or the deuce is in it. Every fortified town has its strong and its weak place. I have carried on my attacks against the impregnable parts. I have not doubt but I shall either shine or

smuggle her out of her cloke, since she and Miss Howe have intended to employ a smuggler against me.—All we wait for now is my Lord's letter.

But I had like to have forgot to tell thee, that we have been not a little alarmed, by some inquiries that have been made after me and my beloved by a man of good appearance; who yesterday procured a tradesman in the neighbourhood to send for Dorcas: of whom he asked several questions relating to us; particularly (as we boarded and lodged in one house) whether we were married?

This has given my beloved great uneasiness. And I could not help observing upon it, to her, how right a thing it was that we had given out below that we were married. The inquiry, most probably, I said, was from her brother's quarter; and now perhaps that our marriage was owned, we should hear no more of his machinations. The person, it seems, was curious to know the day that the ceremony was performed. But Dorcas refused to give him any other particulars than that we were married; and she was the more reserved, as he declined to tell her the motives of his inquiry.

LETTER LI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. MAY 24.

The devil take this uncle of mine! He has at last sent me a letter which I cannot show, without exposing the head of our family for a fool. A confounded parcel of pop-guns has he let off upon me. I was in hopes he had exhausted his whole stock of this sort in his letter to you.—To keep it back, to delay sending it, till he had recollected all this farrago of nonsense—confound his wisdom of nations, if so much of it is to be scraped together, in disgrace of itself, to make one egregious simpleton! —But I am glad I am fortified with this piece of flagrant folly, however; since, in all human affairs, the convenient are so mingled, that there is no having the one without the other.

I have already offered the bill enclosed in it to my beloved; and read to her part of the letter. But she refused the bill: and, as I am in cash myself, I shall return it. She seemed very desirous to peruse the whole letter. And when I told her, that, were it not for exposing the writer, I would oblige her, she said, it would not be exposing his Lordship to show it to her; and that she always preferred the heart to the head. I knew her meaning; but did not thank her for it.

All that makes for me in it I will transcribe for her—yet, hang it, she shall have the letter, and my soul with it, for one consenting kiss.

She has got the letter from me without the reward. Deuce take me, if I had the courage to propose the condition. A new character this of bashfulness in thy friend. I see, that a truly modest woman may make even a confident man keep his distance. By my soul, Belford, I believe, that nine women in ten, who fall, fall either from their own vanity or levity, or for want of circumspection and proper reserves.

I did intend to take my reward on her returning a letter so favourable to us both. But she sent it to me, sealed up, by Dorcas. I might have thought that there were two or three hints in it, that she would be too nice immediately to appear to. I send it to thee; and here will stop, to give thee time to read it. Return it as soon as thou hast perused it.

LETTER LII

LORD M. TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. TUESDAY, MAY 23.

It is a long lane that has no turning.—Do not despise me for my proverbs —you know I was always fond of them; and if you had been so too, it would have been the better for you, let me tell you. I dare swear, the fine lady you are so likely to be soon happy with, will be far from despising them; for I am told, that she writes well, and that all her letters are full of sentences. God convert you! for nobody but he and this lady can.

I have no manner of doubt but that you will marry, as your father, and all your ancestors, did before you: else you would have had no title to be my heir; nor can your descendants have any title to be your's, unless they are legitimate; that's worth your remembrance, Sir!—No man is always a fool, every man is sometimes.—But your follies, I hope, are now at an end.

I know, you have vowed revenge against this fine lady's family: but no more of that, now. You must look upon them all as your relations; and forgive and forget. And when they see you make a good husband and a good father, [which God send, for all our sakes!] they will wonder at their nonsensical antipathy, and beg your pardon: But while they think you a vile fellow, and a rake, how can they either love you, or excuse their daughter?

And methinks I could wish to give a word of comfort to the lady, who, doubtless, must be under great fears, how she shall be able to hold in such a wild creature as you have hitherto been. I would hint to her, that by strong arguments, and gentle words, she may do any thing with you; for though you are apt to be hot, gentle words will cool you, and bring you into the temper that is necessary for your cure.

Would to God, my poor lady, your aunt, who is dead and gone, had been a proper patient for the same remedy! God rest her soul! No reflections upon her memory! Worth is best known by want! I know her's now;

and if I had went first, she would by this time have known mine.

There is great wisdom in that saying, God send me a friend, that may tell me of my faults: if not, an enemy, and he will. Not that I am your enemy; and that you well know. The more noble any one is, the more humble; so bear with me, if you would be thought noble.—Am I not your uncle? and do I not design to be better to you than your father could be? Nay, I will be your father too, when the happy day comes; since you desire it: and pray make my compliments to my dear niece; and tell her, I wonder much that she has so long deferred your happiness.

Pray let her know as that I will present HER (not you) either my Lancashire seat or The Lawn in Hertfordshire, and settle upon her a thousand pounds a year penny-rents; to show her, that we are not a family to take base advantages: and you may have writings drawn, and settle as you will.—Honest Pritchard has the rent-roll of both these estates; and as he has been a good old servant, I recommend him to your lady's favour. I have already consulted him: he will tell you what is best for you, and most pleasing to me.

I am still very bad with my gout, but will come in a litter, as soon as the day is fixed; it would be the joy of my heart to join your hands. And, let me tell you, if you do not make the best of husbands to so good a young lady, and one who has had so much courage for your sake, I will renounce you; and settle all I can upon her and her's by you, and leave you out of the question.

If any thing be wanting for your further security, I am ready to give it; though you know, that my word has always been looked upon as my bond. And when the Harlowes know all this, let us see whether they are able to blush, and take shame to themselves.

Lady Sarah and Lady Betty want only to know the day, to make all the country round them blaze, and all their tenants mad. And, if any one of mine be sober upon the occasion, Pritchard shall eject him. And, on the birth of the first child, if a son, I will do something more for you, and repeat all our rejoicings.

