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LADY — VOLUME 5 ***

CLARISSA HARLOWE

or the

HISTORY OF A YOUNG LADY

Volume V. (of Nine Volumes)

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[This letter may be considered as a kind of summary of Clarissa's trials, her persecutions, and exemplary conduct hitherto; and of Mr. Lovelace's intrigues, plots, and views, so far as Miss Howe could be supposed to know them, or to guess at them.]

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THE HISTORY OF CLARISSA HARLOWE

VOLUME FIVE

LETTER I

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY EVENING.

Just returned from an airing with my charmer, complied with after great importunity. She was attended by the two nymphs. They both topt their parts; kept their eyes within bounds; made moral reflections now-and-then. O Jack! what devils are women, when all tests are got over, and we have completely ruined them!

The coach carried us to Hampstead, to Highgate, to Muswell-hill; back to Hampstead to the Upper-Flask: there, in compliment to the nymphs, my beloved consented to alight, and take a little repast. Then home early by Kentish-town.

Delightfully easy she, and so respectful and obliging I, all the way, and as we walked out upon the heath, to view the variegated prospects which that agreeable elevation affords, that she promised to take now-and-then a little excursion with me. I think, Miss Howe, I think, said I to myself, every now-and-then as we walked, that thy wicked devices are superceded.

But let me give thee a few particulars of our conversation in the circumrotation we took, while in the coach—She had received a letter from Miss Howe yesterday, I presumed?

She made no answer. How happy should I think myself to be admitted into their correspondence? I would joyfully make an exchange of communications.

So, though I hoped not to succeed by her consent, [and little did she think I had so happily in part succeeded without it,] I thought it not amiss to urge for it, for several reasons: among others, that I might account to her for my constant employment at my pen; in order to take off her jealousy, that she was the subject of thy correspondence and mine: and that I might justify my secrecy and uncommunicativeness by her own.

I proceeded therefore—That I loved familiar-letter-writing, as I had more than once told her, above all the species of writing: it was writing from the heart, (without the fetters prescribed by method or study,) as the very word cor-respondence implied. Not the heart only; the soul was in it. Nothing of body, when friend writes to friend; the mind impelling sovereignly the vassal-fingers. It was, in short, friendship recorded; friendship given under hand and seal; demonstrating that the parties were under no apprehension of changing from time or accident, when they so liberally gave testimonies, which would always be ready, on failure or infidelity, to be turned against them.—For my own part, it was the principal diversion I had in her absence; but for this innocent amusement, the distance she so frequently kept me at would have been intolerable.

Sally knew my drift; and said, She had had the honour to see two or three of my letters, and of Mr. Belford's; and she thought them the most entertaining that she had ever read.

My friend Belford, I said, had a happy talent in the letter-writing way; and upon all subjects.

I expected my beloved would have been inquisitive after our subject: but (lying perdue, as I saw) not a word said she. So I touched upon this article myself.

Our topics were various and diffuse: sometimes upon literary articles [she was very attentive upon this]; sometimes upon the public entertainments; sometimes amusing each other with the fruits of the different correspondencies we held with persons abroad, with whom we had contracted friendships; sometimes upon the foibles and perfections of our particular friends; sometimes upon our own present and future hopes; sometimes aiming at humour and raillery upon each other.—It might indeed appear to savour of vanity, to suppose my letters would entertain a lady of her delicacy and judgment: but yet I could not but say, that perhaps she would be far from thinking so hardly of me as sometimes she had seemed to do, if she were to see the letters which generally passed between Mr. Belford and me [I hope, Jack, thou hast more manners, than to give me the lie, though but in thy heart].

She then spoke: after declining my compliment in such a manner, as only a person can do, who deserved it, she said, For her part, she had always thought me a man of sense [a man of sense, Jack! What a niggardly praise!],—and should therefore hope, that, when I wrote, it exceeded even my speech: for that it was impossible, be the letters written in as easy and familiar a style as they would, but that they must have that advantage from sitting down to write them which prompt speech could not always have. She should think it very strange therefore, if my letters were barren of sentiment; and as strange, if I gave myself liberties upon premeditation, which could have no excuse at all, but from a thoughtlessness, which itself wanted excuse.—But if Mr. Belford's letters and mine were upon subjects so general, and some of them equally (she presumed) instructive and entertaining, she could not but say, that she should be glad to see any of them; and particularly those which Miss Martin had seen and praised.

This was put close.

I looked at her, to see if I could discover any tincture of jealousy in this hint; that Miss Martin had seen what I had not shown to her. But she did not look it: so I only said, I should be very proud to show her not only those, but all that passed between Mr. Belford and me; but I must remind her, that she knew the condition.

No, indeed! with a sweet lip pouted out, as saucy as pretty; implying a lovely scorn, that yet can only be lovely in youth so blooming, and beauty so divinely distinguished.

How I long to see such a motion again! Her mouth only can give it.

But I am mad with love—yet eternal will be the distance, at the rate I go on: now fire, now ice, my soul is continually upon the hiss, as I may say. In vain, however, is the trial to quench—what, after all, is unquenchable.

Pr'ythee, Belford, forgive my nonsense, and my Vulcan-like metaphors—Did I not tell thee, not that I am sick of love, but that I am mad with it? Why brought I such an angel into such a house? into such company?—And why do I not stop my ears to the sirens, who, knowing my aversion to wedlock, are perpetually touching that string?

I was not willing to be answered so easily: I was sure, that what passed between two such young ladies (friends so dear) might be seen by every body: I had more reason than any body to wish to see the letters that passed between her and Miss Howe; because I was sure they must be full of admirable instruction, and one of the dear correspondents had deigned to wish my entire reformation.

She looked at me as if she would look me through: I thought I felt eye-beam, after eye-beam, penetrate my shivering reins.—But she was silent. Nor needed her eyes the assistance of speech.

Nevertheless, a little recovering myself, I hoped that nothing unhappy had befallen either Miss Howe or her mother. The letter of yesterday sent by a particular hand: she opening it with great emotion—seeming to have expected it sooner—were the reasons for my apprehensions.

We were then at Muswell-hill: a pretty country within the eye, to Polly, was the remark, instead of replying to me.

But I was not so to be answered—I should expect some charming subjects and characters from two such pens: I hoped every thing went on well between Mr. Hickman and Miss Howe. Her mother's heart, I said, was set upon that match: Mr. Hickman was not without his merits: he was what the ladies called a SOBER man: but I must needs say, that I thought Miss Howe deserved a husband of a very different cast!

This, I supposed, would have engaged her into a subject from which I could have wiredrawn something:—for Hickman is one of her favourites— why, I can't divine, except for the sake of opposition of character to that of thy honest friend.

But she cut me short by a look of disapprobation, and another cool remark upon a distant view; and, How far off, Miss Horton, do you think that clump of trees may be? pointing out of the coach.—So I had done.

Here endeth all I have to write concerning our conversation on this our agreeable airing.

We have both been writing ever since we came home. I am to be favoured with her company for an hour, before she retires to rest.

All that obsequious love can suggest, in order to engage her tenderest sentiments for me against tomorrow's sickness, will I aim at when we meet. But at parting will complain of a disorder in my stomach.

We have met. All was love and unexceptionable respect on my part. Ease and complaisance on her's. She was concerned for my disorder. So sudden!—Just as we parted! But it was nothing. I should be quite well by the morning.

Faith, Jack, I think I am sick already. Is it possible for such a giddy fellow as me to persuade myself to be ill! I am a better mimic at this rate than I wish to be. But every nerve and fibre of me is always ready to contribute its aid, whether by health or by ailment, to carry a resolved-on roguery into execution.

Dorcas has transcribed for me the whole letter of Miss Howe, dated Sunday, May 14,* of which before I had only extracts. She found no other letter added to that parcel: but this, and that which I copied myself in character last Sunday whilst she was at church, relating to the smuggling scheme,** are enough for me.

* See Vol. IV. Letter XXIX. ** Ibid. Letter XLII.

Dorcas tells me, that her lady has been removing her papers from the mahogany chest into a wainscot box, which held her linen, and which she put into her dark closet. We have no key of that at present. No doubt but all her letters, previous to those I have come at, are in that box. Dorcas is uneasy upon it: yet hopes that her lady does not suspect her; for she is sure that she laid in every thing as she found it.

LETTER II

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. COCOA-TREE, SATURDAY, MAY 27.

This ipecacuanha is a most disagreeable medicine. That these cursed physical folks can find out nothing to do us good, but what would poison the devil! In the other world, were they only to take physic, it would be punishable enough of itself for a mis-spent life. A doctor at one elbow, and an apothecary at the other, and the poor soul labouring under their prescribed operations, he need no worse tormentors.

But now this was to take down my countenance. It has done it: for, with violent reachings, having taken

enough to make me sick, and not enough water to carry it off, I presently looked as if I had kept my bed a fortnight. Ill jesting, as I thought in the midst of the exercise, with edge tools, and worse with physical ones.

Two hours it held me. I had forbid Dorcas to let her lady know any thing of the matter; out of tenderness to her; being willing, when she knew my prohibition, to let her see that I expected her to be concerned for me.—

Well, but Dorcas was nevertheless a woman, and she can whisper to her lady the secret she is enjoined to keep!

Come hither, toad, [sick as the devil at the instant]; let me see what a mixture of grief and surprize may be beat up together in thy puden-face.

That won't do. That dropt jaw, and mouth distended into the long oval, is more upon the horrible than the grievous.

Nor that pinking and winking with thy odious eyes, as my charmer once called them.

A little better that; yet not quite right: but keep your mouth closer. You have a muscle or two which you have no command of, between your cheek-bone and your lips, that should carry one corner of your mouth up towards your crow's-foot, and that down to meet it.

There! Begone! Be in a plaguy hurry running up stair and down, to fetch from the dining-room what you carry up on purpose to fetch, till motion extraordinary put you out of breath, and give you the sigh natural.

What's the matter, Dorcas?

Nothing, Madam.

My beloved wonders she has not seen me this morning, no doubt; but is too shy to say she wonders. Repeated What's the matter, however, as Dorcas runs up and down stairs by her door, bring on, O Madam! my master! my poor master!

What! How! When!—and all the monosyllables of surprize.

[Within parentheses let me tell thee, that I have often thought, that the little words in the republic of letters, like the little folks in a nation, are the most significant. The trisyllables, and the rumblers of syllables more than three, are but the good-for-little magnates.]

I must not tell you, Madam—My master ordered me not to tell you—but he is in a worse way than he thinks for!—But he would not have you frightened.

High concern took possession of every sweet feature. She pitied me!—by my soul, she pitied me!

Where is he?

Too much in a hurry for good manners, [another parenthesis, Jack! Good manners are so little natural, that we ought to be composed to observe them: politeness will not live in a storm]. I cannot stay to answer questions, cries the wench—though desirous to answer [a third parenthesis—Like the people crying proclamations, running away from the customers they want to sell to]. This hurry puts the lady in a hurry to ask, [a fourth, by way of establishing the third!] as the other does the people in a hurry to buy. And I have in my eye now a whole street raised, and running after a proclamation or express-crier, as if the first was a thief, the other his pursuers.

At last, O Lord! let Mrs. Lovelace know!—There is danger, to be sure! whispered from one nymph to another; but at the door, and so loud, that my listening fair-one might hear.

Out she darts—As how! as how, Dorcas!

O Madam—A vomiting of blood! A vessel broke, to be sure!

Down she hastens; finds every one as busy over my blood in the entry, as if it were that of the Neapolitan saint.

In steps my charmer, with a face of sweet concern.

How do you, Mr. Lovelace?

O my best love!—Very well!—Very well!—Nothing at all! nothing of consequence!—I shall be well in an instant!—Straining again! for I was indeed plaguy sick, though no more blood came.

In short, Belford, I have gained my end. I see the dear soul loves me. I see she forgives me all that's past. I see I have credit for a new score.

Miss Howe, I defy thee, my dear—Mrs. Townsend!—Who the devil are you?— Troop away with your contrabands. No smuggling! nor smuggler, but myself! Nor will the choicest of my fair-one's favours be long prohibited goods to me!

Every one is now sure that she loves me. Tears were in her eyes more than once for me. She suffered me to take her hand, and kiss it as often as I pleased. On Mrs. Sinclair's mentioning, that I too much confined myself, she pressed me to take an airing; but obligingly desired me to be careful of myself. Wished I would advise with a physician. God made physicians, she said.

I did not think that, Jack. God indeed made us all. But I fancy she meant physic instead of physicians; and then the phrase might mean what the vulgar phrase means;—God sends meat, the Devil cooks.

I was well already, on taking the styptic from her dear hands.

On her requiring me to take the air, I asked, If I might have the honour of her company in a coach; and this, that I might observe if she had an intention of going out in my absence.

If she thought a chair were not a more proper vehicle for my case, she would with all her heart!

There's a precious!

I kissed her hand again! She was all goodness!—Would to Heaven I better deserved it, I said!—But all were golden days before us!—Her presence and generous concern had done every thing. I was well! Nothing ailed me. But since my beloved will have it so, I'll take a little airing!— Let a chair be called!—O my charmer! were I to have owned this indisposition to my late harasses, and to the uneasiness I have had for disobliging you; all is infinitely compensated by your goodness.—All the art of healing is in your smiles!—Your late displeasure

was the only malady!

While Mrs. Sinclair, and Dorcas, and Polly, and even poor silly Mabell [for Sally went out, as my angel came in] with uplifted hands and eyes, stood thanking Heaven that I was better, in audible whispers: See the power of love, cried one!—What a charming husband, another!—Happy couple, all!

O how the dear creature's cheek mantled!—How her eyes sparkled!—How sweetly acceptable is praise to conscious merit, while it but reproaches when applied to the undeserving!—What a new, what a gay creation it makes all at once in a diffident or dispirited heart!

And now, Belford, was it not worth while to be sick? And yet I must tell thee, that too many pleasanter expedients offer themselves, to make trial any more of this confounded ipecacuanha.

LETTER III

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE SATURDAY, MAY 27.

Mr. Lovelace, my dear, has been very ill. Suddenly taken. With a vomiting of blood in great quantities. Some vessel broken. He complained of a disorder in his stomach over night. I was the affected with it, as I am afraid it was occasioned by the violent contentions between us.—But was I in fault?

How lately did I think I hated him!—But hatred and anger, I see, are but temporary passions with me. One cannot, my dear, hate people in danger of death, or who are in distress or affliction. My heart, I find, is not proof against kindness, and acknowledgements of errors committed.

He took great care to have his illness concealed from me as long as he could. So tender in the violence of his disorder!—So desirous to make the best of it!—I wish he had not been ill in my sight. I was too much affected—every body alarming me with his danger. The poor man, from such high health, so suddenly taken!—and so unprepared!—

He is gone out in a chair. I advised him to do so. I fear that my advice was wrong; since quiet in such a disorder must needs be best. We are apt to be so ready, in cases of emergency, to give our advice, without judgment, or waiting for it!—I proposed a physician indeed; but he would not hear of one. I have great honour for the faculty; and the greater, as I have always observed that those who treat the professors of the art of healing contemptuously, too generally treat higher institutions in the same manner.

I am really very uneasy. For I have, I doubt, exposed myself to him, and to the women below. They indeed will excuse me, as they think us married. But if he be not generous, I shall have cause to regret this surprise; which (as I had reason to think myself unaccountably treated by him) has taught me more than I knew of myself.

'Tis true, I have owned more than once, that I could have liked Mr. Lovelace above all men. I remember the debates you and I used to have on this subject, when I was your happy guest. You used to say, and once you wrote,* that men of his cast are the men that our sex do not naturally dislike: While I held, that such were not (however that might be) the men we ought to like. But what with my relations precipitating of me, on one hand, and what with his unhappy character, and embarrassing ways, on the other, I had no more leisure than inclination to examine my own heart in this particular. And this reminds me of a transcribe, though it was written in raillery. 'May it not be,' say you,** 'that you have had such persons to deal with, as have not allowed you to attend to the throbs; or if you had them a little now-and-then, whether, having had two accounts to place them to, you have not by mistake put them to the wrong one?' A passage, which, although it came into my mind when Mr. Lovelace was least exceptionable, yet that I have denied any efficacy to, when he has teased and vexed me, and given me cause of suspicion. For, after all, my dear, Mr. Lovelace is not wise in all his ways. And should we not endeavour, as much as is possible, (where we are not attached by natural ties,) to like and dislike as reason bids us, and according to the merit or demerit of the object? If love, as it is called, is allowed to be an excuse for our most unreasonable follies, and to lay level all the fences that a careful education has surrounded us by, what is meant by the doctrine of subduing our passions?—But, O my dearest friend, am I not guilty of a punishable fault, were I to love this man of errors? And has not my own heart deceived me, when I thought it did not? And what must be that love, that has not some degree of purity for its object? I am afraid of recollecting some passages in my cousin Morden's letter.***—And yet why fly I from subjects that, duly considered, might tend to correct and purify my heart? I have carried, I doubt, my notions on this head too high, not for practice, but for my practice. Yet think me not guilty of prudery neither; for had I found out as much of myself before; or, rather, had he given me heart's ease enough before to find it out, you should have had my confession sooner.

* See Vol. IV. Letter XXXIV. ** See Vol. I. Letter XII. *** See Vol. IV. Letter XIX, & seq.

Nevertheless, let me tell you (what I hope I may justly tell you,) that if again he give me cause to resume distance and reserve, I hope my reason will gather strength enough from his imperfections to enable me to keep my passions under.—What can we do more than govern ourselves by the temporary lights lent us?

You will not wonder that I am grave on this detection—Detection, must I call it? What can I call it?—

Dissatisfied with myself, I am afraid to look back upon what I have written: yet know not how to have done writing. I never was in such an odd frame of mind.—I know not how to describe it.—Was you ever so?— Afraid of the censure of her you love—yet not conscious that you deserve it?

Of this, however, I am convinced, that I should indeed deserve censure, if I kept any secret of my heart from you.

But I will not add another word, after I have assured you, that I will look still more narrowly into myself: and that I am

Your equally sincere and affectionate CL. HARLOWE.

LETTER IV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SAT. EVENING.

I had a charming airing. No return of my malady. My heart was perfectly easy, how could my stomach be otherwise?

But when I came home, I found that my sweet soul had been alarmed by a new incident—The inquiry after us both, in a very suspicious manner, and that by description of our persons, and not by names, by a servant in a blue livery turn'd up and trimm'd with yellow.

Dorcas was called to him, as the upper servant; and she refusing to answer any of the fellow's questions, unless he told his business, and from whom he came, the fellow (as short as she) said, that if she would not answer him, perhaps she might answer somebody else; and went away out of humour.

Dorcas hurried up to her Lady, and alarmed her, not only with the fact, but with her own conjectures; adding, that he was an ill-looking fellow, and she was sure could come for no good.

The livery and the features of the servant were particularly inquired after, and as particularly described—Lord bless her! no end of her alarms, she thought! And then did her apprehensions anticipate every evil that could happen.

She wished Mr. Lovelace would come in.

Mr. Lovelace came in soon after; all lively, grateful, full of hopes, of duty, of love, to thank his charmer, and to congratulate with her upon the cure she had performed. And then she told the story, with all its circumstances; and Dorcas, to point her lady's fears, told us, that the servant was a sun-burnt fellow, and looked as if he had been at sea.

He was then, no doubt, Captain Singleton's servant, and the next news she should hear, was, that the house was surrounded by a whole ship's crew; the vessel lying no farther off, as she understood, than Rotherhithe.

Impossible, I said. Such an attempt would not be ushered in by such a manner of inquiry. And why may it not rather be a servant of your cousin Morden, with notice of his arrival, and of his design to attend you?

This surmise delighted her. Her apprehensions went off, and she was at leisure to congratulate me upon my sudden recovery; which she did in the most obliging manner.

But we had not sat long together, when Dorcas again came fluttering up to tell us, that the footman, the very footman, was again at the door, and inquired, whether Mr. Lovelace and his lady, by name, had not lodgings in this house? He asked, he told Dorcas, for no harm. But his disavowing of harm, was a demonstration with my apprehensive fair-one, that harm was intended. And as the fellow had not been answered by Dorcas, I proposed to go down to the street-parlour, and hear what he had to say.

I see your causeless terror, my dearest life, said I, and your impatience —Will you be pleased to walk down—and, without being observed, (for he shall come no farther than the parlour-door,) you may hear all that passes?

She consented. We went down. Dorcas bid the man come forward. Well, friend, what is your business with Mr. and Mrs. Lovelace?

Bowing, scraping, I am sure you are the gentleman, Sir. Why, Sir, my business is only to know if your honour be here, and to be spoken with; or if you shall be here for any time?

Whom came you from?

From a gentleman who ordered me to say, if I was made to tell, but not else, it was from a friend of Mr. John Harlowe, Mrs. Lovelace's eldest uncle.

The dear creature was ready to sink upon this. It was but of late that she had provided herself with salts. She pulled them out.

Do you know anything of Colonel Morden, friend? said I.

No; I never heard of his name.

Of Captain Singleton?

No, Sir. But the gentleman, my master, is a Captain too.

What is his name?

I don't know if I should tell.

There can be no harm in telling the gentleman's name, if you come upon a good account.

That I do; for my master told me so; and there is not an honest gentleman on the face of God's yearth.—His name is Captain Tomlinson, Sir.

I don't know such a one.

I believe not, Sir. He was pleased to say, he don't know your honor, Sir; but I heard him say as how he should not be an unwelcome visiter to you for all that.

Do you know such a man as Captain Tomlinson, my dearest life, [aside,] your uncle's friend?

No; but my uncle may have acquaintance, no doubt, that I don't know.— But I hope [trembling] this is not a trick.

Well, friend, if your master has anything to say to Mr. Lovelace, you may tell him, that Mr. Lovelace is here; and will see him whenever he pleases.

The dear creature looked as if afraid that my engagement was too prompt for my own safety; and away went the fellow—I wondering, that she might not wonder, that this Captain Tomlinson, whoever he were,

came not himself, or sent not a letter the second time, when he had reason to suppose that I might be here.

Mean time, for fear that this should be a contrivance of James Harlowe, who, I said, love plotting, though he had not a head turned for it, I gave some precautionary directions to the servants, and the women, whom, for the greater parade, I assembled before us, and my beloved was resolved not to stir abroad till she saw the issue of this odd affair.

And here must I close, though in so great a puzzle.

Only let me add, that poor Belton wants thee; for I dare not stir for my life.

Mowbray and Tourville skulk about like vagabonds, without heads, without hands, without souls; having neither you nor me to conduct them. They tell me, they shall rust beyond the power of oil or action to brighten them up, or give them motion.

How goes it with thy uncle?

LETTER V

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SUNDAY, MAY 28.

This story of Captain Tomlinson employed us not only for the time we were together last night, but all the while we sat at breakfast this morning. She would still have it that it was the prelude to some mischief from Singleton. I insisted (according to my former hint) that it might much more probably be a method taken by Colonel Morden to alarm her, previous to a personal visit. Travelled gentlemen affected to surprise in this manner. And why, dearest creature, said I, must every thing that happens, which we cannot immediately account for, be what we least wish?

She had had so many disagreeable things befall her of late, that her fears were too often stronger than her hopes.

And this, Madam, makes me apprehensive, that you will get into so low-spirited a way, that you will not be able to enjoy the happiness that seems to await us.

Her duty and her gratitude, she gravely said, to the Dispenser of all good, would secure her, she hoped, against unthankfulness. And a thankful spirit was the same as a joyful one.

So, Belford, for all her future joys she depends entirely upon the invisible Good. She is certainly right; since those who fix least upon second causes are the least likely to be disappointed—And is not this gravity for her gravity?

She had hardly done speaking, when Dorcas came running up in a hurry—she set even my heart into a palpitation—thump, thump, thump, like a precipitated pendulum in a clock-case—flutter, flutter, flutter, my charmer's, as by her sweet bosom rising to her chin I saw.

This lower class of people, my beloved herself observed, were for ever aiming at the stupid wonderful, and for making even common incidents matter of surprise.

Why the devil, said I to the wench, this alarming hurry?—And with your spread fingers, and your O Madams, and O Sirs!—and be cursed to you! Would there have been a second of time difference, had you come up slowly?

Captain Tomlinson, Sir!

Captain Devilson, what care I?—Do you see how you have disordered your lady?

Good Mr. Lovelace, said my charmer, trembling [see, Jack, when she has an end to serve, I am good Mr. Lovelace,] if—if my brother,—if Captain Singleton should appear—pray now—I beseech you—let me beg of you—to govern your temper—My brother is my brother—Captain Singleton is but an agent.

My dearest life, folding my arms about her, [when she asks favours, thought I, the devil's in it, if she will not allow such an innocent freedom as this, from good Mr. Lovelace too,] you shall be witness of all passes between us.—Dorcas, desire the gentleman to walk up.

Let me retire to my chamber first!—Let me not be known to be in the house!

Charming dear!—Thou seest, Belford, she is afraid of leaving me!—O the little witchcrafts! Were it not for surprises now-and-then, how would an honest man know where to have them?

She withdrew to listen.—And though this incident has not turned out to answer all I wished from it, yet is it not necessary, if I would acquaint thee with my whole circulation, to be very particular in what passed between Captain Tomlinson and me.

Enter Captain Tomlinson, in a riding-dress, whip in hand.

Your servant, Sir,—Mr. Lovelace, I presume?

My name is Lovelace, Sir.

Excuse the day, Sir.—Be pleased to excuse my garb. I am obliged to go out of town directly, that I may return at night.

The day is a good day. Your garb needs no apology.

When I sent my servant, I did not know that I should find time to do myself this honour. All that I thought I could do to oblige my friend this journey, was only to assure myself of your abode; and whether there was a probability of being admitted to the speech of either you, or your lady.

Sir, you best know your own motives. What your time will permit you to do, you also best know. And here I am, attending your pleasure.

My charmer owned afterwards her concern on my being so short. Whatever I shall mingle of her emotions,

thou wilt easily guess I had afterwards.

Sir, I hope no offence. I intend none.

None—None at all, Sir.

Sir, I have no interest in the affair I come about. I may appear officious; and if I thought I should, I would decline any concern in it, after I have just hinted what it is.

And pray, Sir, what is it?

May I ask you, Sir, without offence, whether you wish to be reconciled, and to co-operate upon honourable terms, with one gentleman of the name of Harlowe; preparative, as it may be hoped, to a general reconciliation?

O how my heart fluttered! cried my charmer.

I can't tell, Sir—[and then it fluttered still more, no doubt:] The whole family have used me extremely ill. They have taken greater liberties with my character than are justifiable; and with my family too; which I can less forgive.

Sir, Sir, I have done. I beg pardon for this intrusion.

My beloved was then ready to sink, and thought very hardly of me.

But, pray, Sir, to the immediate purpose of your present commission; since a commission it seems to be?

It is a commission, Sir; and such a one, as I thought would be agreeable to all parties, or I should not have given myself concern about it.

Perhaps it may, Sir, when known. But let me ask you one previous question—Do you know Colonel Morden, Sir?

No, Sir. If you mean personally, I do not. But I have heard my good friend Mr. John Harlowe talk of him with great respect; and such a co-trustee with him in a certain trust.

Lovel. I thought it probable, Sir, that the Colonel might be arrived; that you might be a gentleman of his acquaintance; and that something of an agreeable surprise might be intended.

Capt. Had Colonel Morden been in England, Mr. John Harlowe would have known it; and then I should not have been a stranger to it.

Lovel. Well but, Sir, have you then any commission to me from Mr. John Harlowe?

Capt. Sir, I will tell you, as briefly as I can, the whole of what I have to say; but you'll excuse me also in a previous question, for what curiosity is not my motive; but it is necessary to be answered before I can proceed; as you will judge when you hear it.

Lovel. What, pray, Sir, is your question?

Capt. Briefly, whether you are actually, and *bonâ fide*, married to Miss Clarissa Harlowe?

I started, and, in a haughty tone, is this, Sir, a question that must be answered before you can proceed in the business you have undertaken?

I mean no offence, Mr. Lovelace. Mr. Harlowe sought to me to undertake this office. I have daughters and nieces of my own. I thought it a good office, or I, who have many considerable affairs upon my hands, had not accepted of it. I know the world; and will take the liberty to say, that if the young lady—

Captain Tomlinson, I think you are called?

My name is Tomlinson.

Why then, Tomlinson, no liberty, as you call it, will be taken well, that is not extremely delicate, when that lady is mentioned.

When you had heard me out, Mr. Lovelace, and had found I had so behaved, as to make the caution necessary, it would have been just to have given it.—Allow me to say, I know what is due to the character of a woman of virtue, as well as any man alive.

Why, Sir! Why, Captain Tomlinson, you seem warm. If you intend any thing by this, [O how I trembled! said the lady, when she took notice of this part of our conversation afterwards,] I will only say, that this is a privileged place. It is at present my home, and an asylum for any gentleman who thinks it worth his while to inquire after me, be the manner or end of his inquiry what it will.

I know not, Sir, that I have given occasion for this. I make no scruple to attend you elsewhere, if I am troublesome here. I was told, I had a warm young gentleman to deal with: but as I knew my intention, and that my commission was an amicable one, I was the less concerned about that. I am twice your age, Mr. Lovelace, I dare say: but I do assure you, that if either my message or my manner gives you offence, I can suspend the one or the other for a day, or for ever, as you like. And so, Sir, any time before eight tomorrow morning, you will let me know your further commands.—And was going to tell me where he might be found.

Captain Tomlinson, said I, you answer well. I love a man of spirit. Have you not been in the army?

I have, Sir; but have turned my sword into a ploughshare, as the scripture has it,—[there was a clever fellow, Jack!—he was a good man with somebody, I warrant! O what a fine coat and cloke for an hypocrite will a text of scripture, properly applied, make at any time in the eyes of the pious!—how easily are the good folks taken in!—and all my delight, added he, for some years past, has been in cultivating my paternal estate. I love a brave man, Mr. Lovelace, as well as ever I did in my life. But let me tell you, Sir, that when you come to my time of life, you will be of opinion, that there is not so much true bravery in youthful choler, as you may now think there is.

A clever fellow again, Belford!—Ear and heart, both at once, he took in my charmer!—"Tis well, she says, there are some men who have wisdom in their anger.

Well, Captain, that is reproof for reproof. So we are upon a footing. And now give me the pleasure of hearing the import of your commission.

Sir, you must first allow me to repeat my question: Are you really, and *bonâ fide*, married to Miss Clarissa Harlowe? or are you not yet married?

Bluntly put, Captain. But if I answer that I am, what then?

Why then, Sir, I shall say, that you are a man of honour.

That I hope I am, whether you say it or not, Captain Tomlinson.

Sir, I will be very frank in all I have to say on this subject—Mr. John Harlowe has lately found out, that you and his niece are both in the same lodgings; that you have been long so; and that the lady was at the play with you yesterday was se'nnight; and he hopes that you are actually married. He has indeed heard that you are; but as he knows your enterprising temper, and that you have declared, that you disdain a relation to their family, he is willing by me to have your marriage confirmed from your own mouth, before he take the steps he is inclined to take in his niece's favour. You will allow me to say, Mr. Lovelace, that he will not be satisfied with an answer that admits of the least doubt.

Let me tell you, Captain Tomlinson, that it is a high degree of vileness for any man to suppose—

Sir—Mr. Lovelace—don't put yourself into a passion. The lady's relations are jealous of the honour of their family. They have prejudices to overcome as well as you—advantage may have been taken—and the lady, at the time, not to blame.

This lady, Sir, could give no such advantages: and if she had, what must the man be, Captain Tomlinson, who could have taken them?—Do you know the lady, Sir?

I never had the honour to see her but once; and that was at a church; and should not know her again.

Not know her again, Sir!—I thought there was not a man living who had once seen her, and would not know her among a thousand.

I remember, Sir, that I thought I never saw a finer woman in my life. But, Mr. Lovelace, I believe, you will allow, that it is better that her relations should have wronged you, than you the lady, I hope, Sir, you will permit me to repeat my question.

Enter Dorcas, in a hurry.

A gentleman, this minute, Sir, desires to speak with your honour—[My lady, Sir!—Aside.]

Could the dear creature put Dorcas upon telling this fib, yet want to save me one?

Desire the gentleman to walk into one of the parlours. I will wait upon him presently.

[Exit Dorcas.]

The dear creature, I doubted not, wanted to instruct me how to answer the Captain's home put. I knew how I intended to answer it—plumb, thou may'st be sure—but Dorcas's message staggered me. And yet I was upon one of my master-strokes—which was, to take advantage of the captain's inquiries, and to make her own her marriage before him, as she had done to the people below; and if she had been brought to that, to induce her, for her uncle's satisfaction, to write him a letter of gratitude; which of course must have been signed Clarissa Lovelace. I was loth, therefore, thou may'st believe, to attend her sudden commands: and yet, afraid of pushing matters beyond recovery with her, I thought proper to lead him from the question, to account for himself and for Mr. Harlowe's coming to the knowledge of where we are; and for other particulars which I knew would engage her attention; and which might possibly convince her of the necessity there was for her to acquiesce in the affirmative I was disposed to give. And this for her own sake; For what, as I asked her afterwards, is it to me, whether I am ever reconciled to her family?—A family, Jack, which I must for ever despise.

You think, Captain, that I have answered doubtfully to the question you put. You may think so. And you must know, that I have a good deal of pride; and, only that you are a gentleman, and seem in this affair to be governed by generous motives, or I should ill brook being interrogated as to my honour to a lady so dear to me.—But before I answer more directly to the point, pray satisfy me in a question or two that I shall put to you.

With all my heart, Sir. Ask me what questions you please, I will answer them with sincerity and candour.

You say, Mr. Harlowe has found out that we were at a play together: and that we were both in the same lodgings—How, pray, came he at his knowledge?—for, let me tell you, that I have, for certain considerations, (not respecting myself, I will assure you,) condescended that our abode should be kept secret. And this has been so strictly observed, that even Miss Howe, though she and my beloved correspond, knows not directly where to send to us.

Why, Sir, the person who saw you at the play, was a tenant of Mr. John Harlowe. He watched all your motions. When the play was done, he followed your coach to your lodgings. And early the next day, Sunday, he took horse, and acquainted his landlord with what he had observed.

Level. How oddly things come about!—But does any other of the Harlowes know where we are?

Capt. It is an absolute secret to every other person of the family; and so it is intended to be kept: as also that Mr. John Harlowe is willing to enter into treaty with you, by me, if his niece be actually married; for perhaps he is aware, that he shall have difficulty enough with some people to bring about the desirable reconciliation, although he could give them this assurance.

I doubt it not, Captain—to James Harlowe is all the family folly owing. Fine fools! [heroically stalking about] to be governed by one to whom malice and not genius, gives the busy liveliness that distinguishes him from a natural!—But how long, pray, Sir, has Mr. John Harlowe been in this pacific disposition?

I will tell you, Mr. Lovelace, and the occasion; and be very explicit upon it, and upon all that concerns you to know of me, and of the commission I have undertaken to execute; and this the rather, as when you have heard me out, you will be satisfied, that I am not an officious man in this my present address to you.

I am all attention, Captain Tomlinson.

And so I doubt not was my beloved.

Capt. You must know, Sir, that I have not been many months in Mr. John Harlowe's neighbourhood. I removed from Northamptonshire, partly for the sake of better managing one of two executorship, which I could not avoid engaging in, (the affairs of which frequently call me to town, and are part of my present

business;) and partly for the sake of occupying a neglected farm, which has lately fallen into my hands. But though an acquaintance of no longer standing, and that commencing on the bowling-green, [uncle John is a great bowler, Belford,] (upon my decision of a point to every one's satisfaction, which was appealed to me by all the gentlemen, and which might have been attended with bad consequences,) no two brothers have a more cordial esteem for each other. You know, Mr. Lovelace, that there is a consent, as I may call it, in some minds, which will unite them stronger together in a few hours, than years can do with others, whom yet we see not with disgust.'

Lovel. Very true, Captain.

Capt. 'It was on the foot of this avowed friendship on both sides, that on Monday the 15th, as I very well remember, Mr. Harlowe invited himself home with me. And when there, he acquainted me with the whole of the unhappy affair that had made them all so uneasy. Till then I knew it only by report; for, intimate as we were, I forbore to speak of what was so near his heart, till he began first. And then he told me, that he had had an application made to him, two or three days before, by a gentleman whom he named,* to induce him not only to be reconciled himself to his niece, but to forward for her a general reconciliation.

* See Vol. IV. Letters XXIII and XXIX.

'A like application, he told me, had been made to his sister Harlowe, by a good woman, whom every body respected; who had intimated, that his niece, if encouraged, would again put herself into the protection of her friends, and leave you: but if not, that she must unavoidably be your's.'

I hope, Mr. Lovelace, I make no mischief.—You look concerned—you sigh, Sir.

Proceed, Captain Tomlinson. Pray proceed.—And I sighed still more profoundly.

Capt. 'They all thought it extremely particular, that a lady should decline marriage with a man she had so lately gone away with.'

Pray, Captain—pray, Mr. Tomlinson—no more of this subject. My beloved is an angel. In every thing unblamable. Whatever faults there have been, have been theirs and mine. What you would further say, is, that the unforgiving family rejected her application. They did. She and I had a misunderstanding. The falling out of lovers—you know, Captain. —We have been happier ever since.

Capt. 'Well, Sir; but Mr. John Harlowe could not but better consider the matter afterwards. And he desired my advice how to act in it. He told me that no father ever loved a daughter as he loved this niece of his; whom, indeed, he used to call his daughter-niece. He said, she had really been unkindly treated by her brother and sister: and as your alliance, Sir, was far from being a discredit to their family, he would do his endeavour to reconcile all parties, if he could be sure that ye were actually man and wife.'

Lovel. And what, pray, Captain, was your advice?

Capt. 'I gave it as my opinion, that if his niece were unworthily treated, and in distress, (as he apprehended from the application to him,) he would soon hear of her again: but that it was likely, that this application was made without expecting it would succeed; and as a salvo only, to herself, for marrying without their consent. And the rather thought I so, as he had told me, that it came from a young lady her friend, and not in a direct way from herself; which young lady was no favourite of the family; and therefore would hardly have been employed, had success been expected.'

Lovel. Very well, Captain Tomlinson—pray proceed.

Capt. 'Here the matter rested till last Sunday evening, when Mr. John Harlowe came to me with the man who had seen you and your lady (as I presume she is) at the play; and who had assured him, that you both lodged in the same house.—And then the application having been so lately made, which implied that you were not then married, he was so uneasy for his niece's honour, that I advised him to dispatch to town some one in whom he could confide, to make proper inquiries.'

Lovel. Very well, Captain—And was such a person employed on such an errand by her uncle?

Capt. 'A trusty and discreet person was accordingly sent; and last Tuesday, I think it was, (for he returned to us on the Wednesday,) he made the inquiries among the neighbours first.' [The very inquiry, Jack, that gave us all so much uneasiness.*] 'But finding that none of them could give any satisfactory account, the lady's woman was come at, who declared, that you were actually married. But the inquisitor keeping himself on the reserve as to his employers, the girl refused to tell the day, or to give him other particulars.'

* See Vol. IV. Letter L.

Lovel. You give a very clear account of every thing, Captain Tomlinson. Pray proceed.

Capt. 'The gentleman returned; and, on his report, Mr. Harlowe, having still doubts, and being willing to proceed on some grounds in so important a point, besought me (as my affairs called me frequently to town) to undertake this matter. "You, Mr. Tomlinson, he was pleased to say, have children of your own: you know the world: you know what I drive at: you will proceed, I am sure, with understanding and spirit: and whatever you are satisfied with shall satisfy me."

Enter Dorcas again in a hurry.

Sir, the gentleman is impatient.

I will attend him presently.

The Captain then accounted for his not calling in person, when he had reason to think us here.

He said he had business of consequence a few miles out of town, whither he thought he must have gone yesterday, and having been obliged to put off his little journey till this day, and understanding that we were within, not knowing whether he should have such another opportunity, he was willing to try his good fortune before he set out; and this made him come booted and spurred, as I saw him.

He dropped a hint in commendation of the people of the house; but it was in such a way, as to give no room to suspect that he thought it necessary to inquire after the character of persons, who make so genteel an appearance, as he observed they do.

And here let me remark, that my beloved might collect another circumstance in favour of the people below,

had she doubted their characters, from the silence of her uncle's inquirist on Tuesday among the neighbours.

Capt. 'And now, Sir, that I believe I have satisfied you in every thing relating to my commission, I hope you will permit me to repeat my question—which is—'

Enter Dorcas again, out of breath.

Sir, the gentleman will step up to you. [My lady is impatient. She wonders at your honour's delay. Aside.]

Excuse me, Captain, for one moment.

I have staid my full time, Mr. Lovelace. What may result from my question and your answer, whatever it shall be, may take us up time.— And you are engaged. Will you permit me to attend you in the morning, before I set out on my return?

You will then breakfast with me, Captain?

It must be early if I do. I must reach my own house to-morrow night, or I shall make the best of wives unhappy. And I have two or three places to call at in my way.

It shall be by seven o'clock, if you please, Captain. We are early folks. And this I will tell you, that if ever I am reconciled to a family so implacable as I have always found the Harlowes to be, it must be by the mediation of so cool and so moderate a gentleman as yourself.

And so, with the highest civilities on both sides, we parted. But for the private satisfaction of so good a man, I left him out of doubt that we were man and wife, though I did not directly aver it.

LETTER VI

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

This Captain Tomlinson is one of the happiest as well as one of the best men in the world. What would I give to stand as high in my beloved's opinion as he does! but yet I am as good a man as he, were I to tell my own story, and have equal credit given to it. But the devil should have had him before I had seen him on the account he came upon, had I thought I should not have answered my principal end in it. I hinted to thee in my last what that was.

But to the particulars of the conference between my fair-one and me, on her hasty messages; which I was loth to come to, because she has had an half triumph over me in it.

After I had attended the Captain down to the very passage, I returned to the dining-room, and put on a joyful air, on my beloved's entrance into it—O my dearest creature, said I, let me congratulate you on a prospect so agreeable to your wishes! And I snatched her hand, and smothered it with kisses.

I was going on; when interrupting me, You see, Mr. Lovelace, said she, how you have embarrassed yourself by your obliquities! You see, that you have not been able to return a direct answer to a plain and honest question, though upon it depends all the happiness, on the prospect of which you congratulate me!

You know, my best love, what my prudent, and I will say, my kind motives were, for giving out that we were married. You see that I have taken no advantage of it; and that no inconvenience has followed it. You see that your uncle wants only to be assured from ourselves that it is so—

Not another word on this subject, Mr. Lovelace. I will not only risk, but I will forfeit, the reconciliation so near my heart, rather than I will go on to countenance a story so untrue!

My dearest soul—Would you have me appear—

I would have you appear, Sir, as you are! I am resolved that I will appear to my uncle's friend, and to my uncle, as I am.

For one week, my dearest life! cannot you for one week—only till the settlements—

Not for one hour, with my own consent. You don't know, Sir, how much I have been afflicted, that I have appeared to the people below what I am not. But my uncle, Sir, shall never have it to upbraid me, nor will I to upbraid myself, that I have wilfully passed upon him in false lights.

What, my dear, would you have me say to the Captain to-morrow morning? I have given him room to think—

Then put him right, Mr. Lovelace. Tell the truth. Tell him what you please of the favour of your relations to me: tell him what you will about the settlements: and if, when drawn, you will submit them to his perusal and approbation, it will show him how much you are in earnest.

My dearest life!—Do you think that he would disapprove of the terms I have offered?

No.

Then may I be accursed, if I willingly submit to be trampled under foot by my enemies!

And may I, Mr. Lovelace, never be happy in this life, if I submit to the passing upon my uncle Harlowe a wilful and premeditated falshood for truth! I have too long laboured under the affliction which the rejection of all my friends has given me, to purchase my reconciliation with them now at so dear a price as this of my veracity.

The women below, my dear—

What are the women below to me?—I want not to establish myself with them. Need they know all that passes between my relations and you and me?

Neither are they any thing to me, Madam. Only, that when, for the sake of preventing the fatal mischiefs which might have attended your brother's projects, I have made them think us married, I would not appear to them in a light which you yourself think so shocking. By my soul, Madam, I had rather die, than contradict myself so flagrantly, after I have related to them so many circumstances of our marriage.

Well, Sir, the women may believe what they please. That I have given countenance to what you told them is my error. The many circumstances which you own one untruth has drawn you in to relate, is a justification of my refusal in the present case.

Don't you see, Madam, that your uncle wishes to find that we are married? May not the ceremony be privately over, before his mediation can take place?

Urge this point no further, Mr. Lovelace. If you will not tell the truth, I will to-morrow morning (if I see Captain Tomlinson) tell it myself. Indeed I will.

Will you, Madam, consent that things pass as before with the people below? This mediation of Tomlinson may come to nothing. Your brother's schemes may be pursued; the rather, that now he will know (perhaps from your uncle) that you are not under a legal protection.—You will, at least, consent that things pass here as before?—

To permit this, is to go on in an error, Mr. Lovelace. But as the occasion for so doing (if there can be in your opinion an occasion that will warrant an untruth) will, as I presume, soon be over, I shall the less dispute that point with you. But a new error I will not be guilty of, if I can avoid it.

Can I, do you think, Madam, have any dishonourable view in the step I supposed you would not scruple to take towards a reconciliation with your own family? Not for my own sake, you know, did I wish you to take it; for what is it to me, if I am never reconciled to your family? I want no favours from them.

I hope, Mr. Lovelace, there is no occasion, in our present not disagreeable situation, to answer such a question. And let me say, that I shall think my prospects still more agreeable, if, to-morrow morning you will not only own the very truth, but give my uncle's friend such an account of the steps you have taken, and are taking, as may keep up my uncle's favourable intentions towards me. This you may do under what restrictions of secrecy you please. Captain Tomlinson is a prudent man; a promoter of family-peace, you find; and, I dare say, may be made a friend.

I saw there was no help. I saw that the inflexible Harlowe spirit was all up in her.—A little witch!—A little—Forgive me, Love, for calling her names! And so I said, with an air, We have had too many misunderstandings, Madam, for me to wish for new ones: I will obey you without reserve. Had I not thought I should have obliged you by the other method, (especially as the ceremony might have been over before any thing could have operated from your uncle's intentions, and of consequence no untruth persisted in,) I would not have proposed it. But think not, my beloved creature, that you shall enjoy, without condition, this triumph over my judgment.

And then, clasping my arms about her, I gave her averted cheek (her charming lip designed) a fervent kiss.—And your forgiveness of this sweet freedom [bowing] is that condition.

She was not mortally offended. And now must I make out the rest as well as I can. But this I will tell thee, that although her triumph has not diminished my love for her, yet it has stimulated me more than ever to revenge, as thou wilt be apt to call it. But victory, or conquest, is the more proper word.

There is a pleasure, 'tis true, in subduing one of these watchful beauties. But by my soul, Belford, men of our cast take twenty times the pains to be rogues than it would cost them to be honest; and dearly, with the sweat of our brows, and to the puzzlement of our brains, (to say nothing of the hazards we run,) do we earn our purchase; and ought not therefore to be grudged our success when we meet with it—especially as, when we have obtained our end, satiety soon follows; and leaves us little or nothing to show for it. But this, indeed, may be said of all worldly delights.—And is not that a grave reflection from me?

I was willing to write up to the time. Although I have not carried my principal point, I shall make something turn out in my favour from Captain Tomlinson's errand. But let me give thee this caution; that thou do not pretend to judge of my devices by parts; but have patience till thou seest the whole. But once more I swear, that I will not be out-Norris'd by a pair of novices. And yet I am very apprehensive, at times, of the consequences of Miss Howe's smuggling scheme.

My conscience, I should think, ought not to reproach me for a contrivance, which is justified by the contrivances of two such girls as these: one of whom (the more excellent of the two) I have always, with her own approbation, as I imagine, proposed for my imitation.

But here, Jack, is the thing that concludes me, and cases my heart with adamant: I find, by Miss Howe's letters, that it is owing to her, that I have made no greater progress with my blooming fair-one. She loves me. The ipecacuanha contrivance convinces me that she loves me. Where there is love there must be confidence, or a desire of having reason to confide. Generosity, founded on my supposed generosity, has taken hold of her heart. Shall I not now see (since I must forever be unhappy, if I marry her, and leave any trial unessayed) what I can make of her love, and her newly-raised confidence?—Will it not be to my glory to succeed? And to her's and to the honour of her sex, if I cannot?—Where then will be the hurt to either, to make the trial? And cannot I, as I have often said, reward her when I will by marriage?

'Tis late, or rather early; for the day begins to dawn upon me. I am plaguy heavy. Perhaps I need not to have told thee that. But will only indulge a doze in my chair for an hour; then shake myself, wash and refresh. At my time of life, with such a constitution as I am blessed with, that's all that's wanted.

Good night to me!—It cannot be broad day till I am awake.—Aw-w-w-whaugh—pox of this yawning!

Is not thy uncle dead yet?

What's come to mine, that he writes not to my last?—Hunting after more wisdom of nations, I suppose!—Yaw-yaw-yawning again!—Pen, begone!

LETTER VII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. MONDAY, MAY 29.

Now have I established myself for ever in my charmer's heart.

The Captain came at seven, as promised, and ready equipped for his journey. My beloved chose not to give us her company till our first conversation was over—ashamed, I suppose, to be present at that part of it which was to restore her to her virgin state by my confession, after her wifehood had been reported to her uncle. But she took her cue, nevertheless, and listened to all that passed.

The modestest women, Jack, must think, and think deeply sometimes. I wonder whether they ever blush at those things by themselves, at which they have so charming a knack of blushing in company. If not; and if blushing be a sign of grace or modesty; have not the sex as great a command over their blushes as they are said to have over their tears? This reflection would lead me a great way into female minds, were I disposed to pursue it.

I told the Captain, that I would prevent his question; and accordingly (after I had enjoined the strictest secrecy, that no advantage might be given to James Harlowe, and which he had answered for as well on Mr. Harlowe's part as his own) I acknowledged nakedly and fairly the whole truth—to wit, 'That we were not yet married. I gave him hints of the causes of procrastination. Some of them owing to unhappy misunderstandings: but chiefly to the Lady's desire of previous reconciliation with her friends; and to a delicacy that had no example.'

Less nice ladies than this, Jack, love to have delays, wilful and studied delays, imputed to them in these cases—yet are indelicate in their affected delicacy: For do they not thereby tacitly confess, that they expect to be the greatest estgainers in wedlock; and that there is self-denial in the pride they take in delaying?

'I told him the reason of our passing to the people below as married—yet as under a vow of restriction, as to consummation, which had kept us both to the height, one of forbearing, the other of vigilant punctilio; even to the denial of those innocent freedoms, which betrothed lovers never scruple to allow and to take.

'I then communicated to him a copy of my proposal of settlement; the substance of her written answer; the contents of my letter of invitation to Lord M. to be her nuptial-father; and of my Lord's generous reply. But said, that having apprehensions of delay from his infirmities, and my beloved choosing by all means (and that from principles of unrequited duty) a private solemnization, I had written to excuse his Lordship's presence; and expected an answer every hour.

'The settlements, I told him, were actually drawing by Counsellor Williams, of whose eminence he must have heard—'

He had.

'And of the truth of this he might satisfy himself before he went out of town.

'When these were drawn, approved, and engrossed, nothing, I said, but signing, and the nomination of my happy day, would be wanting. I had a pride, I declared, in doing the highest justice to so beloved a creature, of my own voluntary motion, and without the intervention of a family from whom I had received the greatest insults. And this being our present situation, I was contented that Mr. John Harlowe should suspend his reconciliatory purposes till our marriage were actually solemnized.'

The Captain was highly delighted with all I said: Yet owned, that as his dear friend Mr. Harlowe had expressed himself greatly pleased to hear that we were actually married, he could have wished it had been so. But, nevertheless, he doubted not that all would be well.

He saw my reasons, he said, and approved of them, for making the gentlewomen below [whom again he understood to be good sort of people] believe that the ceremony had passed; which so well accounted for what the lady's maid had told Mr. Harlowe's friend. Mr. James Harlowe, he said, had certainly ends to answer in keeping open the breach; and as certainly had formed a design to get his sister out of my hands. Wherefore it as much imported his worthy friend to keep this treaty as secret, as it did me; at least till he had formed his party, and taken his measures. Ill will and passion were dreadful misrepresenters. It was amazing to him, that animosity could be carried so high against a man capable of views so pacific and so honourable, and who had shown such a command of his temper, in this whole transaction, as I had done. Generosity, indeed, in every case, where love of stratagem and intrigue (I would excuse him) were not concerned, was a part of my character.

He was proceeding, when, breakfast being ready, in came the empress of my heart, irradiating all around her, as with a glory—a benignity and graciousness in her aspect, that, though natural to it, had been long banished from it.

Next to prostration lowly bowed the Captain. O how the sweet creature smiled her approbation of him! Reverence from one begets reverence from another. Men are more of monkeys in imitation than they think themselves.—Involuntarily, in a manner, I bent my knee—My dearest life—and made a very fine speech on presenting the Captain to her. No title myself, to her lip or cheek, 'tis well he attempted not either. He was indeed ready to worship her;—could only touch her charming hand.

I have told the Captain, my dear creature—and then I briefly repeated (as if I had supposed she had not heard it) all I had told him.

He was astonished, that any body could be displeased one moment with such an angel. He undertook her cause as the highest degree of merit to himself.

Never, I must need say, did an angel so much look the angel. All placid, serene, smiling, self-assured: a more lovely flush than usual heightening her natural graces, and adding charms, even to radiance, to her charming complexion.

After we had seated ourselves, the agreeable subject was renewed, as we took our chocolate. How happy should she be in her uncle's restored favour!

The Captain engaged for it—No more delays, he hoped, on her part! Let the happy day be but once over, all would then be right. But was it improper to ask for copies of my proposals, and of her answer, in order to show them to his dear friend, her uncle?

As Mr. Lovelace pleased.—O that the dear creature would always say so!

It must be in strict confidence then, I said. But would it not be better to show her uncle the draught of the settlements, when drawn?

And will you be so good as to allow of this, Mr. Lovelace?

There, Belford! We were once the quarrelsome, but now we are the polite, lovers.

Indeed, my dear creature, I will, if you desire it, and if Captain Tomlinson will engage that Mr. Harlowe shall keep them absolutely a secret; that I may not be subjected to the cavil and controul of any others of a family that have used me so very ill.

Now, indeed, Sir, you are very obliging.

Dost think, Jack, that my face did not now also shine?

I held out my hand, (first consecrating it with a kiss,) for her's. She condescended to give it me. I pressed it to my lips: You know not Captain Tomlinson, (with an air,) all storms overblown, what a happy man—

Charming couple! [his hands lifted up,] how will my good friend rejoice! O that he were present! You know not, Madam, how dear you still are to your uncle Harlowe!

I am still unhappy ever to have disobliged him!

Not too much of that, however, fairest, thought I!

The Captain repeated his resolution of service, and that in so acceptable a manner, that the dear creature wished that neither he, nor any of his, might ever want a friend of equal benevolence.

Nor any of this, she said; for the Captain brought it in, that he had five children living, by one of the best wives and mothers, whose excellent management made him as happy as if his eight hundred pounds a year (which was all he had to boast of) were two thousand.

Without economy, the oracular lady said, no estate was large enough. With it, the least was not too small.

Lie still, teasing villain! lie still.—I was only speaking to my conscience, Jack.

And let me ask you, Mr. Lovelace, said the Captain; yet not so much from doubt, as that I may proceed upon sure grounds—You are willing to co-operate with my dear friend in a general reconciliation?

Let me tell you, Mr. Tomlinson, that if it can be distinguished, that my readiness to make up with a family, of whose generosity I have not had reason to think highly, is entirely owing to the value I have for this angel of a woman, I will not only co-operate with Mr. John Harlowe, as you ask; but I will meet with Mr. James Harlowe senior, and his lady, all the way. And furthermore, to make the son James and his sister Arabella quite easy, I will absolutely disclaim any further interest, whether living or dying, in any of the three brothers' estates; contenting myself with what my beloved's grandfather had bequeathed to her: for I have reason to be abundantly satisfied with my own circumstances and prospects—enough rewarded, were she not to bring a shilling in dowry, in a woman who has a merit superior to all the goods of fortune.—True as the Gospel, Belford!—Why had not this scene a real foundation?

The dear creature, by her eyes, expressed her gratitude, before her lips could utter it. O Mr. Lovelace, said she—you have infinitely—And there she stopt.

The Captain run over in my praise. He was really affected.

