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HARLOWE; OR THE HISTORY OF A YOUNG LADY — VOLUME 6 ***

CLARISSA HARLOWE

or the
HISTORY OF A YOUNG LADY

By Samuel Richardson

Volume VI. (of Nine Volumes)

CONTENTS

DETAILED CONTENTS
THE HISTORY OF CLARISSA HARLOWE
LETTER I
LETTER II
LETTER III
LETTER IV
LETTER V
LETTER VI
LETTER VII
LETTER VIII
LETTER IX
LETTER X
LETTER XI
LETTER XII
LETTER XIII
LETTER XIV
LETTER XV
LETTER XVI
LETTER XVII
LETTER XVIII
LETTER XIX
LETTER XX
LETTER XXI
LETTER XXII
LETTER XXIII
LETTER XXIV
LETTER XXV
LETTER XXVI
LETTER XXVII
LETTER XXVIII
LETTER XXIX
LETTER XXX
LETTER XXXI
LETTER XXXII
LETTER XXXIII
LETTER XXXIV
LETTER XXXV
LETTER XXXVI
LETTER XXXVII
LETTER XXXVIII
LETTER XXXIX
LETTER XL
LETTER XLI
LETTER XLII
LETTER XLIII
LETTER XLIV
LETTER XLV
LETTER XLVI
LETTER XLVII
LETTER XLVIII
LETTER XLIX
LETTER L
LETTER LI
LETTER LII
LETTER LIII
LETTER LIV
LETTER LV
LETTER LVI
LETTER LVII

LETTER LVIII
LETTER LIX
LETTER LX
LETTER LXI
LETTER LXII
LETTER LXIII
LETTER LXIV
LETTER LXV
LETTER LXVI
LETTER LXVII
LETTER LXVIII
LETTER LXIX
LETTER LXX
LETTER LXXI
LETTER LXXII
LETTER LXXIII

DETAILED CONTENTS

LETTER I. II. Lovelace to Belford.—His conditional promise to Tomlinson in the lady's favour. His pleas and arguments on their present situation, and on his darling and hitherto-baffled views. His whimsical contest with his conscience. His latest adieu to it. His strange levity, which he calls gravity, on the death of Belford's uncle.

LETTER III. IV. From the same.—She favours him with a meeting in the garden. Her composure. Her conversation great and noble. But will not determine any thing in his favour. It is however evident, he says, that she has still some tenderness for him. His reasons. An affecting scene between them. Her ingenuousness and openness of heart. She resolves to go to church; but will not suffer him to accompany her thither. His whimsical debate with the God of Love, whom he introduced as pleading for the lady.

LETTER V. VI. VII. From the same.—He has got the wished-for letter from Miss Howe.—Informs him of the manner of obtaining it.—His remarks upon it. Observations on female friendships. Comparison between Clarissa and Miss Howe.

LETTER VIII. From the same.—Another conversation with the lady. His plausible arguments to re-obtain her favour ineffectual. His pride piqued. His revenge incited. New arguments in favour of his wicked prospects. His notice that a license is actually obtained.

LETTER IX. X. From the same.—Copy of the license; with his observations upon it. His scheme for annual marriages. He is preparing with Lady Betty and Miss Montague to wait upon Clarissa. Who these pretended ladies are. How dressed. They give themselves airs of quality. Humourously instructs them how to act up their assumed characters.

LETTER XI. XII. Lovelace to Belford.—Once more is the charmer of his soul in her old lodgings. Brief account of the horrid imposture. Steals his heart by revengeful recollections. Her agonizing apprehensions. Temporary distraction. Is ready to fall into fits. But all her distress, all her prayers, her innocence, her virtue, cannot save her from the most villanous outrage.

LETTER XIII. Belford to Lovelace.—Vehemently inveighs against him. Grieves for the lady. Is now convinced that there must be a world after this to do justice to injured merit. Beseeches him, if he be a man, and not a devil, to do all the poor justice now in his power.

LETTER XIV. Lovelace to Belford.—Regrets that he ever attempted her. Aims at extenuation. Does he not see that he has journeyed on to this stage, with one determined point in view from the first? She is at present stupified, he says.

LETTER XV. From the same.—The lady's affecting behaviour in her delirium. He owns that art has been used to her. Begins to feel remorse.

LETTER XVI. From the same.—The lady writes upon scraps of paper, which she tears, and throws under the table. Copies of ten of these rambling papers; and of a letter to him most affectingly incoherent. He attempts farther to extenuate his villany. Tries to resume his usual levity; and forms a scheme to decoy the people at Hampstead to the infamous woman's in town. The lady seems to be recovering.

LETTER XVII. From the same.—She attempts to get away in his absence. Is prevented by the odious Sinclair. He exults in the hope of looking her into confusion when he sees her. Is told by Dorcas that she is coming into the dining-room to find him out.

LETTER XVIII. From the same.—A high scene of her exalted, and of his depressed, behaviour. Offers to make her amends by matrimony. She treats his offer with contempt. Afraid Belford plays him false.

LETTER XIX. From the same.—Wishes he had never seen her. With all the women he had known till now, it was once subdued, and always subdued. His miserable dejection. His remorse. She attempts to escape. A mob raised. His quick invention to pacify it. Out of conceit with himself and his contrivances.

LETTER XX. XXI. Lovelace to Belford.—Lord M. very ill. His presence necessary at M. Hall. Puts Dorcas upon ingratiating herself with her lady.—He re-urges marriage to her. She absolutely, from the most noble motives, rejects him.

LETTER XXII. From the same.—Reflects upon himself. It costs, he says, more pain to be wicked than to be good. The lady's solemn expostulation with him. Extols her greatness of soul. Dorcas coming into favour with her. He is alarmed by another attempt of the lady to get off. She is in

agonies at being prevented. He tried to intimidate her. Dorcas pleads for her. On the point of drawing his sword against himself. The occasion.

LETTER XXIII. From the same.—Cannot yet persuade himself but the lady will be his. Reasons for his opinion. Opens his heart to Belford, as to his intentions by her. Mortified that she refuses his honest vows. Her violation but notional. Her triumph greater than her sufferings. Her will unviolated. He is a better man, he says, than most rakes; and why.

LETTER XXIV. XXV. From the same.—The lady gives a promissory note to Dorcas, to induce her to further her escape.—A fair trial of skill now, he says. A conversation between the vile Dorcas and her lady: in which she engages her lady's pity. The bonds of wickedness stronger than the ties of virtue. Observations on that subject.

LETTER XXVI. XXVII. XXVIII. From the same.—A new contrivance to advantage of the lady's intended escape.—A letter from Tomlinson. Intent of it.—He goes out to give opportunity for the lady to attempt an escape. His designs frustrated.

LETTER XXIX. From the same.—An interesting conversation between the lady and him. No concession in his favour. By his soul, he swears, this dear girl gives the lie to all their rakish maxims. He has laid all the sex under obligation to him; and why.

LETTER XXX. Lovelace to Belford.—Lord M. in extreme danger. The family desire his presence. He intercepts a severe letter from Miss Howe to her friend. Copy of it.

LETTER XXXI. From the same.—The lady, suspecting Dorcas, tries to prevail upon him to give her her liberty. She disclaims vengeance, and affectingly tells him all her future views. Denied, she once more attempts an escape. Prevented, and terrified with apprehensions of instant dishonour, she is obliged to make some concession.

LETTER XXXII. From the same.—Accuses her of explaining away her concession. Made desperate, he seeks occasion to quarrel with her. She exerts a spirit which overawes him. He is ridiculed by the infamous copartnership. Calls to Belford to help a gay heart to a little of his dismal, on the expected death of Lord M.

LETTER XXXIII. From the same.—Another message from M. Hall, to engage him to go down the next morning.

LETTER XXXIV. XXXV. From the same.—The women's instigations. His farther schemes against the lady. What, he asks, is the injury which a church-rite will not at any time repair?

LETTER XXXVI. From the same.—Himself, the mother, her nymphs, all assembled with intent to execute his detestable purposes. Her glorious behaviour on the occasion. He execrates, detests, despises himself; and admires her more than ever. Obligated to set out early that morning for M. Hall, he will press her with letters to meet him next Thursday, her uncle's birthday, at the altar.

LETTER XXXVII. XXXVIII. XXXIX. Lovelace to Clarissa, from M. Hall.—Urging her accordingly, (the license in her hands,) by the most engaging pleas and arguments.

LETTER XL. Lovelace to Belford.—Begs he will wait on the lady, and induce her to write but four words to him, signifying the church and the day. Is now resolved on wedlock. Curses his plots and contrivances; which all end, he says, in one grand plot upon himself.

LETTER XLI. Belford to Lovelace. In answer.—Refuses to undertake for him, unless he can be sure of his honour. Why he doubts it.

LETTER XLII. Lovelace. In reply.—Curses him for scrupulousness. Is in earnest to marry. After one more letter of entreaty to her, if she keep sullen silence, she must take the consequence.

LETTER XLIII. Lovelace to Clarissa.—Once more earnestly entreats her to meet him at the altar. Not to be forbidden coming, he will take for leave to come.

LETTER XLIV. Lovelace to Patrick M'Donald.—Ordering him to visit the lady, and instructing him what to say, and how to behave to her.

LETTER XLV. To the same, as Captain Tomlinson.—Calculated to be shown to the lady, as in confidence.

LETTER XLVI. M'Donald to Lovelace.—Goes to attend the lady according to direction. Finds the house in an uproar; and the lady escaped.

LETTER XLVII. Mowbray to Lovelace.—With the same news.

LETTER XLVIII. Belford to Lovelace.—Ample particulars of the lady's escape. Makes serious reflections on the distress she must be in; and on his (Lovelace's) ungrateful usage of her. What he takes the sum of

religion.

LETTER XLIX. Lovelace to Belford.—Runs into affected levity and ridicule, yet at last owns all his gayety but counterfeit. Regrets his baseness to the lady. Inveighs against the women for their instigations. Will still marry her, if she can be found out. One misfortune seldom comes alone; Lord M. is recovering. He had bespoken mourning for him.

LETTER L. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—Writes with incoherence, to inquire after her health. Lets her know whither to direct to her. But forgets, in her rambling, her private address. By which means her letter falls into the hands of Miss Howe's mother.

LETTER LI. Mrs. Howe to Clarissa.—Reproaches her for making all her friends unhappy. Forbids her to write any more to her daughter.

LETTER LII. Clarissa's meek reply.

LETTER LIII. Clarissa to Hannah Burton.

LETTER LIV. Hannah Burton. In answer.

LETTER LV. Clarissa to Miss Norton.—Excuses her long silence. Asks her a question, with a view to detect Lovelace. Hints at his ungrateful villany. Self-recrimination.

LETTER LVI. Mrs. Norton to Clarissa.—Answers her question. Inveighs against Lovelace. Hopes she has escaped with her honour. Consoles her by a brief relation of her own case, and from motives truly pious.

LETTER LVII. Clarissa to Lady Betty Lawrance.—Requests an answer to three questions, with a view farther to detect Lovelace.

LETTER LVIII. Lady Betty to Clarissa.—Answers her questions. In the kindest manner offers to mediate between her nephew and her.

LETTER LIX. LX. Clarissa to Mrs. Hodges, her uncle Harlowe's housekeeper; with a view of still farther detecting Lovelace.—Mrs. Hodges's answer.

LETTER LXI. Clarissa to Lady Betty Lawrance.—Acquaints her with her nephew's baseness. Charitably wishes his reformation; but utterly, and from principle, rejects him.

LETTER LXII. Clarissa to Mrs. Norton.—Is comforted by her kind soothing. Wishes she had been her child. Will not allow her to come up to her; why. Some account of the people she is with; and of a worthy woman, Mrs. Lovick, who lodges in the house. Briefly hints to her the vile usage she has received from Lovelace.

LETTER LXIII. Mrs. Norton to Clarissa.—Inveighs against Lovelace. Wishes Miss Howe might be induced to refrain from freedoms that do hurt, and can do no good. Farther piously consoles her.

LETTER LXIV. Clarissa to Mrs. Norton.—A new trouble. An angry letter from Miss Howe. The occasion. Her heart is broken. Shall be uneasy, till she can get her father's curse revoked. Casts about to whom she can apply for this purpose. At last resolves to write to her sister to beg her mediation.

LETTER LXV. Miss Howe to Clarissa.—Her angry and reproachful letter above-mentioned; demands from her the clearing up of her conduct.

LETTER LXVI. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—Gently remonstrates upon her severity. To this hour knows not all the methods taken to deceive and ruin her. But will briefly, yet circumstantially, enter into the darker part of her sad story, though her heart sinks under the thoughts of a recollection so painful.

LETTER LXVII. LXVIII. LXIX. LXX. From the same.—She gives the promised particulars of her story. Begg that the blackest parts of it may be kept secret; and why. Desires one friendly tear, and no more, may be dropt from her gentle eye, on the happy day that shall shut up all her sorrows.

LETTER LXXI. LXXII. Miss Howe to Clarissa.—Execrates the abandoned profligate. She must, she tells her, look to the world beyond this for her reward. Unravels some of Lovelace's plots; and detects his forgeries. Is apprehensive for her own as well as Clarissa's safety. Advises her to pursue a legal vengeance. Laudable custom in the Isle of Man. Offers personally to attend her in a court of justice.

LETTER LXXIII. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—Cannot consent to a prosecution. Discovers who it was that personated her at Hampstead. She is quite sick of life, and of an earth in which innocent and benevolent spirits are sure to be considered as aliens.

THE HISTORY OF CLARISSA HARLOWE

VOLUME SIX

LETTER I

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

Sat. Midnight.

No rest, says a text that I once heard preached upon, to the wicked—and I cannot close my eyes (yet only wanted to compound for half an hour in an elbow-chair)—so must scribble on.

I parted with the Captain after another strong debate with him in relation to what is to be the fate of this lady. As the fellow has an excellent head, and would have made an eminent figure in any station of life, had not his early days been tainted with a deep crime, and he detected in it; and as he had the right side of the argument; I had a good deal of difficulty with him; and at last brought myself to promise, that if I could prevail upon her generously to forgive me, and to reinstate me in her favour, I would make it my whole endeavour to get off of my contrivances, as happily as I could; (only that Lady Betty and Charlotte must come;) and then substituting him for her uncle's proxy, take shame to myself, and marry.

But if I should, Jack, (with the strongest antipathy to the state that ever man had,) what a figure shall I make in rakish annals? And can I have taken all this pains for nothing? Or for a wife only, that, however excellent, [and any woman, do I think I could make good, because I could make any woman fear as well as love me,] might have been obtained without the plague I have been at, and much more reputably than with it? And hast thou not seen, that this haughty woman [forgive me that I call her haughty! and a woman! Yet is she not haughty?] knows not how to forgive with graciousness? Indeed has not at all forgiven me? But holds my soul in a suspense which has been so grievous to her own.

At this silent moment, I think, that if I were to pursue my former scheme, and resolve to try whether I cannot make a greater fault serve as a sponge to wipe out the less; and then be forgiven for that; I can justify myself to myself; and that, as the fair invincible would say, is all in all.

As it is my intention, in all my reflections, to avoid repeating, at least dwelling upon, what I have before written to thee, though the state of the case may not have varied; so I would have thee to re-consider the old reasonings (particularly those contained in my answer to thy last* expostulatory nonsense); and add the new as they fall from my pen; and then I shall think myself invincible;—at least, as arguing rake to rake.

* See Vol. V. Letter XIV.

I take the gaining of this lady to be essential to my happiness: and is it not natural for all men to aim at obtaining whatever they think will make them happy, be the object more or less considerable in the eyes of others?

As to the manner of endeavouring to obtain her, by falsification of oaths, vows, and the like—do not the poets of two thousand years and upwards tell us, that Jupiter laughs at the perjuries of lovers? And let me add, to what I have heretofore mentioned on that head, a question or two.

Do not the mothers, the aunts, the grandmothers, the governesses of the pretty innocents, always, from their very cradles to riper years, preach to them the deceitfulness of men?—That they are not to regard their oaths, vows, promises?—What a parcel of fibbers would all these reverend matrons be, if there were not now and then a pretty credulous rogue taken in for a justification of their preachments, and to serve as a beacon lighted up for the benefit of the rest?

Do we not then see, that an honest prowling fellow is a necessary evil on many accounts? Do we not see that it is highly requisite that a sweet girl should be now-and-then drawn aside by him?—And the more eminent the girl, in the graces of person, mind, and fortune, is not the example likely to be the more efficacious?

If these postulata be granted me, who, I pray, can equal my charmer in all these? Who therefore so fit for an example to the rest of her sex?—At worst, I am entirely within my worthy friend Mandeville's assertion, that private vices are public benefits.

Well, then, if this sweet creature must fall, as it is called, for the benefit of all the pretty fools of the sex, she must; and there's an end of the matter. And what would there have been in it of uncommon or rare, had I not been so long about it?—And so I dismiss all further

argumentation and debate upon the question: and I impose upon thee, when thou writest to me, an eternal silence on this head.

Wafer'd on, as an after-written introduction to the paragraphs which follow, marked with turned commas, [thus, "]:

Lord, Jack, what shall I do now! How one evil brings on another! Dreadful news to tell thee! While I was meditating a simple robbery, here have I (in my own defence indeed) been guilty of murder!—A bl—y murder! So I believe it will prove. At her last gasp!—Poor impertinent opposer!—Eternally resisting!—Eternally contradicting! There she lies weltering in her blood! her death's wound have I given her!—But she was a thief, an impostor, as well as a tormentor. She had stolen my pen. While I was sullenly meditating, doubting, as to my future measures, she stole it; and thus she wrote with it in a hand exactly like my own; and would have faced me down, that it was really my own hand-writing.

"But let me reflect before it is too late. On the manifold perfections of this ever-amiable creature let me reflect. The hand yet is only held up. The blow is not struck. Miss Howe's next letter may blow thee up. In policy thou shouldst be now at least honest. Thou canst not live without her. Thou wouldest rather marry her than lose her absolutely. Thou mayest undoubtedly prevail upon her, inflexible as she seems to be, for marriage. But if now she finds thee a villain, thou mayest never more engage her attention, and she perhaps will refuse and abhor thee.

"Yet already have I not gone too far? Like a repentant thief, afraid of his gang, and obliged to go on, in fear of hanging till he comes to be hanged, I am afraid of the gang of my cursed contrivances.

"As I hope to live, I am sorry, (at the present writing,) that I have been such a foolish plotter, as to put it, as I fear I have done, out of my own power to be honest. I hate compulsion in all forms; and cannot bear, even to be compelled to be the wretch my choice has made me! So now, Belford, as thou hast said, I am a machine at last, and no free agent.

"Upon my soul, Jack, it is a very foolish thing for a man of spirit to have brought himself to such a height of iniquity, that he must proceed, and cannot help himself, and yet to be next to certain, that this very victory will undo him.

"Why was such a woman as this thrown into my way, whose very fall will be her glory, and, perhaps, not only my shame but my destruction?

"What a happiness must that man know, who moves regularly to some laudable end, and has nothing to reproach himself with in his progress to do it! When, by honest means, he attains his end, how great and unmixed must be his enjoyments! What a happy man, in this particular case, had I been, had it been given me to be only what I wished to appear to be!"

Thus far had my conscience written with my pen; and see what a recreant she had made of me!—I seized her by the throat—There!—There, said I, thou vile impertinent!—take that, and that!—How often have I gave thee warning!—and now, I hope, thou intruding varletess, have I done thy business!

Puling and low-voiced, rearing up thy detested head, in vain implorest thou my mercy, who, in thy day hast showed me so little!—Take that, for a rising blow!—And now will thy pain, and my pain for thee, soon be over. Lie there!—Welter on!—Had I not given thee thy death's wound, thou wouldest have robbed me of all my joys. Thou couldest not have mended me, 'tis plain. Thou couldest only have thrown me into despair. Didst thou not see, that I had gone too far to recede?—Welter on, once more I bid thee!—Gasp on!—That thy last gasp, surely!—How hard diest thou!

ADIEU!—Unhappy man! ADIEU!

'Tis kind in thee, however, to bid me, Adieu!

Adieu, Adieu, Adieu, to thee, O thou inflexible, and, till now, unconquerable bosom intruder!—Adieu to thee for ever!

LETTER II

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

SUNDAY MORN. (JUNE 11). FOUR O'CLOCK.

A few words to the verbal information thou sentest me last night concerning thy poor old man; and then I rise from my seat, shake myself, refresh, new-dress, and so to my charmer, whom, notwithstanding her reserves, I hope to prevail upon to walk out with me on the Heath this warm and fine morning.

The birds must have awakened her before now. They are in full song. She always gloried in accustoming herself to behold the sun rise—one of God's natural wonders, as once she called it.

Her window salutes the east. The valleys must be gilded by his rays, by the time I am with her; for already have they made the up-lands smile, and the face of nature cheerful.

How unsuitable will thou find this gay preface to a subject so gloomy as that I am now turning to!

I am glad to hear thy tedious expectations are at last answered.

Thy servant tells me that thou are plaguily grieved at the old fellow's departure.

I can't say, but thou mayest look as if thou wert; harassed as thou hast been for a number of days and nights with a close attendance upon a dying man, beholding his drawing-on hour—pretending, for decency's sake, to whine over his excruciating pangs; to be in the way to answer a thousand impertinent inquiries after the health of a man thou wishedest to die—to pray by him—for so once thou wrotest to me!—To read by him—to be forced to join in consultation with a crew of solemn and parading doctors, and their officious zanies, the apothecaries, joined with the butcherly tribe of scarificators; all combined to carry on the physical farce, and to cut out thongs both from his flesh and his estate—to have the superadded apprehension of dividing thy interest in what he shall leave with a crew of eager-hoping, never-to-be-satisfied relations, legatees, and the devil knows who, of private gratifiers of passions laudable and illaudable—in these circumstances, I wonder not that thou lookest before servants, (as little grieved as thou after heirship,) as if thou indeed wert grieved; and as if the most wry-fac'd woe had befallen thee.

Then, as I have often thought, the reflection that must naturally arise from such mortifying objects, as the death of one with whom we have been familiar, must afford, when we are obliged to attend it in its slow approaches, and in its face-twisting pangs, that it will one day be our own case, goes a great way to credit the appearance of grief.

And that it is this, seriously reflected upon, may temporally give a fine air of sincerity to the wailings of lively widows, heart-exulting heirs, and residuary legatees of all denominations; since, by keeping down the inward joy, those interesting reflections must sadden the aspect, and add an appearance of real concern to the assumed sables.

Well, but, now thou art come to the reward of all thy watchings, anxieties, and close attendances, tell me what it is; tell me if it compensate thy trouble, and answer thy hope?

As to myself, thou seest, by the gravity of my style, how the subject has helped to mortify me. But the necessity I am under of committing either speedy matrimony, or a rape, has saddened over my gayer prospects, and, more than the case itself, contributed to make me sympathize with the present joyful-sorrow.

Adieu, Jack, I must be soon out of my pain; and my Clarissa shall be soon out of her's—for so does the arduousness of the case require.

LETTER III

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

SUNDAY MORNING.

I have had the honour of my charmer's company for two complete hours. We met before six in Mrs. Moore's garden. A walk on the Heath refused me.

The sedateness of her aspect and her kind compliance in this meeting gave me hopes. And all that either the Captain and I had urged yesterday to obtain a full and free pardon, that re-urged I; and I told her, besides, that Captain Tomlinson was gone down with hopes to prevail upon her uncle Harlowe to come up in person, in order to present to me the greatest blessing that man ever received.

But the utmost I could obtain was, that she would take no resolution in my favour till she received Miss Howe's next letter.

I will not repeat the arguments I used; but I will give thee the substance of what she said in answer to them.

She had considered of every thing, she told me. My whole conduct was before her. The house I carried her to must be a vile house. The people early showed what they were capable of, in the earnest attempt made to fasten Miss Partington upon her; as she doubted not, with my approbation. [Surely, thought I, she has not received a duplicate of Miss Howe's letter of detection!] They heard her cries. My insult was undoubtedly premeditated. By my whole recollected behaviour to her, previous to it, it must be so. I had the vilest of views, no question. And my treatment of her put it out of all doubt.

Soul over all, Belford! She seems sensible of liberties that my passion made me insensible of having taken, or she could not so deeply resent.

She besought me to give over all thoughts of her. Sometimes, she said, she thought herself cruelly treated by her nearest and dearest relations; at such times, a spirit of repining and even of resentment took place; and the reconciliation, at other times so desirable, was not then so much the favourite wish of her heart, as was the scheme she had formerly planned—of taking her good Norton for her directress and guide, and living upon her own estate in the manner her grandfather had intended she should live.

This scheme she doubted not that her cousin Morden, who was one of her trustees for that estate, would enable her, (and that, as she hoped, without litigation,) to pursue. And if he can, and does, what, Sir, let me ask you, said she, have I seen in your conduct, that should make me prefer to it an union of interest, where there is such a disunion in minds?

So thou seest, Jack, there is reason, as well as resentment, in the preference she makes against me!—Thou seest, that she presumes to think that she can be happy without me; and that she must be unhappy with me!

I had besought her, in the conclusion of my re-urged arguments, to write to Miss Howe before Miss Howe's answer could come, in order to lay before her the present state of things; and if she would pay a deference to her judgment, to let her have an opportunity to give it, on the full knowledge of the case—

So I would, Mr. Lovelace, was the answer, if I were in doubt myself, which I would prefer—marriage, or the scheme I have mentioned. You cannot think, Sir, but the latter must be my choice. I wish to part with you with temper—don't put me upon repeating—

Part with me, Madam! interrupted I—I cannot bear those words!—But let me beseech you, however, to write to Miss Howe. I hope, if Miss Howe is not my enemy—

She is not the enemy of your person, Sir;—as you would be convinced, if you saw her last letter* to me. But were she not an enemy to your actions, she would not be my friend, nor the friend of virtue. Why will you provoke from me, Mr. Lovelace, the harshness of expression, which, however, which, however deserved by you, I am unwilling just now to use, having suffered enough in the two past days from my own vehemence?

* The lady innocently means Mr. Lovelace's forged one. See Vol. V. Letter XXX.

I bit my lip for vexation. And was silent.

Miss Howe, proceeded she, knows the full state of matters already, Sir. The answer I expect from her respects myself, not you. Her heart is too

warm in the cause of friendship, to leave me in suspense one moment longer than is necessary as to what I want to know. Nor does her answer absolutely depend upon herself. She must see a person first, and that person perhaps see others.

The cursed smuggler-woman, Jack!—Miss Howe's Townsend, I doubt not—Plot, contrivance, intrigue, stratagem!—Underground-moles these women—but let the earth cover me!—let me be a mole too, thought I, if they carry their point!—and if this lady escape me now!

She frankly owned that she had once thought of embarking out of all our ways for some one of our American colonies. But now that she had been compelled to see me, (which had been her greatest dread), and which she might be happiest in the resumption of her former favourite scheme, if Miss Howe could find her a reputable and private asylum, till her cousin Morden could come.—But if he came not soon, and if she had a difficulty to get to a place of refuge, whether from her brother or from any body else, [meaning me, I suppose,] she might yet perhaps go abroad; for, to say the truth, she could not think of returning to her father's house, since her brother's rage, her sister's upbraidings, her father's anger, her mother's still-more-affecting sorrowings, and her own consciousness under them all, would be unsupportable to her.

O Jack! I am sick to death, I pine, I die, for Miss Howe's next letter! I would bind, gag, strip, rob, and do any thing but murder, to intercept it.

But, determined as she seems to be, it was evident to me, nevertheless, that she had still some tenderness for me.

She often wept as she talked, and much oftener sighed. She looked at me twice with an eye of undoubted gentleness, and three times with an eye tending to compassion and softness; but its benign rays were as often snatched back, as I may say, and her face averted, as if her sweet eyes were not to be trusted, and could not stand against my eager eyes; seeking, as they did, for a lost heart in her's, and endeavouring to penetrate to her very soul.

More than once I took her hand. She struggled not much against the freedom. I pressed it once with my lips—she was not very angry. A frown indeed—but a frown that had more distress in it than indignation.

How came the dear soul, (clothed as it is with such a silken vesture,) by all its steadiness?* Was it necessary that the active gloom of such a tyrant of a father, should commix with such a passive sweetness of a will-less mother, to produce a constancy, an equanimity, a steadiness, in the daughter, which never woman before could boast of? If so, she is more obliged to that despotic father than I could have imagined a creature to be, who gave distinction to every one related to her beyond what the crown itself can confer.

* See Vol. I. Letters IX. XIV. and XIX. for what she herself says on that steadiness which Mr. Lovelace, though a deserved sufferer by it, cannot help admiring.

I hoped, I said, that she would admit of the intended visit, which I had so often mentioned, of the two ladies.

She was here. She had seen me. She could not help herself at present. She even had the highest regard for the ladies of my family, because of their worthy characters. There she turned away her sweet face, and vanquished an half-risen sigh.

I kneeled to her then. It was upon a verdant cushion; for we were upon the grass walk. I caught her hand. I besought her with an earnestness that called up, as I could feel, my heart to my eyes, to make me, by her forgiveness and example, more worthy of them, and of her own kind and generous wishes. By my soul, Madam, said I, you stab me with your goodness—your undeserved goodness! and I cannot bear it!

Why, why, thought I, as I did several times in this conversation, will she not generously forgive me? Why will she make it necessary for me to bring Lady Betty and my cousin to my assistance? Can the fortress expect the same advantageous capitulation, which yields not to the summons of a resistless conqueror, as if it gave not the trouble of bringing up and raising its heavy artillery against it?

What sensibilities, said the divine creature, withdrawing her hand, must thou have suppressed! What a dreadful, what a judicial hardness of heart must thine be! who canst be capable of such emotions, as sometimes thou hast shown; and of such sentiments, as sometimes have flowed from thy lips; yet canst have so far overcome them all as to be able to act as thou hast acted, and that from settled purpose and premeditation; and this, as it is said, throughout the whole of thy life, from infancy to this time!

I told her, that I had hoped, from the generous concern she had

expressed for me, when I was so suddenly and dangerously taken ill—[the ipecacuanha experiment, Jack!]

She interrupted me—Well have you rewarded me for the concern you speak of!—However, I will frankly own, now that I am determined to think no more of you, that you might, (unsatisfied as I nevertheless was with you,) have made an interest—

She paused. I besought her to proceed.

Do you suppose, Sir, and turned away her sweet face as we walked,—Do you suppose that I had not thought of laying down a plan to govern myself by, when I found myself so unhappily over-reached and cheated, as I may say, out of myself—When I found, that I could not be, and do, what I wished to be, and to do, do you imagine that I had not cast about, what was the next proper course to take?—And do you believe that this next course has not caused me some pain to be obliged to—

There again she stopt.

But let us break off discourse, resumed she. The subject grows too—She sighed—Let us break off discourse—I will go in—I will prepare for church—[The devil! thought I.] Well, as I can appear in those every-day-worn clothes—looking upon herself—I will go to church.

She then turned from me to go into the house.

Bless me, my beloved creature, bless me with the continuance of this affecting conversation.—Remorse has seized my heart!—I have been excessively wrong—give me farther cause to curse my heedless folly, by the continuance of this calm but soul-penetrating conversation.

No, no, Mr. Lovelace: I have said too much. Impatience begins to break in upon me. If you can excuse me to the ladies, it will be better for my mind's sake, and for your credit's sake, that I do not see them. Call me to them over-nice, petulant, prudish—what you please call me to them. Nobody but Miss Howe, to whom, next to the Almighty, and my own mother, I wish to stand acquitted of wilful error, shall know the whole of what has passed. Be happy, as you may!—Deserve to be happy, and happy you will be, in your own reflection at least, were you to be ever so unhappy in other respects. For myself, if I ever shall be enabled, on due reflection, to look back upon my own conduct, without the great reproach of having wilfully, and against the light of my own judgment, erred, I shall be more happy than if I had all that the world accounts desirable.

The noble creature proceeded; for I could not speak.

This self-acquittal, when spirits are lent me to dispel the darkness which at present too often over-clouds my mind, will, I hope, make me superior to all the calamities that can befall me.

Her whole person was informed by her sentiments. She seemed to be taller than before. How the God within her exalted her, not only above me, but above herself!

Divine creature! (as I thought her,) I called her. I acknowledged the superiority of her mind; and was proceeding—but she interrupted me—All human excellence, said she, is comparative only. My mind, I believe, is indeed superior to your's, debased as your's is by evil habits: but I had not known it to be so, if you had not taken pains to convince me of the inferiority of your's.

How great, how sublimely great, this creature!—By my soul I cannot forgive her for her virtues! There is no bearing the consciousness of the infinite inferiority she charged me with.—But why will she break from me, when good resolutions are taking place? The red-hot iron she refuses to strike—O why will she suffer the yielding wax to harden?

We had gone but a few paces towards the house, when we were met by the impertinent women, with notice, that breakfast was ready. I could only, with uplifted hands, beseech her to give me hope of a renewed conversation after breakfast.

No—she would go to church.

And into the house she went, and up stairs directly. Nor would she oblige me with her company at the tea-table.

I offered, by Mrs. Moore, to quit both the table and the parlour, rather than she should exclude herself, or deprive the two widows of the favour of her company.

That was not all the matter, she told Mrs. Moore. She had been struggling to keep down her temper. It had cost her some pains to do it. She was desirous to compose herself, in hopes to receive benefit by the divine worship she was going to join in.

Mrs. Moore hoped for her presence at dinner.

She had rather be excused. Yet, if she could obtain the frame of mind she hoped for, she might not be averse to show, that she had got above those sensibilities, which gave consideration to a man who deserved not to be to her what he had been.

This said, no doubt, to let Mrs. Moore know, that the garden-conversation had not been a reconciling one.

Mrs. Moore seemed to wonder that we were not upon a better foot of understanding, after so long a conference; and the more, as she believed that the lady had given in to the proposal for the repetition of the ceremony, which I had told them was insisted upon by her uncle Harlowe.—But I accounted for this, by telling both widows that she was resolved to keep on the reserve till she heard from Captain Tomlinson, whether her uncle would be present in person at the solemnity, or would name that worthy gentleman for his proxy.

Again I enjoined strict secrecy, as to this particular; which was promised by the widows, as well as for themselves, as for Miss Rawlins; of whose taciturnity they gave me such an account, as showed me, that she was secret-keeper-general to all the women of fashion at Hampstead.

The Lord, Jack! What a world of mischief, at this rate, must Miss Rawlins know!—What a Pandora's box must her bosom be!—Yet, had I nothing that was more worthy of my attention to regard, I would engage to open it, and make my uses of the discovery.

And now, Belford, thou perceivest, that all my reliance is upon the mediation of Lady Betty and Miss Montague, and upon the hope of intercepting Miss Howe's next letter.

LETTER IV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

This fair inexorable is actually gone to church with Mrs. Moore and Mrs. Bevis; but Will. closely attends her motions; and I am in the way to receive any occasional intelligence from him.

She did not choose, [a mighty word with the sex! as if they were always to have their own wills!] that I should wait upon her. I did not much press it, that she might not apprehend that I thought I had reason to doubt her voluntary return.

I once had it in my head to have found the widow Bevis other employment. And I believe she would have been as well pleased with my company as to go to church; for she seemed irresolute when I told her that two out of a family were enough to go to church for one day. But having her things on, (as the women call every thing,) and her aunt Moore expecting her company, she thought it best to go—lest it should look oddly, you know, whispered she, to one who was above regarding how it looked.

So here am I in my dining-room; and have nothing to do but to write till they return.

And what will be my subject thinkest thou? Why, the old beaten one to be sure; self-debate—through temporary remorse: for the blow being not struck, her guardian angel is redoubling his efforts to save her.

If it be not that, [and yet what power should her guardian angel have over me?] I don't know what it is that gives a check to my revenge, whenever I meditate treason against so sovereign a virtue. Conscience is dead and gone, as I told thee; so it cannot be that. A young conscience growing up, like the phoenix, from the ashes of the old one, it cannot be, surely. But if it were, it would be hard, if I could not overlay a young conscience.

Well, then, it must be LOVE, I fancy. LOVE itself, inspiring love of an object so adorable—some little attention possibly paid likewise to thy whining arguments in her favour.

Let LOVE then be allowed to be the moving principle; and the rather, as LOVE naturally makes the lover loth to disoblige the object of its flame; and knowing, that to an offence of the meditated kind will be a mortal offence to her, cannot bear that I should think of giving it.

Let LOVE and me talk together a little on this subject—be it a young conscience, or love, or thyself, Jack, thou seest that I am for giving every whiffler audience. But this must be the last debate on this subject; for is not her fate in a manner at its crisis? And must not my next step be an irretrievable one, tend it which way it will?

And now the debate is over.

A thousand charming things, (for LOVE is gentler than CONSCIENCE,) has this little urchin suggested in her favour. He pretended to know both our hearts: and he would have it, that though my love was a prodigious strong and potent love; and though it has the merit of many months, faithful service to plead, and has had infinite difficulties to struggle with; yet that it is not THE RIGHT SORT OF LOVE.

Right sort of love!—A puppy!—But, with due regard to your deityship, said I, what merits has she with YOU, that you should be of her party? Is her's, I pray you, a right sort of love? Is it love at all? She don't pretend that it is. She owns not your sovereignty. What a d—l moves you, to plead thus earnestly for a rebel, who despises your power?

And then he came with his If's and And's—and it would have been, and still, as he believed, would be, love, and a love of the exalted kind, if I would encourage it by the right sort of love he talked of: and, in justification of his opinion, pleaded her own confessions, as well those of yesterday, as of this morning: and even went so far back as to my ipecacuanha illness.

I never talked so familiarly with his godship before: thou mayest think, therefore, that his dialect sounded oddly in my ears. And then he told me, how often I had thrown cold water upon the most charming flame that ever warmed a lady's bosom, while but young and rising.

I required a definition of this right sort of love, he tried at it: but made a sorry hand of it: nor could I, for the soul of me, be convinced, that what

he meant to extol was LOVE.

Upon the whole, we had a noble controversy upon this subject, in which he insisted upon the unprecedented merit of the lady. Nevertheless I got the better of him; for he was struck absolutely dumb, when (waving her present perverseness, which yet was a sufficient answer to all his pleas) I asserted, and offered to prove it, by a thousand instances impromptu, that love was not governed by merit, nor could be under the dominion of prudence, or any other reasoning power: and if the lady were capable of love, it was of such a sort as he had nothing to do with, and which never before reigned in a female heart.

I asked him, what he thought of her flight from me, at a time when I was more than half overcome by the right sort of love he talked of?—And then I showed him the letter she wrote, and left behind her for me, with an intention, no doubt, absolutely to break my heart, or to provoke me to hang, drown, or shoot myself; to say nothing of a multitude of declarations from her, defying his power, and imputing all that looked like love in her behaviour to me, to the persecution and rejection of her friends; which made her think of me but as a last resort.

LOVE then gave her up. The letter, he said, deserved neither pardon nor excuse. He did not think he had been pleading for such a declared rebel. And as to the rest, he should be a betrayer of the rights of his own sovereignty, if what I had alleged were true, and he were still to plead for her.

I swore to the truth of all. And truly I swore: which perhaps I do not always do.

And now what thinkest thou must become of the lady, whom LOVE itself gives up, and CONSCIENCE cannot plead for?

LETTER V

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

O Belford! what a hair's-breadth escape have I had!—Such a one, that I tremble between terror and joy, at the thought of what might have happened, and did not.

What a perverse girl is this, to contend with her fate; yet has reason to think, that her very stars fight against her! I am the luckiest of me!—But my breath almost fails me, when I reflect upon what a slender thread my destiny hung.

But not to keep thee in suspense; I have, within this half-hour, obtained possession of the expected letter from Miss Howe—and by such an accident! But here, with the former, I dispatch this; thy messenger waiting.

LETTER VI

MR. LOVELACE [IN CONTINUATION.]

Thus it was—My charmer accompanied Mrs. Moore again to church this afternoon. I had been in very earnest, in the first place, to obtain her company at dinner: but in vain. According to what she had said to Mrs. Moore,* I was too considerable to her to be allowed that favour. In the next place, I besought her to favour me, after dinner, with another garden-walk. But she would again go to church. And what reason have I to rejoice that she did!

* See Letter III. of this volume.

My worthy friend, Mrs. Bevis, thought one sermon a day, well observed, enough; so staid at home to bear me company.

The lady and Mrs. Moore had not been gone a quarter of an hour, when a young country-fellow on horseback came to the door, and inquired for Mrs. Harriot Lucas. The widow and I (undetermined how we were to entertain each other) were in the parlour next the door; and hearing the fellow's inquiry, O my dear Mrs. Bevis, said I, I am undone, undone for ever, if you don't help me out!—Since here, in all probability, is a messenger from that implacable Miss Howe with a letter; which, if delivered to Mrs. Lovelace, may undo all we have been doing.

What, said she, would you have me do?

Call the maid in this moment, that I may give her her lesson; and if it be as I imagined, I'll tell you what you shall do.

Wid. Margaret!—Margaret! come in this minute.

Lovel. What answer, Mrs. Margaret, did you give the man, upon his asking for Mrs. Harriot Lucas?

Peggy. I only asked, What was his business, and who he came from? (for, Sir, your honour's servant had told me how things stood): and I came at your call, Madam, before he answered me.

Lovel. Well, child, if ever you wish to be happy in wedlock yourself, and would have people disappointed who want to make mischief between you and your husband, get out of him his message, or letter if he has one, and bring it to me, and say nothing to Mrs. Lovelace, when she comes in; and here is a guinea for you.

Peggy. I will do all I can to serve your honour's worship for nothing: [nevertheless, with a ready hand, taking the guinea:] for Mr. William tells me what a good gentleman you be.

Away went Peggy to the fellow at the door.

Peggy. What is your business, friend, with Mrs. Harry Lucas?

Fellow. I must speak to her her own self.

Lovel. My dearest widow, do you personate Mrs. Lovelace—for Heaven's sake do you personate Mrs. Lovelace.

Wid. I personate Mrs. Lovelace, Sir! How can I do that?—She is fair; I am brown. She is slender: I am plump—

Lovel. No matter, no matter—The fellow may be a new-come servant: he is not in livery, I see. He may not know her person. You can but be bloated and in a dropsy.

Wid. Dropsical people look not so fresh and ruddy as I do.

Lovel. True—but the clown may not know that. 'Tis but for a present deception. Peggy, Peggy, call'd I, in a female tone, softly at the door. Madam, answer'd Peggy; and came up to me to the parlour-door.

Lovel. Tell him the lady is ill; and has lain down upon the couch. And get his business from him, whatever you do.

Away went Peggy.

Lovel. Now, my dear widow, lie along the settee, and put your handkerchief over your face, that, if he will speak to you himself, he may not see your eyes and your hair.—So—that's right.—I'll step into the closet by you.

I did so.

Peggy. [Returning.] He won't deliver his business to me. He will speak to Mrs. Harriot Lucas her own self.

Lovel. [Holding the door in my hand.] Tell him that this is Mrs. Harriot Lucas; and let him come in. Whisper him (if he doubts) that she is bloated, dropsical, and not the woman she was.

Away went Margery.

Lovel. And now, my dear widow, let me see what a charming Mrs. Lovelace you'll make!—Ask if he comes from Miss Howe. Ask if he lives

with her. Ask how she does. Call her, at every word, your dear Miss Howe. Offer him money—take this half-guinea for him—complain of your head, to have a pretence to hold it down; and cover your forehead and eyes with your hand, where your handkerchief hides not your face.—That's right—and dismiss the rascal—[here he comes]—as soon as you can.

In came the fellow, bowing and scraping, his hat poked out before him with both his hands.

Fellow. I am sorry, Madam, an't please you, to find you ben't well.

Widow. What is your business with me, friend?

Fellow. You are Mrs. Harriot Lucas, I suppose, Madam?

Widow. Yes. Do you come from Miss Howe?

Fellow. I do, Madam.

Widow. Dost thou know my right name, friend?

Fellow. I can give a shrewd guess. But that is none of my business.

Widow. What is thy business? I hope Miss Howe is well?

Fellow. Yes, Madam; pure well, I thank God. I wish you were so too.

Widow. I am too full of grief to be well.

Fellow. So belike I have hard to say.

Widow. My head aches so dreadfully, I cannot hold it up. I must beg of you to let me know your business.

Fellow. Nay, and that be all, my business is soon known. It is but to give this letter into your own partiklar hands—here it is.

Widow. [Taking it.] From my dear friend Miss Howe?—Ah, my head!

Fellow. Yes, Madam: but I am sorry you are so bad.

Widow. Do you live with Miss Howe?

Fellow. No, Madam: I am one of her tenants' sons. Her lady-mother must not know as how I came of this errand. But the letter, I suppose, will tell you all.

Widow. How shall I satisfy you for this kind trouble?

Fellow. No how at all. What I do is for love of Miss Howe. She will satisfy me more than enough. But, may-hap, you can send no answer, you are so ill.

Widow. Was you ordered to wait for an answer?

Fellow. No, I cannot say as that I was. But I was bidden to observe how you looked, and how you was; and if you did write a line or two, to take care of it, and give it only to our young landlady in secret.

Widow. You see I look strangely. Not so well as I used to do.

Fellow. Nay, I don't know that I ever saw you but once before; and that was at a stile, where I met you and my young landlady; but knew better than to stare a gentlewoman in the face; especially at a stile.

Widow. Will you eat, or drink, friend?

Fellow. A cup of small ale, I don't care if I do.

Widow. Margaret, take the young man down, and treat him with what the house affords.

Fellow. Your servant, Madam. But I staid to eat as I come along, just upon the Heath yonder; or else, to say the truth, I had been here sooner. [Thank my stars, thought I, thou didst.] A piece of powdered beef was upon the table, at the sign of the Castle, where I stopt to inquire for this house: and so, thoff I only intended to wet my whistle, I could not help eating. So shall only taste of your ale; for the beef was woundily corned.

Prating dog! Pox on thee! thought I.

He withdrew, bowing and scraping.

Margaret, whispered I, in a female voice [whispering out of the closet, and holding the parlour-door in my hand] get him out of the house as fast as you can, lest they come from church, and catch him here.

Peggy. Never fear, Sir.

The fellow went down, and it seems, drank a large draught of ale; and Margaret finding him very talkative, told him, she begged his pardon, but she had a sweetheart just come from sea, whom she was forced to hide in the pantry; so was sure he would excuse her from staying with him.

Ay, ay, to be sure, the clown said: for if he could not make sport, he would spoil none. But he whispered her, that one 'Squire Lovelace was a damnation rogue, if the truth might be told.

For what? said Margaret. And could have given him, she told the widow (who related to me all this) a good dowse of the chaps.

For kissing all the women he came near.

At the same time, the dog wrapped himself round Margery, and gave her a smack, that, she told Mrs. Bevis afterwards, she might have heard into the parlour.

Such, Jack, is human nature: thus does it operate in all degrees; and so does the clown, as well as his practises! Yet this sly dog knew not but the wench had a sweetheart locked up in the pantry! If the truth were known, some of the ruddy-faced dairy wenches might perhaps call him a damnation rogue, as justly as their betters of the same sex might 'Squire Lovelace.

The fellow told the maid, that, by what he discovered of the young lady's face, it looked very rosy to what he took it to be; and he thought her a good deal fatter, as she lay, and not so tall.

All women are born to intrigue, Jack; and practise it more or less, as fathers, guardians, governesses, from dear experience, can tell; and in love affairs are naturally expert, and quicker in their wits by half than men. This ready, though raw wench, gave an instance of this, and improved on the dropsical hint I had given her. The lady's seeming plumpness was owing to a dropsical disorder, and to the round posture she lay in—very likely, truly. Her appearing to him to be shorter, he might have observed, was owing to her drawing her feet up from pain, and because the couch was too short, she supposed—Adso, he did not think of that. Her rosy colour was owing to her grief and head-ache.—Ay, that might very well be—but he was highly pleased that he had given the letter into Mrs. Harriot's own hand, as he should tell Miss Howe.