I ought indeed to have written sooner. But I knew, that if you thought me long, and were in haste as to your nuptials, you would write and tell me so. But my gout was very troublesome: and I am but a slow writer, you know, at best: for composing is a thing that, though formerly I was very ready at it, (as my Lord Lexington used to say,) yet having left it off a great while, I am not so now. And I chose, on this occasion, to write all out of my own hand and memory; and to give you my best advice; for I may never have such an opportunity again. You have had [God mend you!] a strange way of turning your back upon all I have said: this once, I hope, you will be more attentive to the advice I give you for your own good.

I have still another end; nay, two other ends.

The one was, that now you are upon the borders of wedlock, as I may say, and all your wild oats will be sown, I would give you some instructions as to your public as well as private behaviour in life; which, intending you so much good as I do, you ought to hear; and perhaps would never have listened to, on any less extraordinary occasion.

The second is, that your dear lady-elect (who is it seems herself so fine and so sententious a writer) will see by this, that it is not our faults, nor for want of the best advice, that you was not a better man than you have hitherto been.

And now, in a few words, for the conduct I would wish you to follow in public, as well as in private, if you would think me worthy of advising. —It shall be short; so be not uneasy.

As to the private life: Love your lady as she deserves. Let your actions praise you. Be a good husband; and so give the lie to all your enemies; and make them ashamed of their scandals. And let us have pride in saying, that Miss Harlowe has not done either herself or family any discredit by coming among us. Do this; and I, and Lady Sarah, and Lady Betty, will love you for ever.

As to your public conduct: This as follows is what I could wish: but I reckon your lady's wisdom will put us both right—no disparagement, Sir; since, with all your wit, you have not hitherto shown much wisdom, you know.

Get into parliament as soon as you can: for you have talons to make a great figure there. Who so proper to assist in making new holding laws, as those whom no law in being could hold?

Then, for so long as you will give attendance in St. Stephen's chapel— its being called a chapel, I hope, will not disgust you: I am sure I have known many a riot there—a speaker has a hard time of it! but we peers have more decorum—But what was I going to say?—I must go back.

For so long as you will give your attendance in parliament, for so long will you be out of mischief; out of private mischief, at least: and may St. Stephen's fate be your's, if you wilfully do public mischief!

When a new election comes, you will have two or three boroughs, you know, to choose out of:—but if you stay till then, I had rather you were for the shire.

You will have interest enough, I am sure; and being so handsome a man, the women will make their husbands vote for you.

I shall long to read your speeches. I expect you will speak, if occasion offer, the very first day. You want no courage, and think highly enough of yourself, and lowly enough of every body else, to speak on all occasions.

As to the methods of the house, you have spirit enough, I fear, to be too much above them: take care of that.—I don't so much fear your want of good-manners. To men, you want no decency, if they don't provoke you: as to that, I wish you would only learn to be as patient of contradiction from others, as you would have other people be to you.

Although I would not have you to be a courtier; neither would I have you to be a malcontent. I remember (for I have it down) what my old friend Archibald Hutcheson said; and it was a very good saying—(to Mr. Secretary Craggs, I think it was)—'I look upon an administration, as entitled to every vote I can with good conscience give it; for a house of commons should not needlessly put drags upon the wheels of government: and when I have not given it my vote, it was with regret: and, for my country's sake, I wished with all my heart the measure had been such as I could have approved.'

And another saying he had, which was this: 'Neither can an opposition, neither can a ministry, be always

wrong. To be a plumb man therefore with either, is an infallible mark, that that man must mean more and worse than he will own he does mean.'

Are these sayings bad, Sir? are they to be despised?—Well, then, why should I be despised for remembering them, and quoting them, as I love to do? Let me tell you, if you loved my company more than you do, you would not be the worse for it. I may say so without any vanity; since it is other men's wisdom, and not my own, that I am so fond of.

But to add a word or two more on this occasion; and I may never have such another; for you must read this through—Love honest men, and herd with them, in the house and out of the house; by whatever names they be dignified or distinguished: Keep good men company, and you shall be out of their number. But did I, or did I not, write this before?—Writing, at so many different times, and such a quantity, one may forget.

You may come in for the title when I am dead and gone—God help me!—So I would have you keep an equilibrium. If once you get the name of being a fine speaker, you may have any thing: and, to be sure, you have naturally a great deal of elocution; a tongue that would delude an angel, as the women say—to their sorrow, some of them, poor creatures!—A leading man in the house of commons is a very important character; because that house has the giving of money: and money makes the mare to go; ay, and queens and kings too, sometimes, to go in a manner very different from what they might otherwise choose to go, let me tell you.

However, methinks, I would not have you take a place neither—it will double your value, and your interest, if it be believed, that you will not: for, as you will then stand in no man's way, you will have no envy; but pure sterling respect; and both sides will court you.

For your part, you will not want a place, as some others do, to piece up their broken fortunes. If you can now live reputably upon two thousand pounds a year, it will be hard if you cannot hereafter live upon seven or eight—less you will not have, if you oblige me; as now, by marrying so fine a lady, very much you will—and all this, and above Lady Betty's and Lady Sarah's favours! What, in the name of wonder, could possibly possess the proud Harlowes!—That son, that son of theirs!—But, for his dear sister's sake, I will say no more of him.

I never was offered a place myself: and the only one I would have taken, had I been offered it, was master of the buckhounds; for I loved hunting when I was young; and it carries a good sound with it for us who live in the country. Often have I thought of that excellent old adage; He that eats the king's goose, shall be choked with his feathers. I wish to the Lord, this was thoroughly considered by place-hunters! it would be better for them, and for their poor families.

I could say a great deal more, and all equally to the purpose. But really I am tired; and so I doubt are you. And besides, I would reserve something for conversation.