O that I had not such a mixture of revenge and pride in my love, thought I!—But, (my old plea,) cannot I make her amends at any time? And is not her virtue now in the height of its probation?—Would she lay aside, like the friends of my uncontenting Rosebud, all thoughts of defiance—Would she throw herself upon my mercy, and try me but one fortnight in the life of honour—What then?—I cannot say, What then—

Do not despise me, Jack, for my inconsistency—in no two letters perhaps agreeing with myself—Who expects consistency in men of our character?—But I am mad with love—fired by revenge—puzzled with my own devices—my invention is my curse—my pride my punishment—drawn five or six ways at once, can she possibly be so unhappy as I?—O why, why, was this woman so divinely excellent!—Yet how know I that she is? What have been her trials? Have I had the courage to make a single one upon her person, though a thousand upon her temper?—Enow, I hope, to make her afraid of ever more disobliging me more!—

I must banish reflection, or I am a lost man. For these two hours past have I hated myself for my own contrivances. And this not only from what I have related to thee; but for what I have further to relate. But I have now once more steeled my heart. My vengeance is uppermost; for I have been reperusing some of Miss Howe's virulence. The contempt they have both held me in I cannot bear.

The happiest breakfast-time, my beloved owned, that she had ever known since she had left her father's house. [She might have let this alone.] The Captain renewed all his protestations of service. He would write me word how his dear friend received the account he should give him of the happy situation of our affairs, and what he thought of the settlements, as soon as I should send him the draughts so kindly promised. And we parted with great professions of mutual esteem; my beloved putting up vows for the success of his generous mediation.

When I returned from attending the Captain down stairs, which I did to the outward door, my beloved met me as I entered the dining-room; complacency reigning in every lovely feature.

'You see me already,' said she, 'another creature. You know not, Mr. Lovelace, how near my heart this hoped-for reconciliation is. I am now willing to banish every disagreeable remembrance. You know not, Sir, how much you have obliged me. And O Mr. Lovelace, how happy I shall be, when my heart is lightened from the all-sinking weight of a father's curse! When my dear mamma—You don't know, Sir, half the excellencies of my dear mamma! and what a kind heart she has, when it is left to follow its own impulses—When this blessed mamma shall once more fold me to her indulgent bosom! When I shall again have uncles and aunts, and a brother and sister, all striving who shall show most kindness and favour to the poor outcast, then no more an outcast—And you, Mr. Lovelace, to behold all this, with welcome—What though a little cold at first? when they come to know you better, and to see you oftener, no fresh causes of disgust occurring, and you, as

I hope, having entered upon a new course, all will be warmer and warmer love on both sides, till every one will perhaps wonder, how they came to set themselves against you.'

Then drying her tears with her handkerchief, after a few moments pausing, on a sudden, as if recollecting that she had been led by her joy to an expression of it which she had not intended I should see, she retired to her chamber with precipitation; leaving me almost as unable to stand it as herself.

In short, I was—I want words to say how I was—my nose had been made to tingle before; my eyes have before been made to glisten by this soul-moving beauty; but so very much affected, I never was—for, trying to check my sensibility, it was too strong for me, and I even sobbed— Yes, by my soul, I audibly sobbed, and was forced to turn from her before she had well finished her affecting speech.

I want, methinks, now I have owned the odd sensation, to describe it to thee—the thing was so strange to me—something choking, as it were, in my throat—I know not how—yet, I must needs say, though I am out of countenance upon the recollection, that there was something very pretty in it; and I wish I could know it again, that I might have a more perfect idea of it, and be better able to describe it to thee.

But this effect of her joy on such an occasion gives me a high notion of what that virtue must be [What other name can I call it?] which in a mind so capable of delicate transport, should be able to make so charming a creature, in her very bloom, all frost and snow to every advance of love from the man she hates not. This must be all from education too—Must it not, Belford? Can education have stronger force in a woman's heart than nature?—Sure it cannot. But if it can, how entirely right are parents to cultivate their daughters' minds, and to inspire them with notions of reserve and distance to our sex: and indeed to make them think highly of their own! for pride is an excellent substitute, let me tell thee, where virtue shines not out, as the sun, in its own unborrowed lustre.

LETTER VIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

And now it is time to confess (and yet I know that thy conjectures are beforehand with my exposition) that this Captain Tomlinson, who is so great a favourite with my charmer, and who takes so much delight in healing breaches, and reconciling differences, is neither a greater man nor a less than honest Patrick M'Donald, attended by a discarded footman of his own finding out.

Thou knowest what a various-lived rascal he is; and to what better hopes born and educated. But that ingenious knack of forgery, for which he was expelled the Dublin-University, and a detection since in evidenceship, have been his ruin. For these have thrown him from one country to another; and at last, into the way of life, which would make him a fit husband for Miss Howe's Townsend with her contrabands. He is, thou knowest, admirably qualified for any enterprize that requires adroitness and solemnity. And can there, after all, be a higher piece of justice, than to keep one smuggler in readiness to play against another?

'Well, but, Lovelace, (methinks thou questionest,) how camest thou to venture upon such a contrivance as this, when, as thou hast told me, the Lady used to be a month at a time at this uncle's; and must therefore, in all probability, know, that there was not a Captain Tomlinson in all the neighbourhood, at least no one of the name so intimate with him as this man pretends to be?'

This objection, Jack, is so natural a one, that I could not help observing to my charmer, that she must surely have heard her uncle speak of this gentleman. No, she said, she never had. Besides she had not been at her uncle Harlowe's for near ten months [this I had heard from her before]: and there were several gentlemen who used the same green, whom she knew not.

We are all very ready, thou knowest, to believe what she likes.

And what was the reason, thinkest thou, that she had not been of so long a time at this uncle's?—Why, this old sinner, who imagines himself entitled to call me to account for my freedoms with the sex, has lately fallen into familiarities, as it is suspected, with his housekeeper; who assumes airs upon it.—A cursed deluding sex!—In youth, middle age, or dotage, they take us all in.

Dost thou not see, however, that this housekeeper knows nothing, nor is to know any thing, of the treaty of reconciliation designed to be set on foot; and therefore the uncle always comes to the Captain, the Captain goes not to the uncle? And this I surmised to the lady. And then it was a natural suggestion, that the Captain was the rather applied to, as he is a stranger to the rest of the family—Need I tell thee the meaning of all this?

But this intrigue of the antient is a piece of private history, the truth of which my beloved cares not to own, and indeed affects to disbelieve: as she does also some puisny gallantries of her foolish brother; which, by way of recrimination, I have hinted at, without naming my informant in their family.

'Well but, methinks, thou questionest again, Is it not probable that Miss Howe will make inquiry after such a man as Tomlinson?—And when she cannot—'

I know what thou wouldst say—but I have no doubt, that Wilson will be so good, if I desire it, as to give into my own hands any letter that may be brought by Collins to his house, for a week to come. And now I hope thou art satisfied.

I will conclude with a short story.

'Two neighbouring sovereigns were at war together, about some pitiful chuck-farthing thing or other; no matter what; for the least trifles will set princes and children at loggerheads. Their armies had been drawn up in battalia some days, and the news of a decisive action was expected every hour to arrive at each court. At last, issue was joined; a bloody battle was fought; and a fellow who had been a spectator of it, arriving,

with the news of a complete victory, at the capital of one of the princes some time before the appointed couriers, the bells were set a ringing, bonfires and illuminations were made, and the people went to bed intoxicated with joy and good liquor. But the next day all was reversed: The victorious enemy, pursuing his advantage, was expected every hour at the gates of the almost defenceless capital. The first reporter was hereupon sought for, and found; and being questioned, pleaded a great deal of merit, in that he had, in so dismal a situation, taken such a space of time from the distress of his fellow-citizens, and given it to festivity, as were the hours between the false good news and the real bad.'

Do thou, Belford, make the application. This I know, that I have given greater joy to my beloved, than she had thought would so soon fall to her share. And as the human life is properly said to be chequerwork, no doubt but a person of her prudence will make the best of it, and set off so much good against so much bad, in order to strike as just a balance as possible.

[The Lady, in three several letters, acquaints her friend with the most material passages and conversations contained in those of Mr. Lovelace's preceding. These are her words, on relating what the commission of the pretended Tomlinson was, after the apprehensions that his distant inquiry had given her:]

At last, my dear, all these doubts and fears were cleared up, and banished; and, in their place, a delightful prospect was opened to me. For it comes happily out, (but at present it must be an absolute secret, for reasons which I shall mention in the sequel,) that the gentleman was sent by my uncle Harlowe [I thought he could not be angry with me for ever]: all owing to the conversation that passed between your good Mr. Hickman and him. For although Mr. Hickman's application was too harshly rejected at the time, my uncle could not but think better of it afterwards, and of the arguments that worthy gentleman used in my favour.

Who, upon a passionate repulse, would despair of having a reasonable request granted?—Who would not, by gentleness and condescension, endeavour to leave favourable impressions upon an angry mind; which, when it comes coolly to reflect, may induce it to work itself into a condescending temper? To request a favour, as I have often said, is one thing; to challenge it as our due, is another. And what right has a petitioner to be angry at a repulse, if he has not a right to demand what he sues for as a debt?

[She describes Captain Tomlinson, on his breakfast-visit, to be, a grave, good sort of man. And in another place, a genteel man of great gravity, and a good aspect; she believes upwards of fifty years of age. 'I liked him, says she, as soon as I saw him.'

As her projects are now, she says, more favourable than heretofore, she wishes, that her hopes of Mr. Lovelace's so-often-promised reformation were better grounded than she is afraid they can be.]

We have both been extremely puzzled, my dear, says she, to reconcile some parts of Mr. Lovelace's character with other parts of it: his good with his bad; such of the former, in particular, as his generosity to his tenants; his bounty to the innkeeper's daughter; his readiness to put me upon doing kind things by my good Norton, and others.

A strange mixture in his mind, as I have told him! for he is certainly (as I have reason to say, looking back upon his past behaviour to me in twenty instances) a hard-hearted man.—Indeed, my dear, I have thought more than once, that he had rather see me in tears than give me reason to be pleased with him.

My cousin Morden says, that free livers are remorseless.* And so they must be in the very nature of things.

* See Vol. IV. Letter XIX. See also Mr. Lovelace's own confession of the delight he takes in a woman's tears, in different parts of his letters.

Mr. Lovelace is a proud man. We have both long ago observed that he is. And I am truly afraid, that his very generosity is more owing to his pride and his vanity, than that philanthropy (shall I call it?) which distinguishes a beneficent mind.

Money he values not, but as a mean to support his pride and his independence. And it is easy, as I have often thought, for a person to part with a secondary appetite, when, by so doing, he can promote or gratify a first.

I am afraid, my dear, that there must have been some fault in his education. His natural bias was not, perhaps (as his power was likely to be large) to do good and beneficent actions; but not, I doubt, from proper motives.

If he had, his generosity would not have stopt at pride, but would have struck into humanity; and then would he not have contented himself with doing praiseworthy things by fits and starts, or, as if relying on the doctrine of merits, he hoped by a good action to atone for a bad one;* but he would have been uniformly noble, and done the good for its own sake.

* That the Lady judges rightly of him in this place, see Vol. I. Letter XXXIV. where, giving the motive for his generosity to his Rosebud, he says—'As I make it my rule, whenever I have committed a very capital enormity, to do some good by way of atonement; and as I believe I am a pretty deal indebted on that score; I intend to join an hundred pounds to Johnny's aunt's hundred pounds, to make one innocent couple happy.'—Besides which motive, he had a further view in answer in that instance of his generosity; as may be seen in Vol. II. Letters XXVI. XXVII. XXVIII. See also the note, Vol. II. pp. 170, 171.

To show the consistence of his actions, as they now appear, with his views and principles, as he lays them down in his first letters, it may be not amiss to refer the reader to his letters, Vol. I. No. XXXIV. XXXV.

See also Vol. I. Letter XXX.—and Letter XL. for Clarissa's early opinion of Mr. Lovelace.—Whence the coldness and indifference to him, which he so repeatedly accuses her of, will be accounted for, more to her glory, than to his honour.

O my dear! what a lot have I drawn! pride, this poor man's virtue; and revenge, his other predominating quality!—This one consolation, however, remains:—He is not an infidel, and unbeliever: had he been an infidel, there would have been no room at all for hope of him; (but priding himself, as he does, in his fertile invention) he would have been utterly abandoned, irreclaimable, and a savage.

[When she comes to relate those occasions, which Mr. Lovelace in his narrative acknowledges himself to be affected by, she thus expresses herself:]

He endeavoured, as once before, to conceal his emotion. But why, my dear, should these men (for Mr. Lovelace is not singular in this) think themselves above giving these beautiful proofs of a feeling heart? Were it in my power again to choose, or to refuse, I would reject the man with contempt, who sought to suppress, or offered to deny, the power of being visibly affected upon proper occasions, as either a savage-hearted creature, or as one who was so ignorant of the principal glory of the human nature, as to place his pride in a barbarous insensibility.

These lines translated from Juvenal by Mr. Tate, I have been often pleased with:

*Compassion proper to mankind appears:
Which Nature witness'd, when she lent us tears.
Of tender sentiments we only give
These proofs: To weep is our prerogative:
To show by pitying looks, and melting eyes,
How with a suff'ring friend we sympathise.
Who can all sense of other ills escape,
Is but a brute at best, in human shape.*

It cannot but yield me some pleasure, hardly as I have sometimes thought of the people of the house, that such a good man as Captain Tomlinson had spoken well of them, upon inquiry.

And here I stop a minute, my dear, to receive, in fancy, your kind congratulation.

My next, I hope, will confirm my present, and open still more agreeable prospects. Mean time be assured, that there cannot possibly any good fortune befall me, which I shall look upon with equal delight to that I have in your friendship.

My thankful compliments to your good Mr. Hickman, to whose kind invention I am so much obliged on this occasion, conclude me, my dearest Miss Howe,

Your ever affectionate and grateful CL. HARLOWE.

LETTER IX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY, MAY 30.

I have a letter from Lord M. Such a one as I would wish for, if I intended matrimony. But as matters are circumstanced, I cannot think of showing it to my beloved.

My Lord regrets, 'that he is not to be the Lady's nuptial father. He seems apprehensive that I have still, specious as my reasons are, some mischief in my head.'

He graciously consents, 'that I may marry when I please; and offers one or both of my cousins to assist my bride, and to support her spirits on the occasion; since, as he understands, she is so much afraid to venture with me.

'Pritchard, he tells me, has his final orders to draw up deeds for assigning over to me, in perpetuity, 1000*l.* per annum: which he will execute the same hour that the lady in person owns her marriage.'

He consents, 'that the jointure be made from my own estate.'

He wishes, 'that the Lady would have accepted of his draught; and commends me for tendering it to her. But reproaches me for my pride in not keeping it myself. What the right side gives up, the left, he says, may be the better for.'

The girls, the left-sided girls, he means.

With all my heart. If I can have my Clarissa, the devil take every thing else.

A good deal of other stuff writes the stupid peer; scribbling in several places half a dozen lines, apparently for no other reason but to bring in as many musty words in an old saw.

If thou sawest, 'How I can manage, since my beloved will wonder that I have not an answer from my Lord to such a letter as I wrote to him; and if I own I have one, will expect that I should shew it to her, as I did my letter?—This I answer—'That I can be informed by Pritchard, that my Lord has the gout in his right-hand; and has ordered him to attend me in form, for my particular orders about the transfer:' And I can see Pritchard, thou knowest, at the King's Arms, or wherever I please, at an hour's warning; though he be at M. Hall, I in town; and he, by word of mouth, can acquaint me with every thing in my Lord's letter that is necessary for my charmer to know.

Whenever it suits me, I can resolve the old peer to his right hand, and then can make him write a much more sensible letter than this that he has now sent me.

Thou knowest, that an adroitness in the art of manual imitation, was one of my earliest attainments. It has been said, on this occasion, that had I been a bad man in meum and tuum matters, I should not have been fit to live. As to the girls, we hold it no sin to cheat them. And are we not told, that in being well deceived consists the whole of human happiness?

WEDNESDAY, MAY 31.

All still happier and happier. A very high honour done me: a chariot, instead of a coach, permitted, purposely to indulge me in the subject of subjects.

Our discourse in this sweet airing turned upon our future manner of life. The day is bashfully promised me. Soon was the answer to my repeated urgency. Our equipage, our servants, our liveries, were parts of the delightful subject. A desire that the wretch who had given me intelligence out of the family (honest Joseph Leman) might not be one of our menials; and her resolution to have her faithful Hannah, whether recovered or not; were signified; and both as readily assented to.

Her wishes, from my attentive behaviour, when with her at St. Paul's,* that I would often accompany her to the Divine Service, were greatly intimated, and as readily engaged for. I assured her, that I ever had respected the clergy in a body; and some individuals of them (her Dr. Lewen for one) highly: and that were not going to church an act of religion, I thought it [as I told thee once] a most agreeable sight to see rich and poor, all of a company, as I might say, assembled once a week in one place, and each in his or her best attire, to worship the God that made them. Nor could it be a hardship upon a man liberally educated, to make one on so solemn an occasion, and to hear the harangue of a man of letters, (though far from being the principal part of the service, as it is too generally looked upon to be,) whose studies having taken a different turn from his own, he must always have something new to say.

* See Vol. IV. Letter V. ** Ibid.

She shook her head, and repeated the word new: but looked as if willing to be satisfied for the present with this answer. To be sure, Jack, she means to do great despite to his Satanic majesty in her hopes of reforming me. No wonder, therefore, if he exerts himself to prevent her, and to be revenged. But how came this in!—I am ever of party against myself.—One day, I fancy, I shall hate myself on recollecting what I am about at this instant. But I must stay till then. We must all of us do something to repent of.

The reconciliation-prospect was enlarged upon. If her uncle Harlowe will but pave the way to it, and if it can be brought about, she shall be happy.—Happy, with a sigh, as it is now possible she can be!

She won't forbear, Jack!

I told her, that I had heard from Pritchard, just before we set out on our airing, and expected him in town to-morrow from Lord M. to take my directions. I spoke with gratitude of my Lord's kindness to me; and with pleasure of Lady Sarah's, Lady Betty's, and my two cousins Montague's veneration for her: as also of his Lordship's concern that his gout hindered him from writing a reply with his own hand to my last.

She pitied my Lord. She pitied poor Mrs. Fretchville too; for she had the goodness to inquire after her. The dear creature pitied every body that seemed to want pity. Happy in her own prospects, she had leisure to look abroad, and wishes every body equally happy.

It is likely to go very hard with Mrs. Fretchville. Her face, which she had valued herself upon, will be utterly ruined. 'This good, however, as I could not but observe, she may reap from so great an evil—as the greater malady generally swallows up the less, she may have a grief on this occasion, that may diminish the other grief, and make it tolerable.'

I had a gentle reprimand for this light turn on so heavy an evil—'For what was the loss of beauty to the loss of a good husband?'—Excellent creature!

Her hopes (and her pleasure upon those hopes) that Miss Howe's mother would be reconciled to her, were also mentioned. Good Mrs. Howe was her word, for a woman so covetous, and so remorseless in her covetousness, that no one else will call her good. But this dear creature has such an extension in her love, as to be capable of valuing the most insignificant animal related to those whom she respects. Love me, and love my dog, I have heard Lord M. say.—Who knows, but that I may in time, in compliment to myself, bring her to think well of thee, Jack?

But what am I about? Am I not all this time arraigning my own heart?—I know I am, by the remorse I feel in it, while my pen bears testimony to her excellence. But yet I must add (for no selfish consideration shall hinder me from doing justice to this admirable creature) that in this conversation she demonstrated so much prudent knowledge in every thing that relates to that part of the domestic management which falls under the care of a mistress of a family, that I believe she has no equal of her years in the world.

But, indeed, I know not the subject on which she does not talk with admirable distinction; insomuch that could I but get over my prejudices against matrimony, and resolve to walk in the dull beaten path of my ancestors, I should be the happiest of men—and if I cannot, I may be ten times more to be pitied than she.

My heart, my heart, Belford, is not to be trusted—I break off, to re-peruse some of Miss Howe's virulence.

Cursed letters, these of Miss Howe, Jack!—Do thou turn back to those of mine, where I take notice of them—I proceed—

Upon the whole, my charmer was all gentleness, all ease, all serenity, throughout this sweet excursion. Nor had she reason to be otherwise: for it being the first time that I had the honour of her company alone, I was resolved to encourage her, by my respectfulness, to repeat the favour.

On our return, I found the counsellor's clerk waiting for me, with a draught of the marriage-settlements.

They are drawn, with only the necessary variations, from those made for my mother. The original of which (now returned by the counsellor) as well as the new draughts, I have put into my beloved's hands.

These settlements of my mother made the lawyer's work easy; nor can she have a better precedent; the great Lord S. having settled them, at the request of my mother's relations; all the difference, my charmer's are 100l. per annum more than my mother's.

I offered to read to her the old deed, while she looked over the draught; for she had refused her presence at the examination with the clerk: but this she also declined.

I suppose she did not care to hear of so many children, first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh sons, and as many daughters, to be begotten upon the body of the said Clarissa Harlowe.

Charming matrimonial recitatives!—though it is always said lawfully begotten too—as if a man could beget children unlawfully upon the body of his own wife.—But thinkest thou not that these arch rogues the lawyers hereby intimate, that a man may have children by his wife before marriage?—This must be what they mean. Why will these sly fellows put an honest man in minds of such rogueries?—but hence, as in numberless other instances, we see, that law and gospel are two very different things.

Dorcas, in our absence, tried to get at the wainscot-box in the dark closet. But it cannot be done without violence. And to run a risk of consequence now, for mere curiosity-sake, would be inexcusable.

Mrs. Sinclair and the nymphs are all of opinion, that I am now so much a favourite, and have such a visible

share in her confidence, and even in her affections, that I may do what I will, and plead for excuse violence of passion; which, they will have it, makes violence of action pardonable with their sex; as well as allowed extenuation with the unconcerned of both sexes; and they all offer their helping hands. Why not? they say: Has she not passed for my wife before them all?—And is she not in a fine way of being reconciled to her friends?—And was not the want of that reconciliation the pretence for postponing the consummation?

They again urge me, since it is so difficult to make night my friend, to an attempt in the day. They remind me, that the situation of their house is such, that no noises can be heard out of it; and ridicule me for making it necessary for a lady to be undressed. It was not always so with me, poor old man! Sally told me; saucily flinging her handkerchief in my face.

LETTER X

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY, JUNE 2.

Notwithstanding my studied-for politeness and complaisance for some days past; and though I have wanted courage to throw the mask quite aside; yet I have made the dear creature more than once look about her, by the warm, though decent expression of my passion. I have brought her to own, that I am more than indifferent with her: but as to LOVE, which I pressed her to acknowledge, what need of acknowledgments of that sort, when a woman consents to marrying?—And once repulsing me with displeasure, the proof of true love I was vowing for her, was RESPECT, not FREEDOM. And offering to defend myself, she told me, that all the conception she had been able to form of a faulty passion, was, that it must demonstrate itself as mine sought to do.

I endeavoured to justify my passion, by laying over-delicacy at her door. Over-delicacy, she said, was not my fault, if it were her's. She must plainly tell me, that I appeared to her incapable of distinguishing what were the requisites of a pure mind. Perhaps, had the libertine presumption to imagine, that there was no difference in heart, nor any but what proceeded from difference of education and custom, between the pure and impure—and yet custom alone, as she observed, if I did so think, would make a second nature, as well in good as in bad habits.

I have just now been called to account for some innocent liberties which I thought myself entitled to take before the women; as they suppose us to be married, and now within view of consummation.

I took the lecture very hardly; and with impatience wished for the happy day and hour when I might call her all my own, and meet with no check from a niceness that had no example.

She looked at me with a bashful kind of contempt. I thought it contempt, and required the reason for it; not being conscious of offence, as I told her.

This is not the first time, Mr. Lovelace, said she, that I have had cause to be displeased with you, when you, perhaps, have not thought yourself exceptionable.—But, Sir, let me tell you, that the married state, in my eye, is a state of purity, and [I think she told me] not of licentiousness; so, at least, I understood her.

Marriage-purity, Jack!—Very comical, 'faith—yet, sweet dears, half the female world ready to run away with a rake, because he is a rake; and for no other reason; nay, every other reason against their choice of such a one.

But have not you and I, Belford, seen young wives, who would be thought modest! and, when maids, were fantastically shy; permit freedoms in public from their uxorious husbands, which have shown, that both of them have forgotten what belongs either to prudence or decency? while every modest eye has sunk under the shameless effrontery, and every modest face been covered with blushes for those who could not blush.

I once, upon such an occasion, proposed to a circle of a dozen, thus scandalized, to withdraw; since they must needs see that as well the lady, as the gentleman, wanted to be in private. This motion had its effect upon the amorous pair; and I was applauded for the check given to their licentiousness.

But, upon another occasion of this sort, I acted a little more in character. For I ventured to make an attempt upon a bride, which I should not have had the courage to make, had not the unblushing passiveness with which she received her fond husband's public toyings (looking round her with triumph rather than with shame, upon every lady present) incited my curiosity to know if the same complacency might not be shown to a private friend. 'Tis true, I was in honour obliged to keep the secret. But I never saw the turtles bill afterwards, but I thought of number two to the same female; and in my heart thanked the fond husband for the lesson he had taught his wife.

From what I have said, thou wilt see, that I approve of my beloved's exception to public loves. That, I hope, is all the charming icicle means by marriage-purity, but to return.

From the whole of what I have mentioned to have passed between my beloved and me, thou wilt gather, that I have not been a mere dangler, a Hickman, in the passed days, though not absolutely active, and a Lovelace.

The dear creature now considers herself as my wife-elect. The unsaddened heart, no longer prudish, will not now, I hope, give the sable turn to every address of the man she dislikes not. And yet she must keep up so much reserve, as will justify past inflexibilities. 'Many and many a pretty soul would yield, were she not afraid that the man she favoured would think the worse of her for it.' That is also a part of the rake's creed. But should she resent ever so strongly, she cannot now break with me; since, if she does, there will be an end of the family reconciliation; and that in a way highly discreditable to herself.

SATURDAY, JUNE 3.

Just returned from Doctors Commons. I have been endeavouring to get a license. Very true, Jack. I have the

mortification to find a difficulty, as the lady is of rank and fortune, and as there is no consent of father or next friend, in obtaining this all-fettering instrument.

I made report of this difficulty. 'It is very right,' she says, 'that such difficulties should be made.'—But not to a man of my known fortune, surely, Jack, though the woman were the daughter of a duke.

I asked, if she approved of the settlements? She said, she had compared them with my mother's, and had no objection to them. She had written to Miss Howe upon the subject, she owned; and to inform her of our present situation.*

* As this letter of the Lady to Miss Howe contains no new matter, but what may be collected from one of those of Mr. Lovelace, it is omitted.

Just now, in high good humour, my beloved returned me the draughts of the settlements: a copy of which I have sent to Captain Tomlinson. She complimented me, 'that she never had any doubt of my honour in cases of this nature.'

In matters between man and man nobody ever had, thou knowest.

I had need, thou wilt say, to have some good qualities.

Great faults and great virtues are often found in the same person. In nothing very bad, but as to women: and did not one of them begin with me.*

* See Vol. I. Letter XXXI.

We have held, that women have no souls. I am a very Turk in this point, and willing to believe they have not. And if so, to whom shall I be accountable for what I do to them? Nay, if souls they have, as there is no sex in ethereals, nor need of any, what plea can a lady hold of injuries done her in her lady-state, when there is an end of her lady-ship?

LETTER XI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. MONDAY, JUNE 5.

I am now almost in despair of succeeding with this charming frost-piece by love or gentleness.—A copy of the draughts, as I told thee, has been sent to Captain Tomlinson; and that by a special messenger. Engrossments are proceeding with. I have been again at the Commons.—Should in all probability have procured a license by Mallory's means, had not Mallory's friend, the proctor, been suddenly sent for to Chestnut, to make an old lady's will. Pritchard has told me by word of mouth, though my charmer saw him not, all that was necessary for her to know in the letter my Lord wrote, which I could not show her: and taken my directions about the estates to be made over to me on my nuptials.—Yet, with all these favourable appearances, no conceding moment to be found, no improvable tenderness to be raised.

But never, I believe, was there so true, so delicate a modesty in the human mind as in that of this lady. And this has been my security all along; and, in spite of Miss Howe's advice to her, will be so still; since, if her delicacy be a fault, she can no more overcome it than I can my aversion to matrimony. Habit, habit, Jack, seest thou not? may subject us both to weaknesses. And should she not have charity for me, as I have for her?

Twice indeed with rapture, which once she called rude, did I salute her; and each time resenting the freedom, did she retire; though, to do her justice, she favoured me again with her presence at my first entreaty, and took no notice of the cause of her withdrawing.

Is it policy to show so open a resentment for innocent liberties, which, in her situation, she must so soon forgive?

Yet the woman who resents not initiatory freedoms must be lost. For love is an encroacher. Love never goes backward. Love is always aspiring. Always must aspire. Nothing but the highest act of love can satisfy an indulged love. And what advantages has a lover, who values not breaking the peace, over his mistress who is solicitous to keep it!

I have now at this instant wrought myself up, for the dozenth time, to a half-resolution. A thousand agreeable things I have to say to her. She is in the dining-room. Just gone up. She always expects me when there.

High displeasure!—followed by an abrupt departure.

I sat down by her. I took both her hands in mine. I would have it so. All gentle my voice. Her father mentioned with respect. Her mother with reverence. Even her brother amicably spoken of. I never thought I could have wished so ardently, as I told her I did wish, for a reconciliation with her family.

A sweet and grateful flush then overspread her fair face; a gentle sigh now-and-then heaved her handkerchief.

I perfectly longed to hear from Captain Tomlinson. It was impossible for the uncle to find fault with the draught of the settlements. I would not, however, be understood, by sending them down, that I intended to put it in her uncle's power to delay my happy day. When, when was it to be?

I would hasten again to the Commons; and would not return without the license.

The Lawn I proposed to retire to, as soon as the happy ceremony was over. This day and that day I proposed.

It was time enough to name the day, when the settlements were completed, and the license obtained. Happy should she be, could the kind Captain Tomlinson obtain her uncle's presence privately.

A good hint!—It may perhaps be improved upon—either for a delay or a pacifier.

No new delays for Heaven's sake, I besought her; and reproached her gently for the past. Name but the day—(an early day, I hoped it would be, in the following week)—that I might hail its approach, and number the tardy hours.

My cheek reclined on her shoulder—kissing her hands by turns. Rather bashfully than angrily reluctant, her hands sought to be withdrawn; her shoulder avoiding my reclined cheek—apparently loth, and more loth to quarrel with me; her downcast eye confessing more than her lips can utter. Now surely, thought I, is my time to try if she can forgive a still bolder freedom than I had ever yet taken.

I then gave her struggling hands liberty. I put one arm round her waist: I imprinted a kiss on her sweet lip, with a *Be quiet only*, and an averted face, as if she feared another.

Encouraged by so gentle a repulse, the tenderest things I said; and then, with my other hand, drew aside the handkerchief that concealed the beauty of beauties, and pressed with my burning lips the most charming breast that ever my ravished eyes beheld.

A very contrary passion to that which gave her bosom so delightful a swell, immediately took place. She struggled out of my encircling arms with indignation. I detained her reluctant hand. Let me go, said she. I see there is no keeping terms with you. Base encroacher! Is this the design of your flattering speeches? Far as matters have gone, I will for ever renounce you. You have an odious heart. Let me go, I tell you.

I was forced to obey, and she flung from me, repeating *base*, and adding *flattering*, *encroacher*.

In vain have I urged by Dorcas for the promised favour of dining with her. She would not dine at all. She could not.

But why makes she every inch of her person thus sacred?—So near the time too, that she must suppose, that all will be my own by deed of purchase and settlement?

She has read, no doubt, of the art of the eastern monarchs, who sequester themselves from the eyes of their subjects, in order to excite their adoration, when, upon some solemn occasions, they think fit to appear in public.

But let me ask thee, Belford, whether (on these solemn occasions) the preceding cavalcade; here a greater officer, and there a great minister, with their satellites, and glaring equipages; do not prepare the eyes of the wondering beholders, by degrees, to bear the blaze of canopy'd majesty (what though but an ugly old man perhaps himself? yet) glittering in the collected riches of his vast empire?

And should not my beloved, for her own sake, descend, by degrees, from goddess-hood into humanity? If it be pride that restrains her, ought not that pride to be punished? If, as in the eastern emperors, it be art as well as pride, art is what she of all women need not use. If shame, what a shame to be ashamed to communicate to her adorer's sight the most admirable of her personal graces?

Let me perish, Belford, if I would not forego the brightest diadem in the world, for the pleasure of seeing a twin Lovelace at each charming breast, drawing from it his first sustenance; the pious task, for physical reasons,* continued for one month and no more!

* In Pamela, Vol. III. Letter XXXII. these reasons are given, and are worthy of every parent's consideration, as is the whole Letter, which contains the debate between Mr. B. and his Pamela, on the important subject of mothers being nurses to their own children.

I now, methinks, behold this most charming of women in this sweet office: her conscious eye now dropt on one, now on the other, with a sigh of maternal tenderness, and then raised up to my delighted eye, full of wishes, for the sake of the pretty varlets, and for her own sake, that I would deign to legitimate; that I would condescend to put on the nuptial fetters.

LETTER XII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. MONDAY AFTERNOON.

A letter received from the worthy Captain Tomlinson has introduced me into the presence of my charmer sooner than perhaps I should otherwise have been admitted.

Sullen her brow, at her first entrance into the dining-room. But I took no notice of what had passed, and her anger of itself subsided.

'The Captain, after letting me know that he chose not to write till he had promised the draught of the settlements, acquaint me, that his friend Mr. John Harlowe, in their first conference (which was held as soon as he got down) was extremely surprised, and even grieved (as he feared he would be) to hear that we were not married. The world, he said, who knew my character, would be very censorious, were it owned, that we had lived so long together unmarried in the same lodgings; although our marriage were now to be ever so publicly celebrated.

'His nephew James, he was sure, would make a great handle of it against any motion that might be made towards a reconciliation; and with the greater success, as there was not a family in the kingdom more jealous of their honour than theirs.'

This is true of the Harlowes, Jack: they have been called *The proud Harlowes*: and I have ever found, that all young honour is supercilious and touchy.

But seest thou not how right I was in my endeavour to persuade my fair- one to allow her uncle's friend to think us married; especially as he came prepared to believe it; and as her uncle hoped it was so?—But nothing on earth is so perverse as a woman, when she is set upon carrying a point, and has a meek man, or

one who loves his peace, to deal with.

My beloved was vexed. She pulled out her handkerchief: but was more inclined to blame me than herself.

Had you kept your word, Mr. Lovelace, and left me when we came to town—And there she stopt; for she knew, that it was her own fault that we were not married before we left the country; and how could I leave her afterwards, while her brother was plotting to carry her off by violence?

Nor has this brother yet given over his machinations.

For, as the Captain proceeds, 'Mr. John Harlowe owned to him (but in confidence) that his nephew is at this time busied in endeavouring to find out where we are; being assured (as I am not to be heard of at any of my relations, or at my usual lodgings) that we are together. And that we are not married is plain, as he will have it, from Mr. Hickman's application so lately made to her uncle; and which was seconded by Mrs. Norton to her mother. And her brother cannot bear that I should enjoy such a triumph unmolested.'

A profound sigh, and the handkerchief again lifted to the eye. But did not the sweet soul deserve this turn upon her, for feloniously resolving to rob me of herself, had the application made by Hickman succeeded?

I read on to the following effect:

'Why (asked Mr. Harlowe) was it said to his other inquiring friend, that we were married; and that by his niece's woman, who ought to know? who could give convincing reasons, no doubt'—

Here again she wept; took a turn across the room; then returned—Read on, says she—

Will you, my dearest life, read it yourself?

I will take the letter with me, by-and-by—I cannot see to read it just now, wiping her eyes—read on—let me hear it all—that I may know your sentiments upon this letter, as well as give my own.

'The Captain then told uncle John the reasons that induced me to give out that we were married; and the conditions on which my beloved was brought to countenance it; which had kept us at the most punctilious distance.

'But still Mr. Harlowe objected my character. And went away dissatisfied. And the Captain was also so much concerned, that he cared not to write what the result of his first conference was.

'But in the next, which was held on receipt of the draughts, at the Captain's house, (as the former was, for the greater secrecy,) when the old gentleman had read them, and had the Captain's opinion, he was much better pleased. And yet he declared, that it would not be easy to persuade any other person of his family to believe so favourably of the matter, as he was now willing to believe, were they to know that we had lived so long together unmarried.

'And then the Captain says, his dear friend made a proposal:—It was this—That we should marry out of hand, but as privately as possible, as indeed he found we intended, (for he could have no objection to the draughts)—but yet, he expected to have present one trusty friend of his own, for his better satisfaction'—

Here I stopt, with a design to be angry—but she desiring me to read on, I obeyed.

'—But that it should pass to every one living, except to that trusty person, to himself, and to the Captain, that we were married from the time that we had lived together in one house; and that this time should be made to agree with that of Mr. Hickman's application to him from Miss Howe.'

This, my dearest life, said I, is a very considerate proposal. We have nothing to do but to caution the people below properly on this head. I did not think your uncle Harlowe capable of hitting upon such a charming expedient as this. But you see how much his heart is in the reconciliation.

This was the return I met with—You have always, as a mark of your politeness, let me know how meanly you think of every one in my family.

Yet thou wilt think, Belford, that I could forgive her for the reproach.

'The Captain does not know, says he, how this proposal will be relished by us. But for his part, he thinks it an expedient that will obviate many difficulties, and may possibly put an end to Mr. James Harlowe's further designs: and on this account he has, by the uncle's advice, already declared to two several persons, by whose means it may come to that young gentleman's, that he [Captain Tomlinson] has very great reason to believe that we were married soon after Mr. Hickman's application was rejected.

'And this, Mr. Lovelace, (says the Captain,) will enable you to pay a compliment to the family, that will not be unsuitable to the generosity of some of the declarations you were pleased to make to the lady before me, (and which Mr. John Harlowe may make some advantage of in favour of a reconciliation,) in that you were entitled to make the demand.' An excellent contriver, surely, she must think this worthy Mr. Tomlinson to be!

But the Captain adds, 'that if either the lady or I disapprove of his report of our marriage, he will retract it. Nevertheless, he must tell me, that Mr. John Harlowe is very much set upon this way of proceeding; as the only one, in his opinion, capable of being improved into a general reconciliation. But if we do acquiesce in it, he beseeches my fair-one not to suspend my day, that he may be authorized in what he says, as to the truth of the main fact. [How conscientious this good man!] Nor must it be expected, he says, that her uncle will take one step towards the wished-for reconciliation, till the solemnity is actually over.'

He adds, 'that he shall be very soon in town on other affairs; and then proposes to attend us, and give us a more particular account of all that has passed, or shall further pass, between Mr. Harlowe and him.'

Well, my dearest life, what say you to your uncle's expedient? Shall I write to the Captain, and acquaint him, that we have no objection to it?

She was silent for a few minutes. At last, with a sigh, See, Mr. Lovelace, said she, what you have brought me to, by treading after you in such crooked paths!—See what disgrace I have incurred!—Indeed you have not acted like a wise man.

My beloved creature, do you not remember, how earnestly I besought the honour of your hand before we came to town?—Had I been then favoured—

Well, well, Sir; there has been much amiss somewhere; that's all I will say at present. And since what's past cannot be recalled, my uncle must be obeyed, I think.

Charmingly dutiful!—I had nothing then to do, that I might not be behind-hand with the worthy Captain and her uncle, but to press for the day. This I fervently did. But (as I might have expected) she repeated her former answer; to wit, That when the settlements were completed; when the license was actually obtained; it would be time enough to name the day: and, O Mr. Lovelace, said she, turning from me with a grace imitably tender, her handkerchief at her eyes, what a happiness, if my dear uncle could be prevailed upon to be personally a father, on this occasion, to the poor fatherless girl!

What's the matter with me!—Whence this dew-drop!—A tear!—As I hope to be saved, it is a tear, Jack!—Very ready methinks!—Only on reciting!—But her lovely image was before me, in the very attitude she spoke the words—and indeed at the time she spoke them, these lines of Shakespeare came into my head:

*Thy heart is big. Get thee apart and weep!
Passion, I see, is catching:—For my eye,
Seeing those beads of sorrow stand in thine,
Begin to water—*

I withdrew, and wrote to the Captain to the following effect—'I desired that he would be so good as to acquaint his dear friend that we entirely acquiesced with what he had proposed; and had already properly cautioned the gentlewomen of the house, and their servants, as well as our own: and to tell him, That if he would in person give me the blessing of his dear niece's hand, it would crown the wishes of both. In this case, I consented, that his own day, as I presumed it would be a short one, should be ours: that by this means the secret would be with fewer persons: that I myself, as well as he, thought the ceremony could not be too privately performed; and this not only for the sake of the wise end he had proposed to answer by it, but because I would not have Lord M. think himself slighted; since that nobleman, as I had told him [the Captain] had once intended to be our nuptial-father; and actually made the offer; but that we had declined to accept of it, and that for no other reason than to avoid a public wedding; which his beloved niece would not come into, while she was in disgrace with her friends. But that if he chose not to do us this honour, I wished that Captain Tomlinson might be the trusty person whom he would have be present on the happy occasion.'

I showed this letter to my fair-one. She was not displeased with it. So, Jack, we cannot now move too fast, as to settlements and license: the day is her uncle's day, or Captain Tomlinson's, perhaps, as shall best suit the occasion. Miss Howe's smuggling scheme is now surely provided against in all events.

But I will not by anticipation make thee a judge of all the benefits that may flow from this my elaborate contrivance. Why will these girls put me upon my master-strokes?

And now for a little mine which I am getting ready to spring. The first that I have sprung, and at the rate I go on (now a resolution, and now a remorse) perhaps the last that I shall attempt to spring.

A little mine, I call it. But it may be attended with great effects. I shall not, however, absolutely depend upon the success of it, having much more effectual ones in reserve. And yet great engines are often moved by small springs. A little spark falling by accident into a powder-magazine, hath done more execution in a siege, than an hundred cannon.

Come the worst, the hymeneal torch, and a white sheet, must be my amende honorable, as the French have it.

LETTER XIII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. TUESDAY, JUNE 6.

Unsuccessful as hitherto my application to you has been, I cannot for the heart of me forbear writing once more in behalf of this admirable woman: and yet am unable to account for the zeal which impels me to take her part with an earnestness so sincere.

But all her merit thou acknowledgest; all thy own vileness thou confessest, and even gloriest in it: What hope then of moving so hardened a man?—Yet, as it is not too late, and thou art nevertheless upon the crisis, I am resolved to try what another letter will do. It is but my writing in vain, if it do no good; and if thou wilt let me prevail, I knowthou wilt hereafter think me richly entitled to thy thanks.

To argue with thee would be folly. The case cannot require it. I will only entreat thee, therefore, that thou wilt not let such an excellence lose the reward of her vigilant virtue.

I believe there never were libertines so vile, but purposed, at some future period of their lives, to set about reforming: and let me beg of thee, that thou wilt, in this great article, make thy future repentance as easy, as some time hence thou wilt wish thou hadst made it.

If thou proceedest, I have no doubt that this affair will end tragically, one way or another. It must. Such a woman must interest both gods and men in her cause. But what I most apprehend is, that with her own hand, in resentment of the perpetrated outrage, she (like another Lucretia) will assert the purity of her heart: or, if her piety preserve her from this violence, that wasting grief will soon put a period to her days. And, in either case, will not the remembrance of thy ever-during guilt, and transitory triumph, be a torment of torments to thee?

'Tis a seriously sad thing, after all, that so fine a creature should have fallen into such vile and remorseless hands: for, from thy cradle, as I have heard thee own, thou ever delightedst to sport with and torment the animal, whether bird or beast, that thou lovedst, and hadst a power over.

How different is the case of this fine woman from that of any other whom thou hast seduced!—I need not mention to thee, nor insist upon the striking difference: justice, gratitude, thy interest, thy vows, all engaging thee; and thou certainly loving her, as far as thou art capable of love, above all her sex. She not to be drawn aside by art, or to be made to suffer from credulity, nor for want of wit and discernment, (that will be another

cutting reflection to so fine a mind as her's:) the contention between you only unequal, as it is between naked innocence and armed guilt. In every thing else, as thou ownest, her talents greatly superior to thine!—What a fate will her's be, if thou art not at last overcome by thy reiterated remorse!

At first, indeed, when I was admitted into her presence,* (and till I observed her meaning air, and heard her speak,) I supposed that she had no very uncommon judgment to boast of: for I made, as I thought, but just allowances for her blossoming youth, and for that loveliness of person, and for that ease and elegance in her dress, which I imagined must have taken up half her time and study to cultivate; and yet I had been prepared by thee to entertain a very high opinion of her sense and her reading. Her choice of this gay fellow, upon such hazardous terms, (thought I,) is a confirmation that her wit wants that maturity which only years and experience can give it. Her knowledge (argued I to myself) must be all theory; and the complaisance ever consorting with an age so green and so gay, will make so inexperienced a lady at least forbear to show herself disgusted at freedoms of discourse in which those present of her own sex, and some of ours, (so learned, so well read, and so travelled,) allow themselves.

* See Vol. IV. Letter VII.

In this presumption I ran on; and having the advantage, as I conceited, of all the company but you, and being desirous to appear in her eyes a mighty clever fellow, I thought I showed away, when I said any foolish things that had more sound than sense in them; and when I made silly jests, which attracted the smiles of thy Sinclair, and the specious Partington: and that Miss Harlowe did not smile too, I thought was owing to her youth or affectation, or to a mixture of both, perhaps to a greater command of her features.—Little dreamt I, that I was incurring her contempt all the time.

But when, as I said, I heard her speak, which she did not till she had fathomed us all; when I heard her sentiments on two or three subjects, and took notice of the searching eye, darting into the very inmost cells of our frothy brains; by my faith, it made me look about me; and I began to recollect, and be ashamed of all I had said before; in short, was resolved to sit silent, till every one had talked round, to keep my folly in countenance. And then I raised the subjects that she could join in, and which she did join in, so much to the confusion and surprise of every one of us!—For even thou, Lovelace, so noted for smart wit, repartee, and a vein of raillery, that delighteth all who come near thee, satest in palpable darkness, and lookedst about thee, as well as we.

One instance only of this shall I remind thee of.

We talked of wit, and of it, and aimed at it, bandying it like a ball from one to another, and resting it chiefly with thee, who wert always proud enough and vain enough of the attribute; and then more especially as thou hadst assembled us, as far as I know, principally to show the lady thy superiority over us; and us thy triumph over her. And then Tourville (who is always satisfied with wit at second-hand; wit upon memory: other men's wit) repeated some verses, as applicable to the subject; which two of us applauded, though full of double entendre. Thou, seeing the lady's serious air on one of those repetitions, appliedst thyself to her, desiring her notions of wit: a quality, thou saidst, which every one prized, whether flowing from himself, or found in another.

Then it was that she took all our attention. It was a quality much talked of, she said, but, she believed, very little understood. At least, if she might be so free as to give her judgment of it from what had passed in the present conversation, she must say, that wit with men was one thing; with women another.

This startled us all:—How the women looked!—How they pursed their mouths; a broad smile the moment before upon each, from the verses they had heard repeated, so well understood, as we saw, by their looks! While I besought her to let us know, for our instruction, what wit with women: for such I was sure it ought to be with men.

Cowley, she said, had defined it prettily by negatives. Thou desiredst her to repeat his definition.

She did; and with so much graceful ease, and beauty, and propriety of accent, as would have made bad poetry delightful.

*A thousand diff'rent shapes it bears;
Comely in thousand shapes appears.
'Tis not a tale, 'tis not a jest,
Admir'd with laughter at a feast,
Nor florid talk, which must this title gain:
The proofs of wit for ever must remain.
Much less can that have any place
At which a virgin hides her face.
Such dross the fire must purge away:—'Tis just
The author blush there, where the reader must.*

Here she stopt, looking round upon her upon us all with conscious superiority, as I thought. Lord, how we stared! Thou attemptedst to give us thy definition of wit, that thou mightest have something to say, and not seem to be surprised into silent modesty.

But as if she cared not to trust thee with the subject, referring to the same author as for his more positive decision, she thus, with the same harmony of voice and accent, emphatically decided upon it.

*Wit, like a luxurious vine,
Unless to virtue's prop it join,
Firm and erect, tow'rd heaven bound,
Tho' it with beauteous leaves and pleasant fruit be crown'd,
It lies deform'd, and rotting on the ground.*

If thou recollectest this part of the conversation, and how like fools we looked at one another; how much it put us out of conceit with ourselves, and made us fear her, when we found our conversation thus excluded from the very character which our vanity had made us think unquestionably ours; and if thou profitest properly by the recollection; thou wilt be of my mind, that there is not so much wit in wickedness as we had flattered ourselves there was.

And after all, I have been of opinion ever since that conversation, that the wit of all the rakes and libertines

down to little Johnny Hartop the punster, consists mostly in saying bold and shocking things, with such courage as shall make the modest blush, the impudent laugh, and the ignorant stare.

And why dost thou think I mention these things, so mal-a-propos, as it may seem!—Only, let me tell thee, as an instance (among many that might be given from the same evening's conversation) of this fine woman's superiority in those talents which ennoble nature, and dignify her sex—evidenced not only to each of us, as we offended, but to the flippant Partington, and the grosser, but egregiously hypocritical Sinclair, in the correcting eye, the discouraging blush, in which was mixed as much displeasure as modesty, and sometimes, as the occasion called for it, (for we were some of us hardened above the sense of feeling delicate reproof,) by the sovereign contempt, mingled with a disdainful kind of pity, that showed at once her own conscious worth, and our despicable worthlessness.

O Lovelace! what then was the triumph, even in my eye, and what is it still upon reflection, of true jest, laughing impertinence, and an obscenity so shameful, even to the guilty, that they cannot hint at it but under a double meaning!

Then, as thou hast somewhere observed,* all her correctives avowed by her eye. Not poorly, like the generality of her sex, affecting ignorance of meanings too obvious to be concealed; but so resenting, as to show each impudent laughter the offence given to, and taken by a purity, that had mistaken its way, when it fell into such company.

* See Vol. IV. Letter XLVIII.

Such is the woman, such is the angel, whom thou hast betrayed into thy power, and wouldst deceive and ruin.—Sweet creature! did she but know how she is surrounded, (as I then thought, as well as now think,) and what is intended, how much sooner would death be her choice, than so dreadful a situation!—'And how effectually would her story, were it generally known, warn all the sex against throwing themselves into the power of ours, let our vows, oaths, and protestations, be what they will!'

But let me beg of thee, once more, my dear Lovelace, if thou hast any regard for thine own honour, for the honour of thy family, for thy future peace, or for my opinion of thee, (who yet pretend not to be so much moved by principle, as by that dazzling merit which ought still more to attract thee,) to be prevailed upon—to be—to be humane, that's all— only, that thou wouldst not disgrace our common humanity!

Hardened as thou art, I know that they are the abandoned people in the house who keep thee up to a resolution against her. O that the sagacious fair-one (with so much innocent charity in her own heart) had not so resolutely held those women at distance!—that as she boarded there, she had oftener tabled with them! Specious as they are, in a week's time, she would have seen through them; they could not have been always so guarded, as they were when they saw her but seldom, and when they prepared themselves to see her; and she would have fled their house as a place infected. And yet, perhaps, with so determined an enterprizer, this discovery might have accelerated her ruin.

I know that thou art nice in thy loves. But are there not hundreds of women, who, though not utterly abandoned, would be taken with thee for mere personal regards! Make a toy, if thou wilt, of principle, with respect to such of the sex as regard it as a toy; but rob not an angel of those purities, which, in her own opinion, constitute the difference between angelic and brutal qualities.

With regard to the passion itself, the less of soul in either man or woman, the more sensual are they. Thou, Lovelace, hast a soul, though a corrupted one; and art more intent (as thou even gloriest) upon the preparative stratagem, that upon the end of conquering.

See we not the natural bent of idiots and the crazed? The very appetite is body; and when we ourselves are most fools, and crazed, then are we most eager in these pursuits. See what fools this passion makes the wisest men! What snivellers, what dotards, when they suffer themselves to be run away with by it!—An unpermanent passion! Since, if (ashamed of its more proper name) we must call it love, love gratified, is love satisfied—and where consent on one side adds to the obligation on the other. What then but remorse can follow a forcible attempt?

Do not even chaste lovers choose to be alone in their courtship preparations, ashamed to have even a child to witness to their foolish actions, and more foolish expressions? Is this deified passion, in its greatest altitudes, fitted to stand the day? Do not the lovers, when mutual consent awaits their wills, retire to coverts, and to darkness, to complete their wishes? And shall such a sneaking passion as this, which can be so easily gratified by viler objects, be permitted to debase the noblest?

Were not the delays of thy vile purposes owing more to the awe which her majestic virtue has inspired thee with, than to thy want of adroitness in villany? [I must write my free sentiments in this case; for have I not seen the angel?] I should be ready to censure some of thy contrivances and pretences to suspend the expected day, as trite, stale, and (to me, who know thy intention) poor; and too often resorted to, as nothing comes of them to be gloried in; particularly that of Mennell, the vapourish lady, and the ready-furnished house.

She must have thought so too, at times, and in her heart despised thee for them, or love thee (ungrateful as thou art!) to her misfortune; as well as entertain hope against probability. But this would afford another warning to the sex, were they to know her story; 'as it would show them what poor pretences they must seem to be satisfied with, if once they put themselves into the power of a designing man.'

If trial only was thy end, as once was thy pretence,* enough surely hast thou tried this paragon of virtue and vigilance. But I knew thee too well, to expect, at the time, that thou wouldst stop there. 'Men of our cast put no other bound to their views upon any of the sex, than what want of power compels them to put.' I knew that from one advantage gained, thou wouldst proceed to attempt another. Thy habitual aversion to wedlock too well I knew; and indeed thou avowest thy hope to bring her to cohabitation, in that very letter in which thou pretendest trial to be thy principal view.**

* See Vol. III. Letter XVIII. ** Ibid. See also Letters XVI. and XVII. of that volume.

But do not even thy own frequent and involuntary remorse, when thou hast time, place, company, and every other circumstance, to favour thee in thy wicked design, convince thee, that there can be no room for a

hope so presumptuous?—Why then, since thou wouldest choose to marry her rather than lose her, wilt thou make her hate thee for ever?

But if thou darest to meditate personal trial, and art sincere in thy resolution to reward her, as she behaves in it, let me beseech thee to remove her from this vile house. That will be to give her and thy conscience fair play. So entirely now does the sweet deluded excellence depend upon her supposed happier prospects, that thou needest not to fear that she will fly from thee, or that she will wish to have recourse to that scheme of Miss Howe, which has put thee upon what thou callest thy master-strokes.

But whatever be thy determination on this head; and if I write not in time, but that thou hast actually pulled off the mask; let it not be one of the devices, if thou wouldest avoid the curses of every heart, and hereafter of thy own, to give her, no not for one hour, (be her resentment ever so great,) into the power of that villanous woman, who has, if possible, less remorse than thyself; and whose trade it is to break the resisting spirit, and utterly to ruin the heart unpractised in evil.—O Lovelace, Lovelace, how many dreadful stories could this horrid woman tell the sex! And shall that of a Clarissa swell the guilty list?

But this I might have spared. Of this, devil as thou art, thou canst not be capable. Thou couldst not enjoy a triumph so disgraceful to thy wicked pride, as well as to humanity.

Shouldest thou think, that the melancholy spectacle hourly before me has made me more serious than usual, perhaps thou wilt not be mistaken. But nothing more is to be inferred from hence (were I even to return to my former courses) but that whenever the time of cool reflection comes, whether brought on by our own disasters, or by those of others, we shall undoubtedly, if capable of thought, and if we have time for it, think in the same manner.

We neither of us are such fools as to disbelieve a futurity, or to think, whatever be our practice, that we came hither by chance, and for no end but to do all the mischief we have it in our power to do. Nor am I ashamed to own, that in the prayers which my poor uncle makes me read to him, in the absence of a very good clergyman who regularly attends him, I do not forget to put in a word or two for myself.

If, Lovelace, thou laughest at me, thy ridicule will be more conformable to thy actions than to thy belief.—Devils believe and tremble. Canst thou be more abandoned than they?

And here let me add, with regard to my poor old man, that I often wish thee present but for one half hour in a day, to see the dregs of a gay life running off in the most excruciating tortures that the cholic, the stone, and the surgeon's knife can unitedly inflict, and to hear him bewail the dissoluteness of his past life, in the bitterest anguish of a spirit every hour expecting to be called to its last account.—Yet, by all his confessions, he has not to accuse himself, in sixty-seven years of life, of half the very vile enormities which you and I have committed in the last seven only.

I conclude with recommending to your serious consideration all I have written, as proceeding from the heart and soul of

Your assured friend, JOHN BELFORD

LETTER XIV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 6.

Difficulties still to be got over in procuring this plaguy license. I ever hated, and ever shall hate, these spiritual lawyers, and their court.

And now, Jack, if I have not secured victory, I have a retreat.

But hold—thy servant with a letter—

A confounded long one, though not a narrative one—Once more in behalf of this lady?—Lie thee down, oddity! What canst thou write that can have force upon me at this crisis?—And have I not, as I went along, made thee to say all that was necessary for thee to say?