He desired once more to see the lady at his going away, and would not be denied. The widow therefore sat up, with her handkerchief over her face, leaning her head against the wainscot.

He asked if she had any partiklar message?

No: she was so ill she could not write; which was a great grief to her.

Should he call the next day? for he was going to London, now he was so near; and should stay at a cousin's that night, who lived in a street called Fetter-Lane.

No: she would write as soon as able, and send by the post.

Well, then, if she had nothing to send by him, mayhap he might stay in town a day or two; for he had never seen the lions in the Tower, nor Bedlam, nor the tombs; and he would make a holiday or two, as he had leave to do, if she had no business or message that required his posting down next day.

She had not.

She offered him the half-guinea I had given her for him; but he refused it with great professions of disinterestedness, and love, as he called it, to Miss Howe; to serve whom, he would ride to the world's-end, or even to Jericho.

And so the shocking rascal went away: and glad at my heart was I when he was gone; for I feared nothing so much as that he would have staid till they came from church.

Thus, Jack, got I my heart's ease, the letter of Miss Howe; and through such a train of accidents, as makes me say, that the lady's stars fight against her. But yet I must attribute a good deal to my own precaution, in having taken right measures. For had I not secured the widow by my stories, and the maid by my servant, all would have signified nothing. And so heartily were they secured, the one by a single guinea, the other by half a dozen warm kisses, and the aversion they both had to such wicked creatures as delighted in making mischief between man and wife, that they promised, that neither Mrs. Moore, Miss Rawlins, Mrs. Lovelace, nor any body living, should know any thing of the matter.

The widow rejoiced that I had got the mischief-maker's letter. I excused myself to her, and instantly withdrew with it; and, after I had read it, fell to my short-hand, to acquaint thee with my good luck: and they not returning so soon as church was done, (stepping, as it proved, into Miss Rawlins's, and tarrying there awhile, to bring that busy girl with them to drink tea,) I wrote thus far to thee, that thou mightest, when thou camest to this place, rejoice with me upon the occasion.

They are all three just come in.

I hasten to them.

LETTER VII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

I have begun another letter to thee, in continuation of my narrative: but I believe I shall send thee this before I shall finish that. By the enclosed thou wilt see, that neither of the correspondents deserve mercy from me: and I am resolved to make the ending with one the beginning with the other.

If thou sayest that the provocations I have given to one of them will justify her freedoms; I answer, so they will, to any other person but myself. But he that is capable of giving those provocations, and has the power to punish those who abuse him for giving them, will show his resentment; and the more remorselessly, perhaps, as he has deserved the freedoms.

If thou sayest, it is, however, wrong to do so; I reply, that it is nevertheless human nature:—And wouldst thou not have me to be a man, Jack?

Here read the letter, if thou wilt. But thou art not my friend, if thou offerest to plead for either of the saucy creatures, after thou hast read it.

TO MRS. HARRIOT LUCAS,

AT MRS. MOORE'S, AT HAMPSTEAD. JUNE 10.

After the discoveries I had made of the villanous machinations of the most abandoned of men, particularized in my long letter of Wednesday* last, you will believe, my dearest friend, that my surprise upon perusing your's of Thursday evening from Hampstead** was not so great as my indignation. Had the villain attempted to fire a city instead of a house, I should not have wondered at it. All that I am amazed at is, that he (whose boast, as I am told, it is, that no woman shall keep him out of her bed-chamber, when he has made a resolution to be in it) did not discover his foot before. And it is as strange to me, that, having got you at such a shocking advantage, and in such a horrid house, you could, at the time, escape dishonour, and afterwards get from such a set of infernals.

* See Vol. V. Letter XX. ** Ibid. See Letter XXI.

I gave you, in my long letter of Wednesday and Thursday last, reasons why you ought to mistrust that specious Tomlinson. That man, my dear, must be a solemn villain. May lightning from Heaven blast the wretch, who has set him and the rest of his REMORSELESS GANG at work, to endeavour to destroy the most consummate virtue!—Heaven be praised! you have escaped from all their snares, and now are out of danger.—So I will not trouble you at present with the particulars I have further collected relating to this abominable imposture.

For the same reason, I forbear to communicate to you some new stories of the abhorred wretch himself which have come to my ears. One, in particular, of so shocking a nature!—Indeed, my dear, the man's a devil.

The whole story of Mrs. Fretchville, and her house, I have no doubt to pronounce, likewise, an absolute fiction.—Fellow!—How my soul spurns the villain!

Your thought of going abroad, and your reasons for so doing, most sensibly affect me. But be comforted, my dear; I hope you will not be under a necessity of quitting your native country. Were I sure that that must be the cruel case, I would abandon all my better prospects, and soon be with you. And I would accompany you whithersoever you went, and share fortunes with you: for it is impossible that I should be happy, if I knew that you were exposed not only to the perils of the sea, but to the attempts of other vile men; your personal graces attracting every eye; and exposing you to those hourly dangers, which others, less distinguished by the gifts of nature, might avoid.—All that I know that beauty (so greatly coveted, and so greatly admired) is good for.

O my dear, were I ever to marry, and to be the mother of a CLARISSA, [Clarissa must be the name, if promisingly lovely,] how often would my heart ache for the dear creature, as she grew up, when I reflected that a prudence and discretion, unexampled in woman, had not, in you, been a sufficient protection to that beauty, which had drawn after it as many admirers as beholders!—How little should I regret the attacks of that cruel distemper, as it is called, which frequently makes the greatest ravages in the finest faces!

SAT. AFTERNOON.

I have just parted with Mrs. Townsend.* I thought you had once seen her with me; but she says she never had the honour to be personally

known to you. She has a manlike spirit. She knows the world. And her two brothers being in town, she is sure she can engage them in so good a cause, and (if there should be occasion) both their ships' crews, in your service.

* For the account of Mrs. Townsend, &c. see Vol. IV. Letter XLII.

Give your consent, my dear; and the horrid villain shall be repaid with broken bones, at least, for all his vileness!

The misfortune is, Mrs. Townsend cannot be with you till Thursday next, or Wednesday, at soonest: Are you sure you can be safe where you are till then? I think you are too near London; and perhaps you had better be in it. If you remove, let me, the very moment, know whither.

How my heart is torn, to think of the necessity so dear a creature is driven to of hiding herself! Devilish fellow! He must have been sportive and wanton in his inventions—yet that cruel, that savage sportiveness has saved you from the sudden violence to which he has had recourse in the violation of others, of names and families not contemptible. For such the villain always gloried to spread his snares.

The vileness of this specious monster has done more, than any other consideration could do, to bring Mr. Hickman into credit with me. Mr. Hickman alone knows (from me) of your flight, and the reason of it. Had I not given him the reason, he might have thought still worse of the vile attempt. I communicated it to him by showing him your letter from Hampstead. When he had read it, [and he trembled and reddened, as he read,] he threw himself at my feet, and besought me to permit him to attend you, and to give you the protection of his house. The good-natured man had tears in his eyes, and was repeatedly earnest on this subject; proposing to take his chariot-and-four, or a set, and in person, in the face of all the world, give himself the glory of protecting such an oppressed innocent.

I could not but be pleased with him. And I let him know that I was. I hardly expected so much spirit from him. But a man's passiveness to a beloved object of our sex may not, perhaps, argue want of courage on proper occasions.

I thought I ought, in return, to have some consideration for his safety, as such an open step would draw upon him the vengeance of the most villanous enterpriser in the world, who has always a gang of fellows, such as himself, at his call, ready to support one another in the vilest outrages. But yet, as Mr. Hickman might have strengthened his hands by legal recourses, I should not have stood upon it, had I not known your delicacy, [since such a step must have made a great noise, and given occasion for scandal, as if some advantage had been gained over you,] and were there not the greatest probability that all might be more silently, and more effectually, managed, by Mrs. Townsend's means.

Mrs. Townsend will in person attend you—she hopes, on Wednesday—her brothers, and some of their people, will scatteringly, and as if they knew nothing of you, [so we have contrived,] see you safe not only to London, but to her house at Deptford.

She has a kinswoman, who will take your commands there, if she herself be obliged to leave you. And there you may stay, till the wretch's fury, on losing you, and his search, are over.

He will very soon, 'tis likely, enter upon some new villany, which may engross him: and it may be given out, that you are gone to lay claim to the protection of your cousin Morden at Florence.

Possibly, if he can be made to believe it, he will go over, in hopes to find you there.

After a while, I can procure you a lodging in one of our neighbouring villages, where I may have the happiness to be your daily visiter. And if this Hickman be not silly and apish, and if my mother do not do unaccountable things, I may the sooner think of marrying, that I may, without controul, receive and entertain the darling of my heart.

Many, very many, happy days do I hope we shall yet see together; and as this is my hope, I expect that it will be your consolation.

As to your estate, since you are resolved not to litigate for it, we will be patient, either till Colonel Morden arrives, or till shame compels some people to be just.

Upon the whole, I cannot but think your prospects now much happier than they could have been, had you been actually married to such a man as this. I must therefore congratulate you upon your escape, not only from a horrid libertine, but from so vile a husband, as he must have made to any woman; but more especially to a person of your virtue and delicacy.

You hate him, heartily hate him, I hope, my dear—I am sure you do. It would be strange, if so much purity of life and manners were not to abhor what is so repugnant to itself.

In your letter before me, you mention one written to me for a feint.* I have not received any such. Depend upon it, therefore, that he must have it. And if he has, it is a wonder that he did not likewise get my long one of the 7th. Heaven be praised that he did not; and that it came safe to your hands!

* See Vol. V. Letters XXI. and XXII.

I send this by a young fellow, whose father is one of our tenants, with command to deliver it to no other hands but your's. He is to return directly, if you give him any letter. If not, he will proceed to London upon his own pleasures. He is a simple fellow; but very honest. So you may say anything to him. If you write not by him, I desire a line or two, as soon as possible.

My mother knows nothing of his going to you; nor yet of your abandoning the fellow. Forgive me! But he is not entitled to good manners.

I shall long to hear how you and Mrs. Townsend order matters. I wish she could have been with you sooner. But I have lost no time in engaging her, as you will suppose. I refer to her, what I have further to say and advise. So shall conclude with my prayers, that Heaven will direct and protect my dearest creature, and make your future days happy!

ANNA HOWE.

And now, Jack, I will suppose that thou hast read this cursed letter. Allow me to make a few observations upon some of its contents.

It is strange to Miss Howe, that having got her friend at such a shocking advantage, &c. And it is strange to me, too. If ever I have such another opportunity given to me, the cause of both our wonder, I believe, will cease.

So thou seest Tomlinson is further detected.—No such person as Mrs. Fretchville.—May lightning from Heaven—O Lord, O Lord, O Lord!—What a horrid vixen is this!—My gang, my remorseless gang, too, is brought in—and thou wilt plead for these girls again; wilt thou? heaven be praised, she says, that her friend is out of danger—Miss Howe should be sure of that, and that she herself is safe.—But for this termagant, (as I often said,) I must surely have made a better hand of it.—

New stories of me, Jack!—What can they be?—I have not found that my generosity to my Rose-bud ever did me due credit with this pair of friends. Very hard, Belford, that credits cannot be set against debits, and a balance struck in a rake's favour, as well as in that of every common man!—But he, from whom no good is expected, is not allowed the merit of the good he does.

I ought to have been a little more attentive to character than I have been. For, notwithstanding that the measures of right and wrong are said to be so manifest, let me tell thee, that character biases and runs away with all mankind. Let a man or woman once establish themselves in the world's opinion, and all that either of them do will be sanctified. Nay, in the very courts of justice, does not character acquit or condemn as often as facts, and sometimes even in spite of facts?—Yet, [impolitic that I have been and am!] to be so careless of mine!—And now, I doubt, it is irretrievable.—But to leave moralizing.

Thou, Jack, knowest almost all my enterprises worth remembering. Can this particular story, which this girl hints at, be that of Lucy Villars?—Or can she have heard of my intrigue with the pretty gipsy, who met me in Norwood, and of the trap I caught her cruel husband in, [a fellow as gloomy and tyrannical as old Harlowe,] when he pursued a wife, who would not have deserved ill of him, if he had deserved well of her!—But he was not quite drowned. The man is alive at this day, and Miss Howe mentions the story as a very shocking one. Besides, both these are a twelve-month old, or more.

But evil fame and scandal are always new. When the offender has forgot a vile fact, it is often told to one and to another, who, having never heard of it before, trumpet it about as a novelty to others. But well said the honest corregidor at Madrid, [a saying with which I encroached Lord M.'s collection,]—Good actions are remembered but for a day: bad ones for many years after the life of the guilty. Such is the relish that the world has for scandal. In other words, such is the desire which every one has to exculpate himself by blackening his neighbour. You and I, Belford, have been very kind to the world, in furnishing it with opportunities to gratify its devil.

[Miss Howe will abandon her own better prospects, and share fortunes

with her, were she to go abroad.]—Charming romancer!—I must set about this girl, Jack. I have always had hopes of a woman whose passions carry her to such altitudes.—Had I attacked Miss Howe first, her passions, (inflamed and guided as I could have managed them,) would have brought her into my lure in a fortnight.

But thinkest thou, [and yet I think thou dost,] that there is any thing in these high flights among the sex?—Verily, Jack, these vehement friendships are nothing but chaff and stubble, liable to be blown away by the very wind that raises them. Apes, mere apes of us! they think the word friendship has a pretty sound with it; and it is much talked of—a fashionable word. And so, truly, a single woman, who thinks she has a soul, and knows that she wants something, would be thought to have found a fellow-soul for it in her own sex. But I repeat, that the word is a mere word, the thing a mere name with them; a cork-bottomed shuttlecock, which they are fond of striking to and fro, to make one another glow in the frosty weather of a single-state; but which, when a man comes in between the pretended inseparables, is given up, like their music and other maidenly amusements; which, nevertheless, may be necessary to keep the pretty rogues out of active mischief. They then, in short, having caught the fish, lay aside the net.*

* He alludes here to the story of a pope, who, (once a poor fisherman,) through every preferment he rose to, even to that of the cardinalate, hung up in view of all his guests his net, as a token of humility. But, when he arrived at the pontificate, he took it down, saying, that there was no need of the net, when he had caught the fish.

Thou hast a mind, perhaps, to make an exception for these two ladies.—With all my heart. My Clarissa has, if woman has, a soul capable of friendship. Her flame is bright and steady. But Miss Howe's, were it not kept up by her mother's opposition, is too vehement to endure. How often have I known opposition not only cement friendship, but create love? I doubt not but poor Hickman would fare the better with this vixen, if her mother were as heartily against him, as she is for him.

Thus much, indeed, as to these two ladies, I will grant thee, that the active spirit of the one, and the meek disposition of the other, may make their friendship more durable than it would otherwise be; for this is certain, that in every friendship, whether male or female, there must be a man and a woman spirit, (that is to say, one of them must be a forbearing one,) to make it permanent.

But this I pronounce, as a truth, which all experience confirms, that friendship between women never holds to the sacrifice of capital gratifications, or to the endangering of life, limb, or estate, as it often does in our nobler sex.

Well, but next comes an indictment against poor beauty! What has beauty done that Miss Howe should be offended at it?—Miss Howe, Jack, is a charming girl. She has no reason to quarrel with beauty!—Didst ever see her?—Too much fire and spirit in her eye, indeed, for a girl!—But that's no fault with a man that can lower that fire and spirit at pleasure; and I know I am the man that can.

For my own part, when I was first introduced to this lady, which was by my goddess when she herself was a visiter at Mrs. Howe's, I had not been half an hour with her, but I even hungered and thirsted after a romping 'bout with the lively rogue; and, in the second or third visit, was more deterred by the delicacy of her friend, than by what I apprehended from her own. This charming creature's presence, thought I, awes us both. And I wished her absence, though any other woman were present, that I might try the differences in Miss Howe's behaviour before her friend's face, or behind her back.

Delicate women make delicate women, as well as decent men. With all Miss Howe's fire and spirit, it was easy to see, by her very eye, that she watched for lessons and feared reproof from the penetrating eye of her milder dispositioned friend;* and yet it was as easy to observe, in the candour and sweet manners of the other, that the fear which Miss Howe stood in of her, was more owing to her own generous apprehension that she fell short of her excellencies, than to Miss Harlowe's consciousness of excellence over her. I have often since I came at Miss Howe's letters, revolved this just and fine praise contained in one of them:** 'Every one saw that the preference they gave you to themselves exalted you not into any visible triumph over them; for you had always something to say, on every point you carried, that raised the yielding heart, and left every one pleased and satisfied with themselves, though they carried not off the palm.'

* Miss Howe, in Vol. III. Letter XIX. says, That she was always more afraid of Clarissa than of her mother; and, in Vol. III. Letter XLIV. That

she fears her almost as much as she loves her; and in many other places, in her letters, verifies this observation of Lovelace. ** See Vol. IV. Letter XXXI.

As I propose, in a more advanced life, to endeavour to atone for my useful freedoms with individuals of the sex, by giving cautions and instructions to the whole, I have made a memorandum to enlarge upon this doctrine;—to wit, that it is full as necessary to direct daughters in the choice of their female companions, as it is to guard them against the designs of men.

I say not this, however, to the disparagement of Miss Howe. She has from pride, what her friend has from principle. [The Lord help the sex, if they had not pride!] But yet I am confident, that Miss Howe is indebted to the conversation and correspondence of Miss Harlowe for her highest improvements. But, both these ladies out of the question, I make no scruple to aver, [and I, Jack, should know something of the matter,] that there have been more girls ruined, at least prepared for ruin, by their own sex, (taking in servants, as well as companions,) than directly by the attempts and delusions of men.

But it is time enough when I am old and joyless, to enlarge upon this topic.

As to the comparison between the two ladies, I will expatiate more on that subject, (for I like it,) when I have had them both. Which this letter of the vixen girl's, I hope thou wilt allow, warrants me to try for.

I return to the consideration of a few more of its contents, to justify my vengeance so nearly now in view.

As to Mrs. Townsend,—her manlike spirit—her two brothers—and the ships' crews—I say nothing but this to the insolent threatening—Let 'em come!—But as to her sordid menace—To repay the horrid villain, as she calls me, for all my vileness by BROKEN BONES!—Broken bones, Belford!—Who can bear this portly threatening!—Broken bones, Jack!—D—n the little vulgar!—Give me a name for her—but I banish all furious resentment. If I get these two girls into my power, Heaven forbid that I should be a second Phalaris, who turned his bull upon the artist!—No bones of their's will I break—They shall come off with me upon much lighter terms!—

But these fellows are smugglers, it seems. And am not I a smuggler too?—I am—and have not the least doubt but I shall have secured my goods before Thursday, or Wednesday either.

But did I want a plot, what a charming new one does this letter of Miss Howe strike me out! I am almost sorry, that I have fixed upon one.—For here, how easy would it be for me to assemble a crew of swabbers, and to create a Mrs. Townsend (whose person, thou seest, my beloved knows not) to come on Tuesday, at Miss Howe's repeated solicitations, in order to carry my beloved to a warehouse of my own providing?

This, however, is my triumphant hope, that at the very time that these ragamuffins will be at Hampstead (looking for us) my dear Miss Harlowe and I [so the Fates I imagine have ordained] shall be fast asleep in each other's arms in town.—Lie still, villain, till the time comes.—My heart, Jack! my heart!—It is always thumping away on the remotest prospects of this nature.

But it seems that the vileness of this specious monster [meaning me, Jack!] has brought Hickman into credit with her. So I have done some good! But to whom I cannot tell: for this poor fellow, should I permit him to have this termagant, will be punished, as many times we all are, by the enjoyment of his own wishes—nor can she be happy, as I take it, with him, were he to govern himself by her will, and have none of his own; since never was there a directing wife who knew where to stop: power makes such a one wanton—she despises the man she can govern. Like Alexander, who wept, that he had no more worlds to conquer, she will be looking out for new exercises for her power, till she grow uneasy to herself, a discredit to her husband, and a plague to all about her.

But this honest fellow, it seems, with tears in his eyes, and with humble prostration, besought the vixen to permit him to set out in his chariot-and-four, in order to give himself the glory of protecting such an oppressed innocent, in the face of the whole world. Nay, he reddened, it seems: and trembled too! as he read the fair complainant's letter.—How valiant is all this!—Women love brave men; and no wonder that his tears, his trembling, and his prostration, gave him high reputation with the meek Miss Howe.

But dost think, Jack, that I in the like case (and equally affected with the distress) should have acted thus? Dost think, that I should not first have rescued the lady, and then, if needful, have asked excuse for it, the

lady in my hand?—Wouldst not thou have done thus, as well as I?

But, 'tis best as it is. Honest Hickman may now sleep in a whole skin. And yet that is more perhaps than he would have done (the lady's deliverance unattempted) had I come at this requested permission of his any other way than by a letter that it must not be known that I have intercepted.

Miss Howe thinks I may be diverted from pursuing my charmer, by some new-started villany. Villany is a word that she is extremely fond of. But I can tell her, that it is impossible I should, till the end of this villany be obtained. Difficulty is a stimulus with such a spirit as mine. I thought Miss Howe knew me better. Were she to offer herself, person for person, in the romancing zeal of her friendship, to save her friend, it should not do, while the dear creature is on this side the moon.

She thanks Heaven, that her friend has received her letter of the 7th. We are all glad of it. She ought to thank me too. But I will not at present claim her thanks.

But when she rejoices that the letter went safe, does she not, in effect, call out for vengeance, and expect it!—All in good time, Miss Howe. When settest thou out for the Isle of Wight, love?

I will close at this time with desiring thee to make a list of the virulent terms with which the enclosed letter abounds: and then, if thou supposest that I have made such another, and have added to it all the flowers of the same blow, in the former letters of the same saucy creature, and those in that of Miss Harlowe, which she left for me on her elopement, thou wilt certainly think, that I have provocations sufficient to justify me in all that I shall do to either.

Return the enclosed the moment thou hast perused it.

LETTER VIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SUNDAY NIGHT—
MONDAY MORNING.

I went down with revenge in my heart, the contents of Miss Howe's letter almost engrossing me, the moment that Miss Harlowe and Mrs. Moore (accompanied by Miss Rawlins) came in: but in my countenance all the gentle, the placid, the serene, that the glass could teach; and in my behaviour all the polite, that such an unpolite creature, as she has often told me I am, could put on.

Miss Rawlins was sent for home almost as soon as she came in, to entertain an unexpected visiter; to her great regret, as well as to the disappointment of my fair-one, as I could perceive from the looks of both: for they had agreed, it seems, if I went to town, as I said I intended to do, to take a walk upon the Heath, at least in Mrs. Moore's garden; and who knows, what might have been the issue, had the spirit of curiosity in the one met with the spirit of communication in the other?

Miss Rawlins promised to return, if possible: but sent to excuse herself: her visiter intending to stay with her all night.

I rejoiced in my heart at her message; and, after much supplication, obtained the favour of my beloved's company for another walk in the garden, having, as I told her, abundance of things to say, to propose, and to be informed of, in order ultimately to govern myself in my future steps.

She had vouchsafed, I should have told thee, with eyes turned from me, and in a half-aside attitude, to sip two dishes of tea in my company—Dear soul!—How anger unpolishes the most polite! for I never saw Miss Harlowe behave so awkwardly. I imagined she knew not how to be awkward.

When we were in the garden, I poured my whole soul into her attentive ear; and besought her returning favour.

She told me, that she had formed her scheme for her future life: that, vile as the treatment was which she had received from me, that was not all the reason she had for rejecting my suit: but that, on the maturest deliberation, she was convinced that she could neither be happy with me, nor make me happy; and she enjoined me, for both our sakes, to think no more of her.

The Captain, I told her, was rid down post, in a manner, to forward my wishes with her uncle.—Lady Betty and Miss Montague were undoubtedly arrived in town by this time. I would set out early in the morning to attend them. They adored her. They longed to see her. They would see her.—They would not be denied her company in Oxfordshire. Whither could she better go, to be free from her brother's insults?—Whither, to be absolutely made unapprehensive of any body else?—Might I have any hopes of her returning favour, if Miss Howe could be prevailed upon to intercede for me?

Miss Howe prevailed upon to intercede for you! repeated she, with a scornful bridle, but a very pretty one.—And there she stopt.

I repeated the concern it would be to me to be under a necessity of mentioning the misunderstanding to Lady Betty and my cousin, as a misunderstanding still to be made up; and as if I were of very little consequence to a dear creature who was of so much to me; urging, that these circumstances would extremely lower me not only in my own opinion, but in that of my relations.

But still she referred to Miss Howe's next letter; and all the concession I could bring her to in this whole conference, was, that she would wait the arrival and visit of the two ladies, if they came in a day or two, or before she received the expected letter from Miss Howe.

Thank Heaven for this! thought I. And now may I go to town with hopes at my return to find thee, dearest, where I shall leave thee.

But yet, as she may find reasons to change her mind in my absence, I shall not entirely trust to this. My fellow, therefore, who is in the house, and who, by Mrs. Bevis's kind intelligence, will know every step she can take, shall have Andrew and a horse ready, to give me immediate notice of her motions; and moreover, go whither she will, he shall be one of her retinue, though unknown to herself, if possible.

This was all I could make of the fair inexorable. Should I be glad of it, or sorry for it?—

Glad I believe: and yet my pride is confoundedly abated, to think that I had so little hold in the affections of this daughter of the Harlowes.

Don't tell me that virtue and principle are her guides on this occasion! —'Tis pride, a greater pride than my own, that governs her. Love, she has none, thou seest; nor ever had; at least not in a superior degree. Love, that deserves the name, never was under the dominion of prudence, or of any reasoning power. She cannot bear to be thought a woman, I warrant! And if, in the last attempt, I find her not one, what will she be the worse for the trial?—No one is to blame for suffering an evil he cannot shun or avoid.

Were a general to be overpowered, and robbed by a highwayman, would he be less fit for the command of an army on that account?—If indeed the general, pretending great valour, and having boasted that he never would be robbed, were to make but faint resistance when he was brought to the test, and to yield his purse when he was master of his own sword, then indeed will the highwayman who robs him be thought the braver man.

But from these last conferences am I furnished with one argument in defence of my favourite purpose, which I never yet pleaded.

O Jack! what a difficulty must a man be allowed to have to conquer a predominant passion, be it what it will, when the gratifying of it is in his power, however wrong he knows it to be to resolve to gratify it! Reflect upon this; and then wilt thou be able to account for, if not to excuse, a projected crime, which has habit to plead for it, in a breast as stormy as uncontrollable!

This that follows is my new argument—

Should she fail in the trial; should I succeed; and should she refuse to go on with me; and even resolve not to marry me (of which I can have no notion); and should she disdain to be obliged to me for the handsome provision I should be proud to make for her, even to the half of my estate; yet cannot she be altogether unhappy—Is she not entitled to an independent fortune? Will not Col. Morden, as her trustee, put her in possession of it? And did she not in our former conference point out the way of life, that she always preferred to the married life—to wit, 'To take her good Norton for her directress and guide, and to live upon her own estate in the manner her grandfather desired she should live?'

* See Letter III. of this volume.

It is moreover to be considered that she cannot, according to her own notions, recover above one half of her fame, were we not to intermarry; so much does she think she has suffered by her going off with me. And will she not be always repining and mourning for the loss of the other half?—And if she must live a life of such uneasiness and regret for half, may she not as well repine and mourn for the whole?

Nor, let me tell thee, will her own scheme or penitence, in this case, be half so perfect, if she do not fall, as if she does: for what a foolish penitent will she make, who has nothing to repent of!—She piques herself, thou knowest, and makes it matter of reproach to me, that she went not off with me by her own consent; but was tricked out of herself.

Nor upbraid thou me upon the meditated breach of vows so repeatedly made. She will not, thou seest, permit me to fulfil them. And if she would, this I have to say, that, at the time I made the most solemn of them, I was fully determined to keep them. But what prince thinks himself obliged any longer to observe the articles of treaties, the most sacredly sworn to, than suits with his interest or inclination; although the consequence of the infraction must be, as he knows, the destruction of thousands.

Is not this then the result of all, that Miss Clarissa Harlowe, if it be not her own fault, may be as virtuous after she has lost her honour, as it is called, as she was before? She may be a more eminent example to her sex; and if she yield (a little yield) in the trial, may be a completer penitent. Nor can she, but by her own wilfulness, be reduced to low fortunes.

And thus may her old nurse and she; an old coachman; and a pair of old coach-horses; and two or three old maid-servants, and perhaps a very old footman or two, (for every thing will be old and penitential about her,) live very comfortably together; reading old sermons, and old prayer-books; and relieving old men and old women; and giving old lessons, and old warnings, upon new subjects, as well as old ones, to the young ladies of her neighbourhood; and so pass on to a good old age, doing a great deal of good both by precept and example in her generation.

And is a woman who can live thus prettily without controul; who ever did prefer, and who still prefers, the single to the married life; and who will be enabled to do every thing that the plan she had formed will direct

her to do; to be said to be ruined, undone, and such sort of stuff?—I have no patience with the pretty fools, who use those strong words, to describe a transitory evil; an evil which a mere church-form makes none?

At this rate of romancing, how many flourishing ruins dost thou, as well as I, know? Let us but look about us, and we shall see some of the haughtiest and most censorious spirits among our acquaintance of that sex now passing for chaste wives, of whom strange stories might be told; and others, whose husbands' hearts have been made to ache for their gaities, both before and after marriage; and yet know not half so much of them, as some of us honest fellows could tell them.

But, having thus satisfied myself in relation to the worst that can happen to this charming creature; and that it will be her own fault, if she be unhappy; I have not at all reflected upon what is likely to be my own lot.

This has always been my notion, though Miss Howe grudges us rakes the best of the sex, and says, that the worst is too good for us,* that the wife of a libertine ought to be pure, spotless, uncontaminated. To what purpose has such a one lived a free life, but to know the world, and to make his advantages of it!—And, to be very serious, it would be a misfortune to the public for two persons, heads of a family, to be both bad; since, between two such, a race of varlets might be propagated (Lovelaces and Belfords, if thou wilt) who might do great mischief in the world.

Thou seest at bottom that I am not an abandoned fellow; and that there is a mixture of gravity in me. This, as I grow older, may increase; and when my active capacity begins to abate, I may sit down with the preacher, and resolve all my past life into vanity and vexation of spirit.

This is certain, that I shall never find a woman so well suited to my taste as Miss Clarissa Harlowe. I only wish that I may have such a lady as her to comfort and adorn my setting sun. I have often thought it very unhappy for us both, that so excellent a creature sprang up a little too late for my setting out, and a little too early in my progress, before I can think of returning. And yet, as I have picked up the sweet traveller in my way, I cannot help wishing that she would bear me company in the rest of my journey, although she were stepping out of her own path to oblige me. And then, perhaps, we could put up in the evening at the same inn; and be very happy in each other's conversation; recounting the difficulties and dangers we had passed in our way to it.

I imagine that thou wilt be apt to suspect that some passages in this letter were written in town. Why, Jack, I cannot but say that the Westminster air is a little grosser than that at Hampstead; and the conversation of Mrs. Sinclair and the nymphs less innocent than Mrs. Moore's and Miss Rawlins's. And I think in my heart I can say and write those things at one place which I cannot at the other, nor indeed any where else.

I came to town about seven this morning—all necessary directions and precautions remembered to be given.

I besought the favour of an audience before I set out. I was desirous to see which of her lovely faces she was pleased to put on, after another night had passed. But she was resolved, I found, to leave our quarrel open. She would not give me an opportunity so much as to entreat her again to close it, before the arrival of Lady Betty and my cousin.

I had notice from my proctor, by a few lines brought by a man and horse, just before I set out, that all difficulties had been for two days past surmounted; and that I might have the license for fetching.

I sent up the letter to my beloved, by Mrs. Bevis, with a repeated request for admittance to her presence upon it; but neither did this stand me in stead. I suppose she thought it would be allowing of the consequences that were naturally to be expected to follow the obtaining of this instrument, if she had consented to see me on the contents of this letter, having refused me that honour before I sent it up to her.—No surprising her.—No advantage to be taken of her inattention to the nicest circumstances.

And now, Belford, I set out upon business.

LETTER IX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. MONDAY, JUNE 12.

Durst ever see a license, Jack?

'Edmund, by divine permission, Lord Bishop of London, to our well-beloved in Christ, Robert Lovelace, [your servant, my good Lord! What have I done to merit so much goodness, who never saw your Lordship in my life?] of the parish of St. Martin's in the Fields, bachelor, and Clarissa Harlowe, of the same parish, spinster, sendeth greeting.—WHEREAS ye are, as is alleged, determined to enter into the holy state of Matrimony [this is only alleged, thou observest] by and with the consent of, &c. &c. &c. and are very desirous of obtaining your marriage to be solemnized in the face of the church: We are willing that your honest desires [honest desires, Jack!] may more speedily have their due effect: and therefore, that ye may be able to procure such Marriage to be freely and lawfully solemnized in the parish church of St. Martin's in the Fields, or St. Giles's in the Fields, in the county of Middlesex, by the Rector, Vicar, or Curate thereof, at any time of the year, [at ANY time of the year, Jack!] without publication of bans: Provided, that by reason of any pre-contract, [I verily think that I have had three or four pre-contracts in my time; but the good girls have not claimed upon them of a long while,] consanguinity, affinity, or any other lawful cause whatsoever, there be no lawful impediment on this behalf; and that there be not at this time any action, suit, plaint, quarrel, or demand, moved or depending before any judge ecclesiastical or temporal, for or concerning any marriage contracted by or with either of you; and that the said marriage be openly solemnized in the church above-mentioned, between the hours of eight and twelve in the forenoon; and without prejudice to the minister of the place where the said woman is a parishioner: We do hereby, for good causes, [it cost me—let me see, Jack—what did it cost me?] give and grant our License, as well to you as to the parties contracting, as to the Rector, Vicar, or Curate of the said church, where the said marriage is intended to be solemnized, to solemnize the same, in manner and form above specified, according to the rites and ceremonies prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer in that behalf published by authority of Parliament. Provided always, that if hereafter any fraud shall appear to have been committed, at the time of granting this License, either by false suggestions, or concealment of the truth, [now this, Belford, is a little hard upon us; for I cannot say that every one of our suggestions is literally true:—so, in good conscience, I ought not to marry under this License;] the License shall be void to all intents and purposes, as if the same had not been granted. And in that case we do inhibit all ministers whatsoever, if any thing of the premises shall come to their knowledge, from proceeding to the celebration of the said Marriage; without first consulting Us, or our Vicar-general. Given,' &c.

Then follow the register's name, and a large pendent seal, with these words round it—SEAL OF THE VICAR-GENERAL AND OFFICIAL PRINCIPAL OF THE DIOCESE OF LONDON.

A good whimsical instrument, take it altogether! But what, thinkest thou, are the arms to this matrimonial harbinger?—Why, in the first place, two crossed swords; to show that marriage is a state of offence as well as defence; three lions; to denote that those who enter into the state ought to have a triple proportion of courage. And [couldst thou have imagined that these priestly fellows, in so solemn a case, would cut their jokes upon poor souls who came to have their honest desires put in a way to be gratified;] there are three crooked horns, smartly top-knotted with ribands; which being the ladies' wear, seem to indicate that they may very probably adorn, as well as bestow, the bull's feather.

To describe it according to heraldry art, if I am not mistaken—gules, two swords, saltire-wise, or; second coat, a chevron sable between three bugle-horns, OR [so it ought to be]: on a chief of the second, three lions rampant of the first—but the devil take them for their hieroglyphics, should I say, if I were determined in good earnest to marry!

And determined to marry I would be, were it not for this consideration, that once married, and I am married for life.

That's the plague of it!—Could a man do as the birds do, change every Valentine's day, [a natural appointment! for birds have not the sense, forsooth, to fetter themselves, as we wiseacre men take great and solemn pains to do,] there would be nothing at all in it. And what a glorious time would the lawyers have, on the one hand, with their *noverini universi's*, and suits commenceable on restitution of goods and chattels; and the parsons, on the other, with their indulgencies

[renewable annually, as other licenses] to the honest desires of their clients?

Then, were a stated mullet, according to rank or fortune, to be paid on every change, towards the exigencies of the state [but none on renewals with the old lives, for the sake of encouraging constancy, especially among the *minores*] the change would be made sufficiently difficult, and the whole public would be the better for it; while those children, which the parents could not agree about maintaining, might be considered as the children of the public, and provided for like the children of the antient Spartans; who were (as ours would in this case be) a nation of heroes. How, Jack, could I have improved upon Lycurgus's institutions had I been a lawgiver!

Did I never show thee a scheme which I drew up on such a notion as this?—In which I demonstrated the conveniencies, and obviated the inconveniencies, of changing the present mode to this? I believe I never did.

I remember I proved to a demonstration, that such a change would be a mean of annihilating, absolutely annihilating, four or five very atrocious and capital sins.—Rapes, vulgarly so called; adultery, and fornication; nor would polygamy be panted after. Frequently would it prevent murders and duelling; hardly any such thing as jealousy (the cause of shocking violences) would be heard of: and hypocrisy between man and wife be banished the bosoms of each. Nor, probably, would the reproach of barrenness rest, as it now too often does, where it is least deserved.—Nor would there possibly be such a person as a barren woman.

Moreover, what a multitude of domestic quarrels would be avoided, where such a scheme carried into execution? Since both sexes would bear with each other, in the view that they could help themselves in a few months.

And then what a charming subject for conversation would be the gallant and generous last partings between man and wife! Each, perhaps, a new mate in eye, and rejoicing secretly in the manumission, could afford to be complaisantly sorrowful in appearance. 'He presented her with this jewel, it will be said by the reporter, for example sake: she him with that. How he wept! How she sobb'd! How they looked after one another!' Yet, that's the jest of it, neither of them wishing to stand another twelvemonth's trial.

And if giddy fellows, or giddy girls, misbehave in a first marriage, whether from noviceship, having expected to find more in the matter than can be found; or from perverseness on her part, or positiveness on his, each being mistaken in the other [a mighty difference, Jack, in the same person, an inmate or a visiter]; what a fine opportunity will each have, by this scheme, of recovering a lost character, and of setting all right in the next adventure?

And, O Jack! with what joy, with what rapture, would the changelings (or changeables, if thou like that word better) number the weeks, the days, the hours, as the annual obligation approached to its desirable period!

As for the spleen or vapours, no such malady would be known or heard of. The physical tribe would, indeed, be the sufferers, and the only sufferers; since fresh health and fresh spirits, the consequences of sweet blood and sweet humours (the mind and body continually pleased with each other) would perpetually flow in; and the joys of expectation, the highest of all our joys, would invigorate and keep all alive.

But, that no body of men might suffer, the physicians, I thought, might turn parsons, as there would be a great demand for parsons. Besides, as they would be partakers in the general benefit, they must be sorry fellows indeed if they preferred themselves to the public.

Every one would be married a dozen times at least. Both men and women would be careful of their characters and polite in their behaviour, as well as delicate in their persons, and elegant in their dress, [a great matter each of these, let me tell thee, to keep passion alive,] either to induce a renewal with the old love, or to recommend themselves to a new. While the newspapers would be crowded with paragraphs; all the world their readers, as all the world would be concerned to see who and who's together—

'Yesterday, for instance, entered into the holy state of matrimony,' [we should all speak reverently of matrimony, then,] 'the right Honourable Robert Earl Lovelace' [I shall be an earl by that time,] 'with her Grace the Duchess Dowager of Fifty-manors; his Lordship's one-and-thirtieth wife.'—I shall then be contented, perhaps, to take up, as it is called, with

a widow. But she must not have had more than one husband neither. Thou knowest that I am nice in these particulars.

I know, Jack, that thou for thy part, wilt approve of my scheme.

As Lord M. and I, between us, have three or four boroughs at command, I think I will get into parliament, in order to bring in a bill for this good purpose.

Neither will the house of parliament, nor the houses of convocation, have reason to object it. And all the courts, whether spiritual or sensual, civil or uncivil, will find their account in it when passed into a law.

By my soul, Jack, I should be apprehensive of a general insurrection, and that incited by the women, were such a bill to be thrown out.—For here is the excellency of the scheme: the women will have equal reason with the men to be pleased with it.

Dost think, that old prerogative Harlowe, for example, must not, if such a law were in being, have pulled in his horns?—So excellent a wife as he has, would never else have renewed with such a gloomy tyrant: who, as well as all other married tyrants, must have been upon good behaviour from year to year.

A termagant wife, if such a law were to pass, would be a phoenix.

The churches would be the only market-place for the fair sex; and domestic excellence the capital recommendation.

Nor would there be an old maid in Great Britain, and all its territories. For what an odd soul must she be who could not have her twelvemonth's trial?

In short, a total alteration for the better, in the morals and way of life in both sexes, must, in a very few years, be the consequence of such a salutary law.

Who would have expected such a one from me! I wish the devil owe me not a spite for it.

Then would not the distinction be very pretty, Jack? as in flowers;—such a gentleman, or such a lady, is an ANNUAL—such a one is a PERENNIAL.

One difficulty, however, as I remember, occurred to me, upon the probability that a wife might be *enceinte*, as the lawyers call it. But thus I obviated it—

That no man should be allowed to marry another woman without his then wife's consent, till she were brought-to-bed, and he had defrayed all incident charges; and till it was agreed upon between them whether the child should be his, her's, or the public's. The women in this case to have what I call the coercive option; for I would not have it in the man's power to be a dog neither.

And, indeed, I gave the turn of the scale in every part of my scheme in the women's favour: for dearly do I love the sweet rogues.

How infinitely more preferable this my scheme to the polygamy one of the old patriarchs; who had wives and concubines without number!—I believe David and Solomon had their hundreds at a time. Had they not, Jack?

Let me add, that annual parliaments, and annual marriages, are the projects next my heart. How could I expatiate upon the benefits that would arise from both!

LETTER X

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

Well, but now my plots thicken; and my employment of writing to thee on this subject will soon come to a conclusion. For now, having got the license; and Mrs. Townsend with her tars, being to come to Hampstead next Wednesday or Thursday; and another letter possibly, or message from Miss Howe, to inquire how Miss Harlowe does, upon the rustic's report of her ill health, and to express her wonder that she has not heard from her in answer to her's on her escape; I must soon blow up the lady, or be blown up myself. And so I am preparing, with Lady Betty and my cousin Montague, to wait upon my beloved with a coach-and-four, or a sett; for Lady Betty will not stir out with a pair for the world; though but for two or three miles. And this is a well-known part of her character.

But as to the arms and crest upon the coach and trappings?

Dost thou not know that a Blunt's must supply her, while her own is new lining and repairing? An opportunity she is willing to take now she is in town. Nothing of this kind can be done to her mind in the country. Liveries nearly Lady Betty's.

Thou hast seen Lady Betty Lawrance several times—hast thou not, Belford?

No, never in my life.

But thou hast—and lain with her too; or fame does thee more credit than thou deservest—Why, Jack, knowest thou not Lady Betty's other name?

Other name!—Has she two?

She has. And what thinkest thou of Lady Bab. Wallis?

O the devil!

Now thou hast it. Lady Barbara thou knowest, lifted up in circumstances, and by pride, never appears or produces herself, but on occasions special—to pass to men of quality or price, for a duchess, or countess, at least. She has always been admired for a grandeur in her air, that few women of quality can come up to; and never was supposed to be other than what she passed for; though often and often a paramour for lords.

And who, thinkest thou, is my cousin Montague?

Nay, how should I know?

How indeed! Why, my little Johanetta Golding, a lively, yet modest-looking girl, is my cousin Montague.

There, Belford, is an aunt!—There's a cousin!—Both have wit at will. Both are accustomed to ape quality.—Both are genteelly descended. Mistresses of themselves, and well educated—yet past pity.—True Spartan dames; ashamed of nothing but detection—always, therefore, upon their guard against that. And in their own conceit, when assuming top parts, the very quality they ape.

And how dost think I dress them out?—I'll tell thee.

Lady Betty in a rich gold tissue, adorned with jewels of high price.

My cousin Montague in a pale pink, standing on end with silver flowers of her own working. Charlotte as well as my beloved is admirable at her needle. Not quite so richly jewell'd out as Lady Betty; but ear-rings and solitaire very valuable, and infinitely becoming.

Johanetta, thou knowest, has a good complexion, a fine neck, and ears remarkably fine—so has Charlotte. She is nearly of Charlotte's stature too.

Laces both, the richest that could be procured.

Thou canst not imagine what a sum the loan of the jewels cost me, though but for three days.

This sweet girl will half ruin me. But seest thou not, by this time, that her reign is short!—It must be so. And Mrs. Sinclair has already prepared every thing for her reception once more.

Here come the ladies—attended by Susan Morrison, a tenant-farmer's daughter, as Lady Betty's woman; with her hands before her, and thoroughly instructed.

How dress advantages women!—especially those who have naturally a genteel air and turn, and have had education.

Hadst thou seen how they paraded it—Cousin, and Cousin, and Nephew, at every word; Lady Betty bridling and looking haughtily-condescending.—Charlotte galanting her fan, and swimming over the floor without touching it.

How I long to see my niece-elect! cries one—for they are told that we are not married; and are pleased that I have not put the slight upon them that they had apprehended from me.

How I long to see my dear cousin that is to be, the other!

Your La'ship, and your La'ship, and an awkward courtesy at every address—prim Susan Morrison.

Top your parts, ye villains!—You know how nicely I distinguish. There will be no passion in this case to blind the judgment, and to help on meditated delusion, as when you engage with titled sinners. My charmer is as cool and as distinguishing, though not quite so learned in her own sex, as I am. Your commonly-assumed dignity won't do for me now. Airs of superiority, as if born to rank.—But no over-do!—Doubting nothing. Let not your faces arraign your hearts.

Easy and unaffected!—Your very dresses will give you pride enough.

A little graver, Lady Betty.—More significance, less bridling in your dignity.

That's the air! Charmingly hit—Again—You have it.

Devil take you!—Less arrogance. You are got into airs of young quality. Be less sensible of your new condition. People born to dignity command respect without needing to require it.

Now for your part, Cousin Charlotte!—

Pretty well. But a little too frolicky that air.—Yet have I prepared my beloved to expect in you both great vivacity and quality-freedom.

Curse those eyes!—Those glancings will never do. A down-cast bashful turn, if you can command it. Look upon me. Suppose me now to be my beloved.

Devil take that leer. Too significantly arch!—Once I knew you the girl I would now have you to be.

Sprightly, but not confident, cousin Charlotte!—Be sure forget not to look down, or aside, when looked at. When eyes meet eyes, be your's the retreating ones. Your face will bear examination.

O Lord! Lord! that so young a creature can so soon forget the innocent appearance she first charmed by; and which I thought born with you all!—Five years to ruin what twenty had been building up! How natural the latter lesson! How difficult to regain the former!

A stranger, as I hope to be saved, to the principal arts of your sex!—Once more, what a devil has your heart to do in your eyes?

Have I not told you, that my beloved is a great observer of the eyes? She once quoted upon me a text,* which showed me how she came by her knowledge—Dorcas's were found guilty of treason the first moment she saw her.

* Eccles. xxvi. The whoredom of a woman may be known in her haughty looks and eye-lids. Watch over an impudent eye, and marvel not if it trespass against thee.

Once more, suppose me to be my charmer.—Now you are to encounter my examining eye, and my doubting heart—

That's my dear!

Study that air in the pier-glass!—

Charmingly!—Perfectly right!

Your honours, now, devils!—

Pretty well, Cousin Charlotte, for a young country lady! Till form yields to familiarity, you may courtesy low. You must not be supposed to have forgot your boarding-school airs.