My nieces Montague, and Lady Sarah and Lady Betty, join in compliments to my niece that is to be. If she would choose to have the knot tied among us, pray tell her that we shall all see it securely done: and we will make all the country ring and blaze for a week together. But so I believe I said before.

If any thing further may be needful toward promoting your reciprocal felicity, let me know it; and how you order about the day; and all that. The enclosed bill is very much at your service. 'Tis payable at sight, as whatever else you may have occasion for shall be.

So God bless you both; and make things as convenient to my gout as you can; though, be it whenever it will, I will hobble to you; for I long to see you; and still more to see my niece; and am (in expectation of that happy opportunity)

Your most affectionate Uncle M.

LETTER LIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. THURSDAY, MAY 25.

Thou seest, Belford, how we now drive before the wind.—The dear creature now comes almost at the first word, whenever I desire the honour of her company. I told her last night, that apprehending delay from Pritchard's slowness, I was determined to leave it to my Lord to make his compliments in his own way; and had actually that afternoon put my writings into the hands of a very eminent lawyer, Counsellor Williams, with directions for him to draw up settlements from my own estate, and conformably to those of my mother! which I put into his hands at the same time. It had been, I assured her, no small part of my concern, that her frequent displeasure, and our mutual misapprehensions, had hindered me from advising with her before on this subject. Indeed, indeed, my dearest life, said I, you have hitherto afforded me but a very thorny courtship.

She was silent. Kindly silent. For well know I, that she could have recriminated upon me with a vengeance. But I was willing to see if she were not loth to disoblige me now. I comforted myself, I said, with the hopes that all my difficulties were now over; and that every past disobligations would be buried in oblivion.

Now, Belford, I have actually deposited these writings with Counsellor Williams; and I expect the draughts in a week at farthest. So shall be doubly armed. For if I attempt, and fail, these shall be ready to throw in, to make her have patience with me till I can try again.

I have more contrivances still in embryo. I could tell thee of an hundred, and yet hold another hundred in petto, to pop in as I go along, to excite thy surprize, and to keep up thy attention. Nor rave thou at me; but, if thou art my friend, think of Miss Howe's letters, and of her smuggling scheme. All owing to my fair captive's informations incitements. Am I not a villain, a fool, a Beelzebub, with them already? —Yet no harm done by me, nor so much as attempted?

Every thing of this nature, the dear creature answered, (with a downcast eye, and a blushing cheek,) she left to me.

I proposed my Lord's chapel for the celebration, where we might have the presence of Lady Betty, Lady Sarah, and my two cousins Montague.

She seemed not to favour a public celebration! and waved this subject for the present. I doubted not but she would be as willing as I to decline a public wedding; so I pressed not this matter farther just then.

But patterns I actually produced; and a jeweller was to bring as this day several sets of jewels for her choice. But the patterns she would not open. She sighed at the mention of them: the second patterns, she said, that had been offered to her;* and very peremptorily forbid the jeweller's coming; as well as declined my offer of causing my mother's to be new-set, at least for the present.

* See Vol. I. Letter XLI.

I do assure thee, Belford, I was in earnest in all this. My whole estate is nothing to me, put in competition with her hoped-for favour.

She then told me, that she had put into writing her opinion of my general proposals; and there had expressed her mind as to clothes and jewels: but on my strange behaviour to her (for no cause that she knew of) on Sunday night, she had torn the paper in two.

I earnestly pressed her to let me be favoured with a sight of this paper, torn as it was. And, after some hesitation, she withdrew, and sent it to me by Dorcas.

I perused it again. It was in a manner new to me, though I had read it so lately: and, by my soul, I could hardly stand it. An hundred admirable creatures I called her to myself. But I charge thee, write not a word to me in her favour, if thou meanest her well; for, if I spare her, it must be all *ex mero motu*.

You may easily suppose, when I was re-admitted to her presence, that I ran over in her praises, and in vows of gratitude, and everlasting love. But here's the devil; she still receives all I say with reserve; or if it be not with reserve, she receives it so much as her due, that she is not at all raised by it. Some women are undone by praise, by flattery. I myself, a man, am proud of praise. Perhaps thou wilt say, that those are most proud of it who least deserve it; as those are of riches and grandeur who are not born to either. I own, that to be superior to these foibles, it requires a soul. Have I not then a soul?—Surely, I have.— Let me then be considered as an exception to the rule.

Now have I foundation to go upon in my terms. My Lord, in the exuberance of his generosity, mentions a thousand pounds a year penny-rents. This I know, that were I to marry this lady, he would rather settle upon her all he has a mind to settle, than upon me. He has even threatened, that if I prove not a good husband to her, he will leave all he can at his death from me to her. Yet considers not that a woman so perfect can never be displeased with her husband but to his disgrace: For who will blame her? —Another reason why a LOVELACE should not wish to marry a CLARISSA.

But what a pretty fellow of an uncle is this foolish peer, to think of making a wife independent of her emperor, and a rebel of course; yet smarted himself for an error of this kind!

My beloved, in her torn paper, mentions but two hundred pounds a year, for her separate use. I insisted upon her naming a larger sum. She said it might be three; and I, for fear she should suspect very large offers, named only five; but added the entire disposal of all arrears in her father's hands for the benefit of Mrs. Norton, or whom she pleased.

She said, that the good woman would be uneasy if any thing more than a competency were done for her. She was more for suiting all her dispositions of this kind, she said, to the usual way of life of the person. To go beyond it, was but to put the benefited upon projects, or to make them awkward in a new state; when they might shine in that to which they were accustomed. And to put it into so good a mother's power to give her son a beginning in his business at a proper time; yet to leave her something for herself, to set her above want, or above the necessity of taking back from her child what she had been enabled to bestow upon him; would be the height of such a worthy parent's ambition.

Here's prudence! Here's judgment in so young a creature! How do I hate the Harlowes for producing such an angel!—O why, why, did she refuse my sincere address to tie the knot before we came to this house!