Yet once more I will take thee up.

Trite, stale, poor, (sayest thou,) are some of my contrivances; that of the widow particularly!—I have no patience with thee. Had not that contrivance its effect at that time, for a procrastination? and had I not then reason to fear, that the lady would find enough to make her dislike this house? and was it not right (intending what I intended) to lead her on from time to time with a notion that a house of her own would be ready for her soon, in order to induce her to continue here till it was?

Trite, stale, and poor!—Thou art a silly fellow, and no judge, when thou sayest this. Had I not, like a blockhead, revealed to thee, as I went along, the secret purposes of my heart, but had kept all in till the event had explained my mysteries, I would have defied thee to have been able, any more than the lady, to have guessed at what was to befall her, till it had actually come to pass. Nor doubt I, in this case, that, instead of presuming to reflect upon her for credulity, as loving me to her misfortune, and for hoping against probability, thou wouldest have been readier, by far, to censure her for nicety and over-scrupulousness. And, let me tell thee, that had she loved me as I wished her to love me, she could not possibly have been so very apprehensive of my designs, nor so ready to be influenced by Miss Howe's precautions, as she has always been, although my general character made not for me with her.

But, in thy opinion, I suffer for that simplicity in my contrivances, which is their principal excellence. No machinery make I necessary. No unnatural flights aim I at. All pure nature, taking advantage of nature, as nature tends; and so simple my devices, that when they are known, thou, even thou, imaginest thou couldst

have thought of the same. And indeed thou seemest to own, that the slight thou puttest upon them is owing to my letting thee into them before-hand—undistinguishing as well as ungrateful as thou art!

Yet, after all, I would not have thee think that I do not know my weak places. I have formerly told thee, that it is difficult for the ablest general to say what he will do, or what he can do, when he is obliged to regulate his motions by those of a watchful enemy.* If thou givest due weight to this consideration, thou wilt not wonder that I should make many marches and countermarches, some of which may appear, to a slight observer, unnecessary.

* See Vol. III. Letter XXXIX.

But let me cursorily enter into debate with thee on this subject, now I am within sight of my journey's end.

Abundance of impertinent things thou tellest me in this letter; some of which thou hadst from myself; others that I knew before.

All that thou sayest in this charming creature's praise is short of what I have said and written on the inexhaustible subject.

Her virtue, her resistance, which are her merits, are my stimulatives. have I not told thee so twenty times over?

Devil, as these girls between them call me, what of devil am I, but in my contrivances? I am not more a devil than others in the end I aim at; for when I have carried my point, it is still but one seduction. And I have perhaps been spared the guilt of many seductions in the time.

What of uncommon would there be in this case, but for her watchfulness!—As well as I love intrigue and stratagem, dost think that I had not rather have gained my end with less trouble and less guilt?

The man, let me tell thee, who is as wicked as he can be, is a worse man than I am. Let me ask any rake in England, if, resolving to carry his point, he would have been so long about it? or have had so much compunction as I have had?

Were every rake, nay, were every man, to sit down, as I do, and write all that enters into his head, or into his heart, and to accuse himself with equal freedom and truth, what an army of miscreants should I have to keep me in countenance!

It is a maxim with some, that if they are left alone with a woman, and make not an attempt upon her, she will think herself affronted—Are not such men as these worse than I am? What an opinion must they have of the whole sex!

Let me defend the sex I so dearly love. If these elder brethren of ours think they have general reason for their assertion, they must have kept very bad company, or must judge of women's hearts by their own. She must be an abandoned woman, who will not shrink as a snail into its shell at a gross and sudden attempt. A modest woman must be naturally cold, reserved, and shy. She cannot be so much and so soon affected as libertines are apt to imagine. She must, at least, have some confidence in the honour and silence of a man, before desire can possibly put forth in her, to encourage and meet his flame. For my own part, I have been always decent in the company of women, till I was sure of them. Nor have I ever offered a great offence, till I have found little ones passed over; and that they shunned me not, when they knew my character.

My divine Clarissa has puzzled me, and beat me out of my play: at one time, I hope to overcome by intimidating her; at another, by love; by the amorous see-saw, as I have called it.* And I have only now to join surprise to the other two, and see what can be done by all three.

* See Vol. III. Letter XVI.

And whose property, I pray thee, shall I invade, if I pursue my schemes of love and vengeance? Have not those who have a right to her renounced that right? Have they not wilfully exposed her to dangers? Yet must know, that such a woman would be considered as lawful prize by as many as could have the opportunity to attempt her?—And had they not thus cruelly exposed her, is she not a single woman? And need I tell thee, Jack, that men of our cast, the best of them [the worst stick at nothing] think it a great grace and favour done to the married men, if they leave them their wives to themselves; and compound for their sisters, daughters, wards and nieces? Shocking as these principles must be to a reflecting mind, yet such thou knowest are the principles of thousands (who would not act so generously as I have acted by almost all of the sex, over whom I have obtained a power); and as often carried into practice, as their opportunities or courage will permit.—Such therefore have no right to blame me.

Thou repeatedly pleadest her sufferings from her family. But I have too often answered this plea, to need to say any more now, than that she has not suffered for my sake. For has she not been made the victim of the malice of her rapacious brother and envious sister, who only waited for an occasion to ruin her with her other relations; and took this as the first to drive her out of the house; and, as it happened, into my arms?—Thou knowest how much against her inclination.

As for her own sins, how many has the dear creature to answer for to love and to me!—Twenty times, and twenty times twenty, has she not told me, that she refused not the odious Solmes in favour to me? And as often has she not offered to renounce me for the single life, if the implacables would have received her on that condition?—Of what repetitions does thy weak pity make me guilty?

To look a litter farther back: Canst thou forget what my sufferings were from this haughty beauty in the whole time of my attendance upon her proud motions, in the purlieu of Harlowe-place, and at the little White Hart, at Neale, as we called it?—Did I not threaten vengeance upon her then (and had I not reason?) for disappointing me of a promised interview?

O Jack! what a night had I in the bleak coppice adjoining to her father's paddock! My linen and wig frozen; my limbs absolutely numbed; my fingers only sensible of so much warmth as enabled me to hold a pen; and that obtained by rubbing the skin off, and by beating with my hands my shivering sides! Kneeling on the hoar moss on one knee, writing on the other, if the stiff scrawl could be called writing! My feet, by the time I had done, seeming to have taken root, and actually unable to support me for some minutes!—Love and rage then kept my heart in motion, [and only love and rage could do it,] or how much more than I did suffer must I have suffered!

I told thee, at my melancholy return, what were the contents of the letter I wrote.* And I showed thee afterwards her tyrannical answer to it.** Thou, then, Jack, lovedst thy friend; and pitiedst thy poor suffering Lovelace. Even the affronted God of Love approved then of my threatened vengeance against the fair promiser; though of the night of my sufferings, he is become an advocate for her.

* See Vol. II. Letter XX. ** Ibid.

Nay, was it not he himself that brought to me my adorable Nemesis; and both together put me upon this very vow, 'That I would never rest till I had drawn in this goddess-daughter of the Harlowes to cohabit with me; and that in the face of all their proud family?'

Nor canst thou forget this vow. At this instant I have thee before me, as then thou sorrowfully lookedst. Thy strong features glowing with compassion for me; thy lips twisted; thy forehead furrowed; thy whole face drawn out from the stupid round into the ghastly oval; every muscle contributing its power to complete the aspect grievous; and not one word couldst thou utter, but Amen! to my vow.

And what of distinguishing love, or favour, or confidence, have I had from her since, to make me forego this vow!

I renewed it not, indeed, afterwards; and actually, for a long season, was willing to forget it; till repetitions of the same faults revived the remembrance of the former. And now adding to those the contents of some of Miss Howe's virulent letters, so lately come at, what canst thou say for the rebel, consistent with thy loyalty to thy friend?

Every man to his genius and constitution. Hannibal was called The father of warlike stratagems. Had Hannibal been a private man, and turned his plotting head against the other sex; or had I been a general, and, turned mine against such of my fellow-creatures of my own, as I thought myself entitled to consider as my enemies, because they were born and lived in a different climate; Hannibal would have done less mischief; Lovelace more.—That would have been the difference.

Not a sovereign on earth, if he be not a good man, and if he be of a warlike temper, but must do a thousand times more mischief than I. And why? Because he has it in his power to do more.

An honest man, perhaps thou'lt say, will not wish to have it in his power to do hurt. He ought not, let me tell him: for, if he have it, a thousand to one but it makes him both wanton and wicked.

In what, then, am I so singularly vile?

In my contrivances thou wilt say, (for thou art my echo,) if not in my proposed end of them.

How difficult does every man find it, as well as I, to forego a predominant passion! I have three passions that sway me by turns; all imperial ones—love, revenge, ambition or a desire of conquest.

As to this particular contrivance of Tomlinson and the uncle, which perhaps thou wilt think a black one; that had been spared, had not these innocent ladies put me upon finding a husband for their Mrs. Townsend: that device, therefore, is but a preventive one. Thinkest thou that I could bear to be outwitted? And may not this very contrivance save a world of mischief? for dost thou think I would have tamely given up the lady to Townsend's tars?

What meanest thou, except to overthrow thy own plea, when thou sayest, that men of our cast know no other bound to their wickedness, but want of power; yet knowest this lady to be in mine?

Enough, sayest thou, have I tried this paragon of virtue. Not so; for I have not tried her at all—all I have been doing is but preparation to a trial.

But thou art concerned for the means that I may have recourse to in the trial, and for my veracity.

Silly fellow!—Did ever any man, thinkest thou, deceive a woman, but at the expense of his veracity; how, otherwise, can he be said to deceive?

As to the means, thou dost not imagine that I expect a direct consent. My main hope is but in a yielding reluctance; without which I will be sworn, whatever rapes have been attempted, none ever were committed, one person to one person. And good Queen Bess of England, had she been living, and appealed to, would have declared herself of my mind.

It would not be amiss for the sex to know what our opinions are upon this subject. I love to warn them. I wish no man to succeed with them but myself. I told thee once, that though a rake, I am not a rake's friend.*

* See Vol. III. Letter XVIII.

Thou sayest, that I ever hated wedlock. And true thou sayest. And yet as true, when thou tellest me, that I would rather marry than lose this lady. And will she detest me for ever, thinkest thou, if I try her, and succeed not?—Take care—take care, Jack!—Seest thou not that thou warnest me that I do not try without resolving to conquer?

I must add, that I have for some time been convinced that I have done wrong to scribble to thee so freely as I have done (and the more so, if I make the lady legally mine); for has not every letter I have written to thee been a bill of indictment against myself? I may partly curse my vanity for it; and I think I will refrain for the future; for thou art really very impertinent.

A good man, I own, might urge many of the things thou urgest; but, by my soul, they come very awkwardly from thee. And thou must be sensible, that I can answer every tittle of what you writest, upon the foot of the maxims we have long held and pursued.—By the specimen above, thou wilt see that I can.

And pr'ythee tell me, Jack, what but this that follows would have been the epitome of mine and my beloved's story, after ten years' cohabitation, had I never written to thee upon the subject, and had I not been my own accuser?

'Robert Lovelace, a notorious woman-eater, makes his addresses in an honourable way to Miss Clarissa Harlowe; a young lady of the highest merit—fortunes on both sides out of the question.

'After encouragement given, he is insulted by her violent brother; who thinks it his interest to discountenance the match; and who at last challenging him, is obliged to take his worthless life at his hands.

'The family, as much enraged, as if he had taken the life he gave, insult him personally, and find out an

odious lover for the young lady.

'To avoid a forced marriage, she is prevailed upon to take a step which throws her into Mr. Lovelace's protection.

'Yet, disclaiming any passion for him, she repeatedly offers to renounce him for ever, if, on that condition, her relations will receive her, and free her from the address of the man she hates.

'Mr. Lovelace, a man of strong passions, and, as some say, of great pride, thinks himself under very little obligation to her on this account; and not being naturally fond of marriage, and having so much reason to hate her relations, endeavours to prevail upon her to live with him what he calls the life of honour; and at last, by stratagem, art, and contrivance, prevails.

'He resolves never to marry any other woman: takes a pride to have her called by his name: a church-rite all the difference between them: treats her with deserved tenderness. Nobody questions their marriage but those proud relations of her's, whom he wishes to question it. Every year a charming boy. Fortunes to support the increasing family with splendor. A tender father. Always a warm friend; a generous landlord; and a punctual paymaster. Now-and-then however, perhaps, indulging with a new object, in order to bring him back with greater delight to his charming Clarissa—his only fault, love of the sex—which, nevertheless, the women say, will cure itself—defensible thus far, that he breaks no contracts by his roving.'—

And what is there so very greatly amiss, AS THE WORLD GOES, in all this?

Let me aver, that there are thousands and ten thousands, who have worse stories to tell than this would appear to be, had I not interested thee in the progress to my great end. And besides, thou knowest that the character I gave myself to Joseph Leman, as to my treatment of my mistress, is pretty near the truth.*

* See Vol. III. Letter XLVIII.

Were I to be as much in earnest in my defence, as thou art warm in my arraignment, I could convince thee, by other arguments, observations, and comparisons, [Is not all human good and evil comparative?] that though from my ingenuous temper (writing only to thee, who art master of every secret of my heart) I am so ready to accuse myself in my narrations, yet I have something to say for myself to myself, as I go along; though no one else, perhaps, that was not a rake, would allow any weight to it.— And this caution might I give to thousands, who would stoop for a stone to throw at me: 'See that your own predominant passions, whatever they be, hurry you not into as much wickedness as mine do me. See, if ye happen to be better than I in some things, that ye are not worse in others; and in points too, that may be of more extensive bad consequence, than that of seducing a girl, (and taking care of her afterwards,) who, from her cradle, is armed with cautions against the delusions of men.' And yet I am not so partial to my own follies as to think lightly of this fault, when I allow myself to think.

Another grave thing I will add, now my hand is in: 'So dearly do I love the sex, that had I found that a character for virtue had been generally necessary to recommend me to them, I should have had a much greater regard to my morals, as to the sex, than I have had.'

To sum all up—I am sufficiently apprized, that men of worthy and honest hearts, who never allowed themselves in premeditated evil, and who take into the account the excellencies of this fine creature, will and must not only condemn, but abhor me, were they to know as much of me as thou dost. But, methinks, I would be glad to escape the censure of those men, and of those women too, who have never known what capital trials and temptations are; of those who have no genius for enterprise; of those who want rather courage than will; and most particularly of those who have only kept their secret better than I have kept, or wish to keep, mine. Were those exceptions to take place, perhaps, Jack, I should have ten to acquit to one that should condemn me. Have I not often said, that human nature is a rogue?

I threatened above to refrain writing to thee. But take it not to heart, Jack—I must write on, and cannot help it.

LETTER XV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. WEDNESDAY NIGHT, ELEVEN O'CLOCK.

Faith, Jack, thou hadst half undone me with thy nonsense, though I would not own it on my yesterday's letter: my conscience of thy party before.— But I think I am my own man again.

So near to execution my plot; so near springing my mine; all agreed upon between the women and me; or I believe thou hadst overthrown me.

I have time for a few lines preparative to what is to happen in an hour or two; and I love to write to the moment.

We have been extremely happy. How many agreeable days have we known together!—What may the next two hours produce.

When I parted with my charmer, (which I did, with infinite reluctance, half an hour ago,) it was upon her promise that she would not sit up to write or read. For so engaging was the conversation to me, (and indeed my behaviour throughout the whole of it was confessedly agreeable to her,) that I insisted, if she did not directly retire to rest, that she should add another happy hour to the former.

To have sat up writing or reading half the night, as she sometimes does, would have frustrated my view, as thou wilt observe, when my little plot unravels.

What—What—What now!—Bounding villain! wouldst thou choke me?—

I was speaking to my heart, Jack!—It was then at my throat.—And what is all this for?—These shy women, how, when a man thinks himself near the mark, do they tempest him!

Is all ready, Dorcas? Has my beloved kept her word with me?—Whether are these billowy heavings owing more to love or to fear? I cannot tell, for the soul of me, of which I have most. If I can but take her before her apprehension, before her eloquence, is awake—

Limbs, why thus convulsed?—Knees, till now so firmly knit, why thus relaxed? why beat you thus together? Will not these trembling fingers, which twice have refused to direct the pen, fail me in the arduous moment?

Once again, why and for what all these convulsions? This project is not to end in matrimony, surely!

But the consequences must be greater than I had thought of till this moment—my beloved's destiny or my own may depend upon the issue of the two next hours!

I will recede, I think!—

Soft, O virgin saint, and safe as soft, be thy slumbers!

I will now once more turn to my friend Belford's letter. Thou shalt have fair play, my charmer. I will reperuse what thy advocate has to say for thee. Weak arguments will do, in the frame I am in!—

But, what, what's the matter!—What a double—But the uproar abates!—What a double coward am I!—Or is it that I am taken in a cowardly minute? for heroes have their fits of fear; cowards their brave moments; and virtuous women, all but my Clarissa, their moment critical—

But thus coolly enjoying the reflection in a hurricane!—Again the confusion is renewed—

What! Where!—How came it!

Is my beloved safe—

O wake not too roughly, my beloved!

LETTER XVI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. THURSDAY MORNING, FIVE O'CLOCK, (JUNE 8.)

Now is my reformation secure; for I never shall love any other woman! Oh! she is all variety! She must ever be new to me! Imagination cannot form; much less can the pencil paint; nor can the soul of painting, poetry, describe an angel so exquisitely, so elegantly lovely!—But I will not by anticipation pacify thy impatience. Although the subject is too hallowed for profane contemplation, yet shalt thou have the whole before thee as it passed: and this not from a spirit wantoning in description upon so rich a subject; but with a design to put a bound to thy roving thoughts. It will be iniquity, greater than a Lovelace was ever guilty of, to carry them farther than I shall acknowledge.

Thus then, connecting my last with the present, I lead to it.

Didst thou not, by the conclusion of my former, perceive the consternation I was in, just as I was about to reperuse thy letter, in order to prevail upon myself to recede from my purpose of awaking in terrors my slumbering charmer? And what dost think was the matter?

I'll tell thee—

At a little after two, when the whole house was still, or seemed to be so, and, as it proved, my Clarissa in bed, and fast asleep; I also in a manner undressed (as indeed I was for an hour before) and in my gown and slippers, though, to oblige thee, writing on!—I was alarmed by a trampling noise over head, and a confused buz of mixed voices, some louder than others, like scolding, and little short of screaming. While I was wondering what could be the matter, down stairs ran Dorcas, and at my door, in an accent rather frightedly and hoarsely inward than shrilly clamorous, she cried out Fire! Fire! And this the more alarmed me, as she seemed to endeavour to cry out louder, but could not.

My pen (its last scrawl a benediction on my beloved) dropped from my fingers; and up started I; and making but three steps to the door, opening it, cried out, Where! Where! almost as much terrified as the wench; while she, more than half undrest, her petticoats in her hand, unable to speak distinctly, pointed up stairs.

I was there in a moment, and found all owing to the carelessness of Mrs. Sinclair's cook-maid, who having sat up to read the simple History of Dorastus and Faunia, when she should have been in bed, had set fire to an old pair of calico window-curtains.

She had had the presence of mind, in her fright, to tear down the half-burnt vallens, as well as curtains, and had got them, though blazing, into the chimney, by the time I came up; so that I had the satisfaction to find the danger happily over.

Mean time Dorcas, after she had directed me up stairs, not knowing the worst was over, and expecting every minute the house would be in a blaze, out of tender regard for her lady, [I shall for ever love the wench for it,] ran to her door, and rapping loudly at it, in a recovered voice, cried out, with a shrillness equal to her love, Fire! Fire! The house is on fire!—Rise, Madam!—This instant rise—if you would not be burnt in your bed!

No sooner had she made this dreadful out-cry, but I heard her lady's door, with hasty violence, unbar, unbolt, unlock, and open, and my charmer's voice sounding like that of one going into a fit.

Thou mayest believe that I was greatly affected. I trembled with concern for her, and hastened down faster than the alarm of fire had made me run up, in order to satisfy her that all the danger was over.

When I had flown down to her chamber-door, there I beheld the most charming creature in the world, supporting herself on the arm of the gasping Dorcas, sighing, trembling, and ready to faint, with nothing on but an under petticoat, her lovely bosom half open, and her feet just slipped into her shoes. As soon as she saw me, she panted, and struggled to speak; but could only say, O Mr. Lovelace! and down was ready to sink.

I clasped her in my arms with an ardour she never felt before: My dearest life! fear nothing: I have been up—the danger is over—the fire is got under—and how, foolish devil, [to Dorcas,] could you thus, by your hideous yell, alarm and frighten my angel!

O Jack! how her sweet bosom, as I clasped her to mine, heaved and panted! I could even distinguish her dear heart flutter, flutter, against mine; and, for a few minutes, I feared she would go into fits.

Lest the half-lifeless charmer should catch cold in this undress, I lifted her to her bed, and sat down by her upon the side of it, endeavouring with the utmost tenderness, as well of action as expression, to dissipate her terrors.

But what did I get by this my generous care of her, and my successful endeavour to bring her to herself?—Nothing (ungrateful as she was!) but the most passionate exclamations: for we had both already forgotten the occasion, dreadful as it was, which had thrown her into my arms: I, from the joy of encircling the almost disrobed body of the loveliest of her sex; she, from the greater terrors that arose from finding herself in my arms, and both seated on the bed, from which she had been so lately frightened.

And now, Belford, reflect upon the distance at which the watchful charmer had hitherto kept me: reflect upon my love, and upon my sufferings for her: reflect upon her vigilance, and how long I had laid in wait to elude it; the awe I had stood in, because of her frozen virtue and over-niceness; and that I never before was so happy with her; and then think how ungovernable must be my transports in those happy moments!—And yet, in my own account, I was both decent and generous.

But, far from being affected, as I wished, by an address so fervent, (although from a man from whom she had so lately owned a regard, and with whom, but an hour or two before, she had parted with so much satisfaction,) I never saw a bitterer, or more moving grief, when she came fully to herself.

She appealed to Heaven against my treachery, as she called it; while I, by the most solemn vows, pleaded my own equal fright, and the reality of the danger that had alarmed us both.

She conjured me, in the most solemn and affecting manner, by turns threatening and soothing, to quit her apartment, and permit her to hide herself from the light, and from every human eye.

I besought her pardon, yet could not avoid offending; and repeatedly vowed, that the next morning's sun should witness our espousals. But taking, I suppose, all my protestations of this kind as an indication that I intended to proceed to the last extremity, she would hear nothing that I said; but, redoubling her struggles to get from me, in broken accents, and exclamations the most vehement, she protested, that she would not survive what she called a treatment so disgraceful and villanous; and, looking all wildly round her, as if for some instrument of mischief, she espied a pair of sharp-pointed scissors on a chair by the bed-side, and endeavoured to catch them up, with design to make her words good on the spot.

Seeing her desperation, I begged her to be pacified; that she would hear me speak but one word; declaring that I intended no dishonour to her: and having seized the scissors, I threw them into the chimney; and she still insisting vehemently upon my distance, I permitted her to take the chair.

But, O the sweet discomposure!—Her bared shoulders, and arms so inimitably fair and lovely: her spread hands crossed over her charming neck; yet not half concealing its glossy beauties: the scanty coat, as she rose from me, giving the whole of her admirable shape, and fine- turn'd limbs: her eyes running over, yet seeming to threaten future vengeance: and at last her lips uttering what every indignant look and glowing feature portended: exclaiming as if I had done the worst I could do, and vowing never to forgive me; wilt thou wonder if I resumed the incensed, the already too-much-provoked fair-one?

I did; and clasped her once more to my bosom: but, considering the delicacy of her frame, her force was amazing, and showed how much in earnest she was in her resentment; for it was with the utmost difficulty that I was able to hold her: nor could I prevent her sliding through my arms, to fall upon her knees: which she did at my feet: and there in the anguish of her soul, her streaming eyes lifted up to my face with supplicating softness, hands folded, dishevelled hair; for her night head-dress having fallen off in her struggling, her charming tresses fell down in naturally shining ringlets, as if officious to conceal the dazzling beauties of her neck and shoulders; her lovely bosom too heaving with sighs, and broken sobs, as if to aid her quivering lips in pleading for her—in this manner, but when her grief gave way to her speech, in words pronounced with that emphatical propriety, which distinguishes this admirable creature in her elocution from all the women I ever heard speak, did she implore my compassion and my honour.

'Consider me, dear Lovelace,' [dear was her charming word!] 'on my knees I beg you to consider me as a poor creature who has no protector but you; who has no defence but your honour: by that honour! by your humanity! by all you have vowed! I conjure you not to make me abhor myself! not to make me vile in my own eyes!'

I mentioned to-morrow as the happiest day of my life.

Tell me not of to-morrow. If indeed you mean me honourably, now, this very instant NOW! you must show it, and be gone! you can never in a whole long life repair the evils you NOW make me suffer!

Wicked wretch!—Insolent villain!—yes, she called me insolent villain, although so much in my power! And for what!—only for kissing (with passion indeed) her inimitable neck, her lips, her cheeks, her forehead, and her streaming eyes, as this assemblage of beauties offered itself at once to my ravished sight; she continuing kneeling at my feet as I sat.

If I am a villain, Madam!—And then my grasping, but trembling hand—I hope I did not hurt the tenderest and loveliest of all her beauties—If I am a villain, Madam—

She tore my ruffle, shrunk from my happy hand, with amazing force and agility, as with my other arm I would have encircled her waist.

Indeed you are!—the worst of villains!—Help! dear, blessed people! and screamed out—No help for a poor

creature!

Am I then a villain, Madam?—Am I then a villain, say you?—and clasped both my arms about her, offering to raise her to my bounding heart.

Oh! no!—And yet you are!—And again I was her dear Lovelace!—her hands again clasped over her charming bosom:—Kill me! kill me!—if I am odious enough in your eyes to deserve this treatment: and I will thank you!—Too long, much too long has my life been a burden to me!—Or, (wildly looking all round her,) give me but the means, and I will instantly convince you that my honour is dearer to me than my life!

Then, with still folded hands, and fresh streaming eyes, I was her blessed Lovelace; and she would thank me with her latest breath if I would permit her to make that preference, or free her from farther indignities.

I sat suspended for a moment: by my soul, thought I, thou art, upon full proof, an angel and no woman! still, however, close clasping her to my bosom, as I raised her from her knees, she again slid through my arms, and dropped upon them.—'See, Mr. Lovelace!—Good God! that I should live to see this hour, and to bear this treatment!—See at your feet a poor creature, imploring your pity; who, for your sake, is abandoned of all the world. Let not my father's curse thus dreadfully operate! be not you the inflicter, who have been the cause of it: but spare me, I beseech you, spare me!—for how have I deserved this treatment from you? for your own sake, if not for my sake, and as you would that God Almighty, in your last hour, should have mercy upon you, spare me!'

What heart but must have been penetrated!

I would again have raised the dear suppliant from her knees; but she would not be raised, till my softened mind, she said, had yielded to her prayer, and bid her rise to be innocent.

Rise then, my angel! rise, and be what you are, and all you wish to be! only pronounce me pardoned for what has passed, and tell me you will continue to look upon me with that eye of favour and serenity which I have been blessed with for some days past, and I will submit to my beloved conqueress, whose power never was at so great an height with me, as now, and retire to my apartment.

God Almighty, said she, hear your prayers in your most arduous moments, as you have heard mine! and now leave me, this moment leave me, to my own recollection: in that you will leave me to misery enough, and more than you ought to wish to your bitterest enemy.

Impute not every thing, my best beloved, to design, for design it was not—

O Mr. Lovelace!

Upon my soul, Madam, the fire was real—[and so it was, Jack!]
—The house, my dearest life, might have been consumed by it, as you will be convinced in the morning by ocular demonstration.

O Mr. Lovelace!—

Let my passion for you, Madam, and the unexpected meeting of you at your chamber-door, in an attitude so charming—

Leave me, leave me, this moment!—I beseech you leave me; looking wildly and in confusion about her, and upon herself.

Excuse me, my dearest creature, for those liberties which, innocent as they were, your too great delicacy may make you take amiss—

No more! no more!—leave me, I beseech you! again looking upon herself, and round her, in a sweet confusion—Begone! begone!

Then weeping, she struggled vehemently to withdraw her hands, which all the while I held between mine.—Her struggles!—O what additional charms, as I now reflect, did her struggles give to every feature, every limb, of a person so sweetly elegant and lovely!

Impossible, my dearest life, till you pronounce my pardon!—Say but you forgive me!—say but you forgive me!

I beseech you to be gone! leave me to myself, that I may think what I can do, and what I ought to do.

That, my dearest creature, is not enough. You must tell me that I am forgiven; that you will see me to-morrow as if nothing had happened.

And then I clasped her again in my arms, hoping she would not forgive me—

I will—I do forgive you—wretch that you are!

Nay, my Clarissa! and is it such a reluctant pardon, mingled with a word so upbraiding, that I am to be put off with, when you are thus (clasping her close to me) in my power?

I do, I do forgive you!

Heartily?

Yes, heartily!

And freely?

Freely!

And will you look upon me to-morrow as if nothing had passed?

Yes, yes!

I cannot take these peevish affirmatives, so much like intentional negatives!—Say, you will, upon your honour.

Upon my honour, then—Oh! now, begone! begone!—and never never—

What! never, my angel!—Is this forgiveness?

Never, said she, let what has passed be remembered more!

I insisted upon one kiss to seal my pardon—and retired like a fool, a woman's fool, as I was!—I sneakily retired!—Couldst thou have believed it?

But I had no sooner entered my own apartment, than reflecting upon the opportunity I had lost, and that all

I had gained was but an increase of my own difficulties; and upon the ridicule I should meet with below upon a weakness so much out of my usual character; I repented, and hastened back, in hope that, through the distress of mind which I left her in, she had not so soon fastened the door; and I was fully resolved to execute all my purposes, be the consequence what it would; for, thought I, I have already sinned beyond cordial forgiveness, I doubt; and if fits and desperation ensue, I can but marry at last, and then I shall make her amends.

But I was justly punished; for her door was fast: and hearing her sigh and sob, as if her heart would burst, My beloved creature, said I, rapping gently, [the sobbings then ceasing,] I want but to say three words to you, which must be the most acceptable you ever heard from me. Let me see you out for one moment.

I thought I heard her coming to open the door, and my heart leapt in that hope; but it was only to draw another bolt, to make it still the faster; and she either could not or would not answer me, but retired to the farther end of her apartment, to her closet, probably; and, more like a fool than before, again I sneaked away.

This was mine, my plot! and this was all I made of it!—I love her more than ever!—And well I may!—never saw I polished ivory so beautiful as her arms and shoulders; never touched I velvet so soft as her skin: her virgin bosom—O Belford, she is all perfection! then such an elegance!— In her struggling losing her shoe, (but just slipt on, as I told thee,) her pretty foot equally white and delicate as the hand of any other woman, or even her own hand!

But seest thou not that I have a claim of merit for a grace that every body hitherto had denied me? and that is for a capacity of being moved by prayers and tears—Where, where, on this occasion, was the callous, where the flint, by which my heart was said to be surrounded?

This, indeed, is the first instance, in the like case, that ever I was wrought upon. But why? because, I never before encountered a resistance so much in earnest: a resistance, in short, so irresistible.

What a triumph has her sex obtained in my thoughts by this trial, and this resistance?

But if she can now forgive me—can!—she must. Has she not upon her honour already done it?—But how will the dear creature keep that part of her promise which engages her to see me in the morning as if nothing had happened?

She would give the world, I fancy, to have the first interview over!—She had not best reproach me—yet not to reproach me!—what a charming puzzle!—Let her break her word with me at her peril. Fly me she cannot—no appeals lie from my tribunal—What friend has she in the world, if my compassion exert not itself in her favour?—and then the worthy Captain Tomlinson, and her uncle Harlowe, will be able to make all up for me, be my next offence what it may.

As to thy apprehensions of her committing any rashness upon herself, whatever she might have done in her passion, if she could have seized upon her scissors, or found any other weapon, I dare say there is no fear of that from her deliberate mind. A man has trouble enough with these truly pious, and truly virtuous girls; [now I believe there are such;] he had need to have some benefit from, some security in, the rectitude of their minds.

In short, I fear nothing in this lady but grief: yet that's a slow worker, you know; and gives time to pop in a little joy between its sullen fits.

LETTER XVII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. THURSDAY MORNING, EIGHT O'CLOCK.

Her chamber-door has not yet been opened. I must not expect she will breakfast with me. Nor dine with me, I doubt. A little silly soul, what troubles does she make to herself by her over-niceness!—All I have done to her, would have been looked upon as a frolic only, a romping bout, and laughed off by nine parts in ten of the sex accordingly. The more she makes of it, the more painful to herself, as well as to me.

Why now, Jack, were it not better, upon her own notions, that she seemed not so sensible as she will make herself to be, if she is very angry?

But perhaps I am more afraid than I need. I believe I am. From her over-niceness arises my fear, more than from any extraordinary reason for resentment. Next time, she may count herself very happy, if she come off no worse.

The dear creature was so frightened, and so fatigued, last night, no wonder she lies it out this morning.

I hope she has had more rest than I have had. Soft and balmy, I hope, have been her slumbers, that she may meet me in tolerable temper. All sweetly blushing and confounded—I know how she will look!—But why should she, the sufferer, be ashamed, when I, the trespasser, am not?

But custom is a prodigious thing. The women are told how much their blushes heighten their graces: they practise for them therefore: blushes come as hastily when they call for them, as their tears: aye, that's it! While we men, taking blushes for a sign of guilt or sheepishness, are equally studious to suppress them.

By my troth, Jack, I am half as much ashamed to see the women below, as my fair-one can be to see me. I have not yet opened my door, that I may not be obtruded upon my them.

After all, what devils may one make of the sex! To what a height of— what shall I call it?—must those of it be arrived, who once loved a man with so much distinction, as both Polly and Sally loved me; and yet can have got so much above the pangs of jealousy, so much above the mortifying reflections that arise from dividing and sharing with new objects the affections of them they prefer to all others, as to wish for, and promote a competitorship in his love, and make their supreme delight consist in reducing others to their

level!—For thou canst not imagine, how even Sally Martin rejoiced last night in the thought that the lady's hour was approaching.

PAST TEN O'CLOCK.

I never longed in my life for any thing with so much impatience as to see my charmer. She has been stirring, it seems, these two hours.

Dorcas just now tapped at her door, to take her morning commands.

She had none for her, was the answer.

She desired to know, if she would not breakfast?

A sullen and low-voiced negative received Dorcas.

I will go myself.

Three different times tapped I at the door, but had no answer.

Permit me, dearest creature, to inquire after your health. As you have not been seen to-day, I am impatient to know how you do.

Not a word of answer; but a deep sigh, even to sobbing.

Let me beg of you, Madam, to accompany me up another pair of stairs— you'll rejoice to see what a happy escape we have all had.

A happy escape indeed, Jack!—For the fire had scorched the window-board, singed the hangings, and burnt through the slit-deal linings of the window-jambs.

No answer, Madam!—Am I not worthy of one word?—Is it thus you keep your promise with me?—Shall I not have the favour of your company for two minutes [only for two minutes] in the dining-room?

Hem!—and a deep sigh!—were all the answer.

Answer me but how you do! Answer me but that you are well! Is this the forgiveness that was the condition of my obedience?

Then, with a faintish, but angry voice, begone from my door!—Wretch! inhuman, barbarous, and all that is base and treacherous! begone from my door! Nor tease thus a poor creature, entitled to protection, not outrage.

I see, Madam, how you keep your word with me—if a sudden impulse, the effects of an unthought-of accident, cannot be forgiven—

O the dreadful weight of a father's curse, thus in the very letter of it—

And then her voice dying away in murmurs inarticulate, I looked through the key-hole, and saw her on her knees, her face, though not towards me, lifted up, as well as hands, and these folded, depreciating, I suppose, that gloomy tyrant's curse.

I could not help being moved.

My dearest life! admit me to your presence but for two minutes, and confirm your promised pardon; and may lightning blast me on the spot, if I offer any thing but my penitence, at a shrine so sacred!—I will afterwards leave you for a whole day; till to-morrow morning; and then attend you with writings, all ready to sign, a license obtained, or if it cannot, a minister without one. This once believe me! When you see the reality of the danger that gave occasion for this your unhappy resentment, you will think less hardly of me. And let me beseech you to perform a promise on which I made a reliance not altogether ungenerous.

I cannot see you! Would to Heaven I never had! If I write, that's all I can do.

Let your writing then, my dearest life, confirm your promise: and I will withdraw in expectation of it.

PAST ELEVEN O'CLOCK.

She rung her bell for Dorcas; and, with her door in her hand, only half opened, gave her a billet for me.

How did the dear creature look, Dorcas?

She was dressed. She turned her face quite from me; and sighed, as if her heart would break.

Sweet creature:—I kissed the wet wafer, and drew it from the paper with my breath.

These are the contents.—No inscriptive Sir! No Mr. Lovelace!

I cannot see you: nor will I, if I can help it. Words cannot express the anguish of my sou on your baseness and ingratitude.

If the circumstances of things are such, that I can have no way for reconciliation with those who would have been my natural protectors from such outrages, but through you, [the only inducement I have to stay a moment longer in your knowledge,] pen and ink must be, at present, the only means of communication between us.

Vilest of men, and most detestable of plotters! how have I deserved from you the shocking indignities—but no more—only for your own sake, wish not, at least for a week to come, to see

The undeservedly injured and insulted CLARISSA HARLOWE

So thou seest, nothing could have stood me in stead, but this plot of Tomlinson and her uncle! To what a pretty pass, nevertheless, have I brought myself!—Had Caesar been such a fool, he had never passed the rubicon. But after he had passed it, had he retreated re infecta, intimidated by a senatorial edict, what a pretty figure would he have made in history!—I might have known, that to attempt a robbery, and put a person in bodily fear, is as punishable as if the robbery had been actually committed.

But not to see her for a week!—Dear, pretty soul! how she anticipates me in every thing! The counsellor will have finished the writings to-day or to-morrow, at furthest: the license with the parson, or the parson without the license, must also be procured within the next four-and- twenty hours; Pritchard is as good as ready with his indentures tripartite: Tomlinson is at hand with a favourable answer from her uncle —yet not to see her

for a week!—Dear sweet soul;—her good angel is gone a journey: is truanting at least. But nevertheless, in thy week's time, or in much less, my charmer, I doubt not to complete my triumph!

But what vexes me of all things is, that such an excellent creature should break her word:—Fie, fie, upon her!—But nobody is absolutely perfect! 'Tis human to err, but not to persevere—I hope my charmer cannot be inhuman!

LETTER XVIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. KING'S ARMS, PALL-MALL, THURSDAY, TWO O'CLOCK.

Several billets passed between us before I went out, by the internuncioship of Dorcas: for which reason mine are superscribed by her married name.—She would not open her door to receive them; lest I should be near it, I suppose: so Dorcas was forced to put them under the door (after copying them for thee); and thence to take the answers. Read them, if thou wilt, at this place.

*** TO MRS. LOVELACE

Indeed, my dearest life, you carry this matter too far. What will the people below, who suppose us one as to the ceremony, think of so great a niceness? Liberties so innocent! the occasion so accidental!—You will expose yourself as well as me.—Hitherto they know nothing of what has passed. And what indeed has passed to occasion all this resentment?—I am sure you will not, by a breach of your word of honour, give me reason to conclude that, had I not obeyed you, I could have fared no worse.

Most sincerely do I repent the offence given to your delicacy—But must I, for so accidental an occurrence, be branded by such shocking names?—Vilest of men, and most detestable of plotters, are hard words!—From the pen of such a lady too.

If you step up another pair of stairs, you will be convinced, that, however detestable I may be to you, I am no plotter in this affair.

I must insist upon seeing you, in order to take your directions upon some of the subjects we talked of yesterday in the evening.

All that is more than necessary is too much. I claim your promised pardon, and wish to plead it on my knees.

I beg your presence in the dining-room for one quarter of an hour, and I will then leave you for the day, I am,

My dearest life, Your ever adoring and truly penitent LOVELACE.

*** TO MR. LOVELACE

I will not see you. I cannot see you. I have no directions to give you. Let Providence decide for me as it pleases.

The more I reflect upon your vileness, your ungrateful, your barbarous vileness, the more I am exasperated against you.

You are the last person whose judgment I will take upon what is or is not carried too far in matters of decency.

'Tis grievous to me to write, or even to think of you at present. Urge me no more then. Once more, I will not see you. Nor care I, now you have made me vile to myself, what other people think of me.

*** TO MRS. LOVELACE

Again, Madam, I remind you of your promise: and beg leave to say, I insist upon the performance of it.

Remember, dearest creature, that the fault of a blameable person cannot warrant a fault in one more perfect. Overniceness may be underniceness!

I cannot reproach myself with any thing that deserves this high resentment.

I own that the violence of my passion for you might have carried me beyond fit bounds—but that your commands and adjurations had power over me at such a moment, I humbly presume to say, deserves some consideration.

You enjoin me not to see you for a week. If I have not your pardon before Captain Tomlinson comes to town, what shall I say to him?

I beg once more your presence in the dining-room. By my soul, Madam, I must see you.

I want to consult you about the license, and other particulars of great importance. The people below think us married; and I cannot talk to you upon such subjects with the door between us.

For Heaven's sake, favour me with your presence for a few minutes: and I will leave you for the day.

If I am to be forgiven, according to your promise, the earlier forgiveness will be most obliging, and will save great pain to yourself, as well as to

Your truly contrite and afflicted LOVELACE.

*** TO MR. LOVELACE

The more you tease me, the worse it will be for you.

Time is wanted to consider whether I ever should think of you at all.

At present, it is my sincere wish, that I may never more see your face.

All that can afford you the least shadow of favour from me, arises from the hoped-for reconciliation with my real friends, not my Judas protector.

I am careless at present of consequences. I hate myself: And who is it I have reason to value?—Not the man

who could form a plot to disgrace his own hopes, as well as a poor friendless creature, (made friendless by himself,) by insults not to be thought of with patience.

*** TO MRS. LOVELACE

MADAM, I will go to the Commons, and proceed in every particular as if I had not the misfortune to be under your displeasure.

I must insist upon it, that however faulty my passion, on so unexpected an incident, made me appear to a lady of your delicacy, yet my compliance with your entreaties at such a moment [as it gave you an instance of your power over me, which few men could have shown] ought, duly considered, to entitle me to the effects of that solemn promise which was the condition of my obedience.

I hope to find you in a kinder, and, I will say, juster disposition on my return. Whether I get the license, or not, let me beg of you to make the soon you have been pleased to bid me hope for, to-morrow morning. This will reconcile every thing, and make me the happiest of men.

The settlements are ready to sign, or will be by night.

For Heaven's sake, Madam, do not carry your resentment into a displeasure so disproportionate to the offence. For that would be to expose us both to the people below; and, what is of infinite more consequence to us, to Captain Tomlinson. Let us be able, I beseech you, Madam, to assure him, on his next visit, that we are one.

As I have no hope to be permitted to dine with you, I shall not return till evening: and then, I presume to say, I expect [your promise authorizes me to use the word] to find you disposed to bless, by your consent for to-morrow,

Your adoring LOVELACE.

What pleasure did I propose to take, how to enjoy the sweet confusion in which I expected to find her, while all was so recent!—But she must, she shall, see me on my return. It were better to herself, as well as for me, that she had not made so much ado about nothing. I must keep my anger alive, lest it sink into compassion. Love and compassion, be the provocation ever so great, are hard to be separated: while anger converts what would be pity, without it, into resentment. Nothing can be lovely in a man's eye with which he is thoroughly displeased.

I ordered Dorcas, on putting the last billet under the door, and finding it taken up, to tell her, that I hoped an answer to it before I went out.

Her reply was verbal, tell him that I care not whither he goes, nor what he does.—And this, re-urged by Dorcas, was all she had to say to me.

I looked through the key-hole at my going by her door, and saw her on her knees, at her bed's feet, her head and bosom on the bed, her arms extended; [sweet creature how I adore her!] and in an agony she seemed to be, sobbing, as I heard at that distance, as if her heart would break.—By my soul, Jack, I am a pityful fellow! Recollection is my enemy!—Divine excellence!—Happy with her for so many days together! Now so unhappy!—And for what?—But she is purity herself. And why, after all, should I thus torment—but I must not trust myself with myself, in the humour I am in.

Waiting here for Mowbray and Mallory, by whose aid I am to get the license, I took papers out of my pocket, to divert myself; and thy last post officiously the first into my hand. I gave it the honour of a perusal; and this revived the subject with me, with which I had resolved not to trust myself.

I remember, that the dear creature, in her torn answer to my proposals, says, condescension is not meanness. She better knows how to make this out, than any mortal breathing. Condescension indeed implies dignity: and dignity ever was there in her condescension. Yet such a dignity as gave grace to the condescension; for there was no pride, no insult, no apparent superiority, indicated by it.—This, Miss Howe confirms to be a part of her general character.*

* See Vol. IV. Letter XXIII.

I can tell her, how she might behave, to make me her own for ever. She knows she cannot fly me. She knows she must see me sooner or later; the sooner the more gracious.—I would allow her to resent [not because the liberties I took with her require resentment, were she not a CLARISSA; but as it becomes her particular niceness to resent]: but would she show more love than abhorrence of me in her resentment; would she seem, if it were but to seem, to believe the fire no device, and all that followed merely accidental; and descend, upon it, to tender expostulation, and upbraiding for the advantage I would have taken of her surprise; and would she, at last, be satisfied (as well she may) that it was attended with no further consequence; and place some generous confidence in my honour, [power loves to be trusted, Jack;] I think I would put an end to all her trials, and pay her my vows at the altar.

Yet, to have taken such bold steps, as with Tomlinson and her uncle—to have made such a progress—O Belford, Belford, how I have puzzled myself, as well as her!—This cursed aversion to wedlock how it has entangled me!—What contradictions has it made me guilty of!

How pleasing to myself, to look back upon the happy days I gave her; though mine would doubtless have been unmixedly so, could I have determined to lay aside my contrivances, and to be as sincere all the time, as she deserved that I should be!

If I find this humour hold but till to-morrow morning, [and it has now lasted two full hours, and I seem, methinks, to have pleasure in encouraging it,] I will make thee a visit, I think, or get thee to come to me; and then will I—consult thee upon it.

But she will not trust me. She will not confide in my honour. Doubt, in this case, is defiance. She loves me not well enough to forgive me generously. She is so greatly above me! How can I forgive her for a merit so mortifying to my pride! She thinks, she knows, she has told me, that she is above me. These words are still in my ears, 'Be gone, Lovelace!—My soul is above thee, man!—Thou hast a proud heart to contend with!—My

soul is above thee, man!* Miss Howe thinks her above me too. Thou, even thou, my friend, my intimate friend and companion, art of the same opinion. Then I fear her as much as I love her.—How shall my pride bear these reflections? My wife (as I have often said, because it so often recurs to my thoughts) to be so much my superior!—Myself to be considered but as the second person in my own family!—Canst thou teach me to bear such a reflection as this!—To tell me of my acquisition in her, and that she, with all her excellencies, will be mine in full property, is a mistake—it cannot be so—for shall I not be her's; and not my own?—Will not every act of her duty (as I cannot deserve it) be a condescension, and a triumph over me?—And must I owe it merely to her goodness that she does not despise me?—To have her condescend to bear with my follies!—To wound me with an eye of pity!—A daughter of the Harlowes thus to excel the last, and as I have heretofore said, not the meanest of the Lovelaces**—forbid it!

* See Vol. IV. Letter XLVII. ** See Vol. III. Letter XVIII.

Yet forbid it not—for do I not now—do I not every moment—see her before me all over charms, and elegance and purity, as in the struggles of the past midnight? And in these struggles, heart, voice, eyes, hand, and sentiments, so greatly, so gloriously consistent with the character she has sustained from her cradle to the present hour?

But what advantages do I give thee?

Yet have I not always done her justice? Why then thy teasing impertinence?

However, I forgive thee, Jack—since (so much generous love am I capable of!) I had rather all the world should condemn me, than that her character should suffer the least impeachment.

The dear creature herself once told me, that there was a strange mixture in my mind.* I have been called Devil and Beelzebub, between the two proud beauties: I must indeed be a Beelzebub, if I had not some tolerable qualities.

* See Vol. III. Letter XXXIII.

But as Miss Howe says, the suffering time of this excellent creature is her shining time.* Hitherto she has done nothing but shine.

* See Vol. IV. Letter XXIII.

She called me villain, Belford, within these few hours. And what is the sum of the present argument; but that had I not been a villain in her sense of the word, she had not been such an angel?

O Jack, Jack! This midnight attempt has made me mad; has utterly undone me! How can the dear creature say, I have made her vile in her own eyes, when her behaviour under such a surprise, and her resentment under such circumstances, have so greatly exalted her in mine?

Whence, however, this strange rhapsody?—Is it owing to my being here? That I am not at Sinclair's? But if there be infection in that house, how has my beloved escaped it?

But no more in this strain!—I will see what her behaviour will be on my return—yet already do I begin to apprehend some little sinkings, some little retrogradations: for I have just now a doubt arisen, whether, for her own sake, I should wish her to forgive me lightly, or with difficulty?

I am in a way to come at the wished-for license.

I have now given every thing between my beloved and me a full consideration; and my puzzle is over. What has brought me to a speedier determination is, that I think I have found out what she means by the week's distance at which she intends to hold me. It is, that she may have time to write to Miss Howe, to put in motion that cursed scheme of her's, and to take measures upon it which shall enable her to abandon and renounce me for ever. Now, Jack, if I obtain not admission to her presence on my return; but am refused with haughtiness; if her week be insisted upon (such prospects before her); I shall be confirmed in my conjecture; and it will be plain to me, that weak at best was that love, which could give place to punctilio, at a time when that all-reconciling ceremony, as she must think, waits her command:—then will I recollect all her perversenesses; then will I re-peruse Miss Howe's letters, and the transcripts from others of them; give way to my aversion to the life of shackles: and then shall she be mine in my own way.

But, after all, I am in hopes that she will have better considered of every thing by the evening; that her threat of a week's distance was thrown out in the heat of passion; and that she will allow, that I have as much cause to quarrel with her for breach of her word, as she has with me for breach of the peace.

These lines of Rowe have got into my head; and I shall repeat them very devoutly all the way the chairman shall poppet me towards her by-and-by.

*Teach me, some power, the happy art of speech,
To dress my purpose up in gracious words;
Such as may softly steal upon her soul,
And never waken the tempestuous passions.*

LETTER XIX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 8.

O for a curse to kill with!—Ruined! Undone! Outwitted! Tricked!—Zounds, man, the lady has gone off!—Absolutely gone off! Escaped!—

Thou knowest not, nor canst conceive, the pangs that wring my heart!—What can I do!—O Lord, O Lord, O Lord!

And thou, too, who hast endeavoured to weaken my hands, wilt but clap thy dragon's wings at the tidings!

Yet I must write, or I shall go distracted! Little less have I been these two hours; dispatching messengers to every stage, to every inn, to every waggon or coach, whether flying or creeping, and to every house with a bill up, for five miles around.

The little hypocrite, who knows not a soul in this town, [I thought I was sure of her at any time,] such an unexperienced traitress—giving me hope too, in her first billet, that her expectation of the family-reconciliation would withhold her from taking such a step as this—curse upon her contrivances!—I thought, that it was owing to her bashfulness, to her modesty, that, after a few innocent freedoms, she could not look me in the face; when, all the while, she was impudently [yes, I say, impudently, though she be Clarissa Harlowe] contriving to rob me of the dearest property I had ever purchased—purchased by a painful servitude of many months; fighting through the wild-beasts of her family for her, and combating with a wind-mill virtue, which hath cost me millions of perjuries only to attempt; and which now, with its damn'd air-fans, has tost me a mile and a half beyond hope!—And this, just as I had arrived within view of the consummation of all my wishes!

O Devil of Love! God of Love no more—how have I deserved this of thee!—Never before the friend of frozen virtue?—Powerless demon, for powerless thou must be, if thou meantest not to frustrate my hopes; who shall henceforth kneel at thy altars!—May every enterprising heart abhor, despise, execrate, renounce thee, as I do!—But, O Belford, Belford, what signifies cursing now!

How she could effect this her wicked escape is my astonishment; the whole sisterhood having charge of her;—for, as yet, I have not had patience enough to inquire into the particulars, nor to let a soul of them approach me.

Of this I am sure, or I had not brought her hither, there is not a creature belonging to this house, that could be corrupted either by virtue or remorse: the highest joy every infernal nymph, of this worse than infernal habitation, could have known, would have been to reduce this proud beauty to her own level.—And as to my villain, who also had charge of her, he is such a seasoned varlet, that he delights in mischief for the sake of it: no bribe could seduce him to betray his trust, were there but wickedness in it!—'Tis well, however, he was out of my way when the cursed news was imparted to me!—Gone, the villain! in quest of her: not to return, nor to see my face [so it seems he declared] till he has heard some tidings of her; and all the out-of-place varlets of his numerous acquaintance are summoned and employed in the same business.

To what purpose brought I this angel (angel I must yet call her) to this hellish house?—And was I not meditating to do her deserved honour? By my soul, Belford, I was resolved—but thou knowest what I had conditionally resolved—And now, who can tell into what hands she may have fallen!

I am mad, stark mad, by Jupiter, at the thoughts of this!—Unprovided, destitute, unacquainted—some villain, worse than myself, who adores her not as I adore her, may have seized her, and taken advantage of her distress!—Let me perish, Belford, if a whole hecatomb of innocents, as the little plagues are called, shall atone for the broken promises and wicked artifices of this cruel creature!

Going home, as I did, with resolutions favourable to her, judge thou of my distraction, when her escape was first hinted to me, although but in broken sentences. I knew not what I said, nor what I did. I wanted to kill somebody. I flew out of one room into another, who broke the matter to me. I charged bribery and corruption, in my first fury, upon all; and threatened destruction to old and young, as they should come in my way.

Dorcas continues locked up from me: Sally and Polly have not yet dared to appear: the vile Sinclair—

But here comes the odious devil. She taps at the door, thought that's only a-jar, whining and snuffling, to try, I suppose, to coax me into temper.

What a helpless state, where a man can only execrate himself and others; the occasion of his rage remaining; the evil increasing upon reflection; time itself conspiring to deepen it!—O how I curs'd her!

I have her now, methinks, before me, blubbing—how odious does sorrow make an ugly face!—Thine, Jack, and this old beldam's, in penitentials, instead of moving compassion, must evermore confirm hatred; while beauty in tears, is beauty heightened, and what my heart has ever delighted to see.—

'What excuse!—Confound you, and your cursed daughters, what excuse can you make?—Is she not gone—Has she not escaped?—But before I am quite distracted, before I commit half a hundred murders, let me hear how it was.'—

I have heard her story!—Art, damn'd, confounded, wicked, unpardonable art, is a woman of her character—But show me a woman, and I'll show thee a plotter!—This plaguy sex is art itself: every individual of it is a plotter by nature.

This is the substance of the old wretch's account.

She told me, 'That I had no sooner left the vile house, than Dorcas acquainted the syren' [Do, Jack, let me call her names!—I beseech thee, Jack, to permit me to call her names!] 'that Dorcas acquainted her lady with it; and that I had left word, that I was gone to doctors-commons, and should be heard of for some hours at the Horn there, if inquired after by the counsellor, or anybody else: that afterwards I should be either at the Cocoa-tree, or King's-Arms, and should not return till late. She then urged her to take some refreshment.

'She was in tears when Dorcas approached her; her saucy eyes swelled with weeping: she refused either to eat or drink; sighed as if her heart would break.'—False, devilish grief! not the humble, silent, grief, that only deserves pity!—Contriving to ruin me, to despoil me of all that I held valuable, in the very midst of it.

'Nevertheless, being resolved not to see me for a week at least, she ordered her to bring up three or four French rolls, with a little butter, and a decanter of water; telling her, she would dispense with her attendance; and that should be all she should live upon in the interim. So artful creature! pretending to lay up for a week's siege.'—For, as to substantial food, she, no more than other angels—Angels! said I—the devil

take me if she be any more an angel!—for she is odious in my eyes; and I hate her mortally!

But O Lovelace, thou liest!—She is all that is lovely. All that is excellent!

But is she, can she be gone!—Oh! how Miss Howe will triumph!—But if that little fury receive her, fate shall make me rich amends; for then will I contrive to have them both.

I was looking back for connection—but the devil take connection; I have no business with it: the contrary best befits distraction, and that will soon be my lot!

'Dorcas consulted the old wretch about obeying her: O yes, by all means; for Mr. Lovelace knew how to come at her at any time: and directed a bottle of sherry to be added.