But too low, too low Lady Betty, for your years and your quality. The common fault of your sex will be your danger: aiming to be young too long!—The devil's in you all, when you judge of yourselves by your wishes, and by your vanity! Fifty, in that case, is never more than fifteen.

Graceful ease, conscious dignity, like that of my charmer, Oh! how hard to hit!

Both together now—

Charming!—That's the air, Lady Betty!—That's the cue, Cousin Charlotte, suited to the character of each!—But, once more, be sure to have a guard upon your eyes.

Never fear, Nephew!—

Never fear, Cousin.
A dram of Barbadoes each—
And now we are gone—

LETTER XI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. AT MRS. SINCLAIR'S,
MONDAY AFTERNOON.

All's right, as heart can wish!—In spite of all objection—in spite of a reluctance next to faintings—in spite of all foresight, vigilance, suspicion—once more is the charmer of my soul in her old lodgings!

Now throbs away every pulse! Now thump, thump, thumps my bounding heart for something!

But I have not time for the particulars of our management.

My beloved is now directing some of her clothes to be packed up—never more to enter this house! Nor ever more will she, I dare say, when once again out of it!

Yet not so much as a condition of forgiveness!—The Harlowe-spirited fair-one will not deserve my mercy!—She will wait for Miss Howe's next letter; and then, if she find a difficulty in her new schemes, [Thank her for nothing,]—will—will what? Why even then will take time to consider, whether I am to be forgiven, or for ever rejected. An indifference that revives in my heart the remembrance of a thousand of the like nature.—And yet Lady Betty and Miss Montague, [a man would be tempted to think, Jack, that they wish her to provoke my vengeance,] declare, that I ought to be satisfied with such a proud suspension!

They are entirely attached to her. Whatever she says, is, must be, gospel! They are guarantees for her return to Hampstead this night. They are to go back with her. A supper bespoken by Lady Betty at Mrs. Moore's. All the vacant apartments there, by my permission, (for I had engaged them for a month certain,) to be filled with them and their attendants, for a week at least, or till they can prevail upon the dear perverse, as they hope they shall, to restore me to her favour, and to accompany Lady Betty to Oxfordshire.

The dear creature has thus far condescended—that she will write to Miss Howe and acquaint her with the present situation of things.

If she write, I shall see what she writes. But I believe she will have other employment soon.

Lady Betty is sure, she tells her, that she shall prevail upon her to forgive me; though she dares say, that I deserve not forgiveness. Lady Betty is too delicate to inquire strictly into the nature of my offence. But it must be an offence against herself, against Miss Montague, against the virtuous of the whole sex, or it could not be so highly resented. Yet she will not leave her till she forgive me, and till she see our nuptials privately celebrated. Mean time, as she approves of her uncle's expedient, she will address her as already my wife before strangers.

Stedman, her solicitor, may attend her for orders in relation to her chancery affair, at Hampstead. Not one hour they can be favoured with, will they lose from the company and conversation of so dear, so charming a new relation.

Hard then if she had not obliged them with her company in their coach-and-four, to and from their cousin Leeson's, who longed, (as they themselves had done,) to see a lady so justly celebrated.

'How will Lord M. be raptured when he sees her, and can salute her as his niece!

'How will Lady Sarah bless herself!—She will now think her loss of the dear daughter she mourns for happily supplied!'

Miss Montague dwells upon every word that falls from her lips. She perfectly adores her new cousin—'For her cousin she must be. And her cousin will she call her! She answers for equal admiration in her sister Patty.

'Ay, cry I, (whispering loud enough for her to hear,) how will my cousin Patty's dove's eyes glisten and run over, on the very first interview!—So gracious, so noble, so unaffected a dear creature!'

'What a happy family,' chorus we all, 'will our's be!'

These and such like congratulatory admirations every hour repeated. Her modesty hurt by the ecstatic praises:—'Her graces are too natural to herself for her to be proud of them: but she must be content to be punished for excellencies that cast a shade upon the most excellent!'

In short, we are here, as at Hampstead, all joy and rapture—all of us except my beloved; in whose sweet face, [her almost fainting reluctance to re-enter these doors not overcome,] reigns a kind of anxious serenity!—But how will even that be changed in a few hours!

Methinks I begin to pity the half-apprehensive beauty!—But avaunt, thou unseasonably-intruding pity! Thou hast more than once already well nigh undone me! And, adieu, reflection! Begone, consideration! and commiseration! I dismiss ye all, for at least a week to come!—But remembered her broken word! Her flight, when my fond soul was meditating mercy to her!—Be remembered her treatment of me in her letter on her escape to Hampstead! Her Hampstead virulence! What is it she ought not to expect from an unchained Beelzebub, and a plotting villain?

Be her preference of the single life to me also remembered!—That she despises me!—That she even refuses to be my WIFE!—A proud Lovelace to be denied a wife!—To be more proudly rejected by a daughter of the Harlowes!—The ladies of my own family, [she thinks them the ladies of my family,] supplicating in vain for her returning favour to their despised kinsman, and taking laws from her still prouder punctilio!

Be the execrations of her vixen friend likewise remembered, poured out upon me from her representations, and thereby made her own execrations!

Be remembered still more particularly the Townsend plot, set on foot between them, and now, in a day or two, ready to break out; and the sordid threatening thrown out against me by that little fury!

Is not this the crisis for which I have been long waiting? Shall Tomlinson, shall these women be engaged; shall so many engines be set at work, at an immense expense, with infinite contrivance; and all to no purpose?

Is not this the hour of her trial—and in her, of the trial of the virtue of her whole sex, so long premeditated, so long threatened?—Whether her frost be frost indeed? Whether her virtue be principle? Whether, if once subdued, she will not be always subdued? And will she not want the crown of her glory, the proof of her till now all-surpassing excellence, if I stop short of the ultimate trial?

Now is the end of purposes long over-awed, often suspended, at hand. And need I go throw the sins of her cursed family into the too-weighty scale?

[Abhorred be force!—be the thoughts of force!—There's no triumph over the will in force!] This I know I have said.* But would I not have avoided it, if I could? Have I not tried every other method? And have I any other resource left me? Can she resent the last outrage more than she has resented a fainter effort?—And if her resentments run ever so high, cannot I repair by matrimony?—She will not refuse me, I know, Jack: the haughty beauty will not refuse me, when her pride of being corporally inviolate is brought down; when she can tell no tales, but when, (be her resistance what it will,) even her own sex will suspect a yielding in resistance; and when that modesty, which may fill her bosom with resentment, will lock up her speech.

* Vol. IV. Letter XLVIII.

But how know I, that I have not made my own difficulties? Is she not a woman! What redress lies for a perpetuated evil? Must she not live? Her piety will secure her life.—And will not time be my friend! What, in a word, will be her behaviour afterwards?—She cannot fly me!—She must forgive me—and as I have often said, once forgiven, will be for ever forgiven.

Why then should this enervating pity unsteel my foolish heart?

It shall not. All these things will I remember; and think of nothing else, in order to keep up a resolution, which the women about me will have it I shall be still unable to hold.

I'll teach the dear, charming creature to emulate me in contrivance; I'll teach her to weave webs and plots against her conqueror! I'll show her, that in her smuggling schemes she is but a spider compared to me, and that she has all this time been spinning only a cobweb!

What shall we do now! we are immersed in the depth of grief and apprehension! How ill do women bear disappointment!—Set upon going to Hampstead, and upon quitting for ever a house she re-entered with infinite reluctance; what things she intended to take with her ready packed up, herself on tiptoe to be gone, and I prepared to attend her thither; she begins to be afraid that she shall not go this night; and in grief and despair has flung herself into her old apartment; locked herself in; and through the key-hole Dorcas sees her on her knees, praying, I suppose, for a safe deliverance.

And from what? and wherefore these agonizing apprehensions?

Why, here, this unkind Lady Betty, with the dear creature's knowledge, though to her concern, and this mad-headed cousin Montague without it, while she was employed in directing her package, have hurried away in the coach to their own lodgings, [only, indeed, to put up some night-clothes, and so forth, in order to attend their sweet cousin to Hampstead;] and, no less to my surprise than her's, are not yet returned.

I have sent to know the meaning of it.

In a great hurry of spirits, she would have had me to go myself. Hardly any pacifying her! The girl, God bless her! is wild with her own idle apprehensions! What is she afraid of?

I curse them both for their delay. My tardy villain, how he stays! Devil fetch them! let them send their coach, and we'll go without them. In her hearing I bid the fellow tell them so. Perhaps he stays to bring the coach, if any thing happens to hinder the ladies from attending my beloved this night.

Devil take them, again say I! They promised too they would not stay, because it was but two nights ago that a chariot was robbed at the foot of Hampstead-hill, which alarmed my fair-one when told of it!

Oh! here's Lady Betty's servant, with a billet.

TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. MONDAY NIGHT.

Excuse us, my dear Nephew, I beseech you, to my dearest kinswoman. One night cannot break squares: for here Miss Montague has been taken violently ill with three fainting fits, one after another. The hurry of her joy, I believe, to find your dear lady so much surpass all expectations, [never did family love, you know, reign so strong as among us,] and the too eager desire she had to attend her, have occasioned it! For she has but weak spirits, poor girl! well as she looks.

If she be better, we will certainly go with you tomorrow morning, after we have breakfasted with her, at your lodgings. But whether she be, or not, I will do myself the pleasure to attend your lady to Hampstead; and will be with you for that purpose about nine in the morning. With due compliments to your most worthily beloved, I am

Your's affectionately, ELIZAB. LAWRANCE.

Faith and troth, Jack, I know not what to do with myself; for here, just now having sent in the above note by Dorcas, out came my beloved with it in her hand, in a fit of phrensy!—true, by my soul!

She had indeed complained of her head all the evening.

Dorcas ran to me, out of breath, to tell me, that her lady was coming in some strange way; but she followed her so quick, that the frightened wench had not time to say in what way.

It seems, when she read the billet—Now indeed, said she, am I a lost creature! O the poor Clarissa Harlowe!

She tore off her head-clothes; inquired where I was; and in she came, her shining tresses flowing about her neck; her ruffles torn, and hanging in tatters about her snowy hands, with her arms spread out—her eyes wildly turned, as if starting from their orbits—down sunk she at my feet, as soon as she approached me; her charming bosom heaving to her uplifted face; and clasping her arms about my knees, Dear Lovelace, said she, if ever—if ever—if ever—and, unable to speak another word, quitting her clasping hold—down—prostrate on the floor sunk she, neither in a fit nor out of one.

I was quite astonished.—All my purposes suspended for a few moments, I knew neither what to say, nor what to do. But, recollecting myself, am I again, thought I, in a way to be overcome, and made a fool of!—If I now recede, I am gone for ever.

I raised her; but down she sunk, as if quite disjointed—her limbs failing her—yet not in a fit neither. I never heard of or saw such a dear unaccountable; almost lifeless, and speechless too for a few moments; what must her apprehensions be at that moment?—And for what?—An high-notioned dear soul!—Pretty ignorance!—thought I.

Never having met with so sincere, so unquestionable a repugnance, I was staggered—I was confounded—yet how should I know that it would be so till I tried?—And how, having proceeded thus far, could I stop,

were I not to have had the women to goad me on, and to make light of circumstances, which they pretended to be better judges of than I?

I lifted her, however, into a chair, and in words of disordered passion, told her, all her fears were needless—wondered at them—begged of her to be pacified—besought her reliance on my faith and honour—and revoked all my old vows, and poured forth new ones.

At last, with a heart-breaking sob, I see, I see, Mr. Lovelace, in broken sentences she spoke—I see, I see—that at last—I am ruined!—Ruined, if your pity—let me implore your pity!—and down on her bosom, like a half-broken-stalked lily top-heavy with the overcharging dews of the morning, sunk her head, with a sigh that went to my heart.

All I could think of to re-assure her, when a little recovered, I said.

Why did I not send for their coach, as I had intimated? It might return in the morning for the ladies.

I had actually done so, I told her, on seeing her strange uneasiness. But it was then gone to fetch a doctor for Miss Montague, lest his chariot should not be so ready.

Ah! Lovelace! said she, with a doubting face; anguish in her imploring eye.

Lady Betty would think it very strange, I told her, if she were to know it was so disagreeable to her to stay one night for her company in the house where she had passed so many.

She called me names upon this—she had called me names before.—I was patient.

Let her go to Lady Betty's lodgings then; directly go; if the person I called Lady Betty was really Lady Betty.

If, my dear! Good Heaven! What a villain does that IF show you believe me to be!

I cannot help it—I beseech you once more, let me go to Mrs. Leeson's, if that IF ought not to be said.

Then assuming a more resolute spirit—I will go! I will inquire my way!—I will go by myself!—and would have rushed by me.

I folded my arms about her to detain her; pleading the bad way I heard poor Charlotte was in; and what a farther concern her impatience, if she went, would give to poor Charlotte.

She would believe nothing I said, unless I would instantly order a coach, (since she was not to have Lady Betty's, nor was permitted to go to Mrs. Leeson's,) and let her go in it to Hampstead, late as it was, and all alone, so much the better; for in the house of people of whom Lady Betty, upon inquiry, had heard a bad character, [Dropt foolishly this, by my prating new relation, in order to do credit to herself, by depreciating others.] every thing, and every face, looking with so much meaning vileness, as well as my own, [thou art still too sensible, thought I, my charmer!] she was resolved not to stay another night.

Dreading what might happen as to her intellects, and being very apprehensive that she might possibly go through a great deal before morning, (though more violent she could not well be with the worst she dreaded,) I humoured her, and ordered Will. to endeavour to get a coach directly, to carry us to Hampstead; I cared not at what price.

Robbers, with whom I would have terrified her, she feared not—I was all her fear, I found; and this house her terror: for I saw plainly that she now believed that Lady Betty and Miss Montague were both impostors.

But her mistrust is a little of the latest to do her service!

And, O Jack, the rage of love, the rage of revenge is upon me! by turns they tear me! The progress already made—the women's instigations—the power I shall have to try her to the utmost, and still to marry her, if she be not to be brought to cohabitation—let me perish, Belford, if she escape me now!

Will. is not yet come back. Near eleven.

Will. is this moment returned. No coach to be got, either for love or money.

Once more she urges—to Mrs. Leeson's, let me go, Lovelace! Good Lovelace, let me go to Mrs. Leeson's? What is Miss Montague's illness to my terror?—For the Almighty's sake, Mr. Lovelace!—her hands clasped.

O my angel! What a wildness is this! Do you know, do you see, my dearest life, what appearances your causeless apprehensions have given you?—Do you know it is past eleven o'clock?

Twelve, one, two, three, four—any hour, I care not—If you mean me honourably, let me go out of this hated house!

Thou'lt observe, Belford, that though this was written afterwards, yet, (as in other places,) I write it as it was spoken and happened, as if I had retired to put down every sentence spoken. I know thou likest this lively present-tense manner, as it is one of my peculiarities.

Just as she had repeated the last words, If you mean me honourably, let me go out of this hated house, in came Mrs. Sinclair, in a great ferment—And what, pray, Madam, has this house done to you? Mr. Lovelace, you have known me some time; and, if I have not the niceness of this lady, I hope I do not deserve to be treated thus!

She set her huge arms akimbo: Hoh! Madam, let me tell you that I am amazed at your freedoms with my character! And, Mr. Lovelace, [holding up, and violently shaking her head,] if you are a gentleman, and a man of honour—

Having never before seen any thing but obsequiousness in this woman, little as she liked her, she was frightened at her masculine air, and fierce look—God help me! cried she—what will become of me now! Then, turning her head hither and thither, in a wild kind of amaze. Whom have I for a protector! What will become of me now!

I will be your protector, my dearest love!—But indeed you are uncharitably severe upon poor Mrs. Sinclair! Indeed you are!—She is a gentlewoman born, and the relict of a man of honour; and though left in such circumstance as to oblige her to let lodgings, yet would she scorn to be guilty of a wilful baseness.

I hope so—it may be so—I may be mistaken—but—but there is no crime, I presume, no treason, to say I don't like her house.

The old dragon straddled up to her, with her arms kemboed again—her eye-brows erect, like the bristles upon a hog's back, and, scouling over her shortened nose, more than half-hid her ferret eyes. Her mouth was distorted. She pouted out her blubber-lips, as if to bellows up wind and sputter into her horse-nostrils; and her chin was curdled, and more than usually prominent with passion.

With two Hoh-Madams she accosted the frightened fair-one; who, terrified, caught hold of my sleeve.

I feared she would fall into fits; and, with a look of indignation, told Mrs. Sinclair that these apartments were mine; and I could not imagine what she meant, either by listening to what passed between me and my spouse, or to come in uninvited; and still more I wondered at her giving herself these strange liberties.

I may be to blame, Jack, for suffering this wretch to give herself these airs; but her coming in was without my orders.

The old beldam, throwing herself into a chair, fell a blubbering and exclaiming. And the pacifying of her, and endeavouring to reconcile the lady to her, took up till near one o'clock.

And thus, between terror, and the late hour, and what followed, she was diverted from the thoughts of getting out of the house to Mrs. Leeson's, or any where else.

LETTER XII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY MORNING,
JUNE 13.

And now, Belford, I can go no farther. The affair is over. Clarissa lives.
And I am

Your humble servant, R. LOVELACE.

[The whole of this black transaction is given by the injured lady to Miss
Howe, in her subsequent letters, dated Thursday, July 6. See Letters
LXVII. LXVIII. LXIX.]

LETTER XIII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. WATFORD, WEDN.
JAN. 14.

O thou savage-hearted monster! What work hast thou made in one guilty hour, for a whole age of repentance!

I am inexpressibly concerned at the fate of this matchless lady! She could not have fallen into the hands of any other man breathing, and suffered as she has done with thee.

I had written a great part of another long letter to try to soften thy flinty heart in her favour; for I thought it but too likely that thou shouldst succeed in getting her back again to the accursed woman's. But I find it would have been too late, had I finished it, and sent it away. Yet cannot I forbear writing, to urge thee to make the only amends thou now canst make her, by a proper use of the license thou hast obtained.

Poor, poor lady! It is a pain to me that I ever saw her. Such an adorer of virtue to be sacrificed to the vilest of her sex; and thou their implement in the devil's hand, for a purpose so base, so ungenerous, so inhumane!—Pride thyself, O cruellest of men! in this reflection; and that thy triumph over a woman, who for thy sake was abandoned of every friend she had in the world, was effected; not by advantages taken of her weakness and credulity; but by the blackest artifice; after a long course of studied deceits had been tried to no purpose.

I can tell thee, it is well either for thee or for me, that I am not the brother of the lady. Had I been her brother, her violation must have been followed by the blood of one of us.

Excuse me, Lovelace; and let not the lady fare the worse for my concern for her. And yet I have but one other motive to ask thy excuse; and that is, because I owe to thy own communicative pen the knowledge I have of thy barbarous villany, since thou mightest, if thou wouldst, have passed it upon me for a common seduction.

CLARISSA LIVES, thou sayest. That she does is my wonder: and these words show that thou thyself (though thou couldst, nevertheless, proceed) hardly expectedst she would have survived the outrage. What must have been the poor lady's distress (watchful as she had been over her honour) when dreadful certainty took place of cruel apprehension!—And yet a man may guess what must have been, by that which thou paintest, when she suspected herself tricked, deserted, and betrayed, by the pretended ladies.

That thou couldst behold her phrensy on this occasion, and her half-speechless, half-fainting prostration at thy feet, and yet retain thy evil purposes, will hardly be thought credible, even by those who know thee, if they have seen her.

Poor, poor lady! With such noble qualities as would have adorned the most exalted married life, to fall into the hands of the only man in the world, who could have treated her as thou hast treated her!—And to let loose the old dragon, as thou properly callest her, upon the before-affrighted innocent, what a barbarity was that! What a poor piece of barbarity! in order to obtain by terror, what thou dispairedst to gain by love, though supported by stratagems the most insidious!

O LOVELACE! LOVELACE! had I doubted it before, I should now be convinced, that there must be a WORLD AFTER THIS, to do justice to injured merit, and to punish barbarous perfidy! Could the divine SOCRATES, and the divine CLARISSA, otherwise have suffered?

But let me, if possible, for one moment, try to forget this villanous outrage on the most excellent of women.

I have business here which will hold me yet a few days; and then perhaps I shall quit this house for ever.

I have had a solemn and tedious time of it. I should never have known that I had half the respect I really find I had for the old gentleman, had I not so closely, at his earnest desire, attended him, and been a witness of the tortures he underwent.

This melancholy occasion may possibly have contributed to humanize me: but surely I never could have been so remorseless a caitiff as thou hast been, to a woman of half this lady's excellence.

But pr'ythee, dear Lovelace, if thou'rt a man, and not a devil, resolve, out of hand, to repair thy sin of ingratitude, by conferring upon thyself the highest honour thou canst receive, in making her lawfully thine.

But if thou canst not prevail upon thyself to do her this justice, I think I should not scruple a tilt with thee, [an everlasting rupture at least must

follow] if thou sacrificest her to the accursed women.

Thou art desirous to know what advantage I reap by my uncle's demise. I do not certainly know; for I have not been so greedily solicitous on this subject as some of the kindred have been, who ought to have shown more decency, as I have told them, and suffered the corpse to have been cold before they had begun their hungry inquiries. But, by what I gathered from the poor man's talk to me, who oftener than I wished touched upon the subject, I deem it will be upwards of 5000£. in cash, and in the funds, after all legacies paid, besides the real estate, which is a clear 1000£. a-year.

I wish, from my heart, thou wert a money-lover! Were the estate to be of double the value, thou shouldst have it every shilling; only upon one condition [for my circumstances before were as easy as I wish them to be while I am single]—that thou wouldst permit me the honour of being this fatherless lady's father, as it is called, at the altar.

Think of this! my dear Lovelace! be honest: and let me present thee with the brightest jewel that man ever possessed; and then, body and soul, wilt thou bind to thee for ever thy

BELFORD.

LETTER XIV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. THURSDAY, JUNE 15.

Let me alone, you great dog, you!—let me alone!—have I heard a lesser boy, his coward arms held over his head and face, say to a bigger, who was pommeling him, for having run away with his apple, his orange, or his ginger-bread.

So say I to thee, on occasion of thy severity to thy poor friend, who, as thou ownest, has furnished thee (ungenerous as thou art!) with the weapons thou brandishest so fearfully against him.—And to what purpose, when the mischief is done? when, of consequence, the affair is irretrievable? and when a CLARISSA could not move me?

Well, but, after all, I must own, that there is something very singular in this lady's case: and, at times, I cannot help regretting that ever I attempted her; since not one power either of body or soul could be moved in my favour; and since, to use the expression of the philosopher, on a much graver occasion, there is no difference to be found between the skull of King Philip and that of another man.

But people's extravagant notions of things alter not facts, Belford: and, when all's done, Miss Clarissa Harlowe has but run the fate of a thousand others of her sex—only that they did not set such a romantic value upon what they call their honour; that's all.

And yet I will allow thee this—that if a person sets a high value upon any thing, be it ever such a trifle in itself, or in the eye of others, the robbing of that person of it is not a trifle to him. Take the matter in this light, I own I have done wrong, great wrong, to this admirable creature.

But have I not known twenty and twenty of the sex, who have seemed to carry their notions of virtue high; yet, when brought to the test, have abated of their severity? And how should we be convinced that any of them are proof till they are tried?

A thousand times have I said, that I never yet met with such a woman as this. If I had, I hardly ever should have attempted Miss Clarissa Harlowe. Hitherto she is all angel: and was not that the point which at setting out I proposed to try?* And was not cohabitation ever my darling view? And am I not now, at last, in the high road to it?—It is true, that I have nothing to boast of as to her will. The very contrary. But now are we come to the test, whether she cannot be brought to make the best of an irreparable evil. If she exclaim, [she has reason to exclaim, and I will sit down with patience by the hour together to hear her exclamations, till she is tired of them,] she will then descend to expostulation perhaps: expostulation will give me hope: expostulation will show that she hates me not. And, if she hate me not, she will forgive: and, if she now forgive, then will all be over; and she will be mine upon my own terms: and it shall then be the whole study of my future life to make her happy.

* See Vol. III. Letter XVIII.

So, Belford, thou seest that I have journeyed on to this stage [indeed, through infinite mazes, and as infinite remorse] with one determined point in view from the first. To thy urgent supplication then, that I will do her grateful justice by marriage, let me answer in Matt. Prior's two lines on his hoped-for auditorship; as put into the mouths of his St. John and Harley;

—Let that be done, which Matt. doth say.
YEA, quoth the Earl—BUT NOT TO-DAY.

Thou seest, Jack, that I make no resolutions, however, against doing her, one time or other, the wished-for justice, even were I to succeed in my principal view, cohabitation. And of this I do assure thee, that, if I ever marry, it must, it shall be Miss Clarissa Harlowe.—Nor is her honour at all impaired with me, by what she has so far suffered: but the contrary. She must only take care that, if she be at last brought to forgive me, she show me that her Lovelace is the only man on earth whom she could have forgiven on the like occasion.

But ah, Jack! what, in the mean time, shall I do with this admirable creature? At present—[I am loth to say it—but, at present] she is quite stupified.

I had rather, methinks, she should have retained all her active powers, though I had suffered by her nails and her teeth, than that she should be sunk into such a state of absolute—insensibility (shall I call it?) as she has been in every since Tuesday morning. Yet, as she begins a little to revive, and now-and-then to call names, and to exclaim, I dread almost to engage with the anguish of a spirit that owes its extraordinary agitations

to a niceness that has no example either in ancient or modern story. For, after all, what is there in her case that should stupify such a glowing, such a blooming charmer?—Excess of grief, excess of terror, have made a person's hair stand on end, and even (as we have read) changed the colour of it. But that it should so stupify, as to make a person, at times, insensible to those imaginary wrongs, which would raise others from stupifaction, is very surprising!

But I will leave this subject, least it should make me too grave.

I was yesterday at Hampstead, and discharged all obligations there, with no small applause. I told them that the lady was now as happy as myself: and that is no great untruth; for I am not altogether so, when I allow myself to think.

Mrs. Townsend, with her tars, had not been then there. I told them what I would have them say to her, if she came.

Well, but, after all [how many after-all's have I?] I could be very grave, were I to give way to it.—The devil take me for a fool! What's the matter with me, I wonder!—I must breathe a fresher air for a few days.

But what shall I do with this admirable creature the while?—Hang me, if I know!—For, if I stir, the venomous spider of this habitation will want to set upon the charming fly, whose silken wings are already so entangled in my enormous web, that she cannot move hand or foot: for so much has grief stupified her, that she is at present destitute of will, as she always seemed to be of desire. I must not therefore think of leaving her yet for two days together.

LETTER XV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

I have just now had a specimen of what the resentment of this dear creature will be when quite recovered: an affecting one!—For entering her apartment after Dorcas; and endeavouring to soothe and pacify her disordered mind; in the midst of my blandishments, she held up to Heaven, in a speechless agony, the innocent license (which she has in her own power); as the poor distressed Catalans held up their English treaty, on an occasion that keeps the worst of my actions in countenance.

She seemed about to call down vengeance upon me; when, happily the leaden god, in pity to her trembling Lovelace, waved over her half-drowned eyes his somniferous wand, and laid asleep the fair exclaimer, before she could go half through with her intended imprecation.

Thou wilt guess, by what I have written, that some little art has been made use of: but it was with a generous design (if thou'lt allow me the word on such an occasion) in order to lessen the too-quick sense she was likely to have of what she was to suffer. A contrivance I never had occasion for before, and had not thought of now, if Mrs. Sinclair had not proposed it to me: to whom I left the management of it: and I have done nothing but curse her ever since, lest the quantity should have for ever dampened her charming intellects.

Hence my concern—for I think the poor lady ought not to have been so treated. Poor lady, did I say?—What have I to do with thy creeping style?—But have not I the worst of it; since her insensibility has made me but a thief to my own joys?

I did not intend to tell thee of this little innocent trick; for such I designed it to be; but that I hate disingenuousness: to thee, especially: and as I cannot help writing in a more serious vein than usual, thou wouldst perhaps, had I not hinted the true cause, have imagined that I was sorry for the fact itself: and this would have given thee a good deal of trouble in scribbling dull persuasives to repair by matrimony; and me in reading thy cruel nonsense. Besides, one day or other, thou mightest, had I not confessed it, have heard of it in an aggravated manner; and I know thou hast such an high opinion of this lady's virtue, that thou wouldst be disappointed, if thou hadst reason to think that she was subdued by her own consent, or any the least yielding in her will. And so is she beholden to me in some measure, that, at the expense of my honour, she may so justly form a plea, which will entirely salve her's.

And now is the whole secret out.

Thou wilt say I am a horrid fellow!—As the lady does, that I am the unchained Beelzebub, and a plotting villain: and as this is what you both said beforehand, and nothing worse can be said, I desire, if thou wouldst not have me quite serious with thee, and that I should think thou meanest more by thy tilting hint than I am willing to believe thou dost, that thou wilt forbear thy invectives: For is not the thing done?—Can it be helped?—And must I not now try to make the best of it?—And the rather do I enjoin to make thee this, and inviolable secrecy; because I begin to think that my punishment will be greater than the fault, were it to be only from my own reflection.

LETTER XVI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY, JUNE 16.

I am sorry to hear of thy misfortune; but hope thou wilt not long lie by it. Thy servant tells me what narrow escape thou hadst with thy neck, I wish it may not be ominous: but I think thou seemest not to be in so enterprising a way as formerly; and yet, merry or sad, thou seest a rake's neck is always in danger, if not from the hangman, from his own horse. But, 'tis a vicious toad, it seems; and I think thou shouldst never venture upon his back again; for 'tis a plaguy thing for rider and horse both to be vicious.

The fellow tells me, thou desirest me to continue to write to thee in order to divert thy chagrin on thy forced confinement: but how can I think it in my power to divert, when my subject is not pleasing to myself?

Caesar never knew what it was to be hipped, I will call it, till he came to be what Pompey was; that is to say, till he arrived at the height of his ambition: nor did thy Lovelace know what it was to be gloomy, till he had completed his wishes upon the most charming creature in the world.

And yet why say I completed? when the will, the consent, is wanting—and I have still views before me of obtaining that?

Yet I could almost join with thee in the wish, which thou sendest me up by thy servant, unfriendly as it is, that I had had thy misfortune before Monday night last: for here, the poor lady has run into a contrary extreme to that I told thee of in my last: for now is she as much too lively, as before she was too stupid; and 'bating that she has pretty frequent lucid intervals, would be deemed raving mad, and I should be obliged to confine her.

I am most confoundedly disturbed about it: for I begin to fear that her intellects are irreparably hurt.

Who the devil could have expected such strange effects from a cause so common and so slight?

But these high-souled and high-sensed girls, who had set up for shining lights and examples to the rest of the sex, are with such difficulty brought down to the common standard, that a wise man, who prefers his peace of mind to his glory, in subduing one of that exalted class, would have nothing to say to them.

I do all in my power to quiet her spirits, when I force myself into her presence.

I go on, begging pardon one minute; and vowing truth and honour another.

I would at first have persuaded her, and offered to call witnesses to the truth of it, that we were actually married. Though the license was in her hands, I thought the assertion might go down in her disorder; and charming consequences I hoped would follow. But this would not do.—

I therefore gave up that hope: and now I declare to her, that it is my resolution to marry her, the moment her uncle Harlowe informs me that he will grace the ceremony with his presence.

But she believes nothing I say; nor, (whether in her senses, or not) bears me with patience in her sight.

I pity her with all my soul; and I curse myself, when she is in her wailing fits, and when I apprehend that intellects, so charming, are for ever damped.

But more I curse these women, who put me upon such an expedient! Lord! Lord! what a hand have I made of it!—And all for what?

Last night, for the first time since Monday night, she got to her pen and ink; but she pursues her writing with such eagerness and hurry, as show too evidently her discomposure.

I hope, however, that this employment will help to calm her spirits.

Just now Dorcas tells me, that what she writes she tears, and throws the paper in fragments under the table, either as not knowing what she does, or disliking it: then gets up, wrings her hands, weeps, and shifts her seat all round the room: then returns to her table, sits down, and writes again.

One odd letter, as I may call it, Dorcas has this moment given me from her—Carry this, said she, to the vilest of men. Dorcas, a toad, brought it, without any further direction to me. I sat down, intending (though 'tis pretty long) to give thee a copy of it: but, for my life, I cannot; 'tis so extravagant. And the original is too much an original to let it go out of my hands.

But some of the scraps and fragments, as either torn through, or flung aside, I will copy, for the novelty of the thing, and to show thee how her mind works now she is in the whimsical way. Yet I know I am still furnishing thee with new weapons against myself. But spare thy comments. My own reflections render them needless. Dorcas thinks her lady will ask for them: so wishes to have them to lay again under the table.

By the first thou'lt guess that I have told her that Miss Howe is very ill, and can't write; that she may account the better for not having received the letter designed for her.

PAPER I (Torn in two pieces.)

MY DEAREST MISS HOWE,

O what dreadful, dreadful things have I to tell you! But yet I cannot tell you neither. But say, are you really ill, as a vile, vile creature informs me you are?

But he never yet told me truth, and I hope has not in this: and yet, if it were not true, surely I should have heard from you before now!—But what have I to do to upbraid?—You may well be tired of me!—And if you are, I can forgive you; for I am tired of myself: and all my own relations were tired of me long before you were.

How good you have always been to me, mine own dear Anna Howe!—But how I ramble!

I sat down to say a great deal—my heart was full—I did not know what to say first—and thought, and grief, and confusion, and (O my poor head) I cannot tell what—and thought, and grief and confusion, came crowding so thick upon me; one would be first; another would be first; all would be first; so I can write nothing at all.—Only that, whatever they have done to me, I cannot tell; but I am no longer what I was—in any one thing did I say? Yes, but I am; for I am still, and I ever will be,

Your true——

Plague on it! I can write no more of this eloquent nonsense myself; which rather shows a raised, than a quenched, imagination: but Dorcas shall transcribe the others in separate papers, as written by the whimsical charmer: and some time hence when all is over, and I can better bear to read them, I may ask thee for a sight of them. Preserve them, therefore; for we often look back with pleasure even upon the heaviest griefs, when the cause of them is removed.

PAPER II (Scratch'd through, and thrown under the table.)

—And can you, my dear, honoured Papa, resolve for ever to reprobate your poor child?—But I am sure you would not, if you knew what she has suffered since her unhappy—And will nobody plead for your poor suffering girl?—No one good body?—Why then, dearest Sir, let it be an act of your own innate goodness, which I have so much experienced, and so much abused. I don't presume to think you should receive me—No, indeed!—My name is—I don't know what my name is!—I never dare to wish to come into your family again!—But your heavy curse, my Papa—Yes, I will call you Papa, and help yourself as you can—for you are my own dear Papa, whether you will or not—and though I am an unworthy child—yet I am your child—

PAPER III

A Lady took a great fancy to a young lion, or a bear, I forget which—but a bear, or a tiger, I believe it was. It was made her a present of when a whelp. She fed it with her own hand: she nursed up the wicked cub with great tenderness; and would play with it without fear or apprehension of danger: and it was obedient to all her commands: and its tameness, as she used to boast, increased with its growth; so that, like a lap-dog, it would follow her all over the house. But mind what followed: at last, some how, neglecting to satisfy its hungry maw, or having otherwise disobliged it on some occasion, it resumed its nature; and on a sudden fell upon her, and tore her in pieces.—And who was most to blame, I pray? The brute, or the lady? The lady, surely!—For what she did was out of nature, out of character, at least: what it did was in its own nature.

PAPER IV

How art thou now humbled in the dust, thou proud Clarissa Harlowe!

Thou that never steppedst out of thy father's house but to be admired! Who wert wont to turn thine eye, sparkling with healthful life, and self-assurance, to different objects at once as thou passedst, as if (for so thy penetrating sister used to say) to plume thyself upon the expected applauses of all that beheld thee! Thou that usedst to go to rest satisfied with the adulations paid thee in the past day, and couldst put off every thing but thy vanity!—

PAPER V

Rejoice not now, my Bella, my Sister, my Friend; but pity the humbled creature, whose foolish heart you used to say you beheld through the thin veil of humility which covered it.

It must have been so! My fall had not else been permitted—

You penetrated my proud heart with the jealousy of an elder sister's searching eye.

You knew me better than I knew myself.

Hence your upbraidings and your chidings, when I began to totter.

But forgive now those vain triumphs of my heart.

I thought, poor, proud wretch that I was, that what you said was owing to your envy.

I thought I could acquit my intention of any such vanity.

I was too secure in the knowledge I thought I had of my own heart.

My supposed advantages became a snare to me.

And what now is the end of all?—

PAPER VI

What now is become of the prospects of a happy life, which once I thought opening before me?—Who now shall assist in the solemn preparations? Who now shall provide the nuptial ornaments, which soften and divert the apprehensions of the fearful virgin? No court now to be paid to my smiles! No encouraging compliments to inspire thee with hope of laying a mind not unworthy of thee under obligation! No elevation now for conscious merit, and applauded purity, to look down from on a prostrate adorer, and an admiring world, and up to pleased and rejoicing parents and relations!

PAPER VII

Thou pernicious caterpillar, that preyest upon the fair leaf of virgin fame, and poisonest those leaves which thou canst not devour!

Thou fell blight, thou eastern blast, thou overspreading mildew, that destroyest the early promises of the shining year! that mockest the laborious toil, and blastest the joyful hopes, of the painful husbandman!

Thou fretting moth, that corruptest the fairest garment!

Thou eating canker-worm, that preyest upon the opening bud, and turnest the damask-rose into livid yellowness!

If, as religion teaches us, God will judge us, in a great measure, by our benevolent or evil actions to one another—O wretch! bethink thee, in time bethink thee, how great must be thy condemnation!

PAPER VIII

At first, I saw something in your air and person that displeased me not. Your birth and fortunes were no small advantages to you.—You acted not ignobly by my passionate brother. Every body said you were brave: every body said you were generous: a brave man, I thought, could not be a base man: a generous man, could not, I believed, be ungenerous, where he acknowledged obligation. Thus prepossessed, all the rest that my soul loved and wished for in your reformation I hoped!—I knew not, but by report, any flagrant instances of your vileness. You seemed frank, as well as generous: frankness and generosity ever attracted me: whoever kept up those appearances, I judged of their hearts by my own; and whatever qualities I wished to find in them, I was ready to find; and, when found, I believed them to be natives of the soil.

My fortunes, my rank, my character, I thought a further security. I was in none of those respects unworthy of being the niece of Lord M. and of his two noble sisters.—Your vows, your imprecations—But, Oh! you have barbarously and basely conspired against that honour, which you ought to have protected: and now you have made me—What is it of vile that you have not made me?—

Yet, God knows my heart, I had no culpable inclinations!—I honoured virtue!—I hated vice!—But I knew not, that you were vice itself!

PAPER IX

Had the happiness of any of the poorest outcast in the world, whom I had never seen, never known, never before heard of, lain as much in my

power, as my happiness did in your's, my benevolent heart would have made me fly to the succour of such a poor distressed—with what pleasure would I have raised the dejected head, and comforted the desponding heart!—But who now shall pity the poor wretch, who has increased, instead of diminished, the number of the miserable!

PAPER X

Lead me, where my own thoughts themselves may lose me;
Where I may dose out what I've left of life,
Forget myself, and that day's guile!—
Cruel remembrance!—how shall I appease thee?

[Death only can be dreadful to the bad;*
To innocence 'tis like a bugbear dress'd
To frighten children. Pull but off the mask,
And he'll appear a friend.]

* Transcriber's note: Portions set off in square brackets [] are written at angles to the majority of the text, as if squeezed into margins.

—Oh! you have done an act
That blots the face and blush of modesty;
Takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And makes a blister there!

Then down I laid my head,
Down on cold earth, and for a while was dead;
And my freed soul to a strange somewhere fled!
Ah! sottish soul! said I,
When back to its cage again I saw it fly;
Fool! to resume her broken chain,
And row the galley here again!
Fool! to that body to return,
Where it condemn'd and destin'd is to mourn!

[I could a tale unfold—
Would harrow up thy soul—]

O my Miss Howe! if thou hast friendship, help me,
And speak the words of peace to my divided soul,
That wars within me,
And raises ev'ry sense to my confusion.
I'm tott'ring on the brink
Of peace; an thou art all the hold I've left!
Assist me—in the pangs of my affliction!

When honour's lost, 'tis a relief to die:
Death's but a sure retreat from infamy.

[By swift misfortunes
How I am pursu'd!
Which on each other
Are, like waves, renew'd!]

The farewell, youth,
And all the joys that dwell
With youth and life!
And life itself, farewell!

For life can never be sincerely blest.
Heav'n punishes the bad, and proves the best.

After all, Belford, I have just skimmed over these transcriptions of Dorcas: and I see there are method and good sense in some of them, wild as others of them are; and that her memory, which serves her so well for these poetical flights, is far from being impaired. And this gives me hope, that she will soon recover her charming intellects—though I shall be the sufferer by their restoration, I make no doubt.

But, in the letter she wrote to me, there are yet greater extravagancies; and though I said it was too affecting to give thee a copy of it, yet, after I have let thee see the loose papers enclosed, I think I may throw in a transcript of that. Dorcas therefore shall here transcribe it. I cannot. The reading of it affected me ten times more than the severest reproaches of a regular mind could do.

TO MR. LOVELACE

I never intended to write another line to you. I would not see you, if I could help it—O that I never had!

But tell me, of a truth, is Miss Howe really and truly ill?—Very ill?—And is not her illness poison? And don't you know who gave it to her?

What you, or Mrs. Sinclair, or somebody (I cannot tell who) have done to my poor head, you best know: but I shall never be what I was. My head is gone. I have wept away all my brain, I believe; for I can weep no more. Indeed I have had my full share; so it is no matter.

But, good now, Lovelace, don't set Mrs. Sinclair upon me again.—I never did her any harm. She so affrights me, when I see her!—Ever since—when was it? I cannot tell. You can, I suppose. She may be a good woman, as far as I know. She was the wife of a man of honour—very likely—though forced to let lodgings for a livelihood. Poor gentlewoman! Let her know I pity her: but don't let her come near me again—pray don't!

Yet she may be a very good woman—

What would I say!—I forget what I was going to say.

O Lovelace, you are Satan himself; or he helps you out in every thing; and that's as bad!

But have you really and truly sold yourself to him? And for how long? What duration is your reign to have?

Poor man! The contract will be out: and then what will be your fate!

O Lovelace! if you could be sorry for yourself, I would be sorry too—but when all my doors are fast, and nothing but the key-hole open, and the key of late put into that, to be where you are, in a manner without opening any of them—O wretched, wretched Clarissa Harlowe!

For I never will be Lovelace—let my uncle take it as he pleases.

Well, but now I remember what I was going to say—it is for your good—not mine—for nothing can do me good now!—O thou villanous man! thou hated Lovelace!

But Mrs. Sinclair may be a good woman—if you love me—but that you don't—but don't let her bluster up with her worse than mannish airs to me again! O she is a frightful woman! If she be a woman! She needed not to put on that fearful mask to scare me out of my poor wits. But don't tell her what I say—I have no hatred to her—it is only fright, and foolish fear, that's all.—She may not be a bad woman—but neither are all men, any more than all women alike—God forbid they should be like you!

Alas! you have killed my head among you—I don't say who did it!—God forgive you all!—But had it not been better to have put me out of all your ways at once? You might safely have done it! For nobody would require me at your hands—no, not a soul—except, indeed, Miss Howe would have said, when she should see you, What, Lovelace, have you done with Clarissa Harlowe?—And then you could have given any slight, gay answer—sent her beyond sea; or, she has run away from me, as she did from her parents. And this would have been easily credited; for you know, Lovelace, she that could run away from them, might very well run away from you.

But this is nothing to what I wanted to say. Now I have it.

I have lost it again—This foolish wench comes teasing me—for what purpose should I eat? For what end should I wish to live?—I tell thee, Dorcas, I will neither eat nor drink. I cannot be worse than I am.

I will do as you'd have me—good Dorcas, look not upon me so fiercely—but thou canst not look so bad as I have seen somebody look.

Mr. Lovelace, now that I remember what I took pen in hand to say, let me hurry off my thoughts, lest I lose them again—here I am sensible—and yet I am hardly sensible neither—but I know my head is not as it should be, for all that—therefore let me propose one thing to you: it is for your good—not mine; and this is it:

I must needs be both a trouble and an expense to you. And here my uncle Harlowe, when he knows how I am, will never wish any man to have me: no, not even you, who have been the occasion of it—barbarous and ungrateful!—A less complicated villany cost a Tarquin—but I forget what I would say again—

Then this is it—I never shall be myself again: I have been a very wicked creature—a vain, proud, poor creature, full of secret pride—which I carried off under an humble guise, and deceived every body—my sister says so—and now I am punished—so let me be carried out of this house, and out of your sight; and let me be put into that Bedlam privately, which once I saw: but it was a sad sight to me then! Little as I thought what I should come to myself!—That is all I would say: this is all I have to wish for—then I shall be out of all your ways; and I shall be taken care of; and bread and water without your tormentings, will be dainties: and my straw-bed the easiest I have lain in—for—I cannot tell how long!

My clothes will sell for what will keep me there, perhaps as long as I shall live. But, Lovelace, dear Lovelace, I will call you; for you have cost

me enough, I'm sure!—don't let me be made a show of, for my family's sake; nay, for your own sake, don't do that—for when I know all I have suffered, which yet I do not, and no matter if I never do—I may be apt to rave against you by name, and tell of all your baseness to a poor humbled creature, that once was as proud as any body—but of what I can't tell—except of my own folly and vanity—but let that pass—since I am punished enough for it—

So, suppose, instead of Bedlam, it were a private mad-house, where nobody comes!—That will be better a great deal.

But, another thing, Lovelace: don't let them use me cruelly when I am there—you have used me cruelly enough, you know!—Don't let them use me cruelly; for I will be very tractable; and do as any body would have me to do—except what you would have me do—for that I never will.—Another thing, Lovelace: don't let this good woman, I was going to say vile woman; but don't tell her that—because she won't let you send me to this happy refuge, perhaps, if she were to know it—

Another thing, Lovelace: and let me have pen, and ink, and paper, allowed me—it will be all my amusement—but they need not send to any body I shall write to, what I write, because it will but trouble them: and somebody may do you a mischief, may be—I wish not that any body do any body a mischief upon my account.

You tell me, that Lady Betty Lawrance, and your cousin Montague, were here to take leave of me; but that I was asleep, and could not be waked. So you told me at first I was married, you know, and that you were my husband—Ah! Lovelace! look to what you say.—But let not them, (for they will sport with my misery,) let not that Lady Betty, let not that Miss Montague, whatever the real ones may do; nor Mrs. Sinclair neither, nor any of her lodgers, nor her nieces, come to see me in my place—real ones, I say; for, Lovelace, I shall find out all your villanies in time—indeed I shall—so put me there as soon as you can—it is for your good—then all will pass for ravings that I can say, as, I doubt no many poor creatures' exclamations do pass, though there may be too much truth in them for all that—and you know I began to be mad at Hampstead—so you said.—Ah! villainous man! what have you not to answer for!

A little interval seems to be lent me. I had begun to look over what I have written. It is not fit for any one to see, so far as I have been able to re-peruse it: but my head will not hold, I doubt, to go through it all. If therefore I have not already mentioned my earnest desire, let me tell you it is this: that I be sent out of this abominable house without delay, and locked up in some private mad-house about this town; for such, it seems, there are; never more to be seen, or to be produced to any body, except in your own vindication, if you should be charged with the murder of my person; a much lighter crime than that of honour, which the greatest villain on earth has robbed me of. And deny me not this my last request, I beseech you; and one other, and that is, never to let me see you more! This surely may be granted to

The miserably abused CLARISSA HARLOWE.