But yet, what mortifies my pride is, that this exalted creature, if I were to marry her, would not be governed in her behaviour to me by love, but by generosity merely, or by blind duty; and had rather live single, than be mine.

I cannot bear this. I would have the woman whom I honour with my name, if ever I confer this honour upon any, forego even her superior duties for me. I would have her look after me when I go out as far as she can see me, as my Rosebud after her Johnny; and meet me at my return with rapture. I would be the subject of her dreams, as well as of her waking thoughts. I would have her think every moment lost that is not passed with me: sing to me, read to me, play to me when I pleased: no joy so great as in obeying me. When I should be inclined to love, overwhelm me with it; when to be serious or solitary, if apprehensive of intrusion, retiring at a nod; approaching me only if I smiled encouragement: steal into my presence with silence; out of it, if not noticed, on tiptoe. Be a lady easy to all my pleasures, and valuing those most who most contributed to them; only sighing in private, that it was not herself at the time. Thus of old did the contending wives of the honest patriarchs; each recommending her handmaid to her lord, as she thought it would oblige him, and looking upon the genial product as her own.

The gentle Waller says, women are born to be controuled. Gentle as he was, he knew that. A tyrant husband makes a dutiful wife. And why do the sex love rakes, but because they know how to direct their uncertain wills, and manage them?

Another agreeable conversation. The day of days the subject. As to fixing a particular one, that need not be done, my charmer says, till the settlements are completed. As to marrying at my Lord's chapel, the Ladies of my family present, that would be making a public affair of it; and the dear creature observed, with regret, that it seemed to be my Lord's intention to make it so.

It could not be imagined, I said, but that his Lordship's setting out in a litter, and coming to town, as well as his taste for glare, and the joy he would take to see me married at last, and to her dear self, would give it as much the air of a public marriage as if the ceremony were performed at his own chapel, all the Ladies present.

I cannot, said she, endure the thoughts of a public day. It will carry with it an air of insult upon my whole family. And for my part, if my Lord will not take it amiss, [and perhaps he will not, as the motion came not from himself, but from you, Mr. Lovelace,] I will very willingly dispense with his Lordship's presence; the rather, as dress and appearance will then be unnecessary; for I cannot bear to think of decking my person while my parents are in tears.

How excellent this! Yet do not her parents richly deserve to be in tears?

See, Belford, with so charming a niceness, we might have been a long time ago upon the verge of the state, and yet found a great deal to do before we entered into it.

All obedience, all resignation—no will but her's. I withdrew, and wrote directly to my Lord; and she not disapproving of it, I sent it away. The purport as follows; for I took no copy.

'That I was much obliged to his Lordship for his intended goodness to me on an occasion the most solemn of my life. That the admirable Lady, whom he so justly praised, thought his Lordship's proposals in her favour too high. That she chose not to make a public appearance, if, without disobliging my friends, she could avoid it, till a reconciliation with her own could be effected. That although she expressed a grateful sense of his Lordship's consent to give her to me with his own hand; yet, presuming that the motive to this kind intention was rather to do her honour, than it otherwise would have been his own choice, (especially as travelling would be at this time so inconvenient to him,) she thought it advisable to save his Lordship trouble on this occasion; and hoped he would take as meant her declining the favour.

'That The Lawn will be most acceptable to us both to retire to; and the rather, as it is so to his Lordship.

'But, if he pleases, the jointure may be made from my own estate; leaving to his Lordship's goodness the alternative.'

I conclude with telling him, 'that I had offered to present the Lady his Lordship's bill; but on her declining to accept of it (having myself no present occasion for it) I return it enclosed, with my thanks, &c.'

And is not this going a plaguy length? What a figure should I make in rakish annals, if at last I should be caught in my own gin?

The sex may say what they will, but a poor innocent fellow had need to take great care of himself, when he dances upon the edge of the matrimonial precipice. Many a faint-hearted man, when he began to jest, or only designed to ape gallantry, has been forced into earnest, by being over-prompt, and taken at his word, not knowing how to own that he meant less than the lady supposed he meant. I am the better enabled to judge that this must have been the case of many a sneaking varlet; because I, who know the female world as well as any man in it of my standing, am so frequently in doubt of myself, and know not what to make of the matter.

Then these little sly rogues, how they lie couchant, ready to spring upon us harmless fellows the moment we are in their reach!—When the ice is once broken for them, how swiftly can they make to port!—Mean time, the subject they can least speak to, they most think of. Nor can you talk of the ceremony, before they have laid out in their minds how it is all to be. Little saucy-faced designers! how first they draw themselves in, then us!

But be all these things as they will, Lord M. never in his life received so handsome a letter as this from his nephew

LOVELACE. ***

[The Lady, after having given to Miss Howe on the particulars contained in Mr. Lovelace's last letter, thus expresses herself:]

A principal consolation arising from these favourable appearances, is, that I, who have now but one only friend, shall most probably, and if it be not my own fault, have as many new ones as there are persons in Mr. Lovelace's family; and this whether Mr. Lovelace treat me kindly or not. And who knows, but that, by degrees, those new friends, by their rank and merit, may have weight enough to get me restored to the favour of my relations? till which can be effected, I shall not be tolerably easy. Happy I never expect to be. Mr. Lovelace's mind and mine are vastly different; different in essentials.

But as matters are at present circumstanced, I pray you, my dear friend, to keep to yourself every thing that might bring discredit to him, if revealed.—Better any body expose a man than a wife, if I am to be his; and what is said by you will be thought to come from me.

It shall be my constant prayer, that all the felicities which this world can afford may be your's: and that the Almighty will never suffer you nor your's, to the remotest posterity, to want such a friend as my Anna Howe has been to

Her CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LIV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

And now, that my beloved seems secure in my net, for my project upon the vixen Miss Howe, and upon her mother: in which the officious prancer Hickman is to come in for a dash.