'This cheerful compliance so obliged her, that she was prevailed upon to go up, and look at the damage done by the fire; and seemed not only shocked by it, but, as they thought, satisfied it was no trick; as she owned she had at first apprehended it to be. All this made them secure; and they laughed in their sleeves, to think what a childish way of showing her resentment she had found out; Sally throwing out her witticisms, that Mrs. Lovelace was right, however, not to quarrel with her bread and butter.'

Now this very childishness, as they imagined it, in such a genius, would have made me suspect either her head, after what had happened the night before; or her purpose, when the marriage was (so far as she knew) to be completed within the week in which she was resolved to secrete herself from me in the same house.

'She sent Will. with a letter to Wilson's, directed to Miss Howe, ordering him to inquire if there were not one for her there.

'He only pretended to go, and brought word there was none; and put her letter in his pocket for me.

'She then ordered him to carry another (which she gave him) to the Horn Tavern to me.—All this done without any seeming hurry: yet she appeared to be very solemn; and put her handkerchief frequently to her eyes.

'Will. pretended to come to me with this letter. But thou the dog had the sagacity to mistrust something on her sending him out a second time; (and to me, whom she had refused to see;) which he thought extraordinary; and mentioned his mistrusts to Sally, Polly, and Dorcas; yet they made light of his suspicions; Dorcas assuring them all, that her lady seemed more stupid with her grief, than active; and that she really believed she was a little turned in her head, and knew not what she did. But all of them depended upon her inexperience, her open temper, and upon her not making the least motion towards going out, or to have a coach or chair called, as sometimes she had done; and still more upon the preparations she had made for a week's siege, as I may call it.

'Will. went out, pretending to bring the letter to me; but quickly returned; his heart still misgiving him, on recollecting my frequent cautions, that he was not to judge for himself, when he had positive orders; but if any doubt occurred, from circumstances I could not foresee, literally to follow them, as the only way to avoid blame.

'But it must have been in this little interval, that she escaped; for soon after his return, they made fast the street-door and hatch, the mother and the two nymphs taking a little turn into the garden; Dorcas going up stairs, and Will. (to avoid being seen by his lady, or his voice heard) down into the kitchen.

'About half an hour after, Dorcas, who had planted herself where she could see her lady's door open, had the curiosity to go look through the keyhole, having a misgiving, as she said, that the lady might offer some violence to herself, in the mood she had been in all day; and finding the key in the door, which was not very usual, she tapped at it three or four times, and having no answer, opened it, with Madam, Madam, did you call?—Supposing her in her closet.

'Having no answer, she stept forward, and was astonished to find she was not there. She hastily ran into the dining-room, then into my apartments; searched every closet; dreading all the time to behold some sad catastrophe.

'Not finding her any where, she ran down to the old creature, and her nymphs, with a Have you seen my lady?—Then she's gone!—She's no where above!

'They were sure she could not be gone out.

'The whole house was in an uproar in an instant; some running up-stairs, some down, from the upper rooms to the lower; and all screaming, How should they look me in the face!

'Will. cried out, he was a dead man: he blamed them; they him; and every one was an accuser, and an excuser, at the same time.

'When they had searched the whole house, and every closet in it, ten times over, to no purpose, they took it into their heads to send to all the porters, chairmen, and hackney-coachmen, that had been near the house for two hours past, to inquire if any of them saw such a young lady; describing her.

'This brought them some light: the only dawning for hope, that I can have, and which keeps me from absolute despair. One of the chairmen gave them this account: That he saw such a one come out of the house a little before four (in a great hurry, and as if frighted) with a little parcel tied up in a handkerchief, in her hand: that he took notice to his fellow, who plied her without her answering, that she was a fine young lady: that he'd warrant, she had either a husband, or very cross parents; for that her eyes seemed swelled with crying. Upon which, a third fellow replied, that it might be a doe escaped from mother Damnable's park. This Mrs. Sinclair told me with a curse, and a wish that she had a better reputation; so handsomely as she lived, and so justly as she paid every body for what she bought; her house visited by the best and civilest of gentlemen; and no noise or brawls ever heard or known in it.

'From these appearances, the fellow who gave this information, had the curiosity to follow her, unperceived. She often looked back. Every body who passed her, turned to look after her; passing their verdict upon her tears, her hurry, and her charming person; till coming to a stand of coaches, a coachman plied her; was accepted; alighted; opened the coach-door in a hurry, seeing her hurry; and in it she stumbled for haste; and, as the fellow believed, hurt her shin with the stumble.'

The devil take me, Belford, if my generous heart is not moved for her, notwithstanding her wicked deceit, to

think what must be her reflections and apprehensions at the time:—A mind so delicate, heeding no censures; yet, probably afraid of being laid hold of by a Lovelace in every one she saw! At the same time, not knowing to what dangers she was about to expose herself; nor of whom she could obtain shelter; a stranger to the town, and to all its ways; the afternoon far gone: but little money; and no clothes but those she had on!

It is impossible, in this little interval since last night, that Miss Howe's Townsend could be co-operating.

But how she must abhor me to run all these risques; how heartily she must detest me for my freedoms of last night! Oh! that I had given her greater reason for a resentment so violent!—As to her virtue, I am too much enraged to give her the merit due to that. To virtue it cannot be owing that she should fly from the charming prospects that were before her; but to malice, hatred, contempt, Harlowe pride, (the worst of pride,) and to all the deadly passions that ever reigned in a female breast—and if I can but recover her—But be still, be calm, be hushed, my stormy passions; for is it not Clarissa [Harlowe must I say?] that thus far I rave against?

'The fellow heard her say, drive fast! very fast! Where, Madam? To Holborn-bars, answered she; repeating, Drive very fast!—And up she pulled both the windows: and he lost sight of the coach in a minute.

'Will., as soon as he had this intelligence, speeded away in hopes to trace her out; declaring, that he would never think of seeing me, till he had heard some tidings of his lady.'

And now, Belford, all my hope is, that this fellow (who attended us in our airing to Hampstead, to Highgate, to Muswell-hill, to Kentish-town) will hear of her at some one or other of those places. And on this I the rather build, as I remember she was once, after our return, very inquisitive about the stages, and their prices; praising the conveniency to passengers in their going off every hour; and this in Will.'s hearing, who was then in attendance. Woe be to the villain, if he recollect not this!

I have been traversing her room, meditating, or taking up every thing she but touched or used: the glass she dressed at, I was ready to break, for not giving me the personal image it was wont to reflect of her, whose idea is for ever present with me. I call for her, now in the tenderest, now in the most reproachful terms, as if within hearing: wanting her, I want my own soul, at least every thing dear to it. What a void in my heart! what a chilness in my blood, as if its circulation was arrested! From her room to my own; in the dining-room, and in and out of every place where I have seen the beloved of my heart, do I hurry; in none can I tarry; her lovely image in every one, in some lively attitude, rushing cruelly upon me, in differently remembered conversations.

But when in my first fury, at my return, I went up two pairs of stairs, resolved to find the locked-up Dorcas, and beheld the vainly-burnt window-board, and recollected my baffled contrivances, baffled by my own weak folly, I thought my distraction completed; and down I ran as one frightened at a spectre, ready to howl for vexation; my head and my temples shooting with a violence I had never felt before; and my back aching as if the vertebrae were disjointed, and falling in pieces.

But now that I have heard the mother's story, and contemplated the dawning hopes given by the chairman's information, I am a good deal easier, and can make cooler reflections. Most heartily pray I for Will.'s success, every four or five minutes. If I lose her, all my rage will return with redoubled fury. The disgrace to be thus outwitted by a novice, an infant in stratagem and contrivance, added to the violence of my passion for her, will either break my heart, or (what saves many a heart, in evils insupportable) turn my brain. What had I to do to go out a license-hunting, at least till I had seen her, and made up matters with her? And indeed, were it not the privilege of a principal to lay all his own faults upon his underlings, and never be to blame himself, I should be apt to reflect, that I am more in fault than any body. And, as the sting of this reflection will sharpen upon me, if I recover her not, how shall I ever be able to bear it?

If ever—

[Here Mr. Lovelace lays himself under a curse, too shocking to be repeated, if he revenge not himself upon the Lady, should he once more get her into his hands.]

I have just now dismissed the sniveling toad Dorcas, who was introduced to me for my pardon by the whining mother. I gave her a kind of negative and ungracious forgiveness. Yet I shall as violently curse the two nymphs, by-and-by, for the consequences of my own folly: and if this will be a good way too to prevent their ridicule upon me, for losing so glorious an opportunity as I had last night, or rather this morning.

I have corrected, from the result of the inquiries made of the chairman, and from Dorcas's observations before the cruel creature escaped, a description of her dress; and am resolved, if I cannot otherwise hear of her, to advertise her in the gazette, as an eloped wife, both by her maiden and acknowledged name; for her elopement will soon be known by every enemy: why then should not my friends be made acquainted with it, from whose inquiries and informations I may expect some tidings of her?

'She had on a brown lustring night-gown, fresh, and looking like new, as every thing she wears does, whether new or not, from an elegance natural to her. A beaver hat, a black ribbon about her neck, and blue knots on her breast. A quilted petticoat of carnation-coloured satin; a rose diamond ring, supposed on her finger; and in her whole person and appearance, as I shall express it, a dignity, as well as beauty, that commands the repeated attention of every one who sees her.'

The description of her person I shall take a little more pains about. My mind must be more at ease, before I undertake that. And I shall threaten, 'that if, after a certain period given for her voluntary return, she be not heard of, I will prosecute any person who presumes to entertain, harbour, abet, or encourage her, with all the vengeance that an injured gentleman and husband may be warranted to take by law, or otherwise.'

Fresh cause of aggravation!—But for this scribbling vein, or I should still run mad.

Again going into her chamber, because it was her's, and sighing over the bed, and every piece of furniture in it, I cast my eye towards the drawers of the dressing-glass, and saw peep out, as it were, in one of the half-drawn drawers, the corner of a letter. I snatched it out, and found it superscribed, by her, To Mr. Lovelace.

The sight of it made my heart leap, and I trembled so, that I could hardly open the seal.

How does this damn'd love unman me!—but nobody ever loved as I love!—It is even increased by her unworthy flight, and my disappointment. Ungrateful creature, to fly from a passion thus ardently flaming! which, like the palm, rises the more for being depressed and slighted.

I will not give thee a copy of this letter. I owe her not so much service.

But wouldst thou think, that this haughty promise-breaker could resolve as she does, absolutely and for ever to renounce me for what passed last night? That she could resolve to forego all her opening prospects of reconciliation; the reconciliation with a worthless family, on which she has set her whole heart?—Yet she does—she acquits me of all obligation to her, and herself of all expectations from me—And for what?—O that indeed I had given her real cause! Damn'd confounded niceness, prudery, affectation, or pretty ignorance, if not affectation!—By my soul, Belford, I told thee all—I was more indebted to her struggles, than to my own forwardness. I cannot support my own reflections upon a decency so ill-required.—She could not, she would not have been so much a Harlowe in her resentment. All she feared had then been over; and her own good sense, and even modesty, would have taught her to make the best of it.

But if ever again I get her into my hands, art, and more art, and compulsion too, if she make it necessary, [and 'tis plain that nothing else will do,] shall she experience from the man whose fear of her has been above even his passion for her; and whose gentleness and forbearance she has thus perfidiously triumphed over. Well, says the Poet,

*'Tis nobler like a lion to invade
When appetite directs, and seize my prey,
Than to wait tamely, like a begging dog,
Till dull consent throws out the scraps of love.*

Thou knowest what I have so lately vowed—and yet, at times [cruel creature, and ungrateful as cruel!] I can subscribe with too much truth to those lines of another Poet:

*She reigns more fully in my soul than ever;
She garrisons my breast, and mans against me
Ev'n my own rebel thoughts, with thousand graces,
Ten thousand charms, and new-discovered beauties!*

LETTER XX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

A letter is put into my hands by Wilson himself.—Such a letter!

A letter from Miss Howe to her cruel friend!—

I made no scruple to open it.

It is a miracle that I fell not into fits at the reading of it; and at the thought of what might have been the consequence, had it come into the hands of this Clarissa Harlowe. Let my justly-excited rage excuse my irreverence.

Collins, though not his day, brought it this afternoon to Wilson's, with a particular desire that it might be sent with all speed to Miss Beaumont's lodgings, and given, if possible, into her own hands. He had before been here (at Mrs. Sinclair's with intent to deliver it to the lady with his own hand; but was told [too truly told!] that she was abroad; but that they would give her any thing he should leave for her the moment she returned.) But he cared not to trust them with his business, and went away to Wilson's, (as I find by the description of him at both places,) and there left the letter; but not till he had a second time called here, and found her not come in.

The letter [which I shall enclose; for it is too long to transcribe] will account to thee for Collins's coming hither.

O this devilish Miss Howe;—something must be resolved upon and done with that little fury!

Thou wilt see the margin of this cursed letter crowded with indices [>>>]. I put them to mark the places which call for vengeance upon the vixen writer, or which require animadversion. Return thou it to me the moment thou hast perused it.

Read it here; and avoid trembling for me, if thou canst.

TO MISS LAETITIA BEAUMONT WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

*You will perhaps think that I have been too long silent. But I had begun two letters at different times since my last, and written a great deal
>>> each time; and with spirit enough, I assure you; incensed as I was against the abominable wretch you are with; particularly on reading your's of the 21st of the past month.**

* See Vol. IV. Letter XLVI.

>>> *The first I intended to keep open till I could give you some account of my proceedings with Mrs.*

Townsend. It was some days before I saw her:
and this intervenient space giving me time to re-
peruse what I had written, I thought it proper to lay
>>> that aside, and to write in a style a little less fervent;
>>> for you would have blamed me, I know, for the free-
dom of some of my expressions. [Execrations, if
you please.] And when I had gone a good way
in the second, the change in your prospects, on his
communicating to you Miss Montague's letter, and
his better behaviour, occasioning a change in your
mind, I laid that aside also. And in this uncer-
tainty, thought I would wait to see the issue of
affairs between you before I wrote again; believing
that all would soon be decided one way or other.

I had still, perhaps, held this resolution, [as every
appearance, according to your letters, was more and
more promising,] had not the two passed days fur-
nished me with intelligence which it highly imports
you to know.

But I must stop here, and take a little walk, to
try to keep down that just indignation which rises
to my pen, when I am about to relate to you what
I must communicate.

I am not my own mistress enough—then my
mother—always up and down—and watching as if
I were writing to a fellow. But I will try if I can
contain myself in tolerable bounds.

The women of the house where you are—O my
dear, the women of the house—but you never
thought highly of them—so it cannot be very sur-
>>> prising—nor would you have staid so long with
them, had not the notion of removing to one of your
own, made you less uneasy, and less curious about
their characters, and behaviour. Yet I could now
wish, that you had been less reserved among them
>>> —But I tease you—In short, my dear, you are
certainly in a devilish house!—Be assured that the
woman is one of the vilest women—nor does
she go to you by her right name—[Very true!]
—Her name is not Sinclair, nor is the street she lives
in Dover-street. Did you never go out by your-
self, and discharge the coach or chair, and return
>>> by another coach or chair? If you did, [yet I
don't remember that you ever wrote to me, that
you did,] you would never have found your way to
the vile house, either by the woman's name, Sin-
clair, or by the street's name, mentioned by that
Doleman in his letter about the lodgings.*

* Vol. III. Letters XXXVIII. and XXXIX.

The wretch might indeed have held out these
false lights a little more excusably, had the house
been an honest house; and had his end only been
to prevent mischief from your brother. But this
contrivance was antecedent, as I think, to your
brother's project; so that no excuse can be made
>>> for his intentions at the time—the man, whatever he
may now intend, was certainly then, even then, a
villain in his heart.

>>> I am excessively concerned that I should be pre-
vailed upon, between your over-niceness, on one
hand, and my mother's positiveness, on the other, to
be satisfied without knowing how to direct to you
at your lodgings. I think too, that the proposal
that I should be put off to a third-hand knowledge,
or rather veiled in a first-hand ignorance, came from
him, and that it was only acquiesced in by you, as
it was by me,* upon needless and weak considera-
tions; because, truly, I might have it to say, if
challenged, that I knew not where to send to you!
I am ashamed of myself!—Had this been at first
excusable, it could not be a good reason for going
on in the folly, when you had no liking to the
>>> house, and when he began to play tricks, and delay
with you.—What! I was to mistrust myself, was
I? I was to allow it to be thought, that I could
>>> not keep my own secret?—But the house to be
>>> taken at this time, and at that time, led us both on
>>> —like fools, like tame fools, in a string. Upon my
life, my dear, this man is a vile, a contemptible
villain—I must speak out!—How has he laughed

*in his sleeve at us both, I warrant, for I can't tell
how long!*

* See Vol. III. Letter LVI. par. 12. and Letter LVIII. par. 12.—Where the reader will observe, that the proposal came from herself; which, as it was also mentioned by Mr. Lovelace, (towards the end of Letter I. in Vol. IV.) she may be presumed to have forgotten. So that Clarissa had a double inducement for acquiescing with the proposed method of carrying on the correspondence between Miss Howe and herself by Wilson's conveyance, and by the name of Laetitia Beaumont.

*And yet who could have thought that a man of
>>> fortune, and some reputation, [this Doleman, I
mean—not your wretch, to be sure!] formerly a
rake, indeed, [I inquired after him long ago; and
so was the easier satisfied;] but married to a
woman of family—having had a palsy-blow—and,
>>> one would think, a penitent, should recommend
such a house [why, my dear, he could not inquire
of it, but must find it to be bad] to such a man as
Lovelace, to bring his future, nay, his then supposed,
bride to?*

*I write, perhaps, with too much violence, to be
>>> clear, but I cannot help it. Yet I lay down my
pen, and take it up every ten minutes, in order to
write with some temper—my mother too, in and
out—What need I, (she asks me,) lock myself in,
if I am only reading past correspondencies? For
>>> that is my pretence, when she comes poking in with
her face sharpened to an edge, as I may say, by a
curiosity that gives her more pain than pleasure.—
>>> The Lord forgive me; but I believe I shall huff
her next time she comes in.*

*Do you forgive me too, my dear—my mother
ought; because she says, I am my father's girl; and
because I am sure I am her's. I don't know what
to do—I don't know what to write next—I have
so much to write, yet have so little patience, and so
little opportunity.*

*But I will tell you how I came by my intelli-
>>> gence. That being a fact, and requiring the less
attention, I will try to account to you for that.*

*Thus, then, it came about: 'Miss Lardner
(whom you have seen at her cousin Biddulph's)
saw you at St. James's Church on Sunday was fort-
night. She kept you in her eye during the whole
time; but could not once obtain the notice of your's,
though she courtesied to you twice. She thought to
pay her compliments to you when the service was
>>> over, for she doubted not but you were married—
and for an odd reason—because you came to church
by yourself. Every eye, (as usual, wherever you
are, she said,) was upon you; and this seeming to
give you hurry, and you being nearer the door than
she, you slid out, before she could get to you.—But
she ordered her servant to follow you till you were
housed. This servant saw you step into a chair,
which waited for you; and you ordered the men to
carry you to the place where they took you up.*

*'The next day, Miss Lardner sent the same
servant, out of mere curiosity, to make private in-
quiry whether Mr. Lovelace were, or were not,
with you there.—And this inquiry brought out,
>>> from different people, that the house was suspected
to be one of those genteel wicked houses, which
receive and accommodate fashionable people of both
sexes.*

*'Miss Lardner, confounded at this strange intel-
ligence, made further inquiry; enjoining secrecy
to the servant she had sent, as well as to the gentle-
>>> man whom she employed; who had it confirmed
from a rakish friend, who knew the house; and
told him, that there were two houses: the one in
which all decent appearances were preserved, and guests
rarely admitted; the other, the receptacle of those
who were absolutely engaged, and broken to the
vile yoke.'*

*Say—my dear creature—say—Shall I not exe-
>>> crate the wretch?—But words are weak—What
can I say, that will suitably express my abhorrence*

of such a villain as he must have been, when he meditated to carry a Clarissa to such a place!

'Miss Lardner kept this to herself some days, not knowing what to do; for she loves you, and admires you of all women. At last she revealed it, but in confidence, to Miss Biddulph, by letter. Miss Biddulph, in like confidence, being afraid it would distract me, were I to know it, communicated it to Miss Lloyd; and so, like a whispered scandal, it passed through several canals, and then it came to me; which was not till last Monday.'

I thought I should have fainted upon the surprising communication. But rage taking place, it blew away the sudden illness. I besought Miss Lloyd to re-enjoin secrecy to every one. I told her that
>>> I would not for the world that my mother, or any of your family, should know it. And I instantly caused a trusty friend to make what inquiries he could about Tomlinson.

>>> I had thoughts to have done it before I had this intelligence: but not imagining it to be needful, and little thinking that you could be in such a house, and as you were pleased with your changed prospects, I
>>> forbore. And the rather forbore, as the matter is so laid, that Mrs. Hodges is supposed to know nothing of the projected treaty of accommodation; but, on the contrary, that it was designed to be a secret to her, and to every body but immediate parties; and it was Mrs. Hodges that I had proposed to sound by a second hand.

>>> Now, my dear, it is certain, without applying to that too-much-favoured housekeeper, that there is not such a man within ten miles of your uncle.—Very true!—One Tomkins there is, about four miles off; but he is a day-labourer: and one Thompson, about five miles distant the other way; but he is a parish schoolmaster, poor, and about seventy.

>>> A man, thought but of £.800 a year, cannot come from one country to settle in another, but every body in both must know it, and talk of it.

>>> Mrs. Hodges may yet be sounded at a distance, if you will. Your uncle is an old man. Old men imagine themselves under obligation to their paramours, if younger than themselves, and seldom keep any thing from their knowledge. But if we suppose him to make secret of this designed treaty, it is impossible, before that treaty was thought of, but she must have seen him, at least have heard your uncle speak praisefully of a man he is said to be so intimate with, let him have been ever so little a while in those parts.

>>> Yet, methinks, the story is so plausible—Tomlinson, as you describe him, is so good a man, and so much of a gentleman; the end to be answered
>>> by his being an impostor, so much more than necessary if Lovelace has villany in his head; and as
>>> you are in such a house—your wretch's behaviour to him was so petulant and lordly; and Tomlinson's answer so full of spirit and circumstance;
>>> and then what he communicated to you of Mr. Hickman's application to your uncle, and of Mrs. Norton's to your mother, [some of which particulars, I am satisfied, his vile agent, Joseph Leman, could not reveal to his vile employer;] his pressing on the marriage-day, in the name of your uncle, which it could not answer any wicked purpose for him to do; and what he writes of your uncle's proposal, to have it thought that you were married from the time that you have lived in one house together; and that to be made to agree with the time of Mr. Hickman's visit to your uncle.
>>> The insisting on a trusty person's being present at the ceremony, at that uncle's nomination—These things make me willing to try for a tolerable construction to be made of all. Though I am so much puzzled by what occurs on both sides of the question, that I cannot but abhor the devilish wretch, whose inventions and contrivances are for ever employing an inquisitive head, as mine is, without affording the means of absolute detection.

But this is what I am ready to conjecture, that Tomlinson, specious as he is, is a machine of Lovelace; and that he is employed for some end, which
>>>

has not yet been answered. This is certain, that not only Tomlinson, but Mennell, who, I think, attended you more than once at this vile house, must know it to be a vile house.

What can you then think of Tomlinson's declaring himself in favour of it upon inquiry?

Lovelace too must know it to be so; if not before he brought you to it, soon after.

>>> Perhaps the company he found there, may be the most probable way of accounting for his bearing with the house, and for his strange suspensions of marriage, when it was in his power to call such an angel of a woman his.—

>>> O my dear, the man is a villain!—the greatest of villains, in every light!—I am convinced that he is.—And this Doleman must be another of his implements!

>>> There are so many wretches who think that to be no sin, which is one of the greatest and most ungrateful of all sins,—to ruin young creatures of our sex who place their confidence in them; that the wonder is less than the shame, that people, of appearance at least, are found to promote the horrid purposes of profligates of fortune and interest!

>>> But can I think [you will ask with indignant astonishment] that Lovelace can have designs upon your honour?

>>> That such designs he has had, if he still hold them or not, I can have no doubt, now that I know the house he has brought you to, to be a vile one. This is a clue that has led me to account for all his behaviour to you ever since you have been in his hands.

Allow me a brief retrospection of it all.

We both know, that pride, revenge, and a delight to tread in unbeaten paths, are principal ingredients in the character of this finished libertine.

>>> He hates all your family—yourself excepted: and I have several times thought, that I have seen
>>> him stung and mortified that love has obliged him to kneel at your footstool, because you are a Harlowe. Yet is this wretch a savage in love.—Love
>>> that humanizes the fiercest spirits, has not been able to subdue his. His pride, and the credit which a
>>> few plausible qualities, sprinkled among his odious ones, have given him, have secured him too good a reception from our eye-judging, our undistinguishing, our self-flattering, our too-confiding sex, to make assiduity and obsequiousness, and a conquest of his unruly passions, any part of his study.

>>> He has some reason for his animosity to all the men, and to one woman of your family. He has always shown you, and his own family too, that he
>>> prefers his pride to his interest. He is a declared marriage-hater; a notorious intriguer; full of his inventions, and glorying in them: he never could draw you into declarations of love; nor till your
>>> wise relations persecuted you as they did, to receive his addresses as a lover. He knew that you professedly disliked him for his immoralities; he could not, therefore, justly blame you for the coldness and indifference of your behaviour to him.

>>> The prevention of mischief was your first main view in the correspondence he drew you into. He ought not, then, to have wondered that you declared your preference of the single life to any matrimonial engagement. He knew that this was always your
>>> preference; and that before he tricked you away so artfully. What was his conduct to you afterwards, that you should of a sudden change it?

Thus was your whole behaviour regular, consistent, and dutiful to those to whom by birth you owed duty; and neither prudish, coquettish, nor tyrannical to him.

>>> *He had agreed to go on with you upon those your own terms, and to rely only on his own merits and future reformation for your favour.*

>>> *It was plain to me, indeed, to whom you communicated all that you knew of your own heart, though not all of it that I found out, that love had pretty early gained footing in it. And this you yourself would have discovered sooner than you did, had not his alarming, his unpolite, his rough conduct, kept it under.*

>>> *I knew by experience that love is a fire that is not to be played with without burning one's fingers: I knew it to be a dangerous thing for two single persons of different sexes to enter into familiarity and correspondence with each other: Since, as to the latter, must not a person be capable of premeditated art, who can sit down to write, and not write from the heart?—And a woman to write her heart to a man practised in deceit, or even to a man of some character, what advantage does it give him over her?*

>>> *As this man's vanity had made him imagine, that no woman could be proof against love, when his address was honourable; no wonder that he struggled, like a lion held in toils, against a passion that he thought not returned. And how could you, at first, show a return in love, to so fierce a spirit, and who had seduced you away by vile artifices, but to the approval of those artifices.*

>>> *Hence, perhaps, it is not difficult to believe, that it became possible for such a wretch as this to give way to his old prejudices against marriage; and to that revenge which had always been a first passion with him.*

This is the only way, I think, to account for his horrid views in bringing you to a vile house.

>>> *And now may not all the rest be naturally accounted for?—His delays—his teasing ways—his bringing you to bear with his lodging in the same house—his making you pass to the people of it as his wife, though restrictively so, yet with hope, no doubt, (vilest of villains as he is!) to take you at an advantage—his bringing you into the company of his libertine companions—the attempt of imposing upon you that Miss Partington for a bedfellow, very probably his own invention for the worst of purposes—his terrifying you at many different times—his obtruding himself upon you when you went out to church; no doubt to prevent your finding out what the people of the house were—the advantages he made of your brother's foolish project with Singleton.*

>>> *See, my dear, how naturally all this follows from the discovery made by Miss Lardner. See how the monster, whom I thought, and so often called, a fool, comes out to have been all the time one of the greatest villains in the world!*

>>> *But if this is so, what, [it would be asked by an indifferent person,] has hitherto saved you? Glorious creature!—What, morally speaking, but your watchfulness! What but that, and the majesty of your virtue; the native dignity, which, in a situation so very difficult, (friendless, destitute, passing for a wife, cast into the company of creatures accustomed to betray and ruin innocent hearts,) has hitherto enabled you to baffle, over-awe, and confound, such a dangerous libertine as this; so habitually remorseless, as you have observed him to be; so very various in his temper, so inventive, so seconded, so supported, so instigated, too probably, as he has been!—That native dignity, that heroism, I will call it, which has, on all proper occasions, exerted itself in its full lustre, unmingled with that charming obligingness and condescending sweetness, which is evermore the softener of that dignity, when your mind is free and unapprehensive!*

>>> *Let me stop to admire, and to bless my beloved friend, who, unhappily for herself, at an age so tender, unacquainted as she was with the world, and*

with the vile arts of libertines, having been called upon to sustain the hardest and most shocking trials, from persecuting relations on one hand, and from a villanous lover on the other, has been enabled to give such an illustrious example of fortitude and prudence as never woman gave before her; and who, as I have heretofore observed,* has made a far greater figure in adversity, than she possibly could have made, had all her shining qualities been exerted in their full force and power, by the continuance of that prosperous run of fortune which attended her for eighteen years of life out of nineteen.

* See Vol. IV. Letters XXIV.

>>> But now, my dear, do I apprehend, that you are in greater danger than ever yet you have been in; if you are not married in a week; and yet stay in this abominable house. For were you out of it, I own I should not be much afraid for you.

>>> These are my thoughts, on the most deliberate consideration: 'That he is now convinced, that he has not been able to draw you off your guard: that therefore, if he can obtain no new advantage over you as he goes along, he is resolved to do you all the poor justice that it is in the power of such a wretch as he to do you. He is the rather induced to this, as he sees that all his own family have warmly engaged themselves in your cause: and that it is his highest interest to be just to you. Then the horrid wretch loves you (as well he may) above all women. I have no doubt of this: with such a love as such a wretch is capable of: with such a love as Herod loved his Marianne. He is now therefore, very probably, at last, in earnest.'

>>> I took time for inquiries of different natures, as I knew, by the train you are in, that whatever his designs are, they cannot ripen either for good or evil till something shall result from this device of his about Tomlinson and your uncle.

Device I have no doubt that it is, whatever this dark, this impenetrable spirit intends by it.

>>> And yet I find it to be true, that Counsellor Williams (whom Mr. Hickman knows to be a man of eminence in his profession) has actually as good as finished the settlements: that two draughts of them have been made; one avowedly to be sent to one Captain Tomlinson, as the clerk says:—and I find that a license has actually been more than once endeavoured to be obtained; and that difficulties have hitherto been made, equally to Lovelace's vexation and disappointment. My mother's proctor, who is very intimate with the proctor applied to by the wretch, has come at this information in confidence; and hints, that, as Mr. Lovelace is a man of high fortunes, these difficulties will probably be got over.

>>> But here follow the causes of my apprehension of your danger; which I should not have had a thought of (since nothing very vile has yet been attempted) but on finding what a house you are in, and, on that discovery, laying together and ruminating on past occurrences.

>>> 'You are obliged, from the present favourable appearances, to give him your company whenever he requests it.—You are under a necessity of forgetting, or seeming to forget, past disobligations; and to receive his addresses as those of a betrothed lover.—You will incur the censure of prudery and affectation, even perhaps in your own apprehension, if you keep him at that distance which has hitherto been your security.—His sudden (and as suddenly recovered) illness has given him an opportunity to find out that you love him. [Alas! my dear, I knew you loved him!] He is, as you relate, every hour more and more an encroacher upon it. He has seemed to change his nature, and is all love and gentleness. The wolf has put on the sheep's clothing; yet more than once has shown his teeth, and his hardly-sheathed claws. The instance you have given of his freedom with your person,* which you could not but resent; and yet, as matters are circumstanced between you, could not but pass

over, when Tomlinson's letter called you into his
>>> company, ** show the advantage he has now over
you; and also, that if he can obtain greater, he
will.—And for this very reason (as I apprehend) it
>>> is, that Tomlinson is introduced; that is to say, to
give you the greater security, and to be a mediator,
if mortal offence be given you by any villanous
attempt.—The day seems not now to be so much
in your power as it ought to be, since that now
partly depends on your uncle, whose presence, at
your own motion, he has wished on the occasion.
A wish, were all real, very unlikely, I think, to be
granted.'

* She means the freedom Mr. Lovelace took with her before the fire-plot. See Vol. V. Letter XI. When Miss Howe wrote this letter she could not know of that. ** See Vol. V. Letter XII.

>>> And thus situated, should he offer greater freedoms, must you not forgive him?

I fear nothing (as I know who has said) that devil carnate or incarnate can fairly do against a
>>> virtue so established.*—But surprizes, my dear, in
such a house as you are in, and in such circumstances
>>> as I have mentioned, I greatly fear! the
>>> man one who has already triumphed over persons
worthy of his alliance.

>>> What then have you to do, but to fly this house,
this infernal house!—O that your heart would let
you fly the man!

>>> If you should be disposed so to do, Mrs. Townsend shall be ready at your command.—But if you meet with no impediments, no new causes of doubt, I think your reputation in the eye of the world,
>>> though not your happiness, is concerned, that you
should be his—and yet I cannot bear that these
libertines should be rewarded for their villany with
the best of the sex, when the worst of it are too
good for them.

But if you meet with the least ground for suspicion; if he would detain you at the odious
>>> house, or wish you to stay, now you know what
the people are; fly him, whatever your prospects
are, as well as them.

In one of your next airings, if you have no other
>>> way, refuse to return with him. Name me for your
intelligencer, that you are in a bad house, and if you
think you cannot now break with him, seem rather
>>> to believe that he may not know it to be so; and
that I do not believe he does: and yet this belief
in us both must appear to be very gross.

But suppose you desire to go out of town for the
air, this sultry weather, and insist upon it? You
may plead your health for so doing. He dare not
>>> resist such a plea. Your brother's foolish scheme,
I am told, is certainly given up; so you need not
be afraid on that account.

If you do not fly the house upon reading of this,
or some way or other get out of it, I shall judge of
his power over you, by the little you will have over
either him or yourself.

>>> One of my informers has made such slight inquiries
concerning Mrs. Fretchville. Did he ever name
to you the street or square she lived in?—I don't
>>> remember that you, in any of your's, mentioned the
place of her abode to me. Strange, very strange,
this, I think! No such person or house can be
found, near any of the new streets or squares, where
the lights I had from your letters led me to imagine
>>> her house might be.—Ask him what street the
house is in, if he has not told you; and let me
>>> know. If he make a difficulty of that circumstance,
it will amount to a detection.—And yet, I think,
you will have enough without this.

I shall send this long letter by Collins, who
changes his day to oblige me; and that he may try
(now I know where you are) to get it into your
own hands. If he cannot, he will leave it at
Wilson's. As none of our letters by that conveyance
have miscarried when you have been in more
apparently disagreeable situations than you are in at
present. I hope that this will go safe, if Collins
should be obliged to leave it there.

>>> *I wrote a short letter to you in my first agitations. It contained not above twenty lines, all full of fright, alarm, and execration. But being afraid that my vehemence would too much affect you, I thought it better to wait a little, as well for the reasons already hinted at, as to be able to give you as many particulars as I could, and my thoughts upon all. And as they have offered, or may offer, you will be sufficiently armed to resist all his machinations, be what they will.*

>>> *One word more. Command me up, if I can be of the least service or pleasure to you. I value not fame; I value not censure; nor even life itself, I verily think, as I do your honour, and your friendship—For, is not your honour my honour? And is not your friendship the pride of my life?*

May Heaven preserve you, my dearest creature, in honour and safety, is the prayer, the hourly prayer, of

Your ever-faithful and affectionate ANNA HOWE.

THURSDAY MORN. 5. I have written all night

*** TO MISS HOWE MY DEAREST CREATURE,

How you have shocked, confounded, surprised, astonished me, by your dreadful communication!—My heart is too weak to bear up against such a stroke as this!—When all hope was with me! When my prospects were so much mended!—But can there be such villany in men, as in this vile principal, and equally vile agent!

I am really ill—very ill—grief and surprise, and, now I will say, despair, have overcome me!—All, all, you have laid down as conjecture, appears to me now to be more than conjecture!

O that your mother would have the goodness to permit me the presence of the only comforter that my afflicted, my half-broken heart, could be raised by. But I charge you, think not of coming up without her indulgent permission. I am too ill at present, my dear, to think of combating with this dreadful man; and of flying from this horrid house!— My bad writing will show you this.—But my illness will be my present security, should he indeed have meditated villany.—Forgive, O forgive me, my dearest friend, the trouble I have given you!—All must soon—But why add I grief to grief, and trouble to trouble?—But I charge you, my beloved creature, not to think of coming up without your mother's love, to the truly desolate and broken-spirited

CLARISSA HARLOWE. ***

Well, Jack!—And what thinkest thou of this last letter? Miss Howe values not either fame or censure; and thinkest thou, that this letter will not bring the little fury up, though she could procure no other conveyance than her higgler's panniers, one for herself, the other for her maid? She knows whither to come now. Many a little villain have I punished for knowing more than I would have her know, and that by adding to her knowledge and experience. What thinkest thou, Belford, if, by getting hither this virago, and giving cause for a lamentable letter from her to the fair fugitive, I should be able to recover her? Would she not visit that friend in her distress, thinkest thou, whose intended visit to her in her's brought her into the condition from which she herself had so perfidiously escaped?

Let me enjoy the thought!

Shall I send this letter?—Thou seest I have left room, if I fail in the exact imitation of so charming a hand, to avoid too strict a scrutiny. Do they not both deserve it of me? Seest thou now how the raving girl threatens her mother? Ought she not to be punished? And can I be a worse devil, or villain, or monster, that she calls me in the long letter I enclose (and has called me in her former letters) were I to punish them both as my vengeance urges me to punish them? And when I have executed that my vengeance, how charmingly satisfied may they both go down into the country and keep house together, and have a much better reason than their pride could give them, for living the single life they have both seemed so fond of!

I will set about transcribing it this moment, I think. I can resolve afterwards. Yet what has poor Hickman done to deserve this of me!—But gloriously would it punish the mother (as well as daughter) for all her sordid avarice; and for her undutifulness to honest Mr. Howe, whose heart she actually broke. I am on tiptoe, Jack, to enter upon this project. Is not one country as good to me as another, if I should be obliged to take another tour upon it?

But I will not venture. Hickman is a good man, they tell me. I love a good man. I hope one of these days to be a good man myself. Besides, I have heard within this week something of this honest fellow that shows he has a soul; when I thought, if he had one, that it lay a little of the deepest to emerge to notice, except on very extraordinary occasions; and that then it presently sunk again into its cellula adiposa.—The man is a plump man.—Didst ever see him, Jack?

But the principal reason that withholds me [for 'tis a tempting project!] is, for fear of being utterly blown up, if I should not be quick enough with my letter, or if Miss Howe should deliberate on setting out, to try her mother's consent first; in which time a letter from my frightened beauty might reach her; for I have no doubt, wherever she has refuged, but her first work was to write to her vixen friend. I will therefore go on patiently; and take my revenge upon the little fury at my leisure.

But in spite of my compassion for Hickman, whose better character is sometimes my envy, and who is one

of those mortals that bring clumsiness into credit with the mothers, to the disgrace of us clever fellows, and often to our disappointment, with the daughters; and who has been very busy in assisting these double-armed beauties against me; I swear by all the *dii majores*, as well as *minores*, that I will have Miss Howe, if I cannot have her more exalted friend! And then, if there be as much flaming love between these girls as they pretend, will my charmer profit by her escape?

And now, that I shall permit Miss Howe to reign a little longer, let me ask thee, if thou hast not, in the enclosed letter, a fresh instance, that a great many of my difficulties with her sister-toast are owing to this flighty girl?—'Tis true that here was naturally a confounded sharp winter air; and if a little cold water was thrown into the path, no wonder that it was instantly frozen; and that the poor honest traveller found it next to impossible to keep his way; one foot sliding back as fast as the other advanced, to the endangering of his limbs or neck. But yet I think it impossible that she should have baffled me as she has done (novice as she is, and never before from under her parents' wings) had she not been armed by a virago, who was formerly very near showing that she could better advise than practise. But this, I believe, I have said more than once before.

I am loth to reproach myself, now the cruel creature has escaped me; For what would that do, but add to my torment? since evils self-caused, and avoidable, admit not of palliation or comfort. And yet, if thou tellest me, that all her strength was owing to my weakness, and that I have been a cursed coward in this whole affair; why, then, Jack, I may blush, and be vexed; but, by my soul, I cannot contradict thee.

But this, Belford, I hope—that if I can turn the poison of the enclosed letter into wholesome ailment; that is to say, if I can make use of it to my advantage; I shall have thy free consent to do it.

I am always careful to open covers cautiously, and to preserve seals entire. I will draw out from this cursed letter an alphabet. Nor was Nick Rowe ever half so diligent to learn Spanish, at the Quixote recommendation of a certain peer, as I will be to gain the mastery of this vixen's hand.

LETTER XXI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 8.

After my last, so full of other hopes, the contents of this will surprise you. O my dearest friend, the man has at last proved himself to be a villain!

It was with the utmost difficulty last night, that I preserved myself from the vilest dishonour. He extorted from me a promise of forgiveness, and that I would see him next day, as if nothing had happened: but if it were possible to escape from a wretch, who, as I have too much reason to believe, formed a plot to fire the house, to frighten me, almost naked, into his arms, how could I see him next day?

I have escaped—Heaven be praised that I have!—And now have no other concern, than that I fly from the only hope that could have made such a husband tolerable to me; the reconciliation with my friends, so agreeably undertaken by my uncle.

All my present hope is, to find some reputable family, or person of my own sex, who is obliged to go beyond sea, or who lives abroad; I care not whether; but if I might choose, in some one of our American colonies—never to be heard of more by my relations, whom I have so grievously offended.

Nor let your generous heart be moved at what I write. If I can escape the dreadfullest part of my father's malediction, (for the temporary part is already, in a manner, fulfilled, which makes me tremble in apprehension of the other,) I shall think the wreck of my worldly fortunes a happy composition.

Neither is there need of the renewal of your so-often-tendered goodness to me: for I have with me rings and other valuables, that were sent me with my clothes, which will turn into money to answer all I can want, till Providence shall be pleased to put me into some want to help myself, if, for my further punishment, my life is to be lengthened beyond my wishes.

Impute not this scheme, my beloved friend, either to dejection on one hand, or to that romantic turn on the other, which we have supposed generally to obtain with our sex, from fifteen to twenty-two: for, be pleased to consider my unhappy situation, in the light in which it really must appear to every considerate person who knows it. In the first place, the man, who has endeavoured to make me, his property, will hunt me as a stray: and he knows he may do so with impunity; for whom have I to protect me from him?

Then as to my estate, the envied estate, which has been the original cause of all my misfortunes, it shall never be mine upon litigated terms. What is there in being enabled to boast, that I am worth more than I can use, or wish to use? And if my power is circumscribed, I shall not have that to answer for, which I should have, if I did not use it as I ought: which very few do. I shall have no husband, of whose interest I ought to be so regardful, as to prevent me doing more than justice to others, that I may not do less for him. If therefore my father will be pleased (as I shall presume, in proper time, to propose to him) to pay two annuities out of it, one to my dear Mrs. Norton, which may make her easy for the remainder of her life, as she is now growing into years; the other of 50£. per annum, to the same good woman, for the use of my poor, as I had the vanity to call a certain set of people, concerning whom she knows all my mind; that so as few as possible may suffer by the consequences of my error; God bless them, and give them heart's ease and content, with the rest!

Other reasons for my taking the step I have hinted at, are these.

This wicked man knows I have no friend in the world but you: your neighbourhood therefore would be the first he would seek for me in, were you to think it possible for me to be concealed in it: and in this case you might be subjected to inconveniencies greater even than those which you have already sustained on my account.

From my cousin Morden, were he to come, I could not hope protection; since, by his letter to me, it is

evident, that my brother has engaged him in his party: nor would I, by any means, subject so worthy a man to danger; as might be the case, from the violence of this ungovernable spirit.

These things considered, what better method can I take, than to go abroad to some one of the English colonies; where nobody but yourself shall know any thing of me; nor you, let me tell you, presently, nor till I am fixed, and (if it please God) in a course of living tolerably to my mind? For it is no small part of my concern, that my indiscretions have laid so heavy a tax upon you, my dear friend, to whom, once, I hoped to give more pleasure than pain.

I am at present at one Mrs. Moore's at Hampstead. My heart misgave me at coming to this village, because I had been here with him more than once: but the coach hither was so ready a conveniency, that I knew not what to do better. Then I shall stay here no longer than till I can receive your answer to this: in which you will be pleased to let me know, if I cannot be hid, according to your former contrivance, [happy, had I given into it at the time!] by Mrs. Townsend's assistance, till the heat of his search be over. The Deptford road, I imagine, will be the right direction to hear of a passage, and to get safely aboard.

O why was the great fiend of all unchained, and permitted to assume so specious a form, and yet allowed to conceal his feet and his talons, till with the one he was ready to trample upon my honour, and to strike the other into my heart!—And what had I done, that he should be let loose particularly upon me!

Forgive me this murmuring question, the effect of my impatience, my guilty impatience, I doubt: for, as I have escaped with my honour, and nothing but my worldly prospects, and my pride, my ambition, and my vanity, have suffered in this wretch of my hopefuller fortunes, may I not still be more happy than I deserve to be? And is it not in my own power still, by the Divine favour, to secure the greatest stake of all? And who knows but that this very path into which my inconsideration has thrown me, strewed as it is with briars and thorns, which tear in pieces my gaudier trappings, may not be the right path to lead me into the great road to my future happiness; which might have been endangered by evil communication?

And after all, are there not still more deserving persons than I, who never failed in any capital point of duty, than have been more humbled than myself; and some too, by the errors of parents and relations, by the tricks and baseness of guardians and trustees, and in which their own rashness or folly had no part?

I will then endeavour to make the best of my present lot. And join with me, my best, my only friend, in praying, that my punishment may end here; and that my present afflictions may be sanctified to me.

This letter will enable you to account for a line or two, which I sent to Wilson's, to be carried to you, only for a feint, to get his servant out of the way. He seemed to be left, as I thought, for a spy upon me. But he returning too soon, I was forced to write a few lines for him to carry to his master, to a tavern near Doctors Commons, with the same view: and this happily answered my end.

I wrote early in the morning a bitter letter to the wretch, which I left for him obvious enough; and I suppose he has it by this time. I kept no copy of it. I shall recollect the contents, and give you the particulars of all, at more leisure.

I am sure you will approve of my escape—the rather, as the people of the house must be very vile: for they, and that Dorcas too, did hear me (I know they did) cry out for help: if the fire had been other than a villanous plot (although in the morning, to blind them, I pretended to think it otherwise) they would have been alarmed as much as I; and have run in, hearing me scream, to comfort me, supposing my terror was the fire; to relieve me, supposing it was any thing else. But the vile Dorcas went away as soon as she saw the wretch throw his arms about me!— Bless me, my dear, I had only my slippers and an under-petticoat on. I was frighted out of my bed, by her cries of fire; and that I should be burnt to ashes in a moment—and she to go away, and never to return, nor any body else! And yet I heard women's voices in the next room; indeed I did—an evident contrivance of them all:—God be praised, I am out of their house!

My terror is not yet over: I can hardly think myself safe: every well-dressed man I see from my windows, whether on horseback or on foot, I think to be him.

I know you will expedite an answer. A man and horse will be procured me to-morrow early, to carry this. To be sure, you cannot return an answer by the same man, because you must see Mrs. Townsend first: nevertheless, I shall wait with impatience till you can; having no friend but you to apply to; and being such a stranger to this part of the world, that I know not which way to turn myself; whither to go; nor what to do—What a dreadful hand have I made of it!

Mrs. Moore, at whose house I am, is a widow, and of good character: and of this one of her neighbours, of whom I bought a handkerchief, purposely to make inquiry before I would venture, informed me.

I will not set my foot out of doors, till I have your direction: and I am the more secure, having dropt words to the people of the house where the coach set me down, as if I expected a chariot to meet me in my way to Hendon; a village a little distance from this. And when I left their house, I walked backward and forward upon the hill; at first, not knowing what to do; and afterwards, to be certain that I was not watched before I ventured to inquire after a lodging.

You will direct for me, my dear, by the name of Mrs. Harriot Lucas.

Had I not made my escape when I did, I was resolved to attempt it again and again. He was gone to the Commons for a license, as he wrote me word; for I refused to see him, notwithstanding the promise he extorted from me.

How hard, how next to impossible, my dear, to avoid many lesser deviations, when we are betrayed into a capital one!

For fear I should not get away at my first effort, I had apprized him, that I would not set eye upon him under a week, in order to gain myself time for it in different ways. And were I so to have been watched as to have made it necessary, I would, after such an instance of the connivance of the women of the house, have run out into the street, and thrown myself into the next house I could have entered, or claim protection from the first person I had met—Women to desert the cause of a poor creature of their own sex, in such a situation, what must they be!—Then, such poor guilty sort of figures did they make in the morning after he was gone out—so earnest to get me up stairs, and to convince me, by the scorched window-boards, and burnt curtains

and vallens, that the fire was real—that (although I seemed to believe all they would have me believe) I was more and more resolved to get out of their house at all adventures.

When I began, I thought to write but a few lines. But, be my subject what it will, I know not how to conclude when I write to you. It was always so: it is not therefore owing peculiarly to that most interesting and unhappy situation, which you will allow, however, to engross at present the whole mind of

Your unhappy, but ever-affectionate CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER XXII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY MORNING, PAST TWO O'CLOCK.

Io Triumphe!—Io Clarissa, sing!—Once more, what a happy man thy friend!—A silly dear novice, to be heard to tell the coachman where to carry her!—And to go to Hampstead, of all the villages about London!—The place where we had been together more than once!

Methinks I am sorry she managed no better!—I shall find the recovery of her too easy a task, I fear! Had she but known how much difficulty enhances the value of any thing with me, and had she the least notion of obliging me by it, she would never have stopt short at Hampstead, surely.

Well, but after al this exultation, thou wilt ask, If I have already got back my charmer?—I have not;—But knowing where she is, is almost the same thing as having her in my power. And it delights me to think how she will start and tremble when I first pop upon her! How she will look with conscious guilt, that will more than wipe off my guilt of Wednesday night, when she sees her injured lover, and acknowledged husband, from whom, the greatest of felonies, she would have stolen herself.

But thou wilt be impatient to know how I came by my lights. Read the enclosed letter, as I have told thee, I have given my fellow, in apprehension of such an elopement; and that will tell thee all, and what I may reasonably expect from the rascal's diligence and management, if he wishes ever to see my face again.

I received it about half an hour ago, just as I was going to lie down in my clothes, and it has made me so much alive, that, midnight as it is, I have sent for a Blunt's chariot, to attend me here by day peep, with my usual coachman, if possible; and knowing not what else to do with myself, I sat down, and, in the joy of my heart, have not only written thus far, but have concluded upon the measures I shall take when admitted to her presence: for well am I aware of the difficulties I shall have to contend with from her perverseness.

HONNERED SIR,

This is to sertifie your Honner, as how I am heer at Hamestet, where I have found out my lady to be in logins at one Mrs. Moore's, near upon Hamestet-Hethe. And I have so ordered matters, that her ladyship cannot stur but I must have notice of her goins and comins. As I knowed I durst not look into your Honner's fase, if I had not found out my lady, thoff she was gone off the prems's in a quarter of an hour, as a man may say; so I knowed you would be glad at hart to know I have found her out: and so I send thiss Petur Patrick, who is to have 5 shillings, it being now near 12 of the clock at nite; for he would not stur without a hearty drink too besides: and I was willing all shulde be snug likeways at the logins before I sent.

I have munny of youre Honner's; but I thought as how, if the man was payed by me beforend, he mought play trix; so left that to your Honner.

My lady knows nothing of my being hereaway. But I thoute it best not to leve the plase, because she has taken the logins but for a fue nites.

If your Honner come to the Upper Flax, I will be in site all the day about the tapp-house or the Hethe. I have borrowed another cote, instead of your Honner's liferie, and a blacke wigg; so cannot be knoen by my lady, iff as howe she shuld see me: and have made as if I had the tooth- ake; so with my hancriffe at my mothe, the teth which your Honner was pleased to bett out with your Honner's fyste, and my dam'd wide mothe, as your Honner notifiys it to be, cannot be knoen to be mine.

The two inner letters I had from my lady, before she went off the prems's. One was to be left at Mr. Wilson's for Miss Howe. The next was to be for your Honner. But I knowed you was not at the plase directed; and being afear'd of what fell out, so I kept them for your Honner, and so could not give um to you, until I seed you. Miss How's I only made belief to her ladyship as I carried it, and sed as how there was nothing left for hur, as she wished to knoe: so here they be bothe.

I am, may it please your Honner, Your Honner's must dutiful, And, wonce more, happy servant, WM. SUMMERS.

The two inner letters, as Will. calls them, 'tis plain, were written for no other purpose, but to send him out of the way with them, and one of them to amuse me. That directed to Miss Howe is only this:—

THURSDAY, JUNE 8.

I write this, my dear Miss Howe, only for a feint, and to see if it will go current. I shall write at large very soon, if not miserably prevented!!!

CL. H. ***

Now, Jack, will not her feints justify mine! Does she not invade my province, thinkest thou? And is it not now fairly come to—Who shall most deceive and cheat the other? So, I thank my stars, we are upon a par at last, as to this point, which is a great ease to my conscience, thou must believe. And if what Hudibras tells us is true, the dear fugitive has also abundance of pleasure to come.

*Doubtless the pleasure is as great
In being cheated, as to cheat.
As lookers-on find most delight,
Who least perceive the juggler's sleight;
And still the less they understand,
The more admire the slight of hand.*

This my dear juggler's letter to me; the other inner letter sent by Will.

THURSDAY, JUNE 8. MR. LOVELACE,

Do not give me cause to dread your return. If you would not that I should hate you for ever, send me half a line by the bearer, to assure me that you will not attempt to see me for a week to come. I cannot look you in the face without equal confusion and indignation. The obliging me in this, is but a poor atonement for your last night's vile behaviour.

You may pass this time in a journey to Lord M.'s; and I cannot doubt, if the ladies of your family are as favourable to me, as you have assured me they are, but that you will have interest enough to prevail with one of them to oblige me with their company. After your baseness of last night, you will not wonder, that I insist upon this proof of your future honour.

If Captain Tomlinson comes mean time, I can hear what he has to say, and send you an account of it.

But in less than a week if you see me, it must be owing to a fresh act of violence, of which you know not the consequence.

Send me the requested line, if ever you expect to have the forgiveness confirmed, the promise of which you extorted from

The unhappy CL. H.

Now, Belford, what canst thou say in behalf of this sweet rogue of a lady? What canst thou say for her? 'Tis apparent, that she was fully determined upon an elopement when she wrote it. And thus would she make me of party against myself, by drawing me in to give her a week's time to complete it. And, more wicked still, send me upon a fool's errand to bring up one of my cousins.—When we came to have the satisfaction of finding her gone off, and me exposed for ever!—What punishment can be bad enough for such a little villain of a lady?

But mind, moreover, how plausibly she accounts by this billet, (supposing she should not find an opportunity of eloping before I returned,) for the resolution of not seeing me for a week; and for the bread and butter expedient!—So childish as we thought it!

The chariot is not come; and if it were, it is yet too soon for every thing but my impatience. And as I have already taken all my measures, and can think of nothing but my triumph, I will resume her violent letter, in order to strengthen my resolutions against her. I was before in too gloomy a way to proceed with it. But now the subject is all alive to me, and my gayer fancy, like the sunbeams, will irradiate it, and turn the solemn deep-green into a brighter verdure.

When I have called upon my charmer to explain some parts of her letter, and to atone for others, I will send it, or a copy of it, to thee.

Suffice it at present to tell thee, in the first place, that she is determined never to be my wife.—To be sure there ought to be no compulsion in so material a case. Compulsion was her parents' fault, which I have censured so severely, that I shall hardly be guilty of the same. I am therefore glad I know her mind as to this essential point.

I have ruined her! she says.—Now that's a fib, take it her own way—if I had, she would not, perhaps, have run away from me.

She is thrown upon the wide world! Now I own that Hampstead-heath affords very pretty and very extensive prospects; but 'tis not the wide world neither. And suppose that to be her grievance, I hope soon to restore her to a narrower.

I am the enemy of her soul, as well as of her honour!—Confoundedly severe! Nevertheless, another fib!—For I love her soul very well; but think no more of it in this case than of my own.

She is to be thrown upon strangers!—And is not that her own fault?—Much against my will, I am sure!

She is cast from a state of independency into one of obligation. She never was in a state of independency; nor is it fit a woman should, of any age, or in any state of life. And as to the state of obligation, there is no such thing as living without being beholden to somebody. Mutual obligation is the very essence and soul of the social and commercial life:—Why should she be exempt from it? I am sure the person she raves at desires not such an exemption; has been long dependent upon her; and would rejoice to owe further obligations to her than he can boast of hitherto.