I will not bear thy heavy preachments, Belford, upon this affecting letter. So, not a word of that sort! The paper, thou'lt see, is blistered with the tears even of the hardened transcriber; which has made her ink run here and there.

Mrs. Sinclair is a true heroine, and, I think, shames us all. And she is a woman too! Thou'lt say, the beset things corrupted become the worst. But this is certain, that whatever the sex set their hearts upon, they make thorough work of it. And hence it is, that a mischief which would end in simple robbery among men rogues, becomes murder, if a woman be in it.

I know thou wilt blame me for having had recourse to art. But do not physicians prescribe opiates in acute cases, where the violence of the disorder would be apt to throw the patient into a fever or delirium? I aver, that my motive for this expedient was mercy; nor could it be any thing else. For a rape, thou knowest, to us rakes, is far from being an undesirable thing. Nothing but the law stands in our way, upon that account; and the opinion of what a modest woman will suffer rather than become a *viva voce* accuser, lessens much an honest fellow's

apprehensions on that score. Then, if these somnivolencies [I hate the word opiates on this occasion,] have turned her head, that is an effect they frequently have upon some constitutions; and in this case was rather the fault of the dose than the design of the giver.

But is not wine itself an opiate in degree?—How many women have been taken advantage of by wine, and other still more intoxicating viands?—Let me tell thee, Jack, that the experience of many of the passive sex, and the consciences of many more of the active, appealed to, will testify that thy Lovelace is not the worst of villains. Nor would I have thee put me upon clearing myself by comparisons.

If she escape a settled delirium when my plots unravel, I think it is all I ought to be concerned about. What therefore I desire of thee, is, that, if two constructions may be made of my actions, thou wilt afford me the most favourable. For this, not only friendship, but my own ingenuousness, which has furnished thee with the knowledge of the facts against which thou art so ready to inveigh, require of thee.

Will. is just returned from an errand to Hampstead; and acquaints me, that Mrs. Townsend was yesterday at Mrs. Moore's, accompanied by three or four rough fellows; a greater number (as supposed) at a distance. She was strangely surprised at the news that my spouse and I are entirely reconciled; and that two fine ladies, my relations, came to visit her, and went to town with her: where she is very happy with me. She was sure we were not married, she said, unless it was while we were at Hampstead: and they were sure the ceremony was not performed there. But that the lady is happy and easy, is unquestionable: and a fling was thrown out by Mrs. Moore and Mrs. Bevis at mischief-makers, as they knew Mrs. Townsend to be acquainted with Miss Howe.

Now, since my fair-one can neither receive, nor send away letters, I am pretty easy as to this Mrs. Townsend and her employer. And I fancy Miss Howe will be puzzled to know what to think of the matter, and afraid of sending by Wilson's conveyance; and perhaps suppose that her friend slights her; or has changed her mind in my favour, and is ashamed to own it; as she has not had an answer to what she wrote; and will believe that the rustic delivered her last letter into her own hand.

Mean time I have a little project come into my head, of a new kind; just for amusement-sake, that's all: variety has irresistible charms. I cannot live without intrigue. My charmer has no passions; that is to say, none of the passions that I want her to have. She engages all my reverence. I am at present more inclined to regret what I have done, than to proceed to new offences: and shall regret it till I see how she takes it when recovered.

Shall I tell thee my project? 'Tis not a high one.—'Tis this—to get hither to Mrs. Moore, Miss Rawlins, and my widow Bevis; for they are desirous to make a visit to my spouse, now we are so happy together. And, if I can order it right, Belton, Mowbray, Tourville, and I, will show them a little more of the ways of this wicked town, than they at present know. Why should they be acquainted with a man of my character, and not be the better and wiser for it?—I would have every body rail against rakes with judgment and knowledge, if they will rail. Two of these women gave me a great deal of trouble: and the third, I am confident, will forgive a merry evening.

Thou wilt be curious to know what the persons of these women are, to whom I intend so much distinction. I think I have not heretofore mentioned any thing characteristic of their persons.

Mrs. Moore is a widow of about thirty-eight; a little mortified by misfortunes; but those are often the merriest folks, when warmed. She has good features still; and is what they call much of a gentlewoman, and very neat in her person and dress. She has given over, I believe, all thoughts of our sex: but when the dying embers are raked up about the half-consumed stump, there will be fuel enough left, I dare say, to blaze out, and give a comfortable warmth to a half-starved by-stander.

Mrs. Bevis is comely; that is to say, plump; a lover of mirth, and one whom no grief ever dwelt with, I dare say, for a week together; about twenty-five years of age: Mowbray will have very little difficulty with her, I believe; for one cannot do every thing one's self. And yet sometimes women of this free cast, when it comes to the point, answer not the promises their cheerful forwardness gives a man who has a view upon them.

Miss Rawlins is an agreeable young lady enough; but not beautiful. She

has sense, and would be thought to know the world, as it is called; but, for her knowledge, is more indebted to theory than experience. A mere whipt-syllabub knowledge this, Jack, that always fails the person who trusts to it, when it should hold to do her service. For such young ladies have so much dependence upon their own understanding and wariness, are so much above the cautions that the less opinionative may be benefited by, that their presumption is generally their overthrow, when attempted by a man of experience, who knows how to flatter their vanity, and to magnify their wisdom, in order to take advantage of their folly. But, for Miss Rawlins, if I can add experience to her theory, what an accomplished person will she be!—And how much will she be obliged to me; and not only she, but all those who may be the better for the precepts she thinks herself already so well qualified to give! Dearly, Jack, do I love to engage with these precept-givers, and example-setters.

Now, Belford, although there is nothing striking in any of these characters; yet may we, at a pinch, make a good frolicky half-day with them, if, after we have softened their wax at table by encouraging viands, we can set our women and them into dancing: dancing, which all women love, and all men should therefore promote, for both their sakes.

And thus, when Tourville sings, Belton fiddles, Mowbray makes rough love, and I smooth; and thou, Jack, wilt be by that time well enough to join in the chorus; the devil's in't if we don't mould them into what shape we please—our own women, by their laughing freedoms, encouraging them to break through all their customary reserves. For women to women, thou knowest, are great darers and incentives: not one of them loving to be outdone or outdared, when their hearts are thoroughly warmed.

I know, at first, the difficulty will be the accidental absence of my dear Mrs. Lovelace, to whom principally they will design their visit: but if we can exhilarate them, they won't then wish to see her; and I can form twenty accidents and excuses, from one hour to another, for her absence, till each shall have a subject to take up all her thoughts.

I am really sick at heart for a frolic, and have no doubt but this will be an agreeable one. These women already think me a wild fellow; nor do they like me the less for it, as I can perceive; and I shall take care, that they shall be treated with so much freedom before one another's faces, that in policy they shall keep each other's counsel. And won't this be doing a kind thing by them? since it will knit an indissoluble band of union and friendship between three women who are neighbours, and at present have only common obligations to one another: for thou wantest not to be told, that secrets of love, and secrets of this nature, are generally the strongest cement of female friendships.

But, after all, if my beloved should be happily restored to her intellects, we may have scenes arise between us that will be sufficiently busy to employ all the faculties of thy friend, without looking out for new occasions. Already, as I have often observed, has she been the means of saving scores of her sex, yet without her own knowledge.

SATURDAY NIGHT.

By Dorcas's account of her lady's behaviour, the dear creature seems to be recovering. I shall give the earliest notice of this to the worthy Capt. Tomlinson, that he may apprize uncle John of it. I must be properly enabled, from that quarter, to pacify her, or, at least, to rebate her first violence.

LETTER XVII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SUNDAY AFTERNOON,
SIX O'CLOCK, (JUNE 18.)

I went out early this morning, and returned not till just now; when I was informed that my beloved, in my absence, had taken it into her head to attempt to get away.

She tripped down, with a parcel tied up in a handkerchief, her hood on; and was actually in the entry, when Mrs. Sinclair saw her.

Pray, Madam, whipping between her and the street-door, be pleased to let me know where you are going?

Who has a right to controul me? was the word.

I have, Madam, by order of your spouse: and, kemboing her arms, as she owned, I desire you will be pleased to walk up again.

She would have spoken; but could not: and, bursting into tears, turned back, and went up to her chamber: and Dorcas was taken to task for suffering her to be in the passage before she was seen.

This shows, as we hoped last night, that she is recovering her charming intellects.

Dorcas says, she was visible to her but once before the whole day; and then she seemed very solemn and sedate.

I will endeavour to see her. It must be in her own chamber, I suppose; for she will hardly meet me in the dining-room. What advantage will the confidence of our sex give me over the modesty of her's, if she be recovered!—I, the most confident of men: she, the most delicate of women. Sweet soul! methinks I have her before me: her face averted: speech lost in sighs—abashed—conscious—what a triumphant aspect will this give me, when I gaze on her downcast countenance!

This moment Dorcas tells me she believes she is coming to find me out. She asked her after me: and Dorcas left her, drying her red-swoln eyes at her glass; [no design of moving me by tears!] sighing too sensibly for my courage. But to what purpose have I gone thus far, if I pursue not my principal end? Niceness must be a little abated. She knows the worst. That she cannot fly me; that she must see me; and that I can look her into a sweet confusion; are circumstances greatly in my favour. What can she do but rave and exclaim? I am used to raving and exclaiming—but, if recovered, I shall see how she behaves upon this our first sensible interview after what she has suffered.

Here she comes.

LETTER XVIII

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

Never blame me for giving way to have art used with this admirable creature. All the princes of the air, or beneath it, joining with me, could never have subdued her while she had her senses.

I will not anticipate—only to tell thee, that I am too much awakened by her to think of sleep, were I to go to bed; and so shall have nothing to do but to write an account of our odd conversation, while it is so strong upon my mind that I can think of nothing else.

She was dressed in a white damask night-gown, with less negligence than for some days past. I was sitting with my pen in my fingers; and stood up when I first saw her, with great complaisance, as if the day were still her own. And so indeed it is.

She entered with such dignity in her manner as struck me with great awe, and prepared me for the poor figure I made in the subsequent conversation. A poor figure indeed!—But I will do her justice.

She came up with quick steps, pretty close to me; a white handkerchief in her hand; her eyes neither fierce nor mild, but very earnest; and a fixed sedateness in her whole aspect, which seemed to be the effect of deep contemplation: and thus she accosted me, with an air and action that I never saw equalled.

You see before you, Sir, the wretch, whose preference of you to all your sex you have rewarded—as it indeed deserved to be rewarded. My father's dreadful curse has already operated upon me in the very letter of it, as to this life; and it seems to me too evident that it will not be your fault that it is not entirely completed in the loss of my soul, as well as of my honour—which you, villanous man! have robbed me of, with a baseness so unnatural, so inhuman, that it seems you, even you, had not the heart to attempt it, till my senses were made the previous sacrifice.

Here I made an hesitating effort to speak, laying down my pen: but she proceeded!—Hear me out, guilty wretch!—abandoned man!—Man, did I say?—Yet what name else can I? since the mortal wrappings of the fiercest beast would have been more natural, and infinitely more welcome, than what you have acted by me; and that with a premeditation and contrivance worthy only of that single heart which now, base as well as ungrateful as thou art, seems to quake within thee.—And well may'st thou quake; well may'st thou tremble, and falter, and hesitate, as thou dost, when thou reflectest upon what I have suffered for thy sake, and upon the returns thou hast made me!

By my soul, Belford, my whole frame was shaken: for not only her looks and her action, but her voice, so solemn, was inexpressibly affecting: and then my cursed guilt, and her innocence, and merit, and rank, and superiority of talents, all stared me at that instant in the face so formidably, that my present account, to which she unexpectedly called me, seemed, as I then thought, to resemble that general one, to which we are told we shall be summoned, when our conscience shall be our accuser.

But she had had time to collect all the powers of her eloquence. The whole day probably in her intellects. And then I was the more disappointed, as I had thought I could have gazed the dear creature into confusion—but it is plain, that the sense she has of her wrongs sets this matchless woman above all lesser, all weaker considerations.

My dear—my love—I—I—I never—no never—lips trembling, limbs quaking, voice inward, hesitating, broken—never surely did miscreant look so like a miscreant! while thus she proceeded, waving her snowy hand, with all the graces of moving oratory.

I have no pride in the confusion visible in thy whole person. I have been all the day praying for a composure, if I could not escape from this vile house, that should once more enable me to look up to my destroyer with the consciousness of an innocent sufferer. Thou seest me, since my wrongs are beyond the power of words to express, thou seest me, calm enough to wish, that thou may'st continue harassed by the workings of thy own conscience, till effectual repentance take hold of thee, that so thou may'st not forfeit all title to that mercy which thou hast not shown to the poor creature now before thee, who had so well deserved to meet with a faithful friend where she met with the worst of enemies.

But tell me, (for no doubt thou hast some scheme to pursue,) tell me, since I am a prisoner, as I find, in the vilest of houses, and have not a friend to protect or save me, what thou intendest shall become of the remnant of a life not worth the keeping!—Tell me, if yet there are more

evils reserved for me; and whether thou hast entered into a compact with the grand deceiver, in the person of his horrid agent in this house; and if the ruin of my soul, that my father's curse may be fulfilled, is to complete the triumphs of so vile a confederacy?—Answer me!—Say, if thou hast courage to speak out to her whom thou hast ruined, tell me what farther I am to suffer from thy barbarity?

She stopped here, and, sighing, turned her sweet face from me, drying up with her handkerchief those tears which she endeavoured to restrain; and, when she could not, to conceal from my sight.

As I told thee, I had prepared myself for high passions, raving, flying, tearing execration; these transient violences, the workings of sudden grief, and shame, and vengeance, would have set us upon a par with each other, and quitted scores. These have I been accustomed to; and as nothing violent is lasting, with these I could have wished to encounter. But such a majestic composure—seeking me—whom, yet it is plain, by her attempt to get away, she would have avoided seeking—no Lucretia-like vengeance upon herself in her thought—yet swallowed up, her whole mind swallowed up, as I may say, by a grief so heavy, as, in her own words, to be beyond the power of speech to express—and to be able, discomposed as she was, to the very morning, to put such a home-question to me, as if she had penetrated my future view—how could I avoid looking like a fool, and answering, as before, in broken sentences and confusion?

What—what-a—what has been done—I, I, I—cannot but say—must own—must confess—hem—hem— is not right—is not what should have been—but-a—but—but—I am truly—truly—sorry for it—upon my soul I am—and—and—will do all—do every thing—do what—whatever is incumbent upon me—all that you—that you—that you shall require, to make you amends!—

O Belford! Belford! whose the triumph now! HER'S, or MINE?

Amends! O thou truly despicable wretch! Then lifting up her eyes—Good Heaven! who shall pity the creature who could fall by so base a mind!—Yet—[and then she looked indignantly upon me!] yet, I hate thee not (base and low-souled as thou art!) half so much as I hate myself, that I saw thee not sooner in thy proper colours! That I hoped either morality, gratitude, or humanity, from a libertine, who, to be a libertine, must have got over and defied all moral sanctions.*

* Her cousin Morden's words to her in his letter from Florence. See Vol. IV. Letter XIX.

She then called upon her cousin Morden's name, as if he had warned her against a man of free principles; and walked towards the window; her handkerchief at her eyes. But, turning short towards me, with an air of mingled scorn and majesty, [what, at the moment, would I have given never to have injured her!] What amends hast thou to propose! What amends can such a one as thou make to a person of spirit, or common sense, for the evils thou hast so inhumanely made me suffer?

As soon, Madam—as soon—as—as soon as your uncle—or—not waiting

—
Thou wouldest tell me, I suppose—I know what thou wouldest tell me—But thinkest thou, that marriage will satisfy for a guilt like thine? Destitute as thou hast made me both of friends and fortune, I too much despise the wretch, who could rob himself of his wife's virtue, to endure the thoughts of thee in the light thou seemest to hope I will accept thee in!—

I hesitated an interruption; but my meaning died away upon my trembling lips. I could only pronounce the word marriage—and thus she proceeded:

Let me, therefore, know whether I am to be controuled in the future disposal of myself? Whether, in a country of liberty, as this, where the sovereign of it must not be guilty of your wickedness, and where you neither durst have attempted it, had I one friend or relation to look upon me, I am to be kept here a prisoner, to sustain fresh injuries? Whether, in a word, you intend to hinder me from going where my destiny shall lead me?

After a pause—for I was still silent:

Can you not answer me this plain question?—I quit all claim, all expectation, upon you—what right have you to detain me here?

I could not speak. What could I say to such a question?

O wretch! wringing her uplifted hands, had I not been robbed of my senses, and that in the basest manner—you best know how—had I been able to account for myself, and your proceedings, or to have known but

how the days passed—a whole week should not have gone over my head, as I find it has done, before I had told you, what I now tell you—That the man who has been the villain to me you have been, shall never make me his wife.—I will write to my uncle, to lay aside his kind intentions in my favour—all my prospects are shut in—I give myself up for a lost creature as to this world—hinder me not from entering upon a life of severe penitence, for corresponding, after prohibition, with a wretch who has too well justified all their warnings and inveteracy; and for throwing myself into the power of your vile artifices. Let me try to secure the only hope I have left. This is all the amends I ask of you. I repeat, therefore, Am I now at liberty to dispose of myself as I please?

Now comes the fool, the miscreant again, hesitating his broken answer: My dearest love, I am confounded, quite confounded, at the thought of what—of what has been done; and at the thought of—to whom. I see, I see, there is no withstanding your eloquence!—Such irresistible proofs of the love of virtue, for its own sake, did I never hear of, nor meet with, in all my reading. And if you can forgive a repentant villain, who thus on his knees implores your forgiveness, [then down I dropt, absolutely in earnest in all I said,] I vow by all that's sacred and just, (and may a thunderbolt strike me dead at your feet, if I am not sincere!) that I will by marriage before to-morrow noon, without waiting for your uncle, or any body, do you all the justice I now can do you. And you shall ever after controul and direct me as you please, till you have made me more worthy of your angelic purity than now I am: nor will I presume so much as to touch your garment, till I have the honour to call so great a blessing lawfully mine.

O thou guileful betrayer! there is a just God, whom thou invokest: yet the thunderbolt descends not; and thou livest to imprecate and deceive!

My dearest life! rising; for I hoped she was relenting——

Hadst thou not sinned beyond the possibility of forgiveness, interrupted she; and this had been the first time that thus thou solemnly promisest and invokest the vengeance thou hast as often defied; the desperateness of my condition might have induced me to think of taking a wretched chance with a man so profligate. But, after what I have suffered by thee, it would be criminal in me to wish to bind my soul in covenant to a man so nearly allied to perdition.

Good God!—how uncharitable!—I offer not to defend—would to Heaven that I could recall—so nearly allied to perdition, Madam!—So profligate a man, Madam!——

O how short is expression of thy crimes, and of my sufferings! Such premeditation is thy baseness! To prostitute the characters of persons of honour of thy own family—and all to delude a poor creature, whom thou oughtest—But why talk I to thee? Be thy crimes upon thy head! Once more I ask thee, Am I, or am I not, at my own liberty now?

I offered to speak in defence of the women, declaring that they really were the very persons——

Presume not, interrupted she, base as thou art, to say one word in thine own vindication. I have been contemplating their behaviour, their conversation, their over-ready acquiescences, to my declarations in thy disfavour; their free, yet affectedly-reserved light manners: and now that the sad event has opened my eyes, and I have compared facts and passages together, in the little interval that has been lent me, I wonder I could not distinguish the behaviour of the unmatron-like jilt, whom thou broughtest to betray me, from the worthy lady whom thou hast the honour to call thy aunt: and that I could not detect the superficial creature whom thou passedst upon me for the virtuous Miss Montague.

Amazing uncharitableness in a lady so good herself!—That the high spirits those ladies were in to see you, should subject them to such censures!—I do must solemnly vow, Madam——

That they were, interrupting me, verily and indeed Lady Betty Lawrance and thy cousin Montague!—O wretch! I see by thy solemn averment [I had not yet averred it,] what credit ought to be given to all the rest. Had I no other proof——

Interrupting her, I besought her patient ear. 'I had found myself, I told her, almost avowedly despised and hated. I had no hope of gaining her love, or her confidence. The letter she had left behind her, on her removal to Hampstead, sufficiently convinced me that she was entirely under Miss Howe's influence, and waited but the return of a letter from her to enter upon measures that would deprive me of her for ever: Miss Howe had ever been my enemy: more so then, no doubt, from the contents of the letter she had written to her on her first coming to Hampstead; that I dared not to stand the event of such a letter; and was

glad of an opportunity, by Lady Betty's and my cousin's means (though they knew not my motive) to get her back to town; far, at the time, from intending the outrage which my despair, and her want of confidence in me, put me so vilely upon'—

I would have proceeded; and particularly would have said something of Captain Tomlinson and her uncle; but she would not hear me further. And indeed it was with visible indignation, and not without several angry interruptions, that she heard me say so much.

Would I dare, she asked me, to offer at a palliation of my baseness? The two women, she was convinced, were impostors. She knew not but Captain Tomlinson and Mr. Mennell were so too. But whether they were so or not, I was. And she insisted upon being at her own disposal for the remainder of her short life—for indeed she abhorred me in every light; and more particularly in that in which I offered myself to her acceptance.

And, saying this, she flung from me; leaving me absolutely shocked and confounded at her part of a conversation which she began with such uncommon, however severe, composure, and concluded with so much sincere and unaffected indignation.

And now, Jack, I must address one serious paragraph particularly to thee.

I have not yet touched upon cohabitation—her uncle's mediation she does not absolutely discredit, as I had the pleasure to find by one hint in this conversation—yet she suspects my future views, and has doubt about Mennell and Tomlinson.

I do say, if she come fairly at her lights, at her clues, or what shall I call them? her penetration is wonderful.

But if she do not come at them fairly, then is her incredulity, then is her antipathy to me evidently accounted for.

I will speak out—thou couldst not, surely, play me booty, Jack?—Surely thou couldst not let thy weak pity for her lead thee to an unpardonable breach of trust to thy friend, who has been so unreserved in his communications to thee?

I cannot believe thee capable of such a baseness. Satisfy me, however, upon this head. I must make a cursed figure in her eye, vowing and protesting, as I shall not scruple occasionally to vow and protest, if all the time she has had unquestionable informations of my perfidy. I know thou as little fearest me, as I do thee, if any point of manhood; and wilt scorn to deny it, if thou hast done it, when thus home-pressed.

And here I have a good mind to stop, and write no farther, till I have thy answer.

And so I will.

MONDAY MORN. PAST THREE.

LETTER XIX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. MONDAY MORN. FIVE O'CLOCK (JUNE 19.)

I must write on. Nothing else can divert me: and I think thou canst not have been a dog to me.

I would fain have closed my eyes: but sleep flies me. Well says Horace, as translated by Cowley:

The halcyon sleep will never build his nest
In any stormy breast.
'Tis not enough that he does find
Clouds and darkness in the mind:
Darkness but half his work will do.
'Tis not enough: he must find quiet too.

Now indeed do I from my heart wish that I had never known this lady. But who would have thought there had been such a woman in the world? Of all the sex I have hitherto known, or heard, or read of, it was once subdued, and always subdued. The first struggle was generally the last; or, at least, the subsequent struggles were so much fainter and fainter, that a man would rather have them than be without them. But how know I yet—

It is now near six—the sun for two hours past has been illuminating every thing about me: for that impartial orb shines upon Mother Sinclair's house as well as upon any other: but nothing within me can it illuminate.

At day-dawn I looked through the key-hole of my beloved's door. She had declared she would not put off her clothes any more in this house. There I beheld her in a sweet slumber, which I hope will prove refreshing to her disturbed senses; sitting in her elbow-chair, her apron over her head; her head supported by one sweet hand, the other hand hanging down upon her side, in a sleepy lifelessness; half of one pretty foot only visible.

See the difference in our cases! thought I: she, the charming injured, can sweetly sleep, while the varlet injurer cannot close his eyes; and has been trying, to no purpose, the whole night to divert his melancholy, and to fly from himself!

As every vice generally brings on its own punishment, even in this life; if any thing were to tempt me to doubt of future punishment, it would be, that there can hardly be a greater than that in which I at this instant experience in my own remorse.

I hope it will go off. If not, well will the dear creature be avenged; for I shall be the most miserable of men.

*** SIX O'CLOCK.

Just now Dorcas tells me, that her lady is preparing openly, and without disguise, to be gone. Very probable. The humour she flew away from me in last night has given me expectation of such an enterprize.

Now, Jack, to be thus hated and despised!—And if I have sinned beyond forgiveness—

But she has sent me a message by Dorcas, that she will meet me in the dining-room; and desires [odd enough] that the wretch may be present at the conversation that shall pass between us. This message gives me hope.

NINE O'CLOCK.

Confounded art, cunning villany!—By my soul, she had like to have slipped through my fingers! She meant nothing by her message but to get Dorcas out of the way, and a clear coast. Is a fancied distress, sufficient to justify this lady for dispensing with her principles? Does she not show me that she can wilfully deceive, as well as I?

Had she been in the fore-house, and no passage to go through to get at the street-door, she had certainly been gone. But her haste betrayed her: for Sally Martin happening to be in the fore-parlour, and hearing a swifter motion than usual, and a rustling of silks, as if from somebody in a hurry, looked out; and seeing who it was, stept between her and the door, and set her back against it.

You must not go, Madam. Indeed you must not.

By what right?—And how dare you?—And such-like imperious airs the

dear creature gave herself.—While Sally called out for her aunt; and half a dozen voiced joined instantly in the cry, for me to hasten down, to hasten down in a moment.

I was gravely instructing Dorcas above stairs, and wondering what would be the subject of the conversation to which the wench was to be a witness, when these outcries reached my ears. And down I flew.—And there was the charming creature, the sweet deceiver, panting for breath, her back against the partition, a parcel in her hand, [women make no excursions without their parcels,] Sally, Polly, (but Polly obligingly pleaded for her,) the mother, Mabell, and Peter, (the footman of the house,) about her; all, however, keeping their distance; the mother and Sally between her and the door—in her soft rage the dear soul repeating, I will go—nobody has a right—I will go—if you kill me, women, I won't go up again!

As soon as she saw me, she stept a pace or two towards me; Mr. Lovelace, I will go! said she—do you authorize these women—what right have they, or you either, to stop me?

Is this, my dear, preparative to the conversation you led me to expect in the dining-room? And do you think I can part with you thus?—Do you think I will.

And am I, Sir, to be thus beset?—Surrounded thus?—What have these women to do with me?

I desired them to leave us, all but Dorcas, who was down as soon as I. I then thought it right to assume an air of resolution, having found my tameness so greatly triumphed over. And now, my dear, said I, (urging her reluctant feet,) be pleased to walk into the fore-parlour. Here, since you will not go up stairs, here we may hold our parley; and Dorcas will be witness to it. And now, Madam, seating her, and sticking my hands in my sides, your pleasure!

Insolent villain! said the furious lady. And rising, ran to the window, and threw up the sash, [she knew not, I suppose, that there were iron rails before the windows.] And, when she found she could not get out into the street, clasping her uplifted hands together, having dropt her parcel—For the love of God, good honest man!—For the love of God, mistress—[to two passers by,] a poor, a poor creature, said she, ruined!

I clasped her in my arms, people beginning to gather about the window: and then she cried out Murder! help! help! and carried her up to the dining-room, in spite of her little plotting heart, (as I may now call it,) although she violently struggled, catching hold of the banisters here and there, as she could. I would have seated her there; but she sunk down half-motionless, pale as ashes. And a violent burst of tears happily relieved her.

Dorcas wept over her. The wench was actually moved for her!

Violent hysterics succeeded. I left her to Mabell, Dorcas, and Polly; the latter the most supportable to her of the sisterhood.

This attempt, so resolutely made, alarmed me not a little.

Mrs. Sinclair and her nymphs, are much more concerned; because of the reputation of their house as they call it, having received some insults (broken windows threatened) to make them produce the young creature who cried out.

While the mobbish inquisitors were in the height of their office, the women came running up to me, to know what they should do; a constable being actually fetched.

Get the constable into the parlour, said I, with three or four of the forwardest of the mob, and produce one of the nymphs, onion-eyed, in a moment, with disordered head-dress and handkerchief, and let her own herself the person: the occasion, a female skirmish: but satisfied with the justice done her. Then give a dram or two to each fellow, and all will be well.

ELEVEN O'CLOCK.

All done as I advised; and all is well.

Mrs. Sinclair wishes she had never seen the face of so skittish a lady; and she and Sally are extremely pressing with me, to leave the perverse beauty to their breaking, as they call it, for four or five days. But I cursed them into silence; only ordering double precaution for the future.

Polly, though she consoled the dear perverse one all she could, when with her, insists upon it to me, that nothing but terror will procure me tolerable usage.

Dorcas was challenged by the women upon her tears. She owned them real. Said she was ashamed of herself: but could not help it. So sincere,

so unyielding a grief, in so sweet a lady!—

The women laughed at her; but I bid her make no apologies for her tears, nor mind their laughing. I was glad to see them so ready. Good use might be made of such strangers. In short, I would not have her indulge them often, and try if it were not possible to gain her lady's confidence by her concern for her.

She said that her lady did take kind notice of them to her; and was glad to see such tokens of humanity in her.

Well then, said I, your part, whether any thing come of it or not, is to be tender-hearted. It can do no harm, if no good. But take care you are not too suddenly, or too officiously compassionate.

So Dorcas will be a humane, good sort of creature, I believe, very quickly with her lady. And as it becomes women to be so, and as my beloved is willing to think highly of her own sex; it will the more readily pass with her.

I thought to have had one trial (having gone so far) for cohabitation. But what hope can there be of succeeding?—She is invincible!—Against all my motions, against all my conceptions, (thinking of her as a woman, and in the very bloom of her charms,) she is absolutely invincible. My whole view, at the present, is to do her legal justice, if I can but once more get her out of her altitudes.

The consent of such a woman must make her ever new, ever charming. But astonishing! Can the want of a church-ceremony make such a difference!

She owes me her consent; for hitherto I have had nothing to boast of. All of my side, has been deep remorse, anguish of mind, and love increased rather than abated.

How her proud rejection stings me!—And yet I hope still to get her to listen to my stories of the family-reconciliation, and of her uncle and Capt. Tomlinson—and as she has given me a pretence to detain her against her will, she must see me, whether in temper or not.—She cannot help it. And if love will not do, terror, as the women advise, must be tried.

A nice part, after all, has my beloved to act. If she forgive me easily, I resume perhaps my projects:—if she carry her rejection into violence, that violence may make me desperate, and occasion fresh violence. She ought, since she thinks she has found the women out, to consider where she is.

I am confoundedly out of conceit with myself. If I give up my contrivances, my joy in stratagem, and plot, and invention, I shall be but a common man; such another dull heavy creature as thyself. Yet what does even my success in my machinations bring me but regret, disgrace, repentance? But I am overmatched, egregiously overmatched, by this woman. What to do with her, or without her, I know not.

LETTER XX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

I have this moment intelligence from Simon Parsons, one of Lord M.'s stewards, that his Lordship is very ill. Simon, who is my obsequious servant, in virtue of my presumptive heirship, gives me a hint in his letter, that my presence at M. Hall will not be amiss. So I must accelerate, whatever be the course I shall be allowed or compelled to take.

No bad prospects for this charming creature, if the old peer would be so kind as to surrender; and many a summons has this gout given him. A good 8000*l.* a-year, and perhaps the title reversionary, or a still higher, would help me up with her.

Proudly as this lady pretends to be above all pride, grandeur will have its charms with her; for grandeur always makes a man's face shine in a woman's eye. I have a pretty good, because a clear, estate, as it is. But what a noble variety of mischief will 8000*l.* a-year, enable a man to do?

Perhaps thou'lt say, I do already all that comes into my head; but that's a mistake—not one half I will assure thee. And even good folks, as I have heard, love to have the power of doing mischief, whether they make use of it or not. The late Queen Anne, who was a very good woman, was always fond of prerogative. And her ministers, in her name, in more instances than one, made a ministerial use of this her foible.

But now, at last, am I to be admitted to the presence of my angry fair-one; after three denials, nevertheless; and a peremptory from me, by Dorcas, that I must see her in her chamber, if I cannot see her in the dining-room.

Dorcas, however, tells me that she says, if she were at her own liberty, she would never see me more; and that she had been asking after the characters and conditions of the neighbours. I suppose, now she has found her voice, to call out for help from them, if there were any to hear her.

She will have it now, it seems, that I had the wickedness from the very beginning, to contrive, for her ruin, a house so convenient for dreadful mischief.

Dorcas begs of her to be pacified—entreats her to see me with patience—tells her that I am one of the most determined of men, as she has heard say. That gentleness may do with me; but that nothing else will, she believes. And what, as her ladyship (as she always styles her,) is married, if I had broken my oath, or intended to break it!—

She hinted plain enough to the honest wench, that she was not married. But Dorcas would not understand her.

This shows she is resolved to keep no measures. And now is to be a trial of skill, whether she shall or not.

Dorcas has hinted to her my Lord's illness, as a piece of intelligence that dropt in conversation from me.

But here I stop. My beloved, pursuant to my peremptory message, is just gone up into the dining-room.

LETTER XXI

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

Pity me, Jack, for pity's sake; since, if thou dost not, nobody else will: and yet never was there a man of my genius and lively temper that wanted it more. We are apt to attribute to the devil every thing happens to us, which we would not have happen: but here, being, (as perhaps thou'lt say,) the devil myself, my plagues arise from an angel. I suppose all mankind is to be plagued by its contrary.

She began with me like a true woman, [she in the fault, I to be blamed,] the moment I entered the dining-room: not the least apology, not the least excuse, for the uproar she had made, and the trouble she had given me.

I come, said she, into thy detested presence, because I cannot help it. But why am I to be imprisoned here?—Although to no purpose, I cannot help—

Dearest Madam, interrupted I, give not way to so much violence. You must know, that your detention is entirely owing to the desire I have to make you all the amends that is in my power to make you. And this, as well for your sake as my own. Surely there is still one way left to repair the wrongs you have suffered—

Canst thou blot out the past week! Several weeks past, I should say; ever since I have been with thee? Canst thou call back time?—If thou canst—

Surely, Madam, again interrupting her, if I may be permitted to call you legally mine, I might have but anticip—

Wretch, that thou art! Say not another word upon this subject. When thou vowedst, when thou promisedst at Hampstead, I had begun to think that I must be thine. If I had consented, at the request of those I thought thy relations, this would have been a principal inducement, that I could then have brought thee, what was most wanted, an unsullied honour in dowry, to a wretch destitute of all honour; and could have met the gratulations of a family to which thy life has been one continued disgrace, with a consciousness of deserving their congratulations. But thinkest thou, that I will give a harlot niece to thy honourable uncle, and to thy real aunts; and a cousin to thy cousins from a brothel? for such, in my opinion, is this detested house!—Then, lifting up her clasped hands, 'Great and good God of Heaven,' said she, 'give me patience to support myself under the weight of those afflictions, which thou, for wise and good ends, though at present impenetrable by me, hast permitted!'

Then, turning towards me, who knew neither what to say to her, nor for myself, I renounce thee for ever, Lovelace!—Abhorred of my soul! for ever I renounce thee!—Seek thy fortunes wheresoever thou wilt!—only now, that thou hast already ruined me!—

Ruined you, Madam—the world need not—I knew not what to say.

Ruined me in my own eyes; and that is the same to me as if all the world knew it—hinder me not from going whither my mysterious destiny shall lead me.

Why hesitate you, Sir? What right have you to stop me, as you lately did; and to bring me up by force, my hands and arms bruised by your violence? What right have you to detain me here?

I am cut to the heart, Madam, with invectives so violent. I am but too sensible of the wrong I have done you, or I could not bear your reproaches. The man who perpetrates a villany, and resolves to go on with it, shows not the compunction I show. Yet, if you think yourself in my power, I would caution you, Madam, not to make me desperate. For you shall be mine, or my life shall be the forfeit! Nor is life worth having without you!—

Be thine!—I be thine!—said the passionate beauty. O how lovely in her violence!

Yes, Madam, be mine! I repeat you shall be mine! My very crime is your glory. My love, my admiration of you is increased by what has passed—and so it ought. I am willing, Madam, to court your returning favour; but let me tell you, were the house beset by a thousand armed men, resolved to take you from me, they should not effect their purpose, while I had life.

I never, never will be your's, said she, clasping her hands together, and lifting up her eyes!—I never will be your's!

We may yet see many happy years, Madam. All your friends may be reconciled to you. The treaty for that purpose is in greater forwardness

than you imagine. You know better than to think the worse of yourself for suffering what you could not help. Enjoin but the terms I can make my peace with you upon, and I will instantly comply.

Never, never, repeated she, will I be your's!

Only forgive me, my dearest life, this one time!—A virtue so invincible! what further view can I have against you?—Have I attempted any further outrage?—If you will be mine, your injuries will be injuries done to myself. You have too well guessed at the unnatural arts that have been used. But can a greater testimony be given of your virtue?—And now I have only to hope, that although I cannot make you complete amends, yet you will permit me to make you all the amends that can possibly be made.

Hear me out, I beseech you, Madam; for she was going to speak with an aspect unapacifiedly angry: the God, whom you serve, requires but repentance and amendment. Imitate him, my dearest love, and bless me with the means of reforming a course of life that begins to be hateful to me. That was once your favourite point. Resume it, dearest creature, in charity to a soul, as well as body, which once, as I flattered myself, was more than indifferent to you, resume it. And let to-morrow's sun witness to our espousals.

I cannot judge thee, said she; but the GOD to whom thou so boldly referrest can, and, assure thyself, He will. But, if compunction has really taken hold of thee—if, indeed, thou art touched for thy ungrateful baseness, and meanest any thing by this pleading the holy example thou recommendest to my imitation; in this thy pretended repentant moment, let me sift thee thoroughly, and by thy answer I shall judge of the sincerity of thy pretended declarations.

Tell me, then, is there any reality in the treaty thou has pretended to be on foot between my uncle and Capt. Tomlinson, and thyself?—Say, and hesitate not, is there any truth in that story?—But, remember, if there be not, and thou avowest that there is, what further condemnation attends to thy averment, if it be as solemn as I require it to be!

This was a cursed thrust! What could I say!—Surely this merciless lady is resolved to d—n me, thought I, and yet accuses me of a design against her soul!—But was I not obliged to proceed as I had begun?

In short, I solemnly averred that there was!—How one crime, as the good folks say, brings on another!

I added, that the Captain had been in town, and would have waited on her, had she not been indisposed; that he went down much afflicted, as well on her account, as on that of her uncle; though I had not acquainted him either with the nature of her disorder, or the ever-to-be-regretted occasion of it, having told him that it was a violent fever; That he had twice since, by her uncle's desire, sent up to inquire after her health; and that I had already dispatched a man and horse with a letter, to acquaint him, (and her uncle through him,) with her recovery; making it my earnest request, that he would renew his application to her uncle for the favour of his presence at the private celebrations of our nuptials; and that I expected an answer, if not this night, as to-morrow.

Let me ask thee next, said she, (thou knowest the opinion I have of the women thou broughtest to me at Hampstead; and who have seduced me hither to my ruin; let me ask thee,) If, really and truly, they were Lady Betty Lawrance and thy cousin Montague?—What sayest thou—hesitate not—what sayest thou to this question?

Astonishing, my dear, that you should suspect them!—But, knowing your strange opinion of them, what can I say to be believed?

And is this the answer thou returnest me? Dost thou thus evade my question? But let me know, for I am trying thy sincerity now, and all shall judge of thy new professions by thy answer to this question; let me know, I repeat, whether those women be really Lady Betty Lawrance and thy cousin Montague?

Let me, my dearest love, be enabled to-morrow to call you lawfully mine, and we will set out the next day, if you please, to Berkshire to my Lord M.'s, where they both are at this time; and you shall convince yourself by your own eyes, and by your own ears; which you will believe sooner than all I can say or swear.

Now, Belford, I had really some apprehension of treachery from thee; which made me so miserably evade; for else, I could as safely have sworn to the truth of this, as to that of the former: but she pressing me still for a categorical answer, I ventured plumb; and swore to it, [lover's oaths, Jack!] that they were really and truly Lady Betty Lawrance and my cousin Montague.

She lifted up her hands and eyes—What can I think!—what can I think!

You think me a devil, Madam; a very devil! or you could not after you have put these questions to me, seem to doubt the truth of answers so solemnly sworn to.

And if I do think thee so, have I not cause? Is there another man in the world, (I hope for the sake of human nature, there is not,) who could act by any poor friendless creature as thou hast acted by me, whom thou hast made friendless—and who, before I knew thee, had for a friend every one who knew me?

I told you, Madam, before that Lady Betty and my cousin were actually here, in order to take leave of you, before they set out for Berkshire: but the effects of my ungrateful crime, (such, with shame and remorse, I own it to be,) were the reason you could not see them. Nor could I be fond that they should see you; since they never would have forgiven me, had they known what had passed—and what reason had I to expect your silence on the subject, had you been recovered?

It signifies nothing now, that the cause of their appearance has been answered in my ruin, who or what they are: but if thou hast averred thus solemnly to two falsehoods, what a wretch do I see before me!

I thought she had now reason to be satisfied; and I begged her to allow me to talk to her of to-morrow, as of the happiest day of my life. We have the license, Madam—and you must excuse me, that I cannot let you go hence till I have tried every way I can to obtain your forgiveness.

And am I then, [with a kind of frantic wildness,] to be detained a prisoner in this horrid house—am I, Sir?—Take care! take care! holding up her hand, menacing, how you make me desperate! If I fall, though by my own hand, inquisition will be made for my blood; and be not out in thy plot, Lovelace, if it should be so—make sure work, I charge thee—dig a hole deep enough to cram in and conceal this unhappy body; for, depend upon it, that some of those who will not stir to protect me living, will move heaven and earth to avenge me dead!

A horrid dear creature!—By my soul she made me shudder! She had need indeed to talk of her unhappiness in falling into the hands of the only man in the world, who could have used her as I have used her—she is the only woman in the world, who could have shocked and disturbed me as she has done. So we are upon a foot in that respect. And I think I have the worst of it by much: since very little has been my joy—very much my trouble. And her punishment, as she calls it, is over: but when mine will, or what it may be, who can tell?

Here, only recapitulating, (think, then, how I must be affected at the time,) I was forced to leave off, and sing a song to myself. I aimed at a lively air; but I croaked rather than sung. And fell into the old dismal thirtieth of January strain; I hemmed up for a sprightlier note; but it would not do; and at last I ended, like a malefactor, in a dead psalm melody.

Heigh-ho!—I gape like an unfledged kite in its nest, wanting to swallow a chicken, bobbed at its mouth by its marauding dam!—

What a-devil ails me?—I can neither think nor write!

Lie down, pen, for a moment!

LETTER XXII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

There is certainly a good deal in the observation, that it costs a man ten times more pains to be wicked, than it would cost him to be good. What a confounded number of contrivances have I had recourse to, in order to carry my point with this charming creature; and yet after all, how have I puzzled myself by it; and yet am near tumbling into the pit which it was the end of all my plots to shun! What a happy man had I been with such an excellence, could I have brought my mind to marry when I first prevailed upon her to quit her father's house! But then, as I have often reflected, how had I known, that a but blossoming beauty, who could carry on a private correspondence, and run such risques with a notorious wild fellow, was not prompted by inclination, which one day might give such a free-liver as myself as much pain to reflect upon, as, at the time it gave me pleasure? Thou rememberest the host's tale in Ariosto. And thy experience, as well as mine, can furnish out twenty Fiametta's in proof of the imbecility of the sex.

But to proceed with my narrative.

The dear creature resumed the topic her heart was so firmly fixed upon; and insisted upon quitting the odious house, and that in very high terms.

I urged her to meet me the next day at the altar in either of the two churches mentioned in the license. And I besought her, whatever was her resolution, to let me debate this matter calmly with her.

If, she said, I would have her give what I desired the least moment's consideration, I must not hinder her from being her own mistress. To what purpose did I ask her consent, if she had not a power over either her own person or actions?

Will you give me your honour, Madam, if I consent to your quitting a house so disagreeable to you?—

My honour, Sir! said the dear creature—Alas!—And turned weeping from me with inimitable grace—as if she had said—Alas!—you have robbed me of my honour!

I hoped then, that her angry passions were subsiding; but I was mistaken; for, urging her warmly for the day; and that for the sake of our mutual honour, and the honour of both our families; in this high-flown and high-souled strain she answered me:

And canst thou, Lovelace, be so mean—as to wish to make a wife of the creature thou hast insulted, dishonoured, and abused, as thou hast me? Was it necessary to humble me down to the low level of thy baseness, before I could be a wife meet for thee? Thou hadst a father, who was a man of honour: a mother, who deserved a better son. Thou hast an uncle, who is no dishonour to the Peerage of a kingdom, whose peers are more respectable than the nobility of any other country. Thou hast other relations also, who may be thy boast, though thou canst not be theirs—and canst thou not imagine, that thou hearest them calling upon thee; the dead from their monuments; the living from their laudable pride; not to dishonour thy ancient and splendid house, by entering into wedlock with a creature whom thou hast levelled with the dirt of the street, and classed with the vilest of her sex?

I extolled her greatness of soul, and her virtue. I execrated myself for my guilt: and told her, how grateful to the manes of my ancestors, as well as to the wishes of the living, the honour I supplicated for would be.

But still she insisted upon being a free agent; of seeing herself in other lodgings before she would give what I urged the least consideration. Nor would she promise me favour even then, or to permit my visits. How then, as I asked her, could I comply, without resolving to lose her for ever?

She put her hand to her forehead often as she talked; and at last, pleading disorder in her head, retired; neither of us satisfied with the other. But she ten times more dissatisfied with me, than I with her.

Dorcas seems to be coming into favour with her—

What now!—What now!

MONDAY NIGHT.

How determined is this lady!—Again had she like to have escaped us!—What a fixed resentment!—She only, I find, assumed a little calm, in order to quiet suspicion. She was got down, and actually had unbolted the street-door, before I could get to her; alarmed as I was by Mrs.

Sinclair's cookmaid, who was the only one that saw her fly through the passage: yet lightning was not quicker than I.

Again I brought her back to the dining-room, with infinite reluctance on her part. And, before her face, ordered a servant to be placed constantly at the bottom of the stairs for the future.

She seemed even choked with grief and disappointment.

Dorcas was exceedingly assiduous about her; and confidently gave it as her own opinion, that her dear lady should be permitted to go to another lodging, since this was so disagreeable to her: were she to be killed for saying so, she would say it. And was good Dorcas for this afterwards.

But for some time the dear creature was all passion and violence—

I see, I see, said she, when I had brought her up, what I am to expect from your new professions, O vilest of men!—

Have I offered to you, my beloved creature, any thing that can justify this impatience after a more hopeful calm?

She wrung her hands. She disordered her head-dress. She tore her ruffles. She was in a perfect phrensy.

I dreaded her returning malady: but, entreaty rather exasperating, I affected an angry air.—I bid her expect the worst she had to fear—and was menacing on, in hopes to intimidate her; when, dropping to my feet,

'Twill be a mercy, said she, the highest act of mercy you can do, to kill me outright upon this spot—this happy spot, as I will, in my last moments, call it!—Then, baring, with a still more frantic violence, part of her enchanting neck—Here, here, said the soul-harrowing beauty, let thy pointed mercy enter! and I will thank thee, and forgive thee for all the dreadful past!—With my latest gasp will I forgive and thank thee!—Or help me to the means, and I will myself put out of the way so miserable a wretch! And bless thee for those means!

Why all this extravagant passion? Why all these exclamations? Have I offered any new injury to you, my dearest life? What a phrensy is this! Am I not ready to make you all the reparation that I can make you? Had I not reason to hope—

No, no, no, no, as before, shaking her head with wild impatience, as resolved not to attend to what I said.