But why upon her mother, methinks thou askest, who, unknown to herself, has only acted, by the impulse,

through thy agent Joseph Leman, upon the folly of old Tony the uncle?

No matter for that: she believes she acts upon her own judgment: and deserves to be punished for pretending to judgment, when she has none.—Every living soul, but myself, I can tell thee, shall be punished, that treats either cruelly or disrespectfully so adored a lady.—What a plague! is it not enough that she is teased and tormented in person by me?

I have already broken the matter to our three confederates; as a supposed, not a resolved-on case indeed. And yet they know, that with me, in a piece of mischief, execution, with its swiftest feel, is seldom three paces behind projection, which hardly ever limps neither.

MOWBRAY is not against it. It is a scheme, he says, worthy of us: and we have not done any thing for a good while that has made a noise.

BELTON, indeed, hesitates a little, because matters go wrong between him and his Thomasine; and the poor fellow has not the courage to have his sore place probed to the bottom.

TOURVILLE has started a fresh game, and shrugs his shoulders, and should not choose to go abroad at present, if I please. For I apprehend that (from the nature of the project) there will be a kind of necessity to travel, till all is blown over.

To ME, one country is as good as another; and I shall soon, I suppose, choose to quit this paltry island; except the mistress of my fate will consent to cohabit at home; and so lay me under no necessity of surprising her into foreign parts. TRAVELLING, thou knowest, gives the sexes charming opportunities of being familiar with one another. A very few days and nights must now decide all matters betwixt me and my fair inimitable.

DOLEMAN, who can act in these causes only as chamber-counsel, will inform us by pen and ink [his right hand and right side having not yet been struck, and the other side beginning to be sensible] of all that shall occur in our absence.

As for THEE, we had rather have thy company than not; for, although thou art a wretched fellow at contrivance, yet art thou intrepid at execution. But as thy present engagements make thy attendance uncertain, I am not for making thy part necessary to our scheme; but for leaving thee to come after us when abroad. I know thou canst not long live without us.

The project, in short, is this:—Mrs. Howe has an elder sister in the Isle of Wight, who is lately a widow; and I am well informed, that the mother and daughter have engaged, before the latter is married, to pay a visit to this lady, who is rich, and intends Miss for her heiress; and in the interim will make her some valuable presents on her approaching nuptials; which, as Mrs. Howe, who loves money more than any thing but herself, told one of my acquaintance, would be worth fetching.

Now, Jack, nothing more need be done, than to hire a little trim vessel, which shall sail a pleasuring backward and forward to Portsmouth, Spithead, and the Isle of Wight, for a week or fortnight before we enter upon our parts of the plot. And as Mrs. Howe will be for making the best bargain she can for her passage, the master of the vessel may have orders (as a perquisite allowed him by his owners) to take what she will give: and the master's name, be it what it will, shall be Ganmore on the occasion; for I know a rogue of that name, who is not obliged to be of any country, any more than we.

Well, then, we will imagine them on board. I will be there in disguise. They know not any of ye four—supposing (the scheme so inviting) that thou canst be one.

'Tis plaguy hard, if we cannot find, or make a storm.

Perhaps they will be sea-sick: but whether they be or not, no doubt they will keep their cabin.

Here will be Mrs. Howe, Miss Howe, Mr. Hickman, a maid, and a footman, I suppose: and thus we will order it.

I know it will be hard weather: I know it will: and, before there can be the least suspicion of the matter, we shall be in sight of Guernsey, Jersey, Dieppe, Cherbourg, or any where on the French coast that it shall please us to agree with the winds to blow us: and then, securing the footman, and the women being separated, one of us, according to lots that may be cast, shall overcome, either by persuasion or force, the maid servant: that will be no hard task; and she is a likely wench, [I have seen her often:] one, Mrs. Howe; nor can there be much difficulty there; for she is full of health and life, and has been long a widow: another, [that, says the princely lion, must be I!] the saucy daughter; who will be much too frightened to make great resistance, [violent spirits, in that sex, are seldom true spirits—'tis but where they can:] and after beating about the coast for three or four days for recreation's sake, and to make sure work, till we see our sullen birds begin to eat and sip, we will set them all ashore where it will be most convenient; sell the vessel, [to Mrs. Townsend's agents, with all my heart, or to some other smugglers,] or give it to Ganmore; and pursue our travels, and tarry abroad till all is hushed up.

Now I know thou wilt make difficulties, as it is thy way; while it is mine to conquer them. My other vassals made theirs; and I condescended to obviate them: as thus I will thine, first stating them for thee according to what I know of thy phlegm.

What, in the first place, wilt thou ask, shall be done with Hickman? who will be in full parade of dress and primness, in order to show the old aunt what a devilish clever fellow of a nephew she is to have.

What!—I'll tell thee—Hickman, in good manners, will leave the women in their cabin—and, to show his courage with his breeding, be upon deck—

Well, and suppose he is!—Why then I hope it is easy for Ganmore, or any body else, myself suppose in my pea-jacket and great watch coat, (if any other make scruple to do it), while he stands in the way, gaping and staring like a novice, to stumble against him, and push him overboard! —A rich thought—is it not, Belford?—He is certainly plaguy officious in the ladies' correspondence; and I am informed, plays double between mother and daughter, in fear of both.—Dost not see him, Jack?—I do—popping up and down, his wig and hat floating by him; and paddling, pawing, and dashing, like a frightened mongrel—I am afraid he never ventured to learn to swim.

But thou wilt not drown the poor fellow; wilt thou?

No, no!—that is not necessary to the project—I hate to do mischiefs supererogatory. The skiff shall be ready to save him, while the vessel keeps its course: he shall be set on shore with the loss of wig and hat only, and of half his little wits, at the place where he embarked, or any where else.