She talks of her father's curse!—But have I not repaid him for it an hundred fold in the same coin? But why must the faults of other people be laid at my door? Have I not enow of my own?

But the grey-eyed dawn begins to peep—let me sum up all.

In short, then, the dear creature's letter is a collection of invectives not very new to me: though the occasion for them, no doubt is new to her. A little sprinkling of the romantic and contradictory runs through it. She loves, and she hates; she encourages me to pursue her, by telling me I safely may; and yet she begs I will not. She apprehends poverty and want, yet resolves to give away her estate; To gratify whom?—Why, in short, those who have been the cause of her misfortunes. And finally, though she resolves never to be mine, yet she has some regrets at leaving me, because of the opening prospects of a reconciliation with her friends.

But never did morning dawn so tardily as this!—Neither is the chariot yet come.

A gentleman to speak with me, Dorcas?—Who can want me thus early?

Captain Tomlinson, sayest thou? Surely he must have traveled all night! Early riser as I am, how could he think to find me up thus early?

Let but the chariot come, and he shall accompany me in it to the bottom of the hill, (though he return to town on foot; for the Captain is all obliging goodness,) that I may hear all he has to say, and tell him all my mind, and lose no time.

Well, now I am satisfied that this rebellious flight will turn to my advantage, as all crushed rebellions do to the advantage of a sovereign in possession.

Dear Captain, I rejoice to see you—just in the nick of time—See! See!

*The rosy-finger'd morn appears,
And from her mantle shakes her tears:
The sun arising mortals cheers,
And drives the rising mists away,
In promise of a glorious day.*

Excuse me, Sir, that I salute you from my favourite bard. He that rises with the lark will sing with the lark. Strange news since I saw you, Captain!—Poor mistaken lady!—But you have too much goodness, I know, to reveal to her uncle Harlowe the error of this capricious beauty. It will all turn out for the best. You must accompany me part of the way. I know the delight you take in composing differences. But 'tis the task of the prudent to heal the breaches made by the rashness and folly of the imprudent.

And now, (all around me so still and so silent,) the rattling of the chariot-wheels at a street's distance do I hear! And to this angel of a woman I fly!

Reward, O God of Love! [The cause is thy own!] Reward thou, as it deserves, my suffering perseverance!—Succeed my endeavours to bring back to thy obedience this charming fugitive! Make her acknowledge her rashness; repent her insults; implore my forgiveness; beg to be reinstated in my favour, and that I will bury in oblivion the remembrance of her heinous offence against thee, and against me, thy faithful votary.

The chariot at the door!—I come! I come!

I attend you, good Captain—

Indeed, Sir—

Pray, Sir—civility is not ceremony.

And now, dressed as a bridegroom, my heart elated beyond that of the most desiring one, (attended by a footman whom my beloved never saw,) I am already at Hampstead!

LETTER XXIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. UPPER-FLASK, HAMPSTEAD. FRI. MORN. 7 O'CLOCK. (JUNE 9.)

I am now here, and here have been this hour and half.—What an industrious spirit have I!—Nobody can say that I eat the bread of idleness. I take true pains for all the pleasure I enjoy. I cannot but admire myself strangely; for certainly, with this active soul, I should have made a very great figure in whatever station I had filled. But had I been a prince, (to be sure I should have made a most noble prince!) I should have led up a military dance equal to that of the great Macedonian. I should have added kingdom to kingdom, and despoiled all my neighbour sovereigns, in order to have obtained the name of Robert the Great! And I would have gone to war with the Great Turk, and the Persian, and Mogul, for the seraglios; for not one of those eastern monarchs should have had a pretty woman to bless himself with till I had done with her.

And now I have so much leisure upon my hands, that, after having informed myself of all necessary particulars, I am set to my short-hand writing in order to keep up with time as well as I can; for the subject is now become worthy of me; and it is yet too soon, I doubt, to pay my compliments to my charmer, after all her fatigues for two or three days past. And, moreover, I have abundance of matters preparative to my future proceedings to recount, in order to connect and render all intelligible.

I parted with the Captain at the foot of the hill, trebly instructed; that is to say, as to the fact, to the probable, and to the possible. If my beloved and I can meet, and make up without the mediating of this worthy gentleman, it will be so much the better. As little foreign aid as possible in my amorous conflicts has always been a rule with me; though here I have been obliged to call in so much. And who knows but it may be the better for the lady the less she makes necessary? I cannot bear that she should sit so indifferent to me as to be in earnest to part with me for ever upon so slight, or even upon any occasion. If I find she is—but no more threatenings till she is in my power—thou knowest what I have vowed.

All Will.'s account, from the lady's flight to his finding her again, all the accounts of the people of the house, the coachman's information to Will., and so forth, collected together, stand thus:

'The Hampstead coach, when the dear fugitive came to it, had but two passengers in it. But she made the fellow to go off directly, paying for the vacant places.

'The two passengers directing the coachman to set them down at the Upper Flask, she bid him set her down there also.

'They took leave of her, [very respectfully, no doubt,] and she went into the house, and asked, if she could not have a dish of tea, and a room to herself for half an hour.

'They showed her up to the very room where I now am. She sat at the very table I now write upon; and, I believe, the chair I sit in was her's.' O Belford, if thou knowest what love is, thou wilt be able to account for these minutiae.

'She seemed spiritless and fatigued. The gentlewoman herself chose to attend so genteel and lovely a guest. She asked her if she would have bread and butter with her tea?

'No. She could not eat.

'They had very good biscuits.

'As she pleased.

'The gentlewoman stepped out for some, and returning on a sudden, she observed the sweet little fugitive endeavouring to restrain a violent burst of grief to which she had given way in the little interval.

'However, when the tea came, she made the landlady sit down with her, and asked her abundance of questions, about the villages and roads in the neighbourhood.

'The gentlewoman took notice to her, that she seemed to be troubled in mind.

'Tender spirits, she replied, could not part with dear friends without concern.'

She meant me, no doubt.

'She made no inquiry about a lodging, though by the sequel, thou'lt observe, that she seemed to intend to go no farther that night than Hampstead. But after she had drank two dishes, and put a biscuit in her pocket, [sweet soul! to serve for her supper, perhaps,] she laid down half-a-crown; and refusing change, sighing, took leave, saying she would proceed towards Hendon; the distance to which had been one of her questions.

'They offered to send to know if a Hampstead coach were not to go to Hendon that evening.

'No matter, she said—perhaps she might meet the chariot.'

Another of her feints, I suppose: for how, or with whom, could any thing of this sort have been concerted since yesterday morning?

'She had, as the people took notice to one another, something so uncommonly noble in her air, and in her person and behaviour, that they were sure she was of quality. And having no servant with her of either sex, her eyes, [her fine eyes, the gentlewoman called them, stranger as she was, and a woman!] being swelled and red, they were sure there was an elopement in the case, either from parents or guardians; for they supposed her too young and too maidenly to be a married lady; and were she married, no husband would let such a fine young creature to be unattended and alone; nor give her cause for so much grief, as seemed to be settled in her countenance. Then at times she seemed to be so bewildered, they said, that they were afraid she had it in her head to make away with herself.

'All these things put together, excited their curiosity; and they engaged a peery servant, as they called a footman who was drinking with Kit. the hostler, at the tap-house, to watch all her motions. This fellow reported the following particulars, as they re-reported to me:

'She indeed went towards Hendon, passing by the sign of the Castle on the Heath; then, stopping, looked about her, and down into the valley before her. Then, turning her face towards London, she seemed, by the motion of her handkerchief to her eyes, to weep; repenting [who knows?] the rash step she had taken, and wishing herself back again.'

Better for her, if she do, Jack, once more I say!—Woe be to the girl who could think of marrying me, yet to be able to run away from me, and renounce me for ever!

'Then, continuing on a few paces, she stopt again—and, as if disliking her road, again seeming to weep, directed her course back towards Hampstead.'

I am glad she wept so much, because no heart bursts, (be the occasion for the sorrow what it will,) which has that kindly relief. Hence I hardly ever am moved at the sight of these pellucid fugitives in a fine woman. How often, in the past twelve hours, have I wished that I could cry most confoundedly?

'She then saw a coach-and-four driving towards her empty. She crossed the path she was in, as if to meet it, and seemed to intend to speak to the coachman, had he stopt or spoken first. He as earnestly looked at her.—Every one did so who passed her, (so the man who dogged her was the less suspected.)—Happy rogue of a coachman, hadst thou known whose notice thou didst engage, and whom thou mightest have obliged!—It was the divine Clarissa Harlowe at whom thou gazest!—Mine own Clarissa Harlowe!—But it was well for me that thou wert as undistinguishing as the beasts thou drovest; otherwise, what a wild-goose chase had I been led?

'The lady, as well as the coachman, in short, seemed to want resolution; —the horses kept on—[the fellow's head and eyes, no doubt, turned behind him,] and the distance soon lengthened beyond recall. With a wistful eye she looked after him; sighed and wept again; as the servant who then slyly passed her, observed.

'By this time she had reached the houses. She looked up at every one as she passed; now and then breathing upon her bared hand, and applying it to her swelled eyes, to abate the redness, and dry the tears. At last, seeing a bill up for letting lodgings, she walked backwards and forwards half a dozen times, as if unable to determine what to do. And then went farther into the town, and there the fellow, being spoken to by one of his familiars, lost her for a few minutes: but he soon saw her come out of a linen-drapery shop, attended with a servant-maid, having, as it proved, got that maid-servant to go with her to the house she is now at.*

* See Letter XXI. of this volume.

'The fellow, after waiting about an hour, and not seeing her come out, returned, concluding that she had taken lodgings there.'

And here, supposing my narrative of the dramatic kind, ends Act the first. And now begins

ACT II SCENE.—Hampstead Heath continued. ENTER MY RASCAL.

Will. having got at all these particulars, by exchanging others as frankly against them, with which I had formerly prepared him both verbally and in writing.—I found the people already of my party, and full of good wishes for my success, repeating to me all they told him.

But he had first acquainted me with the accounts he had given them of his lady and me. It is necessary that I give thee the particulars of his tale, and I have a little time upon my hands: for the maid of the house, who had been out of an errand, tells us, that she saw Mrs. Moore, [with whom must be my first business,] go into the house of a young gentleman, within a few doors of her, who has a maiden sister, Miss Rawlins by name, so notified for prudence, that none of her acquaintance undertake any thing of consequence without consulting her.

Meanwhile my honest coachman is walking about Miss Rawlin's door, in order to bring me notice of Mrs.

Moore's return to her own house. I hope her gossip's-tale will be as soon told as mine—which take as follows:

Will. told them, before I came, 'That his lady was but lately married to one of the finest gentlemen in the world. But that he, being very gay and lively, she was mortal jealous of him; and, in a fit of that sort, had eloped from him. For although she loved him dearly, and he doated upon her, (as well he might, since, as they had seen, she was the finest creature that ever the sun shone upon,) yet she was apt to be very wilful and sullen, if he might take liberty to say so—but truth was truth;—and if she could not have her own way in every thing, would be for leaving him. That she had three or four times played his master such tricks; but with all the virtue and innocence in the world; running away to an intimate friend of her's, who, though a young lady of honour, was but too indulgent to her in this only failing; for which reason his master has brought her to London lodgings; their usual residence being in the country: and that, on his refusing to satisfy her about a lady he had been seen with in St. James's Park, she had, for the first time since she came to town, served his master thus, whom he had left half-distracted on this account.'

And truly well he might, poor gentleman! cried the honest folks, pitying me before they saw me.

'He told them how he came by his intelligence of her; and made himself such an interest with them, that they helped him to a change of clothes for himself; and the landlord, at his request, privately inquired, if the lady actually remained at Mrs. Moore's, and for how long she had taken the lodgings?—which he found only to be for a week certain; but she had said, that she believed she should hardly stay so long. And then it was that he wrote his letter, and sent it by honest Peter Patrick, as thou hast heard.'

When I came, my person and dress having answered Will.'s description, the people were ready to worship me. I now-and-then sighed, now-and-then put on a lighter air; which, however, I designed should show more of vexation ill-disguised, than of real cheerfulness; and they told Will. it was such a thousand pities so fine a lady should have such skittish tricks; adding, that she might expose herself to great dangers by them; for that there were rakes every where—[Lovelaces in every corner, Jack!] and many about that town, who would leave nothing unattempted to get into her company; and although they might not prevail upon her, yet might they nevertheless hurt her reputation; and, in time, estrange the affections of so fine a gentleman from her.

Good sensible people these!—Hey, Jack!

Here, Landlord, one word with you.—My servant, I find, has acquainted you with the reason of my coming this way.—An unhappy affair, Landlord! —A very unhappy affair!—But never was there a more virtuous woman.

So, Sir, she seems to be. A thousand pities her ladyship has such ways— and to so good-humoured a gentleman as you seem to be, Sir.

Mother-spoilt, Landlord!—Mother-spoilt!—that's the thing!—But [sighing] I must make the best of it. What I want you to do for me is to lend me a great-coat.—I care not what it is. If my spouse should see me at a distance, she would make it very difficult for me to get at her speech. A great-coat with a cape, if you have one. I must come upon her before she is aware.

I am afraid, Sir, I have none fit for such a gentleman as you.

O, any thing will do!—The worse the better.

Exit Landlord.—Re-enter with two great-coats.

Ay, Landlord, this will be best; for I can button the cape over the lower part of my face. Don't I look devilishly down and concerned, Landlord?

I never saw a gentleman with a better-natured look.—'Tis pity you should have such trials, Sir.

I must be very unhappy, no doubt of it, Landlord.—And yet I am a little pleased, you must needs think, that I have found her out before any great inconvenience has arisen to her. However, if I cannot break her of these freaks, she'll break my heart; for I do love her with all her failings.

The good woman, who was within hearing of all this, pitied me much.

Pray, your Honour, said she, if I may be so bold, was madam ever a mamma?

No—[and I sighed.]—We have been but a little while married; and as I may say to you, it is her own fault that she is not in that way. [Not a word of a lie in this, Jack.] But to tell you truth, Madam, she may be compared to the dog in the manger—

I understand you, Sir, [simpering,] she is but young, Sir. I have heard of one or two such skittish young ladies, in my time, Sir.—But when madam is in that way, I dare say, as she loves you, (and it would be strange if she did not!) all this will be over, and she may make the best of wives.

That's all my hope.

She is a fine lady as I ever beheld.—I hope, Sir, you won't be too severe. She'll get over all these freaks, if once she be a mamma, I warrant.

I can't be severe to her—she knows that. The moment I see her, all resentment is over with me, if she gives me but one kind look.

All this time I was adjusting the horseman's coat, and Will. was putting in the ties of my wig,* and buttoning the cape over my chin.

* The fashionable wigs at that time.

I asked the gentlewoman for a little powder. She brought me a powder-box, and I slightly shook the puff over my hat, and flapt one side of it, though the lace looked a little too gay for my covering; and, slouching it over my eyes, Shall I be known, think you, Madam?

Your Honour is so expert, Sir!—I wish, if I may be so bold, your lady has not some cause to be jealous. But it will be impossible, if you keep your laced clothes covered, that any body should know you in that dress to be the same gentleman—except they find you out by your clocked stockings.

Well observed—Can't you, Landlord, lend or sell me a pair of stockings, that will draw over these? I can cut off the feet, if they won't go into my shoes.

He could let me have a pair of coarse, but clean, stirrup stockings, if I pleased.

The best in the world for the purpose.

He fetch'd them. Will. drew them on; and my legs then made a good gouty appearance.

The good woman smiling, wished me success; and so did the landlord. And as thou knowest that I am not a bad mimic, I took a cane, which I borrowed of the landlord, and stooped in the shoulders to a quarter of a foot less height, and stumped away cross to the bowling-green, to practise a little the hobbling gait of a gouty man.—The landlady whispered her husband, as Will. tells me, He's a good one, I warrant him—I dare say the fault lies not at all of one side. While mine host replied, That I was so lively and so good-natured a gentleman, that he did not know who could be angry with me, do what I would. A sensible fellow!—I wish my charmer were of the same opinion.

And now I am going to try if I can't agree with goody Moore for lodgings and other conveniencies for my sick wife.

'Wife, Lovelace?' methinks thou interrogatest.

Yes, wife, for who knows what cautions the dear fugitive may have given in apprehension of me?

'But has goody Moore any other lodgings to let?'

Yes, yes; I have taken care of that; and find that she has just such conveniencies as I want. And I know that my wife will like them. For, although married, I can do every thing I please; and that's a bold word, you know. But had she only a garret to let, I would have liked it; and been a poor author afraid of arrests, and made that my place of refuge; yet would have made shift to pay beforehand for what I had. I can suit myself to any condition, that's my comfort.

The widow Moore returned! say you?—Down, down, flutterer!—This impertinent heart is more troublesome to me than my conscience, I think. —I shall be obliged to hoarsen my voice, and roughen my character, to keep up with its puppily dancings.

But let me see, shall I be angry or pleased when I am admitted to my beloved's presence?

Angry to be sure.—Has she not broken her word with me?—At a time too when I was meditating to do her grateful justice?—And is not breach of word a dreadful crime in good folks?—I have ever been for forming my judgment of the nature of things and actions, not so much from what they are in themselves, as from the character of the actors. Thus it would be as odd a thing in such as we to keep our words with a woman, as it would be wicked in her to break her's to us.

Seest thou not that this unseasonable gravity is admitted to quell the palpitations of this unmanageable heart? But still it will go on with its boundings. I'll try as I ride in my chariot to tranquilize.

'Ride, Bob! so little a way?'

Yes, ride, Jack; for am I not lame? And will it not look well to have a lodger who keeps his chariot? What widow, what servant, asks questions of a man with an equipage?

My coachman, as well as my other servant, is under Will.'s tuition.

Never was there such a hideous rascal as he has made himself. The devil only and his other master can know him. They both have set their marks upon him. As to my honour's mark, it will never be out of his dam'd wide mothe, as he calls it. For the dog will be hanged before he can lose the rest of his teeth by age.

I am gone.

LETTER XXIV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. HAMPSTEAD, FRIDAY NIGHT, JUNE 9.

Now, Belford, for the narrative of narratives. I will continue it as I have opportunity; and that so dexterously, that, if I break off twenty times, thou shalt not discern where I piece my thread.

Although grievously afflicted with the gout, I alighted out of my chariot (leaning very hard on my cane with one hand, and on my new servant's shoulder with the other) the same instant almost that he had knocked at the door, that I might be sure of admission into the house.

I took care to button my great coat about me, and to cover with it even the pummel of my sword, it being a little too gay for my years. I knew not what occasion I might have for my sword. I stooped forward; blinked with my eyes to conceal their lustre (no vanity in saying that, Jack); my chin wrapt up for the tooth-ache; my slouched, laced hat, and so much of my wig as was visible, giving me, all together, the appearance of an antiquated beau.

My wife, I resolved beforehand, should have a complication of disorders.

The maid came to the door. I asked for her mistress. She showed me into one of the parlours; and I sat down with a gouty Oh!—

ENTER GOODY MOORE.

Your servant, Madam—but you must excuse me; I cannot well stand—I find by the bill at the door, that you have lodgings to let [mumbling my words as if, like my man Will., I had lost some of my fore-teeth]: be pleased to inform me what they are; for I like your situation—and I will tell you my family—I have a wife, a good old woman—older than myself, by the way, a pretty deal. She is in a bad state of health, and is advised into the Hampstead air. She will have two maid servants and a footman. The coach or chariot (I shall not have them put up both together) we can put up any where, and the coachman will be with his horses.

When, Sir, shall you want to come in?

I will take them from this very day; and, if convenient, will bring my wife in the afternoon.

Perhaps, Sir, you would board, as well as lodge?

That as you please. It will save me the trouble of bringing my cook, if we do. And I suppose you have servants who know how to dress a couple of dishes. My wife must eat plain food, and I don't love kickshaws.

We have a single lady, who will be gone in two or three days. She has one of the best apartments: that will then be at liberty.

You have one or two good ones mean time, I presume, Madam, just to receive my wife; for we have lost time—these damn'd physicians—excuse me, Madam, I am not used to curse; but it is owing to the love I have for my wife—they have kept her in hand, till they are ashamed to take more fees, and now advise her to the air. I wish we had sent her hither at first. But we must now make the best of it.

Excuse me, Madam, [for she looked hard at me,] that I am muffled up in this warm weather. I am but too sensible that I have left my chamber sooner than I ought, and perhaps shall have a return of my gout for it. I came out thus muffled up with a dreadful pain in my jaws; an ague in them, I believe. But my poor dear will not be satisfied with any body's care but mine. And, as I told thee, we have lost time.

You shall see what accommodations I have, if you please, Sir. But I doubt you are too lame to walk up stairs.

I can make shift to hobble up now I have rested a little. I'll just look upon the apartment my wife is to have. Any thing may do for the servants: and as you seem to be a good sort of gentlewoman, I shan't stand for a price, and will pay well besides for the trouble I shall give.

She led the way; and I, helping myself by the banisters, made shift to get up with less fatigue than I expected from ancles so weak. But oh! Jack, what was Sixtus the Vth.'s artful depression of his natural powers to mine, when, as this half-dead Montalto, he gaped for the pretendedly unsought pontificate, and the moment he was chosen leapt upon the prancing beast, which it was thought by the amazed conclave he was not able to mount, without help of chairs and men? Never was there a more joyful heart and lighter heels than mine joined together; yet both denied their functions; the one fluttering in secret, ready to burst its bars for relief-ful expression, the others obliged to an hobbling motion; when, unrestrained, they would, in their master's imagination, have mounted him to the lunar world without the help of a ladder.

There were three rooms on a floor: two of them handsome; and the third, she said, still handsomer; but the lady was in it.

I saw, I saw she was! for as I hobbled up, crying out upon my weak ancles, in the hoarse mumbling voice I had assumed, I beheld a little piece of her as she just cast an eye (with the door a-jar, as they call it) to observe who was coming up; and, seeing such an old clumsy fellow, great coated in weather so warm, slouched and muffled up, she withdrew, shutting the door without any emotion. But it was not so with me; for thou canst not imagine how my heart danced to my mouth, at the very glimpse of her; so that I was afraid the thump, thump, thumping villain, which had so lately thumped as much to no purpose, would have choked me.

I liked the lodging well; and the more as she said the third room was still handsomer. I must sit down, Madam, [and chose the darkest part of the room]: Won't you take a seat yourself?—No price shall part us—but I will leave the terms to you and my wife, if you please. And also whether for board or not. Only please to take this for earnest, putting a guinea into her hand—and one thing I will say; my poor wife loves money; but is not an ill-natured woman. She was a great fortune to me: but, as the real estate goes away at her death, I would fain preserve her for that reason, as well as for the love I bear her as an honest man. But if she makes too close a bargain with you, tell me; and, unknown to her, I will make it up. This is my constant way: she loves to have her pen'orths; and I would not have her vexed or made uneasy on any account.

She said, I was a very considerate gentleman; and, upon the condition I had mentioned, she was content to leave the terms to my lady.

But, Madam, cannot a body just peep into the other apartment; that I may be more particular to my wife in the furniture of it?

The lady desires to be private, Sir—but—and was going to ask her leave.

I caught hold of her arm—However, stay, stay, Madam: it mayn't be proper, if the lady loves to be private. Don't let me intrude upon the lady—

No intrusion, Sir, I dare say: the lady is good-humoured. She will be so kind as to step down into the parlour, I dare say. As she stays so little a while, I am sure she will not wish to stand in my way.

No, Madam, that's true, if she be good-humoured, as you say—Has she been with you long, Madam?

She came but yesterday, Sir—

I believe I just now saw the glimpse of her. She seems to be an elderly lady.

No, Sir! you're mistaken. She's a young lady; and one of the handsomest I ever saw.

Cot so, I beg her pardon! Not but that I should have liked her the better, were she to stay longer, if she had been elderly. I have a strange taste, Madam, you'll say; but I really, for my wife's sake, love every elderly woman. Indeed I ever thought age was to be revered, which made me (taking the fortune into the scale too, that I own) make my addresses to my present dear.

Very good of you, Sir, to respect age: we all hope to live to be old.

Right, Madam.—But you say the lady is beautiful. Now you must know, that though I choose to converse with the elderly, yet I love to see a beautiful young woman, just as I love to see fine flowers in a garden. There's no casting an eye upon her, is there, without her notice? For in this dress, and thus muffled up about my jaws, I should not care to be seen any more than she, let her love privacy as much as she will.

I will go and ask if I may show a gentleman the apartment, Sir; and, as you are a married gentleman, and not over young, she'll perhaps make the less scruple.

Then, like me, she loves elderly folks best perhaps. But it may be she has suffered by young ones.

I fancy she has, Sir, or is afraid she shall. She desired to be very private; and if by description inquired

after, to be denied.

Thou art a true woman, goody Moore, thought I.

Good lack—good lack!—What may be her story then, I pray?

She is pretty reserved in her story: but, to tell you my thoughts, I believe love is in the case: she is always in tears, and does not much care for company.

Nay, Madam, it becomes not me to dive into ladies' secrets; I want not to pry into other people's affairs. But, pray, how does she employ herself?—Yet she came but yesterday; so you can't tell.

Writing continually, Sir.

These women, Jack, when you ask them questions by way of information, don't care to be ignorant of any thing.

Nay, excuse me, Madam, I am very far from being an inquisitive man. But if her case be difficult, and not merely love, as she is a friend of your's, I would give her my advice.

Then you are a lawyer, Sir—

Why, indeed, Madam, I was some time at the bar; but I have long left practice; yet am much consulted by my friends in difficult points. In a pauper case I frequently give money; but never take any from the richest.

You are a very good gentleman, then, Sir.

Ay, Madam, we cannot live always here; and we ought to do what good we can—but I hate to appear officious. If the lady stay any time, and think fit, upon better acquaintance, to let me into her case, it may be a happy day for her, if I find it a just one; for, you must know, that when I was at the bar, I never was such a sad fellow as to undertake, for the sake of a paltry fee, to make white black, and black white: For what would that have been, but to endeavour to establish iniquity by quirks, while I robbed the innocent?

You are an excellent gentleman, Sir: I wish [and then she sighed] I had had the happiness to know there was such a lawyer in the world; and to have been acquainted with him.

Come, come, Mrs. Moore, I think your name is, it may not be too late— when you and I are better acquainted, I may help you perhaps.—But mention nothing of this to the lady: for, as I said, I hate to appear officious.

This prohibition, I knew, if goody Moore answered the specimen she had given of her womanhood, would make her take the first opportunity to tell, were it to be necessary to my purpose that she should.

I appeared, upon the whole, so indifferent about seeing the room, or the lady, that the good woman was the more eager I should see both. And the rather, as I, to stimulate her, declared, that there was more required in my eye to merit the character of a handsome woman, than most people thought necessary; and that I had never seen six truly lovely women in my life.

To be brief, she went in; and after a little while came out again. The lady, Sir, is retired to her closet. So you may go in and look at the room.

Then how my heart began again to play its pug's tricks!

I hobbled in, and stumped about, and liked it very much; and was sure my wife would. I begged excuse for sitting down, and asked, who was the minister of the place? If he were a good preacher? Who preached at the Chapel? And if he were a good preacher, and a good liver too, Madam—I must inquire after that: for I love, but I must needs say, that the clergy should practise what they preach.

Very right, Sir; but that is not so often the case as were to be wished.

More's the pity, Madam. But I have a great veneration for the clergy in general. It is more a satire upon human nature than upon the cloth, if we suppose those who have the best opportunities to do good, less perfect than other people. For my part, I don't love professional any more than national reflections.—But I keep the lady in her closet. My gout makes me rude.

Then up from my seat stumped I—what do you call these window-curtains, Madam?

Stuff-damask, Sir.

It looks mighty well, truly. I like it better than silk. It is warmer to be sure, and much fitter for lodgings in the country; especially for people in years. The bed is in a pretty state.

It is neat and clean, Sir: that's all we pretend to.

Ay, mighty well—very well—a silk camblet, I think—very well, truly!—I am sure my wife will like it. But we would not turn the lady out of her lodgings for the world. The other two apartments will do for us at present.

Then stumping towards the closet, over the door of which hung a picture—What picture is that—Oh! I see; a St. Cecilia!

A common print, Sir!

Pretty well, pretty well! It is after an Italian master.—I would not for the world turn the lady out of her apartment. We can make shift with the other two, repeated I, louder still: but yet mumbly hoarse: for I had as great regard to uniformity in accent, as to my words.

O Belford! to be so near my angel, think what a painful constraint I was under.

I was resolved to fetch her out, if possible: and pretending to be going—you can't agree as to any time, Mrs. Moore, when we can have this third room, can you?—Not that [whispered I, loud enough to be heard in the next room; not that] I would incommode the lady: but I would tell my wife when abouts—and women, you know, Mrs. Moore, love to have every thing before them of this nature.

Mrs. Moore (said my charmer) [and never did her voice sound so harmonious to me: Oh! how my heart bounded again! It even talked to me, in a manner; for I thought I heard, as well as felt, its unruly flutters; and every vein about me seemed a pulse; Mrs. Moore] you may acquaint the gentleman, that I shall stay here only for two or three days at most, till I receive an answer to a letter I have written into the country; and rather than be your hindrance, I will take up with any apartment a pair of stairs higher.

Not for the world!—Not for the world, young lady! cried I.—My wife, as I love her, should lie in a garret,

rather than put such a considerate young lady, as you seem to be, to the least inconveniency.

She opened not the door yet; and I said, but since you have so much goodness, Madam, if I could but just look into the closet as I stand, I could tell my wife whether it is large enough to hold a cabinet she much values, and ill have with her wherever she goes.

Then my charmer opened the door, and blazed upon me, as it were, in a flood of light, like what one might imagine would strike a man, who, born blind, had by some propitious power been blessed with his sight, all at once, in a meridian sun.

Upon my soul, I never was so strangely affected before. I had much ado to forbear discovering myself that instant: but, hesitatingly, and in great disorder, I said, looking into the closet and around it, there is room, I see, for my wife's cabinet; and it has many jewels in it of high price; but, upon my soul, [for I could not forbear swearing, like a puppy: habit is a cursed thing, Jack—] nothing so valuable as a lady I see, can be brought into it.

She started, and looked at me with terror. The truth of the compliment, as far as I know, had taken dissimulation from my accent.

I saw it was impossible to conceal myself longer from her, any more than (from the violent impulses of my passion) to forbear manifesting myself. I unbuttoned therefore my cape, I pulled off my flapt slouched hat; I threw open my great coat, and, like the devil in Milton [an odd comparison though!]

*I started up in my own form divine,
Touch'd by the beam of her celestial eye,
More potent than Ithuriel's spear!*

Now, Belford, for a similitude—now for a likeness to illustrate the surprising scene, and the effect it had upon my charmer, and the gentlewoman!—But nothing was like it, or equal to it. The plain fact can only describe it, and set it off—thus then take it.

She no sooner saw who it was, than she gave three violent screams; and, before I could catch her in my arms, (as I was about to do the moment I discovered myself,) down she sunk at my feet in a fit; which made me curse my indiscretion for so suddenly, and with so much emotion, revealing myself.

The gentlewoman, seeing so strange an alteration in my person, and features, and voice, and dress, cried out, Murder, help! murder, help! by turns, for half a dozen times running. This alarmed the house, and up ran two servant maids, and my servant after them. I cried out for water and hartshorn, and every one flew a different way, one of the maids as fast down as she came up; while the gentlewoman ran out of one room into another, and by turns up and down the apartment we were in, without meaning or end, wringing her foolish hands, and not knowing what she did.

Up then came running a gentleman and his sister, fetched, and brought in by the maid, who had run down, and having let in a cursed crabbed old wretch, hobbling with his gout, and mumbling with his hoarse broken-toothed voice, who was metamorphosed all at once into a lively, gay young fellow, with a clear accent, and all his teeth, she would have it, that I was neither more nor less than the devil, and could not keep her eye from my foot, expecting, no doubt, every minute to see it discover itself to be cloven.

For my part, I was so intent upon restoring my angel, that I regarded nobody else. And, at last, she slowly recovering motion, with bitter sighs and sobs, (only the whites of her eyes however appearing for some moments,) I called upon her in the tenderest accent, as I kneeled by her, my arm supporting her head, My angel! my charmer! my Clarissa! look upon me, my dearest life!—I am not angry with you; I will forgive you, my best beloved.

The gentleman and his sister knew not what to make of all this: and the less, when my fair-one, recovering her sight, snatched another look at me; and then again groaned, and fainted away.

I threw up the closet-sash for air, and then left her to the care of the young gentlewoman, the same notable Miss Rawlins, who I had heard of at the Flask: and to that of Mrs. Moore; who by this time had recovered herself; and then retiring to one corner of the room, I made my servant pull off my gouty stockings, brush my hat, and loop it up into the usual smart cock.

I then stopt to the closet to Mr. Rawlins, whom, in the general confusion, I had not much minded before.—Sir, said I, you have an uncommon scene before you. The lady is my wife, and no gentleman's presence is necessary here but my own.

I beg pardon, Sir; if the lady be your wife, I have no business here. But, Sir, by her concern at seeing you—

Pray, Sir, none of your if's and but's, I beseech you: nor your concern about the lady's concern. You are a very unqualified judge in this cause; and I beg of you, Sir, to oblige me with your absence. The women only are proper to be present on this occasion, added I; and I think myself obliged to them for their care and kind assistance.

'Tis well he made not another word: for I found my choler begin to rise. I could not bear, that the finest neck, and arms, and foot, in the world, should be exposed to the eyes of any man living but mine.

I withdrew once more from the closet, finding her beginning to recover, lest the sight of me too soon should throw her back again.

The first words she said, looking round her with great emotion, were, Oh! hide me, hide me! Is he gone?—Oh! hide me!—Is he gone?

Sir, said Miss Rawlins, coming to me with an air both peremptory and assured, This is some surprising case. The lady cannot bear the sight of you. What you have done is best known to yourself. But another such fit will probably be her last. It would be but kind therefore for you to retire.

It behoved me to have so notable a person of my party; and the rather as I had disobliged her impertinent brother.

The dear creature, said I, may well, be concerned to see me. If you, Madam, had a husband who loved you as I love her, you would not, I am confident, fly from him, and expose yourself to hazards, as she does whenever she has not all her way—and yet with a mind not capable of intentional evil—but mother-spoilt!—

This is her fault, and all her fault: and the more inexcusable it is, as I am the man of her choice, and have reason to think she loves me above all the men in the world.

Here, Jack, was a story to support to the lady; face to face too!*

* And here, Belford, lest thou, through inattention, should be surprised at my assurance, let me remind thee (and that, thus, by way of marginal observation, that I may not break in upon my narrative) that this my intrepidity concerted (as I have from time to time acquainted thee) in apprehension of such an event as has fallen out. For had not the dear creature already passed for my wife before no less than four worthy gentlemen of family and fortune? ** and before Mrs. Sinclair, and her household, and Miss Partington? And had she not agreed to her uncle's expedient, that she should pass for such, from the time of Mr. Hickman's application to that uncle, *** and that the worthy Capt. Tomlinson should be allowed to propagate that belief: as he had actually reported to two families (they possibly to more); purposely that it might come to the ears of James Harlowe; and serve for a foundation for uncle John to build his reconciliation-scheme upon? **** And canst thou think that nothing was meant by all this contrivance? and that I am not still further prepared to support my story?

** See Vol. IV. Letter IV. towards the conclusion. *** Ibid. Letter XVI. **** Ibid.

Indeed, I little thought, at the time that I formed these precautionary schemes, that she would ever have been able, if willing, to get out of my hands. All that I hoped I should have occasion to have recourse to them for, was only, in case I should have the courage to make the grand attempt, and should succeed in it, to bring the dear creature [and this out of tenderness to her, for what attention did I ever yet pay to the grief, the execrations, the tears of a woman I had triumphed over?] to bear me in her sight: to expostulate with me, to be pacified by my pleas, and by my own future hopes, founded upon the reconciliatory-project, upon my reiterated vows, and upon the Captain's assurances. Since in that case, to forgive me, to have gone on with me, for a week, would have been to forgive me, to have gone on with me, for ever. And that, had my eligible life of honour taken place, her trials would all have been then over: and she would have known nothing but gratitude, love, and joy, to the end of one of our lives. For never would I, never could I, have abandoned such an admirable creature as this. Thou knowest I never was a sordid villain to any of her inferiors—Her inferiors, I may say—For who is not her inferior?

You speak like a gentleman; you look like a gentleman, said Miss Rawlins—but, Sir, this is a strange case; the lady sees to dread the sight of you.

No wonder, Madam; taking her a little on one side, nearer to Mrs. Moore. I have three times already forgiven the dear creature—but this is jealousy!—There is a spice of that in it—and of phrensy too [whispered I, that it might have the face of a secret, and of consequence the more engage their attention]—but our story is too long.

I then made a motion to go to my beloved. But they desired that I would walk into the next room; and they would endeavour to prevail upon her to lie down.

I begged that they would not suffer her to talk; for that she was accustomed to fits, and, when in this way, would talk of any thing that came uppermost: and the more she was suffered to run on, the worse she was; and if not kept quiet, would fall into ravings: which might possibly hold her a week.

They promised to keep her quiet; and I withdrew into the next room; ordering every one down but Mrs. Moore and Miss Rawlins.

She was full of exclamations! Unhappy creature! miserable! ruined! and undone! she called herself; wrung her hands, and begged they would assist her to escape from the terrible evils she should otherwise be made to suffer.

They preached patience and quietness to her; and would have had her to lie down: but she refused; sinking, however, into an easy chair; for she trembled so she could not stand.

By this time, I hoped, that she was enough recovered to bear a presence that it behoved me to make her bear; and fearing she would throw out something in her exclamations, that would still more disconcert me, I went into the room again.

O there he is! said she, and threw her apron over her face—I cannot see him!—I cannot look upon him!—Begone, begone! touch me not!—

For I took her struggling hand, beseeching her to be pacified; and assuring her, that I would make all up with her upon her own terms and wishes.

Base man! said the violent lady, I have no wishes, but never to behold you more! Why must I be thus pursued and haunted? Have you not made me miserable enough already?—Despoiled of all succour and help, and of every friend, I am contented to be poor, low, and miserable, so I may live free from your persecutions.

Miss Rawlins stared at me [a confident slut this Miss Rawlins, thought I]: so did Mrs. Moore. I told you so! whispering said I, turning to the women; shaking my head with a face of great concern and pity; and then to my charmer, My dear creature, how you rave! You will not easily recover from the effects of this violence. Have patience, my love. Be pacified; and we will coolly talk this matter over: for you expose yourself, as well as me: these ladies will certainly think you have fallen among robbers, and that I am the chief of them.

So you are! so you are! stamping, her face still covered [she thought of Wednesday night, no doubt]; and, sighing as if her heart were breaking, she put her hand to her forehead—I shall be quite distracted!

I will not, my dearest love, uncover your face. You shall not look upon me, since I am so odious to you. But this is a violence I never thought you capable of.

And I would have pressed her hand, as I held it, with my lips; but she drew it from me with indignation.

Unhand me, Sir, said she. I will not be touched by you. Leave me to my fate. What right, what title, have you to persecute me thus?

What right, what title, my dear!—But this is not a time—I have a letter from Captain Tomlinson—here it is—offering it to her—

I will receive nothing from your hands—tell me not of Captain Tomlinson—tell me not of any body—you

have no right to invade me thus— once more leave me to my fate—have you not made me miserable enough?

I touched a delicate string, on purpose to set her in such a passion before the women, as might confirm the intimation I had given of a phrensical disorder.

What a turn is here!—Lately so happy—nothing wanting but a reconciliation between you and your friends!—That reconciliation in such a happy train—shall so slight, so accidental an occasion be suffered to overturn all our happiness?

She started up with a trembling impatience, her apron falling from her indignant face—now, said she, that thou darest to call the occasion slight and accidental, and that I am happily out of thy vile hands, and out of a house I have reason to believe as vile, traitor and wretch as thou art, I will venture to cast an eye upon thee—and Oh! that it were in my power, in mercy to my sex, to look thee first into shame and remorse, and then into death!

This violent tragedy-speech, and the high manner in which she uttered it, had its desired effect. I looked upon the women, and upon her by turns, with a pitying eye; and they shook their wise heads, and besought me to retire, and her to lie down to compose herself.

This hurricane, like other hurricanes, was presently allayed by a shower. She threw herself once more into her armed chair, and begged pardon of the women for her passionate excess; but not of me: yet I was in hopes, that when compliments were stirring, I should have come in for a share.

Indeed, Ladies, said I, [with assurance enough, thou'lt say,] this violence is not natural to my beloved's temper—misapprehension—

Misapprehension, wretch!—And want I excuses from thee!

By what a scorn was every lovely feature agitated!

Then turning her face from me, I have not patience, O thou guileful betrayer, to look upon thee! Begone! Begone! With a face so unblushing, how darest thou appear in my presence?

I thought then, that the character of a husband obliged me to be angry.

You may one day, Madam, repent this treatment:—by my soul, you may. You know I have not deserved it of you—you know—I have not.

Do I know you have not?—Wretch! Do I know—

You do, Madam—and never did man of my figure and consideration, [I thought it was proper to throw that in] meet with such treatment—

She lifted up her hands: indignation kept her silent.

But all is of a piece with the charge you bring against me of despoiling you of all succour and help, of making you poor and low, and with other unprecedented language. I will only say, before these two gentlewomen, that since it must be so, and since your former esteem for me is turned into so riveted an aversion, I will soon, very soon, make you entirely easy. I will be gone:—I will leave you to your own fate, as you call it; and may that be happy!—Only, that I may not appear to be a spoiler, a robber indeed, let me know whither I shall send your apparel, and every thing that belongs to you, and I will send it.

Send it to this place; and assure me, that you will never molest me more; never more come near me; and that is all I ask of you.

I will do so, Madam, said I, with a dejected air. But did I ever think I should be so indifferent to you?—However, you must permit me to insist on your reading this letter; and on your seeing Captain Tomlinson, and hearing what he has to say from your uncle. He will be here by-and-by.

Don't trifle with me, said she in an imperious tone—do as you offer. I will not receive any letter from your hands. If I see Captain Tomlinson, it shall be on his own account, not on your's. You tell me you will send me my apparel—if you would have me believe any thing you say, let this be the test of your sincerity.—Leave me now, and send my things.

The women started.—They did nothing but stare; and appeared to be more and more at a loss what to make of the matter between us.

I pretended to be going from her in a pet; but, when I had got to the door, I turned back; and, as if I had recollected myself—One word more, my dearest creature!—Charming, even in your anger!—O my fond soul! said I, turning half round, and pulling out my handkerchief.—

I believe, Jack, my eyes did glisten a little. I have no doubt but they did. The women pitied me—honest souls! They showed they had each of them a handkerchief as well as I. So, has thou not observed (to give a familiar illustration,) every man in a company of a dozen, or more, obligingly pull out his watch, when some one has asked what's o'clock?—As each man of a like number, if one talks of his beard, will fall to stroking his chin with his four fingers and thumb.

One word only, Madam, repeated I, (as soon as my voice had recovered its tone,) I have represented to Captain Tomlinson in the most favourable light the cause of our present misunderstanding. You know what your uncle insists upon, and with which you have acquiesced.—The letter in my hand, [and again I offered it to her,] will acquaint you with what you have to apprehend from your brother's active malice.

She was going to speak in a high accent, putting the letter from her, with an open palm—Nay, hear me out, Madam—The Captain, you know, has reported our marriage to two different persons. It is come to your brother's ears. My own relations have also heard of it.—Letters were brought me from town this morning, from Lady Betty Lawrance, and Miss Montague. Here they are. [I pulled them out of my pocket, and offered them to her, with that of the Captain; but she held back her still open palm, that she might not receive them.] Reflect, Madam, I beseech you, reflect upon the fatal consequences with which this, your high resentment, may be attended.

Ever since I knew you, said she, I have been in a wilderness of doubt and error. I bless God that I am out of your hands. I will transact for myself what relates to myself. I dismiss all your solicitude for me.—Am I not my own mistress?—Have you any title?—

The women stared—[the devil stare ye, thought I!—Can ye do nothing but stare?—It was high time to stop her here.

I raised my voice to drown her's.—You used, my dearest creature, to have a tender and apprehensive heart.—You never had so much reason for such a one as now.

Let me judge for myself, upon what I shall see, not upon what I shall hear.—Do you think I shall ever?—

I dreaded her going on—I must be heard, Madam, (raising my voice still higher,)—you must let me read one paragraph or two out of this letter to you, if you will not read it yourself—

Begone from me, Man!—Begone from me with thy letters! What pretence hast thou for tormenting me thus? What right?—What title?—

Dearest creature! what questions you ask!—Questions that you can as well answer yourself—

I can, I will, and thus I answer them—

Still louder I raised my voice.—She was overborne.—Sweet soul! It would be hard, thought I, [and yet I was very angry with her,] if such a spirit as thine cannot be brought to yield to such a one as mine!

I lowered my voice on her silence. All gentle, all intreative, my accent. My head bowed—one hand held out—the other on my honest heart. —For heaven's sake, my dearest creature, resolve to see Captain Tomlinson with temper. He would have come along with me, but I was willing to try to soften your mind first on this fatal misapprehension, and this for the same of your own wishes. For what is it otherwise to me, whether your friends are, or are not, reconciled to us?—Do I want any favour from them?—For your own mind's sake, therefore, frustrate not Captain Tomlinson's negotiation. That worthy gentleman will be here in the afternoon; Lady Betty will be in town, with my cousin Montague, in a day or two.—They will be your visiters. I beseech you do not carry this misunderstanding so far, as that Lord M. and Lady Betty, and Lady Sarah, may know it. [How considerable this made me look to the women!] Lady Betty will not let you rest till you consent to accompany her to her own seat—and to that lady may you safely intrust your cause.

Again, upon my pausing a moment, she was going to break out. I liked not the turn of her countenance, nor the tone of her voice—'And thinkest thou, base wretch,' were the words she did utter: I again raised my voice, and drowned her's.—Base wretch, Madam?—You know that I have not deserved the violent names you have called me. Words so opprobrious from a mind so gentle!—But this treatment is from you, Madam?—From you, whom I love more than my own soul!—By that soul, I swear that I do.—[The women looked upon each other—they seemed pleased with my ardour.—Women, whether wives, maids, or widows, love ardours: even Miss Howe, thou knowest, speaks up for ardours,*]—Nevertheless, I must say, that you have carried matters too far for the occasion. I see you hate me—

* See Vol. IV. Letters XXIX. and XXXIV.

She was just going to speak—If we are to separate for ever, in a strong and solemn voice, proceeded I, this island shall not long be troubled with me. Mean time, only be pleased to give these letters a perusal, and consider what is to be said to your uncle's friend, and what he is to say to your uncle.—Any thing will I come into, (renounce me, if you will,) that shall make for your peace, and for the reconciliation your heart was so lately set upon. But I humbly conceive, that it is necessary that you should come into better temper with me, were it but to give a favourable appearance to what has passed, and weight to any future application to your friends, in whatever way you shall think proper to make it.

I then put the letters into her lap, and retired into the next apartment with a low bow, and a very solemn air.

I was soon followed by the two women. Mrs. Moore withdrew to give the fair perverse time to read them: Miss Rawlins for the same reason, and because she was sent for home.

The widow besought her speedy return. I joined in the same request; and she was ready enough to promise to oblige us.

I excused myself to Mrs. Moore for the disguise I had appeared in at first, and for the story I had invented. I told her that I held myself obliged to satisfy her for the whole floor we were upon; and for an upper room for my servant, and that for a month certain.

She made many scruples, and begged she might not be urged, on this head, till she had consulted Miss Rawlins.

I consented; but told her, that she had taken my earnest, and I hoped there was no room for dispute.

Just then Miss Rawlins returned, with an air of eager curiosity; and having been told what had passed between Mrs. Moore and me, she gave herself airs of office immediately: which I humoured, plainly perceiving that if I had her with me I had the other.

She wished, if there were time for it, and if it were not quite impertinent in her to desire it, that I would give Mrs. Moore and her a brief history of an affair, which, as she said, bore the face of novelty, mystery, and surprise. For sometimes it looked to her as if we were married; at other times that point appeared doubtful; and yet the lady did not absolutely deny it, but, upon the whole, thought herself highly injured.

I said that our's was a very particular case.—That, were I to acquaint them with it, some part of it would hardly appear credible. But, however, as they seemed hardly to be persons of discretion, I would give them a brief account of the whole; and this in so plain and sincere a manner, that it should clear up, to their satisfaction, every thing that had passed, or might hereafter pass between us.

They sat down by me and threw every feature of their faces into attention. I was resolved to go as near the truth as possible, lest any thing should drop from my spouse to impeach my veracity; and yet keep in view what passed at the Flask.

It is necessary, although thou knowest my whole story, and a good deal of my views, that thou shouldst be apprized of the substance of what I told them.

'I gave them, in as concise a manner as I was able, this history of our families, fortunes, alliances, antipathies, her brother's and mine particularly. I averred the truth of our private marriage.' The Captain's letter, which I will enclose, will give thee my reasons for that. And, besides, the women might have proposed

a parson to me by way of compromise. 'I told them the condition my spouse had made me swear to; and to which she held me, in order, I said, to induce me the sooner to be reconciled to her relations.

'I owned, that this restraint made me sometimes ready to fly out.' And Mrs. Moore was so good as to declare, that she did not much wonder at it.

Thou art a very good sort of woman, Mrs. Moore, thought I.

As Miss Howe has actually detected our mother, and might possibly find some way still to acquaint her friend with her discoveries, I thought it proper to prepossess them in favour of Mrs. Sinclair and her two nieces.

I said, 'they were gentlewomen born; that they had not bad hearts; that indeed my spouse did not love them; they having once taken the liberty to blame her for her over-niceness with regard to me. People, I said, even good people, who knew themselves to be guilty of a fault they had no inclination to mend, were too often least patient when told of it; as they could less bear than others to be thought indifferently of.'

Too often the case, they owned.

'Mrs. Sinclair's house was a very handsome house, and fit to receive the first quality, [true enough, Jack!] Mrs. Sinclair was a woman very easy in her circumstances:—A widow gentlewoman, as you, Mrs. Moore, are. — Lets lodgings, as you, Mrs. Moore, do.—Once had better prospects as you, Mrs. Moore, may have had: the relict of Colonel Sinclair;—you, Mrs. Moore, might know Colonel Sinclair—he had lodgings at Hampstead.'

She had heard of the name.

'Oh! he was related to the best families in Scotland!—And his widow is not to be reflected upon because she lets lodgings you know, Mrs. Moore— you know, Miss Rawlins.'

Very true, and very true.—And they must needs say, it did not look quite so pretty, in such a lady as my spouse, to be so censorious.

A foundation here, thought I, to procure these women's help to get back the fugitive, or their connivance, at least, at my doing so; as well as for anticipating any future information from Miss Howe.

I gave them a character of that virago; and intimated, 'that for a head to contrive mischief, and a heart to execute it, she had hardly her equal in her sex.'

To this Miss Howe it was, Mrs. Moore said, she supposed, that my spouse was so desirous to dispatch a man and horse, by day-dawn, with a letter she wrote before she went to bed last night, proposing to stay no longer than till she had received an answer to it.

The very same, said I; I knew she would have immediate recourse to her. I should have been but too happy, could I have prevented such a letter from passing, or so to have it managed, as to have it given into Mrs. Howe's hands, instead of her daughter's. Women who had lived some time in the world knew better, than to encourage such skittish pranks in young wives.

Let me just stop to tell thee, while it is in my head, that I have since given Will. his cue to find out where the man lives who is gone with the fair fugitive's letter; and, if possible, to see him on his return, before he sees her.

I told the women, 'I despaired that it would ever be better with us while Miss Howe had so strange an ascendancy over my spouse, and remained herself unmarried. And until the reconciliation with her friends could be effected; or a still happier event—as I should think it, who am the last male of my family; and which my foolish vow, and her rigour, had hitherto'—

Here I stopt, and looked modest, turning my diamond ring round my finger; while goody Moore looked mighty significant, calling it a very particular case; and the maiden fanned away, and primm'd, and purs'd, to show that what I had said needed no farther explanantion.

'I told them the occasion of our present difference. I avowed the reality of the fire; but owned, that I would have made no scruple of breaking the unnatural oath she had bound me in, (having a husband's right on my side,) when she was so accidentally frighted into my arms; and I blamed myself excessively, that I did not; since she thought fit to carry her resentment so high, and had the injustice to suppose the fire to be a contrivance of mine.'

Nay, for that matter, Mrs. Moore said, as we were married, and madam was so odd—every gentleman would not—and stopt there Mrs. Moore.

'To suppose I should have recourse to such a poor contrivance, said I, when I saw the dear creature every hour.'—Was not this a bold put, Jack?

A most extraordinary case, truly, cried the maiden; fanning, yet coming in with her Well-but's!—and her sifting Pray, Sir's!—and her restraining Enough, Sir's.—flying from the question to the question—her seat now-and-then uneasy, for fear my want of delicacy should hurt her abundant modesty; and yet it was difficult to satisfy her super-abundant curiosity.

'My beloved's jealousy, [and jealousy of itself, to female minds, accounts for a thousand unaccountablenesses,] and the imputation of her half-phrensy, brought upon her by her father's wicked curse, and by the previous persecutions she had undergone from all her family, were what I dwelt upon, in order to provide against what might happen.'

In short, 'I owned against myself most of the offences which I did not doubt but she would charge me with in their hearing; and as every cause has a black and white side, I gave the worst parts of our story the gentlest turn. And when I had done, acquainted them with some of the contents of that letter of Captain Tomlinson which I left with the lady. I concluded with James Harlowe, and of Captain Singleton, or of any sailor-looking men.'

This thou wilt see, from the letter itself, was necessary to be done. Here, therefore, thou mayest read it. And a charming letter to my purpose wilt thou find it to be, if thou givest the least attention to its contents.

TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. WEDN. JUNE 7.

DEAR SIR,

Although I am obliged to be in town to-morrow, or next day at farthest, yet I would not dispense with writing to you, by one of my servants, (whom I send up before upon a particular occasion,) in order to advertise you, that it is probable you will hear from some of your own relations on your [supposed*] nuptials. One of the persons, (Mr. Lilburne by name,) to whom I hinted my belief of your marriage, happens to be acquainted with Mr. Spurrier, Lady Betty Lawrance's steward, and (not being under any restriction) mentioned it to Mr. Spurrier, and he to Lady Betty, as a thing certain; and this, (though I have not the honour to be personally known to her Ladyship,) brought on an inquiry from her Ladyship to me by her gentleman; who coming to me in company with Mr. Lilburne, I had no way but to confirm the report.—And I understand, that Lady Betty takes it amiss that she was not acquainted with so desirable a piece of news from yourself.

* What is between hooks [] thou mayest suppose, Jack, I sunk upon the women, in the account I gave them of the contents of this letter.

Her Ladyship, it seems, has business that calls her to town [and you will possibly choose to put her right. If you do, it will, I presume, be in confidence; that nothing may transpire from your own family to contradict what I have given out.]

[I have ever been of opinion, That truth ought to be strictly adhered to on all occasions: and am concerned that I have, (though with so good a view,) departed from my old maxim. But my dear friend Mr. John Harlowe would have it so. Yet I never knew a departure of this kind a single departure. But, to make the best of it now, allow me, Sir, once more to beg the lady, as soon as possible, to authenticate the report given out.] When both you and the lady join in the acknowledgement of your marriage, it will be impertinent in any one to be inquisitive as to the day or week. [And if as privately celebrated as you intend, (while the gentlewomen with whom you lodge are properly instructed, as you say they are, and who shall actually believe you were married long ago,) who shall be able to give a contradiction to my report?]

And yet it is very probable, that minute inquiries will be made; and this is what renders precaution necessary; for Mr. James Harlowe will not believe that you are married; and is sure, he says, that you both lived together when Mr. Hickman's application was made to Mr. John Harlowe: and if you lived together any time unmarried, he infers from your character, Mr. Lovelace, that it is not probable that you would ever marry. And he leaves it to his two uncles to decide, if you even should be married, whether there be not room to believe, that his sister was first dishonoured; and if so, to judge of the title she will have to their favour, or to the forgiveness of any of her family.—I believe, Sir, this part of my letter had best be kept from the lady.

Young Mr. Harlowe is resolved to find this out, and to come at his sister's speech likewise: and for that purpose sets out to-morrow, as I am well informed, with a large attendance armed; and Mr. Solmes is to be of the party. And what makes him the more earnest to find it out is this:—Mr. John Harlowe has told the whole family that he will alter, and new-settle his will. Mr. Antony Harlowe is resolved to do the same by his; for, it seems, he has now given over all thoughts of changing his condition, having lately been disappointed in a view he had of that sort with Mrs. Howe. These two brothers generally act in concert; and Mr. James Harlowe dreads (and let me tell you, that he has reason for it, on my Mr. Harlowe's account) that his younger sister will be, at last, more benefited than he wishes for, by the alteration intended. He has already been endeavouring to sound his uncle Harlowe on this subject; and wanted to know whether any new application had been made to him on his sister's part. Mr. Harlowe avoided a direct answer, and expressed his wishes for a general reconciliation, and his hopes that his niece were married. This offended the furious young man, and he reminded his uncle of engagements they had all entered into at his sister's going away, not to be reconciled but by general consent.