My resolutions are so honourable, if you will permit them to take effect, that I need not be solicitous where you go, if you will but permit my visits, and receive my vows.—And God is my witness, that I bring you not back from the door with any view to your dishonour, but the contrary: and this moment I will send for a minister to put an end to all your doubts and fears.

Say this, and say a thousand times more, and bind every word with a solemn appeal to that God whom thou art accustomed to invoke to the truth of the vilest falsehoods, and all will still be short of what thou has vowed and promised to me. And, were not my heart to abhor thee, and to rise against thee, for thy perjuries, as it does, I would not, I tell thee once more, I would not, bind my soul in covenant with such a man, for a thousand worlds!

Compose yourself, however, Madam; for your own sake, compose yourself. Permit me to raise you up; abhorred as I am of your soul!

Nay, if I must not touch you; for she wildly slapt my hands; but with such a sweet passionate air, her bosom heaving and throbbing as she looked up to me, that although I was most sincerely enraged, I could with transport have pressed her to mine.

If I must not touch you, I will not.—But depend upon it, [and I assumed the sternest air I could assume, to try what it would do,] depend upon it, Madam, that this is not the way to avoid the evils you dread. Let me do what I will, I cannot be used worse—Dorcas, begone!

She arose, Dorcas being about to withdraw; and wildly caught hold of her arm: O Dorcas! If thou art of mine own sex, leave me not, I charge thee!—Then quitting Dorcas, down she threw herself upon her knees, in the furthest corner of the room, clasping a chair with her face laid upon the bottom of it!—O where can I be safe?—Where, where can I be safe, from this man of violence?—

This gave Dorcas an opportunity to confirm herself in her lady's confidence: the wench threw herself at my feet, while I seemed in violent wrath; and embracing my knees, Kill me, Sir, kill me, Sir, if you please!—I must throw myself in your way, to save my lady. I beg your pardon, Sir—but you must be set on!—God forgive the mischief-makers!—But your own heart, if left to itself, would not permit these things—spare, however, Sir! spare my lady, I beseech you!—bustling on her knees about me, as if I were intending to approach her lady, had I not been

restrained by her.

This, humoured by me, Begone, devil!—Officious devil, begone!—startled the dear creature: who, snatching up hastily her head from the chair, and as hastily popping it down again in terror, hit her nose, I suppose, against the edge of the chair; and it gushed out with blood, running in a stream down her bosom; she herself was too much frightened to heed it!

Never was mortal man in such terror and agitation as I; for I instantly concluded, that she had stabbed herself with some concealed instrument.

I ran to her in a wild agony—for Dorcas was frightened out of all her mock interposition——

What have you done!—O what have you done!—Look up to me, my dearest life!—Sweet injured innocence, look up to me! What have you done!—Long will I not survive you!—And I was upon the point of drawing my sword to dispatch myself, when I discovered—[What an unmanly blockhead does this charming creature make me at her pleasure!] that all I apprehended was but a bloody nose, which, as far as I know (for it could not be stopped in a quarter of an hour) may have saved her head and her intellects.

But I see by this scene, that the sweet creature is but a pretty coward at bottom; and that I can terrify her out of her virulence against me, whenever I put on sternness and anger. But then, as a qualifier to the advantage this gives me over her, I find myself to be a coward too, which I had not before suspected, since I was capable of being so easily terrified by the apprehensions of her offering violence to herself.

LETTER XXIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

But with all this dear creature's resentment against me, I cannot, for my heart, think but she will get all over, and consent to enter the pale with me. Were she even to die to-morrow, and to know she should, would not a woman of her sense, of her punctilio, and in her situation, and of so proud a family, rather die married, than otherwise?—No doubt but she would; although she were to hate the man ever so heartily. If so, there is now but one man in the world whom she can have—and that is me.

Now I talk [familiar writing is but talking, Jack] thus glibly of entering the pale, thou wilt be ready to question me, I know, as to my intentions on this head.

As much of my heart, as I know of it myself, will I tell thee.—When I am from her, I cannot still help hesitating about marriage; and I even frequently resolve against it, and determine to press my favourite scheme for cohabitation. But when I am with her, I am ready to say, to swear, and to do, whatever I think will be the most acceptable to her, and were a parson at hand, I should plunge at once, no doubt of it, into the state.

I have frequently thought, in common cases, that it is happy for many giddy fellows [there are giddy fellows, as well as giddy girls, Jack; and perhaps those are as often drawn in, as these] that ceremony and parade are necessary to the irrevocable solemnity; and that there is generally time for a man to recollect himself in the space between the heated over-night, and the cooler next morning; or I know not who could escape the sweet gypsies, whose fascinating powers are so much aided by our own raised imaginations.

A wife at any time, I used to say. I had ever confidence and vanity enough to think that no woman breathing could deny her hand when I held out mine. I am confoundedly mortified to find that this lady is able to hold me at bay, and to refuse all my honest vows.

What force [allow me a serious reflection, Jack: it will be put down! What force] have evil habits upon the human mind! When we enter upon a devious course, we think we shall have it in our power when we will return to the right path. But it is not so, I plainly see: For, who can acknowledge with more justice this dear creature's merits, and his own errors, than I? Whose regret, at times, can be deeper than mine, for the injuries I have done her? Whose resolutions to repair those injuries stronger?—Yet how transitory is my penitence!—How am I hurried away—Canst thou tell by what?—O devil of youth, and devil of intrigue, how do you mislead me!—How often do we end in occasions for the deepest remorse, what we begin in wantonness!—

At the present writing, however, the turn of the scale is in behalf of matrimony—for I despair of carrying with her my favourite point.

The lady tells Dorcas, that her heart is broken: and that she shall live but a little while. I think nothing of that, if we marry. In the first place, she knows not what a mind unapprehensive will do for her, in a state to which all the sex look forwards with high satisfaction. How often have the whole of the sacred conclave been thus deceived in their choice of a pope; not considering that the new dignity is of itself sufficient to give new life! A few months' heart's ease will give my charmer a quite different notion of things: and I dare say, as I have heretofore said,* once married, and I am married for life.

* See Letter IX. of this volume.

I will allow that her pride, in one sense, has suffered abasement: but her triumph is the greater in every other. And while I can think that all her trials are but additions to her honour, and that I have laid the foundations of her glory in my own shame, can I be called cruel, if I am not affected with her grief as some men would be?

And for what should her heart be broken? Her will is unviolated;—at present, however, her will is unviolated. The destroying of good habits, and the introducing of bad, to the corrupting of the whole heart, is the violation. That her will is not to be corrupted, that her mind is not to be debased, she has hitherto unquestionably proved. And if she give cause for farther trials, and hold fast her integrity, what ideas will she have to dwell upon, that will be able to corrupt her morals? What vestigia, what remembrances, but such as will inspire abhorrence of the attempter?

What nonsense then to suppose that such a mere notional violation as she has suffered should be able to cut asunder the strings of life?

Her religion, married, or not married, will set her above making such a trifling accident, such an involuntary suffering fatal to her.

Such considerations as these they are that support me against all apprehensions of bugbear consequences; and I would have them have weight with thee; who are such a doughty advocate for her. And yet I allow thee this; that she really makes too much of it; takes it too much to heart. To be sure she ought to have forgot it by this time, except the charming, charming consequence happen, that still I am in hopes will happen, were I to proceed no farther. And, if she apprehended this herself, then has the dear over-nice soul some reason for taking it so much to heart; and yet would not, I think, refuse to legitimate.

O Jack! had I am imperial diadem, I swear to thee, that I would give it up, even to my enemy, to have one charming boy by this lady. And should she escape me, and no such effect follow, my revenge on her family, and, in such a case, on herself, would be incomplete, and I should reproach myself as long as I lived.

Were I to be sure that this foundation is laid [And why may I not hope it is?] I should not doubt to have her still (should she withstand her day of grace) on my own conditions; nor should I, if it were so, question that revived affection in her, which a woman seldom fails to have for the father of her first child, whether born in wedlock, or out of it.

And pr'ythee, Jack, see in this my ardent hope, a distinction in my favour from other rakes; who, almost to a man, follow their inclinations without troubling themselves about consequences. In imitation, as one would think, of the strutting villain of a bird, which from feathered lady to feathered lady pursues his imperial pleasures, leaving it to his sleek paramours to hatch the genial product in holes and corners of their own finding out.

LETTER XXIV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY MORN. JUNE 20.

Well, Jack, now are we upon another footing together. This dear creature will not let me be good. She is now authorizing all my plots by her own example.

Thou must be partial in the highest degree, if now thou blamest me for resuming my former schemes, since in that case I shall but follow her cue. No forced construction of her actions do I make on this occasion, in order to justify a bad cause or a worse intention. A slight pretence, indeed, served the wolf when he had a mind to quarrel with the lamb; but this is not now my case.

For here (wouldst thou have thought it?) taking advantage of Dorcas's compassionate temper, and of some warm expressions which the tender-hearted wench let fall against the cruelty of men, and wishing to have it in her power to serve her, has she given her the following note, signed by her maiden name: for she has thought fit, in positive and plain words, to own to the pitying Dorcas that she is not married.

MONDAY, JUNE 19.

I then underwritten do hereby promise, that, on my coming into possession of my own estate, I will provide for Dorcas Martindale in a gentlewoman-like manner, in my own house: or, if I do not soon obtain that possession, or should first die, I do hereby bind myself, my executors, and administrators, to pay to her, or her order, during the term of her natural life, the sum of five pounds on each of the four usual quarterly days in the year; on condition that she faithfully assist me in my escape from an illegal confinement under which I now labour. The first quarterly payment to commence and be payable at the end of three months immediately following the day of my deliverance. And I do also promise to give her, as a testimony of my honour in the rest, a diamond ring, which I have showed her. Witness my hand this nineteenth day of June, in the year above written.

CLARISSA HARLOWE.

Now, Jack, what terms wouldst thou have me to keep with such a sweet corruptress? Seest thou not how she hates me? Seest thou not that she is resolved never to forgive me? Seest thou not, however, that she must disgrace herself in the eye of the world, if she actually should escape? That she must be subjected to infinite distress and hazard! For whom has she to receive and protect her? Yet to determine to risque all these evils! and furthermore to stoop to artifice, to be guilty of the reigning vice of the times, of bribery and corruption! O Jack, Jack! say not, write not another word in her favour!

Thou hast blamed me for bringing her to this house: but had I carried her to any other in England, where there would have been one servant or inmate capable either of compassion or corruption, what must have been the consequence?

But seest thou not, however, that in this flimsy contrivance, the dear implacable, like a drowning man, catches at a straw to save herself!—A straw shall she find to be the refuge she has resorted to.

LETTER XXV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUES. MORN. TEN O'CLOCK

Very ill—exceedingly ill—as Dorcas tells me, in order to avoid seeing me—and yet the dear soul may be so in her mind. But is not that equivocation? Some one passion predominating in every human breast, breaks through principle, and controuls us all. Mine is love and revenge taking turns. Her's is hatred.—But this is my consolation, that hatred appeased is love begun; or love renewed, I may rather say, if love ever had footing here.

But reflectioning apart, thou seest, Jack, that her plot is beginning to work. To-morrow is to break out.

I have been abroad, to set on foot a plot of circumvention. All fair now, Belford!

I insisted upon visiting my indisposed fair-one. Dorcas made officious excuses for her. I cursed the wench in her hearing for her impertinence; and stamped and made a clutter; which was improved into an apprehension to the lady that I would have flung her faithful confidante from the top of the stairs to the bottom.

He is a violent wretch!—But, Dorcas, [dear Dorcas, now it is,] thou shalt have a friend in me to the last day of my life.

And what now, Jack, dost think the name of her good angel is!—Why Dorcas Martindale, christian and super (no more Wykes) as in the promissory note in my former—and the dear creature has bound her to her by the most solemn obligations, besides the tie of interest.

Whither, Madam, do you design to go when you get out of this house?

I will throw myself into the first open house I can find; and beg protection till I can get a coach, or a lodging in some honest family.

What will you do for clothes, Madam? I doubt you'll be able to take any away with you, but what you'll have on.

O, no matter for clothes, if I can but get out of this house.

What will you do for money, Madam? I have heard his honour express his concern, that he could not prevail upon you to be obliged to him, though he apprehended that you must be short of money.

O, I have rings and other valuables. Indeed I have but four guineas, and two of them I found lately wrapt up in a bit of lace, designed for a charitable use. But now, alas! charity begins at home!—But I have one dear friend left, if she be living, as I hope in God she is! to whom I can be obliged, if I want. O Dorcas! I must ere now have heard from her, if I had had fair play.

Well, Madam, your's is a hard lot. I pity you at my heart!

Thank you, Dorcas!—I am unhappy, that I did not think before, that I might have confided in thy pity, and in thy sex!

I pitied you, Madam, often and often: but you were always, as I thought, diffident of me. And then I doubted not but you were married; and I thought his honour was unkindly used by you. So that I thought it my duty to wish well to his honour, rather than to what I thought to be your humours, Madam. Would to Heaven that I had known before that you were not married!—Such a lady! such a fortune! to be so sadly betrayed;—

Ah, Dorcas! I was basely drawn in! My youth—my ignorance of the world—and I have some things to reproach myself with when I look back.

Lord, Madam, what deceitful creatures are these men!—Neither oaths, nor vows—I am sure! I am sure! [and then with her apron she gave her eyes half a dozen hearty rubs] I may curse the time that I came into this house!

Here was accounting for her bold eyes! And was it not better for Dorcas to give up a house which her lady could not think worse of than she did, in order to gain the reputation of sincerity, than by offering to vindicate it, to make her proffered services suspected.

Poor Dorcas!—Bless me! how little do we, who have lived all our time in the country, know of this wicked town!

Had I been able to write, cried the veteran wench, I should certainly have given some other near relations I have in Wales a little inkling of matters; and they would have saved me from— from— from—

Her sobs were enough. The apprehensions of women on such subjects are ever aforehand with speech.

And then, sobbing on, she lifted her apron to her face again. She

showed me how.

Poor Dorcas!—Again wiping her own charming eyes.

All love, all compassion, is this dear creature to every one in affliction but me.

And would not an aunt protect her kinswoman?—Abominable wretch!

I can't—I can't—I can't—say, my aunt was privy to it. She gave me good advice. She knew not for a great while that I was—that I was—that I was—ugh!—ugh!—ugh!—

No more, no more, good Dorcas—What a world do we live in!—What a house am I in!—But come, don't weep, (though she herself could not forbear:) my being betrayed into it, though to my own ruin, may be a happy event for thee: and, if I live, it shall.

I thank you, my good lady, blubbering. I am sorry, very sorry, you have had so hard a lot. But it may be the saving of my soul, if I can get to your ladyship's house. Had I but known that your ladyship was not married, I would have eat my own flesh, before—before—before—

Dorcas sobbed and wept. The lady sighed and wept also.

But now, Jack, for a serious reflection upon the premises.

How will the good folks account for it, that Satan has such faithful instruments, and that the bond of wickedness is a stronger bond than the ties of virtue; as if it were the nature of the human mind to be villanous? For here, had Dorcas been good, and been tempted as she was tempted to any thing evil, I make no doubt but she would have yielded to the temptation.

And cannot our fraternity in an hundred instances give proof of the like predominance of vice over virtue? And that we have risked more to serve and promote the interests of the former, than ever a good man did to serve a good man or a good cause? For have we not been prodigal of life and fortune? have we not defied the civil magistrate upon occasion? and have we not attempted rescues, and dared all things, only to extricate a pounded profligate?

Whence, Jack, can this be?

O! I have it, I believe. The vicious are as bad as they can be; and do the Devil's work without looking after; while he is continually spreading snares for the others; and, like a skilful angler, suiting his baits to the fish he angles for.

Nor let even honest people, so called, blame poor Dorcas for her fidelity in a bad cause. For does not the general, who implicitly serves an ambitious prince in his unjust designs upon his neighbours, or upon his own oppressed subjects; and even the lawyer, who, for the sake of a paltry fee, undertakes to whiten a black cause, and to defend it against one he knows to be good, do the very same thing as Dorcas? And are they not both every whit as culpable? Yet the one shall be dubbed a hero, the other called an admirable fellow, and be contended for by every client, and his double-tongued abilities shall carry him through all the high preferments of the law with reputation and applause.

Well, but what shall be done, since the lady is so much determined on removing!—Is there no way to oblige her, and yet to make the very act subservient to my other views? I fancy such a way may be found out.

I will study for it—

Suppose I suffer her to make an escape? Her heart is in it. If she effect it, the triumph she will have over me upon it will be a counterbalance for all she has suffered.

I will oblige her if I can.

LETTER XXVI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

Tired with a succession of fatiguing days and sleepless nights, and with contemplating the precarious situation I stand in with my beloved, I fell into a profound reverie; which brought on sleep; and that produced a dream; a fortunate dream; which, as I imagine, will afford my working mind the means to effect the obliging double purpose my heart is now once more set upon.

What, as I have often contemplated, is the enjoyment of the finest woman in the world, to the contrivance, the bustle, the surprises, and at last the happy conclusion of a well-laid plot!—The charming roundabouts, to come to the nearest way home;—the doubts; the apprehensions; the heart-achings; the meditated triumphs—these are the joys that make the blessing dear.—For all the rest, what is it?—What but to find an angel in imagination dwindled down to a woman in fact?—But to my dream—

Methought it was about nine on Wednesday morning that a chariot, with a dowager's arms upon the doors, and in it a grave matronly lady [not unlike mother H. in the face; but, in her heart, Oh! how unlike!] stopped at a grocer's shop, about ten doors on the other side of the way, in order to buy some groceries: and methought Dorcas, having been out to see if the coast were clear for her lady's flight, and if a coach were to be got near the place, espied the chariot with the dowager's arms, and this matronly lady: and what, methought, did Dorcas, that subtle traitress, do, but whip up to the old matronly lady, and lifting up her voice, say, Good my Lady, permit me one word with your Ladyship!

What thou hast to say to me, say on, quoth the old lady; the grocer retiring, and standing aloof, to give Dorcas leave to speak; who, methought, in words like these accosted the lady:

'You seem, Madam, to be a very good lady; and here, in this neighbourhood, at a house of no high repute, is an innocent lady of rank and fortune, beautiful as a May morning, and youthful as a rose-bud, and full as sweet and lovely, who has been tricked thither by a wicked gentleman, practised in the ways of the town, and this very night will she be ruined if she get not out of his hands. Now, O Lady! if you will extend your compassionate goodness to this fair young lady, in whom, the moment you behold her, you will see cause to believe all I say, and let her but have a place in your chariot, and remain in your protection for one day only, till she can send a man and horse to her rich and powerful friends, you may save from ruin a lady who has no equal for virtue as well as beauty.'

Methought the old lady, moved with Dorcas's story, answered and said, 'Hasten, O damsel, who in a happy moment art come to put it in my power to serve the innocent and virtuous, which it has always been my delight to do: hasten to this young lady, and bid her hie hither to me with all speed; and tell her, that my chariot shall be her asylum: and if I find all that thou sayest true, my house shall be her sanctuary, and I will protect her from all her oppressors.'

Hereupon, methought, this traitress Dorcas hied back to the lady, and made report of what she had done. And, methought, the lady highly approved of Dorcas's proceeding and blessed her for her good thought.

And I lifted up mine eyes, and behold the lady issued out of the house, and without looking back, ran to the chariot with the dowager's coat upon it; and was received by the matronly lady with open arms, and 'Welcome, welcome, welcome, fair young lady, who so well answer the description of the faithful damsel: and I will carry you instantly to my house, where you shall meet with all the good usage your heart can wish for, till you can apprise your rich and powerful friends of your past dangers, and present escape.'

'Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, worthy, thrice worthy lady, who afford so kindly your protection to a most unhappy young creature, who has been basely seduced and betrayed, and brought to the very brink of destruction.'

Methought, then, the matronly lady, who had, by the time the young lady came to her, bought and paid for the goods she wanted, ordered her coachman to drive home with all speed; who stopped not till he had arrived in a certain street not far from Lincoln's-inn-fields, where the matronly lady lived in a sumptuous dwelling, replete with damsels who wrought curiously in muslins, cambrics, and fine linen, and in every good work that industrious damsels love to be employed about, except the

loom and the spinning-wheel.

And, methought, all the way the young lady and the old lady rode, and after they came in, till dinner was ready, the young lady filled up the time with the dismal account of her wrongs and her sufferings, the like of which was never heard by mortal ear; and this in so moving a manner, that the good old lady did nothing but weep, and sigh, and sob, and inveigh against the arts of wicked men, and against that abominable 'Squire Lovelace, who was a plotting villain, methought she said; and more than that, an unchained Beelzebub.

Methought I was in a dreadful agony, when I found the lady had escaped, and in my wrath had like to have slain Dorcas, and our mother, and every one I met. But, by some quick transition, and strange metamorphosis, which dreams do not usually account for, methought, all of a sudden, this matronly lady turned into the famous mother H. herself; and, being an old acquaintance of mother Sinclair, was prevailed upon to assist in my plot upon the young lady.

Then, methought, followed a strange scene; for mother H. longing to hear more of the young lady's story, and night being come, besought her to accept of a place in her own bed, in order to have all the talk to themselves. For, methought, two young nieces of her's had broken in upon them, in the middle of the dismal tale.

Accordingly, going early to bed, and the sad story being resumed, with as great earnestness on one side as attention on the other, before the young lady had gone far in it, mother H. methought was taken with a fit of the colic; and her tortures increasing, was obliged to rise to get a cordial she used to find specific in this disorder, to which she was unhappily subject.

Having thus risen, and stept to her closet, methought she let fall the wax taper in her return; and then [O metamorphosis still stranger than the former! what unaccountable things are dreams!] coming to bed again in the dark, the young lady, to her infinite astonishment, grief, and surprise, found mother H. turned into a young person of the other sex; and although Lovelace was the abhorred of her soul, yet, fearing it was some other person, it was matter of consolation to her, when she found it was no other than himself, and that she had been still the bed-fellow of but one and the same man.

A strange promiscuous huddle of adventures followed, scenes perpetually shifting; now nothing heard from the lady, but sighs, groans, exclamations, faintings, dyings—From the gentleman, but vows, promises, protestations, disclaimers of purposes pursued, and all the gentle and ungentle pressures of the lover's warfare.

Then, as quick as thought (for dreams, thou knowest confine not themselves to the rules of the drama) ensued recoveries, lyings-in, christenings, the smiling boy, amply, even in her own opinion, rewarding the suffering mother.

Then the grandfather's estate yielded up, possession taken of it: living very happily upon it: her beloved Norton her companion; Miss Howe her visiter; and (admirable! thrice admirable!) enabled to compare notes with her; a charming girl, by the same father, to her friend's charming boy; who, as they grow up, in order to consolidate their mamma's friendships, (for neither have dreams regard to consanguinity,) intermarry; change names by act of parliament, to enjoy my estate—and I know not what of the like incongruous stuff.

I awoke, as thou mayest believe, in great disorder, and rejoiced to find my charmer in the next room, and Dorcas honest.

Now thou wilt say this was a very odd dream. And yet, (for I am a strange dreamer,) it is not altogether improbable that something like it may happen; as the pretty simpleton has the weakness to confide in Dorcas, whom till now she disliked.

But I forgot to tell thee one part of my dream; and that was, that, the next morning, the lady gave way to such transports of grief and resentment, that she was with difficulty diverted from making an attempt upon her own life. But, however, at last was prevailed upon to resolve to live, and make the best of the matter: a letter, methought, from Captain Tomlinson helping to pacify her, written to apprise me, that her uncle Harlowe would certainly be at Kentish-town on Wednesday night, June 28, the following day (the 29th) being his birth-day; and be doubly desirous, on that account, that our nuptials should be then privately solemnized in his presence.

But is Thursday, the 29th, her uncle's anniversary, methinks thou askest?—It is; or else the day of celebration should have been earlier still. Three weeks ago I heard her say it was: and I have down the

birthday of every one in the family, and the wedding-day of her father and mother. The minutest circumstances are often of great service in matters of the last importance.

And what sayest thou now to my dream?

Who says that, sleeping and waking, I have not fine helps from somebody, some spirit rather, as thou'lt be apt to say? But no wonder that a Beelzebub has his devilkins to attend his call.

I can have no manner of doubt of succeeding in mother H.'s part of the scheme; for will the lady (who resolves to throw herself into the first house she can enter, or to bespeak the protection of the first person she meets, and who thinks there can be no danger out of this house, equal to what she apprehends from me in it) scruple to accept of the chariot of a dowager, accidentally offered? and the lady's protection engaged by her faithful Dorcas, so highly bribed to promote her escape?—And then Mrs. H. has the air and appearance of a venerable matron, and is not such a forbidding devil as Mrs. Sinclair.

The pretty simpleton knows nothing in the world; nor that people who have money never want assistants in their views, be they what they will. How else could the princes of the earth be so implicitly served as they are, change they hands every so often, and be their purposes ever so wicked.

If I can but get her to go on with me till Wednesday next week, we shall be settled together pretty quietly by that time. And indeed if she has any gratitude, and has in her the least of her sex's foibles, she must think I deserve her favour, by the pains she has cost me. For dearly do they all love that men should take pains about them and for them.

And here, for the present, I will lay down my pen, and congratulate myself upon my happy invention (since her obstinacy puts me once more upon exercising it.)—But with this resolution, I think, that, if the present contrivance fail me, I will exert all the faculties of my mind, all my talents, to procure for myself a regal right to her favour and that in defiance of all my antipathies to the married state; and of the suggestions of the great devil out of the house, and of his secret agents in it.—Since, if now she is not to be prevailed upon, or drawn in, it will be in vain to attempt her further.

LETTER XXVII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY NIGHT, JUNE 20.

No admittance yet to my charmer! she is very ill—in a violent fever, Dorcas thinks. Yet will have no advice.

Dorcas tells her how much I am concerned at it.

But again let me ask, Does this lady do right to make herself ill, when she is not ill? For my own part, libertine as people think me, when I had occasion to be sick, I took a dose of ipecacuanha, that I might not be guilty of a falsehood; and most heartily sick was I; as she, who then pitied me, full well knew. But here to pretend to be very ill, only to get an opportunity to run away, in order to avoid forgiving a man who has offended her, how unchristian!—If good folks allow themselves in these breaches of a known duty, and in these presumptuous contrivances to deceive, who, Belford, shall blame us?

I have a strange notion that the matronly lady will be certainly at the grocer's shop at the hour of nine tomorrow morning: for Dorcas heard me tell Mrs. Sinclair, that I should go out at eight precisely; and then she is to try for a coach: and if the dowager's chariot should happen to be there, how lucky will it be for my charmer! how strangely will my dream be made out!

I have just received a letter from Captain Tomlinson. Is it not wonderful? for that was part of my dream.

I shall always have a prodigious regard to dreams henceforward. I know not but I may write a book upon that subject; for my own experience will furnish out a great part of it. 'Glanville of Witches,' 'Baxter's History of Spirits and Apparitions,' and the 'Royal Pedant's Demonology,' will be nothing at all to Lovelace's Reveries.

The letter is just what I dreamed it to be. I am only concerned that uncle John's anniversary did not happen three or four days sooner; for should any new misfortune befall my charmer, she may not be able to support her spirits so long as till Thursday in the next week. Yet it will give me the more time for new expedients, should my present contrivance fail; which I cannot however suppose.

TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. MONDAY, JUNE 19.

Dear Sir,

I can now return your joy, for the joy you have given me, as well as my dear friend Mr. Harlowe, in the news of his beloved niece's happy recovery; for he is determined to comply with her wishes and your's, and to give her to you with his own hand.

As the ceremony has been necessarily delayed by reason of her illness, and as Mr. Harlowe's birth-day is on Thursday the 29th of this instant June, when he enters into the seventy-fourth year of his age; and as time may be wanted to complete the dear lady's recovery; he is very desirous that the marriage shall be solemnized upon it; that he may afterwards have double joy on that day to the end of his life.

For this purpose he intends to set out privately, so as to be at Kentish-town on Wednesday se'nnight in the evening.

All the family used, he says, to meet to celebrate it with him; but as they are at present in too unhappy a situation for that, he will give out, that, not being able to bear the day at home, he has resolved to be absent for two or three days.

He will set out on horseback, attended only with one trusty servant, for the greater privacy. He will be at the most creditable-looking public house there, expecting you both next morning, if he hear nothing from me to prevent him. And he will go to town with you after the ceremony is performed, in the coach he supposes you will come in.

He is very desirous that I should be present on the occasion. But this I have promised him, at his request, that I will be up before the day, in order to see the settlements executed, and every thing properly prepared.

He is very glad you have the license ready.

He speaks very kindly of you, Mr. Lovelace; and says, that, if any of the family stand out after he has seen the ceremony performed, he will separate from them, and unite himself to his dear niece and her interests.

I owned to you, when in town last, that I took slight notice to my dear friend of the misunderstanding between you and his niece; and that I did this, for fear the lady should have shown any little discontent in his presence, had I been able to prevail upon him to go up in person, as then was doubtful. But I hope nothing of that discontent remains now.

My absence, when your messenger came, must excuse me for not writing by him.

Be pleased to make my most respectful compliments acceptable to the admirable lady, and believe me to be

Your most faithful and obedient servant, ANTONY TOMLINSON.

This letter I sealed, and broke open. It was brought, thou mayest suppose, by a particular messenger; the seal such a one as the writer need be ashamed of. I took care to inquire after the Captain's health, in my beloved's hearing; and it is now ready to be produced as a pacifier, according as she shall take on or resent, if the two metamorphoses happen pursuant to my wonderful dream; as, having great faith in dreams, I dare say they will.—I think it will not be amiss, in changing my clothes, to have this letter of the worthy Captain lie in my beloved's way.

LETTER XXVIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. WEDN. NOON, JUNE 21.

What shall I say now!—I, who but a few hours ago had such faith in dreams, and had proposed out of hand to begin my treatise of dreams sleeping and dreams waking, and was pleasing myself with the dialogues between the old matronal lady and the young lady, and with the metamorphoses, (absolutely assured that every thing would happen as my dream chalked it out,) shall never more depend upon those flying follies, those illusions of a fancy depraved, and run mad.

Thus confoundedly have matters happened.

I went out at eight o'clock in high good humour with myself, in order to give the sought-for opportunity to the plotting mistress and corrupted maid; only ordering Will. to keep a good look-out for fear his lady should mistrust my plot, or mistake a hackney-coach for the dowager-lady's chariot. But first I sent to know how she did; and receiving for answer, Very ill: had a very bad night: which latter was but too probable; since this I know, that people who have plots in their heads as seldom have as deserve good ones.

I desired a physician might be called in; but was refused.

I took a walk in St. James's Park, congratulating myself all the way on my rare inventions: then, impatient, I took coach, with one of the windows quite up, the other almost up, playing at bo-peep in every chariot I saw pass in my way to Lincoln's-inn-fields: and when arrived there I sent the coachman to desire any one of Mother H.'s family to come to me to the coach-side, not doubting but I should have intelligence of my fair fugitive there; it being then half an hour after ten.

A servant came, who gave me to understand that the matronly lady was just returned by herself in the chariot.

Frighted out of my wits, I alighted, and heard from the mother's own mouth, that Dorcas had engaged her to protect the lady; but came to tell her afterwards, that she had changed her mind, and would not quit the house.

Quite astonished, not knowing what might have happened, I ordered the coachman to lash away to our mother's.

Arriving here in an instant, the first word I asked, was, If the lady was safe?

[Mr. Lovelace here gives a very circumstantial relation of all that passed between the Lady and Dorcas. But as he could only guess at her motives for refusing to go off, when Dorcas told her that she had engaged for her the protection of the dowager-lady, it is thought proper to omit this relation, and to supply it by some memoranda of the Lady's. But it is first necessary to account for the occasion on which those memoranda were made.

The reader may remember, that in the letter written to Miss Howe, on her escape to Hampstead,* she promises to give her the particulars of her flight at leisure. She had indeed thoughts of continuing her account of every thing that had passed between her and Mr. Lovelace since her last narrative letter. But the uncertainty she was in from that time, with the execrable treatment she met with on her being deluded back again, followed by a week's delirium, had hitherto hindered her from prosecuting her intention. But, nevertheless, having it still in her view to perform her promise as soon as she had opportunity, she made minutes of every thing as it passed, in order to help her memory:—'Which,' as she observes in one place, 'she could less trust to since her late disorders than before.' In these minutes, or book of memoranda, she observes, 'That having apprehensions that Dorcas might be a traitress, she would have got away while she was gone out to see for a coach; and actually slid down stairs with that intent. But that, seeing Mrs. Sinclair in the entry, (whom Dorcas had planted there while she went out,) she speeded up again unseen.'

* See Vol. V. Letter XXI.

She then went up to the dining-room, and saw the letter of Captain Tomlinson: on which she observes in her memorandum-book as follows:]

'How am I puzzled now!—He might leave this letter on purpose: none of the other papers left with it being of any consequence: What is the alternative?—To stay, and be the wife of the vilest of men—how my heart resists that!—To attempt to get off, and fail, ruin inevitable!—Dorcas may betray me!—I doubt she is still his implement!—At his going out, he whispered her, as I saw, unobserved—in a very familiar manner too—

Never fear, Sir, with a courtesy.

'In her agreeing to connive at my escape, she provided not for her own safety, if I got away: yet had reason, in that case, to expect his vengeance. And wants not forethought.—To have taken her with me, was to be in the power of her intelligence, if a faithless creature.—Let me, however, though I part not with my caution, keep my charity!—Can there be any woman so vile to a woman?—O yes!—Mrs. Sinclair: her aunt.—The Lord deliver me!—But, alas!—I have put myself out of the course of his protection by the natural means—and am already ruined! A father's curse likewise against me! Having made vain all my friends' cautions and sollicitudes, I must not hope for miracles in my favour!

'If I do escape, what may become of me, a poor, helpless, deserted creature!—Helpless from sex!—from circumstances!—Exposed to every danger!—Lord protect me!

'His vile man not gone with him!—Lurking hereabouts, no doubt, to watch my steps!—I will not go away by the chariot, however.—

'That the chariot should come so opportunely! So like his many opportunities!—That Dorcas should have the sudden thought!—Should have the courage with the thought, to address a lady in behalf of an absolute stranger to that lady! That the lady should so readily consent! Yet the transaction between them to take up so much time, their distance in degree considered: for, arduous as the case was, and precious as the time, Dorcas was gone above half an hour! Yet the chariot was said to be ready at a grocer's not many doors off!

'Indeed some elderly ladies are talkative: and there are, no doubt, some good people in the world.—

'But that it should chance to be a widow lady, who could do what she pleased! That Dorcas should know her to be so by the lozenge! Persons in her station are not usually so knowing, I believe, in heraldry.

'Yet some may! for servants are fond of deriving collateral honours and distinctions, as I may call them, from the quality, or people of rank, whom they serve. But this sly servant not gone with him! Then this letter of Tomlinson!—

'Although I am resolved never to have this wretch, yet, may I not throw myself into my uncle's protection at Kentish-town, or Highgate, if I cannot escape before: and so get clear of him? May not the evil I know be less than what I may fall into, if I can avoid farther villany? Farther villany he has not yet threatened; freely and justly as I have treated him!—I will not go, I think. At least, unless I can send this fellow away.*—

* She tried to do this; but was prevented by the fellow's pretending to put his ankle out, by a slip down stairs—A trick, says his contriving master, in his omitted relation, I had taught him, on a like occasion, at Amiens.

'The fellow a villain! The wench, I doubt, a vile wench. At last concerned for her own safety. Plays off and on about a coach.

'All my hopes of getting off at present over!—Unhappy creature! to what farther evils art thou reserved! Oh! how my heart rises at the necessity I must still be under to see and converse with so very vile a man!'

LETTER XXIX

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

Disappointed in her meditated escape; obliged, against her will, to meet me in the dining-room; and perhaps apprehensive of being upbraided for her art in feigning herself ill; I expected that the dear perverse would begin with me with spirit and indignation. But I was in hopes, from the gentleness of her natural disposition; from the consideration which I expected from her on her situation; from the contents of the letter of Captain Tomlinson, which Dorcas told me she had seen; and from the time she had had to cool and reflect since she last admitted me to her presence, that she would not have carried it so strongly through as she did.

As I entered the dining-room, I congratulated her and myself upon her sudden recovery. And would have taken her hand, with an air of respectful tenderness; but she was resolved to begin where she left off.

She turned from me, drawing in her hand, with a repulsing and indignant aspect—I meet you once more, said she, because I cannot help it. What have you to say to me? Why am I to be thus detained against my will?

With the utmost solemnity of speech and behaviour, I urged the ceremony. I saw I had nothing else for it. I had a letter in my pocket I said, [feeling for it, although I had not taken it from the table where I left it in the same room,] the contents of which, if attended to, would make us both happy. I had been loth to show it to her before, because I hoped to prevail upon her to be mine sooner than the day mentioned in it.

I felt for it in all my pockets, watching her eye mean time, which I saw glance towards the table where it lay.

I was uneasy that I could not find it—at last, directed again by her sly eye, I spied it on the table at the farther end of the room.

With joy I fetched it. Be pleased to read that letter, Madam; with an air of satisfied assurance.

She took it, and cast her eye over it, in such a careless way, as made it evident, that she had read it before: and then unthankfully tossed it into the window-seat before her.

I urged her to bless me to-morrow, or Friday morning; at least, that she would not render vain her uncle's journey, and kind endeavours to bring about a reconciliation among us all.

Among us all! repeated she, with an air equally disdainful and incredulous. O Lovelace, thou art surely nearly allied to the grand deceiver, in thy endeavour to suit temptations to inclinations?—But what honour, what faith, what veracity, were it possible that I could enter into parley with thee on this subject, (which it is not,) may I expect from such a man as thou hast shown thyself to be?

I was touched to the quick. A lady of your perfect character, Madam, who has feigned herself sick, on purpose to avoid seeing the man who adored her, should not—

I know what thou wouldst say, interrupted she—Twenty and twenty low things, that my soul would have been above being guilty of, and which I have despised myself for, have I been brought into by the infection of thy company, and by the necessity thou hadst laid me under, of appearing mean. But, I thank God, destitute as I am, that I am not, however, sunk so low, as to wish to be thine.

I, Madam, as the injurer, ought to have patience. It is for the injured to reproach. But your uncle is not in a plot against you, it is to be hoped. There are circumstances in the letter you cast your eyes over—

Again she interrupted me, Why, once more I ask you, am I detained in this house?—Do I not see myself surrounded by wretches, who, though they wear the habit of my sex, may yet, as far as I know, lie in wait for my perdition?

She would be very loth, I said, that Mrs. Sinclair and her nieces should be called up to vindicate themselves and their house.

Would but they kill me, let them come, and welcome, I will bless the hand that will strike the blow! Indeed I will.

'Tis idle, very idle, to talk of dying. Mere young-lady talk, when controuled by those they hate. But let me beseech you, dearest creature

—
Beseech me nothing. Let me not be detained thus against my will!—Unhappy creature that I am, said she, in a kind of phrensy, wringing her

hands at the same time, and turning from me, her eyes lifted up! 'Thy curse, O my cruel father, seems to be now in the height of its operation!—My weakened mind is full of forebodings, that I am in the way of being a lost creature as to both worlds! Blessed, blessed God, said she, falling on her knees, save me, O save me, from myself and from this man!'

I sunk down on my knees by her, excessively affecting—O that I could recall yesterday!—Forgive me, my dearest creature, forgive what is past, as it cannot now, but by one way, be retrieved. Forgive me only on this condition—That my future faith and honour—

She interrupted me, rising—If you mean to beg of me never to seek to avenge myself by law, or by an appeal to my relations, to my cousin Morden in particular, when he comes to England—

D—n the law, rising also, [she started,] and all those to whom you talk of appealing!—I defy both the one and the other—All I beg is YOUR forgiveness; and that you will, on my unfeigned contrition, re-establish me in your favour—

O no, no, no! lifting up her clasped hands, I never never will, never, never can forgive you!—and it is a punishment worse than death to me, that I am obliged to meet you, or to see you.

This is the last time, my dearest life, that you will ever see me in this posture, on this occasion: and again I kneeled to her. Let me hope, that you will be mine next Thursday, your uncle's birth-day, if not before. Would to Heaven I had never been a villain! Your indignation is not, cannot be greater, than my remorse—and I took hold of her gown for she was going from me.

Be remorse thy portion!—For thine own sake, be remorse thy portion!—I never, never will forgive thee!—I never, never will be thine!—Let me retire!—Why kneelest thou to the wretch whom thou hast so vilely humbled?

Say but, dearest creature, you will consider—say but you will take time to reflect upon what the honour of both our families requires of you. I will not rise. I will not permit you to withdraw [still holding her gown] till you tell me you will consider.—Take this letter. Weigh well your situation, and mine. Say you will withdraw to consider; and then I will not presume to withhold you.

Compulsion shall do nothing with me. Though a slave, a prisoner, in circumstance, I am no slave in my will!—Nothing will I promise thee!—Withheld, compelled—nothing will I promise thee!

Noble creature! but not implacable, I hope!—Promise me but to return in an hour!

Nothing will I promise thee!

Say but that you will see me again this evening!

O that I could say—that it were in my power to say—I never will see thee more!—Would to Heaven I never were to see thee more!

Passionate beauty!—still holding her—

I speak, though with vehemence, the deliberate wish of my heart.—O that I could avoid looking down upon thee, mean groveler, and abject as insulting—Let me withdraw! My soul is in tumults! Let me withdraw!

I quitted my hold to clasp my hands together—Withdraw, O sovereign of my fate!—Withdraw, if you will withdraw! My destiny is in your power!—It depends upon your breath!—Your scorn but augments my love! Your resentment is but too well founded!—But, dearest creature, return, return, return, with a resolution to bless with pardon and peace your faithful adorer!

She flew from me. The angel, as soon as she found her wings, flew from me. I, the reptile kneeler, the despicable slave, no more the proud victor, arose; and, retiring, tried to comfort myself, that, circumstanced as she is, destitute of friends and fortune; her uncle moreover, who is to reconcile all so soon, (as I thank my stars she still believes,) expected.

O that she would forgive me!—Would she but generously forgive me, and receive my vows at the altar, at the instant of her forgiving me, that I might not have time to relapse into my old prejudices! By my soul, Belford, this dear girl gives the lie to all our rakish maxims. There must be something more than a name in virtue!—I now see that there is!—Once subdued, always subdued—'Tis an egregious falsehood!—But, O Jack, she never was subdued. What have I obtained but an increase of shame and confusion!—While her glory has been established by her sufferings!

This one merit is, however, left me, that I have laid all her sex under obligation to me, by putting this noble creature to trials, which, so gloriously supported, have done honour to them all.

However—But no more will I add—What a force have evil habits!—I will take an airing, and try to fly from myself!—Do not thou upbraid me on my weak fits—on my contradictory purposes—on my irresolution—and all will be well.

LETTER XXX

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

A man is just now arrived from M. Hall, who tells me, that my Lord is in a very dangerous way. The gout in his stomach to an extreme degree, occasioned by drinking a great quantity of lemonade.

A man of 8000£. a year to prefer his appetite to his health!—He deserves to die!—But we have all of us our inordinate passions to gratify: and they generally bring their punishment along with them—so witnesses the nephew, as well as the uncle.

The fellow was sent upon other business; but stretched his orders a little, to make his court to a successor.

I am glad I was not at M. Hall, at the time my Lord took the grateful dose: [it was certainly grateful to him at the time:] there are people in the world, who would have had the wickedness to say, that I had persuaded him to drink.

The man says, that his Lordship was so bad when he came away, that the family began to talk of sending for me in post haste. As I know the old peer has a good deal of cash by him, of which he seldom keeps account, it behoves me to go down as soon as I can. But what shall I do with this dear creature the while?—To-morrow over, I shall, perhaps, be able to answer my own question. I am afraid she will make me desperate.

For here have I sent to implore her company, and am denied with scorn.

I have been so happy as to receive, this moment, a third letter from the dear correspondent Miss Howe. A little severe devil!—It would have broken the heart of my beloved, had it fallen into her hands. I will enclose a copy of it. Read it here.

TUESDAY, JUNE 20. MY DEAREST MISS HARLOWE,

Again I venture to you, (almost against inclination;) and that by your former conveyance, little as I like it.

I know not how it is with you. It may be bad; and then it would be hard to upbraid you, for a silence you may not be able to help. But if not, what shall I say severe enough, that you have not answered either of my last letters? the first* of which [and I think it imported you too much to be silent upon it] you owned the receipt of. The other which was delivered into your own hands,** was so pressing for the favour of a line from you, that I am amazed I could not be obliged; and still more, that I have not heard from you since.

* See Vol. V. Letter XX. ** See Vol. VI. Letter VII.

The fellow made so strange a story of the condition he saw you in, and of your speech to him, that I know not what to conclude from it: only, that he is a simple, blundering, and yet conceited fellow, who, aiming at description, and the rustic wonderful, gives an air of bumkinly romance to all he tells. That this is his character, you will believe, when you are informed that he described you in grief excessive,* yet so improved in your person and features, and so rosy, that was his word, in your face, and so flush-coloured, and so plump in your arms, that one would conclude you were labouring under the operation of some malignant poison; and so much the rather, as he was introduced to you, when you were upon a couch, from which you offered not to rise, or sit up.

* See Vol. VI. Letter VI.

Upon my word, Miss Harlowe, I am greatly distressed upon your account; for I must be so free as to say, that in your ready return with your deceiver, you have not at all answered my expectations, nor acted up to your own character; for Mrs. Townsend tells me, from the women at Hampstead, how cheerfully you put yourself into his hands again: yet, at the time, it was impossible you should be married!—

Lord, my dear, what pity it is, that you took much pains to get from the man!—But you know best!—Sometimes I think it could not be you to whom the rustic delivered my letter. But it must too: yet, it is strange I could not have one line by him:—not one:—and you so soon well enough to go with the wretch back again!

I am not sure that the letter I am now writing will come to your hands: so shall not say half that I have upon my mind to say. But, if you think it worth your while to write to me, pray let me know what fine ladies his relations those were who visited you at Hampstead, and carried you back

again so joyfully to a place that I had so fully warned you.—But I will say no more: at least till I know more: for I can do nothing but wonder and stand amazed.

Notwithstanding all the man's baseness, 'tis plain there was more than a lurking love—Good Heaven!—But I have done!—Yet I know not how to have done neither!—Yet I must—I will.

Only account to me, my dear, for what I cannot at all account for: and inform me, whether you are really married, or not.—And then I shall know whether there must or must not, be a period shorter than that of one of our lives, to a friendship which has hitherto been the pride and boast of

Your ANNA HOWE.

Dorcas tells me, that she has just now had a searching conversation, as she calls it, with her lady. She is willing, she tells the wench, still to place her confidence in her. Dorcas hopes she has re-assured her: but wishes me not to depend upon it. Yet Captain Tomlinson's letter must assuredly weigh with her.

I sent it in just now by Dorcas, desiring her to re-peruse it. And it was not returned me, as I feared it would be. And that's a good sign, I think.

I say I think, and I think; for this charming creature, entangled as I am in my own inventions, puzzles me ten thousand times more than I her.

LETTER XXXI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. THURSDAY NOON, JUNE 22.

Let me perish if I know what to make either of myself or of this surprising creature—now calm, now tempestuous.—But I know thou lovest not anticipation any more than I.

At my repeated requests, she met me at six this morning.

She was ready dressed; for she had not her clothes off every since she declared, that they never more should be off in this house. And charmingly she looked, with all the disadvantages of a three-hours violent stomach-ache—(for Dorcas told me that she had been really ill)—no rest, and eyes red and swelled with weeping. Strange to me that those charming fountains have not been so long ago exhausted! But she is a woman. And I believe anatomists allow, that women have more watry heads than men.

Well, my dearest creature, I hope you have now thoroughly considered of the contents of Captain Tomlinson's letter. But as we are thus early met, let me beseech you to make this my happy day.