Well, but shall we not be in danger of being hanged for three such enormous rapes, although Hickman should escape with only a bellyful of sea-water?

Yes, to be sure, when caught—But is there any likelihood of that?— Besides, have we not been in danger before now for worse facts? and what is there in being only in danger?—If we actually were to appear in open day in England before matters are made up, there will be greater likelihood that these women will not prosecute that they will.—For my own part, I should wish they may. Would not a brave fellow choose to appear in court to such an arraignment, confronting women who would do credit to his attempt? The country is more merciful in these cases, than in any others: I should therefore like to put myself upon my country.

Let me indulge in a few reflections upon what thou mayest think the worst that can happen. I will suppose that thou art one of us; and that all five are actually brought to trial on this occasion: how bravely shall we enter a court, I at the head of you, dressed out each man, as if to his wedding appearance!—You are sure of all the women, old and young, of your side.—What brave fellows!—what fine gentlemen!—There goes a charming handsome man!—meaning me, to be sure!—who could find in their hearts to hang such a gentleman as that? whispers one lady, sitting perhaps on the right hand of the recorder: [I suppose the scene to be in London:] while another disbelieves that any woman could fairly swear against me. All will crowd after me: it will be each man's happiness (if ye shall chance to be bashful) to be neglected: I shall be found to be the greatest criminal; and my safety, for which the general voice will be engaged, will be yours.

But then comes the triumph of triumphs, that will make the accused look up, while the accusers are covered with confusion.

Make room there!—stand by!—give back!—One receiving a rap, another an elbow, half a score a push a piece!—

Enter the slow-moving, hooded-faced, down-looking plaintiffs.—

And first the widow, with a sorrowful countenance, though half-veiled, pitying her daughter more than herself. The people, the women especially, who on this occasion will be five-sixths of the spectators, reproaching her—You'd have the conscience, would you, to have five such brave gentlemen as these hanged for you know not what?

Next comes the poor maid—who, perhaps, has been ravished twenty times before; and had not appeared now, but for company-sake; mincing, simpering, weeping, by turns; not knowing whether she should be sorry or glad.

But every eye dwells upon Miss!—See, see, the handsome gentleman bows to her!

To the very ground, to be sure, I shall bow; and kiss my hand.

See her confusion! see! she turns from him!—Ay! that's because it is in open court, cries an arch one!—While others admire her—Ay! that's a girl worth venturing one's neck for!

Then we shall be praised—even the judges, and the whole crowded bench, will acquit us in their hearts! and every single man wish he had been me! —the women, all the time, disclaiming prosecution, were the case to be their own. To be sure, Belford, the sufferers cannot put half so good a face upon the matter as we.

Then what a noise will this matter make!—Is it not enough, suppose us moving from the prison to the sessions-house,* to make a noble heart thump it away most gloriously, when such an one finds himself attended to his trial by a parade of guards and officers, of miens and aspects warlike and unwarlike; himself of their whole care, and their business! weapons in their hands, some bright, some rusty, equally venerable for their antiquity and inoffensiveness! others of more authoritative demeanour, strutting before with fine painted staves! shoals of people following, with a Which is he whom the young lady appears against?— Then, let us look down, look up, look round, which way we will, we shall see all the doors, the shops, the windows, the sign-irons, and balconies, (garrets, gutters, and chimney-tops included,) all white-capt, black-hooded, and periwigg'd, or crop-ear'd up by the immobile vulgus: while the floating street-swarmers, who have seen us pass by at one place, run with stretched-out necks, and strained eye-balls, a roundabout way, and elbow and shoulder themselves into places by which we have not passed, in order to obtain another sight of us; every street continuing to pour out its swarms of late-comers, to add to the gathering snowball; who are content to take descriptions of our persons, behaviour, and countenances, from those who had the good fortune to have been in time to see us.

* Within these few years past, a passage has been made from the prison to the sessions-house, whereby malefactors are carried into court without going through the street. Lovelace's triumph on their supposed march shows the wisdom of this alteration.

Let me tell thee, Jack, I see not why (to judge according to our principles and practices) we should not be as much elated in our march, were this to happen to us, as others may be upon any other the most mob-attracting occasion—suppose a lord-mayor on his gawdy—suppose a victorious general, or ambassador, on his public entry—suppose (as I began with the lowest) the grandest parade that can be supposed, a coronation—for, in all these, do not the royal guard, the heroic trained-bands, the pendent, clinging throngs of spectators, with their waving heads rolling to-and-fro from house-tops to house-bottoms and street-ways, as I have above described, make the principal part of the raree-show?

And let me ask thee, if thou dost not think, that either the mayor, the ambassador, or the general would not make very pitiful figures on their galas, did not the trumpets and tabrets call together the canaille to gaze at them?—Nor perhaps should we be the most guilty heroes neither: for who knows how the magistrate may have obtained his gold chain? while the general probably returns from cutting of throats, and from murders, sanctified by custom only.—Caesar, we are told,* had won, at the age of fifty-six, when he was assassinated, fifty pitched battles, had taken by assault above a thousand towns, and slain near 1,200,000 men; I suppose exclusive of those who fell on his own side in slaying them. Are not you and I, Jack, innocent men, and babes in swaddling-clothes, compared to Caesar, and to his predecessor in heroism, Alexander, dubbed, for murders

and depredation, Magnus?

* Pliny gives this account, putting the number of men slain at 1,100,092. See also Lipsius de Constandia.

The principal difference that strikes me in the comparison between us and the mayor, the ambassador, the general, on their gawdies, is, that the mob make a greater noise, a louder huzzaing, in the one case than the other, which is called acclamation, and ends frequently in higher taste, by throwing dead animals at one another, before they disperse; in which they have as much joy, as in the former part of the triumph: while they will attend us with all the marks of an awful or silent (at most only a whispering) respect; their mouths distended, as if set open with gags, and their voices generally lost in goggle-ey'd admiration.