Mr. John Harlowe complains to me often of the uncontrollableness of his nephew; and says, that now that the young man has not any body of whose superior sense he stands in awe, he observes not decency in his behaviour to any of them, and this makes my Mr. Harlowe still more desirous than ever of bringing his younger niece into favour again. I will not say all I might of this young man's extraordinary rapaciousness:—but one would think, that these grasping men expect to live for ever!

I took the liberty but within these two hours to propose to set on foot (and offered my cover to) a correspondence between my friend and his daughter-niece, as she still sometimes fondly calls her. She was mistress of so much prudence, I said, that I was sure she could better direct every thing to its desirable end, than any body else could. But he said, he did not think himself entirely at liberty to take such a step at present; and that it was best that he should have it in his power to say, occasionally, that he had not any correspondence with her, or letter from her.

'You will see, Sir, from all this, the necessity of keeping our treaty an absolute secret; and if the lady has mentioned it to her worthy friend Miss Howe, I hope it is in confidence.'

[And now, Sir, a few lines in answer to your's of Monday last.]

[Mr. Harlowe was very well pleased with your readiness to come into his proposal. But as to what you both desire, that he will be present at the ceremony, he said, that his nephew watched all his steps so narrowly, that he thought it was not practicable (if he were inclinable) to oblige you: but that he consented, with all his heart, that I should be the person whom he had stipulated should be privately present at the ceremony on his part.]

[However, I think, I have an expedient for this, if your lady continues to be very desirous of her uncle's presence (except he should be more determined than his answer to me seemed to import); of which I shall acquaint you, and perhaps of what he says to it, when I have the pleasure to see you in town. But, indeed, I think you have no time to lose. Mr. Harlowe is impatient to hear, that you are actually one; and I hope I may carry him down word, when I leave you next, that I saw the ceremony performed.]

[If any obstacle arises from the lady, (from you it cannot,) I shall be tempted to think a little hardly of her punctilio.]

Mr. Harlowe hopes, Sir, that you will rather take pains to avoid, than to meet, this violent young man. He has the better opinion of you, let me tell you, Sir, from the account I gave him of your moderation and politeness; neither of which are qualities with his nephew. But we have all of us something to amend.

You cannot imagine how dearly my friend still loves this excellent niece of his.—I will give you an instance

of it, which affected me a good deal—'If once more, said he, (the last time but one we were together,) I can but see this sweet child gracing the upper end of my table, as mistress of my house, in my allotted month; all the rest of my family present but as her guests; for so I formerly would have it; and had her mother's consent for it—' There he stopt; for he was forced to turn his reverend face from me. Tears ran down his cheeks. Fain would he have hid them: but he could not—'Yet—yet, said he—how—how—' [poor gentleman, he perfectly sobbed,] 'how shall I be able to bear the first meeting!'

I bless God I am no hard-hearted man, Mr. Lovelace: my eyes showed to my worthy friend, that he had no reason to be ashamed of his humanity before me.

I will put an end to this long epistle. Be pleased to make my compliments acceptable to the most excellent of women; as well as believe me to be,

Dear Sir, Your faithful friend, and humble servant, ANTONY TOMLINSON.

During the conversation between me and the women, I had planted myself at the farthest end of the apartment we were in, over against the door, which was open; and opposite to the lady's chamber-door, which was shut. I spoke so low that it was impossible for her, at that distance, to hear what we said; and in this situation I could see if her door was opened.

I told the women, that what I had mentioned to my spouse of Lady Betty's coming to town with her niece Montague, and of their intention to visit my beloved, whom they had never seen, nor she them, was real; and that I expected news of their arrival every hour. I then showed them copies of the other two letters, which I had left with her; the one from Lady Betty, the other from my cousin Montague.—And here thou mayest read them if thou wilt.

Eternally reproaching, eternally upbraiding me, are my impertinent relations. But they are fond of occasions to find fault with me. Their love, their love, Jack, and their dependence on my known good humour, are their inducements.

TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. WED. MORN. JUNE 7.

DEAR NEPHEW,

I understand that at length all our wishes are answered in your happy marriage. But I think we might as well have heard of it directly from you, as from the round-about way by which we have been made acquainted with it. Methinks, Sir, the power and the will we have to oblige you, should not expose us the more to your slights and negligence. My brother had set his heart upon giving to you the wife we have all so long wished you to have. But if you were actually married at the time you made him that request (supposing, perhaps, that his gout would not let him attend you) it is but like you.*—If your lady had her reasons to wish it to be private while the differences between her family and self continue, you might nevertheless have communicated it to us with that restriction; and we should have forborne the public manifestations of our joy upon an event we have so long desired.

* I gave Mrs. Moore and Miss Rawlins room to think this reproach just, Jack.

The distant way we have come to know it is by my steward; who is acquainted with a friend of Captain Tomlinson, to whom that gentleman revealed it: and he, it seems, had it from yourself and lady, with such circumstances as leave it not to be doubted.

I am, indeed, very much disobliged with you: so is Lady Sarah. But I have a very speedy opportunity to tell you so in person; being obliged to go to town to my old chancery affair. My cousin Leeson, who is, it seems, removed to Albemarle-street, has notice of it. I shall be at her house, where I bespeak your attendance of Sunday night. I have written to my cousin Charlotte for either her, or her sister, to meet me at Reading, and accompany me to town. I shall stay but a few days; my business being matter of form only. On my return I shall pop upon Lord M. at M. Hall, to see in what way his last fit has left him.

Mean time, having told you my mind on your negligence, I cannot help congratulating you both on the occasion.—Your fair lady particularly, upon her entrance into a family which is prepared to admire and love her.

My principal intention of writing to you (dispensing with the necessary punctilio) is, that you may acquaint my dear new niece, that I will not be denied the honour of her company down with me into Oxfordshire. I understand that your proposed house and equipages cannot be soon ready. She shall be with me till they are. I insist upon it. This shall make all up. My house shall be her own. My servants and equipages her's.

Lady Sarah, who has not been out of her own house for months, will oblige me with her company for a week, in honour of a niece so dearly beloved, as I am sure she will be of us all.

Being but in lodgings in town, neither you nor your lady can require much preparation.

Some time on Monday I hope to attend the dear young lady, to make her my compliments; and to receive her apology for your negligence: which, and her going down with me, as I said before, shall be full satisfaction. Mean time, God bless her for her courage, (tell her I say so;) and bless you both in each other; and that will be happiness to us all— particularly to

Your truly affectionate Aunt, ELIZ. LAWRANCE.

TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. DEAR COUSIN,

At last, as we understand, there is some hope of you. Now does my good Lord run over his bead-roll of proverbs; of black oxen, wild oats, long lanes, and so forth.

Now, Cousin, say I, is your time come; and you will be no longer, I hope, an infidel either to the power or excellence of the sex you have pretended hitherto so much as undervalue; nor a ridiculer or scoffer at an institution which all sober people reverence, and all rakes, sooner or later, are brought to reverence, or to wish they had.

I want to see how you become your silken fetters: whether the charming yoke sits light upon your shoulders. If with such a sweet yoke-fellow it does not, my Lord, and my sister, as well as I, think that you will deserve a closer tie about your neck.

His Lordship is very much displeas'd, that you have not written him word of the day, the hour, the manner, and every thing. But I ask him, how he can already expect any mark of deference or politeness from you? He must stay, I tell him, till that sign of reformation, among others, appear from the influence and example of your lady: but that, if ever you will be good for any thing, it will be quickly seen. And, O Cousin, what a vast, vast journey have you to take from the dreary land of libertinism, through the bright province of reformation, into the serene kingdom of happiness!—You had need to lose no time. You have many a weary step to tread, before you can overtake those travellers who set out for it from a less remote quarter. But you have a charming pole-star to guide you; that's your advantage. I wish you joy of it: and as I have never yet expected any highly complaisant thing from you, I make no scruple to begin first; but it is purely, I must tell you, in respect to my new cousin; whose accession into our family we most heartily congratulate and rejoice in.

I have a letter from Lady Betty. She commands either my attendance or my sister's to my cousin Leeson's. She puts Lord M. in hopes, that she shall certainly bring down with her our lovely new relation; for she says, she will not be denied. His Lordship is the willinger to let me be the person, as I am in a manner wild to see her; my sister having two years ago had that honour at Sir Robert Biddulph's. So get ready to accompany us in our return; except your lady had objections strong enough to satisfy us all. Lady Sarah longs to see her; and says, This accession to the family will supply to it the loss of her beloved daughter.

I shall soon, I hope, pay my compliments to the dear lady in person: so have nothing to add, but that I am
Your old mad Playfellow and Cousin, CHARLOTTE MONTAGUE.

The women having read the copies of these two letters, I thought that I might then threaten and swagger—'But very little heart have I, said I, to encourage such a visit from Lady Betty and Miss Montague to my spouse. For after all, I am tired out with her strange ways. She is not what she was, and (as I told her in your hearing, Ladies) I will leave this plaguy island, though the place of my birth, and though the stake I have in it is very considerable, and go and reside in France or Italy, and never think of myself as a married man, nor live like one.'

O dear! said one.

That would be a sad thing! said the other.

Nay, Madam, [turning to Mrs. Moore,]—Indeed, Madam, [to Miss Rawlins,]— I am quite desperate. I can no longer bear such usage. I have had the good fortune to be favoured by the smiles of very fine ladies, though I say it [and I looked very modest] both abroad and at home—[Thou knowest this to be true, Jack]. With regard to my spouse here, I have but one hope left, (for as to the reconciliation with her friends, I left, I scorn them all too much to value that, but for her sake,) and that was, that if it pleased God to bless us with children, she might entirely recover her usual serenity; and we might then be happy. But the reconciliation her heart was so much set upon, is now, as I hinted before, entirely hopeless—made so, by this rash step of her's, and by the rash temper she is in; since (as you will believe) her brother and sister, when they come to know it, will make a fine handle of it against us both;—affecting, as they do at present, to disbelieve our marriage— and the dear creature herself too ready to countenance such a disbelief—as nothing more than the ceremony—as nothing more—hem!—as nothing more than the ceremony—

Here, as thou wilt perceive, I was bashful; for Miss Rawlins, by her preparatory primness, put me in mind that it was proper to be so—

I turned half round; then facing the fan-player, and the matron—you yourselves, Ladies, knew not what to believe till now, that I have told you our story; and I do assure you, that I shall not give myself the same trouble to convince people I hate; people from whom I neither expect nor desire any favour; and who are determined not to be convinced. And what, pray, must be the issue, when her uncle's friend comes, although he seems to be a truly worthy man? It is not natural for him to say, 'To what purpose, Mr. Lovelace, should I endeavour to bring about a reconciliation between Mrs. Lovelace and her friends, by means of her elder uncle, when a good understanding is wanting between yourselves?'—A fair inference, Mrs. Moore!—A fair inference, Miss Rawlins.—And here is the unhappiness—till she is reconciled to them, this cursed oath, in her notion, is binding.

The women seemed moved; for I spoke with great earnestness, though low—and besides, they love to have their sex, and its favours, appear of importance to us. They shook their deep heads at each other, and looked sorrowful: and this moved my tender heart too.

'Tis an unheard-of case, Ladies—had she not preferred me to all mankind—There I stopped—and that, resumed I, feeling for my handkerchief, is what staggered Captain Tomlinson when he heard of her flight; who, the last time he saw us together, saw the most affectionate couple on earth!—the most affectionate couple on earth!—in the accent-grievous, repeated I.

Out then I pulled my handkerchief, and putting it to my eyes, arose, and walked to the window—It makes me weaker than a woman, did I not love her, as never man loved his wife! [I have no doubt but I do, Jack.]

There again I stopt; and resuming—Charming creature, as you see she is, I wish I had never beheld her face!—Excuse me, Ladies; traversing the room, and having rubbed my eyes till I supposed them red, I turned to the women; and, pulling out my letter-case, I will show you one letter—here it is—read it, Miss Rawlins, if you please—it will confirm to you how much all my family are prepared to admire her. I am freely treated in it;—so I am in the two others: but after what I have told you, nothing need be a secret to you two.

She took it, with an air of eager curiosity, and looked at the seal, ostentatiously coroneted; and at the superscription, reading out, To Robert Lovelace, Esq.—Ay, Madam—Ay, Miss, that's my name, [giving myself an air, though I had told it to them before,] I am not ashamed of it. My wife's maiden name—unmarried name, I should rather say—fool that I am!—and I rubbed my cheek for vexation [Fool enough in conscience, Jack!] was Harlowe—Clarissa Harlowe—you heard me call her my Clarissa—

I did—but thought it to be a feigned or love-name, said Miss Rawlins.

I wonder what is Miss Rawlins's love-name, Jack. Most of the fair romancers have in their early womanhood chosen love-names. No parson ever gave more real names, than I have given fictitious ones. And to very good

purpose: many a sweet dear has answered me a letter for the sake of owning a name which her godmother never gave her.

No—it was her real name, I said.

I bid her read out the whole letter. If the spelling be not exact, Miss Rawlins, said I, you will excuse it; the writer is a lord. But, perhaps, I may not show it to my spouse; for if those I have left with her have no effect upon her, neither will this: and I shall not care to expose my Lord M. to her scorn. Indeed I begin to be quite careless of consequences.

Miss Rawlins, who could not but be pleased with this mark of my confidence, looked as if she pitied me.

And here thou mayest read the letter, No. III.

TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. M. HALL, WEDN. JUNE 7.

COUSIN LOVELACE,

I think you might have found time to let us know of your nuptials being actually solemnized. I might have expected this piece of civility from you. But perhaps the ceremony was performed at the very time that you asked me to be your lady's father—but I should be angry if I proceed in my guesses—and little said is soon amended.

But I can tell you, that Lady Betty Lawrance, whatever Lady Sarah does, will not so soon forgive you, as I have done. Women resent slights longer than men. You that know so much of the sex (I speak it not, however, to your praise) might have known that. But never was you before acquainted with a lady of such an amiable character. I hope there will be but one soul between you. I have before now said, that I will disinherit you, and settle all I can upon her, if you prove not a good husband to her.

May this marriage be crowned with a great many fine boys (I desire no girls) to build up again a family so antient! The first boy shall take my surname by act of parliament. That is my will.

Lady Betty and niece Charlotte will be in town about business before you know where you are. They long to pay their compliments to your fair bride. I suppose you will hardly be at The Lawn when they get to town; because Greme informs me, you have sent no orders there for your lady's accommodation.

Pritchard has all things in readiness for signing. I will take no advantage of your slights. Indeed I am too much used to them—more praise to my patience than to your complaisance, however.

One reason for Lady Betty's going up, as I may tell you under the rose, is, to buy some suitable presents for Lady Sarah and all of us to make on this agreeable occasion.

We would have blazed it away, could we have had timely notice, and thought it would have been agreeable to all round. The like occasions don't happen every day.

My most affectionate compliments and congratulations to my new niece, conclude me, for the present, in violent pain, that with all your heroicalness would make you mad,

Your truly affectionate uncle, M.

This letter clench'd the nail. Not but that, Miss Rawlins said, she saw I had been a wild gentleman; and, truly she thought so the moment she beheld me.

They began to intercede for my spouse, (so nicely had I turned the tables;) and that I would not go abroad and disappoint a reconciliation so much wished for on one side, and such desirable prospects on the other in my own family.

Who knows, thought I to myself, but more may come of this plot, than I had even promised myself? What a happy man shall I be, if these women can be brought to join to carry my marriage into consummation!

Ladies, you are exceedingly good to us both. I should have some hopes, if my unhappily nice spouse could be brought to dispense with the unnatural oath she has laid me under. You see what my case is. Do you think I may not insist upon her absolving me from this abominable oath? Will you be so good as to give your advice, that one apartment may serve for a man and his wife at the hour of retirement?—[Modestly put, Belford!—And let me here observe, that few rakes would find a language so decent as to engage modest women to talk with him in, upon such subjects.]

They both simpered, and looked upon one another.

These subjects always make women simper, at least. No need but of the most delicate hints to them. A man who is gross in a woman's company, ought to be knocked down with a club: for, like so many musical instruments, touch but a single wire, and the dear souls are sensible all over.

To be sure, Miss Rawlins learnedly said, playing with her fan, a casuist would give it, that the matrimonial vow ought to supercede any other obligation.

Mrs. Moore, for her part, was of opinion, that, if the lady owned herself to be a wife, she ought to behave like one.

Whatever be my luck, thought I, with this all-eyed fair-one, any other woman in the world, from fifteen to five-and-twenty, would be mine upon my own terms before the morning.

And now, that I may be at hand to take all advantages, I will endeavour, said I to myself, to make sure of good quarters.

I am your lodger, Mrs. Moore, in virtue of the earnest I have given you for these apartments, and for any one you can spare above for my servants. Indeed for all you have to spare—For who knows what my spouse's brother may attempt? I will pay you to your own demand; and that for a month or two certain, (board included,) as I shall or shall not be your hindrance. Take that as a pledge; or in part of payment— offering her a thirty pound bank note.

She declined taking it; desiring she might consult the lady first; adding, that she doubted not my honour; and that she would not let her apartments to any other person, whom she knew not something of, while I and

the lady were here.

The Lady! The Lady! from both women's mouth's continually (which still implied a doubt in their hearts): and not Your Spouse, and Your Lady, Sir.

I never met with such women, thought I:—so thoroughly convinced but this moment, yet already doubting—I am afraid I have a couple of skeptics to deal with.

I knew no reason, I said, for my wife to object to my lodging in the same house with her here, any more than in town, at Mrs. Sinclair's. But were she to make such objection, I would not quit possession since it was not unlikely that the same freakish disorder which brought her to Hampstead, might carry her absolutely out of my knowledge.

They both seemed embarrassed; and looked upon one another; yet with such an air, as if they thought there was reason in what I said. And I declared myself her boarder, as well as lodger; and dinner-time approaching, was not denied to be the former.

LETTER XXV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

I thought it was now high time to turn my whole mind to my beloved; who had had full leisure to weigh the contents of the letters I had left with her.

I therefore requested Mrs. Moore to step in, and desire to know whether she would be pleased to admit me to attend her in her apartment, on occasion of the letters I had left with her; or whether she would favour me with her company in the dining-room?

Mrs. Moore desired Miss Rawlins to accompany her in to the lady. They tapped at the door, and were both admitted.

I cannot but stop here for one minute to remark, though against myself, upon that security which innocence gives, that nevertheless had better have in it a greater mixture of the serpent with the dove. For here, heedless of all I could say behind her back, because she was satisfied with her own worthiness, she permitted me to go on with my own story, without interruption, to persons as great strangers to her as me; and who, as strangers to both, might be supposed to lean to the side most injured; and that, as I managed it, was to mine. A dear, silly soul, thought I, at the time, to depend upon the goodness of her own heart, when the heart cannot be seen into but by its actions; and she, to appearance, a runaway, an eloper, from a tender, a most indulgent husband!—To neglect to cultivate the opinion of individuals, when the whole world is governed by appearance!

Yet what can be expected of an angel under twenty?—She has a world of knowledge:—knowledge speculative, as I may say, but no experience.—How should she?—Knowledge by theory only is a vague, uncertain light: a Will o' the Wisp, which as often misleads the doubting mind, as puts it right.

There are many things in the world, could a moralizer say, that would afford inexpressible pleasure to a reflecting mind, were it not for the mixture they come to us with. To be graver still, I have seen parents, [perhaps my own did so,] who delighted in those very qualities in their children while young, the natural consequences of which, (too much indulged and encouraged,) made them, as they grew up, the plague of their hearts.—To bring this home to my present purpose, I must tell thee, that I adore this charming creature for her vigilant prudence; but yet I would not, methinks, wish her, by virtue of that prudence, which is, however, necessary to carry her above the devices of all the rest of the world, to be too wise for mine.

My revenge, my sworn revenge, is, nevertheless, (adore her as I will,) uppermost in my heart.—Miss Howe says that my love is a Herodian love.* By my soul, that girl's a witch! I am half sorry to say, that I find a pleasure in playing the tyrant over what I love. Call it an ungenerous pleasure, if thou wilt: softer hearts than mine know it. The women, to a woman, know it, and show it too, whenever they are trusted with power. And why should it be thought strange, that I, who love them so dearly, and study them so much, should catch the infection of them?

* See Letter XX. of this volume.

LETTER XXVI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

I will now give thee the substance of the dialogue that passed between the two women and the lady. Wonder not, that a perverse wife makes a listening husband. The event, however, as thou wilt find, justified the old observation, That listeners seldom hear good of themselves. Conscious of their own demerits, if I may guess by myself, [There's ingenuousness, Jack!] and fearful of censure, they seldom find themselves disappointed. There is something of sense, after all in these proverbs, in these phrases, in this wisdom of nations.

Mrs. Moore was to be the messenger, but Miss Rawlins began the dialogue.

Your SPOUSE, Madam,—[Devil!—only to fish for a negative or affirmative declaration.]

Cl. My spouse, Madam—

Miss R. Mr. Lovelace, Madam, avers that you are married to him; and begs admittance, or your company in the dining-room, to talk upon the subject of the letters he left with you.

Cl. He is a poor wicked wretch. Let me beg of you, Madam, to favour me with your company as often as possible while he is hereabouts, and I remain here.

Miss R. I shall with pleasure attend you, Madam: but, methinks, I could wish you would see the gentleman, and hear what he has to say on the subject of the letters.

Cl. My case is a hard, a very hard one—I am quite bewildered!—I know not what to do!—I have not a friend in the world that can or will help me! Yet had none but friends till I knew that man!

Miss R. The gentleman neither looks nor talks like a bad man.—Not a very bad man, as men go.

As men go! Poor Miss Rawlins, thought I; and dost thou know how men go?

Cl. O Madam, you know him not! He can put on the appearance of an angel of light; but has a black, a very black heart!

Poor I!—

Miss R. I could not have thought it, truly! But men are very deceitful, now-a-days.

Now-a-days!—A fool!—Have not her history-books told her that they were always so?

Mrs. Moore, sighing. I have found it so, I am sure, to my cost!—

Who knows but in her time poor goody Moore may have met with a Lovelace, or a Belford, or some such vile fellow? My little harum-scarum beauty knows not what strange histories every woman living, who has had the least independence of will, could tell her, were such to be as communicative as she is. But here's the thing—I have given her cause enough of offence; but not enough to make her hold her tongue.

Cl. As to the letters he has left with me, I know not what to say to them: but am resolved never to have any thing to say to him.

Miss R. If, Madam, I may be allowed to say so, I think you carry matters very far.

Cl. Has he been making a bad cause a good one with you, Madam?—That he can do with those who know him not. Indeed I heard him talking, thought not what he said, and am indifferent about it.—But what account does he give of himself?

I was pleased to hear this. To arrest, to stop her passion, thought I, in the height of its career, is a charming presage.

Then the busy Miss Rawlins fished on, to find out from her either a confirmation or disavowal of my story—Was Lord M. my uncle? Did I court her at first with the allowance of her friends, her brother excepted? Had I a rencounter with that brother? Was she so persecuted in favour of a very disagreeable man, one Solmes, as to induce her to throw herself into my protection?

None of these were denied. All the objections she could have made, were stifled, or kept in, by the considerations, (as she mentioned,) that she should stay there but a little while, and that her story was too long; but Miss Rawlins would not be thus easily answered.

Miss R. He says, Madam, that he could not prevail for marriage, till he had consented, under a solemn oath, to separate beds, while your family remained unreconciled.

Cl. O the wretch! What can be still in his head, to endeavour to pass these stories upon strangers?

So no direct denial, thought I.—Admirable!—All will do by-and-by.

Miss R. He has owned that an accidental fire had frightened you very much on Wednesday night—and that—and that—an accidental fire had frightened you—very much frightened you—last Wednesday night!

Then, after a short pause—In short, he owned, that he had taken some innocent liberties, which might have led to a breach of the oath you had imposed upon him; and that this was the cause of your displeasure.

I would have been glad to see how my charmer then looked.—To be sure she was at a loss in her own mind, to justify herself for resenting so highly an offence so trifling.—She hesitated—did not presently speak.—When she did, she wished that she, (Miss Rawlins,) might never meet with any man who would take such innocent liberties with her.

Miss Rawlins pushed further.

Your case, to be sure, Madam, is very particular: but if the hope of a reconciliation with your own friends is made more distant by your leaving him, give me leave to say, that 'tis pity—'tis pity—[I suppose the maiden then primm'd, fann'd, and blush'd—'tis pity] the oath cannot be dispensed with; especially as he owns he has not been so strict a liver.

I could have gone in and kissed the girl.

Cl. You have heard his story. Mine, as I told you before, is too long, and too melancholy: my disorder on seeing the wretch is too great; and my time here is too short, for me to enter upon it. And if he has any end to serve by his own vindication, in which I shall not be a personal sufferer, let him make himself appear as white as an angel, with all my heart.

My love for her, and the excellent character I gave her, were then pleaded.

Cl. Specious seducer!—Only tell me if I cannot get away from him by some back way?

How my heart then went pit-a-pat, to speak in the female dialect.

Cl. Let me look out—[I heard the sash lifted up.]—Whither does that path lead? Is there no possibility of getting to a coach? Surely he must deal with some fiend, or how could he have found me out? Cannot I steal to some neighbouring house, where I may be concealed till I can get quite away? You are good people!—I have not been always among such!— O help me, help me, Ladies! [with a voice of impatience,] or I am ruined!

Then pausing, Is that the way to Hendon? [pointing, I suppose.] Is Hendon a private place?—The Hampstead coach, I am told, will carry passengers thither.

Mrs. Moore. I have an honest friend at Mill-Hill, [Devil fetch her! thought I,] where, if such be your determination, Madam, and if you think yourself in danger, you may be safe, I believe.

Cl. Any where, if I can but escape from this man! Whither does that path lead, out yonder?—What is that town on the right hand called?

Mrs. Moore. Highgate, Madam.

Miss R. On the side of the heath is a little village, called North-end. A kinswoman of mine lives there. But her house is small. I am not sure she could accommodate such a lady.

Devil take her too! thought I,—I imagined that I had made myself a better interest in these women. But the whole sex love plotting—and plotters too, Jack.

Cl. A barn, an outhouse, a garret, will be a palace to me, if it will but afford me a refuge from this man!

Her senses, thought I, are much livelier than mine.—What a devil have I done, that she should be so very implacable? I told thee, Belford, all I did: Was there any thing in it so very much amiss? Such prospects of a family reconciliation before her too! To be sure she is a very sensible lady!

She then espied my new servant walking under the window, and asked if he were not one of mine?

Will. was on the look-out for old Grimes, [so is the fellow called whom my beloved has dispatched to Miss Howe.] And being told that the man she saw was my servant; I see, said she, that there is no escaping, unless you, Madam, [to Miss Rawlins, I suppose,] can befriend me till I can get farther. I have no doubt that the fellow is planted about the house to watch my steps. But the wicked wretch his master has no right to controul me. He shall not hinder me from going where I please. I will raise the town upon him, if he molests me. Dear Ladies, is there no back-door for me to get out at while you hold him in talk?

Miss R. Give me leave to ask you, Madam, Is there no room to hope for accommodation? Had you not better see him? He certainly loves you dearly: he is a fine gentleman; you may exasperate him, and make matters more unhappy for yourself.

Cl. O Mrs. Moore! O Miss Rawlins! you know not the man! I wish not to see his face, nor to exchange another word with him as long as I live.

Mrs. Moore. I don't find, Miss Rawlins, that the gentleman has misrepresented any thing. You see, Madam, [to my Clarissa,] how respectful he is; not to come in till permitted. He certainly loves you dearly. Pray, Madam, let him talk to you, as he wishes to do, on the subject of his letters.

Very kind of Mrs. Moore!—Mrs. Moore, thought I, is a very good woman. I did not curse her then.

Miss Rawlins said something; but so low that I could not hear what it was. Thus it was answered.

Cl. I am greatly distressed! I know not what to do!—But, Mrs. Moore, be so good as to give his letters to him—here they are.—Be pleased to tell him, that I wish him and Lady Betty and Miss Montague a happy meeting. He never can want excuses to them for what has happened, any more than pretences to those he would delude. Tell him, that he has ruined me in the opinion of my own friends. I am for that reason the less solicitous how I appear to his.

Mrs. Moore then came to me; and I, being afraid that something would pass mean time between the other two, which I should not like, took the letters, and entered the room, and found them retired into the closet; my beloved whispering with an air of earnestness to Miss Rawlins, who was all attention.

Her back was towards me; and Miss Rawlins, by pulling her sleeve, giving intimation of my being there—Can I have no retirement uninvaded, Sir, said she, with indignation, as if she were interrupted in some talk her heart was in?—What business have you here, or with me?—You have your letters; have you not?

Lovel. I have, my dear; and let me beg of you to consider what you are about. I every moment expect Captain Tomlinson here. Upon my soul, I do. He has promised to keep from your uncle what has happened: but what will he think if he find you hold in this strange humour?

Cl. I will endeavour, Sir, to have patience with you for a moment or two, while I ask you a few questions before this lady, and before Mrs. Moore, [who just then came in,] both of whom you have prejudiced in your favour by your specious stories:—Will you say, Sir, that we are married together? Lay your hand upon your heart, and answer me, am I your wedded wife?

I am gone too far, thought I, to give up for such a push as this, home one as it is.

My dearest soul! how can you put such a question? It is either for your honour or my own, that it should be doubted?—Surely, surely, Madam, you cannot have attended to the contents of Captain Tomlinson's letter.

She complained often of want of spirits throughout our whole contention, and of weakness of person and mind, from the fits she had been thrown into: but little reason had she for this complaint, as I thought, who was able to hold me to it, as she did. I own that I was excessively concerned for her several times.

You and I! Vilest of Men!—

My name is Lovelace, Madam—

Therefore it is that I call you the vilest of men. [Was this pardonable, Jack!—] You and I know the truth, the whole truth.—I want not to clear up my reputation with these gentlewomen:—that is already lost with every one I had most reason to value: but let me have this new specimen of what you are capable of—say, wretch, (say, Lovelace, if thou hadst rather,) art thou really and truly my wedded husband?—Say; answer without hesitation.

She trembled with impatient indignation; but had a wildness in her manner, which I took some advantage of, in order to parry this cursed thrust. And a cursed thrust it was; since, had I positively averred it, she would never have believed any thing I said: and had I owned that I was not married, I had destroyed my own plot, as well with the women as with her; and could have no pretence for pursuing her, or hindering her from going wheresoever she pleased. Not that I was ashamed to aver it, had it been consistent with policy. I would not have thee think me such a milk-sop neither.

Lovel. My dearest love, how wildly you talk! What would you have me answer? It is necessary that I should answer? May I not re-appeal this to your own breast, as well as to Captain Tomlinson's treaty and letter? You

know yourself how matters stand between us.—And Captain Tomlinson—

Cl. O wretch! Is this an answer to my question? Say, are we married, or are we not?

Level. What makes a marriage, we all know. If it be the union of two hearts, [there was a turn, Jack!] to my utmost grief, I must say that we are not; since now I see you hate me. If it be the completion of marriage, to my confusion and regret, I must own we are not. But, my dear, will you be pleased to consider what answer half a dozen people whence you came, could give to your question? And do not now, in the disorder of your mind, and the height of passion, bring into question before these gentlewomen a point you have acknowledged before those who know us better.

I would have whispered her about the treaty with her uncle, and about the contents of the Captain's letter; but, retreating, and with a rejecting hand, Keep thy distance, man, cried the dear insolent—to thine own heart I appeal, since thou evadest me thus pitifully!—I own no marriage with thee!—Bear witness, Ladies, I do not. And cease to torment me, cease to follow me.—Surely, surely, faulty as I have been, I have not deserved to be thus persecuted!—I resume, therefore, my former language: you have no right to pursue me: you know you have not: begone then, and leave me to make the best of my hard lot. O my dear, cruel father! said she, in a violent fit of grief [falling upon her knees, and clasping her uplifted hands together] thy heavy curse is completed upon thy devoted daughter! I am punished, dreadfully punished, by the very wretch in whom I had placed my wicked confidence!

By my soul, Belford, the little witch with her words, but more by her manner, moved me! Wonder not then that her action, her grief, her tears, set the women into the like compassionate manifestations.

Had I not a cursed task of it?

The two women withdrew to the further end of the room, and whispered, a strange case! There is no phrensy here—I just heard said.

The charming creature threw her handkerchief over her head and neck, continuing kneeling, her back towards me, and her face hid upon a chair, and repeatedly sobbed with grief and passion.

I took this opportunity to step to the women to keep them steady.

You see, Ladies, [whispering,] what an unhappy man I am! You see what a spirit this dear creature has!—All, all owing to her implacable relations, and to her father's curse.—A curse upon them all! they have turned the head of the most charming woman in the world!

Ah! Sir, Sir, replied Miss Rawlins, whatever be the fault of her relations, all is not as it should be between you and her. 'Tis plain she does not think herself married: 'tis plain she does not: and if you have any value for the poor lady, and would not totally deprive her of her senses, you had better withdraw, and leave to time and cooler consideration the event in your favour.

She will compel me to this at last, I fear, Miss Rawlins; I fear she will; and then we are both undone: for I cannot live without her; she knows it too well: and she has not a friend who will look upon her: this also she knows. Our marriage, when her uncle's friend comes, will be proved incontestably. But I am ashamed to think I have given her room to believe it no marriage: that's what she harps upon!

Well, 'tis a strange case, a very strange one, said Miss Rawlins; and was going to say further, when the angry beauty, coming towards the door, said, Mrs. Moore, I beg a word with you. And they both stepped into the dining-room.

I saw her just before put a parcel into her pocket; and followed them out, for fear she should slip away; and stepping to the stairs, that she might not go by me, Will., cried I, aloud [though I knew he was not near] — Pray, child, to a maid, who answered, call either of my servants to me.

She then came up to me with a wrathful countenance: do you call your servant, Sir, to hinder me, between you, from going where I please?

Don't, my dearest life, misinterpret every thing I do. Can you think me so mean and unworthy as to employ a servant to constrain you?—I call him to send to the public-houses, or inns in this town, to inquire after Captain Tomlinson, who may have alighted at some one of them, and be now, perhaps, needlessly adjusting his dress; and I would have him come, were he to be without clothes, God forgive me! for I am stabbed to the heart by your cruelty.

Answer was returned, that neither of my servants was in the way.

Not in the way, said I!—Whither can the dogs be gone?

O Sir! with a scornful air; not far, I'll warrant. One of them was under the window just now; according to order, I suppose, to watch my steps— but I will do what I please, and go where I please; and that to your face.

God forbid, that I should hinder you in any thing that you may do with safety to yourself!

Now I verily believe that her design was to slip out, in pursuance of the closet-whispering between her and Miss Rawlins; perhaps to Miss Rawlins's house.

She then stepped back to Mrs. Moore, and gave her something, which proved to be a diamond ring, and desired her [not whisperingly, but with an air of defiance to me] that that might be a pledge for her, till she defrayed her demands; which she should soon find means to do; having no more money about her than she might have occasion for before she came to an acquaintance's.

Mrs. Moore would have declined taking it; but she would not be denied; and then, wiping her eyes, she put on her gloves—nobody has a right to stop me, said she!—I will go!—Whom should I be afraid of?—Her very question, charming creature! testifying her fear.

I beg pardon, Madam, [turning to Mrs. Moore, and courtesying,] for the trouble I have given you.—I beg pardon, Madam, to Miss Rawlins, [courtesying likewise to her,]—you may both hear of me in a happier hour, if such a one fall to my lot—and God bless you both!—struggling with her tears till she sobbed—and away was tripping.

I stepped to the door: I put it to; and setting my back against it, took her struggling hand—My dearest life! my angel! said I, why will you thus distress me?—Is this the forgiveness which you so solemnly promised?—

Unhand me, Sir!—You have no business with me! You have no right over me! You know you have not.

But whither, whither, my dearest love, would you go!—Think you not that I will follow you, were it to the world's end!—Whither would you go?

Well do you ask me, whither I would go, who have been the occasion that I have not a friend left!—But God, who knows my innocence, and my upright intentions, will not wholly abandon me when I am out of your power; but while I am in it, I cannot expect a gleam of the divine grace or favour to reach me.

How severe is this!—How shockingly severe!—Out of your presence, my angry fair-one, I can neither hope for the one nor the other. As my cousin Montague, in the letter you have read, observes, You are my polar star and my guide, and if ever I am to be happy, either here or hereafter, it must be in and by you.

She would then have opened the door. But I, respectfully opposing her, Begone, man! Begone, Mr. Lovelace! said she, stop not in my way. If you would not that I should attempt the window, give me passage by the door; for, once more, you have no right to detain me.

Your resentments, my dearest life, I will own to be well grounded. I will acknowledge that I have been all in fault. On my knee, [and down I dropt,] I ask your pardon. And can you refuse to ratify your own promise? Look forward to the happy prospect before us. See you not my Lord M. and Lady Sarah longing to bless you, for blessing me, and their whole family? Can you take no pleasure in the promised visit of Lady Betty and my cousin Montague? And in the protection they offer you, if you are dissatisfied with mine? Have you no wish to see your uncle's friend? Stay only till Captain Tomlinson comes. Receive from him the news of your uncle's compliance with the wishes of both.

She seemed altogether distressed; was ready to sink; and forced to lean against the wainscot, as I kneeled at her feet. A stream of tears at last burst from her less indignant eyes. Good heaven! said she, lifting up her lovely face, and clasped hands, what is at last to be my destiny? Deliver me from this dangerous man; and direct me—I know not what to do, what I can do, nor what I ought to do!

The women, as I had owned our marriage to be but half completed, heard nothing in this whole scene to contradict (not flagrantly to contradict) what I had asserted. They believed they saw in her returning temper, and staggered resolution, a love for me, which her indignation had before suppressed; and they joined to persuade her to tarry till the Captain came, and to hear his proposals; representing the dangers to which she would be exposed; the fatigues she might endure; a lady of her appearance, unguarded, unprotected. On the other hand they dwelt upon my declared contrition, and on my promises; for the performance of which they offered to be bound. So much had my kneeling humility affected them.

Women, Jack, tacitly acknowledge the inferiority of their sex, in the pride they take to behold a kneeling lover at their feet.

She turned from me, and threw herself into a chair.

I arose and approached her with reverence. My dearest creature, said I, and was proceeding, but, with a face glowing with conscious dignity, she interrupted me—Ungenerous, ungrateful Lovelace! You know not the value of the heart you have insulted! Nor can you conceive how much my soul despises your meanness. But meanness must ever be the portion of the man, who can act vilely!

The women believing we were likely to be on better terms, retired. The dear perverse opposed their going; but they saw I was desirous of their absence; and when they had withdrawn, I once more threw myself at her feet, and acknowledged my offences; implored her forgiveness for this one time, and promised the most exact circumspection for the future.

It was impossible for her she said to keep her memory and forgive me. What hadst thou seen in the conduct of Clarissa Harlowe, that should encourage such an insult upon her as thou didst dare to make? How meanly must thou think of her, that thou couldst presume to be so guilty, and expect her to be so weak as to forgive thee?

I besought her to let me read over to her Captain Tomlinson's letter. I was sure it was impossible she could have given it the requisite attention.

I have given it the requisite attention, said she; and the other letters too. So that what I say is upon deliberation. And what have I to fear from my brother and sister? They can but complete the ruin of my fortunes with my father and uncles. Let them and welcome. You, Sir, I thank you, have lowered my fortunes; but, I bless God, that my mind is not sunk with my fortunes. It is, on the contrary, raised above fortune, and above you; and for half a word they shall have the estate they envied me for, and an acquittal from me of all the expectations from my family that may make them uneasy.

I lifted up my hands and eyes in silent admiration of her.

My brother, Sir, may think me ruined; to the praise of your character, he may think it impossible to be with you and be innocent. You have but too well justified their harshest censures by every part of your conduct. But now that I have escaped from you, and that I am out of the reach of your mysterious devices, I will wrap myself up in mine own innocence, [and then the passionate beauty folded her arms about herself,] and leave to time, and to my future circumspection, the re-establishment of my character. Leave me then, Sir, pursue me not!—

Good Heaven! [interrupting her]—and all this, for what?—Had I not yielded to your entreaties, (forgive me, Madam,) you could not have carried farther your resentments—

Wretch! Was it not crime enough to give occasion for those entreaties? Wouldst thou make a merit to me, that thou didst not utterly ruin her whom thou oughtest to have protected? Begone, man! (turning from me, her face crimsoned over with passion.)—See me no more!—I cannot bear thee in my sight!—

Dearest, dearest creature!

If I forgive thee, Lovelace—And there she stopped.—To endeavour, proceeded she, to endeavour by premeditation, by low contrivances, by cries of Fire! to terrify a poor creature who had consented to take a wretched chance with thee for life!

For Heaven's sake,—offering to take her repulsing hand, as she was flying from me towards the closet.

What hast thou to do to plead for the sake of Heaven in thy favour!—O darkest of human minds!

Then turning from me, wiping her eyes, and again turning towards me, but her sweet face half aside, What difficulties hast thou involved me in! That thou hadst a plain path before thee, after thou hadst betrayed me into thy power.—At once my mind takes in the whole of thy crooked behaviour; and if thou thinkest of Clarissa Harlowe as her proud heart tells her thou oughtest to think of her, thou wilt seek thy fortunes elsewhere. How often hast thou provoked me to tell thee, that my soul is above thee!

For Heaven's sake, Madam, for a soul's sake, which it is in your power to save from perdition, forgive me the past offence. I am the greatest villain on earth if it was a premeditated one; yet I presume not to excuse myself. On your mercy I throw myself. I will not offer at any plea but that of penitence. See but Captain Tomlinson.—See but Lady Betty and my cousin; let them plead for me; let them be guarantees for my honour.

If Captain Tomlinson come while I stay here, I may see him; but as for you, Sir—

Dearest creature! let me beg of you not to aggravate my offence to the Captain when he comes. Let me beg of you—

What askest thou? It is not that I shall be of party against myself? That I shall palliate—

Do not charge me, Madam, interrupted I, with villainous premeditation! —Do not give such a construction to my offence as may weaken your uncle's opinion—as may strengthen your brother's—

She flung from me to the further end of the room, [she could go no further,] and just then Mrs. Moore came up, and told her that dinner was ready, and that she had prevailed upon Miss Rawlins to give her her company.

You must excuse me, Mrs. Moore, said she. Miss Rawlins I hope also will —but I cannot eat—I cannot go down. As for you, Sir, I suppose you will think it right to depart hence; at least till the gentleman comes whom you expect.

I respectfully withdrew into the next room, that Mrs. Moore might acquaint her, (I durst not myself,) that I was her lodger and boarder, as, whisperingly, I desired that she would; and meeting Miss Rawlins in the passage, Dearest Miss Rawlins, said I, stand my friend; join with Mrs. Moore to pacify my spouse, if she has any new flights upon my having taken lodgings, and intending to board here. I hope she will have more generosity than to think of hindering a gentlewoman from letting her lodgings.

I suppose Mrs. Moore, (whom I left with my fair-one,) had apprized her of this before Miss Rawlins went in; for I heard her say, while I withheld Miss Rawlins,—'No, indeed: he is much mistaken—surely he does not think I will.'

They both expostulated with her, as I could gather from bits and scraps of what they said; for they spoke so low, that I could not hear any distinct sentence, but from the fair perverse, whose anger made her louder. And to this purpose I heard her deliver herself in answer to different parts of their talk to her:—'Good Mrs. Moore, dear Miss Rawlins, press me no further:—I cannot sit down at table with him!'

They said something, as I suppose in my behalf—'O the insinuating wretch! What defence have I against a man, who, go where I will, can turn every one, even of the virtuous of my sex, in his favour?'

After something else said, which I heard not distinctly—'This is execrable cunning!—Were you to know his wicked heart, he is not without hope of engaging you two good persons to second him in the vilest of his machinations.'

How came she, (thought I, at the instant,) by all this penetration? My devil surely does not play me booty. If I thought he did, I would marry, and live honest, to be even with him.

I suppose then they urged the plea which I hinted to Miss Rawlins at going in, that she would not be Mrs. Moore's hindrance; for thus she expressed herself—'He will no doubt pay you your own price. You need not question his liberality; but one house cannot hold us.—Why, if it would, did I fly from him, to seek refuge among strangers?'

Then, in answer to somewhat else they pleaded—"Tis a mistake, Madam; I am not reconciled to him, I will believe nothing he says. Has he not given you a flagrant specimen of what a man he is, and of what his is capable, by the disguises you saw him in? My story is too long, and my stay here will be but short; or I could convince you that my resentments against him are but too well founded.'

I suppose that they pleaded for her leave for my dining with them; for she said—'I have nothing to say to that: it is your own house, Mrs. Moore—it is your own table—you may admit whom you please to it, only leave me at my liberty to choose my company.'

Then, in answer, as I suppose, to their offer of sending her up a plate— 'A bit of bread, if you please, and a glass of water; that's all I can swallow at present. I am really very much discomposed. Saw you not how bad I was? Indignation only could have supported my spirits!—

'I have no objections to his dining with you, Madam;' added she, in reply, I suppose, to a farther question of the same nature—'But I will not stay a night in the same house where he lodges.'

I presume Miss Rawlins had told her that she would not stay dinner: for she said,—'Let me not deprive Mrs. Moore of your company, Miss Rawlins. You will not be displeased with his talk. He can have no design upon you.'

Then I suppose they pleaded what I might say behind her back, to make my own story good:—'I care not what he says or what he thinks of me. Repentance and amendment are all the harm I wish him, whatever becomes of me!'

By her accent she wept when she spoke these last words.

They came out both of them wiping their eyes; and would have persuaded me to relinquish the lodgings, and to depart till her uncle's friend came. But I knew better. I did not care to trust the Devil, well as she and Miss Howe suppose me to be acquainted with him, for finding her out again, if once more she escaped me.

What I am most afraid of is, that she will throw herself among her own relations; and, if she does, I am confident they will not be able to withstand her affecting eloquence. But yet, as thou'lt see, the Captain's letter to me is admirably calculated to obviate my apprehensions on this score; particularly in that passage

where it is said, that her uncle thinks not himself at liberty to correspond directly with her, or to receive applications from her—but through Captain Tomlinson, as is strongly implied.*

* See Letter XXIV. of this volume.

I must own, (notwithstanding the revenge I have so solemnly vowed,) that I would very fain have made for her a merit with myself in her returning favour, and have owed as little as possible to the mediation of Captain Tomlinson. My pride was concerned in this: and this was one of my reasons for not bringing him with me.—Another was, that, if I were obliged to have recourse to his assistance, I should be better able, (by visiting without him,) to direct him what to say or do, as I should find out the turn of her humour.

I was, however, glad at my heart that Mrs. Moore came up so seasonably with notice that dinner was ready. The fair fugitive was all in all. She had the excuse for withdrawing, I had time to strengthen myself; the Captain had time to come; and the lady to cool.—Shakspeare advises well:

*Oppose not rage, whilst rage is in its force;
But give it way awhile, and let it waste.
The rising deluge is not stopt with dams;
Those it o'erbears, and drowns the hope of harvest.
But, wisely manag'd, its divided strength
Is sluic'd in channels, and securely drain'd:
And when its force is spent, and unsupply'd,
The residue with mounds may be restrain'd,
And dry-shod we may pass the naked ford.*

I went down with the women to dinner. Mrs. Moore sent her fair boarder up a plate, but she only ate a little bit of bread, and drank a glass of water. I doubted not but she would keep her word, when it was once gone out. Is she not an Harlowe? She seems to be enuring herself to hardships, which at the worst she can never know; since, though she should ultimately refuse to be obliged to me, or (to express myself more suitable to my own heart,) to oblige me, every one who sees her must befriend her.

But let me ask thee, Belford, art thou not solicitous for me in relation to the contents of the letter which the angry beauty had written and dispatched away by man and horse; and for what may be Miss Howe's answer to it? art thou not ready to inquire, whether it be not likely that Miss Howe, when she knows of her saucy friend's flight, will be concerned about her letter, which she must know could not be at Wilson's till after that flight, and so, probably, would fall into my hands?—

All these things, as thou'lt see in the sequel, are provided for with as much contrivance as human foresight can admit.

I have already told thee that Will. is upon the lookout for old Grimes— old Grimes is, it seems, a gossiping, sottish rascal; and if Will. can but light of him, I'll answer for the consequence; For has not Will. been my servant upwards of seven years?

LETTER XXVII

MR. LOVELACE [IN CONTINUATION.]

We had at dinner, besides Miss Rawlins, a young widow-niece of Mrs. Moore, who is come to stay a month with her aunt—Bevis her name; very forward, very lively, and a great admirer of me, I assure you;—hanging smirkingly upon all I said; and prepared to approve of every word before I spoke: and who, by the time we had half-dined, (by the help of what she had collected before,) was as much acquainted with our story as either of the other two.

As it behoved me to prepare them in my favour against whatever might come from Miss Howe, I improved upon the hint I had thrown out above-stairs against that mischief-making lady. I represented her to be an arrogant creature, revengeful, artful, enterprising, and one who, had she been a man, would have sworn and cursed, and committed rapes, and played the devil, as far as I knew: [I have no doubt of it, Jack!] but who, by advantage of a female education, and pride and insolence, I believed was personally virtuous.

Mrs. Bevis allowed, that there was a vast deal in education—and in pride too, she said. While Miss Rawlins came with a prudish God forbid that virtue should be owing to education only! However, I declared that Miss Howe was a subtle contriver of mischief; one who had always been my enemy: her motives I knew not: but despised the man whom her mother was desirous she should have, one Hickman; although I did not directly aver that she would rather have had me; yet they all immediately imagined that that was the ground of her animosity to me, and of her envy to my beloved: and it was pity, they said, that so fine a young lady did not see through such a pretended friend.

And yet nobody [added I] has more reason than she to know by experience the force of a hatred founded in envy; as I hinted to you above, Mrs. Moore, and to you, Miss Rawlins, in the case of her sister Arabella.

I had compliments made to my person and talents on this occasion: which gave me a singular opportunity of displaying my modesty, by disclaiming the merit of them, with a No, indeed!—I should be very vain, Ladies, if I thought so. While thus abusing myself, and exalting Miss Howe, I got their opinion both for modesty and generosity; and had all the graces which I disclaimed thrown in upon me besides.

In short, they even oppressed that modesty, which (to speak modestly of myself) their praises created, by disbelieving all I said against myself.

And, truly, I must needs say, they have almost persuaded even me myself, that Miss Howe is actually in love with me. I have often been willing to hope this. And who knows but she may? The Captain and I have agreed, that it shall be so insinuated occasionally—And what's thy opinion, Jack? She certainly hates Hickman; and girls who are disengaged seldom hate, though they may not love: and if she had rather have another, why not

that other ME? For am I not a smart fellow, and a rake? And do not your sprightly ladies love your smart fellow, and your rakes? And where is the wonder, that the man who could engage the affections of Miss Harlowe, should engage those of a lady (with her* alas's) who would be honoured in being deemed her second?

* See Letter XX. of this volume, where Miss Howe says, Alas! my dear, I know you loved him!

Nor accuse thou me of SINGULAR vanity in this presumption, Belford. Wert thou to know the secret vanity that lurks in the hearts of those who disguise or cloke it best, thou wouldst find great reason to acquit, at least, to allow for me: since it is generally the conscious over-fulness of conceit, that makes the hypocrite most upon his guard to conceal it. Yet with these fellows, proudly humble as they are, it will break out sometimes in spite of their clokes, though but in self-denying, compliment-begging self-degradation.

But now I have undervalued myself, in apologizing to thee on this occasion, let me use another argument in favour of my observation, that the ladies generally prefer a rake to a sober man; and of my presumption upon it, that Miss Howe is in love with me: it is this: common fame says, That Hickman is a very virtuous, a very innocent fellow—a male-virgin, I warrant!—An odd dog I always thought him. Now women, Jack, like not novices. Two maidenheads meeting together in wedlock, the first child must be a fool, is their common aphorism. They are pleased with a love of the sex that is founded in the knowledge of it. Reason good; novices expect more than they can possibly find in the commerce with them. The man who knows them, yet has ardours for them, to borrow a word from Miss Howe,* though those ardours are generally owing more to the devil within him, than to the witch without him, is the man who makes them the highest and most grateful compliment. He knows what to expect, and with what to be satisfied.

* See Vol. IV. Letters XXIX. and XXXIV.

Then the merit of a woman, in some cases, must be ignorance, whether real or pretended. The man, in these cases, must be an adept. Will it then be wondered at, that a woman prefers a libertine to a novice?—While she expects in the one the confidence she wants, she considers the other and herself as two parallel lines, which, though they run side by side, can never meet.

Yet in this the sex is generally mistaken too; for these sheepish fellows are sly. I myself was modest once; and this, as I have elsewhere hinted to thee,* has better enabled me to judge of both sexes.

* See Vol. III. Letter XXIII.

But to proceed with my narrative:

Having thus prepared every one against any letter should come from Miss Howe, and against my beloved's messenger returns, I thought it proper to conclude that subject with a hint, that my spouse could not bear to have any thing said that reflected upon Miss Howe; and, with a deep sigh, added, that I had been made very unhappy more than once by the ill-will of ladies whom I had never offended.

The widow Bevis believed that might very easily be. Will. both without and within, [for I intend he shall fall in love with widow Moore's maid, and have saved one hundred pounds in my service, at least,] will be great helps, as things may happen.

LETTER XXVIII

MR. LOVELACE [IN CONTINUATION.]

We had hardly dined, when my coachman, who kept a look-out for Captain Tomlinson, as Will. did for old Grimes, conducted hither that worthy gentleman, attended by one servant, both on horseback. He alighted. I went out to meet him at the door.

Thou knowest his solemn appearance, and unblushing freedom; and yet canst not imagine what a dignity the rascal assumed, nor how respectful to him I was.

I led him into the parlour, and presented him to the women, and them to him. I thought it highly imported me (as they might still have some diffidences about our marriage, from my fair-one's home-pushed questions on that head) to convince them entirely of the truth of all I had asserted. And how could I do this better, than by dialoguing a little with him before them?

Dear Captain, I thought you long; for I have had a terrible conflict with my spouse.

Capt. I am sorry that I am later than my intention—my account with my banker—[There's a dog, Jack!] took me up longer time to adjust than I had foreseen [all the time pulling down and stroking his ruffles]: for there was a small difference between us—only twenty pounds, indeed, which I had taken no account of.

The rascal has not seen twenty pounds of his own these ten years.

Then had we between us the character of the Harlowe family; I railed against them all; the Captain taking his dear friend Mr. John Harlowe's part; with a Not so fast!—not so fast, young gentleman!—and the like free assumptions.

He accounted for their animosity by my defiances: no good family, having such a charming daughter, would care to be defied, instead of courted: he must speak his mind: never was a double-tongued man.—He appealed to the ladies, if he were not right?

He got them on his side.

The correction I had given the brother, he told me, must have aggravated matters.

How valiant this made me look to the women!—The sex love us mettled fellows at their hearts.

Be that as it would, I should never love any of the family but my spouse; and wanting nothing from them, I would not, but for her sake, have gone so far as I had gone towards a reconciliation.

This was very good of me; Mrs. Moore said.

Very good indeed; Miss Rawlins.

Good;—It is more than good; it is very generous; said the widow.

Capt. Why so it is, I must needs say: for I am sensible that Mr. Lovelace has been rudely treated by them all—more rudely, than it could have been imagined a man of his quality and spirit would have put up with. But then, Sir, [turning to me,] I think you are amply rewarded in such a lady; and that you ought to forgive the father for the daughter's sake.

Mrs. Moore. Indeed so I think.

Miss R. So must every one think who has seen the lady.

Widow B. A fine lady, to be sure! But she has a violent spirit; and some very odd humours too, by what I have heard. The value of good husbands is not known till they are lost!

Her conscience then drew a sigh from her.

Lovel. Nobody must reflect upon my angel!—An angel she is—some little blemishes, indeed, as to her over-hasty spirit, and as to her unforgiving temper. But this she has from the Harlowes; instigated too by that Miss Howe.—But her innumerable excellencies are all her own.

Capt. Ay, talk of spirit, there's a spirit, now you have named Miss Howe! [And so I led him to confirm all I had said of that vixen.] Yet she was to be pitied too; looking with meaning at me.

As I have already hinted, I had before agreed with him to impute secret love occasionally to Miss Howe, as the best means to invalidate all that might come from her in my disfavour.

Capt. Mr. Lovelace, but that I know your modesty, or you could give a reason—

Lovel. Looking down, and very modest—I can't think so, Captain—but let us call another cause.

Every woman present could look me in the face, so bashful was I.

Capt. Well, but as to our present situation—only it mayn't be proper— looking upon me, and round upon the women.