She looked not favourably upon me. A cloud hung upon her brow at her entrance: but as she was going to answer me, a still greater solemnity took possession of her charming features.

Your air, and your countenance, my beloved creature, are not propitious to me. Let me beg of you, before you speak, to forbear all further recriminations: for already I have such a sense of my vileness to you, that I know not how to bear the reproaches of my own mind.

I have been endeavouring, said she, since I am not permitted to avoid you, to obtain a composure which I never more expected to see you in. How long I may enjoy it, I cannot tell. But I hope I shall be enabled to speak to you without that vehemence which I expressed yesterday, and could not help it.*

* The Lady, in her minutes, says, 'I fear Dorcas is a false one. May I not be able to prevail upon him to leave me at my liberty? Better to try than to trust to her. If I cannot prevail, but must meet him and my uncle, I hope I shall have fortitude enough to renounce him then. But I would fain avoid qualifying with the wretch, or to give him an expectation which I intend not to answer. If I am mistress of my own resolutions, my uncle himself shall not prevail with me to bind my soul in covenant with so vile a man.'

After a pause (for I was all attention) thus she proceeded:

It is easy for me, Mr. Lovelace, to see that further violences are intended me, if I comply not with your purposes, whatever they are, I will suppose them to be what you solemnly profess they are. But I have told you as solemnly my mind, that I never will, that I never can be your's; nor, if so, any man's upon earth. All vengeance, nevertheless, for the wrongs you have done me, I disclaim. I want but to slide into some obscure corner, to hide myself from you and from every one who once loved me. The desire lately so near my heart, of a reconciliation with my friends, is much abated. They shall not receive me now, if they would. Sunk in mine own eyes, I now think myself unworthy of their favour. In the anguish of my soul, therefore, I conjure you, Lovelace, [tears in her eyes,] to leave me to my fate. In doing so, you will give me a pleasure the highest I now can know.

Where, my dearest life——

No matter where. I will leave to Providence, when I am out of this house, the direction of my future steps. I am sensible enough of my destitute condition. I know that I have not now a friend in the world. Even Miss Howe has given me up—or you are—But I would fain keep my temper!—By your means I have lost them all—and you have been a barbarous enemy to me. You know you have.

She paused.

I could not speak.

The evils I have suffered, proceeded she, [turning from me,] however irreparable, are but temporarily evils. Leave me to my hopes of being enabled to obtain the Divine forgiveness for the offence I have been drawn in to give to my parents and to virtue; that so I may avoid the evils that are more than temporary. This is now all I have to wish for. And what is it that I demand, that I have not a right to, and from which it is an illegal violence to withhold me?

It was impossible for me, I told her plainly, to comply.

I besought her to give me her hand as this very day. I could not live without her. I communicated to her my Lord's illness, as a reason why I wished not to stay for her uncle's anniversary. I besought her to bless me with her consent; and, after the ceremony was passed, to accompany me down to Berks. And thus, my dearest life, said I, will you be freed from a house, to which you have conceived so great an antipathy.

This, thou wilt own, was a princely offer. And I was resolved to be as good as my word. I thought I had killed my conscience, as I told thee, Belford, some time ago. But conscience, I find, though it may be temporarily stifled, cannot die, and, when it dare not speak aloud, will whisper. And at this instant I thought I felt the revived varletess (on but a slight retrograde motion) writhing round my pericardium like a serpent; and in the action of a dying one, (collecting all its force into its head,) fix its plaguy fangs into my heart.

She hesitated, and looked down, as if irresolute. And this set my heart up at my mouth. And, believe me, I had instantly popt in upon me, in imagination, an old spectacled parson, with a white surplice thrown over a black habit, [a fit emblem of the halcyon office, which, under a benign appearance, often introduced a life of storms and tempests,] whining and snuffling through his nose the irrevocable ceremony.

I hope now, my dearest life, said I, snatching her hand, and pressing it to my lips, that your silence bodes me good. Let me, my beloved creature, have but your tacit consent; and this moment I will step out and engage a minister. And then I promised how much my whole future life should be devoted to her commands, and that I would make her the best and tenderest of husbands.

At last, turning to me, I have told you my mind, Mr. Lovelace, said she. Think you, that I could thus solemnly—There she stopt—I am too much in your power, proceeded she; your prisoner, rather than a person free to choose for myself, or to say what I will do or be. But as a testimony that you mean me well, let me instantly quit this house; and I will then give you such an answer in writing, as best befits my unhappy circumstances.

And imaginest thou, fairest, thought I, that this will go down with a Lovelace? Thou oughtest to have known that free-livers, like ministers of state, never part with a power put into their hands, without an equivalent of twice the value.

I pleaded, that if we joined hands this morning, (if not, to-morrow; if not, on Thursday, her uncle's birth-day, and in his presence); and afterwards, as I had proposed, set out for Berks; we should, of course, quit this house; and, on our return to town, should have in readiness the house I was in treaty for.

She answered me not, but with tears and sighs; fond of believing what I hoped I imputed her silence to the modesty of her sex. The dear creature, (thought I,) solemnly as she began with me, is ruminating, in a sweet suspence, how to put into fit words the gentle purposes of her condescending heart. But, looking in her averted face with a soothing gentleness, I plainly perceived, that it was resentment, and not bashfulness, that was struggling in her bosom.*

* The Lady, in her minutes, owns the difficulty she lay under to keep her temper in this conference. 'But when I found,' says she, 'that all my entreaties were ineffectual, and that he was resolved to detain me, I could no longer withhold my impatience.'

At last she broke silence—I have no patience, said she, to find myself a slave, a prisoner, in a vile house—Tell me, Sir, in so many words tell me, whether it be, or be not, your intention to permit me to quit it?—To permit me the freedom which is my birthright as an English subject?

Will not the consequence of your departure hence be that I shall lose you for ever, Madam?—And can I bear the thoughts of that?

She flung from me—My soul disdains to hold parley with thee! were her violent words.—But I threw myself at her feet, and took hold of her reluctant hand, and began to imprecate, avow, to promise—But thus the passionate beauty, interrupting me, went on:

I am sick of thee, MAN!—One continued string of vows, oaths, and protestations, varied only by time and place, fills thy mouth!—Why detainest thou me? My heart rises against thee, O thou cruel implement of my brother's causeless vengeance.—All I beg of thee is, that thou wilt remit me the future part of my father's dreadful curse! the temporary part, base and ungrateful as thou art! thou hast completed!

I was speechless!—Well I might!—Her brother's implement!—James Harlowe's implement!—Zounds, Jack! what words were these!

I let go her struggling hand. She took two or three turns cross the room, her whole haughty soul in her air. Then approaching me, but in

silence, turning from me, and again to me, in a milder voice—I see thy confusion, Lovelace. Or is it thy remorse?—I have but one request to make thee—the request so often repeated—That thou wilt this moment permit me to quit this house. Adieu, then, let me say, for ever adieu! And mayest thou enjoy that happiness in this world, which thou hast robbed me of; as thou hast of every friend I have in it!

And saying this, away she flung, leaving me in a confusion so great, that I knew not what to think, say, or do!

But Dorcas soon roused me—Do you know, Sir, running in hastily, that my lady is gone down stairs!

No, sure!—And down I flew, and found her once more at the street-door, contending with Polly Horton to get out.

She rushed by me into the fore parlour, and flew to the window, and attempted once more to throw up the sash—Good people! good people! cried she.

I caught her in my arms, and lifted her from the window. But being afraid of hurting the charming creature, (charming in her very rage,) she slid through my arms on the floor.—Let me die here! let me die here! were her words; remaining jointless and immovable, till Sally and Mrs. Sinclair hurried in.

She was visibly terrified at the sight of the old wretch; while I (sincerely affected) appealed, Bear witness, Mrs. Sinclair!—bear witness, Miss Martin!—Miss Horton!—Every one bear witness, that I offer not violence to this beloved creature!

She then found her feet—O house [look towards the windows, and all round her, O house,] contrived on purpose for my ruin! said she—but let not that woman come into my presence—not that Miss Horton neither, who would not have dared to controul me, had she not been a base one!

Hoh, Sir! Hoh, Madam! vociferated the old dragon, her armed kemboed, and flourishing with one foot to the extent of her petticoats—What's ado here about nothing! I never knew such work in my life, between a chicken of a gentleman and a tiger of a lady!—

She was visibly affrighted: and up stairs she hastened. A bad woman is certainly, Jack, more terrible to her own sex than even a bad man.

I followed her up. She rushed by her own apartment into the dining-room: no terror can make her forget her punctilio.

To recite what passed there of invective, exclamations, threatenings, even of her own life, on one side; of expostulations, supplications, and sometimes menaces, on the other; would be too affecting; and, after my particularity in like scenes, these things may as well be imagined as expressed.

I will therefore only mention, that, at length, I extorted a concession from her. She had reason* to think it would have been worse for her on the spot, if she had not made it. It was, That she would endeavour to make herself easy till she saw what next Thursday, her uncle's birth-day, would produce. But Oh! that it were not a sin, she passionately exclaimed on making this poor concession, to put an end to her own life, rather than yield to give me but that assurance!

* The Lady mentions, in her memorandum-book, that she had no other way, as is apprehended, to save herself from instant dishonour, but by making this concession. Her only hope, now, she says, if she cannot escape by Dorcas's connivance, (whom, nevertheless she suspects,) is to find a way to engage the protection of her uncle, and even of the civil magistrate, on Thursday next, if necessary. 'He shall see,' says she, 'tame and timid as he thought me, what I dare to do, to avoid so hated a compulsion, and a man capable of a baseness so premeditatedly vile and inhuman.'

This, however, shows me, that she is aware that the reluctantly-given assurance may be fairly construed into a matrimonial expectation on my side. And if she will now, even now, look forward, I think, from my heart, that I will put on her livery, and wear it for life.

What a situation am I in, with all my cursed inventions! I am puzzled, confounded, and ashamed of myself, upon the whole. To take such pains to be a villain!—But (for the fiftieth time) let me ask thee, Who would have thought that there had been such a woman in the world?—Nevertheless, she had best take care that she carries not her obstinacy much farther. She knows not what revenge for slighted love will make me do.

The busy scenes I have just passed through have given emotions to my heart, which will not be quieted one while. My heart, I see, (on re-

perusing what I have written,) has communicated its tremors to my fingers; and in some places the characters are so indistinct and unformed, that thou'lt hardly be able to make them out. But if one half of them is only intelligible, that will be enough to expose me to thy contempt, for the wretched hand I have made of my plots and contrivances.—But surely, Jack, I have gained some ground by this promise.

And now, one word to the assurances thou sendest me, that thou hast not betrayed my secrets in relation to this charming creature. Thou mightest have spared them, Belford. My suspicions held no longer than while I wrote about them.* For well I knew, when I allowed myself time to think, that thou hadst no principles, no virtue, to be misled by. A great deal of strong envy, and a little of weak pity, I knew to be thy motives. Thou couldst not provoke my anger, and my compassion thou ever hadst; and art now more especially entitled to it; because thou art a pityful fellow.

All thy new expostulations in my beloved's behalf I will answer when I see thee.

LETTER XXXII

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

Confoundedly out of humour with this perverse woman!—Nor wilt thou blame me, if thou art my friend. She regards the concession she made, as a concession extorted from her: and we are but just where we were before she made it.

With great difficulty I prevailed upon her to favour me with her company for one half hour this evening. The necessity I was under to go down to M. Hall was the subject I wanted to talk upon.

I told her, that as she had been so good as to promise that she would endeavour to make herself easy till she saw the Thursday in next week over, I hoped that she would not scruple to oblige me with her word, that I should find her here at my return from M. Hall.

Indeed she would make no such promise. Nothing of this house was mentioned to me, said she: you know it was not. And do you think that I would have given my consent to my imprisonment in it?

I was plaguily nettled, and disappointed too. If I go not down to Mr. Hall, Madam, you'll have no scruple to stay here, I suppose, till Thursday is over?

If I cannot help myself I must—but I insist upon being permitted to go out of this house, whether you leave it or not.

Well, Madam, then I will comply with your commands. And I will go out this very evening in quest of lodgings that you shall have no objections to.

I will have no lodgings of your providing, Sir—I will go to Mrs. Moore's, at Hampstead.

Mrs. Moore's, Madam!—I have no objection to Mrs. Moore's—but will you give me your promise, to admit me there to your presence?

As I do here—when I cannot help it.

Very well, Madam—Will you be so good as to let me know what you intend by your promise to make yourself easy.

To endeavour, Sir, to make myself easy—were the words—

Till you saw what next Thursday would produce?

Ask me no questions that may ensnare me. I am too sincere for the company I am in.

Let me ask you, Madam, What meant you, when you said, 'that, were it not a sin, you would die before you gave me that assurance?'

She was indignantly silent.

You thought, Madam, you had given me room to hope your pardon by it?

When I think I ought to answer you with patience I will speak.

Do you think yourself in my power, Madam?

If I were not—And there she stopt—

Dearest creature, speak out—I beseech you, dearest creature, speak out—

She was silent; her charming face all in a glow.

Have you, Madam, any reliance upon my honour?

Still silent.

You hate me, Madam! You despise me more than you do the most odious of God's creatures!

You ought to despise me, if I did not.

You say, Madam, you are in a bad house. You have no reliance upon my honour—you believe you cannot avoid me—

She arose. I beseech you, let me withdraw.

I snatched her hand, rising, and pressed it first to my lips, and then to my heart, in wild disorder. She might have felt the bounding mischief ready to burst its bars—You shall go—to your own apartment, if you please—But, by the great God of Heaven, I will accompany you thither!

She trembled—Pray, pray, Mr. Lovelace, don't terrify me so!

Be seated, Madam! I beseech you, be seated!—

I will sit down—

Do then—All my soul is in my eyes, and my heart's blood throbbing at my fingers' ends.

I will—I will—You hurt me—Pray, Mr. Lovelace, don't—don't frighten me so—And down she sat, trembling; my hand still grasping her's.

I hung over her throbbing bosom, and putting my other arm round her waist—And you say, you hate me, Madam—and you say, you despise me—and you say, you promise me nothing—

Yes, yes, I did promise you—let me not be held down thus—you see I sat down when you bid me—Why [struggling] need you hold me down thus?—I did promise to endeavour to be easy till Thursday was over! But you won't let me!—How can I be easy?—Pray, let me not be thus terrified.

And what, Madam, meant you by your promise? Did you mean any thing in my favour?—You designed that I should, at that time, think you did. Did you mean any thing in my favour, Madam?—Did you intend that I should think you did?

Let go my hand, Sir—Take away your arm from about me, [struggling, yet trembling,]—Why do you gaze upon me so?

Answer me, Madam—Did you mean any thing in my favour by your promise?

Let me be not thus constrained to answer.

Then pausing, and gaining more spirit, Let me go, said she: I am but a woman—but a weak woman.

But my life is in my own power, though my person is not—I will not be thus constrained.

You shall not, Madam, quitting her hand, bowing; but my heart is at my mouth, and hoping farther provocation.

She arose, and was hurrying away.

I pursue you not, Madam—I will try your generosity. Stop—return—this moment stop, return, if, Madam, you would not make me desperate.

She stopt at the door; burst into tears—O Lovelace!—How, how, have I deserved—

Be pleased, dearest angel, to return.

She came back—but with declared reluctance; and imputing her compliance to terror.

Terror, Jack, as I have heretofore found out, though I have so little benefited by the discovery, must be my resort, if she make it necessary—nothing else will do with the inflexible charmer.

She seated herself over-against me; extremely discomposed—but indignation had a visible predominance in her features.

I was going towards her, with a countenance intently changed to love and softness: Sweetest, dearest angel, were my words, in the tenderest accent:—But, rising up, she insisted upon my being seated at a distance from her.

I obeyed, and begged her hand over the table, to my extended hand; to see, if in any thing she would oblige me. But nothing gentle, soft, or affectionate, would do. She refused me her hand!—Was she wise, Jack, to confirm to me, that nothing but terror would do?

Let me only know, Madam, if your promise to endeavour to wait with patience the event of next Thursday meant me favour?

Do you expect any voluntary favour from one to whom you give not a free choice?

Do you intend, Madam, to honour me with your hand, in your uncle's presence, or do you not?

My heart and my hand shall never be separated. Why, think you, did I stand in opposition to the will of my best, my natural friends.

I know what you mean, Madam—Am I then as hateful to you as the vile Solmes?

Ask me not such a question, Mr. Lovelace.

I must be answered. Am I as hateful to you as the vile Solmes?

Why do you call Mr. Solmes vile?

Don't you think him so, Madam?

Why should I? Did Mr. Solmes ever do vilely by me?

Dearest creature! don't distract me by hateful comparisons! and perhaps by a more hateful preference.

Don't you, Sir, put questions to me that you know I will answer truly, though my answer were ever so much to enrage you.

My heart, Madam, my soul is all your's at present. But you must give me hope, that your promise, in your own construction, binds you, no new cause to the contrary, to be mine on Thursday. How else can I leave you?

Let me go to Hampstead; and trust to my favour.

May I trust to it?—Say only may I trust to it?

How will you trust to it, if you extort an answer to this question?

Say only, dearest creature, say only, may I trust to your favour, if you go to Hampstead?

How dare you, Sir, if I must speak out, expect a promise of favour from me?—What a mean creature must you think me, after the ungrateful baseness to me, were I to give you such a promise?

Then standing up, Thou hast made me, O vilest of men! [her hands clasped, and a face crimsoned with indignation,] an inmate of the vilest of houses—nevertheless, while I am in it, I shall have a heart incapable of any thing but abhorrence of that and of thee!

And round her looked the angel, and upon me, with fear in her sweet aspect of the consequence of her free declaration—But what a devil must I have been, I who love bravery in a man, had I not been more struck with admiration of her fortitude at the instant, than stimulated by revenge?

Noblest of creatures!—And do you think I can leave you, and my interest in such an excellence, precarious? No promise!—no hope!—If you make me not desperate, may lightning blast me, if I do you not all the justice 'tis in my power to do you!

If you have any intention to oblige me, leave me at my own liberty, and let me not be detained in this abominable house. To be constrained as I have been constrained! to be stopt by your vile agents! to be brought up by force, and be bruised in my own defence against such illegal violence!—I dare to die, Lovelace—and she who fears not death, is not to be intimidated into a meanness unworthy of her heart and principles!

Wonderful creature! But why, Madam, did you lead me to hope for something favourable for next Thursday?—Once more, make me not desperate—With all your magnanimity, glorious creature! [I was more than half frantic, Belford,] you may, you may—but do not, do not make me brutally threaten you—do not, do not make me desperate!

My aspect, I believe, threatened still more than my words. I was rising—She rose—Mr. Lovelace, be pacified—you are even more dreadful than the Lovelace I have long dreaded—let me retire—I ask your leave to retire—you really frighten me—yet I give you no hope—from my heart I ab—

Say not, Madam, you abhor me. You must, for your own sake, conceal your hatred—at least not avow it. I seized her hand.

Let me retire—let me, retire, said she, in a manner out of breath.

I will only say, Madam, that I refer myself to your generosity. My heart is not to be trusted at this instant. As a mark of my submission to your will, you shall, if you please, withdraw—but I will not go to M. Hall—live or die my Lord M. I will not go to M. Hall—but will attend the effect of your promise. Remember, Madam, you have promised to endeavour to make yourself easy till you see the event of next Thursday—next Thursday, remember, your uncle comes up, to see us married—that's the event.—You think ill of your Lovelace—do not, Madam, suffer your own morals to be degraded by the infection, as you called it, of his example.

Away flew the charmer with this half permission—and no doubt thought that she had an escape—nor without reason.

I knew not for half an hour what to do with myself. Vexed at the heart, nevertheless, (now she was from me, and when I reflected upon her hatred of me, and her defiances,) that I suffered myself to be so overawed, checked, restrained—

And now I have written thus far, (have of course recollected the whole of our conversation,) I am more and more incensed against myself.

But I will go down to these women—and perhaps suffer myself to be laughed at by them.

Devil fetch them, they pretend to know their own sex. Sally was a woman well educated—Polly also—both have read—both have sense—of parentage not mean—once modest both—still, they say, had been modest, but for me—not entirely indelicate now; though too little nice for my personal intimacy, loth as they both are to have me think so—the old one, too, a woman of family, though thus (from bad inclination as well as at first from low circumstances) miserably sunk:—and hence they all pretend to remember what once they were; and vouch for the inclinations and hypocrisy of the whole sex, and wish for nothing so ardently, as that I will leave the perverse lady to their management while I am gone to Berkshire; undertaking absolutely for her humility and passiveness on my return; and continually boasting of the many perverse creatures whom they have obliged to draw in their traces.

I am just come from the sorceresses.

I was forced to take the mother down; for she began with her Hoh, Sir! with me; and to catechize and upbraid me, with as much insolence as if I owed her money.

I made her fly the pit at last. Strange wishes wished we against each other at her quitting it—What were they?—I'll tell thee—She wished me married, and to be jealous of my wife; and my heir-apparent the child of another man. I was even with her with a vengeance. And yet thou wilt think that could not well be.—As how?—As how, Jack!—Why, I wished for her conscience come to life! And I know, by the gripes mine gives me every half-hour, that she would then have a cursed time of it.

Sally and Polly gave themselves high airs too. Their first favours were thrown at me, [women to boast of those favours which they were as willing to impart, first forms all the difficulty with them! as I to receive!] I was upbraided with ingratitude, dastardice and all my difficulties with my angel charged upon myself, for want of following my blows; and for leaving the proud lady mistress of her own will, and nothing to reproach herself with. And all agreed, that the arts used against her on a certain occasion, had too high an operation for them or me to judge what her will would have been in the arduous trial. And then they blamed one another; as I cursed them all.

They concluded, that I should certainly marry, and be a lost man. And Sally, on this occasion, with an affected and malicious laugh, snapt her fingers at me, and pointing two of each hand forkedly at me, bid me remember the lines I once showed her of my favourite Jack Dryden, as she always familiarly calls that celebrated poet:

We women to new joys unseen may move:
There are no prints left in the paths of love.
All goods besides by public marks are known:
But those men most desire to keep, have none.

This infernal implement had the confidence further to hint, that when a wife, some other man would not find half the difficulty with my angel that I had found. Confidence indeed! But yet, I must say, if a man gives himself up to the company of these devils, they never let him rest till he either suspects or hate his wife.

But a word or two of other matters, if possible.

Methinks I long to know how causes go at M. Hall. I have another private intimation, that the old peer is in the greatest danger.

I must go down. Yet what to do with this lady the mean while! These cursed women are full of cruelty and enterprise. She will never be easy with them in my absence. They will have provocation and pretence therefore. But woe be to them, if—

Yet what will vengeance do, after an insult committed? The two nymphs will have jealous rage to goad them on. And what will withhold a jealous and already-ruined woman?

To let her go elsewhere; that cannot be done. I am still too resolved to be honest, if she'll give me hope: if yet she'll let me be honest. But I'll see how she'll be after the contention she will certainly have between her resentment and the terror she has reason for from our last conversation. So let this subject rest till the morning. And to the old peer once more.

I shall have a good deal of trouble, I reckon, though no sordid man, to be decent on the expected occasion. Then how to act (I who am no hypocrite) in the days of condolment! What farces have I to go through; and to be the principal actor in them! I'll try to think of my own latter end; a gray beard, and a graceless heir; in order to make me serious.

Thou, Belford, knowest a good deal of this sort of grimace; and canst help a gay heart to a little of the dismal. But then every feature of thy face is cut out for it. My heart may be touched, perhaps, sooner than thine; for, believe me or not, I have a very tender one. But then, no man looking into my face, be the occasion for grief ever so great, will believe that heart to be deeply distressed.

All is placid, easy, serene, in my countenance. Sorrow cannot sit half an hour together upon it. Nay, I believe, that Lord M.'s recovery, should it happen, would not affect me above a quarter of an hour. Only the new scenery, (and the pleasure of aping an Heraclitus to the family, while I am a Democritus among my private friends,) or I want nothing that the old peer can leave me. Wherefore then should grief sadden and distort such blythe, such jocund, features as mine?

But as for thine, were there murder committed in the street, and thou wert but passing by, the murderer even in sight, the pursuers would quit him, and lay hold of thee: and thy very looks would hang, as well as apprehend thee.

But one word to business, Jack. Whom dealest thou with for thy blacks?—Wert thou well used?—I shall want a plaguy parcel of them. For I intend to make every soul of the family mourn—outside, if not in.

LETTER XXXIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. JUNE 23, FRIDAY MORNING.

I went out early this morning, on a design that I know not yet whether I shall or shall not pursue; and on my return found Simon Parsons, my Lord's Berkshire bailiff, (just before arrived,) waiting for me with a message in form, sent by all the family, to press me to go down, and that at my Lord's particular desire, who wants to see me before he dies.

Simon has brought my Lord's chariot-and-six [perhaps my own by this time,] to carry me down. I have ordered it to be in readiness by four to-morrow morning. The cattle shall smoke for the delay; and by the rest they'll have in the interim, will be better able to bear it.

I am still resolved upon matrimony, if my fair perverse will accept of me. But, if she will not—why then I must give an uninterrupted hearing, not to my conscience, but to these women below.

Dorcas had acquainted her lady with Simon's arrival and errand. My beloved had desired to see him. But my coming in prevented his attendance on her, just as Dorcas was instructing him what questions he should not answer to, that might be asked of him.

I am to be admitted to her presence immediately, at my repeated request. Surely the acquisition in view will help me to make up all with her. She is just gone up to the dining-room.

Nothing will do, Jack!—I can procure no favour from her, though she has obtained from me the point which she had set her heart upon.

I will give thee a brief account of what passed between us.

I first proposed instant marriage; and this in the most fervent manner: but was denied as fervently.

Would she be pleased to assure me that she would stay here only till Tuesday morning? I would but just go down to see how my Lord was—to know whether he had any thing particular to say, or enjoin me, while yet he was sensible, as he was very earnest to see me: perhaps I might be up on Sunday.—Concede in something!—I beseech you, Madam, show me some little consideration.

Why, Mr. Lovelace, must I be determined by your motions?—Think you that I will voluntarily give a sanction to the imprisonment of my person? Of what importance to me ought to be your stay or your return.

Give a sanction to the imprisonment of your person! Do you think, Madam, that I fear the law?

I might have spared this foolish question of defiance: but my pride would not let me. I thought she threatened me, Jack.

I don't think you fear the law, Sir.—You are too brave to have any regard either to moral or divine sanctions.

'Tis well, Madam! But ask me any thing I can do to oblige you; and I will oblige you, though in nothing will you oblige me.

Then I ask you, then I request of you, to let me go to Hampstead.

I paused—And at last—By my soul you shall—this very moment I will wait upon you, and see you fixed there, if you'll promise me your hand on Thursday, in presence of your uncle.

I want not you to see me fixed. I will promise nothing.

Take care, Madam, that you don't let me see that I can have no reliance upon your future favour.

I have been used to be threatened by you, Sir—but I will accept of your company to Hampstead—I will be ready to go in a quarter of an hour—my clothes may be sent after me.

You know the condition, Madam—Next Thursday.

You dare not trust—

My infinite demerits tell me, that I ought not—nevertheless I will confide in your generosity.—To-morrow morning (no new cause arising to give reason to the contrary) as early as you please you may go to Hampstead.

This seemed to oblige her. But yet she looked with a face of doubt.

I will go down to the women, Belford. And having no better judges at hand, will hear what they say upon my critical situation with this proud beauty, who has so insolently rejected a Lovelace kneeling at her feet,

though making an earnest tender of himself for a husband, in spite of all his prejudices to the state of shackles.

LETTER XXXIV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

Just come from the women.

'Have I gone so far, and am I afraid to go farther?—Have I not already, as it is evident by her behaviour, sinned beyond forgiveness?—A woman's tears used to be to me but as water sprinkled on a glowing fire, which gives it a fiercer and brighter blaze: What defence has this lady but her tears and her eloquence? She was before taken at no weak advantage. She was insensible in her moments of trial. Had she been sensible, she must have been sensible. So they say. The methods taken with her have augmented her glory and her pride. She has now a tale to tell, that she may tell with honour to herself. No accomplice-inclination. She can look me into confusion, without being conscious of so much as a thought which she need to be ashamed of.'

This, Jack, is the substance of the women's reasonings with me.

To which let me add, that the dear creature now sees the necessity I am in to leave her. Detecting me is in her head. My contrivances are of such a nature, that I must appear to be the most odious of men if I am detected on this side matrimony. And yet I have promised, as thou seest, that she shall set out to Hampstead as soon as she pleases in the morning, and that without condition on her side.

Dost thou ask, What I meant by this promise?

No new cause arising, was the proviso on my side, thou'lt remember. But there will be a new cause.

Suppose Dorcas should drop the promissory note given her by her lady? Servants, especially those who cannot read or write, are the most careless people in the world of written papers. Suppose I take it up?—at a time, too, that I was determined that the dear creature should be her own mistress?—Will not this detection be a new cause?—A cause that will carry with it against her the appearance of ingratitude!

That she designed it a secret to me, argues a fear of detection, and indirectly a sense of guilt. I wanted a pretence. Can I have a better?—If I am in a violent passion upon the detection, is not passion an universally-allowed extenuator of violence? Is not every man and woman obliged to excuse that fault in another, which at times they find attended with such ungovernable effects in themselves?

The mother and sisterhood, suppose, brought to sit in judgment upon the vile corrupted—the least benefit that must accrue from the accidental discovery, if not a pretence for perpetration, [which, however, may be the case,] an excuse for renewing my orders for her detention till my return from M. Hall, [the fault her own,] and for keeping a stricter watch over her than before; with direction to send me any letters that may be written by her or to her.—And when I return, the devil's in it if I find not a way to make her choose lodgings for herself, (since these are so hateful to her,) that shall answer all my purposes; and yet I no more appear to direct her choice, than I did before in these.

Thou wilt curse me when thou comest to this place. I know thou wilt. But thinkest thou that, after such a series of contrivance, I will lose this inimitable woman for want of a little more? A rake's a rake, Jack!—And what rake is withheld by principle from the perpetration of any evil his heart is set upon, and in which he thinks he can succeed?—Besides, am I not in earnest as to marriage?—Will not the generality of the world acquit me, if I do marry? And what is that injury which a church-rite will not at any time repair? Is not the catastrophe of every story that ends in wedlock accounted happy, be the difficulties in the progress of it ever so great.

But here, how am I engrossed by this lady, while poor Lord M. as Simon tells me, lies groaning in the most dreadful agonies!—What must he suffer!—Heaven relieve him!—I have a too compassionate heart. And so would the dear creature have found, could I have thought that the worst of her sufferings is equal to the lightest of his. I mean as to fact; for as to that part of her's, which arises from extreme sensibility, I know nothing of that; and cannot therefore be answerable for it.

LETTER XXXV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

Just come from my charmer. She will not suffer me to say half the obliging, the tender things, which my honest heart is ready to overflow with. A confounded situation that, when a man finds himself in humour to be eloquent, and pathetic at the same time, yet cannot engage the mistress of his fate to lend an ear to his fine speeches.

I can account now how it comes about that lovers, when their mistresses are cruel, run into solitude, and disburthen their minds to stocks and stones: For am I not forced to make my complaints to thee?

She claimed the performance of my promise, the moment she saw me, of permitting her [haughtily she spoke the word] to go to Hampstead as soon as I was gone to Berks.

Most cheerfully I renewed it.

She desired me to give orders in her hearing.

I sent for Dorcas and Will. They came.—Do you both take notice, (but, perhaps, Sir, I may take you with me,) that your lady is to be obeyed in all her commands. She purposes to return to Hampstead as soon as I am gone—My dear, will you not have a servant to attend you?

I shall want no servant there.

Will you take Dorcas?

If I should want Dorcas, I can send for her.

Dorcas could not but say, She should be very proud—

Well, well, that may be at my return, if your lady permit.—Shall I, my dear, call up Mrs. Sinclair, and give her orders, to the same effect, in your hearing?

I desire not to see Mrs. Sinclair; nor any that belong to her.

As you please, Madam.

And then (the servants being withdrawn) I urged her again for the assurance, that she would meet me at the altar on Thursday next. But to no purpose.—May she not thank herself for all that may follow?

One favour, however, I would not be denied, to be admitted to pass the evening with her.

All sweetness and obsequiousness will I be on this occasion. My whole soul shall be poured out to move her to forgive me. If she will not, and if the promissory note should fall in my way, my revenge will doubtless take total possession of me.

All the house in my interest, and every one in it not only engaging to intimidate and assist, as occasion shall offer, but staking all their experience upon my success, if it be not my own fault, what must be the consequence?

This, Jack, however, shall be her last trial; and if she behave as nobly in and after this second attempt (all her senses about her) as she has done after the first, she will come out an angel upon full proof, in spite of man, woman, and devil: then shall there be an end of all her sufferings. I will then renounce that vanquished devil, and reform. And if any vile machination start up, presuming to mislead me, I will sooner stab it in my heart, as it rises, than give way to it.

A few hours will now decide all. But whatever be the event, I shall be too busy to write again, till I get to M. Hall.

Mean time, I am in strange agitations. I must suppress them, if possible, before I venture into her presence.—My heart bounces my bosom from the table. I will lay down my pen, and wholly resign to its impulses.

LETTER XXXVI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY NIGHT, OR RATHER SAT. MORN. ONE O'CLOCK.

I thought I should not have had either time or inclination to write another line before I got to M. Hall. But, having the first, must find the last; since I can neither sleep, nor do any thing but write, if I can do that. I am most confoundedly out of humour. The reason let it follow; if it will follow—nor preparation for it from me.

I tried by gentleness and love to soften—What?—Marble. A heart incapable either of love or gentleness. Her past injuries for ever in her head. Ready to receive a favour; the permission to go to Hampstead: but neither to deserve it, nor return any. So my scheme of the gentle kind was soon given over.

I then wanted to provoke her: like a coward boy, who waits for the first blow before he can persuade himself to fight, I half challenged her to challenge or defy me. She seemed aware of her danger; and would not directly brave my resentment: but kept such a middle course, that I neither could find a pretence to offend, nor reason to hope: yet she believed my tale, that her uncle would come to Kentish-town, and seemed not to apprehend that Tomlinson was an impostor.

She was very uneasy, upon the whole, in my company: wanted often to break from me: yet so held me to my purpose of permitting her to go to Hampstead, that I knew not how to get off it; although it was impossible, in my precarious situation with her, to think of performing it.

In this situation; the women ready to assist; and, if I proceeded not, as ready to ridicule me; what had I left me, but to pursue the concerted scheme, and to seek a pretence to quarrel with her, in order to revoke my promised permission, and to convince her that I would not be upbraided as the most brutal of ravishers for nothing?

I had agreed with the women, that if I could not find a pretence in her presence to begin my operations, the note should lie in my way, and I was to pick it up, soon after her retiring from me. But I began to doubt at near ten o'clock, (so earnest was she to leave me, suspecting my overwarm behaviour to her, and eager grasping of her hand two or three times, with eye-strings, as I felt, on the strain, while her eyes showed uneasiness and apprehension,) that if she actually retired for the night, it might be a chance whether it would be easy to come at her again. Loth, therefore, to run such a risk, I stept out a little after ten, with intent to alter the preconcerted disposition a little; saying I would attend her again instantly. But as I returned I met her at the door, intending to withdraw for the night. I could not persuade her to go back: nor had I presence of mind (so full of complaisance as I was to her just before) to stay her by force: so she slid through my hands into her own apartment. I had nothing to do, therefore, but to let my former concert take place.

I should have promised (but care not for order of time, connection, or any thing else) that, between eight and nine in the evening, another servant of Lord M. on horseback came, to desire me to carry down with me Dr. S., the old peer having been once (in extremis, as they judge he is now) relieved and reprieved by him. I sent and engaged the doctor to accompany me down: and am to call upon him by four this morning: or the devil should have both my Lord and the Doctor, if I'd stir till I got all made up.

Poke thy damn'd nose forward into the event, if thou wilt—Curse me if thou shalt have it till its proper time and place. And too soon then.

She had hardly got into her chamber, but I found a little paper, as I was going into mine, which I took up; and opening it, (for it was carefully pinned in another paper,) what should it be but a promissory note, given as a bribe, with a further promise of a diamond ring, to induce Dorcas to favour her mistress's escape?

How my temper changed in a moment!—Ring, ring, ring, ring, I my bell, with a violence enough to break the string, and as if the house were on fire.

Every devil frightened into active life: the whole house in an uproar. Up runs Will.—Sir—Sir—Sir!—Eyes goggling, mouth distended—Bid the damn'd toad Dorcas come hither, (as I stood at the stair-head,) in a horrible rage, and out of breath, cried I.

In sight came the trembling devil—but standing aloof, from the report made her by Will. of the passion I was in, as well as from what she had heard.

Flash came out my sword immediately; for I had it ready on—Cursed,

confounded, villanous bribery and corruption—

Up runs she to her lady's door, screaming out for safety and protection.

Good your honour, interposed Will., for God's sake!—O Lord, O Lord!—receiving a good cuff.—

Take that, varlet, for saving the ungrateful wretch from my vengeance.

Wretch! I intended to say; but if it were some other word of like ending, passion must be my excuse.

Up ran two or three of the sisterhood, What's the matter! What's the matter!

The matter! (for still my beloved opened not the door; on the contrary, drew another bolt,) This abominable Dorcas!—(call her aunt up!—let her see what a traitress she has placed about me!—and let her bring the toad to answer for herself)—has taken a bribe, a provision for life, to betray her trust; by that means to perpetuate a quarrel between a man and his wife, and frustrate for ever all hopes of reconciliation between us!

Let me perish, Belford, if I have patience to proceed with the farce!

If I must resume, I must—

Up came the aunt, puffing and blowing—As she hoped for mercy, she was not privy to it! She never knew such a plotting, perverse lady in her life!—Well might servants be at the pass they were, when such ladies as Mrs. Lovelace made no conscience of corrupting them. For her part she desired no mercy for the wretch; no niece of her's, if she were not faithful to her trust!—But what was the proof?—

She was shown the paper—

But too evident!—Cursed, cursed toad, devil, jade, passed from each mouth:—and the vileness of the corrupted, and the unworthiness of the corruptress, were inveighed against.

Up we all went, passing the lady's door into the dining-room, to proceed to trial.—

Stamp, stamp, stamp up, each on her heels; rave, rave, rave, every tongue—

Bring up the creature before us all this instant!—

And would she have got out of the house, say you?—

These the noises and the speeches as we clattered by the door of the fair bribress.

Up was brought Dorcas (whimpering) between two, both bawling out—You must go—You shall go—'Tis fit you should answer for yourself—You are a discredit to all worthy servants—as they pulled and pushed her up stairs.—She whining, I cannot see his honour—I cannot look so good and so generous a gentleman in the face—O how shall I bear my aunt's ravings?—

Come up, and be d—n'd—Bring her forward, her imperial judge—What a plague, it is the detection, not the crime, that confounds you. You could be quiet enough for days together, as I see by the date, under the villany. Tell me, ungrateful devil, tell me who made the first advances?

Ay, disgrace to my family and blood, cried the old one—tell his honour—tell the truth!—Who made the first advances?—

Ay, cursed creature, cried Sally, who made the first advances?

I have betrayed one trust already!—O let me not betray another!—My lady is a good lady!—O let not her suffer!—

Tell all you know. Tell the whole truth, Dorcas, cried Polly Horton.—His honour loves his lady too well to make her suffer much: little as she requites his love!—

Every body sees that, cried Sally—too well, indeed, for his honour, I was going to say.

Till now, I thought she deserved my love—But to bribe a servant thus, who she supposed had orders to watch her steps, for fear of another elopement; and to impute that precaution to me as a crime!—Yet I must love her—Ladies, forgive my weakness!—

Curse upon my grimaces!—if I have patience to repeat them!—But thou shalt have it all—thou canst not despise me more than I despise myself!

But suppose, Sir, said Sally, you have my lady and the wench face to face! You see she cares not to confess.

O my carelessness! cried Dorcas—Don't let my poor lady suffer!—Indeed, if you all knew what I know, you would say her ladyship has been cruelly treated—

See, see, see, see!—repeatedly, every one at once—Only sorry for the detection, as your honour said—not for the fault.

Cursed creature, and devilish creature, from every mouth.

Your lady won't, she dare not come out to save you, cried Sally; though it is more his honour's mercy, than your desert, if he does not cut your vile throat this instant.

Say, repeated Polly, was it your lady that made the first advances, or was it you, you creature—

If the lady had so much honour, bawled the mother, excuse me, so—Excuse me, Sir, [confound the old wretch! she had like to have said son!]—If the lady has so much honour, as we have supposed, she will appear to vindicate a poor servant, misled, as she has been, by such large promises!—But I hope, Sir, you will do them both justice: I hope you will!—Good lack!—Good lack! clapping her hands together, to grant her every thing she could ask—to indulge her in her unworthy hatred to my poor innocent house!—to let her go to Hampstead, though your honour told us, you could get no condescension from her; no, not the least—O Sir, O Sir—I hope—I hope—if your lady will not come out—I hope you will find a way to hear this cause in her presence. I value not my doors on such an occasion as this. Justice I ever loved. I desire you will come to the bottom of it in clearance to me. I'll be sworn I had no privity in this black corruption.

Just then we heard the lady's door, unbar, unlock, unbolt—

Now, Sir!

Now, Mr. Lovelace!

Now, Sir! from every encouraging mouth!—

But, O Jack! Jack! Jack! I can write no more!

If you must have it all, you must!

Now, Belford, see us all sitting in judgment, resolved to punish the fair bribress—I, and the mother, the hitherto dreaded mother, the nieces Sally, Polly, the traitress Dorcas, and Mabell, a guard, as it were, over Dorcas, that she might not run away, and hide herself:—all pre-determined, and of necessity pre-determined, from the journey I was going to take, and my precarious situation with her—and hear her unbolt, unlock, unbar, the door; then, as it proved afterwards, put the key into the lock on the outside, lock the door, and put it in her pocket—Will. I knew, below, who would give me notice, if, while we were all above, she should mistake her way, and go down stairs, instead of coming into the dining-room: the street-door also doubly secured, and every shutter to the windows round the house fastened, that no noise or screaming should be heard—[such was the brutal preparation]—and then hear her step towards us, and instantly see her enter among us, confiding in her own innocence; and with a majesty in her person and manner, that is natural to her; but which then shone out in all its glory!—Every tongue silent, every eye awed, every heart quaking, mine, in a particular manner sunk, throbbless, and twice below its usual region, to once at my throat:—a shameful recreant:—She silent too, looking round her, first on me; then on the mother, no longer fearing her; then on Sally, Polly, and the culprit Dorcas!—such the glorious power of innocence exerted at that awful moment!

She would have spoken, but could not, looking down my guilt into confusion. A mouse might have been heard passing over the floor: her own light feet and rustling silks could not have prevented it; for she seemed to tread air, and to be all soul. She passed backwards and forwards, now towards me, now towards the door several times, before speech could get the better of indignation; and at last, after twice or thrice hemming to recover her articulate voice—'O thou contemptible and abandoned Lovelace, thinkest thou that I see not through this poor villanous plot of thine, and of these thy wicked accomplices?

'Thou, woman, [looking at the mother] once my terror! always my dislike! but now my detestation! shouldst once more (for thine perhaps was the preparation) have provided for me intoxicating potions, to rob me of my senses—

'And then, thus, wretch, [turning to me,] mightest thou more securely have depended upon such a low contrivance as this!

'And ye, vile women, who perhaps have been the ruin, body and soul, of hundreds of innocents, (you show me how, in full assembly,) know, that I am not married—ruined as I am, by your help, I bless God, I am not married to this miscreant—and I have friends that will demand my honour at your hands!—and to whose authority I will apply; for none has this man over me. Look to it then, what farther insults you offer me, or incite him to offer me. I am a person, though thus vilely betrayed, of rank and fortune. I never will be his; and, to your utter ruin, will find friends to pursue you: and now I have this full proof of your detestable wickedness, and have heard your base incitements, will have no mercy upon you!'

They could not laugh at the poor figure I made.—Lord! how every devil, conscience-shaken, trembled!—

What a dejection must ever fall to the lot of guilt, were it given to innocence always thus to exert itself!

'And as for thee, thou vile Dorcas! Thou double deceiver!—whining out thy pretended love for me!—Begone, wretch!—Nobody will hurt thee!—Begone, I say!—thou has too well acted thy part to be blamed by any here but myself—thou art safe: thy guilt is thy security in such a house as this!—thy shameful, thy poor part, thou hast as well acted as the low farce could give thee to act!—as well as they each of them (thy superiors, though not thy betters), thou seest, can act theirs.—Steal away into darkness! No inquiry after this will be made, whose the first advances, thine or mine.'

And, as I hope to live, the wench, confoundedly frightened, slunk away; so did her sentinel Mabell; though I, endeavouring to rally, cried out for Dorcas to stay—but I believe the devil could not have stopt her, when an angel bid her begone.

Madam, said I, let me tell you; and was advancing towards her with a fierce aspect, most cursedly vexed, and ashamed too——

But she turned to me: 'Stop where thou art, O vilest and most abandoned of men!—Stop where thou art!—nor, with that determined face, offer to touch me, if thou wouldst not that I should be a corps at thy feet!'

To my astonishment, she held forth a penknife in her hand, the point to her own bosom, grasping resolutely the whole handle, so that there was no offering to take it from her.

'I offer not mischief to any body but myself. You, Sir, and ye women, are safe from every violence of mine. The LAW shall be all my resource: the LAW,' and she spoke the word with emphasis, the LAW! that to such people carries natural terror with it, and now struck a panic into them.

No wonder, since those who will damn themselves to procure ease and plenty in this world, will tremble at every thing that seems to threaten their methods of obtaining that ease and plenty.——

'The LAW only shall be my refuge!'——

The infamous mother whispered me, that it were better to make terms with this strange lady, and let her go.

Sally, notwithstanding all her impudent bravery at other times, said, If Mr. Lovelace had told them what was not true, of her being his wife——

And Polly Horton, That she must needs say, the lady, if she were not my wife, had been very much injured; that was all.

That is not now a matter to be disputed, cried I: you and I know, Madam——

'We do, said she; and I thank God, I am not thine—once more I thank God for it—I have no doubt of the farther baseness that thou hast intended me, by this vile and low trick: but I have my SENSES, Lovelace: and from my heart I despise thee, thou very poor Lovelace!—How canst thou stand in my presence!—Thou, that'——

Madam, Madam, Madam—these are insults not to be borne—and was approaching her.

She withdrew to the door, and set her back against it, holding the pointed knife to her heaving bosom; while the women held me, beseeching me not to provoke the violent lady—for their house sake, and be curs'd to them, they besought me—and all three hung upon me—while the truly heroic lady braved me at that distance:

'Approach me, Lovelace, with resentment, if thou wilt. I dare die. It is in defence of my honour. God will be merciful to my poor soul! I expect no more mercy from thee! I have gained this distance, and two steps nearer me, and thou shalt see what I dare do!'——

Leave me, women, to myself, and to my angel!—[They retired at a distance.]—O my beloved creature, how you terrify me! Holding out my arms, and kneeling on one knee—not a step, not a step farther, except to receive my death at that injured hand which is thus held up against a life far dearer to me than my own! I am a villain! the blackest of villains!—Say you will sheath your knife in the injurer's, not the injured's heart, and then will I indeed approach you, but not else.

The mother twanged her d—n'd nose; and Sally and Polly pulled out their handkerchiefs, and turned from us. They never in their lives, they told me afterwards, beheld such a scene—

Innocence so triumphant: villany so debased, they must mean!