Well, but suppose, after all, we are convicted; what have we to do, but in time make over our estates, that the sheriffs may not revel in our spoils?—There is no fear of being hanged for such a crime as this, while we have money or friends.—And suppose even the worst, that two or three were to die, have we not a chance, each man of us, to escape? The devil's in them, if they'll hang five for ravishing three!

I know I shall get off for one—were it but for family sake: and being a handsome fellow, I shall have a dozen or two young maidens, all dressed in white, go to court to beg my life—and what a pretty show they will make, with their white hoods, white gowns, white petticoats, white scarves, white gloves, kneeling for me, with their white handkerchiefs at their eyes, in two pretty rows, as his Majesty walks through them and nods my pardon for their sakes!—And, if once pardoned, all is over: for, Jack, in a crime of this nature there lies no appeal, as in a murder.

So thou seest the worst that can happen, should we not make the grand tour upon this occasion, but stay and take our trials. But it is most likely, that they will not prosecute at all. If not, no risque on our side will be run; only taking our pleasure abroad, at the worst; leaving friends tired of us, in order, after a time, to return to the same friends endeared to us, as we to them, by absence.

This, Jack, is my scheme, at the first running. I know it is capable of improvement—for example: I can land these ladies in France; whip over before they can get a passage back, or before Hickman can have recovered his fright; and so find means to entrap my beloved on board—and then all will be right; and I need not care if I were never to return to England.

Memorandum, To be considered of—Whether, in order to complete my vengeance, I cannot contrive to kidnap away either James Harlowe or Solmes? or both? A man, Jack, would not go into exile for nothing.

LETTER LV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

If, Belford, thou likest not my plot upon Miss Howe, I have three or four more as good in my own opinion; better, perhaps, they will be in thine: and so 'tis but getting loose from thy present engagement, and thou shalt pick and choose. But as for thy three brethren, they must do as I would have them: and so, indeed, must thou—Else why am I your general? But I will refer this subject to its proper season. Thou knowest, that I never absolutely conclude upon a project, till 'tis time for execution; and then lightning strikes not quicker than I.

And now to the subject next my heart.

Wilt thou believe me, when I tell thee, that I have so many contrivances rising up and crowding upon me for preference, with regard to my Gloriana, that I hardly know which to choose?—I could tell thee of no less than six princely ones, any of which must do. But as the dear creature has not grudged giving me trouble, I think I ought not, in gratitude, to spare combustibles for her; but, on the contrary, to make her stare and stand aghast, by springing three or four mines at once.

Thou remembrest what Shakespeare, in his Troilus and Cressida, makes Hector, who, however, is not used to boast, say to Achilles in an interview between them; and which, applied to this watchful lady, and to the vexation she has given me, and to the certainty I now think I have of subduing her, will run thus: supposing the charmer before me; and I meditating her sweet person from head to foot:

*Henceforth, O watchful fair-one, guard thee well:
For I'll not kill thee there! nor there! nor there!
But, by the zone that circles Venus' waist,
I'll kill thee ev'ry where; yea, o'er and o'er.—
Thou, wisest Belford, pardon me this brag:
Her watchfulness draws folly from my lips;
But I'll endeavour deeds to match the words,
Or I may never—*

Then I imagine thee interposing to qualify my impatience, as Ajax did to Achilles:

*—Do not chafe thee, cousin:
—And let these threats alone,
Till accident or purpose bring thee to it.*

All that vexes me, in the midst of my gloried-in devices, is, that there is a sorry fellow in the world, who has presumed to question, whether the prize, when obtained, is worthy of the pains it costs me: yet knows, with what patience and trouble a bird-man will spread an acre of ground with gins and snares; set up his stalking horse, his glasses; plant his decoy-birds, and invite the feathered throng by his whistle; and all his prize at last (the reward of early hours, and of a whole morning's pains) only a simple linnet.

To be serious, Belford, I must acknowledge, that all our pursuits, from childhood to manhood, are only

trifles of different sort and sizes, proportioned to our years and views: but then is not a fine woman the noblest trifle, that ever was or could be obtained by man?—And to what purpose do we say obtained, if it be not in the way we wish for?—If a man is rather to be her prize, than she his?

And now, Belford, what dost think?

That thou art a cursed fellow, if—

If—no if's—but I shall be very sick to-morrow. I shall, 'faith.

Sick!—Why sick? What a-devil shouldst thou be sick for?

For more good reasons than one, Jack.

I should be glad to hear but one.—Sick, quotha! Of all thy roguish inventions I should not have thought of this.

Perhaps thou thinkest my view to be, to draw the lady to my bedside. That's a trick of three or four thousand years old; and I should find it much more to my purpose, if I could get to her's. However, I'll condescend to make thee as wise as myself.

I am excessively disturbed about this smuggling scheme of Miss Howe. I have no doubt, that my fair-one, were I to make an attempt, and miscarry, will fly from me, if she can. I once believed she loved me: but now I doubt whether she does or not: at least, that it is with such an ardour, as Miss Howe calls it, as will make her overlook a premeditated fault, should I be guilty of one.

And what will being sick do for thee?

Have patience. I don't intend to be so very bad as Dorcas shall represent me to be. But yet I know I shall reach confoundedly, and bring up some clotted blood. To be sure, I shall break a vessel: there's no doubt of that: and a bottle of Eaton's styptic shall be sent for; but no doctor. If she has humanity, she will be concerned. But if she has love, let it have been pushed ever so far back, it will, on this occasion, come forward, and show itself; not only in her eye, but in every line of her sweet face.

I will be very intrepid. I will not fear death, or any thing else. I will be sure of being well in an hour or two, having formerly found great benefit by this astringent medicine, on occasion of an inward bruise by a fall from my horse in hunting, of which perhaps this malady may be the remains. And this will show her, that though those about me may make the most of it, I do not; and so can have no design in it.