Lovel. O Captain, you may say any thing before this company—only, Andrew, [to my new servant, who attended us at table,] do you withdraw: this good girl [looking at the maid-servant] will help us to all we want.

Away went Andrew: he wanted not his cue; and the maid seemed pleased at my honour's preference of her.

Capt. As to our present situation, I say, Mr. Lovelace—why, Sir, we shall be all untwisted, let me tell you, if my friend Mr. John Harlowe were to know what that is. He would as much question the truth of your being married, as the rest of the family do.

Here the women perked up their ears; and were all silent attention.

Capt. I asked you before for particulars, Mr. Lovelace; but you declined giving them.—Indeed it may not be proper for me to be acquainted with them.—But I must own, that it is past my comprehension, that a wife can resent any thing a husband can do (that is not a breach of the peace) so far as to think herself justified for eloping from him.

Lovel. Captain Tomlinson:—Sir—I do assure you, that I shall be offended—I shall be extremely concerned—if I hear that word eloping mentioned again—

Capt. Your nicety and your love, Sir, may make you take offence—but it is my way to call every thing by its proper name, let who will be offended—

Thou canst not imagine, Belford, how brave and how independent the rascal looked.

Capt. When, young gentleman, you shall think proper to give us particulars, we will find a word for this rash act in so admirable a lady, that shall please you better.—You see, Sir, that being the representative of my dear friend Mr. John Harlowe, I speak as freely as I suppose he would do, if present. But you blush, Sir—I beg your pardon, Mr. Lovelace: it becomes not a modest man to pry into those secrets, which a modest man cannot reveal.

I did not blush, Jack; but denied not the compliment, and looked down: the women seemed delighted with my modesty: but the widow Bevis was more inclined to laugh at me than praise me for it.

Capt. Whatever be the cause of this step, (I will not again, Sir, call it elopement, since that harsh word wounds your tenderness,) I cannot but express my surprise upon it, when I recollect the affectionate behaviour, to which I was witness between you, when I attended you last. Over-love, Sir, I think you once mention—but over-love [smiling] give me leave to say, Sir, it is an odd cause of quarrel—few ladies—

Lovel. Dear Captain!—And I tried to blush.

The women also tried; and being more used to it, succeeded better.—Mrs. Bevis indeed has a red-hot countenance, and always blushes.

Miss R. It signifies nothing to mince the matter: but the lady above as good as denies her marriage. You know, Sir, that she does; turning to me.

Capt. Denies her marriage! Heavens! how then have I imposed upon my dear friend Mr. John Harlowe!

Lovel. Poor dear!—But let not her veracity be called into question. She would not be guilty of a wilful untruth for the world.

Then I had all their praises again.

Lovel. Dear creature!—She thinks she has reason for her denial. You know, Mrs. Moore; you know, Miss Rawlins; what I owned to you above as my vow.

I looked down, and, as once before, turned round my diamond ring.

Mrs. Moore looked awry, and with a leer at Miss Rawlins, as to her partner in the hinted-at reference.

Miss Rawlins looked down as well as I; her eyelids half closed, as if mumbling a pater-noster, meditating her snuff-box, the distance between her nose and chin lengthened by a close-shut mouth.

She put me in mind of the pious Mrs. Fetherstone at Oxford, whom I pointed out to thee once, among other grotesque figures, at St. Mary's church, whither we went to take a view of her two sisters: her eyes shut, not

daring to trust her heart with them open; and but just half-rearing her lids, to see who the next comer was; and falling them again, when her curiosity was satisfied.

The widow Bevis gazed, as if on the hunt for a secret.

The Captain looked archly, as if half in the possession of one.

Mrs. Moore at last broke the bashful silence. Mrs. Lovelace's behaviour, she said, could be no otherwise so well accounted for, as by the ill offices of that Miss Howe; and by the severity of her relations; which might but too probably have affected her head a little at times: adding, that it was very generous in me to give way to the storm when it was up, rather than to exasperate at such a time.

But let me tell you, Sirs, said the widow Bevis, that is not what one husband in a thousand would have done.

I desired, that no part of this conversation might be hinted to my spouse; and looked still more bashfully. Her great fault, I must own, was over-delicacy.

The Captain leered round him; and said, he believed he could guess from the hints I had given him in town (of my over-love) and from what had now passed, that we had not consummated our marriage.

O Jack! how sheepishly then looked, or endeavoured to look, thy friend! how primly goody Moore! how affectedly Miss Rawlins!—while the honest widow Bevis gazed around her fearless; and though only simpering with her mouth, her eyes laughed outright, and seemed to challenge a laugh from every eye in the company.

He observed, that I was a phoenix of a man, if so; and he could not but hope that all matters would be happily accommodated in a day or two; and that then he should have the pleasure to aver to her uncle, that he was present, as he might say, on our wedding-day.

The women seemed all to join in the same hope.

Ah, Captain! Ah, Ladies! how happy should I be, if I could bring my dear spouse to be of the same mind!

It would be a very happy conclusion of a very knotty affair, said the widow Bevis; and I see not why we may not make this very night a merry one.

The Captain superciliously smiled at me. He saw plainly enough, he said, that we had been at children's play hitherto. A man of my character, who could give way to such a caprice as this, must have a prodigious value for his lady. But one thing he would venture to tell me; and that was this—that, however desirous young skittish ladies might be to have their way in this particular, it was a very bad setting-out for the man; as it gave his bride a very high proof of the power she had over him: and he would engage, that no woman, thus humoured, ever valued the man the more for it; but very much the contrary—and there were reasons to be given why she should not.

Well, well, Captain, no more of this subject before the ladies.—One feels [shrugging my shoulders in a bashful try-to-blush manner] that one is so ridiculous—I have been punished enough for my tender folly.

Miss Rawlins had taken her fan, and would needs hide her face behind it— I suppose because her blush was not quite ready.

Mrs. Moore hemmed, and looked down; and by that gave her's over.

While the jolly widow, laughing out, praised the Captain as one of Hudibras's metaphysicians, repeating,

*He knew what's what, and that's as high
As metaphysic wit can fly.*

This made Miss Rawlins blush indeed:—Fie, fie, Mrs. Bevis! cried she, unwilling, I suppose, to be thought absolutely ignorant.

Upon the whole, I began to think that I had not made a bad exchange of our professing mother, for the unprofessing Mrs. Moore. And indeed the women and I, and my beloved too, all mean the same thing; we only differ about the manner of coming at the proposed end.

LETTER XXIX

MR. LOVELACE [IN CONTINUATION.]

It was now high time to acquaint my spouse, that Captain Tomlinson was come. And the rather, as the maid told us, that the lady had asked her if such a gentleman [describing him] was not in the parlour?

Mrs. Moore went up, and requested, in my name, that she would give us audience.

But she returned, reporting my beloved's desire, that Captain Tomlinson would excuse her for the present. She was very ill. Her spirits were too weak to enter into conversation with him; and she must lie down.

I was vexed, and at first extremely disconcerted. The Captain was vexed too. And my concern, thou mayest believe, was the greater on his account.

She had been very much fatigued, I own. Her fits in the morning must have disordered her: and she had carried her resentment so high, that it was the less wonder she should find herself low, when her raised spirits had subsided. Very low, I may say; if sinkings are proportioned to risings; for she had been lifted up above the standard of a common mortal.

The Captain, however, sent up his own name, that if he could be admitted to drink one dish of tea with her, he should take it for a favour: and would go to town, and dispatch some necessary business, in order, if possible, to leave his morning free to attend her.

But she pleaded a violent head-ache; and Mrs. Moore confirmed the plea to be just.

I would have had the Captain lodge there that night, as well in compliment to him, as introductory to my

intention of entering myself upon my new-taken apartment: but his hours were of too much importance to him to stay the evening.

It was indeed very inconvenient for him, he said, to return in the morning; but he is willing to do all in his power to heal this breach, and that as well for the sakes of me and my lady, as for that of his dear friend Mr. John Harlowe; who must not know how far this misunderstanding had gone. He would therefore only drink one dish of tea with the ladies and me.

And accordingly, after he had done so, and I had had a little private conversation with him, he hurried away.

His fellow had given him, in the interim, a high character to Mrs. Moore's servants: and this reported by the widow Bevis (who being no proud woman, is hail fellow well met, as the saying is, with all her aunt's servants) he was a fine gentleman, a discreet gentleman, a man of sense and breeding, with them all: and it was pity, that, with such great business upon his hands, he should be obliged to come again.

My life for your's, audibly whispered the widow Bevis, there is humour as well as head-ache in somebody's declining to see this worthy gentleman.— Ah, Lord! how happy might some people be if they would!

No perfect happiness in this world, said I, very gravely, and with a sigh; for the widow must know that I heard her. If we have not real unhappiness, we can make it, even from the overflowings of our good fortune.

Very true, and very true, the two widows. A charming observation! Mrs. Bevis. Miss Rawlins smiled her assent to it; and I thought she called me in her heart charming man! for she professes to be a great admirer of moral observations.

I had hardly taken leave of the Captain, and sat down again with the women, when Will. came; and calling me out, 'Sir, Sir,' said he, grinning with a familiarity in his looks as if what he had to say entitled him to take liberties; 'I have got the fellow down!—I have got old Grimes—hah, hah, hah, hah!—He is at the Lower Flask—almost in the condition of David's sow, and please your honour—[the dog himself not much better] here is his letter—from—from Miss Howe—ha, ha, ha, ha,' laughed the varlet; holding it fast, as if to make conditions with me, and to excite my praises, as well as my impatience.

I could have knocked him down; but he would have his say out—'old Grimes knows not that I have the letter—I must get back to him before he misses it—I only make a pretence to go out for a few minutes—but—but'—and then the dog laughed again—'he must stay—old Grimes must stay—till I go back to pay the reckoning.'

D—n the prater; grinning rascal! The letter! The letter!

He gathered in his wide mothe, as he calls it, and gave me the letter; but with a strut, rather than a bow; and then sidled off like one of widow Sorlings's dunghill cocks, exulting after a great feat performed. And all the time that I was holding up the billet to the light, to try to get at its contents without breaking the seal, [for, dispatched in a hurry, it had no cover,] there stood he, laughing, shrugging, playing off his legs; now stroking his shining chin, now turning his hat upon his thumb! then leering in my face, flourishing with his head—O Christ! now-and-then cried the rascal—

What joy has this dog in mischief!—More than I can have in the completion of my most favourite purposes!—These fellows are ever happier than their masters.

I was once thinking to rumple up this billet till I had broken the seal. Young families [Miss Howe's is not an ancient one] love ostentatious sealings: and it might have been supposed to have been squeezed in pieces in old Grimes's breeches-pocket. But I was glad to be saved the guilt as well as suspicion of having a hand in so dirty a trick; for thus much of the contents (enough for my purpose) I was enabled to scratch out in character without it; the folds depriving me only of a few connecting words, which I have supplied between hooks.

My Miss Harlowe, thou knowest, had before changed her name to Miss Laetitia Beaumont. Another alias now, Jack, to it; for this billet was directed to her by the name of Mrs. Harriot Lucas. I have learned her to be half a rogue, thou seest.

'I congratulate you, my dear, with all my heart and soul, upon [your escape] from the villain. [I long] for the particulars of all. [My mother] is out; but, expecting her return every minute, I dispatched [your] messenger instantly. [I will endeavour to come at] Mrs. Townsend without loss of time; and will write at large in a day or two, if in that time I can see her. [Mean time I] am excessively uneasy for a letter I sent you yesterday by Collins, [who must have left it at] Wilson's after you got away. [It is of very] great importance. [I hope the] villain has it not. I would not for the world [that he should.] Immediately send for it, if, by doing so, the place you are at [will not be] discovered. If he has it, let me know it by some way [out of] hand. If not, you need not send.

'Ever, ever your's, 'A.H. 'June 9.'

O Jack! what heart's-ease does this interception give me!—I sent the rascal back with the letter to old Grimes, and charged him to drink no deeper. He owned, that he was half-seas over, as he phrased it.

Dog! said I, are you not to court one of Mrs. Moore's maids to-night?—

Cry your mercy, Sir!—I will be sober.—I had forgot that—but old Grimes is plaguy tough, I thought I should never have got him down.

Away, villain! Let old Grimes come, and on horseback too, to the door—

He shall, and please your honour, if I can get him on the saddle, and if he can sit—

And charge him not to have alighted, nor to have seen any body—

Enough, Sir, familiarly nodding his head, to show he took me. And away went the villain—into the parlour, to the women, I.

In a quarter of an hour came old Grimes on horseback, waving to his saddle-bow, now on this side, now on that; his head, at others, joining to that of his more sober beast.

It looked very well to the women that I made no effort to speak to old Grimes, (though I wished, before them, that I knew the contents of what he brought;) but, on the contrary, desired that they would instantly let

my spouse know that her messenger was returned.

Down she flew, violently as she had the head-ache!

O how I prayed for an opportunity to be revenged of her for the ungrateful trouble she had given to her uncle's friend!

She took the letter from old Grimes with her own hands, and retired to an inner parlour to read it.

She presently came out again to the fellow, who had much ado to sit his horse—Here is your money, friend.—I thought you long: but what shall I do to get somebody to go to town immediately for me? I see you cannot.

Old Grimes took his money, let fall his hat in doffing it; had it given him, and rode away; his eyes isinglass, and set in his head, as I saw through the window, and in a manner speechless—all his language hiccup. My dog needed not to have gone so deep with this tough old Grimes. But the rascal was in his kingdom with him.

The lady applied to Mrs. Moore; she mattered not the price. Could a man and horse be engaged for her?—Only to go for a letter left for her, at one Mr. Wilson's, in Pall-mall.

A poor neighbour was hired—a horse procured for him—he had his directions.

In vain did I endeavour to engaged my beloved, when she was below. Her head-ache, I suppose, returned.—She, like the rest of her sex, can be ill or well when she pleases.

I see her drift, thought I; it is to have all her lights from Miss Howe before she resolves, and to take her measures accordingly.

Up she went expressing great impatience about the letter she had sent for; and desired Mrs. Moore to let her know if I offered to send any one of my servants to town—to get at the letter, I suppose, was her fear; but she might have been quite easy on that head; and yet, perhaps, would not, had she known that the worthy Captain Tomlinson, (who will be in town before her messenger,) will leave there the important letter, which I hope will help to pacify her, and reconcile her to me.

O Jack, Jack! thinkest thou that I will take all this roguish pains, and be so often called villain for nothing?

But yet, is it not taking pains to come at the finest creature in the world, not for a transitory moment only, but for one of our lives! The struggle only, Whether I am to have her in my own way, or in her's?

But now I know thou wilt be frightened out of thy wits for me—What, Lovelace! wouldest thou let her have a letter that will inevitably blow thee up; and blow up the mother, and all her nymphs!—yet not intend to reform, nor intend to marry?

Patience, puppy!—Canst thou not trust thy master?

LETTER XXX

MR. LOVELACE [IN CONTINUATION.]

I went up to my new-taken apartment, and fell to writing in character, as usual. I thought I had made good my quarters, but the cruel creature, understanding that I intended to take up my lodgings there, declared with so much violence against it, that I was obliged to submit, and to accept of another lodging, about twelve doors off, which Mrs. Moore recommended. And all the advantage I could obtain was, that Will., unknown to my spouse, and for fear of a freak, should lie in the house.

Mrs. Moore, indeed, was unwilling to disoblige either of us. But Miss Rawlins was of opinion, that nothing more ought to be allowed me: and yet Mrs. Moore owned, that the refusal was a strange piece of tyranny to a husband, if I were a husband.

I had a good mind to make Miss Rawlins smart for it. Come and see Miss Rawlins, Jack.—If thou likest her, I'll get her for thee with a wet-finger, as the saying is!

The widow Bevis indeed stickled hard for me. [An innocent, or injured man, will have friends every where.] She said, that to bear much with some wives, was to be obliged to bear more; and I reflected, with a sigh, that tame spirits must always be imposed upon. And then, in my heart, I renewed my vows of revenge upon this haughty and perverse beauty.

The second fellow came back from town about nine o'clock, with Miss Howe's letter of Wednesday last. 'Collins, it seems, when he left it, had desired, that it might be safely and speedily delivered into Miss Laetitia Beaumont's own hands. But Wilson, understanding that neither she nor I were in town, [he could not know of our difference thou must think,] resolved to take care of it till our return, in order to give it into one of our own hands; and now delivered it to her messenger.'

This was told her. Wilson, I doubt not, is in her favour upon it.

She took the letter with great eagerness; opened it in a hurry, [am glad she did; yet, I believe, all was right,] before Mrs. Moore and Mrs. Bevis, [Miss Rawlins was gone home;] and said, she would not for the world that I should have had that letter, for the sake of her dear friend the writer, who had written to her very uneasily about it.

Her dear friend! repeated Mrs. Bevis, when she told me this:—such mischief-makers are always deemed dear friends till they are found out!

The widow says that I am the finest gentleman she ever beheld.

I have found a warm kiss now-and-then very kindly taken.

I might be a very wicked fellow, Jack, if I were to do all the mischief in my power. But I am evermore for quitting a too-easy prey to reptile rakes! What but difficulty, (though the lady is an angel,) engages me to so much perseverance here?—And here, conquer or die! is now the determination!

I have just now parted with this honest widow. She called upon me at my new lodgings. I told her, that I saw I must be further obliged to her in the course of this difficult affair. She must allow me to make her a handsome present when all was happily over. But I desired that she would take no notice of what should pass between us, not even to her aunt; for that she, as I saw, was in the power of Miss Rawlins: and Miss Rawlins, being a maiden gentlewoman, knew not the right and the fit in matrimonial matters, as she, my dear widow, did.

Very true: How should she? said Mrs. Bevis, proud of knowing—nothing! But, for her part, she desired no present. It was enough if she could contribute to reconcile man and wife, and disappoint mischief-makers. She doubted not, that such an envious creature as Miss Howe was glad that Mrs. Lovelace had eloped—jealousy and love was Old Nick!

See, Belford, how charmingly things work between me and my new acquaintance, the widow!—Who knows, but that she may, after a little farther intimacy, (though I am banished the house on nights,) contrive a midnight visit for me to my spouse, when all is still and fast asleep?

Where can a woman be safe, who has once entered the lists with a contriving and intrepid lover?

But as to this letter, methinkest thou sayest, of Miss Howe?

I knew thou wouldst be uneasy for me. But did not I tell thee that I had provided for every thing? That I always took care to keep seals entire, and to preserve covers?* Was it not easy then, thinkest thou, to contrive a shorter letter out of a longer; and to copy the very words?

* See Letter XX. of this volume.

I can tell thee, it was so well ordered, that, not being suspected to have been in my hands, it was not easy to find me out. Had it been my beloved's hand, there would have been no imitating it for such a length. Her delicate and even mind is seen in the very cut of her letters. Miss Howe's hand is no bad one, but it is not so equal and regular. That little devil's natural impatience hurrying on her fingers, gave, I suppose, from the beginning, her handwriting, as well as the rest of her, its fits and starts, and those peculiarities, which, like strong muscular lines in a face, neither the pen, nor the pencil, can miss.

Hast thou a mind to see what it was I permitted Miss Howe to write to her lovely friend? Why then, read it here, so extracted from her's of Wednesday last, with a few additions of my own. The additions underscored.*

* Editor's note: In place of italics, as in the original, I have substituted hooks [].

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

You will perhaps think that I have been too long silent. But I had begun two letters at different times since my last, and written a great deal each time; and with spirit enough I assure you; incensed as I was against the abominable wretch you are with; particularly on reading your's of the 21st of the past month.

The FIRST I intended to keep open till I could give you some account of my proceedings with Mrs. Townsend. It was some days before I saw her: and this intervenient space giving me time to reperuse what I had written, I thought it proper to lay that aside, and to write in a style a little less fervent; for you would have blamed me, I knew, for the freedom of some of my expressions, (execrations, if you please.) And when I had gone a good way in the SECOND, and change your prospects, on his communicating to you Miss Montague's letter, and his better behaviour, occasioning a change in your mind, I laid that aside also. And in this uncertainty thought I would wait to see the issue of affairs between you before I wrote again; believing that all would soon be decided one way or other.

[Here I was forced to break off. I am too little my own mistress:—My mother* is always up and down—and watching as if I were writing to a fellow. What need I (she asks me,) lock myself in,** if I am only reading past correspondencies? For that is my pretence, when she comes poking in with her face sharpened to an edge, as I may say, by a curiosity that gives her more pain than pleasure.—The Lord forgive me; but I believe I shall huff her next time she comes in.]

* See Letter XX. of this volume. ** Ibid.

Do you forgive me too, my dear—my mother ought; because she says I am my father's girl; and because I am sure I am her's.

[Upon my life, my dear, I am sometimes of opinion, that this vile man was capable of meaning you dishonour. When I look back upon his past conduct, I cannot help, and verily believe, that he has laid aside such thoughts. My reasons for both opinions I will give you.]

[For the first: to-wit, that he had it once in his head to take you at advantage if he could, I consider* that] pride, revenge, and a delight to tread in unbeaten paths, are principal ingredients in the character of this finished libertine. He hates all your family, yourself excepted— yet is a savage in love. His pride, and the credit which a few plausible qualities, sprinkled among his odious ones, have given him, have secured him too good a reception from our eye-judging, our undistinguishing, our self—flattering, our too-confiding sex, to make assiduity and obsequiousness, and a conquest of his unruly passions, any part of his study.

He has some reason for his animosity to all the men, and to one woman of your family. He has always shown you, and his own family too, that he prefers his pride to his interest. He is a declared marriage-hater; a notorious intriguer; full of his inventions, and glorying in them.—As his vanity had made him imagine that no woman could be proof against his love, no wonder that he struggled like a lion held in toils,* against a passion that he thought not returned.** Hence, perhaps, it is not difficult to believe, that it became possible for such a wretch as this to give way to his old prejudices against marriage; and to that revenge which had always been a first passion with him.***

* See Letter XX. of this volume. ** Ibid. *** Ibid.

[And hence we may account for] his delays—his teasing ways—his bringing you to bear with his lodging in the same house—his making you pass to the other people of it as his wife—his bringing you into the company of his libertine companions—the attempt of imposing upon you that Miss Partington for a bedfellow, &c.

[My reasons for a contrary opinion, to wit, that he is now resolved to do you all the justice in his power to do you,] are these:—That he sees that all his own family* have warmly engaged themselves in your cause: that the horrid wretch loves you; with such a love, however, as Herod loved his Mariamne: that, on inquiry, I find it to be true, that Counsellor Williams, (whom Mr. Hickman knows to be a man of eminence in his profession,) has actually as good as finished the settlements: that two draughts of them have been made; one avowedly to be sent to this very Captain Tomlinson:—and I find, that a license has actually been more than once endeavoured to be obtained, and that difficulties have hitherto been made, equally to Lovelace's vexation and disappointment. My mother's proctor, who is very intimate with the proctor applied to by the wretch, has come at this information in confidence; and hints, that, as Mr. Lovelace is a man of high fortunes, these difficulties will probably be got over.

* See Letter XX. of this volume.

[I had once resolved to make strict inquiry about Tomlinson; and still, if you will, your uncle's favourite housekeeper may be sounded at a distance.]

[I know that the matter is so laid,*] that Mrs. Hodges is supposed to know nothing of the treaty set on foot by means of Captain Tomlinson. But your uncle is an—

* See Letter XX. of this volume.

But your uncle is an old man;* and old men imagine themselves to be under obligation to their paramours, if younger than themselves, and seldom keep any thing from their knowledge.—Yet, methinks, there can be no need; since Tomlinson, as you describe him, is so good a man, and so much of a gentleman; the end to be answered by his being an impostor so much more than necessary, if Lovelace has villany in his head.—And thus what he communicated to you of Mr. Hickman's application to your uncle, and of Mrs. Norton's to your mother (some of which particulars I am satisfied his vile agent Joseph Leman could not reveal to his viler employer); his pushing on the marriage-day in the name of your uncle; which it could not answer any wicked purpose for him to do; and what he writes of your uncle's proposal, to have it thought that you were married from the time that you had lived in one house together; and that to be made to agree with the time of Mr. Hickman's visit to your uncle; the insisting on a trusty person's being present at the ceremony, at that uncle's nomination —these things make me [assured that he now at last means honourably.]

* See Letter XX. of this volume.

[But if any unexpected delays should happen on his side, acquaint me, my dear, with the very street where Mrs. Sinclair lives; and where Mrs. Fretchville's house is situated (which I cannot find that you have ever mentioned in your former letters—which is a little odd); and I will make strict inquiries of them, and of Tomlinson too; and I will (if your heart will let you take my advice) soon procure you a refuge from him with Mrs. Townsend.]

[But why do I now, when you seem to be in so good a train, puzzle and perplex you with my retrospections? And yet they may be of use to you, if any delay happen on his part.]

[But that I think cannot well be. What you have therefore now to do, is so to behave to this proud-spirited wretch, as may banish from his mind all remembrance of] past disobligations,* and to receive his addresses, as those of a betrothed lover. You will incur the censure of prudery and affectation, if you keep him at that distance which you have hitherto [kept him at.] His sudden (and as suddenly recovered) illness has given him an opportunity to find out that you love him (Alas! my dear, I knew you loved him!) He has seemed to change his nature, and is all love and gentleness. [And no more quarrels now, I beseech you.]

* See Letter XX. of this volume.

[I am very angry with him, nevertheless, for the freedoms which he took with your person;* and I think some guard is necessary, as he is certainly an encroacher. But indeed all men are so; and you are such a charming creature, and have kept him at such a distance!—But no more of this subject. Only, my dear, be not over-nice, now you are so near the state. You see what difficulties you laid yourself under,] when Tomlinson's letter called you again into [the wretch's] company.

* See Letter XI. of this volume.

If you meet with no impediments, no new causes of doubt,* your reputation in the eye of the world is concerned, that you should be his, [and, as your uncle rightly judges, be thought to have been his before now.] And yet, [let me tell you,] I [can hardly] bear [to think,] that these libertines should be rewarded for their villany with the best of the sex, when the worst of it are too good for them.

* See Letter XX. of this volume.

I shall send this long letter by Collins,* who changes his day to oblige me. As none of our letters by Wilson's conveyance have miscarried, when you have been in more apparently-disagreeable situations than you are in at present, [I have no doubt] that this will go safe.

* See Letter XX. of this volume.

Miss Lardner* (whom you have seen hat her cousin Biddulph's) saw you at St. James's church on Sunday was fortnight. She kept you in her eye during the whole time; but could not once obtain the notice of your's, though she courtesied to you twice. She thought to pay her compliments to you when the service was over; for she doubted not but you were married—and for an odd reason—because you came to church by yourself. Every eye, (as usual, wherever you are,) she said was upon you; and this seeming to give you hurry, and you being nearer the door than she, you slid out before she could get to you. But she ordered her servant to follow you till you were housed. This servant saw you step into a chair which waited for you; and you ordered the men to carry you to the place where they took you up. She [describes the house] as a very genteel house, and fit to receive people of fashion: [and what makes me mention this, is, that perhaps you will have a visit from her; or message, at least.]

* See Letter XX. of this volume.

[So that you have Mr. Doleman's testimony to the credit of the house and people you are with; and he is] a man of fortune, and some reputation; formerly a rake indeed; but married to a woman of family; and having had a palsy blow, one would think a penitent.* You have [also Mr. Mennell's at least passive testimony; Mr.]

Tomlinson's; [and now, lastly, Miss Lardner's; so that there will be the less need for inquiry: but you know my busy and inquisitive temper, as well as my affection for you, and my concern for your honour. But all doubt will soon be lost in certainty.]

[Nevertheless I must add, that I would have you] command me up, if I can be of the least service or pleasure to you.* I value not fame; I value not censure; nor even life itself, I verily think, as I do your honour, and your friendship—For is not your honour my honour? And is not your friendship the pride of my life?

* See Letter XX. of this volume.

May Heaven preserve you, my dearest creature, in honour and safety, is the prayer, the hourly prayer, of
Your ever-faithful and affectionate, ANNA HOWE.

THURSDAY MORN. 5.

I have written all night. [Excuse indifferent writing; my crow-quills are worn to the stumps, and I must get a new supply.]

These ladies always write with crow-quills, Jack.

If thou art capable of taking in all my providences, in this letter, thou wilt admire my sagacity and contrivance almost as much as I do myself. Thou seest, that Miss Lardner, Mrs. Sinclair, Tomlinson, Mrs. Fretchville, Mennell, are all mentioned in it. My first liberties with her person also. [Modesty, modesty, Belford, I doubt, is more confined to time, place, and occasion, even by the most delicate minds, than these minds would have it believed to be.] And why all these taken notice of by me from the genuine letter, but for fear some future letter from the vixen should escape my hands, in which she might refer to these names? And, if none of them were to have been found in this that is to pass for her's, I might be routed horse and foot, as Lord M. would phrase it in a like case.

Devilish hard (and yet I may thank myself) to be put to all this plague and trouble:—And for what dost thou ask?—O Jack, for a triumph of more value to me beforehand than an imperial crown!—Don't ask me the value of it a month hence. But what indeed is an imperial crown itself when a man is used to it?

Miss Howe might well be anxious about the letter she wrote. Her sweet friend, from what I have let pass of her's, has reason to rejoice in the thought that it fell not into my hands.

And now must all my contrivances be set at work, to intercept the expected letter from Miss Howe: which is, as I suppose, to direct her to a place of safety, and out of my knowledge. Mrs. Townsend is, no doubt, in this case, to smuggle her off: I hope the villain, as I am so frequently called between these two girls, will be able to manage this point.

But what, perhaps, thou askest, if the lady should take it into her head, by the connivance of Miss Rawlins, to quit this house privately in the night?

I have thought of this, Jack. Does not Will. lie in the house? And is not the widow Bevis my fast friend?

LETTER XXXI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SATURDAY, SIX O'CLOCK, JUNE 10.

The lady gave Will.'s sweetheart a letter last night to be carried to the post-house, as this morning, directed for Miss Howe, under cover to Hickman. I dare say neither cover nor letter will be seen to have been opened. The contents but eight lines—To own—'The receipt of her double-dated letter in safety; and referring to a longer letter, which she intends to write, when she shall have a quieter heart, and less trembling fingers. But mentions something to have happened [My detecting her she means] which has given her very great flutters, confusions, and apprehensions: but which she will wait the issue of [Some hopes for me hence, Jack!] before she gives her fresh perturbation or concern on her account.—She tells her how impatient she shall be for her next,' &c.

Now, Belford, I thought it would be but kind in me to save Miss Howe's concern on these alarming hints; since the curiosity of such a spirit must have been prodigiously excited by them. Having therefore so good a copy to imitate, I wrote; and, taking out that of my beloved, put under the same cover the following short billet; inscriptive and conclusive parts of it in her own words.

HAMPSTEAD, TUES. EVEN. MY EVER-DEAR MISS HOWE,

A few lines only, till calmer spirits and quieter fingers be granted me, and till I can get over the shock which your intelligence has given me—to acquaint you—that your kind long letter of Wednesday, and, as I may say, of Thursday morning, is come safe to my hands. On receipt of your's by my messenger to you, I sent for it from Wilson's. There, thank Heaven! it lay. May that Heaven reward you for all your past, and for all your intended goodness to

Your for-ever obliged, CL. HARLOWE.

I took great pains in writing this. It cannot, I hope, be suspected. Her hand is so very delicate. Yet her's is written less beautifully than she usually writes: and I hope Miss Howe will allow somewhat for hurry of spirits, and unsteady fingers.

My consideration for Miss Howe's ease of mind extended still farther than to the instance I have mentioned.

That this billet might be with her as soon as possible, (and before it could have reached Hickman by the post,) I dispatched it away by a servant of Mowbray's. Miss Howe, had there been any failure or delay, might, as thou wilt think, have communicated her anxieties to her fugitive friend; and she to me perhaps in a way I should not have been pleased with.

Once more wilt thou wonderingly question—All this pains for a single girl?

Yes, Jack—But is not this girl a CLARISSA?—And who knows, but kind fortune, as a reward for my perseverance, may toss me in her charming friend? Less likely things have come to pass, Belford. And to be sure I shall have her, if I resolve upon it.

LETTER XXXII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. EIGHT O'CLOCK, SAT. MORN. JUNE 10.

I am come back from Mrs. Moore's, whither I went in order to attend my charmer's commands. But no admittance—a very bad night.

Doubtless she must be as much concerned that she has carried her resentments so very far, as I have reason to be that I made such poor use of the opportunity I had on Wednesday night.

But now, Jack, for a brief review of my present situation; and a slight hint or two of my precautions.

I have seen the women this morning, and find them half-right, half-doubting.

Miss Rawlins's brother tells her, that she lives at Mrs. Moore's.

Mrs. Moore can do nothing without Miss Rawlins.

People who keep lodgings at public places expect to get by every one who comes into their purlieus. Though not permitted to lodge there myself, I have engaged all the rooms she has to spare, to the very garrets; and that, as I have told thee before, for a month certain, and at her own price, board included; my spouse's and all: but she must not at present know it. So I hope I have Mrs. Moore fast by the interest.

This, devil-like, is suiting temptations to inclinations.

I have always observed, and, I believe, I have hinted as much formerly,* that all dealers, though but for pins, may be taken in by customers for pins, sooner than by a direct bribe of ten times the value; especially if pretenders to conscience: for the offer of a bribe would not only give room for suspicion, but would startle and alarm their scrupulousness; while a high price paid for what you buy, is but submitting to be cheated in the method of the person makes a profession to get by. Have I not said that human nature is a rogue?**—And do not I know that it is?

* See Vol. III. Letter XXXIV. ** See Vol. III. Letter XXXV. and Vol. IV. Letter XXI.

To give a higher instance, how many proud senators, in the year 1720, were induced, by presents or subscription of South-sea stock, to contribute to a scheme big with national ruin; who yet would have spurned the man who should have presumed to offer them even twice the sum certain that they had a chance to gain by the stock?—But to return to my review and to my precautions.

Miss Rawlins fluctuates, as she hears the lady's story, or as she hears mine. Somewhat of an infidel, I doubt, is this Miss Rawlins. I have not yet considered her foible. The next time I see her, I will take particular notice of all the moles and freckles in her mind; and then infer and apply.

The widow Bevis, as I have told thee, is all my own.

My man Will. lies in the house. My other new fellow attends upon me; and cannot therefore be quite stupid.

Already is Will. over head and ears in love with one of Mrs. Moore's maids. He was struck with her the moment he set his eyes upon her. A raw country wench too. But all women, from the countess to the cook-maid, are put into high good humour with themselves when a man is taken with them at first sight. Be they ever so plain [no woman can be ugly, Jack!] they'll find twenty good reasons, besides the great one (for sake's sake) by the help of the glass without (and perhaps in spite of it) and conceit within, to justify the honest fellow's caption.

'The rogue has saved 150£. in my service.'—More by 50 than I bid him save. No doubt, he thinks he might have done so; though I believe not worth a groat. 'The best of masters I—passionate, indeed; but soon appeased.'

The wench is extremely kind to him already. The other maid is also very civil to him. He has a husband for her in his eye. She cannot but say, that Mr. Andrew, my other servant [the girl is for fixing the person] is a very well spoken civil young man.

'We common folks have our joys, and please your honour, says honest Joseph Leman, like as our betters have.* And true says honest Joseph— did I prefer ease to difficulty, I should envy these low-born sinners some of their joys.

* See Vol. III. Letter XLVII.

But if Will. had not made amorous pretensions to the wenches, we all know, that servants, united in one common compare-note cause, are intimate the moment they see one another—great genealogists too; they know immediately the whole kin and kin's kin of each other, though dispersed over the three kingdoms, as well as the genealogies and kin's kin of those whom they serve.

But my precautions end not here.

O Jack, with such an invention, what occasion had I to carry my beloved to Mrs. Sinclair's?

My spouse may have farther occasion for the messengers whom she dispatched, one to Miss Howe, the other to Wilson's. With one of these Will. is already well-acquainted, as thou hast heard—to mingle liquor is to mingle souls with these fellows; with the other messenger he will soon be acquainted, if he be not already.

The Captain's servant has his uses and instructions assigned him. I have hinted at some of them already.* He also serves a most humane and considerate master. I love to make every body respected to my power.

* See Letter XXIX. of this volume.

The post, general and penny, will be strictly watched likewise.

Miss Howe's Collins is remembered to be described. Miss Howe's and Hickman's liveries also.

James Harlowe and Singleton are warned against. I am to be acquainted with any inquiry that shall happen to be made after my spouse, whether by her married or maiden name, before she shall be told of it—and this that I may have it in my power to prevent mischief.

I have ordered Mowbray and Tourville (and Belton, if his health permit) to take their quarters at Hampstead for a week, with their fellows to attend them. I spare thee for the present, because of thy private concerns. But hold thyself in cheerful readiness, however, as a mark of thy allegiance.

As to my spouse herself, has she not reason to be pleased with me for having permitted her to receive Miss Howe's letter from Wilson's? A plain case, either that I am no deep plotter, or that I have no farther views than to make my peace with her for an offence so slight and so accidental.

Miss Howe says, though prefaced with an alas! that her charming friend loves me: she must therefore yearn after this reconciliation—prospects so fair—if she showed me any compassion; seemed inclinable to spare me, and to make the most favourable construction: I cannot but say, that it would be impossible not to show her some. But, to be insulted and defied by a rebel in one's power, what prince can bear that?

But I must return to the scene of action. I must keep the women steady. I had no opportunity to talk to my worthy Mrs. Bevis in private.

Tomlinson, a dog, not come yet!

LETTER XXXIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FROM MY APARTMENTS AT MRS. MOORE'S.

Miss Rawlins at her brothers; Mrs. Moore engaged in household matters; widow Bevis dressing; I have nothing to do but write. This cursed Tomlinson not yet arrived!—Nothing to be done without him.

I think he shall complain in pretty high language of the treatment he met with yesterday. 'What are our affairs to him? He can have no view but to serve us. Cruel to send back to town, un-audienced, unseen, a man of his business and importance. He never stirs a-foot, but something of consequence depends upon his movements. A confounded thing to trifle thus humoursomely with such a gentleman's moments!—These women think, that all the business of the world must stand still for their figaries [a good female word, Jack!] the greatest triflers in the creation, to fancy themselves the most important beings in it—marry come up! as I have heard goody Sorlings say to her servants, when she has rated at them with mingled anger and disdain.'

After all, methinks I want those tostications [thou seest how women, and women's words, fill my mind] to be over, happily over, that I may sit down quietly, and reflect upon the dangers I have passed through, and the troubles I have undergone. I have a reflecting mind, as thou knowest; but the very word reflecting implies all got over.

What briars and thorns does the wretch rush into (a scratched face and tattered garments the unavoidable consequence) who will needs be for striking out a new path through overgrown underwood; quitting that beaten out for him by those who have travelled the same road before him!

A visit from the widow Bevis, in my own apartment. She tells me, that my spouse had thoughts last night, after I was gone to my lodgings, of removing from Mrs. Moore's.

I almost wish she had attempted to do so.

Miss Rawlins, it seems, who was applied to upon it, dissuaded her from it.

Mrs. Moore also, though she did not own that Will. lay in the house, (or rather set up in it, courting,) set before her the difficulties, which, in her opinion, she would have to get clear off, without my knowledge; assuring her, that she could be no where more safe than with her, till she had fixed whither to go. And the lady herself recollected, that if she went, she might miss the expected letter from her dear friend Miss Howe! which, as she owned, was to direct her future steps.

She must also surely have some curiosity to know what her uncle's friend had to say to her from her uncle, contemptuously as she yesterday treated a man of his importance. Nor could she, I should think, be absolutely determined to put herself out of the way of receiving the visits of two of the principal ladies of my family, and to break entirely with me in the face of them all.—Besides, whither could she have gone?—Moreover, Miss Howe's letter coming (after her elopement) so safely to her hands, must surely put her into a more confiding temper with me, and with every one else, though she would not immediately own it.

But these good folks have so little charity!—Are such severe censors! —Yet who is absolutely perfect?—It were to be wished, however, that they would be so modest as to doubt themselves sometimes: then would they allow for others, as others (excellent as they imagine themselves to be) must for them.

SATURDAY, ONE O'CLOCK.

Tomlinson at last is come. Forced to ride five miles about (though I shall impute his delay to great and important business) to avoid the sight of two or three impertinent rascals, who, little thinking whose affairs he was employed in, wanted to obtrude themselves upon him. I think I will make this fellow easy, if he behave to my liking in this affair.

I sent up the moment he came.

She desired to be excused receiving his visit till four this afternoon.

Intolerable!—No consideration!—None at all in this sex, when their cursed humours are in the way!—Pay-day, pay-hour, rather, will come!— Oh! that it were to be the next!

The Captain is in a pet. Who can blame him? Even the women think a man of his consequence, and generously coming to serve us, hardly used. Would to heaven she had attempted to get off last night! The women not my enemies, who knows but the husband's exerted authority might have met with such connivance, as might have concluded either in carrying her back to her former lodgings, or in consummation at Mrs. Moore's, in spite of exclamations, fits, and the rest of the female obscenities?

My beloved has not appeared to any body this day, except to Mrs. Moore. Is, it seems, extremely low: unfit for the interesting conversation that is to be held in the afternoon. Longs to hear from her dear friend Miss Howe—yet cannot expect a letter for a day or two. Has a bad opinion of all mankind.—No wonder!—Excellent creature as she is! with such a father, such uncles, such a brother, as she has!

How does she look?

Better than could be expected from yesterday's fatigue, and last night's ill rest.

These tender doves know not, till put to it, what they can bear; especially when engaged in love affairs; and their attention wholly engrossed. But the sex love busy scenes. Still life is their aversion. A woman will create a storm, rather than be without one. So that they can preside in the whirlwind, and direct it, they are happy.—But my beloved's misfortune is, that she must live in tumult; yet neither raise them herself, nor be able to controul them.

LETTER XXXIV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SAT NIGHT, JUNE 10.

What will be the issue of all my plots and contrivances, devil take me if I am able to divine. But I will not, as Lord M. would say, forestall my own market.

At four, the appointed hour, I sent up, to desire admittance in the Captain's name and my own.

She would wait upon the Captain presently; [not upon me!] and in the parlour, if it were not engaged.

The dining-room being mine, perhaps that was the reason of her naming the parlour—mighty nice again, if so! No good sign for me, thought I, this stiff punctilio.

In the parlour, with me and the Captain, were Mrs. Moore, Miss Rawlins, and Mrs. Bevis.

The women said, they would withdraw when the lady came down.

Lovel. Not, except she chooses you should, Ladies.—People who are so much above-board as I am, need not make secrets of any of their affairs. Besides, you three ladies are now acquainted with all our concerns.

Capt. I have some things to say to your lady, that perhaps she would not herself choose that any body should hear; not even you, Mr. Lovelace, as you and her family are not upon such a good foot of understanding as were to be wished.

Lovel. Well, well, Captain, I must submit. Give us a sign to withdraw, and we will withdraw.

It was better that the exclusion of the women should come from him, than from me.

Capt. I will bow, and wave my hand, thus—when I wish to be alone with the lady. Her uncle dotes upon her. I hope, Mr. Lovelace, you will not make a reconciliation more difficult, for the earnestness which my dear friend shows to bring it to bear. But indeed I must tell you, as I told you more than once before, that I am afraid you have made lighter of the occasion of this misunderstanding to me, than it ought to have been made.

Lovel. I hope, Captain Tomlinson, you do not question my veracity!

Capt. I beg your pardon, Mr. Lovelace—but those things which we men may think lightly of, may not be light to a woman of delicacy.—And then, if you have bound yourself by a vow, you ought—

Miss Rawlins bridling, her lips closed, (but her mouth stretched to a smile of approbation, the longer for not buttoning,) tacitly showed herself pleased with the Captain for his delicacy.

Mrs. Moore could speak—Very true, however, was all she said, with a motion of her head that expressed the bow-approbatory.

For my part, said the jolly widow, staring with eyes as big as eggs, I know what I know.—But man and wife are man and wife; or they are not man and wife.—I have no notion of standing upon such niceties.

But here she comes! cried one, hearing her chamber-door open—Here she comes! another, hearing it shut after her—And down dropt the angel among us.

We all stood up, bowing and courtesying, and could not help it; for she entered with such an air as commanded all our reverence. Yet the Captain looked plaguy grave.

Cl. Pray keep your seats, Ladies—Pray do not go, [for they made offers to withdraw; yet Miss Rawlins would have burst had she been suffered to retire.] Before this time you have all heard my story, I make no doubt—pray keep your seats—at least all Mr. Lovelace's.

A very saucy and whimsical beginning, thought I.

Captain Tomlinson, your servant, addressing herself to him with inimitable dignity. I hope you did not take amiss my declining your visit yesterday. I was really incapable of talking upon any subject that required attention.

Capt. I am glad to see you better now, Madam. I hope I do.

Cl. Indeed I am not well. I would not have excused myself from attending you some hours ago, but in hopes I should have been better. I beg your pardon, Sir, for the trouble I have given you; and shall the rather expect it, as this day will, I hope, conclude it all.

Thus set; thus determined; thought I,—yet to have slept upon it!—But, as what she said was capable of a good, as well as a bad, construction, I would not put an unfavourable one upon it.

Lovel. The Captain was sorry, my dear, he did not offer his attendance the moment he arrived yesterday. He was afraid that you took it amiss that he did not.

Cl. Perhaps I thought that my uncle's friend might have wished to see me as soon as he came, [how we stared!]
—But, Sir, [to me,] it might be convenient to you to detain him.

The devil, thought I!—So there really was resentment as well as head-ache, as my good friend Mrs. Bevis observed, in her refusing to see the honest gentleman.

Capt. You would detain me, Mr. Lovelace—I was for paying my respects to the lady the moment I came—

Cl. Well, Sir, [interrupting him,] to wave this; for I would not be thought captious—if you have not suffered inconvenience, in being obliged to come again, I shall be easy.

Capt. [Half disconcerted.] A little inconvenience, I can't say but I have suffered. I have, indeed, too many affairs upon my hands; but the desire I have to serve you and Mr. Lovelace, as well as to oblige my dear friend, your uncle Harlowe, make great inconveniencies but small ones.

Cl. You are very obliging, Sir.—Here is a great alteration since you parted with us last.

Capt. A great one indeed, Madam! I was very much surprised at it, on Thursday evening, when Mr. Lovelace conducted me to your lodgings, where we hoped to find you.

Cl. Have you any thing to say to me, Sir, from my uncle himself, that requires my private ear!—Don't go, Ladies, [for the women stood up, and offered to withdraw,]—if Mr. Lovelace stays, I am sure you may.

I frowned—I bit my lip—I looked at the women—and shook my head.

Capt. I have nothing to offer, but what Mr. Lovelace is a party to, and may hear, except one private word or two, which may be postponed to the last.

Cl. Pray, Ladies, keep your seats.—Things are altered, Sir, since I saw you. You can mention nothing that relates to me now, to which that gentleman can be a party.

Capt. You surprise me, Madam! I am sorry to hear this!—Sorry for your uncle's sake!—Sorry for your sake!—Sorry for Mr. Lovelace's sake!—And yet I am sure he must have given greater occasion than he has mentioned to me, or—

Lovel. Indeed, Captain,—indeed, Ladies, I have told you great part of my story!—And what I told you of my offence was the truth:—what I concealed of my story was only what I apprehended would, if known, cause this dear creature to be thought more censorious than charitable.

Cl. Well, well, Sir, say what you please. Make me as black as you please—make yourself as white as you can—I am not now in your power: that consideration will comfort me for all.

Capt. God forbid that I should offer to plead in behalf of a crime, that a woman of virtue and honour cannot forgive! But surely, surely, Madam, this is going too far.

Cl. Do not blame me, Captain Tomlinson. I have a good opinion of you, as my uncle's friend; but if you are Mr. Lovelace's friend, that is another thing; for my interest and Mr. Lovelace's must now be for ever separated.

Capt. One word with you, Madam, if you please—offering to retire.

Cl. You may say all that you please to say before these gentlewomen.— Mr. Lovelace may have secrets—I have none:—you seem to think me faulty: I should be glad that all the world knew my heart. Let my enemies sit in judgment upon my actions; fairly scanned, I fear not the result; let them even ask me my most secret thoughts, and, whether they make for me, or against me, I will reveal them.

Capt. Noble Lady! who can say as you say?

The women held up their hands and eyes; each, as if she had said,—Not I.

No disorder here! said Miss Rawlins:—but, (judging by her own heart,) a confounded deal of improbability, I believe she thought.

Finely said, to be sure, said the widow Bevis, shrugging her shoulders.

Mrs. Moore sighed.

Jack Belford, thought I, knows all mine; and in this I am more ingenuous than any of the three, and a fit match for this paragon.

Cl. How Mr. Lovelace has found me out here I cannot tell: but such mean devices, such artful, such worse than Waltham disguises put on, to obtrude himself into my company; such bold, such shocking untruths—

Capt. The favour of but one word, Madam, in private—

Cl. In order to support a right which he has not over me!—O Sir!—O Captain Tomlinson!—I think I have reason to say, that the man, (there he stands!) is capable of any villainy!—

The women looked upon one another, and upon me, by turns, to see how I bore it. I had such dartings in my head at the instant, that I thought I should have gone distracted. My brain seemed on fire. What would I have given to have had her alone with me!—I traversed the room; my clenched fist to my forehead. O that I had any body here, thought I, that, Hercules-like, when flaming in the tortures of Dejanira's poisoned shirt, I could tear in pieces!

Capt. Dear Lady! see you not how the poor gentleman—Lord, how have I imposed upon your uncle, at this rate! How happy did I tell him I saw you! How happy I was sure you would be in each other!

Cl. O Sir, you don't know how many premeditated offences I had forgiven when I saw you last, before I could appear to you what I hoped then I might for the future be!—But now you may tell my uncle, if you please, that I cannot hope for his mediation. Tell him, that my guilt, in giving this man an opportunity to spirit me away from my tried, my experienced, my natural friends, (harshly as they treated me,) stares me every day more and more in the face; and still the more, as my fate seems to be drawing to a crisis, according to the malediction of my offended father!

And then she burst into tears, which even affected that dog, who, brought to abet me, was himself all Belforded over.

The women, so used to cry without grief, as they are to laugh without reason, by mere force of example, [confound their promptitudes;] must needs pull out their handkerchiefs. The less wonder, however, as I myself, between confusion, surprise, and concern, could hardly stand it.

What's a tender heart good for?—Who can be happy that has a feeling heart?—And yet, thou'lt say, that he who has it not, must be a tiger, and no man.

Capt. Let me beg the favour of one word with you, Madam, in private; and that on my own account.

The women hereupon offered to retire. She insisted that, if they went, I should not stay.

Capt. Sir, bowing to me, shall I beg—

I hope, thought I, that I may trust this solemn dog, instructed as he is. She does not doubt him. I'll stay out no longer than to give her time to spend her first fire.

I then passively withdrew with the women.—But with such a bow to my goddess, that it won for me every heart but that I wanted most to win; for the haughty maid bent not her knee in return.

The conversation between the Captain and the lady, when we were retired, was to the following effect:—They both talked loud enough for me to hear them—the lady from anger, the Captain with design; and thou mayest be sure there was no listener but myself. What I was imperfect in was supplied afterwards; for I had my vellum-leaved book to note all down. If she had known this, perhaps she would have been more sparing of her invectives—and but perhaps neither.

He told her that as her brother was absolutely resolved to see her; and as he himself, in compliance with her uncle's expedient, had reported her marriage; and as that report had reached the ears of Lord M., Lady Betty, and the rest of my relations; and as he had been obliged, in consequence of his first report, to vouch it; and as her brother might find out where she was, and apply to the women here for a confirmation or refutation of the marriage; he had thought himself obliged to countenance the report before the women. That this had embarrassed him not a little, as he would not for the world that she should have cause to think him capable of prevarication, contrivance, or double dealing; and that this made him desirous of a private conversation with her.

It was true, she said, she had given her consent to such an expedient, believing it was her uncle's; and little thinking that it would lead to so many errors. Yet she might have known that one error is frequently the parent of many. Mr. Lovelace had made her sensible of the truth of that observation, on more occasions than one; and it was an observation that he, the Captain, had made, in one of the letters that was shown her yesterday.*

* See Letter XXIV.

He hoped that she had no mistrust of him: that she had no doubt of his honour. If, Madam, you suspect me—if you think me capable—what a man! the Lord be merciful to me!—What a man must you think me!

I hope, Sir, there cannot be a man in the world who could deserve to be suspected in such a case as this. I do not suspect you. If it were possible there could be one such a man, I am sure, Captain Tomlinson, a father of children, a man in years, of sense and experience, cannot be that man.

He told me, that just then, he thought he felt a sudden flash from her eye, an eye-beam as he called it, dart through his shivering reins; and he could not help trembling.

The dog's conscience, Jack!—Nothing else!—I have felt half a dozen such flashes, such eye-beams, in as many different conversations with this soul-piercing beauty.

Her uncle, she must own, was not accustomed to think of such expedients; but she had reconciled this to herself, as the case was unhappily uncommon; and by the regard he had for her honour.

This set the puppy's heart at ease, and gave him more courage.

She asked him if he thought Lady Betty and Miss Montague intended her a visit?

He had no doubt but they did.

And does he imagine, said she, that I could be brought to countenance to them the report you have given out?

[I had hoped to bring her to this, Jack, or she had seen their letters. But I had told the Captain that I believed I must give up this expectation.]

No.—He believed that I had not such a thought. He was pretty sure, that I intended, when I saw them, to tell them, (as in confidence,) the naked truth.

He then told her that her uncle had already made some steps towards a general reconciliation. The moment, Madam, that he knows you are really married, he will enter into confidence with your father upon it; having actually expressed to your mother his desire to be reconciled to you.

And what, Sir, said my mother? What said my dear mother?

With great emotion she asked this question; holding out her sweet face, as the Captain described her, with the most earnest attention, as if she would shorten the way which his words were to have to her heart.

Your mother, Madam, burst into tears upon it: and your uncle was so penetrated by her tenderness, that he could not proceed with the subject. But he intends to enter upon it with her in form, as soon as he hears that the ceremony is over.

By the tone of her voice she wept. The dear creature, thought I, begins to relent!—And I grudged the dog his eloquence. I could hardly bear the thought that any man breathing should have the power which I had lost, of persuading this high-souled woman, though in my own favour. And wouldest thou think it? this reflection gave me more uneasiness at the moment than I felt from her reproaches, violent as they were; or than I had pleasure in her supposed relenting: for there is beauty in every thing she says and does!—Beauty in her passion!—Beauty in her tears!—Had the Captain been a young fellow, and of rank and fortune, his throat would have been in danger; and I should have thought very hardly of her.

O Captain Tomlinson, said she, you know not what I have suffered by this man's strange ways! He had, as I was not ashamed to tell him yesterday, a plain path before him. He at first betrayed me into his power—but when I was in it—There she stopt.—Then resuming—O Sir, you know not what a strange man he has been!—An unpolite, a rough-manner'd man! In disgrace of his birth, and education, and knowledge, an unpolite man!—And so acting, as if his worldly and personal advantages set him above those graces which distinguish a gentleman.

The first woman that ever said, or that ever thought so of me, that's my comfort, thought I!—But this, (spoken of to her uncle's friend, behind my back,) helps to heap up thy already-too-full measure, dearest!—It is down in my vellum-book.

Cl. When I look back on his whole behaviour to a poor young creature, (for I am but a very young creature,) I cannot acquit him either of great folly or of deep design. And, last Wednesday—There she stopt; and I suppose turned away her face.

I wonder she was not ashamed to hint at what she thought so shameful; and that to a man, and alone with him.

Capt. Far be it from me, Madam, to offer to enter too closely into so tender a subject. Mr. Lovelace owns, that you have reason to be displeas'd with him. But he so solemnly clears himself of premeditated offence—

Cl. He cannot clear himself, Captain Tomlinson. The people of the house must be very vile, as well as he. I am convinc'd that there was a wicked confederacy—but no more upon such a subject.

Capt. Only one word more, Madam.—He tells me, that you promis'd to pardon him. He tells me—

He knew, interrupt'd she, that he deserv'd not pardon, or he had not extorted the promise from me. Nor had I given it to him, but to shield myself from the vilest outrage—

Capt. I could wish, Madam, inexcusable as his behaviour has been, since he has something to plead in the reliance he made upon your promise, that, for the sake of appearances to the world, and to avoid the mischiefs that may follow if you absolutely break with him, you could prevail upon your naturally-generous mind to lay an obligation upon him by your forgiveness.

She was silent.

Capt. Your father and mother, Madam, deplore a daughter lost to them, whom your generosity to Mr. Lovelace may restore: do not put it to the possible chance, that they may have cause to deplore a double loss; the losing of a son, as well as a daughter, who, by his own violence, which you may perhaps prevent, may be for ever lost to them, and to the whole family.

She paused—she wept—she own'd that she felt the force of this argument.

I will be the making of this fellow, thought I.