Unawares to myself, I had moved onward to my angel—'And dost thou, dost thou, still disclaiming, still advancing—dost thou, dost thou, still insidiously move towards me?'—[And her hand was extended] 'I dare—I dare—not rashly neither—my heart from principle abhors the act, which thou makest necessary!—God, in thy mercy! [lifting up her eyes and hands] God, in thy mercy!'

I threw myself to the farther end of the room. An ejaculation, a silent ejaculation, employing her thoughts that moment; Polly says the whites of her lovely eyes were only visible: and, in the instant that she extended her hand, assuredly to strike the fatal blow, [how the very recital terrifies me!] she cast her eye towards me, and saw me at the utmost distance the room would allow, and heard my broken voice—my voice was utterly broken; nor knew I what I said, or whether to the purpose or not—and her charming cheeks, that were all in a glow before, turned pale, as if terrified at her own purpose; and lifting up her eyes—'Thank God!—thank God! said the angel—delivered for the present; for the present delivered—from myself—keep, Sir, that distance;' [looking down towards me, who was prostrate on the floor, my heart pierced, as with an hundred daggers;] 'that distance has saved a life; to what reserved, the Almighty only knows!'

To be happy, Madam; and to make happy!—And, O let me hope for your favour for to-morrow—I will put off my journey till then—and may God—

Swear not, Sir!—with an awful and piercing aspect—you have too often sworn!—God's eye is upon us!—His more immediate eye; and looked wildly.—But the women looked up to the ceiling, as if afraid of God's eye, and trembled. And well they might, and I too, who so very lately had each of us the devil in our hearts.

If not to-morrow, Madam, say but next Thursday, your uncle's birthday; say but next Thursday!

'This I say, of this you may assure yourself, I never, never will be your's.—And let me hope, that I may be entitled to the performance of your promise, to be permitted to leave this innocent house, as one called it, (but long have my ears been accustomed to such inversions of words), as soon as the day breaks.'

Did my perdition depend upon it, that you cannot, Madam, but upon terms. And I hope you will not terrify me—still dreading the accursed knife.

'Nothing less than an attempt upon my honour shall make me desperate. I have no view but to defend my honour: with such a view only I entered into treaty with your infamous agent below. The resolution you have seen, I trust, God will give me again, upon the same occasion. But for a less, I wish not for it.—Only take notice, women, that I am no wife of this man: basely as he has used me, I am not his wife. He has no authority over me. If he go away by-and-by, and you act by his authority to detain me, look to it.'

Then, taking one of the lights, she turned from us; and away she went, unmolested.—Not a soul was able to molest her.

Mabell saw her, tremblingly, and in a hurry, take the key of her chamber-door out of her pocket, and unlock it; and, as soon as she entered, heard her double-lock, bar, and bolt it.

By her taking out her key, when she came out of her chamber to us, she no doubt suspected my design: which was, to have carried her in my arms thither, if she made such force necessary, after I had intimidated her; and to have been her companion for that night.

She was to have had several bedchamber-women to assist to undress her upon occasion: but from the moment she entered the dining-room with so much intrepidity, it was absolutely impossible to think of prosecuting my villanous designs against her.

This, this, Belford, was the hand I made of a contrivance from which I expected so much!—And now I am ten times worse off than before.

Thou never sawest people in thy life look so like fools upon one another, as the mother, her partners, and I, did, for a few minutes. And at last, the two devilish nymphs broke out into insulting ridicule upon me; while the old wretch was concerned for her house, the reputation of her house. I cursed them all together; and, retiring to my chamber, locked myself in.

And now it is time to set out: all I have gained, detection, disgrace, fresh guilt by repeated perjuries, and to be despised by her I doat upon; and, what is still worse to a proud heart, by myself.

Success, success in projects, is every thing. What an admirable contriver did I think myself till now! Even for this scheme among the rest! But how pitifully foolish does it now appear to me!—Scratch out, erase, never to be read, every part of my preceding letters, where I have boastingly mentioned it. And never presume to rally me upon the cursed subject: for I cannot bear it.

But for the lady, by my soul, I love her. I admire her more than ever! I must have her. I will have her still—with honour or without, as I have often vowed. My cursed fright at her accidental bloody nose, so lately, put her upon improving upon me thus. Had she threatened ME, I should have soon been master of one arm, and in both! But for so sincere a virtue to threaten herself, and not to offer to intimidate any other, and with so much presence of mind, as to distinguish, in the very passionate intention, the necessity of the act, defence of her honour, and so fairly to disavow lesser occasions: showed such a deliberation, such a choice, such a principle; and then keeping me so watchfully at a distance that I could not seize her hand, so soon as she could have given the fatal blow; how impossible not to be subdued by so true and so discreet a magnanimity!

But she is not gone. She shall not go. I will press her with letters for the Thursday. She shall yet be mine, legally mine. For, as to cohabitation, there is no such thing to be thought of.

The Captain shall give her away, as proxy for her uncle. My Lord will die. My fortune will help my will, and set me above every thing and every body.

But here is the curse—she despises me, Jack!—What man, as I have heretofore said, can bear to be despised—especially by his wife!—O Lord!—O Lord! What a hand, what a cursed hand, have I made of this plot!—And here ends

The history of the lady and the penknife!—The devil take the penknife!
—It goes against me to say,

God bless the lady!

NEAR 5, SAT. MORN.

LETTER XXXVII

MR. LOVELACE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [SUPERSCRIBED TO MRS. LOVELACE.] M. HALL, SAT. NIGHT, JUNE 24.

MY DEAREST LIFE,

If you do not impute to live, and to terror raised by love, the poor figure I made before you last night, you will not do me justice. I thought I would try to the very last moment, if, by complying with you in every thing, I could prevail upon you to promise to be mine on Thursday next, since you refused me an earlier day. Could I have been so happy, you had not been hindered going to Hampstead, or wherever else you pleased. But when I could not prevail upon you to give me this assurance, what room had I, (my demerit so great,) to suppose, that your going thither would not be to lose you for ever?

I will own to you, Madam, that yesterday afternoon I picked up the paper dropt by Dorcas; who has confessed that she would have assisted you in getting away, if she had had opportunity so to do; and undoubtedly dropped it by accident. And could I have prevailed upon you as to Thursday next, I would have made no use of it; secure as I should have been in your word given, to be mine. But when I found you inflexible, I was resolved to try, if, by resenting Dorcas's treachery, I could not make your pardon of me the condition of mine to her: and if not, to make a handle of it to revoke my consent to your going away from Mrs. Sinclair's; since the consequence of that must have been so fatal to me.

So far, indeed, was my proceeding low and artful: and when I was challenged with it, as such, in so high and noble a manner, I could not avoid taking shame to myself upon it.

But you must permit me, Madam, to hope, that you will not punish me too heavily for so poor a contrivance, since no dishonour was meant you: and since, in the moment of its execution, you had as great an instance of my incapacity to defend a wrong, a low measure, and, at the same time, in your power over me, as mortal man could give—in a word, since you must have seen, that I was absolutely under the controul both of conscience and of love.

I will not offer to defend myself, for wishing you to remain where you are, till either you give me your word to meet me at the altar on Thursday; or till I have the honour of attending you, preparative to the solemnity which will make that day the happiest of my life.

I am but too sensible, that this kind of treatment may appear to you with the face of an arbitrary and illegal imposition: but as the consequences, not only to ourselves, but to both our families, may be fatal, if you cannot be moved in my favour; let me beseech you to forgive this act of compulsion, on the score of the necessity you your dear self have laid me under to be guilty of it; and to permit the solemnity of next Thursday to include an act of oblivion for all past offences.

The orders I have given to the people of the house are: 'That you shall be obeyed in every particular that is consistent with my expectations of finding you there on my return on Wednesday next: that Mrs. Sinclair and her nieces, having incurred your just displeasure, shall not, without your orders, come into your presence: that neither shall Dorcas, till she has fully cleared her conduct to your satisfaction, be permitted to attend you: but Mabell, in her place; of whom you seemed some time ago to express some liking. Will. I have left behind me to attend your commands. If he be either negligent or impertinent, your dismissal shall be a dismissal of him from my service for ever. But, as to letters which may be sent you, or any which you may have to send, I must humbly entreat, that none such pass from or to you, for the few days that I shall be absent.' But I do assure you, madam, that the seals of both sorts shall be sacred: and the letters, if such be sent, shall be given into your own hands the moment the ceremony is performed, or before, if you require it.

Mean time I will inquire, and send you word, how Miss Howe does; and to what, if I can be informed, her long silence is owing.

Dr. Perkins I found here, attending my Lord, when I arrived with Dr. S. He acquaints me that your father, mother, uncles, and the still less worthy persons of your family, are well; and intend to be all at your uncle Harlowe's next week; I presume, with intent to keep his anniversary. This can make no alteration, but a happy one, as to persons, on Thursday; because Mr. Tomlinson assured me, that if any thing fell out to hinder your uncle's coming up in person, (which, however, he did not

then expect,) he would be satisfied if his friend the Captain were proxy for him. I shall send a man and horse to-morrow to the Captain, to be at greater certainty.

I send this by a special messenger, who will wait your pleasure in relation to the impatiently-wished-for Thursday: which I humbly hope will be signified by a line.

My Lord, though hardly sensible, and unmindful of every thing but of your felicity, desires his most affectionate compliments to you. He has in readiness to present to you a very valuable set of jewels, which he hopes will be acceptable, whether he lives to see you adorn them or not.

Lady Sarah and Lady Betty have also their tokens of respect ready to court your acceptance: but may Heaven incline you to give the opportunity of receiving their personal compliments, and those of my cousins Montague, before the next week be out!

His Lordship is exceeding ill. Dr. S. has no hopes of him. The only consolation I can have for the death of a relation who loves me so well, if he do die, must arise from the additional power it will put into my hands of showing how much I am,

My dearest life, Your ever-affectionate, faithful, LOVELACE.

LETTER XXXVIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [SUPERSCRIBED TO MRS. LOVELACE.] M. HALL, SUNDAY NIGHT, JUNE 25.

MY DEAREST LOVE,

I cannot find words to express how much I am mortified at the return of my messenger without a line from you.

Thursday is so near, that I will send messenger after messenger every four hours, till I have a favourable answer; the one to meet the other, till its eve arrives, to know if I may venture to appear in your presence with the hope of having my wishes answered on that day.

Your love, Madam, I neither expect, nor ask for; nor will, till my future behaviour gives you cause to think I deserve it. All I at present presume to wish is, to have it in my power to do you all the justice I can now do you: and to your generosity will I leave it, to reward me, as I shall merit, with your affection.

At present, revolving my poor behaviour of Friday night before you, I think I should sooner choose to go to my last audit, unprepared for it as I am, than to appear in your presence, unless you give me some hope, that I shall be received as your elected husband, rather than, (however deserved,) as a detested criminal.

Let me, therefore, propose an expedient, in order to spare my own confusion; and to spare you the necessity for that soul-harrowing recrimination, which I cannot stand, and which must be disagreeable to yourself—to name the church, and I will have every thing in readiness; so that our next interview will be, in a manner, at the very altar; and then you will have the kind husband to forgive for the faults of the ungrateful lover. If your resentment be still too high to write more, let it only be in your own dear hand, these words, St. Martin's church, Thursday—or these, St. Giles's church, Thursday; nor will I insist upon any inscription or subscription, or so much as the initials of your name. This shall be all the favour I will expect, till the dear hand itself is given to mine, in presence of that Being whom I invoke as a witness of the inviolable faith and honour of

Your adoring LOVELACE.

LETTER XXXIX

MR. LOVELACE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [SUPERSCRIBED TO MRS. LOVELACE.] M. HALL, MONDAY, JUNE 26.

Once more, my dearest love, do I conjure you to send me the four requested words. There is no time to be lost. And I would not have next Thursday go over, without being entitled to call you mine, for the world; and that as well for your sake as for my own. Hitherto all that has passed is between you and me only; but, after Thursday, if my wishes are unanswered, the whole will be before the world.

My Lord is extremely ill, and endures not to have me out of his sight for one half hour. But this shall not have the least weight with me, if you be pleased to hold out the olive-branch to me in the four requested words.

I have the following intelligence from Captain Tomlinson.

'All your family are at your uncle Harlowe's. Your uncle finds he cannot go up; and names Captain Tomlinson for his proxy. He proposes to keep all your family with him till the Captain assures him that the ceremony is over.

'Already he has begun, with hope of success, to try to reconcile your mother to you.'

My Lord M. but just now has told me how happy he should think himself to have an opportunity, before he dies, to salute you as his niece. I have put him in hopes that he shall see you; and have told him that I will go to town on Wednesday, in order to prevail upon you to accompany me down on Thursday or Friday. I have ordered a set to be in readiness to carry me up; and, were not my Lord so very ill, my cousin Montague tells me that she would offer her attendance on you. If you please, therefore, we can set out for this place the moment the solemnity is performed.

Do not, dearest creature, dissipate all those promising appearances, and by refusing to save your own and your family's reputation in the eye of the world, use yourself worse than the ungratefullest wretch on earth has used you. For if we were married, all the disgrace you imagine you have suffered while a single lady, will be my own, and only known to ourselves.

Once more, then, consider well the situation we are both in; and remember, my dearest life, that Thursday will be soon here; and that you have no time to lose.

In a letter sent by the messenger whom I dispatch with this, I have desired that my friend, Mr. Belford, who is your very great admirer, and who knows all the secrets of my heart, will wait upon you, to know what I am to depend upon as to the chosen day.

Surely, my dear, you never could, at any time, suffer half so much from cruel suspense, as I do.

If I have not an answer to this, either from your own goodness, or through Mr. Belford's intercession, it will be too late for me to set out: and Captain Tomlinson will be disappointed, who goes to town on purpose to attend your pleasure.

One motive for the gentle resistance I have presumed to lay you under is, to prevent the mischiefs that might ensue (as probably to the more innocent, as to the less) were you to write to any body while your passions were so much raised and inflamed against me. Having apprized you of my direction to the women in town on this head, I wonder you should have endeavoured to send a letter to Miss Howe, although in a cover directed to that young lady's* servant; as you must think it would be likely to fall into my hands.

* The lady had made an attempt to send away a letter.

The just sense of what I have deserved the contents should be, leaves me no room to doubt what they are. Nevertheless, I return it you enclosed, with the seal, as you will see, unbroken.

Relieve, I beseech you, dearest Madam, by the four requested words, or by Mr. Belford, the anxiety of

Your ever-affectionate and obliged LOVELACE.

Remember, there will not, there cannot be time for further writing, and for coming up by Thursday, your uncle's birth-day.

LETTER XL

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. MONDAY, JUNE 26.

Thou wilt see the situation I am in with Miss Harlowe by the enclosed copies of three letters; to two of which I am so much scorned as not to have one word given me in answer; and of the third (now sent by the messenger who brings thee this) I am afraid as little notice will be taken—and if so, her day of grace is absolutely over.

One would imagine (so long used to constraint too as she has been) that she might have been satisfied with the triumph she had over us all on Friday night! a triumph that to this hour has sunk my pride and my vanity so much, that I almost hate the words, plot, contrivance, scheme; and shall mistrust myself in future for every one that rises to my inventive head.

But seest thou not that I am under a necessity to continue her at Sinclair's and to prohibit all her correspondencies?

Now, Belford, as I really, in my present mood, think of nothing less than marrying her, if she let not Thursday slip, I would have thee attend her, in pursuance of the intimation I have given her in my letter of this date; and vow for me, swear for me, bind thy soul to her for my honour, and use what arguments thy friendly heart can suggest, in order to procure me an answer from her; which, as thou wilt see, she may give in four words only. And then I purpose to leave Lord M. (dangerously ill as he is,) and meet her at her appointed church, in order to solemnize. If she will but sign Cl. H. to thy writing the four words, that shall do: for I would not come up to be made a fool of in the face of all my family and friends.

If she should let the day go off, I shall be desperate. I am entangled in my own devices, and cannot bear that she should detect me.

O that I had been honest!—What a devil are all my plots come to! What do they end in, but one grand plot upon myself, and a title to eternal infamy and disgrace! But, depending on thy friendly offices, I will say no more of this.—Let her send me but one line!—But one line!—To treat me as unworthy of her notice;—yet be altogether in my power—I cannot—I will not bear that.

My Lord, as I said, is extremely ill. The doctors give him over. He gives himself over. Those who would not have him die, are afraid he will die. But as to myself, I am doubtful: for these long and violent struggles between the constitution and the disease (though the latter has three physicians and an apothecary to help it forward, and all three, as to their prescriptions, of different opinions too) indicate a plaguy habit, and savour more of recovery than death: and the more so, as he has no sharp or acute mental organs to whet out his bodily ones, and to raise his fever above the sympathetic helpful one.

Thou wilt see in the enclosed what pains I am at to dispatch messengers; who are constantly on the road to meet each other, and one of them to link in the chain with the fourth, whose station is in London, and five miles onwards, or till met. But in truth I have some other matters for them to perform at the same time, with my Lord's banker and his lawyer; which will enable me, if his Lordship is so good as to die this bout, to be an over match for some of my other relations. I don't mean Charlotte and Patty; for they are noble girls: but others, who have been scratching and clawing under-ground like so many moles in my absence; and whose workings I have discovered since I have been down, by the little heaps of dirt they have thrown up.

A speedy account of thy commission, dear Jack! The letter travels all night.

LETTER XLI

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. LONDON, JUNE 27.
TUESDAY.

You must excuse me, Lovelace, from engaging in the office you would have me undertake, till I can be better assured you really intend honourably at last by this much-injured lady.

I believe you know your friend Belford too well to think he would be easy with you, or with any man alive, who should seek to make him promise for him what he never intended to perform. And let me tell thee, that I have not much confidence in the honour of a man, who by imitation of hands (I will only call it) has shown so little regard to the honour of his own relations.

Only that thou hast such jesuitical qualifyings, or I should think thee at last touched with remorse, and brought within view of being ashamed of thy cursed inventions by the ill success of thy last: which I heartily congratulate thee upon.

O the divine lady!—But I will not aggravate!

Nevertheless, when thou writest that, in thy present mood, thou thinkest of marrying, and yet canst so easily change thy mood; when I know thy heart is against the state: that the four words thou courttest from the lady are as much to thy purpose, as if she wrote forty; since it will show she can forgive the highest injury that can be offered to woman; and when I recollect how easily thou canst find excuses to postpone; thou must be more explicit a good deal, as to thy real intentions, and future honour, than thou art: for I cannot trust to temporary remorse; which brought on by disappointment too, and not by principle, and the like of which thou hast so often got over.

If thou canst convince me time enough for the day, that thou meanest to do honourably by her, in her own sense of the word; or, if not time enough, wilt fix some other day, (which thou oughtest to leave to her option, and not bind her down for the Thursday; and the rather, as thy pretence for so doing is founded on an absolute fiction;) I will then most cheerfully undertake thy cause; by person, if she will admit me to her presence; if she will not, by pen. But, in this case, thou must allow me to be guarantee for thy family. And, if so, so much as I value thee, and respect thy skill in all the qualifications of a gentleman, thou mayest depend upon it, that I will act up to the character of a guarantee, with more honour than the princes of our day usually do—to their shame be it spoken.

Mean time let me tell thee, that my heart bleeds for the wrong this angelic lady has received: and if thou dost not marry her, if she will have thee, and, when married, make her the best and tenderest of husbands, I would rather be a dog, a monkey, a bear, a viper, or a toad, than thee.

Command me with honour, and thou shalt find none readier to oblige thee than

Thy sincere friend, JOHN BELFORD.

LETTER XLII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. M. HALL, JUNE 27.
TUESDAY NIGHT, NEAR 12.

Your's reached me this moment, by an extraordinary push in the messengers.

What a man of honour thou of a sudden!—

And so, in the imaginary shape of a guarantee, thou threatenest me!

Had I not been in earnest as to the lady, I should not have offered to employ thee in the affair. But, let me say, that hadst thou undertaken the task, and I hadst afterwards thought fit to change my mind, I should have contented myself to tell thee, that that was my mind when thou engagedst for me, and to have given thee the reasons for the change, and then left thee to thy own discretion: for never knew I what fear of man was—nor fear of woman neither, till I became acquainted with Miss Clarissa Harlowe, nay, what is most surprising, till I came to have her in my power.

And so thou wilt not wait upon the charmer of my heart, but upon terms and conditions!—Let it alone and be curs'd; I care not.—But so much credit did I give to the value thou expressedst for her, that I thought the office would have been acceptable to thee, as serviceable to me; for what was it, but to endeavour to persuade her to consent to the reparation of her own honour? For what have I done but disgraced myself, and been a thief to my own joys?—And if there be a union of hearts, and an intention to solemnize, what is there wanting but the foolish ceremony?—and that I still offer. But, if she will keep back her hand, if she will make me hold out mine in vain, how can I help it?

I write her one more letter; and if, after she has received that, she keeps sullen silence, she must thank herself for what is to follow.

But, after all, my heart is not wholly her's. I love her beyond expression; and cannot help it. I hope therefore she will receive this last tender as I wish. I hope she intends not, like a true woman, to plague, and vex, and tease me, now she has found her power. If she will take me to mercy now these remorse are upon me, (though I scorn to condition with thee for my sincerity,) all her trials, as I have heretofore declared, shall be over, and she shall be as happy as I can make her: for, ruminating upon all that has passed between us, from the first hour of our acquaintance till the present, I must pronounce, That she is virtue itself and once more I say, has no equal.

As to what you hint, of leaving to her choice another day, do you consider, that it will be impossible that my contrivances and stratagems should be much longer concealed?—This makes me press that day, though so near; and the more, as I have made so much ado about her uncle's anniversary. If she send me the four words, I will spare no fatigue to be in time, if not for the canonical hour at church, for some other hour of the day in her own apartment, or any other: for money will do every thing: and that I have never spared in this affair.

To show thee, that I am not at enmity with thee, I enclose the copies of two letters—one to her: it is the fourth, and must be the last on the subject—The other to Captain Tomlinson; calculated, as thou wilt see, for him to show her.

And now, Jack, interfere; in this case or not, thou knowest the mind of
R. LOVELACE.

LETTER XLIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [SUPERSCRIBED TO MRS. LOVELACE.] M. HALL, WED. MORNING, ONE O'CLOCK, JUNE 28.

Not one line, my dearest life, not one word, in answer to three letters I have written! The time is now so short, that this must be the last letter that can reach you on this side the important hour that might make us legally one.

My friend, Mr. Belford, is apprehensive, that he cannot wait upon you in time, by reason of some urgent affairs of his own.

I the less regret the disappointment, because I have procured a more acceptable person, as I hope, to attend you; Captain Tomlinson I mean: to whom I had applied for this purpose, before I had Mr. Belford's answer.

I was the more solicitous to obtain his favour from him, because of the office he is to take upon him, as I humbly presume to hope, to-morrow. That office obliged him to be in town as this day: and I acquainted him with my unhappy situation with you; and desired that he would show me, on this occasion, that I had as much of his favour and friendship as your uncle had; since the whole treaty must be broken off, if he could not prevail upon you in my behalf.

He will dispatch the messenger directly; whom I propose to meet in person at Slough; either to proceed onward to London with a joyful heart, or to return back to M. Hall with a broken one.

I ought not (but cannot help it) to anticipate the pleasure Mr. Tomlinson proposes to himself, in acquainting you with the likelihood there is of your mother's seconding your uncle's views. For, it seems, he has privately communicated to her his laudable intentions: and her resolution depends, as well as his, upon what to-morrow will produce.

Disappoint not then, I beseech you, for an hundred persons' sakes, as well as for mine, that uncle and that mother, whose displeasure I have heard you so often deplore.

You may think it impossible for me to reach London by the canonical hour. If it should, the ceremony may be performed in your own apartments, at any time in the day, or at night: so that Captain Tomlinson may have it to aver to your uncle, that it was performed on his anniversary.

Tell but the Captain, that you forbid me not to attend you: and that shall be sufficient for bringing to you, on the wings of love,

Your ever-grateful and affectionate LOVELACE.

LETTER XLIV

TO MR. PATRICK M'DONALD,
AT HIS LODGINGS, AT MR. BROWN'S, PERUKE-MAKER, IN ST.
MARTIN'S LANE, WESTMINSTER

M. Hall, Wedn. Morning, Two o'clock.

DEAR M'DONALD,

The bearer of this has a letter to carry to the lady.* I have been at the trouble of writing a copy of it: which I enclose, that you may not mistake your cue.

* See the preceding Letter.

You will judge of my reasons for ante-dating the enclosed sealed one,* directed to you by the name of Tomlinson; which you are to show to the lady, as in confidence. You will open it of course.

* See the next Letter.

I doubt not your dexterity and management, dear M'Donald; nor your zeal; especially as the hope of cohabitation must now be given up. Impossible to be carried is that scheme. I might break her heart, but not incline her will—am in earnest therefore to marry her, if she let not the day slip.

Improve upon the hint of her mother. That may touch her. But John Harlowe, remember, has privately engaged that lady—privately, I say; else, (not to mention the reason for her uncle Harlowe's former expedient,) you know, she might find means to get a letter away to the one or to the other, to know the truth; or to Miss Howe, to engage her to inquire into it: and, if she should, the word privately will account for the uncle's and mother's denying it.

However, fail not, as from me, to charge our mother and her nymphs to redouble their vigilance both as to her person and letters. All's upon a crisis now. But she must not be treated ill neither.

Thursday over, I shall know what to resolve upon.

If necessary, you must assume authority. The devil's in't, if such a girl as this shall awe a man of your years and experience. You are not in love with her as I am. Fly out, if she doubt your honour. Spirits naturally soft may be beat out of their play and borne down (though ever so much raised) by higher anger. All women are cowards at bottom; only violent where they may. I have often stormed a girl out of her mistrust, and made her yield (before she knew where she was) to the point indignantly mistrusted; and that to make up with me, though I was the aggressor.

If this matter succeed as I'd have it, (or if not, and do not fail by your fault,) I will take you off the necessity of pursuing your cursed smuggling; which otherwise may one day end fatally for you.

We are none of us perfect, M'Donald. This sweet lady makes me serious sometimes in spite of my heart. But as private vices are less blamable than public; and as I think smuggling (as it is called) a national evil; I have no doubt to pronounce you a much worse man than myself, and as such shall take pleasure in reforming you.

I send you enclosed ten guineas, as a small earnest of further favours. Hitherto you have been a very clever fellow.

As to clothes for Thursday, Monmouth-street will afford a ready supply. Clothes quite new would make your condition suspected. But you may defer that care, till you see if she can be prevailed upon. Your riding-dress will do for the first visit. Nor let your boots be over clean. I have always told you the consequence of attending to the minutiae, where art (or imposture, as the ill-mannered would call it) is designed—your linen rumpled and soily, when you wait upon her—easy terms these—just come to town—remember (as formerly) to loll, to throw out your legs, to stroke and grasp down your ruffles, as if of significance enough to be careless. What though the presence of a fine lady would require a different behaviour, are you not of years to dispense with politeness? You can have no design upon her, you know. You are a father yourself of daughters as old as she. Evermore is parade and obsequiousness suspectable: it must show either a foolish head, or a knavish heart. Assume airs of consequence therefore; and you will be treated as a man of consequence. I have often more than half ruined myself by my complaisance; and, being afraid of controul, have brought controul upon myself.

I think I have no more to say at present. I intend to be at Slough, or on the way to it, as by mine to the lady. Adieu, honest M'Donald.

LETTER XLV

TO CAPTAIN TOMLINSON [ENCLOSED IN THE PRECEDING; TO BE SHOWN TO THE LADY AS IN CONFIDENCE.] M. HALL, TUESDAY MORN., JUNE 27.

DEAR CAPTAIN TOMLINSON,

An unhappy misunderstanding has arisen between the dearest lady in the world and me (the particulars of which she perhaps may give you, but I will not, because I might be thought partial to myself;) and she refusing to answer my most pressing and respectful letters; I am at a most perplexing uncertainty whether she will meet us or not next Thursday to solemnize.

My Lord is so extremely ill, that if I thought she would not oblige me, I would defer going up to town for two or three days. He cares not to have me out of his sight: yet is impatient to salute my beloved as his niece before he dies. This I have promised to give him an opportunity to do: intending, if the dear creature will make me happy, to set out with her for this place directly from church.

With regret I speak it of the charmer of my soul, that irreconcilableness is her family-fault—the less excusable indeed for her, as she herself suffers by it in so high a degree from her own relations.

Now, Sir, as you intended to be in town some time before Thursday, if it be not too great an inconvenience to you, I could be glad you would go up as soon as possible, for my sake: and this I the more boldly request, as I presume that a man who has so many great affairs of his own in hand as you have, would be glad to be at a certainty as to the day.

You, Sir, can so pathetically and justly set before her the unhappy consequences that will follow if the day be postponed, as well with regard to her uncle's disappointment, as to the part you have assured me her mother is willing to take in the wished-for reconciliation, that I have great hopes she will suffer herself to be prevailed upon. And a man and horse shall be in waiting to take your dispatches and bring them to me.

But if you cannot prevail in my favour, you will be pleased to satisfy your friend, Mr. John Harlowe, that it is not my fault that he is not obliged. I am, dear Sir,

Your extremely obliged and faithful servant, R. LOVELACE.

LETTER XLVI

TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. WEDN. JUNE 28, NEAR TWELVE O'CLOCK.

HONOURED SIR,

I received your's, as your servant desired me to acquaint you, by ten this morning. Horse and man were in a foam.

I instantly equipped myself, as if come off from a journey, and posted away to the lady, intending to plead great affairs that I came not before, in order to favour your antedate; and likewise to be in a hurry, to have a pretence to hurry her ladyship, and to take no denial for her giving a satisfactory return to your messenger. But, upon my entering Mrs. Sinclair's house, I found all in the greatest consternation.

You must not, Sir, be surpris'd. It is a trouble to me to be the relater of the bad news; but so it is—The lady is gone off! She was missed but half an hour before I came.

Her waiting-maid is run away, or hitherto is not to be found: so that they conclude it was by her connivance.

They had sent, before I came, to my honoured masters Mr. Belton, Mr. Mowbray, and Mr. Belford. Mr. Tourville is out of town.

High words are passing between Madam Sinclair, and Madam Horton, and Madam Martin; as also with Dorcas. And your servant William threatens to hang or drown himself.

They have sent to know if they can hear of Mabell, the waiting-maid, at her mother's, who it seems lives in Chick-lane, West-Smithfield; and to an uncle of her's also, who keeps an alehouse at Cow-cross, had by, and with whom she lived last.

Your messenger having just changed his horse, is come back: so I will not detain him longer than to add, that I am, with great concern for this misfortune, and thanks for your seasonable favour and kind intentions towards me—I am sure this was not my fault—

Honoured Sir, Your most obliged, humble servant, PATRICK M'DONALD.

LETTER XLVII

MR. MOWBRAY, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. WEDNESDAY,
TWELVE O'CLOCK.

DEAR LOVELACE,

I have plaguy news to acquaint thee with. Miss Harlowe is gone off!—Quite gone, by soul!—I have no time for particulars, your servant being gone off. But if I had, we are not yet come to the bottom of the matter. The ladies here are all blubbering like devills, accusing one another most confoundedly: whilst Belton and I damn them all together in thy name.

If thou shouldst hear that thy fellow Will. is taken dead out of some horse-pond, and Dorcas cut down from her bed's teaster, from dangling in her own garters, be not surprised. Here's the devil to pay. Nobody serene but Jack Belford, who is taking minutes of examinations, accusations, and confessions, with the significant air of a Middlesex Justice; and intends to write at large all particulars, I suppose.

I heartily condole with thee: so does Belton. But it may turn out for the best: for she is gone away with thy marks, I understand. A foolish little devill! Where will she mend herself? for nobody will look upon her. And they tell me that thou wouldst certainly have married her, had she staid. But I know thee better.

Dear Bobby, adieu. If Lord M. will die now, to comfort thee for this loss, what a seasonable exit would he make! Let's have a letter from thee. Pr'ythee do. Thou can'st write devill-like to Belford, who shews us nothing at all. Thine heartily,

RD. MOWBRAY.

LETTER XLVIII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. THURSDAY, JUNE 29.

Thou hast heard from M'Donald and Mowbray the news. Bad or good, I know not which thou'lt deem it. I only wish I could have given thee joy upon the same account, before the unhappy lady was seduced from Hampstead; for then of what an ungrateful villany hadst thou been spared the perpetration, which now thou hast to answer for!

I came to town purely to serve thee with her, expecting that thy next would satisfy me that I might endeavour it without dishonour. And at first when I found her gone, I half pitied thee; for now wilt thou be inevitably blown up: and in what an execrable light wilt thou appear to all the world!—Poor Lovelace! caught in thy own snares! thy punishment is but beginning.

But to my narrative: for I suppose thou expectest all particulars from me, since Mowbray has informed thee that I have been collecting them.

'The noble exertion of spirit she has made on Friday night, had, it seems, greatly disordered her; insomuch that she was not visible till Saturday evening; when Mabell saw her; and she seemed to be very ill: but on Sunday morning, having dressed herself, as if designing to go to church, she ordered Mabell to get her a coach to the door.

'The wench told her, She was to obey her in every thing but the calling of a coach or chair, or in relation to letters.

'She sent for Will. and gave him the same command.

'He pleaded his master's orders to the contrary, and desired to be excused.

'Upon this, down she went, herself, and would have gone out without observation; but finding the street-door double-locked, and the key not in the lock, she stept into the street-parlour, and would have thrown up the sash to call out to the people passing by, as they doubted not: but that, since her last attempt of the same nature, had been fastened down.

'Hereupon she resolutely stept into Mrs. Sinclair's parlour in the back-house; where were the old devil and her two partners; and demanded the key of the street-door, or to have it opened for her.

'They were all surprised; but desired to be excused, and pleaded your orders.

'She asserted, that you had no authority over her; and never should have any: that their present refusal was their own act and deed: she saw the intent of their back house, and the reason of putting her there: she pleaded her condition and fortune; and said, they had no way to avoid utter ruin, but by opening their doors to her, or by murdering her, and burying her in their garden or cellar, too deep for detection: that already what had been done to her was punishable by death: and bid them at their peril detain her.'

What a noble, what a right spirit has this charming creature, in cases that will justify an exertion of spirit!—

'They answered that Mr. Lovelace could prove his marriage, and would indemnify them. And they all would have vindicated their behaviour on Friday night, and the reputation of their house. But refusing to hear them on that topic, she flung from them threatening.

'She then went up half a dozen stairs in her way to her own apartment: but, as if she had bethought herself, down she stept again, and proceeded towards the street-parlour; saying, as she passed by the infamous Dorcas, I'll make myself protectors, though the windows suffer. But that wench, of her own head, on the lady's going out of that parlour to Mrs. Sinclair's, had locked the door, and taken out the key: so that finding herself disappointed, she burst into tears, and went sobbing and menacing up stairs again.

'She made no other attempt till the effectual one. Your letters and messages, they suppose, coming so fast upon one another (though she would not answer one of them) gave her some amusement, and an assurance to them, that she would at last forgive you; and that then all would end as you wished.

'The women, in pursuance of your orders, offered not to obtrude themselves upon her; and Dorcas also kept out of her sight all the rest of Sunday; also on Monday and Tuesday. But by the lady's condescension, (even to familiarity) to Mabell, they imagined, that she must be working in her mind all that time to get away. They therefore redoubled their cautions to the wench; who told them so faithfully all that passed between her lady and her, that they had no doubt of her fidelity to her

wicked trust.

‘Tis probable she might have been contriving something all this time; but saw no room for perfecting any scheme. The contrivance by which she effected her escape seems to me not to have been fallen upon till the very day; since it depended partly upon the weather, as it proved. But it is evident she hoped something from Mabell’s simplicity, or gratitude, or compassion, by cultivating all the time her civility to her.

‘Polly waited on her early on Wednesday morning; and met with a better reception than she had reason to expect. She complained however, with warmth, of her confinement. Polly said there would be an happy end to it (if it were a confinement,) next day, she presumed. She absolutely declared to the contrary, in the way Polly meant it; and said, That Mr. Lovelace, on his return [which looked as if she intended to wait for it] should have reason to repent the orders he had given, as they all should their observance of them: let him send twenty letters, she would not answer one, be the consequence what it would; nor give him hope of the least favour, while she was in that house. She had given Mrs. Sinclair and themselves fair warning, she said: no orders of another ought to make them detain a free person: but having made an open attempt to go, and been detained by them, she was the calmer, she told Polly; let them look to the consequence.

‘But yet she spoke this with temper; and Polly gave it as her opinion, (with apprehension for their own safety,) that having so good a handle to punish them all, she would not go away if she might. And what, inferred Polly, is the indemnity of a man who has committed the vilest of rapes on a person of condition; and must himself, if prosecuted for it, either fly, or be hanged?

‘Sinclair, [so I will still call her,] upon this representation of Polly, foresaw, she said, the ruin of her poor house in the issue of this strange business; and the infamous Sally and Dorcas bore their parts in the apprehension: and this put them upon thinking it advisable for the future, that the street-door should generally in the day-time be only left upon a bolt-latch, as they called it, which any body might open on the inside; and that the key should be kept in the door; that their numerous comers and goers, as they called their guests, should be able to give evidence, that she might have gone out if she would: not forgetting, however, to renew their orders to Will. to Dorcas, to Mabell, and the rest, to redouble their vigilance on this occasion, to prevent her escape: none of them doubting, at the same time, that her love of a man so considerable in their eyes, and the prospect of what was to happen, as she had reason to believe, on Thursday, her uncle’s birth-day, would (though perhaps not till the last hour, for her pride sake, was their word) engage her to change her temper.

‘They believe, that she discovered the key to be left in the door; for she was down more than once to walk in the little garden, and seemed to cast her eye each time to the street-door.

‘About eight yesterday morning, an hour after Polly had left her, she told Mabell, she was sure she should not live long; and having a good many suits of apparel, which after her death would be of no use to any body she valued, she would give her a brown lustring gown, which, with some alterations to make it more suitable to her degree, would a great while serve her for a Sunday wear; for that she (Mabell) was the only person in that house of whom she could think without terror or antipathy.

‘Mabell expressing her gratitude upon the occasion, the lady said, she had nothing to employ herself about, and if she could get a workwoman directly, she would look over her things then, and give her what she intended for her.

‘Her mistress’s mantua-maker, the maid replied, lived but a little way off: and she doubted not that she could procure her, or one of the journey-women to alter the gown out of hand.

‘I will give you also, said she, a quilted coat, which will require but little alteration, if any; for you are much about my stature: but the gown I will give directions about, because the sleeves and the robings and facings must be altered for your wear, being, I believe, above your station: and try, said she, if you can get the workwoman, and we’ll advise about it. If she cannot come now, let her come in the afternoon; but I had rather now, because it will amuse me to give you a lift.

‘Then stepping to the window, it rains, said she, [and so it had done all the morning:] slip on the hood and short cloak I have seen you wear, and come to me when you are ready to go out, because you shall bring me in something that I want.

'Mabell equipped herself accordingly, and received her commands to buy her some trifles, and then left her; but in her way out, stepped into the back parlour, where Dorcas was with Mrs. Sinclair, telling her where she was going, and on what account, bidding Dorcas look out till she came back. So faithful as the wench to the trust reposed in her, and so little had the lady's generosity wrought upon her.

'Mrs. Sinclair commended her; Dorcas envied her, and took her cue: and Mabell soon returned with the mantua-maker's journey-woman; (she resolved, she said, but she would not come without her); and then Dorcas went off guard.

'The lady looked out the gown and petticoat, and before the workwoman caused Mabell to try it on; and, that it might fit the better, made the willing wench pull off her upper-petticoat, and put on that she gave her. Then she bid them go into Mr. Lovelace's apartment, and contrive about it before the pier-glass there, and stay till she came to them, to give them her opinion.

'Mabell would have taken her own clothes, and hood, and short cloak with her: but her lady said, No matter; you may put them on again here, when we have considered about the alterations: there's no occasion to litter the other room.

'They went; and instantly, as it is supposed, she slipped on Mabell's gown and petticoat over her own, which was white damask, and put on the wench's hood, short cloak, and ordinary apron, and down she went.

'Hearing somebody tripping along the passage, both Will. and Dorcas whipt to the inner-hall door, and saw her; but, taking her for Mabell, Are you going far, Mabell? cried Will.

'Without turning her face, or answering, she held out her hand, pointing to the stairs; which they construed as a caution for them to look out in her absence; and supposing she would not be long gone, as she had not in form, repeated her caution to them, up went Will, tarrying at the stairs-head in expectation of the supposed Mabell's return.

'Mabell and the workwoman waited a good while, amusing themselves not disagreeably, the one with contriving in the way of her business, the other delighting herself with her fine gown and coat. But at last, wondering the lady did not come in to them, Mabell tiptoed it to her door, and tapping, and not being answered, stepped into the chamber.

'Will. at that instant, from his station at the stairs-head, seeing Mabell in her lady's clothes; for he had been told of the present, [gifts to servants fly from servant to servant in a minute,] was very much surprised, having, as he thought, just seen her go out in her own; and stepping up, met her at the door. How the devil can this be? said he: just now you went out in your own dress! How came you here in this? and how could you pass me unseen? but nevertheless, kissing her, said, he would now brag he had kissed his lady, or one in her clothes.

'I am glad, Mr. William, cried Mabell, to see you here so diligently. But know you where my lady is?

'In my master's apartment, answered Will. Is she not? Was she not talking with you this moment?

'No, that's Mrs. Dolins's journey-woman.

'They both stood aghast, as they said; Will, again recollecting he had seen Mabell, as he thought, go out in her own clothes. And while they were debating and wondering, up comes Dorcas with your fourth letter, just then brought for the lady, and seeing Mabell dressed out, (whom she had likewise beheld a little before), as she supposed, in her common clothes; she joined in the wonder; till Mabell, re-entering the lady's apartment, missed her own clothes; and then suspecting what had happened, and letting the others into the ground of the suspicion, they all agreed that she had certainly escaped. And then followed such an uproar of mutual accusation, and you should have done this, and you have done that, as alarmed the whole house; every apartment in both houses giving up its devil, to the number of fourteen or fifteen, including the mother and her partners.

'Will. told them his story; and then ran out, as on the like occasion formerly, to make inquiry whether the lady was seen by any of the coachmen, chairmen, or porters, plying in that neighbourhood: while Dorcas cleared herself immediately, and that at the poor Mabell's expense, who made a figure as guilty as awkward, having on the suspected price of her treachery; which Dorcas, out of envy, was ready to tear from her back.

'Hereupon all the pack opened at the poor wench, while the mother foamed at the mouth, bellowed out her orders for seizing the suspected offender; who could neither be heard in her own defence, nor had she

been heard, would have been believed.

'That such a perfidious wretch should ever disgrace her house, was the mother's cry; good people might be corrupted; but it was a fine thing if such a house as her's could not be faithfully served by cursed creatures who were hired knowing the business they were to be employed in, and who had no pretence to principle!—D—n her, the wretch proceeded!—She had no patience with her! call the cook, and call the scullion!

'They were at hand.

'See, that guilty pyeball devil, was her word—(her lady's gown upon her back)—but I'll punish her for a warning to all betrayers of their trust. Put on the great gridiron this moment, [an oath or a curse at every word:] make up a roaring fire—the cleaver bring me this instant—I'll cut her into quarters with my own hands; and carbonade and broil the traitress for a feast to all the dogs and cats in the neighbourhood, and eat the first slice of the toad myself, without salt or pepper.

'The poor Mabell, frightened out of her wits, expected every moment to be torn in pieces, having half a score open-clawed paws upon her all at once. She promised to confess all. But that all, when she had obtained a hearing, was nothing: for nothing had she to confess.

'Sally, hereupon with a curse of mercy, ordered her to retire; undertaking that she and Polly would examine her themselves, that they might be able to write all particulars to his honour; and then, if she could not clear herself, or, if guilty, give some account of the lady, (who had been so wicked as to give them all this trouble,) so as they might get her again, then the cleaver and gridiron might go to work with all their heart.

'The wench, glad of this reprieve, went up stairs; and while Sally was laying out the law, and prating away in her usual dictorial manner, whipt on another gown, and sliding down the stairs, escaped to her relations. And this flight, which was certainly more owing to terror than guilt, was, in the true Old Bailey construction, made a confirmation of the latter.'

These are the particulars of Miss Harlowe's flight. Thou'lt hardly think me too minute.—How I long to triumph over thy impatience and fury on the occasion!

Let me beseech thee, my dear Lovelace, in thy next letter, to rave most gloriously!—I shall be grievously disappointed if thou dost not.

Where, Lovelace, can the poor lady be gone? And who can describe the distress she must be in?

By thy former letters, it may be supposed, that she can have very little money: nor, by the suddenness of her flight, more clothes than those she has on. And thou knowest who once said,* 'Her parents will not receive her. Her uncles will not entertain her. Her Norton is in their direction, and cannot. Miss Howe dare not. She has not one friend or intimate in town—entirely a stranger to it.' And, let me add, has been despoiled of her honour by the man for whom she had made all these sacrifices; and who stood bound to her by a thousand oaths and vows, to be her husband, her protector, and friend!

* See Vol. IV. Letter XXI.

How strong must be her resentment of the barbarous treatment she has received! how worthy of herself, that it has made her hate the man she once loved! and, rather than marry him, choose to expose her disgrace to the whole world: to forego the reconciliation with her friends which her heart was so set upon: and to hazard a thousand evils to which her youth and her sex may too probably expose an indigent and friendly beauty!

Rememberest thou not that home push upon thee, in one of the papers written in her delirium; of which, however it savours not?—

I will assure thee, that I have very often since most seriously reflected upon it: and as thy intended second outrage convinces me that it made no impression upon thee then, and perhaps thou hast never thought of it since, I will transcribe the sentence.

'If, as religion teaches us, God will judge us, in a great measure! by our benevolent or evil actions to one another—O wretch! bethink thee, in time bethink thee, how great must be thy condemnation.'*

* See Vol. VI. Letter XVI.

And is this amiable doctrine the sum of religion? Upon my faith, believe it is. For, to indulge a serious thought, since we are not atheists, except in practice, does God, the BEING of Beings, want any thing of us for HIMSELF! And does he not enjoin us works of mercy to one another, as the means to obtain his mercy? A sublime principle, and worthy of the SUPREME SUPERINTENDENT and FATHER of all things!—But if we are to be judged by this noble principle, what, indeed, must be thy condemnation on the score of this lady only? and what mine, and what all our confraternity's, on the score of other women: though we are none of us half so bad as thou art, as well for want of inclination, I hope, as of opportunity!

I must add, that, as well for thy own sake, as for the lady's, I wish ye were yet to be married to each other. It is the only medium that can be hit upon to salve the honour of both. All that's past may yet be concealed from the world, and from all her sufferings, if thou resolvest to be a tender and kind husband to her.

And if this really be thy intention, I will accept with pleasure of a commission from thee that shall tend to promote so good an end, whenever she can be found; that is to say, if she will admit to her presence a man who professes friendship to thee. Nor can I give a greater demonstration, that I am

Thy sincere friend, J. BELFORD.

P.S. Mabell's clothes were thrown into the passage this morning: nobody knows by whom.

LETTER XLIX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY, JUNE 30.

I am ruined, undone, blown up, destroyed, and worse than annihilated, that's certain!—But was not the news shocking enough, dost thou think, without thy throwing into the too-weighty scale reproaches, which thou couldst have had no opportunity to make but for my own voluntary communications? at a time too, when, as it falls out, I have another very sensible disappointment to struggle with?

I imagine, if there be such a thing as future punishment, it must be none of the smallest mortifications, that a new devil shall be punished by a worse old one. And, take that! And, take that! to have the old satyr cry to the screaming sufferer, laying on with a cat-o'-nine-tails, with a star of burning brass at the end of each: and, for what! for what!—Why, if the truth may be fairly told, for not being so bad a devil as myself.