Well, methinks thou sayest, I begin to think tolerably of this device.

I knew thou wouldst, when I explained myself. Another time prepare to wonder; and banish doubt.

Now, Belford, I shall expect, that she will show some concern at the broken vessel, as it may be attended with fatal effects, especially to one so fiery in his temper as I have the reputation to be thought to be: and the rather, as I shall calmly attribute the accident to the harasses and doubts under which I have laboured for some time past. And this will be a further proof of my love, and will demand a grateful return—

And what then, thou egregious contriver?

Why then I shall have the less remorse, if I am to use a little violence: for can she deserve compassion, who shows none?

And what if she shows a great deal of concern?

Then shall I be in hopes of building on a good foundation. Love hides a multitude of faults, and diminishes those it cannot hide. Love, when acknowledged, authorizes freedom; and freedom begets freedom; and I shall then see how far I can go.

Well but, Lovelace, how the deuce wilt thou, with that full health and vigour of constitution, and with that bloom in thy face, make any body believe thou art sick?

How!—Why, take a few grains of ipecacuanha; enough to make me reach like a fury.

Good!—But how wilt thou manage to bring up blood, and not hurt thyself?

Foolish fellow! Are there no pigeons and chickens in every poulterer's shop?

Cry thy mercy.

But then I will be persuaded by Mrs. Sinclair, that I have of late confined myself too much; and so will have a chair called, and be carried to the Park; where I will try to walk half the length of the Mall, or so; and in my return, amuse myself at White's or the Cocoa.

And what will this do?

Questioning again!—I am afraid thou'rt an infidel, Belford—Why then shall I not know if my beloved offers to go out in my absence?—And shall I not see whether she receives me with tenderness at my return? But this is not all: I have a foreboding that something affecting will happen while I am out. But of this more in its place.

And now, Belford, wilt thou, or wilt thou not, allow, that it is a right thing to be sick?—Lord, Jack, so much delight do I take in my contrivances, that I shall be half sorry when the occasion for them is over; for never, never, shall I again have such charming exercise for my invention.

Mean time these plaguy women are so impertinent, so full of reproaches, that I know not how to do any thing but curse them. And then, truly, they are for helping me out with some of their trite and vulgar artifices. Sally, particularly, who pretends to be a mighty contriver, has just now, in an insolent manner, told me, on my rejecting her proffered aids, that I had no mind to conquer; and that I was so wicked as to intend to marry, though I would not own it to her.

Because this little devil made her first sacrifice at my altar, she thinks she may take any liberty with me: and what makes her outrageous at times is, that I have, for a long time, studiously, as she says, slighted her too-readily-offered favours: But is it not very impudent in her to think, that I will be any man's successor? It is not come to that neither. This, thou knowest, was always my rule—Once any other man's, and I know it, and never more mine. It is for such as thou, and thy brethren, to take up with harlots. I have been always aiming

at the merit of a first discoverer.

The more devil I, perhaps thou wilt say, to endeavour to corrupt the uncorrupted.

But I say, not; since, hence, I have but very few adulteries to answer for.

One affair, indeed, at Paris, with a married lady [I believe I never told thee of it] touched my conscience a little: yet brought on by the spirit of intrigue, more than by sheer wickedness. I'll give it thee in brief:

'A French marquis, somewhat in years, employed by his court in a public function at that of Madrid, had put his charming young new-married wife under the controul and wardship, as I may say, of his insolent sister, an old prude.

I saw the lady at the opera. I liked her at first sight, and better at second, when I knew the situation she was in. So, pretending to make my addresses to the prude, got admittance to both.

'The first thing I had to do, was to compliment the prude into shyness by complaints of shyness: next, to take advantage of the marquise's situation, between her husband's jealousy and his sister's arrogance; and to inspire her with resentment; and, as I hoped, with a regard to my person. The French ladies have no dislike to intrigue.

'The sister began to suspect me: the lady had no mind to part with the company of the only man who had been permitted to visit her; and told me of her sister's suspicions. I put her upon concealing the prude, as if unknown to me, in a closet in one of her own apartments, locking her in, and putting the key in her own pocket: and she was to question me on the sincerity of my professions to her sister, in her sister's hearing.

'She complied. My mistress was locked up. The lady and I took our seats. I owned fervent love, and made high professions: for the marquise put it home to me. The prude was delighted with what she heard.

'And how dost thou think it ended?—I took my advantage of the lady herself, who durst not for her life cry out; and drew her after me to the next apartment, on pretence of going to seek her sister, who all the time was locked up in the closet.'

No woman ever gave me a private meeting for nothing; my dearest Miss Harlowe excepted.

'My ingenuity obtained my pardon: the lady being unable to forbear laughing throughout the whole affair, to find both so uncommonly tricked; her gaoleress her prisoner, safe locked up, and as much pleased as either of us.'

The English, Jack, do not often out-wit the French.

'We had contrivances afterwards equally ingenious, in which the lady, the ice once broken [once subdued, always subdued] co-operated. But a more tender tell-tale revealed the secret—revealed it, before the marquise could cover the disgrace. The sister was inveterate; the husband irreconcilable; in every respect unfit for a husband, even for a French one—made, perhaps, more delicate to these particulars by the customs of a people among whom he was then resident, so contrary to those of his own countrymen. She was obliged to throw herself into my protection—nor thought herself unhappy in it, till childbed pangs seized her: then penitence, and death, overtook her the same hour!'

Excuse a tear, Belford!—She deserved a better fate! What hath such a vile inexorable husband to answer for!—The sister was punished effectually—that pleases me on reflection—the sister effectually punished!—But perhaps I have told thee this story before.

END OF VOL.4

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CLARISSA HARLOWE; OR THE HISTORY OF A YOUNG LADY — VOLUME 4 ***

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