Capt. Permit me, Madam, to tell you, that I do not think it would be difficult to prevail upon your uncle, if you insist upon it, to come up privately to town, and to give you with his own hand to Mr. Lovelace— except, indeed, your present misunderstanding were to come to his ears. Besides, Madam, your brother, it is likely, may at this very time be in town; and he is resolv'd to find you out—

Cl. Why, Sir, should I be so much afraid of my brother? My brother has injur'd me, not I him. Will my brother offer to me what Mr. Lovelace has offer'd?—Wicked, ungrateful man! to insult a friendless, unprotected creature, made friendless by himself!—I cannot, cannot think of him in the light I once thought of him. What, Sir, to put myself into the power of a wretch, who has acted by me with so much vile premeditation!—Who shall pity, who shall excuse me, if I do, were I to suffer ever so much from him?—No, Sir.—Let Mr. Lovelace leave me—let my brother find me. I am not such a poor creature as to be afraid to face the brother who has injur'd me.

Capt. Were you and your brother to meet only to confer together, to expostulate, to clear up difficulties, it were another thing. But what, Madam, can you think will be the issue of an interview, (Mr. Solmes with him,) when he finds you unmarried, and resolv'd never to have Mr. Lovelace; supposing Mr. Lovelace were not to interfere, which cannot be imagin'd?

Cl. Well, Sir, I can only say, I am a very unhappy creature!—I must resign to the will of Providence, and be patient under evils, which that will not permit me to shun. But I have taken my measures. Mr. Lovelace can never make me happy, nor I him. I wait here only for a letter from Miss Howe—that must determine me—

Determine you as to Mr. Lovelace, Madam? interrupt'd the Captain.

Cl. I am already determin'd as to him.

Capt. If it be not in his favour, I have done. I cannot use stronger arguments than I have used, and it would be impertinent to repeat them. If you cannot forgive his offence, I am sure it must have been much greater than he has own'd to me. If you are absolutely determin'd, be pleas'd to let me know what I shall say to your uncle? You were pleas'd to tell me, that this day would put an end to what you call'd my trouble: I should not have thought it any, could I have been an humble mean of reconciling persons of worth and honour to each other.

Here I enter'd with a solemn air.

Lovel. Captain Tomlinson, I have heard a part of what has pass'd between you and this unforgiving (however otherwise excellent) lady. I am cut to the heart to find the dear creature so determin'd. I could not have believ'd it possible, with such prospects, that I had so little share in her esteem. Nevertheless I must do myself justice with regard to the offence I was so unhappy as to give, since I find you are ready to think it much greater than it really was.

Cl. I hear not, Sir, your recapitulations. I am, and ought to be, the sole judge of insults offer'd to my person. I enter not into discussion with you, nor hear you on the shocking subject. And was going.

I put myself between her and the door—You may hear all I have to say, Madam. My fault is not of such a nature, but that you may. I will be a just accuser of myself; and will not wound your ears.

I then protest'd that the fire was a real fire. [So it was.] I disclaim'd [less truly] premeditation. I own'd that I was hurried on by the violence of a youthful passion, and by a sudden impulse, which few other

persons, in the like situation, would have been able to check: that I withdrew, at her command and entreaty, on the promise of pardon, without having offered the least indecency, or any freedom, that would not have been forgiven by persons of delicacy, surprised in an attitude so charming—her terror, on the alarm of fire, calling for a soothing behaviour, and personal tenderness, she being ready to fall into fits: my hoped-for happy day so near, that I might be presumed to be looked upon as a betrothed lover—and that this excuse might be pleaded even for the women of the house, that they, thinking us actually married, might suppose themselves to be the less concerned to interfere on so tender an occasion.—[There, Jack, was a bold insinuation on behalf of the women!]

High indignation filled her disdainful eye, eye-beam after eye-beam flashing at me. Every feature of her sweet face had soul in it. Yet she spoke not. Perhaps, Jack, she had a thought, that this plea for the women accounted for my contrivance to have her pass to them as married, when I first carried her thither.

Capt. Indeed, Sir, I must say that you did not well to add to the apprehensions of a lady so much terrified before.

The dear creature offered to go by me. I set my back against the door, and besought her to stay a few moments. I had not said thus much, my dearest creature, but for your sake, as well as for my own, that Captain Tomlinson should not think I had been viler than I was. Nor will I say one word more on the subject, after I have appealed to your own heart, whether it was not necessary that I should say so much; and to the Captain, whether otherwise he would not have gone away with a much worse opinion of me, if he had judged of my offence by the violence of your resentment.

Capt. Indeed I should. I own I should. And I am very glad, Mr. Lovelace, that you are able to defend yourself thus far.

Cl. That cause must be well tried, where the offender takes his seat upon the same bench with the judge.—I submit not mine to men—nor, give me leave to say, to you, Captain Tomlinson, though I am willing to have a good opinion of you. Had not the man been assured that he had influenced you in his favour, he would not have brought you up to Hampstead.

Capt. That I am influenced, as you call it, Madam, is for the sake of your uncle, and for your own sake, more (I will say to Mr. Lovelace's face) than for his. What can I have in view but peace and reconciliation? I have, from the first, blamed, and I now, again, blame Mr. Lovelace, for adding distress to distress, and terror to terror; the lady, as you acknowledge, Sir, [looking valiantly,] ready before to fall into fits.

Lovel. Let me own to you, Captain Tomlinson, that I have been a very faulty, a very foolish man; and, if this dear creature ever honoured me with her love, an ungrateful one. But I have had too much reason to doubt it. And this is now a flagrant proof that she never had the value for me which my proud heart wished for; that, with such prospects before us; a day so near; settlements approved and drawn; her uncle meditating a general reconciliation which, for her sake, not my own, I was desirous to give into; she can, for an offence so really slight, on an occasion so truly accidental, renounce me for ever; and, with me, all hopes of that reconciliation in the way her uncle had put it in, and she had acquiesced with; and risque all consequences, fatal ones as they may too possibly be.—By my soul, Captain Tomlinson, the dear creature must have hated me all the time she was intending to honour me with her hand. And now she must resolve to abandon me, as far as I know, with a preference in her heart of the most odious of men—in favour of that Solmes, who, as you tell me, accompanies her brother: and with what hopes, with what view, accompanies him!—How can I bear to think of this?—

Cl. It is fit, Sir, that you should judge of my regard for you by your own conscienceness of demerit. Yet you know, or you would not have dared to behave to me as sometimes you did, that you had more of it than you deserved.

She walked from us; and then returning, Captain Tomlinson, said she, I will own to you, that I was not capable of resolving to give my hand, and —nothing but my hand. Had I not given a flagrant proof of this to the once most indulgent parents? which has brought me into a distress, which this man has heightened, when he ought, in gratitude and honour, to have endeavoured to render it supportable. I had even a bias, Sir, in his favour, I scruple not to own it. Long (much too long!) bore I with his unaccountable ways, attributing his errors to unmeaning gaiety, and to a want of knowing what true delicacy, and true generosity, required from a heart susceptible of grateful impressions to one involved by his means in unhappy circumstances.

It is now wickedness in him (a wickedness which discredits all his professions) to say, that this last cruel and ungrateful insult was not a premeditated one—But what need I say more of this insult, when it was of such a nature, and that it has changed that bias in his favour, and make me choose to forego all the inviting prospects he talks of, and to run all hazards, to free myself from his power?

O my dearest creature! how happy for us both, had I been able to discover that bias, as you condescend to call it, through such reserves as man never encountered with!

He did discover it, Capt. Tomlinson. He brought me, more than once, to own it; the more needlessly brought me to own it, as I dare say his own vanity gave him no cause to doubt it; and as I had apparently no other motive in not being forward to own it, than my too-justly-founded apprehensions of his want of generosity. In a word, Captain Tomlinson, (and now, that I am determined upon my measures, I the less scruple to say,) I should have despised myself, had I found myself capable of affectation or tyranny to the man I intended to marry. I have always blamed the dearest friend I have in the world for a fault of this nature. In a word—

Lovel. And had my angel really and indeed the favour for me she is pleased to own?—Dearest creature, forgive me. Restore me to your good opinion. Surely I have not sinned beyond forgiveness. You say that I extorted from you the promise you made me. But I could not have presumed to make that promise the condition of my obedience, had I not thought there was room to expect forgiveness. Permit, I beseech you, the prospects to take place, that were opening so agreeably before us. I will go to town, and bring the license. All difficulties to the obtaining of it are surmounted. Captain Tomlinson shall be witness to the deeds. He will be present at the ceremony on the part of your uncle. Indeed he gave me hope that your uncle himself—

Capt. I did, Mr. Lovelace: and I will tell you my grounds for the hope I gave. I promised to my dear friend,

(your uncle, Madam,) that he should give out that he would take a turn with me to my little farm-house, as I call it, near Northampton, for a week or so.—Poor gentleman! he has of late been very little abroad!—Too visibly declining!—Change of air, it might be given out, was good for him.—But I see, Madam, that this is too tender a subject—

The dear creature wept. She knew how to apply as meant the Captain's hint to the occasion of her uncle's declining state of health.

Capt. We might indeed, I told him, set out in that road, but turn short to town in my chariot; and he might see the ceremony performed with his own eyes, and be the desired father, as well as the beloved uncle.

She turned from us, and wiped her eyes.

Capt. And, really, there seem now to be but two objections to this, as Mr. Harlowe discouraged not the proposal—The one, the unhappy misunderstanding between you; which I would not by any means he should know; since then he might be apt to give weight to Mr. James Harlowe's unjust surmises.—The other, that it would necessarily occasion some delay to the ceremony; which certainly may be performed in a day or two — if—

And then he reverently bowed to my goddess.—Charming fellow!—But often did I curse my stars, for making me so much obliged to his adroitness.

She was going to speak; but, not liking the turn of her countenance (although, as I thought, its severity and indignation seemed a little abated) I said, and had like to have blown myself up by it—one expedient I have just thought of—

Cl. None of your expedients, Mr. Lovelace!—I abhor your expedients, your inventions—I have had too many of them.

Lovel. See, Capt. Tomlinson!—See, Sir!—O how we expose ourselves to you!—Little did you think, I dare say, that we have lived in such a continued misunderstanding together!—But you will make the best of it all. We may yet be happy. Oh! that I could have been assured that this dear creature loved me with the hundredth part of the love I have for her!—Our diffidences have been mutual. I presume to say that she has too much punctilio: I am afraid that I have too little. Hence our difficulties. But I have a heart, Captain Tomlinson, a heart, that bids me hope for her love, because it is resolved to deserve it as much as man can deserve it.

Capt. I am indeed surprised at what I have seen and heard. I defend not Mr. Lovelace, Madam, in the offence he has given you—as a father of daughters myself, I cannot defend him; though his fault seems to be lighter than I had apprehended—but in my conscience, Madam, I think you carry your resentment too high.

Cl. Too high, Sir!—Too high to the man that might have been happy if he would! Too high to the man that has held my soul in suspense an hundred times, since (by artifice and deceit) he obtained a power over me!—Say, Lovelace, thyself say, art thou not the very Lovelace, who by insulting me, hast wronged thine own hopes?—The wretch that appeared in vile disguises, personating an old, lame creature, seeking for lodgings for thy sick wife?—Telling the gentlewomen here stories all of thine own invention; and asserting to them an husband's right over me, which thou hast not!—And is it [turning to the Captain] to be expected, that I should give credit to the protestations of such a man?

Lovel. Treat me, my dearest creature, as you please, I will bear it: and yet your scorn and your violence have fixed daggers in my heart—But was it possible, without those disguises, to come at your speech?—And could I lose you, if study, if invention, would put it in my power to arrest your anger, and give me hope to engage you to confirm to me the promised pardon? The address I made to you before the women, as if the marriage-ceremony had passed, was in consequence of what your uncle had advised, and what you had acquiesced with; and the rather made, as your brother, and Singleton, and Solmes, were resolved to find out whether what was reported of your marriage were true or not, that they might take their measures accordingly; and in hopes to prevent that mischief, which I have been but too studious to prevent, since this tameness has but invited insolence from your brother and his confederates.

Cl. O thou strange wretch, how thou talkest!—But, Captain Tomlinson, give me leave to say, that, were I inclined to enter farther upon this subject, I would appeal to Miss Rawlins's judgment (whom else have I to appeal to?) She seems to be a person of prudence and honour; but not to any man's judgment, whether I carry my resentment beyond fit bounds, when I resolve—

Capt. Forgive, Madam, the interruption—but I think there can be no reason for this. You ought, as you said, to be the sole judge of indignities offered you. The gentlewomen here are strangers to you. You will perhaps stay but a little while among them. If you lay the state of your case before any of them, and your brother come to inquire of them, your uncle's intended mediation will be discovered, and rendered abortive —I shall appear in a light that I never appeared in, in my life—for these women may not think themselves obliged to keep the secret.

Charming fellow!

Cl. O what difficulties has one fatal step involved me in—but there is no necessity for such an appeal to any body. I am resolved on my measures.

Capt. Absolutely resolved, Madam?

Cl. I am.

Capt. What shall I say to your uncle Harlowe, Madam?—Poor gentleman! how will he be surprised!—You see, Mr. Lovelace—you see, Sir,—turning to me with a flourishing hand—but you may thank yourself—and admirably stalked he from us.

True, by my soul, thought I. I traversed the room, and bit my unpersuasive lips, now upper, now under, for vexation.

He made a profound reverence to her—and went to the window, where lay his hat and whip; and, taking them up, opened the door. Child, said he, to some body he saw, pray order my servant to bring my horse to the door—

Lovel. You won't go, Sir—I hope you won't!—I am the unhappiest man in the world!—You won't go—yet, alas!—But you won't go, Sir!—there may be yet hopes that Lady Betty may have some weight—

Capt. Dear Mr. Lovelace! and may not my worthy friend, and affectionate uncle, hope for some influence upon his daughter-niece?—But I beg pardon—a letter will always find me disposed to serve the lady, and that as well for her sake as for the sake of my dear friend.

She had thrown herself into her chair: her eyes cast down: she was motionless, as in a profound study.

The Captain bowed to her again: but met with no return to his bow. Mr. Lovelace, said he, (with an air of equality and independence,) I am your's.

Still the dear unaccountable sat as immovable as a statue; stirring neither hand, foot, head, nor eye—I never before saw any one in so profound a reverie in so waking a dream.

He passed by her to go out at the door she sat near, though the passage by the other door was his direct way; and bowed again. She moved not. I will not disturb the lady in her meditations, Sir.—Adieu, Mr. Lovelace—no farther, I beseech you.

She started, sighing—Are you going, Sir?

Capt. I am, Madam. I could have been glad to do you service; but I see it is not in my power.

She stood up, holding out one hand, with inimitable dignity and sweetness—I am sorry you are going, Sir!—can't help it—I have no friend to advise with—Mr. Lovelace has the art (or good fortune, perhaps I should call it) to make himself many.—Well, Sir—if you will go, I can't help it.

Capt. I will not go, Madam; his eyes twinkling. [Again seized with a fit of humanity!] I will not go, if my longer stay can do you either service or pleasure. What, Sir, [turning to me,] what, Mr. Lovelace, was your expedient;—perhaps something may be offered, Madam—

She sighed, and was silent.

REVENGE, invoked I to myself, keep thy throne in my heart. If the usurper LOVE once more drive thee from it, thou wilt never again regain possession!

Lovel. What I had thought of, what I had intended to propose, [and I sighed,] was this, that the dear creature, if she will not forgive me, as she promised, will suspend the displeasure she has conceived against me, till Lady Betty arrives.—That lady may be the mediatrix between us. This dear creature may put herself into her protection, and accompany her down to her seat in Oxfordshire. It is one of her Ladyship's purposes to prevail on her supposed new niece to go down with her. It may pass to every one but to Lady Betty, and to you, Captain Tomlinson, and to your friend Mr. Harlowe (as he desires) that we have been some time married: and her being with my relations will amount to a proof to James Harlowe that we are; and our nuptials may be privately, and at this beloved creature's pleasure, solemnized; and your report, Captain, authenticated.

Capt. Upon my honour, Madam, clapping his hand upon his breast, a charming expedient!—This will answer every end.

She mused—she was greatly perplexed—at last, God direct me! said she: I know not what to do—a young unfriended creature! Whom can I have to advise with?—Let me retire, if I can retire.

She withdrew with slow and trembling feet, and went up to her chamber.

For Heaven's sake, said the penetrated varlet [his hands lifted up]; for Heaven's sake, take compassion upon this admirable woman!—I cannot proceed—she deserves all things—

Softly!—d—n the fellow!—the women are coming in.

He sobbed up his grief—turned about—hemm'd up a more manly accent—Wipe thy cursed eyes—He did. The sunshine took place on one cheek, and spread slowly to the other, and the fellow had his whole face again.

The women all three came in, led by that ever-curious Miss Rawlins. I told them, that the lady was gone up to consider of every thing: that we had hopes of her. And such a representation we made of all that had passed, as brought either tacit or declared blame upon the fair perverse for hardness of heart and over-delicacy.

The widow Bevis, in particular, put out one lip, tossed up her head, wrinkled her forehead, and made such motions with her now lifted-up, now cast-down eyes, as showed that she thought there was a great deal of perverseness and affectation in the lady. Now-and-then she changed her censuring looks to looks of pity of me—but (as she said) she loved not to aggravate!—A poor business, God help's! shrugging up her shoulders, to make such a rout about! And then her eyes laughed heartily—Indulgence was a good thing! Love was a good thing!—but too much was too much!

Miss Rawlins, however, declared, after she had called the widow Bevis, with a prudish simper, a comical gentlewoman! that there must be something in our story, which she could not fathom; and went from us into a corner, and sat down, seemingly vexed that she could not.

LETTER XXXV

MR. LOVELACE [IN CONTINUATION.]

The lady staid longer above than we wished; and I hoping that (lady-like) she only waited for an invitation to return to us, desired the widow Bevis, in the Captain's name, (who wanted to go to town,) to request the favour of her company.

I cared not to send up either Miss Rawlins or Mrs. Moore on the errand, lest my beloved should be in a communicative disposition; especially as she had hinted at an appeal to Miss Rawlins; who, besides, has such

an unbounded curiosity.

Mrs. Bevis presently returned with an answer (winking and pinking at me) that the lady would follow her down.

Miss Rawlins could not but offer to retire, as the others did. Her eyes, however, intimated that she had rather stay. But they not being answered as she seemed to wish, she went with the rest, but with slower feet; and had hardly left the parlour, when the lady entered it by the other door; a melancholy dignity in her person and air.

She sat down. Pray, Mr. Tomlinson, be seated.

He took his chair over against her. I stood behind her's that I might give him agreed-upon signals, should there be occasion for them.

As thus—a wink of the left eye was to signify push that point, Captain.

A wink of the right, and a nod, was to indicate approbation of what he had said.

My fore-finger held up, and biting my lip, get off of that, as fast as possible.

A right-forward nod, and a frown, swear to it, Captain.

My whole spread hand, to take care not to say too much on that particular subject.

A scowling brow, and a positive nod, was to bid him rise in temper.

And these motions I could make, even those with my hand, without holding up my arm, or moving my wrist, had the women been there; as, when the motions were agreed upon, I knew not but they would.

She hemmed—I was going to speak, to spare her supposed confusion: but this lady never wants presence of mind, when presence of mind is necessary either to her honour, or to that conscious dignity which distinguishes her from all the women I ever knew.

I have been considering, said she, as well as I was able, of every thing that has passed; and of all that has been said; and of my unhappy situation. I mean no ill, I wish no ill, to any creature living, Mr. Tomlinson. I have always delighted to draw favourable rather than unfavourable conclusions; sometimes, as it has proved, for very bad hearts. Censoriousness, whatever faults I have, is not naturally my fault.—But, circumstanced as I am, treated as I have been, unworthily treated, by a man who is full of contrivances, and glories in them—

Lovel. My dearest life!—But I will not interrupt you.

Cl. Thus treated, it becomes me to doubt—it concerns my honour to doubt, to fear, to apprehend—your intervention, Sir, is so seasonable, so kind, for this man—my uncle's expedient, the first of the kind he ever, I believe, thought of! a plain, honest, good-minded man, as he is, not affecting such expedients—your report in conformity to it—the consequences of that report; the alarm taken by my brother; his rash resolution upon it—the alarm taken by Lady Betty, and the rest of Mr. Lovelace's relations—the sudden letters written to him upon it, which, with your's, he showed me—all ceremony, among persons born observers of ceremony, and entitled to value themselves upon their distinction, dispensed with—all these things have happened so quick, and some of them so seasonable—

Lovel. Lady Betty, you see, Madam, in her letter, dispenses with punctilo, avowedly in compliment to you. Charlotte, in her's, professes to do the same for the same reason. Good Heaven! that the respect intended you by my relations, who, in every other case, are really punctilious, should be thus construed! They were glad, Madam, to have an opportunity to compliment you at my expense. Every one of my family takes delight in rallying me. But their joy on the supposed occasion—

Cl. Do I doubt, Sir, that you have not something to say for any thing you think fit to do? I am speaking to Captain Tomlinson, Sir. I will you would be pleased to withdraw—at least to come from behind my chair.

And she looked at the Captain, observing, no doubt, that his eyes seemed to take lessons from mine.

A fair match, by Jupiter!

The Captain was disconcerted. The dog had not had such a blush upon his face for ten years before. I bit my lip for vexation: walked about the room; but nevertheless took my post again; and blinked with my eyes to the Captain, as a caution for him to take more care of his: and then scouling with my brows, and giving the nod positive, I as good as said, resent that, Captain.

Capt. I hope, Madam, you have no suspicion that I am capable—

Cl. Be not displeased with me, Captain Tomlinson. I have told you that I am not of a suspicious temper. Excuse me for the sake of my sincerity. There is not, I will be bold to say, a sincerer heart in the world than her's before you.

She took out her handkerchief, and put it to her eyes.

I was going, at that instant, after her example, to vouch for the honesty of my heart; but my conscience Mennelled upon me; and would not suffer the meditated vow to pass my lips.—A devilish thing, thought I, for a man to be so little himself, when he has most occasion for himself!

The villain Tomlinson looked at me with a rueful face, as if he begged leave to cry for company. It might have been as well, if he had cried. A feeling heart, or the tokens of it given by a sensible eye, are very reputable things, when kept in countenance by the occasion.

And here let me fairly own to thee, that twenty times in this trying conversation I said to myself, that could I have thought that I should have had all this trouble, and incurred all this guilt, I would have been honest at first. But why, Jack, is this dear creature so lovely, yet so invincible?—Ever heardst thou before that the sweets of May blossomed in December?

Capt. Be pleased—be pleased, Madam—if you have any doubts of my honour—

A whining varlet! He should have been quite angry—For what gave I him the nod positive? He should have stalked again to the window, as for his whip and hat.

Cl. I am only making such observations as my youth, my inexperience, and my present unhappy circumstances, suggest to me—a worthy heart (such, I hope, as Captain Tomlinson's) need not fear an

examination— need not fear being looked into—whatever doubts that man, who has been the cause of my errors, and, as my severe father imprecated, the punisher of the errors he has caused, might have had of me, or of my honour, I would have forgiven him for them, if he had fairly proposed them to me: for some doubts perhaps such a man might have of the future conduct of a creature whom he could induce to correspond with him against parental prohibition, and against the lights which her own judgment threw in upon her: and if he had propounded them to me like a man and a gentleman, I would have been glad of the opportunity given me to clear my intentions, and to have shown myself entitled to his good opinion—and I hope you, Sir—

Capt. I am ready to hear all your doubts, Madam, and to clear them up—

Cl. I will only put it, Sir, to your conscience and honour—

The dog sat uneasy—he shuffled with his feet—her eye was upon him—he was, therefore, after the rebuff he had met with, afraid to look at me for my motions; and now turned his eyes towards me, then from me, as if he would unlook his own looks.

Cl. That all is true, that you have written, and that you have told me.

I gave him a right forward nod, and a frown—as much as to say, swear to it, Captain. But the varlet did not round it off as I would have had him. However, he averred that it was.

He had hoped, he said, that the circumstances with which his commission was attended, and what he had communicated to her, which he could not know but from his dear friend, her uncle, might have shielded him even from the shadow of suspicion. But I am contented, said he, stammering, to be thought—to be thought—what—what you please to think of me—till, till, you are satisfied—

A whore's-bird!

Cl. The circumstances you refer to, I must own ought to shield you, Sir, from suspicion; but the man before you is a man that would make an angel suspected, should that angel plead for him.

I came forward,—traversed the room,—was indeed in a bloody passion.—I have no patience, Madam!—and again I bit my unpersuasive lips.

Cl. No man ought to be impatient at imputations he is not ashamed to deserve. An innocent man will not be outrageous upon such imputations. A guilty man ought not. [Most excellently would this charming creature cap sentences with Lord M.!] But I am not now trying you, Sir, [to me,] on the foot of your merits. I am only sorry that I am constrained to put questions to this worthier gentleman, [worthier gentleman, Jack!] which, perhaps, I ought not to put, so far as they regard himself. And I hope, Captain Tomlinson, that you, who know not Mr. Lovelace so well, as, to my unhappiness, I do, and who have children of your own, will excuse a poor young creature, who is deprived of all worldly protection, and who has been insulted and endangered by the most designing man in the world, and, perhaps, by a confederacy of his creatures.

There she stopt; and stood up, and looked at me; fear, nevertheless, apparently mingled with her anger.—And so it ought. I was glad, however, of this poor sign of love; no one fears whom they value not.

Women's tongues were licensed, I was going to say; but my conscience would not let me call her a woman; nor use to her so vulgar a phrase. I could only rave by my motions, lift up my eyes, spread my hands, rub my face, pull my wig, and look like a fool. Indeed, I had a great mind to run mad. Had I been alone with her, I would; and she should have taken consequences.

The Captain interposed in my behalf; gently, however, and as a man not quite sure that he was himself acquitted. Some of the pleas we had both insisted on he again enforced; and, speaking low, Poor gentleman! said he, who can but pity him? Indeed, Madam, it is easy to see, with all his failings, the power you have over him!

Cl. I have no pleasure, Sir, in distressing any one; not even him, who has so much distressed me. But, Sir, when I THINK, and when I see him before me, I cannot command my temper! Indeed, indeed, Captain Tomlinson, Mr. Lovelace has not acted by me either as a grateful or a generous man, nor even as a prudent one!—He knows not, as I told him yesterday, the value of the heart he has insulted!

There the angel stopt; her handkerchief at her eyes.

O Belford, Belford! that she should so greatly excel, as to make me, at times, appear as a villain in my own eyes!

I besought her pardon. I promised that it should be the study of my whole life to deserve it. My faults, I said, whatever they had been, were rather faults in her apprehension than in fact. I besought her to give way to the expedient I had hit upon—I repeated it. The Captain enforced it, for her uncle's sake. I, once more, for the sake of the general reconciliation; for the sake of all my family; for the sake of preventing further mischief.

She wept. She seemed staggered in her resolution—she turned from me. I mentioned the letter of Lord M. I besought her to resign to Lady Betty's mediation all our differences, if she would not forgive me before she saw her.

She turned towards me—she was going to speak; but her heart was full, and again she turned away her eyes,—And do you really and indeed expect Lady Betty and Miss Montague?—And do you—Again she stopt.

I answered in a solemn manner.

She turned from me her whole face, and paused, and seemed to consider. But, in a passionate accent, again turning towards me, [O how difficult, Jack, for a Harlowe spirit to forgive!] Let her Ladyship come, if she pleases, said she, I cannot, cannot, wish to see her; and if I did see her, and she were to plead for you, I cannot wish to hear her! The more I think, the less I can forgive an attempt, that I am convinced was intended to destroy me. [A plaguy strong word for the occasion, supposing she was right!] What has my conduct been, that an insult of such a nature should be offered to me, and it would be a weakness in me to forgive? I am sunk in my own eyes! And how can I receive a visit that must depress me more?

The Captain urged her in my favour with greater earnestness than before. We both even clamoured, as I may say, for mercy and forgiveness. [Didst thou never hear the good folks talk of taking Heaven by storm?—]—Contrition repeatedly avowed; a total reformation promised; the happy expedient again urged.

Cl. I have taken my measures. I have gone too far to recede, or to wish to recede. My mind is prepared for adversity. That I have not deserved the evils I have met with is my consolation; I have written to Miss Howe what my intentions are. My heart is not with you—it is against you, Mr. Lovelace. I had not written to you as I did in the letter I left behind me, had I not resolved, whatever became of me, to renounce you for ever.

I was full of hope now. Severe as her expressions were, I saw she was afraid that I should think of what she had written. And, indeed, her letter is violence itself.—Angry people, Jack, should never write while their passion holds.

Lovel. The severity you have shown me, Madam, whether by pen or by speech, shall never have place in my remembrance, but for your honor. In the light you have taken things, all is deserved, and but the natural result of virtuous resentment; and I adore you, even for the pangs you have given me.

She was silent. She had employment enough with her handkerchief at her eyes.

Lovel. You lament, sometimes, that you have no friends of your own sex to consult with. Miss Rawlins, I must confess, is too inquisitive to be confided in, [I liked not, thou mayest think, her appeal to Miss Rawlins.] She may mean well. But I never in my life knew a person, who was fond of prying into the secrets of others, that was fit to be trusted. The curiosity of such is governed by pride, which is not gratified but by whispering about a secret till it becomes public, in order to show either their consequence, or their sagacity. It is so in every case. What man or woman, who is covetous of power, or of making a right use of it? But in the ladies of my family you may confide. It is their ambition to think of you as one of themselves. Renew but your consent to pass to the world, for the sake of your uncle's expedient, and for the prevention of mischief, as a lady some time married. Lady Betty may be acquainted with the naked truth; and you may, (as she hopes you will,) accompany her to her seat; and, if it must be so, consider me as in a state of penitence or probation, to be accepted or rejected, as I may appear to deserve.

The Captain again clapt his hands on his breast, and declared, upon his honour, that this was a proposal that, were the case that of his own daughter, and she were not resolved upon immediate marriage, (which yet he thought by far the more eligible choice,) he should be very much concerned were she to refuse it.

Cl. Were I with Mr. Lovelace's relations, and to pass as his wife to the world, I could not have any choice. And how could he be then in a state of probation?—O Mr. Tomlinson, you are too much his friend to see into his drift.

Capt. His friend, Madam, as I said before, as I am your's and your uncle's, for the sake of a general reconciliation, which must begin with a better understanding between yourselves.

Lovel. Only, my dearest life, resolve to attend the arrival and visit of Lady Betty; and permit her to arbitrate between us.

Capt. There can be no harm in that, Madam. You can suffer no inconvenience from that. If Mr. Lovelace's offence be such, that a woman of Lady Betty's character judges it to be unpardonable, why then—

Cl. [Interrupting; and to me,] If I am not invaded by you, Sir; if I am, (as I ought to be,) my own mistress, I think to stay here, in this honest house, [and then had I an eye-beam, as the Captain calls it, flashed at me,] till I receive a letter from Miss Howe. That, I hope, will be in a day or two. If in that time the ladies come whom you expect, and if they are desirous to see the creature whom you have made unhappy, I shall know whether I can or cannot receive their visit.

She turned short to the door, and, retiring, went up stairs to her chamber.

O Sir, said the Captain, as soon as she was gone, what an angel of a woman is this! I have been, and I am a very wicked man. But if any thing should happen amiss to this admirable lady, through my means, I shall have more cause for self-reproach than for all the bad actions of my life put together.

And his eyes glistened.

Nothing can happen amiss, thou sorrowful dog!—What can happen amiss? Are we to form our opinion of things by the romantic notions of a girl, who supposes that to be the greatest which is the slightest of evils? Have I not told thee our whole story? Has she not broken her promise? Did I not generously spare her, when in my power? I was decent, though I had her at such advantage.—Greater liberties have I taken with girls of character at a common romping 'bout, and all has been laughed off, and handkerchief and head-clothes adjusted, and petticoats shaken to rights, in my presence. Never man, in the like circumstances, and resolved as I was resolved, goaded on as I was goaded on, as well by her own sex, as by the impulses of a violent passion, was ever so decent. Yet what mercy does she show me?

Now, Jack, this pitiful dog was such another unfortunate one as thyself —his arguments serving to confirm me in the very purpose he brought them to prevail upon me to give up. Had he left me to myself, to the tenderness of my own nature, moved as I was when the lady withdrew, and had he set down, and made odious faces, and said nothing—it is very possible that I should have taken the chair over against him, which she had quitted, and have cried and blubbered with him for half an hour together. But the varlet to argue with me!—to pretend to convince a man, who knows in his heart that he is doing a wrong thing!—He must needs think that this would put me upon trying what I could say for myself; and when the extended compunction can be carried from the heart to the lips it must evaporate in words.

Thou, perhaps, in this place, wouldst have urged the same pleas that he urged. What I answered to him therefore may do for thee, and spare thee the trouble of writing, and me of reading, a good deal of nonsense.

Capt. You were pleased to tell me, Sir, that you only proposed to try her virtue; and that you believed you should actually marry her.

Lovel. So I shall, and cannot help it. I have no doubt but I shall. And as to trying her, is she not now in the height of her trial? Have I not reason to think that she is coming about? Is she not now yielding up her resentment for an attempt which she thinks she ought not to forgive? And if she do, may she not forgive the last attempt?—Can she, in a word, resent that more than she does this? Women often, for their own sakes, will keep the last secret; but will ostentatiously din the ears of gods and men with their clamours upon a successful offer. It was my folly, my weakness, that I gave her not more cause for this her unsparing violence!

Capt. O Sir, you will never be able to subdue this lady without force.

Level. Well, then, puppy, must I not endeavour to find a proper time and place—

Capt. Forgive me, Sir! but can you think of force to such a fine creature?

Level. Force, indeed, I abhor the thought of; and for what, thinkest thou, have I taken all the pains I have taken, and engaged so many persons in my cause, but to avoid the necessity of violent compulsion? But yet, imaginest thou that I expect direct consent from such a lover of forms as this lady is known to be! Let me tell thee, M'Donald, that thy master, Belford, has urged on thy side of the question all that thou canst urge. Must I have every sorry fellow's conscience to pacify, as well as my own?—By my soul, Patrick, she has a friend here, [clapping my hand on my breast,] that pleads for her with greater and more irresistible eloquence than all the men in the world can plead for her. And had she not escaped me—And yet how have I answered my first design of trying her,* and in her the virtue of the most virtuous of the sex?— Perseverance, man!— Perseverance!—What! wouldst thou have me decline a trial that they make for the honour of a sex we all so dearly love?

* See Vol. III. Letter XVIII.

Then, Sir, you have no thoughts—no thoughts—[looking still more sorrowfully,] of marrying this wonderful lady?

Yes, yes, Patrick, but I have. But let me, first, to gratify my pride, bring down her's. Let me see, that she loves me well enough to forgive me for my own sake. Has she not heretofore lamented that she staid not in her father's house, though the consequence must have been, if she had, that she would have been the wife of the odious Solmes? If now she be brought to consent to be mine, seest thou not that the reconciliation with her detested relations is the inducement, as it always was, and not love of me?—Neither her virtue nor her love can be established but upon full trial; the last trial—but if her resistance and resentment be such as hitherto I have reason to expect they will be, and if I find in that resentment less of hatred of me than of the fact, then shall she be mine in her own way. Then, hateful as is the life of shackles to me, will I marry her.

Well, Sir, I can only say, that I am dough in your hands, to be moulded into what shape you please. But if, as I said before—

None of thy Said-before's, Patrick. I remember all thou saidst—and I know all thou canst farther say—thou art only, Pontius Pilate like, washing thine own hands, (don't I know thee?) that thou mayest have something to silence thy conscience with by loading me. But we have gone too far to recede. Are not all our engines in readiness? Dry up thy sorrowful eyes. Let unconcern and heart's ease once more take possession of thy solemn features. Thou hast hitherto performed extremely well.— Shame not thy past by thy future behaviour; and a rich reward awaits thee. If thou art dough be dough; and I slapt him on the shoulder— Resume but thy former shape, and I'll be answerable for the event.

He bowed assent and compliance; went to the glass; and began to untwist and unsadden his features; pulled his wig right, as if that, as well as his head and heart had been discomposed by his compunction, and once more became old Lucifer's and mine.

But didst thou think, Jack, that there was so much—What-shall-I-call-it? —in this Tomlinson? Didst thou imagine that such a fellow as that had bowels? That nature, so long dead and buried in him, as to all humane effects, should thus revive and exert itself?—Yet why do I ask this question of thee, who, to my equal surprise, hast shown, on the same occasion, the like compassionate sensibilities?

As to Tomlinson, it looks as if poverty had made him the wicked fellow he is; as plenty and wantonness have made us what we are. Necessity, after all, is the test of principle. But what is there in this dull word, or thing, called HONESTY, that even I, who cannot in my present views be served by it, cannot help thinking even the accidental emanations of it amiable in Tomlinson, though demonstrated in a female case; and judging better of him for being capable of such?

LETTER XXXVI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

This debate between the Captain and me was hardly over when the three women, led by Miss Rawlins, entered, hoping no intrusion, but very desirous, the maiden said, to know if we were likely to accommodate.

O yes, I hope so. You know, Ladies, that your sex must, in these cases, preserve their forms. They must be courted to comply with their own happiness. A lucky expedient we have hit upon. The uncle has his doubts of our marriage. He cannot believe, nor will any body, that it is possible that a man so much in love, the lady so desirable—

They all took the hint. It was a very extraordinary case, the two widows allowed. Women, Jack, [as I believe I have observed* elsewhere,] have a high opinion of what they can do for us. Miss Rawlins desired, if I pleased, to let them know the expedient; and looked as if there was no need to proceed in the rest of my speech.

* See Letter XXIV. of this volume.

I begged that they would not let the lady know I had told them what this expedient was; and they should hear it.

They promised.

It was this: that to oblige and satisfy Mr. Harlowe, the ceremony was to be again performed. He was to be privately present, and to give his niece to me with his own hands—and she was retired to consider of it.

Thou seest, Jack, that I have provided an excuse, to save my veracity to the women here, in case I should incline to marriage, and she should choose to have Miss Rawlins's assistance at the ceremony. Nor doubted I to bring my fair-one to save my credit on this occasion, if I could get her to consent to be mine.

A charming expedient! cried the widow. They were all three ready to clap their hands for joy upon it. Women love to be married twice at least, Jack; though not indeed to the same man. And all blessed the reconciliatory scheme and the proposer of it; and, supposing it came from the Captain, they looked at him with pleasure, while his face shined with the applause implied. He should think himself very happy, if he could bring about a general reconciliation; and he flourished with his head like my man Will. on his victory over old Grimes; bridle by turns, like Miss Rawlins in the height of a prudish fit.

But now it was time for the Captain to think of returning to town, having a great deal of business to dispatch before morning. Nor was he certain that he should be able again to attend us at Hampstead before he went home.

And yet, as every thing was drawing towards a crisis, I did not intend that he should leave Hampstead that night.

A message to the above effect was carried up, at my desire, by Mrs. Moore; with the Captain's compliments, and to know if she had any commands for him to her uncle?

But I hinted to the women, that it would be proper for them to withdraw, if the lady did come down; lest she should not care to be so free before them on a proposal so particular, as she would be to us, who had offered it to her consideration.

Mrs. Moore brought down word that the lady was following her. They all three withdrew; and she entered at one door, as they went out at the other.

The Captain accosted her, repeating the contents of the message sent up; and desired that she would give him her commands in relation to the report he was to make to her uncle Harlowe.

I know not what to say, Sir, nor what I would have you to say, to my uncle—perhaps you may have business in town—perhaps you need not see my uncle till I have heard from Miss Howe; till after Lady Betty—I don't know what to say.

I implored the return of that value which she had so generously acknowledged once to have had for me. I presumed, I said, to flatter myself that Lady Betty, in her own person, and in the name of all my family, would be able, on my promised reformation and contrition, to prevail in my favour, especially as our prospects in other respects with regard to the general reconciliation wished for were so happy. But let me owe to your own generosity, my dearest creature, said I, rather than to the mediation of any person on earth, the forgiveness I am an humble suitor for. How much more agreeable to yourself, O best beloved of my soul, must it be, as well as obliging to me, that your first personal knowledge of my relations, and theirs of you, (for they will not be denied attending you) should not be begun in recriminations, in appeals? As Lady Betty will be here soon, it will not perhaps be possible for you to receive her visit with a brow absolutely serene. But, dearest, dearest creature, I beseech you, let the misunderstanding pass as a slight one—as a misunderstanding cleared up. Appeals give pride and superiority to the persons appealed to, and are apt to lessen the appellant, not only in their eye, but in her own. Exalt not into judges those who are prepared to take lessons and instructions from you. The individuals of my family are as proud as I am said to be. But they will cheerfully resign to your superiority—you will be the first woman of the family in every one's eyes.

This might have done with any other woman in the world but this; and yet she is the only woman in the world of whom it may with truth be said. But thus, angrily, did she disclaim the compliment.

Yes, indeed!—[and there she stopt a moment, her sweet bosom heaving with a noble disdain]—cheated out of myself from the very first!—A fugitive from my own family! Renounced by my relations! Insulted by you!—Laying humble claim to the protection of your's!—Is not this the light in which I must appear not only to the ladies of your family, but to all the world?—Think you, Sir, that in these circumstances, or even had I been in the happiest, that I could be affected by this plea of undeserved superiority?—You are a stranger to the mind of Clarissa Harlowe, if you think her capable of so poor and so undue a pride!

She went from us to the farther end of the room.

The Captain was again affected—Excellent creature! I called her; and, reverently approaching her, urged farther the plea I had last made.

It is but lately, said I, that the opinions of my relations have been more than indifferent to me, whether good or bad; and it is for your sake, more than for my own, that I now wish to stand well with my whole family. The principal motive of Lady Betty's coming up, is, to purchase presents for the whole family to make on the happy occasion.

This consideration, turning to the Captain, with so noble-minded a dear creature, I know, can have no weight; only as it will show their value and respect. But what a damp would their worthy hearts receive, were they to find their admired new niece, as they now think her, not only not their niece, but capable of renouncing me for ever! They love me. They all love me. I have been guilty of carelessness and levity to them, indeed; but of carelessness and levity only; and that owing to a pride that has set me above meanness, though it has not done every thing for me.

My whole family will be guaranties for my good behaviour to this dear creature, their niece, their daughter, their cousin, their friend, their chosen companion and directress, all in one.—Upon my soul, Captain, we may, we must be happy.

But, dearest, dearest creature, let me on my knees [and down I dropt, her face all the time turned half from me, as she stood at the window, her handkerchief often at her eyes] on my knees let me plead your promised forgiveness; and let us not appear to them, on their visit, thus unhappy with each other. Lady Betty, the next hour that she sees you, will write her opinion of you, and of the likelihood of our future happiness, to Lady Sarah her sister, a weak-spirited woman, who now hopes to supply to herself, in my bride, the lost daughter she still mourns for!

The Captain then joined in, and re-urged her uncle's hopes and expectations, and his resolution effectually

to set about the general reconciliation; the mischief that might be prevented; and the certainty that there was that her uncle might be prevailed on to give her to me with his own hand, if she made it her choice to wait for his coming up. but, for his own part, he humbly advised, and fervently pressed her, to make the very next day, or Monday at farthest, my happy day.

Permit me, dearest lady, said he, and I could kneel to you myself, [bending his knee,] though I have no interest in my earnestness, but the pleasure I should have to be able to serve you all, to beseech you to give me an opportunity to assure your uncle that I myself saw with my own eyes the happy knot tied!—All misunderstandings, all doubts, all diffidences, will then be at an end.

And what, Madam, rejoined I, still kneeling, can there be in your new measures, be they what they will, that can so happily, so reputably, I will presume to say, for all around, obviate the present difficulties?

Miss Howe herself, if she love you, and if she love your fame, Madam, urged the Captain, his knee still bent, must congratulate you on such happy conclusion.

Then turning her face, she saw the Captain half-kneeling—O Sir! O Capt. Tomlinson!—Why this undue condensation? extending her hand to his elbow, to raise him. I cannot bear this!—Then casting her eye on me, Rise, Mr. Lovelace—kneel not to the poor creature whom you have insulted!—How cruel the occasion for it!—And how mean the submission!

Not mean to such an angel!—Nor can I rise but to be forgiven!

The Captain then re-urged once more the day—he was amazed, he said, if she ever valued me—

O Captain Tomlinson, interrupted she, how much are you the friend of this man!—If I had never valued him, he never would have had it in his power to insult me; nor could I, if I had never regarded him, have taken to heart as I do, the insult (execrable as it was) so undeservedly, so ungratefully given—but let him retire—for a moment let him retire.

I was more than half afraid to trust the Captain by himself with her. He gave me a sign that I might depend upon him. And then I took out of my pocket his letter to me, and Lady Betty's and Miss Montague's, and Lord M.'s letters (which last she had not then seen); and giving them to him, procure for me, in the first place, Mr. Tomlinson, a re-perusal of these three letters; and of this from Lord M. And I beseech you, my dearest life, give them due consideration: and let me on my return find the happy effects of that consideration.

I then withdrew; with slow feet, however, and a misgiving heart.

The Captain insisted upon this re-perusal previously to what she had to say to him, as he tells me. She complied, but with some difficulty; as if she were afraid of being softened in my favour.

She lamented her unhappy situation; destitute of friends, and not knowing whither to go, or what to do. She asked questions, sifting-questions, about her uncle, about her family, and after what he knew of Mr. Hickman's fruitless application in her favour.

He was well prepared in this particular; for I had shown him the letters and extracts of letter of Miss Howe, which I had so happily come at.* Might she be assured, she asked him, that her brother, with Singleton and Solmes, were actually in quest of her?

* Vol. IV. Letter XLIV.

He averred that they were.

She asked, if he thought I had hopes of prevailing on her to go back to town?

He was sure I had not.

Was he really of opinion that Lady Betty would pay her a visit?

He had no doubt of it.

But, Sir; but, Captain Tomlinson—[impatiently turning from him, and again to him] I know not what to do—but were I your daughter, Sir—were you my own father—Alas! Sir, I have neither father nor mother!

He turned from her and wiped his eyes.

O Sir! you have humanity! [She wept too.] There are some men in the world, thank Heaven, that can be moved. O Sir, I have met with hard-hearted men—in my own family too—or I could not have been so unhappy as I am—but I make every body unhappy!

His eyes no doubt ran over.—

Dearest Madam! Heavenly Lady!—Who can—who can—hesitated and blubbered the dog, as he owned. And indeed I heard some part of what passed, though they both talked lower than I wished; for, from the nature of their conversation, there was no room for altitudes.

THEM, and BOTH, and THEY!—How it goes against me to include this angel of a creature, and any man on earth but myself, in one world!

Capt. Who can forbear being affected?—But, Madam, you can be no other man's.

Cl. Nor would I be. But he is so sunk with me!—To fire the house!—An artifice so vile!—contrived for the worst of purposes!—Would you have a daughter of your's—But what would I say?—Yet you see that I have nobody in whom I can confide!—Mr. Lovelace is a vindictive man!—He could not love the creature whom he could insult as he has insulted me!

She paused. And then resuming—in short, I never, never can forgive him, nor he me.—Do you think, Sir, I never would have gone so far as I have gone, if I had intended ever to draw with him in one yoke?—I left behind me such a letter—

You know, Madam, he has acknowledged the justice of your resentment—

O Sir, he can acknowledge, and he can retract, fifty times a day—but do not think I am trifling with myself and you, and want to be persuaded to forgive him, and to be his. There is not a creature of my sex, who would have been more explicit, and more frank, than I would have been, from the moment I intended to be his, had I a heart like my own to deal with. I was always above reserve, Sir, I will presume to say, where I had no cause of doubt. Mr. Lovelace's conduct has made me appear, perhaps, over-nice, when my heart wanted to be

encouraged and assured! and when, if it had been so, my whole behaviour would have been governed by it.

She stopt; her handkerchief at her eyes.

I inquired after the minutest part of her behaviour, as well as after her words. I love, thou knowest, to trace human nature, and more particularly female nature, through its most secret recesses.

The pitiful fellow was lost in silent admiration of her. And thus the noble creature proceeded.

It is the fate in unequal unions, that tolerable creatures, through them, frequently incur censure, when more happily yoked they might be entitled to praise. And shall I not shun a union with a man, that might lead into errors a creature who flatters herself that she is blest with an inclination to be good; and who wishes to make every one happy with whom she has any connection, even to her very servants?

She paused, taking a turn about the room—the fellow, devil fetch him, a mummy all the time:—Then proceeded.

Formerly, indeed, I hoped to be an humble mean of reforming him. But, when I have no such hope, is it right [you are a serious man, Sir] to make a venture that shall endanger my own morals?

Still silent was the varlet. If my advocate had nothing to say for me, what hope of carrying my cause?

And now, Sir, what is the result of all?—It is this—that you will endeavour, if you have that influence over him which a man of your sense and experience ought to have, to prevail upon him, and that for his own sake, as well as for mine, to leave me free, to pursue my own destiny. And of this you may assure him, that I will never be any other man's.

Impossible, Madam! I know that Mr. Lovelace would not hear me with patience on such a topic. And I do assure you that I have some spirit, and should not care to take an indignity from him or from any man living.

She paused—then resuming—and think you, Sir, that my uncle will refuse to receive a letter from me? [How averse, Jack, to concede a tittle in my favour!]

I know, Madam, as matters are circumstanced, that he would not answer it. If you please I will carry one down from you.

And will he not pursue his intentions in my favour, nor be himself reconciled to me, except I am married?

From what your brother gives out, and effects to believe, on Mr. Lovelace's living with you in the same—

No more, Sir—I am an unhappy creature!

He then re-urged, that it would be in her power instantly, or on the morrow, to put an end to all her difficulties.

How can that be? said she: the license still to be obtained? The settlements still to be signed? Miss Howe's answer to my last unreceived?—And shall I, Sir, be in such a HURRY, as if I thought my honour in danger if I delayed? Yet marry the man from whom only it can be endangered!—Unhappy, thrice unhappy Clarissa Harlowe!—In how many difficulties has one rash step involved thee!—And she turned from him and wept.

The varlet, by way of comfort, wept too: yet her tears, as he might have observed, were tears that indicated rather a yielding than a perverse temper.

There is a sort of stone, thou knowest, so soft in the quarry, that it may in manner be cut with a knife; but if the opportunity not be taken, and it is exposed to the air for any time, it will become as hard as marble, and then with difficulty it yields to the chisel.* So this lady, not taken at the moment, after a turn or two across the room, gained more resolution! and then she declared, as she had done once before, that she would wait the issue of Miss Howe's answer to the letter she had sent her from hence, and take her measures accordingly—leaving it to him, mean time, to make what report he thought fit to her uncle—the kindest that truth could bear, she doubted not from Captain Tomlinson: and she should be glad of a few lines from him, to hear what that was.

* The nature of the Bath stone, in particular.

She wished him a good journey. She complained of her head; and was about to withdraw: but I stept round to the door next the stairs, as if I had but just come in from the garden (which, as I entered, I called a very pretty one) and took her reluctant hand as she was going out: My dearest life, you are not going?—What hopes, Captain?—Have you not some hopes to give me of pardon and reconciliation?

She said she would not be detained. But I would not let her go till she had promised to return, when the Captain had reported to me what her resolution was.

And when he had, I sent up and claimed her promise; and she came down again, and repeated (as what she was determined upon) that she would wait for Miss Howe's answers to the letter she had written to her, and take her measures according to its contents.

I expostulated with her upon it, in the most submissive and earnest manner. She made it necessary for me to repeat many of the pleas I had before urged. The Captain seconded me with equal earnestness. At last, each fell down on our knees before her.

She was distressed. I was afraid at one time she would have fainted. Yet neither of us would rise without some concessions. I pleaded my own sake; the Captain, his dear friend, her uncle's; and both re-pleaded the prevention of future mischief; and the peace and happiness of the two families.

She owned herself unequal to the conflict. She sighed. She sobbed. She wept. She wrung her hands.

I was perfectly eloquent in my vows and protestations. Her tearful eyes were cast down upon me; a glow upon each charming cheek; a visible anguish in every lovely feature—at last, her trembling knees seemed to fail her, she dropt into the next chair; her charming face, as if seeking for a hiding place (which a mother's bosom would have best supplied) sinking upon her own shoulder.

I forgot at the instant all my vows of revenge. I threw myself at her feet, as she sat; and, snatching her hand, pressed it with my lips. I besought Heaven to forgive my past offences, and prosper my future hopes, as I designed honourably and justly by the charmer of my heart, if once more she should restore me to her favour. And I thought I felt drops of scalding water [could they be tears?] trickle down upon my cheeks; while my cheeks, glowing like fire, seemed to scorch up the unwelcome strangers.

I then arose, not doubting of an implied pardon in this silent distress. I raised the Captain. I whispered him—by my soul, man, I am in earnest. —Now talk of reconciliation, of her uncle, of the license, of settlement — and raising my voice, If now at last, Captain Tomlinson, my angel will give me leave to call so great a blessing mine, it will be impossible that you should say too much to her uncle in praise of my gratitude, my affection, and fidelity to his charming niece; and he may begin as soon as he pleases his kind schemes for effecting the desirable reconciliation!—Nor shall he prescribe any terms to me that I will not comply with.

The Captain blessed me with his eyes and hands—Thank God! whispered he. We approached the lady together.

Capt. What hinders, dearest Madam, what now hinders, but that Lady Betty Lawrance, when she comes, may be acquainted with the truth of every thing? And that then she may assist privately at your nuptials? I will stay till they are celebrated; and then shall go down with the happy tidings to my dear Mr. Harlowe. And all will, all must, soon be happy.

I must have an answer from Miss Howe, replied the still trembling fair- one. I cannot change my new measures but with her advice. I will forfeit all my hopes of happiness in this world, rather than forfeit her good opinion, and that she should think me giddy, unsteady, or precipitate. All I shall further say on the present subject is this, that when I have her answer to what I have written, I will write to her the whole state of the matter, as I shall then be enabled to do.

Level. Then must I despair for ever!—O Captain Tomlinson, Miss Howe hates me!—Miss Howe—

Capt. Not so, perhaps—when Miss Howe knows your concern for having offended, she will never advise that, with such prospects of general reconciliation, the hopes of so many considerable persons in both families should be frustrated. Some little time, as this excellent lady had foreseen and hinted, will necessarily be taken up in actually procuring the license, and in perusing and signing the settlements. In that time Miss Howe's answer may be received; and Lady Betty may arrive; and she, no doubt, will have weight to dissipate the lady's doubts, and to accelerate the day. It shall be my part, mean time, to make Mr. Harlowe easy. All I fear is from Mr. James Harlowe's quarter; and therefore all must be conducted with prudence and privacy: as your uncle, Madam, has proposed.

She was silent, I rejoiced in her silence. The dear creature, thought I, has actually forgiven me in her heart! —But why will she not lay me under obligation to her, by the generosity of an explicit declaration?—And yet, as that would not accelerate any thing, while the license is not in my hands, she is the less to be blamed (if I do her justice) for taking more time to descend.

I proposed, as on the morrow night, to go to town; and doubted not to bring the license up with me on Monday morning; would she be pleased to assure me, that she would not depart from Mrs. Moore's.

She should stay at Mrs. Moore's till she had an answer from Miss Howe.

I told her that I hoped I might have her tacit consent at least to the obtaining of the license.

I saw by the turn of her countenance that I should not have asked this question. She was so far from tacitly consenting, that she declared to the contrary.

As I never intended, I said, to ask her to enter again into a house, with the people of which she was so much offended, would she be pleased to give orders for her clothes to be brought up hither? Or should Dorcas attend her for any of her commands on that head?

She desired not ever more to see any body belonging to that house. She might perhaps get Mrs. Moore or Mrs. Bevis to go thither for her, and take her keys with them.

I doubted not, I said, that Lady Betty would arrive by that time. I hoped she had no objection to my bringing that lady and my cousin Montague up with me?

She was silent.

To be sure, Mr. Lovelace, said the Captain, the lady can have no objection to this.

She was still silent. So silence in this case was assent.

Would she be pleased to write to Miss Howe?—

Sir! Sir! peevishly interrupting—no more questions; no prescribing to me —you will do as you think fit—so will I, as I please. I own no obligation to you. Captain Tomlinson, your servant. Recommend me to my uncle Harlowe's favour. And was going.

I took her reluctant hand, and besought her only to promise to meet me early in the morning.

To what purpose meet you? Have you more to say than has been said? I have had enough of vows and protestations, Mr. Lovelace. To what purpose should I meet you to-morrow morning?

I repeated my request, and that in the most fervent manner, naming six in the morning.

'You know that I am always stirring before that hour, at this season of the year,' was the half-expressed consent.

She then again recommended herself to her uncle's favour; and withdrew.

And thus, Belford, has she mended her markets, as Lord M. would say, and I worsted mine. Miss Howe's next letter is now the hinge on which the fate of both must turn. I shall be absolutely ruined and undone, if I cannot intercept it.

END OF VOL.5

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