Thou art, surely, casuist good enough to know, (what I have insisted upon* heretofore,) that the sin of seducing a credulous and easy girl, is as great as that of bringing to your lure an incredulous and watchful one.

* See Vol. IV. Letter XVII.

However ungenerous an appearance what I am going to say may have from my pen, let me tell thee, that if such a woman as Miss Harlowe chose to enter into the matrimonial state, [I am resolved to disappoint thee in thy meditated triumph over my rage and despair!] and, according to the old patriarchal system, to go on contributing to get sons and daughters, with no other view than to bring them up piously, and to be good and useful members of the commonwealth, what a devil had she to do, to let her fancy run a gadding after a rake? one whom she knew to be a rake?

Oh! but truly she hoped to have the merit of reclaiming him. She had formed pretty notions how charming it would look to have a penitent of her own making dangling at her side at church, through an applauding neighbourhood: and, as their family increased, marching with her thither, at the head of their boys and girls, processionally, as it were, boasting of the fruits of their honest desires, as my good lord bishop has it in his license. And then, what a comely sight, all kneeling down together in one pew, according to eldership as we have seen in effigy, a whole family upon some old monument, where the honest chevalier in armour is presented kneeling, with up-lifted hands, and half a dozen jolter-headed crop-eared boys behind him, ranged gradatim, or step-fashion according to age and size, all in the same posture—facing his pious dame, with a ruff about her neck, and as many whey-faced girls all kneeling behind her: an altar between them, and an open book upon it: over their heads semiluminary rays darting from gilded clouds, surrounding an achievement-motto, IN COELO SALUS—or QUIES—perhaps, if they have happened to live the usual married life of brawl and contradiction.

It is certainly as much my misfortune to have fallen in with Miss Clarissa Harlowe, were I to have valued my reputation or ease, as it is that of Miss Harlowe to have been acquainted with me. And, after all, what have I done more than prosecute the maxim, by which thou and I and every rake are governed, and which, before I knew this lady, we have pursued from pretty girl to pretty girl, as fast as we have set one down, taking another up;—just as the fellows do with their flying coaches and flying horses at a country fair——with a Who rides next! Who rides next!

But here in the present case, to carry on the volant metaphor, (for I must either be merry, or mad,) is a pretty little miss just come out of her hanging-sleeve-coat, brought to buy a pretty little fairing; for the world, Jack, is but a great fair, thou knowest; and, to give thee serious reflection for serious, all its joys but tinselled hobby-horses, gilt gingerbread, squeaking trumpets, painted drums, and so forth.

Now behold this pretty little miss skimming from booth to booth, in a very pretty manner. One pretty little fellow called Wyerley, perhaps; another jiggeting rascal called Biron, a third simpering varlet of the name of Symmes, and a more hideous villain than any of the reset, with a long bag under his arm, and parchment settlements tagged to his heels, yelped Solmes: pursue her from raree-show to raree-show, shouldering upon one another at every turn, stopping when she stops, and set a spinning again when she moves. And thus dangled after, but still in the eye of her watchful guardians, traverses the pretty little miss through the whole fair, equally delighted and delighting: till at last, taken with the invitation of the laced-hat orator, and seeing several pretty little bib-

wearers stuck together in the flying-coaches, cutting safely the yielding air, in the one-go-up the other go-down picture-of-the-world vehicle, and all with as little fear as wit, is tempted to ride next.

In then suppose she slyly pops, when none of her friends are near her: And if, after two or three ups and downs, her pretty head turns giddy, and she throws herself out of the coach when at its elevation, and so dashes out her pretty little brains, who can help it?—And would you hang the poor fellow, whose professed trade it was to set the pretty little creature a flying?

'Tis true, this pretty little miss, being a very pretty little miss, being a very much-admired little miss, being a very good little miss, who always minded her book, and had passed through her sampler-doctrine with high applause; had even stitched out, in gaudy propriety of colors, an Abraham offering up Isaac, a Sampson and the Philistines; and flowers, and knots, and trees, and the sun and the moon, and the seven stars, all hung up in frames with glasses before them, for the admiration of her future grand children: who likewise was entitled to a very pretty little estate: who was descended from a pretty little family upwards of one hundred years gentility; which lived in a very pretty little manner, respected a very little on their own accounts, a great deal on her's:—

For such a pretty little miss as this to come to so great a misfortune, must be a very sad thing: But, tell me, would not the losing of any ordinary child, of any other less considerable family, or less shining or amiable qualities, have been as great and heavy a loss to that family, as the losing this pretty little miss could be to her's?

To descend to a very low instance, and that only as to personality; hast thou any doubt, that thy strong-muscled bony-faced was as much admired by thy mother, as if it had been the face of a Lovelace, or any other handsome fellow? And had thy picture been drawn, would she have forgiven the painter, had he not expressed so exactly thy lineaments, as that every one should have discerned the likeness? The handsome likeness is all that is wished for. Ugliness made familiar to us, with the partiality natural to fond parents, will be beauty all the world over.—Do thou apply.

But, alas! Jack, all this is but a copy of my countenance, drawn to evade thy malice!—Though it answer thy unfriendly purpose to own it, I cannot forbear to own it, that I am stung to the very soul with this unhappy—accident, must I call it!—Have I nobody, whose throat, either for carelessness or treachery, I ought to cut, in order to pacify my vengeance?

When I reflect upon my last iniquitous intention, the first outrage so nobly resented, as well as, so far as she was able, so nobly resisted, I cannot but conclude, that I was under the power of fascination from these accursed Circes; who, pretending to know their own sex, would have it, that there is in every woman a yielding, or a weak-resisting moment to be met with: and that yet, and yet, and yet, I had not tried enough; but that, if neither love nor terror should enable me to hit that lucky moment, when, by help of their cursed arts, she was once overcome, she would be for ever overcome:—appealing to all my experience, to all my knowledge of the sex, for justification of their assertion.

My appeal to experience, I own, was but too favourable to their argument: For dost thou think I could have held my purpose against such an angel as this, had I ever before met with a woman so much in earnest to defend her honour against the unwearied artifices and perseverance of the man she loved? Why then were there not more examples of a virtue so immovable? Or, why was this singular one to fall to my lot? except indeed to double my guilt; and at the same time to convince all that should hear her story, that there are angels as well as devils in the flesh?

So much for confession; and for the sake of humouring my conscience; with a view likewise to disarm thy malice by acknowledgement: since no one shall say worse of me, than I will of myself on this occasion.

One thing I will nevertheless add, to show the sincerity of my contrition—'Tis this, that if thou canst by any means find her out within these three days, or any time before she has discovered the stories relating to Captain Tomlinson and her uncle to be what they are; and if thou canst prevail upon her to consent, I will actually, in thy presence and his, (he to represent her uncle,) marry her.

I am still in hopes it may be so—she cannot be long concealed—I have already set all engines at work to find her out! and if I do, what indifferent persons, [and no one of her friends, as thou observest, will

look upon her,] will care to embroil themselves with a man of my figure, fortune, and resolution? Show her this part, then, or any other part of this letter, at thy own discretion, if thou canst find her: for, after all, methinks, I would be glad that this affair, which is bad enough in itself, should go off without worse personal consequences to any body else: and yet it runs in my mind, I know not why, that, sooner or later it will draw a few drops of blood after it; except she and I can make it up between ourselves. And this may be another reason why she should not carry her resentment too far—not that such an affair would give me much concern neither, were I to choose any man of men, for I heartily hate all her family, but herself; and ever shall.

Let me add, that the lady's plot to escape appears to me no extraordinary one. There was much more luck than probability that it should do: since, to make it succeed, it was necessary that Dorcas and Will., and Sinclair and her nymphs, should be all deceived, or off their guard. It belongs to me, when I see them, to give them my hearty thanks that they were; and that their selfish care to provide for their own future security, should induce them to leave their outward door upon their bolt-latch, and be curs'd to them.

Mabell deserves a pitch suit and a bonfire, rather than the lustring; and as her clothes are returned, let the lady's be put to her others, to be sent to her when it can be told whither—but not till I give the word neither; for we must get the dear fugitive back again if possible.

I suppose that my stupid villain, who knew not such a goddess-shaped lady with a mien so noble, from the awkward and bent-shouldered Mabell, has been at Hampstead to see after her. And yet I hardly think she would go thither. He ought to go through every street where bills for lodgings are up, to inquire after a new-comer. The houses of such as deal in women's matters, and tea, coffee, and such-like, are those to be inquired at for her. If some tidings be not quickly heard of her, I would not have either Dorcas, Will., or Mabell, appear in my sight, whatever their superiors think fit to do.

This, though written in character, is a very long letter, considering it is not a narrative one, or a journal of proceedings, like most of my former; for such will unavoidably and naturally, as I may say, run into length. But I have so used myself to write a great deal of late, that I know not how to help it. Yet I must add to its length, in order to explain myself on a hint I gave at the beginning of it; which was, that I have another disappointment, besides this of Miss Harlowe's escape, to bemoan.

And what dost thou think it is? Why, the old Peer, pox of his tough constitution, (for that malady would have helped him on,) has made shift by fire and brimstone, and the devil knows what, to force the gout to quit the counterscarp of his stomach, just as it had collected all its strength, in order to storm the citadel of his heart. In short, they have, by the mere force of stink-pots, hand-granades, and pop-guns, driven the slow-working pioneer quite out of the trunk into the extremities; and there it lies nibbling and gnawing upon his great toe; when I had a fair end of the distemper and the distempered.

But I, who could write to thee of laudanum, and the wet cloth, formerly, yet let 8000£. a year slip through my fingers, when I had entered upon it more than in imagination, [for I had begun to ask the stewards questions, and to hear them talk of fines and renewals, and such sort of stuff,] deserve to be mortified.

Thou canst not imagine how differently the servants, and even my cousins, look upon me, since yesterday, to what they did before. Neither the one nor the other bow or courtesy half so low—nor am I a quarter so often his honour and your honour, as I was within these few hours, with the former: and as to the latter—it is cousin Bobby again, with the usual familiarity, instead of Sir, and Sir, and If you please, Mr. Lovelace. And now they have the insolence to congratulate me on the recovery of the best of uncles; while I am forced to seem as much delighted as they, when, would it do me good, I could sit down and cry my eyes out.

I had bespoke my mourning in imagination, after the example of a certain foreign minister, who, before the death, or even last illness of Charles II., as honest White Kennet tells us, had half exhausted Blackwell-hall of its sables—an indication, as the historian would insinuate, that the monarch was to be poisoned, and the ambassador in the secret.—And yet, fool that I was, I could not take the hint—What the devil does a man read history for, if he cannot profit by the examples he find in it?

But thus, Jack, is an observation of the old Peer's verified, that one misfortune seldom comes alone: and so concludes

Thy doubly mortified LOVELACE.

LETTER L

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE WEDNESDAY NIGHT,
JUNE 28.

O MY DEAREST MISS HOWE!

Once more have I escaped—But, alas! I, my best self, have not escaped!—Oh! your poor Clarissa Harlowe! you also will hate me, I fear!

—

Yet you won't, when you know all!

But no more of my self! my lost self. You that can rise in a morning to be blest, and to bless; and go to rest delighted with your own reflections, and in your unbroken, unstartling slumbers, conversing with saints and angels, the former only more pure than yourself, as they have shaken off the incumbrance of body; you shall be my subject, as you have long, long, been my only pleasure. And let me, at awful distance, revere my beloved Anna Howe, and in her reflect upon what her Clarissa Harlowe once was!

Forgive, O forgive my rambling. My peace is destroyed. My intellects are touched. And what flighty nonsense must you read, if you now will vouchsafe to correspond with me, as formerly!

O my best, my dearest, my only friend! what a tale have I to unfold!—But still upon self, this vile, this hated self!—I will shake it off, if possible; and why should I not, since I think, except one wretch, I hate nothing so much? Self, then, be banished from self one moment (for I doubt it will be for no longer) to inquire after a dearer object, my beloved Anna Howe!—whose mind, all robed in spotless white, charms and irradiates—But what would I say?—

And how, my dearest friend, after this rhapsody, which on re-perusal, I would not let go, but to show you what a distracted mind dictates to my trembling pen! How do you? You have been very ill, it seems. That you are recovered, my dear, let me hear. That your mother is well, pray let me hear, and hear quickly. This comfort surely is owing to me; for if life is no worse than chequer-work, I must now have a little white to come, having seen nothing but black, all unchequered dismal black, for a great, great while.

And what is all this wild incoherence for? It is only to beg to know how you have been, and how you do now, by a line directed for Mrs. Rachel Clark, at Mr. Smith's, a glove-shop, in King-street, Covent-garden; which (although my abode is secret to every body else) will reach the hands of—your unhappy—but that's not enough—

Your miserable CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LI

MRS. HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [SUPERSCRIBED AS DIRECTED IN THE PRECEDING.] FRIDAY, JUNE 30.

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE,

You will wonder to receive a letter from me. I am sorry for the great distress you seem to be in. Such a hopeful young lady as you were! But see what comes of disobedience to parents!

For my part; although I pity you, yet I much more pity your poor father and mother. Such education as they gave you! such improvement as you made! and such delight as they took in you!—And all come to this!—

But pray, Miss, don't make my Nancy guilt of your fault; which is that of disobedience. I have charged her over and over not to correspond with one who had made such a giddy step. It is not to her reputation, I am sure. You know that I so charged her; yet you go on corresponding together, to my very great vexation; for she has been very perverse upon it more than once. Evil communication, Miss—you know the rest.

Here, people cannot be unhappy by themselves, but they must invoke their friends and acquaintance whose discretion has kept them clear of their errors, into near as much unhappiness as if they had run into the like of their own heads! Thus my poor daughter is always in tears and grief. And she has postponed her own felicity, truly, because you are unhappy.

If people, who seek their own ruin, could be the only sufferers by their headstrong doings, it were something: But, O Miss, Miss! what have you to answer for, who have made as many grieved hearts as have known you! The whole sex is indeed wounded by you: For, who but Miss Clarissa Harlowe was proposed by every father and mother for a pattern for their daughters?

I write a long letter, where I proposed to say but a few words; and those to forbid your writing to my Nancy: and this as well because of the false step you have made, as because it will grieve her poor heart, and do you no good. If you love her, therefore, write not to her. Your sad letter came into my hands, Nancy being abroad: and I shall not show it her: for there would be no comfort for her, if she saw it, nor for me, whose delight she is—as you once was to your parents.—

But you seem to be sensible enough of your errors now.—So are all giddy girls, when it is too late: and what a crest-fallen figure then do the consequences of their self-willed obstinacy and headstrongness compel them to make!

I may say too much: only as I think it proper to bear that testimony against your rashness which it behoves every careful parent to bear: and none more than

Your compassionating, well-wishing ANNABELLA HOWE.

I send this by a special messenger, who has business only so far as Barnet, because you shall have no need to write again; knowing how you love writing: and knowing, likewise, that misfortune makes people plaintive.

LETTER LII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MRS. HOWE. SATURDAY, JULY 1.

Permit me, Madam, to trouble you with a few lines, were it only to thank you for your reproofs; which have nevertheless drawn fresh streams of blood from a bleeding heart.

My story is a dismal story. It has circumstances in it that would engage pity, and possibly a judgment not altogether unfavourable, were those circumstances known. But it is my business, and shall be all my business, to repent of my failings, and not endeavour to extenuate them.

Nor will I seek to distress your worthy mind. If I cannot suffer alone, I will make as few parties as I can in my sufferings. And, indeed, I took up my pen with this resolution when I wrote the letter which has fallen into your hands. It was only to know, and that for a very particular reason, as well as for affection unbounded, if my dear Miss Howe, from whom I had not heard of a long time, were ill; as I had been told she was; and if so, how she now does. But my injuries being recent, and my distresses having been exceeding great, self would crowd into my letter. When distressed, the human mind is apt to turn itself to every one, in whom it imagined or wished an interest, for pity and consolation.—Or, to express myself better, and more concisely, in your own words, misfortune makes people plaintive: And to whom, if not to a friend, can the afflicted complain?

Miss Howe being abroad when my letter came, I flatter myself that she is recovered. But it would be some satisfaction to me to be informed if she has been ill. Another line from your hand would be too great a favour: but if you will be pleased to direct any servant to answer yes, or no, to that question, I will not be farther troublesome.

Nevertheless, I must declare, that my Miss Howe's friendship was all the comfort I had, or expected to have in this world; and a line from her would have been a cordial to my fainting heart. Judge then, dearest Madam, how reluctantly I must obey your prohibition—but yet I will endeavour to obey it; although I should have hoped, as well from the tenor of all that has passed between Miss Howe and me, as from her established virtue, that she could not be tainted by evil communication, had one or two letters been permitted. This, however, I ask not for, since I think I have nothing to do but to beg of God (who, I hope, has not yet withdrawn his grace from me, although he has pleaded to let loose his justice upon my faults) to give me a truly broken spirit, if it be not already broken enough, and then to take to his mercy

The unhappy

CLARISSA HARLOWE.

Two favours, good Madam, I have to beg of you.—The first,—that you will not let any of my relations know that you have heard from me. The other,—that no living creature be apprized where I am to be heard of, or directed to. This is a point that concerns me more than I can express.—In short, my preservation from further evils may depend upon it.

LETTER LIII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO HANNAH BURTON THURSDAY,
JUNE 29.

MY GOOD HANNAH,

Strange things have happened to me, since you were dismissed my service (so sorely against my will) and your pert fellow servant set over me. But that must all be forgotten now—

How do you, my Hannah? Are you recovered of your illness? If you are, do you choose to come and be with me? Or can you conveniently?

I am a very unhappy creature, and, being among all strangers, should be very glad to have you with me, of whose fidelity and love I have had so many acceptable instances.

Living or dying, I will endeavour to make it worth your while, my Hannah.

If you are recovered, as I hope, and if you have a good place, it may be they would bear with your absence, and suffer somebody in your room for a month or so: and, by that time, I hope to be provided for, and you may then return to your place.

Don't let any of my friends know of this my desire: whether you can come or not.

I am at Mr. Smith's, a hosier's and glove shop, in King-street, Covent-garden.

You must direct to me by the name of Rachel Clark.

Do, my good Hannah, come if you can to your poor young mistress, who always valued you, and always will whether you come or not.

I send this to your mother at St. Alban's, not knowing where to direct to you. Return me a line, that I may know what to depend upon: and I shall see you have not forgotten the pretty hand you were taught, in happy days, by

Your true friend, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LIV

HANNAH BURTON [IN ANSWER.] MONDAY, JULY 3.

HONORED MADDAM,

I have not forgot to write, and never will forget any thing you, my dear young lady, was so good as to larn me. I am very sorrowful for your misfortens, my dearest young lady; so sorrowfull, I do not know what to do. Gladd at harte would I be to be able to come to you. But indeed I have not been able to stir out of my rome here at my mother's ever since I was forsed to leave my plase with a roomatise, which has made me quite and clene helpless. I will pray for you night and day, my dearest, my kindest, my goodest young lady, who have been so badly used; and I am very sorry I cannot come to do you love and sarvice; which will ever be in the harte of mee to do, if it was in my power: who am

Your most dutiful servant to command, HANNAH BURTON.

LETTER LV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MRS. JUDITH NORTON THURSDAY,
JUNE 29.

MY DEAR MRS. NORTON,

I address myself to you, after a very long silence, (which, however, was not owing either to want of love or duty,) principally to desire you to satisfy me in two or three points, which it behoves me to know.

My father, and all the family, I am informed, are to be at my uncle Harlowe's this day, as usual. Pray acquaint me, if they have been there? And if they were cheerful on the anniversary occasion? And also, if you have heard of any journey, or intended journey, of my brother, in company with Captain Singleton and Mr. Solmes?

Strange things have happened to me, my dear, worthy and maternal friend—very strange things!—Mr. Lovelace has proved a very barbarous and ungrateful man to me. But, God be praised, I have escaped from him. Being among absolute strangers (though I think worthy folks) I have written to Hannah Burton to come and be with me. If the good creature fall in your way, pray encourage her to come to me. I always intended to have her, she knows: but hoped to be in happier circumstances.

Say nothing to any of my friends that you have heard from me.

Pray, do you think my father would be prevailed upon, if I were to supplicate him by letter, to take off the heavy curse he laid upon me at my going from Harlowe-place? I can expect no other favour from him. But that being literally fulfilled as to my prospects in this life, I hope it will be thought to have operated far enough; and my heart is so weak!—it is very weak!—But for my father's own sake—what should I say!—Indeed I hardly know how I ought to express myself on this sad subject!—but it will give ease to my mind to be released from it.

I am afraid my Poor, as I used to call the good creatures to whose necessities I was wont to administer by your faithful hands, have missed me of late. But now, alas! I am poor myself. It is not the least aggravation of my fault, nor of my regrets, that with such inclinations as God has given me, I have put it out of my power to do the good I once pleased myself to think I was born to do. It is a sad thing, my dearest Mrs. Nortin, to render useless to ourselves and the world, by our own rashness, the talents which Providence has intrusted to us, for the service of both.

But these reflections are now too late; and perhaps I ought to have kept them to myself. Let me, however, hope that you love me still. Pray let me hope that you do. And then, notwithstanding my misfortunes, which have made me seem ungrateful to the kind and truly maternal pains you have taken with me from my cradle, I shall have the happiness to think that there is one worthy person, who hates not

The unfortunate CLARISSA HARLOWE.

Pray remember me to my foster-brother. I hope he continues dutiful and good to you.

Be pleased to direct for Rachel Clark, at Mr. Smith's, in King-street, Covent-garden. But keep the direction an absolute secret.

LETTER LVI

MRS. NORTON [IN ANSWER.] SATURDAY, JULY 1.

Your letter, my dearest young lady, cuts me to the heart! Why will you not let me know all your distresses?—Yet you have said enough!

My son is very good to me. A few hours ago he was taken with a feverish disorder. But I hope it will go off happily, if his ardour for business will give him the recess from it which his good master is willing to allow him. He presents his duty to you, and shed tears at hearing your sad letter read.

You have been misinformed as to your family's being at your uncle Harlowe's. They did not intend to be there. Nor was the day kept at all. Indeed, they have not stirred out, but to church (and that but three times) ever since the day you went away.—Unhappy day for them, and for all who know you!—To me, I am sure, most particularly so!—My heart now bleeds more and more for you.

I have not heard a syllable of such a journey as you mentioned of your brother, Captain Singleton, and Mr. Solmes. There has been some talk indeed of your brother's setting out for his northern estates: but I have not heard of it lately.

I am afraid no letter will be received from you. It grieves me to tell you so, my dearest young lady. No evil can have happened to you, which they do not expect to hear of; so great is their antipathy to the wicked man, and so bad is his character.

I cannot but think hardly of their unforgiveness: but there is no judging for others by one's self. Nevertheless I will add, that, if you had had as gentle spirits as mine, these evils had never happened either to them or to you. I knew your virtue, and your love of virtue, from your very cradle; and I doubted not but that, with God's grace, would always be your guard. But you could never be driven; nor was there occasion to drive you—so generous, so noble, so discreet.—But how does my love of your amiable qualities increase my affliction; as these recollections must do your's!

You are escaped, my dearest Miss—happily, I hope—that is to say, with your honour—else, how great must be your distress!—Yet, from your letter, I dread the worst.

I am very seldom at Harlowe-place. The house is not the house it used to be, since you went from it. Then they are so relentless! And, as I cannot say harsh things of the beloved child of my heart, as well as bosom, they do not take it amiss that I stay away.

Your Hannah left her place ill some time ago! and, as she is still at her mother's at St. Alban's, I am afraid she continues ill. If so, as you are among strangers, and I cannot encourage you at present to come into these parts, I shall think it my duty to attend you (let it be taken as it will) as soon as my Tommy's indisposition will permit; which I hope will be soon.

I have a little money by me. You say you are poor yourself.—How grievous are those words from one entitled and accustomed to affluence!—Will you be so good to command it, my beloved young lady?—It is most of it your own bounty to me. And I should take a pride to restore it to its original owner.

Your Poor bless you, and pray for you continually. I have so managed your last benevolence, and they have been so healthy, and have had such constant employ, that it has held out; and will hold out till the happier times return, which I continually pray for.

Let me beg of you, my dearest young lady, to take to yourself all those aids which good persons, like you, draw from RELIGION, in support of their calamities. Let your sufferings be what they will, I am sure you have been innocent in your intention. So do not despond. None are made to suffer above what they can, and therefore ought to bear.

We know not the methods of Providence, nor what wise ends it may have to serve in its seemingly-severe dispensations to its poor creatures.

Few persons have greater reason to say this than myself. And since we are apt in calamities to draw more comfort from example than precept, you will permit me to remind you of my own lot: For who has had a greater share of afflictions than myself?

To say nothing of the loss of an excellent mother, at a time of life when motherly care is most wanted; the death of a dear father, who was an ornament to his cloth, (and who had qualified me to be his scribe and amanuensis,) just as he came within view of a preferment which would

have made his family easy, threw me friendless into the wide world; threw me upon a very careless, and, which was much worse, a very unkind husband. Poor man!—but he was spared long enough, thank God, in a tedious illness, to repent of his neglected opportunities, and his light principles; which I have always thought of with pleasure, although I was left the more destitute for his chargeable illness, and ready to be brought to bed, when he died, of my Tommy.

But this very circumstance, which I thought the unhappiest that I could have been left in, (so short-sighted is human prudence!) became the happy means of recommending me to your mother, who, in regard to my character, and in compassion to my very destitute circumstances, permitted me, as I made a conscience of not parting with my poor boy, to nurse both you and him, born within a few days of each other. And I have never since wanted any of the humble blessings which God has made me contented with.

Nor have I known what a very great grief was, from the day of my poor husband's death till the day that your parents told me how much they were determined that you should have Mr. Solmes; when I was apprized not only of your aversion to him, but how unworthy he was of you: for then I began to dread the consequences of forcing so generous a spirit; and, till then, I never feared Mr. Lovelace, attracting as was his person, and specious his manners and address. For I was sure you would never have him, if he gave you not good reason to be convinced of his reformation: nor till your friends were as well satisfied in it as yourself. But that unhappy misunderstanding between your brother and Mr. Lovelace, and their joining so violently to force you upon Mr. Solmes, did all that mischief, which has cost you and them so dear, and poor me all my peace! Oh! what has not this ungrateful, this double-guilty man to answer for!

Nevertheless, you know not what God has in store for you yet!—But if you are to be punished all your days here, for example sake, in a case of such importance, for your one false step, be pleased to consider, that this life is but a state of probation; and if you have your purification in it, you will be the more happy. Nor doubt I, that you will have the higher reward hereafter for submitting to the will of Providence here with patience and resignation.

You see, my dearest Miss Clary, that I make no scruple to call the step you took a false one. In you it was less excusable than it would have been in any other young lady; not only because of your superior talents, but because of the opposition between your character and his: so that, if you had been provoked to quit your father's house, it need not to have been with him. Nor needed I, indeed, but as an instance of my impartial love, to have written this to you.*

* Mrs. Norton, having only the family representation and invectives to form her judgment upon, knew not that Clarissa had determined against going off with Mr. Lovelace; nor how solicitous she had been to procure for herself any other protection than his, when she apprehended that, if she staid, she had no way to avoid being married to Mr. Solmes.

After this, it will have an unkind, and perhaps at this time an unseasonable appearance, to express my concern that you have not before favoured me with a line. Yet if you can account to yourself for your silence, I dare say I ought to be satisfied; for I am sure you love me: as I both love and honour you, and ever will, and the more for your misfortunes.

One consolation, methinks, I have, even when I am sorrowing for your calamities; and that is, that I know not any young person so qualified to shine the brighter for the trials she may be exercised with: and yet it is a consolation that ends in adding to my regrets for your afflictions, because you are blessed with a mind so well able to bear prosperity, and to make every body round you the better for it!—But I will forbear till I know more.

Ruminating on every thing your melancholy letter suggests, and apprehending, from the gentleness of your mind, the amiableness of your person, and your youth, the farther misfortunes and inconveniencies to which you may possibly be subjected, I cannot conclude without asking for your leave to attend you, and that in a very earnest manner—and I beg of you not to deny me, on any consideration relating to myself, or even to the indisposition of my other beloved child, if I can be either of use or of comfort to you. Were it, my dearest young lady, but for two or three days, permit me to attend you, although my son's illness should increase, and compel me to come down again at the end of those two or three days.—I repeat my request, likewise, that you will command from me the little sum remaining in the hands of your bounty to your Poor, as

well as that dispensed to

Your ever-affectionate and faithful servant, JUDITH NORTON.

LETTER LVII

MISS CL. HARLOWE, TO LADY BETTY LAWRANCE THURSDAY, JUNE 29.

MADAM,

I hope you'll excuse the freedom of this address, from one who has not the honour to be personally known to you, although you must have heard much of Clarissa Harlowe. It is only to beg the favour of a line from your Ladyship's hand, (by the next post, if convenient,) in answer to the following questions:

1. Whether you wrote a letter, dated, as I have a memorandum, Wedn. June 7, congratulating your nephew Lovelace on his supposed nuptials, as reported to you by Mr. Spurrier, your Ladyship's steward, as from one Captain Tomlinson:—and in it reproaching Mr. Lovelace, as guilty of slight, &c. in not having acquainted your Ladyship and the family with his marriage?

2. Whether your ladyship wrote to Miss Montague to meet you at Reading, in order to attend you to your cousin Leeson's, in Albemarle-street; on your being obliged to be in town on your old chancery affair, I remember are the words? and whether you bespoke your nephew's attendance there on Sunday night the 11th?

3. Whether your Ladyship and Miss Montague did come to town at that time; and whether you went to Hampstead, on Monday, in a hired coach and four, your own being repairing, and took from thence to town with the young creature whom you visited there?

Your Ladyship will probably guess, that the questions are not asked for reasons favourable to your nephew Lovelace. But be the answer what it will, it can do him no hurt, nor me any good; only that I think I owe it to my former hopes, (however deceived in them,) and even to charity, that a person, of whom I was once willing to think better, should not prove so egregiously abandoned, as to be wanting, in every instance, to that veracity which is indispensable in the character of a gentleman.

Be pleased, Madam, to direct to me, (keeping the direction a secret for the present,) to be left at the Belle-Savage, on Ludgate hill, till called for. I am

Your Ladyship's most humble servant, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LVIII

LADY BETTY LAWRANCE, TO MISS CL. HARLOWE SATURDAY, JULY 1.

DEAR MADAM,

I find that all is not as it should be between you and my nephew Lovelace. It will very much afflict me, and all his friends, if he has been guilty of any designed baseness to a lady of your character and merit.

We have been long in expectation of an opportunity to congratulate you and ourselves upon an event most earnestly wished for by us all; since our hopes of him are built upon the power you have over him: for if ever man adored a woman, he is that man, and you, Madam, are that woman.

Miss Montague, in her last letter to me, in answer to one of mine, inquiring if she knew from him whether he could call you his, or was likely soon to have that honour, has these words: 'I know not what to make of my cousin Lovelace, as to the point your Ladyship is so earnest about. He sometimes says he is actually married to Miss Cl. Harlowe: at other times, that it is her own fault if he be not.—He speaks of her not only with love but with reverence: yet owns, that there is a misunderstanding between them; but confesses that she is wholly faultless. An angel, and not a woman, he says she is: and that no man living can be worthy of her.'—

This is what my niece Montague writes.

God grant, my dearest young lady, that he may not have so heinously offended you that you cannot forgive him! If you are not already married, and refuse to be his, I shall lose all hopes that he ever will marry, or be the man I wish him to be. So will Lord M. So will Lady Sarah Sadleir.

I will now answer your questions: but indeed I hardly know what to write, for fear of widening still more the unhappy difference between you. But yet such a young lady must command every thing from me. This then is my answer:

I wrote not any letter to him on or about the 7th of June.

Neither I nor my steward know any such man as Captain Tomlinson.

I wrote not to my niece to meet me at Reading, nor to accompany me to my cousin Leeson's in town.

My chancery affair, though, like most chancery affairs, it be of long standing, is, nevertheless, now in so good a way, that it cannot give me occasion to go to town.

Nor have I been in town these six months: nor at Hampstead for years.

Neither shall I have any temptation to go to town, except to pay my congratulatory compliments to Mrs. Lovelace. On which occasion I should go with the greatest pleasure; and should hope for the favour of your accompanying me to Glenham-hall, for a month at least.

Be what will the reason of your inquiry, let me entreat you, my dear young lady, for Lord M.'s sake; for my sake; for this giddy man's sake, soul as well as body; and for all our family's sakes; not to suffer this answer to widen differences so far as to make you refuse him, if he already has not the honour of calling you his; as I am apprehensive he has not, by your signing by your family-name.

And here let me offer to you my mediation to compose the difference between you, be it what it will. Your cause, my dear young lady, cannot be put into the hands of any body living more devoted to your service, than into those of

Your sincere admirer, and humble servant, ELIZ. LAWRANCE.

LETTER LIX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MRS. HODGES ENFIELD, JUNE 22.

MRS. HODGES,

I am under a kind of necessity to write to you, having no one among my relations to whom I dare write, or hope a line from if I did. It is but to answer a question. It is this:

Whether you know any such man as Captain Tomlinson? and, if you do, whether he be very intimate with my uncle Harlowe?

I will describe his person lest, possibly, he should go by another name among you; although I know not why he should.

'He is a thin, tallish man, a little pock-fretten, of a sallowish complexion. Fifty years of age, or more. Of good aspect when he looks up. He seems to be a serious man, and one who knows the world. He stoops a little in the shoulders. Is of Berkshire. His wife of Oxfordshire; and has several children. He removed lately into your parts from Northamptonshire.'

I must desire you, Mrs. Hodges, that you will not let my uncle, nor any of my relations, know that I write to you.

You used to say, that you would be glad to have it in your power to serve me. That, indeed, was in my prosperity. But, I dare say, you will not refuse me in a particular that will oblige me, without hurting yourself.

I understand that my father, mother, and sister, and I presume, my brother, and my uncle Antony, are to be at my uncle Harlowe's this day. God preserve them all, and may they rejoice in many happy birth-days! You will write six words to me concerning their healths.

Direct, for a particular reason, to Mrs. Dorothy Salcombe, to be left till called for, at the Four Swans Inn, Bishopsgate-street.

You know my hand-writing well enough, were not the contents of the letter sufficient to excuse my name, or any other subscription, than that of

Your friend.

LETTER LX

MRS. HODGES [IN ANSWER.] SAT. JULY 2.

MADDAM,

I return you an anser, as you wish me to doe. Master is acquainted with no sitch man. I am shure no sitch ever came to our house. And master sturs very little out. He has no harte to stur out. For why? Your obstinacy makes um not care to see one another. Master's birth-day never was kept soe before: for not a sole heere: and nothing but sikeing and sorrowin from master to think how it yused to bee.

I axed master, if soe bee he knowed sitch a man as one Captain Tomlinson? but said not whirfor I axed. He sed, No, not he.

Shure this is no trix nor forgery bruing against master by one Tomlinson—Won knows not what company you may have been forsed to keep, sen you went away, you knoe, Maddam; but Lundon is a pestilent plase; and that 'Squire Luvless is a devil (for all he is sitch a like gentleman to look to) as I hev herd every boddy say; and think as how you have found by thiss.

I truste, Maddam, you wulde not let master cum to harme, if you knoed it, by any body who may pretend to be acquainted with him: but for fere, I querid with myself if I shulde not tell him. But I was willin to show you, that I wulde plessure you in advarsity, if advarsity be your lott, as well as prosperity; for I am none of those that woulde doe otherwiss. Soe no more from

Your humble sarvent, to wish you well, SARAH HODGES.

LETTER LXI

MISS CL. HARLOWE, TO LADY BETTY LAWRANCE. MONDAY, JULY 3.

MADAM,

I cannot excuse myself from giving your Ladyship this one trouble more; to thank you, as I most heartily do, for your kind letter.

I must own to you, Madam, that the honour of being related to ladies as eminent for their virtue as for their descent, was at first no small inducement with me to lend an ear to Mr. Lovelace's address. And the rather, as I was determined, had it come to effect, to do every thing in my power to deserve your favourable opinion.

I had another motive, which I knew would of itself give me merit with your whole family; a presumptuous one, (a punishably presumptuous one, as it has proved,) in the hope that I might be an humble mean in the hand of Providence to reclaim a man, who had, as I thought, good sense enough to acknowledge the intended obligation, whether the generous hope were to succeed or not.

But I have been most egregiously mistaken in Mr. Lovelace; the only man, I persuade myself, pretending to be a gentleman, in whom I could have been so much mistaken: for while I was endeavouring to save a drowning wretch, I have been, not accidentally, but premeditatedly, and of set purpose, drawn in after him. And he has had the glory to add to the list of those he has ruined, a name, that, I will be bold to say, would not have disparaged his own. And this, Madam, by means that would shock humanity to be made acquainted with.

My whole end is served by your Ladyship's answer to the questions I took the liberty to put to you in writing. Nor have I a wish to make the unhappy man more odious to you than is necessary to excuse myself for absolutely declining your offered mediation.

When your Ladyship shall be informed of the following particulars:

That after he had compulsorily, as I may say, tricked me into the act of going off with him, he could carry me to one of the vilest houses, as it proved, in London:

That he could be guilty of a wicked attempt, in resentment of which, I found means to escape from him to Hampstead:

That, after he had found me out there (I know not how) he could procure two women, dressed out richly, to personate your Ladyship and Miss Montague; who, under pretence of engaging me to make a visit in town to your cousin Leeson, (promising to return with me that evening to Hampstead,) betrayed me back again to the vile house: where, again made a prisoner, I was first robbed of my senses; and then of my honour. Why should I seek to conceal that disgrace from others which I cannot hide from myself?

When your Ladyship shall know, that, in the shocking progress to this ruin, wilful falsehoods, repeated forgeries, (particularly of one letter from your Ladyship, another from Miss Montague, and a third from Lord M.) and numberless perjuries, were not the least of his crimes: you will judge, that I can have no principles that will make me worthy of an alliance with ladies of your's and your noble sister's character, if I could not from my soul declare, that such an alliance can never now take place.

I will not offer to clear myself entirely of blame: but, as to him, I have no fault to accuse myself of: my crime was, the corresponding with him at first, when prohibited so to do by those who had a right to my obedience; made still more inexcusable, by giving him a clandestine meeting, which put me into the power of his arts. And for this I am content to be punished: thankful, that at last I have escaped from him; and have it in my power to reject so wicked a man for my husband: and glad, if I may be a warning, since I cannot be an example: which once (very vain, and very conceited, as I was) I proposed to myself to be.

All the ill I wish him is, that he may reform; and that I may be the last victim to his baseness. Perhaps this desirable wish may be obtained, when he shall see how his wickedness, his unmerited wickedness! to a poor creature, made friendless by his cruel arts, will end.

I conclude with my humble thanks to your Ladyship for your favourable opinion of me; and with the assurance that I will be, while life is lent me,

Your Ladyship's grateful and obliged servant, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LXII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MRS. NORTON SUNDAY EVENING,
JULY 2.

How kindly, my beloved Mrs. Norton, do you soothe the anguish of a bleeding heart! Surely you are mine own mother; and, by some unaccountable mistake, I must have been laid to a family that, having newly found out, or at least suspected, the imposture, cast me from their hearts, with the indignation that such a discovery will warrant.

Oh! that I had been indeed your own child, born to partake of your humble fortunes, an heiress only to that content in which you are so happy! then should I have had a truly gentle spirit to have guided my ductile heart, which force and ungenerous usage sit so ill upon: and nothing of what has happened would have been.

But let me take heed that I enlarge not, by impatience, the breach already made in my duty by my rashness! since, had I not erred, my mother, at least, could never have been thought hard-hearted and unforgiving. Am I not then answerable, not only for my own faults, but for the consequences of them; which tend to depreciate and bring disgrace upon a maternal character never before called in question?

It is kind, however, in you to endeavour to extenuate the faults of one so greatly sensible of it: and could it be wiped off entirely, it would render me more worthy of the pains you have taken in my education: for it must add to your grief, as it does to my confusion, that, after such promising beginnings, I should have so behaved as to be a disgrace instead of a credit to you and my other friends.

But that I may not make you think me more guilty than I am, give me leave briefly to assure you, that, when my story is known, I shall be to more compassion than blame, even on the score of going away with Mr. Lovelace.

As to all that happened afterwards, let me only say, that although I must call myself a lost creature as to this world, yet have I this consolation left me, that I have not suffered either for want of circumspection, or through careful credulity or weakness. Not one moment was I off my guard, or unmindful of your early precepts. But (having been enabled to baffle many base contrivances) I was at last ruined by arts the most inhuman. But had I not been rejected by every friend, this low-hearted man had not dared, nor would have had opportunity, to treat me as he has treated me.

More I cannot, at this time, nor need I say: and this I desire you to keep to yourself, lest resentments should be taken up when I am gone, that may spread the evil which I hope will end with me.

I have been misinformed, you say, as to my principal relations being at my uncle Harlowe's. The day, you say, was not kept. Nor have my brother and Mr. Solmes—Astonishing!—What complicated wickedness has this wretched man to answer for!—Were I to tell you, you would hardly believe that there could have been such a heart in man.—

But one day you may know the whole story!—At present I have neither inclination nor words—O my bursting heart!—Yet a happy, a wished relief!—Were you present my tears would supply the rest!

I resume my pen!

And so you fear no letter will be received from me. But DON'T grieve to tell me so! I expect every thing bad—and such is my distress, that had you not bid me hope for mercy from the throne of mercy, I should have been afraid that my father's dreadful curse would be completed with regard to both worlds.

For here, an additional misfortune!—In a fit of phrensical heedlessness, I sent a letter to my beloved Miss Howe, without recollecting her private address; and it has fallen into her angry mother's hands: and so that dear friend perhaps has anew incurred displeasure on my account. And here too your worthy son is ill; and my poor Hannah, you think, cannot come to me—O my dear Mrs. Norton, will you, can you censure those whose resentments against me Heaven seems to approve of? and will you acquit her whom that condemns?

Yet you bid me not despond.—I will not, if I can help it. And, indeed, most seasonable consolation has your kind letter afforded me.—Yet to God Almighty do I appeal, to avenge my wrongs, and vindicate my inno

But hushed be my stormy passions!—Have I not but this moment said that your letter gave me consolation?—May those be forgiven who hinder my father from forgiving me!—and this, as to them, shall be the harshest thing that shall drop from my pen.

But although your son should recover, I charge you, my dear Mrs. Norton, that you do not think of coming to me. I don't know still but your mediation with my mother (although at present your interposition would be so little attended to) may be of use to procure me the revocation of that most dreadful part of my father's curse, which only remains to be fulfilled. The voice of Nature must at last be heard in my favour, surely. It will only plead at first to my friends in the still conscious plaintiveness of a young and unhardened beggar. But it will grow more clamorous when I have the courage to be so, and shall demand, perhaps, the paternal protection from farther ruin; and that forgiveness, which those will be little entitled to expect, for their own faults, who shall interpose to have it refused to me, for an accidental, not a premeditated error: and which, but for them, I had never fallen into.

But again, impatience, founded perhaps on self-partiality, that strange misleader! prevails.

Let me briefly say, that it is necessary to my present and future hopes that you keep well with my family. And moreover, should you come, I may be traced out by that means by the most abandoned of men. Say not then that you think you ought to come up to me, let it be taken as it will:—For my sake, let me repeat, (were my foster-brother recovered, as I hope he is,) you must not come. Nor can I want your advice, while I can write, and you can answer me. And write I will as often as I stand in need of your counsel.

Then the people I am now with seem to be both honest and humane: and there is in the same house a widow-lodger, of low fortunes, but of great merit:—almost such another serious and good woman as the dear one to whom I am now writing; who has, as she says, given over all other thoughts of the world but such as should assist her to leave it happily.—How suitable to my own views!—There seems to be a comfortable providence in this at least—so that at present there is nothing of exigence; nothing that can require, or even excuse, your coming, when so many better ends may be answered by your staying where you are. A time may come, when I shall want your last and best assistance: and then, my dear Mrs. Norton—and then, I will speak it, and embrace it with all my whole heart—and then, will it not be denied me by any body.

You are very obliging in your offer of money. But although I was forced to leave my clothes behind me, yet I took several things of value with me, which will keep me from present want. You'll say, I have made a miserable hand of it—so indeed I have—and, to look backwards, in a very little while too.

But what shall I do, if my father cannot be prevailed upon to recall his malediction? O my dear Mrs. Norton, what a weight must a father's curse have upon a heart so appreciative as mine!—Did I think I should ever have a father's curse to deprecate? And yet, only that the temporary part of it is so terribly fulfilled, or I should be as earnest for its recall, for my father's sake, as for my own!

You must not be angry with me that I wrote not to you before. You are very right and very kind to say you are sure I love you. Indeed I do. And what a generosity, [so like yourself!] is there in your praise, to attribute to me more than I merit, in order to raise an emulation to me to deserve your praises!—you tell me what you expect from me in the calamities I am called upon to bear. May I behave answerably!

I can a little account to myself for my silence to you, my kind, my dear maternal friend! How equally sweetly and politely do you express yourself on this occasion! I was very desirous, for your sake, as well as for my own, that you should have it to say that we did not correspond: had they thought we did, every word you could have dropt in my favour would have been rejected; and my mother would have been forbid to see you, or pay any regard to what you should say.

Then I had sometimes better and sometimes worse prospects before me. My worst would only have troubled you to know: my better made me frequently hope, that, by the next post, or the next, and so on for weeks, I should have the best news to impart to you that then could happen: cold as the wretch had made my heart to that best.—For how could I think to write to you, with a confession that I was not married, yet lived in the house (for I could not help it) with such a man?—Who likewise had given it out to several, that we were actually married, although with

restrictions that depended on the reconciliation with my friends? And to disguise the truth, or be guilty of a falsehood, either direct or equivocal, that was what you had never taught me.

But I might have written to you for advice, in my precarious situation, perhaps you will think. But, indeed, my dear Mrs. Norton, I was not lost for want of advice. And this will appear clear to you from what I have already hinted, were I to explain myself no further:—For what need had the cruel spoiler to have recourse to unprecedented arts—I will speak out plainer still, (but you must not at present report it,) to stupifying potions, and to the most brutal and outrageous force, had I been wanting in my duty?

A few words more upon this grievous subject—

When I reflect upon all that has happened to me, it is apparent, that this generally-supposed thoughtless seducer has acted by me upon a regular and preconcerted plan of villany.

In order to set all his vile plots in motion, nothing was wanting, from the first, but to prevail upon me, either by force or fraud, to throw myself into his power: and when this was effected, nothing less than the intervention of the paternal authority, (which I had not deserved to be exerted in my behalf,) could have saved me from the effect of his deep machinations. Opposition from any other quarter would but too probably have precipitated his barbarous and ungrateful violence: and had you yourself been with me, I have reason now to think, that somehow or other you would have suffered in endeavouring to save me: for never was there, as now I see, a plan of wickedness more steadily and uniformly pursued than his has been, against an unhappy creature who merited better of him: but the Almighty has thought fit, according to the general course of His providence, to make the fault bring on its own punishment: but surely not in consequence of my father's dreadful imprecation, 'That I might be punished here,' [O my mamma Norton, pray with me, if so, that here it stop!] 'by the very wretch in whom I had placed my wicked confidence!'

I am sorry, for your sake, to leave off so heavily. Yet the rest must be brief.

Let me desire you to be secret in what I have communicated to you; at least till you have my consent to divulge it.

God preserve to you your more faultless child!

I will hope for His mercy, although I should not obtain that of any earthly person.

And I repeat my prohibition:—You must not think of coming up to

Your ever dutiful CL. HARLOWE.

The obliging person, who left your's for me this day, promised to call to-morrow, to see if I should have any thing to return. I would not lose so good an opportunity.

LETTER LXIII

MRS. NORTON, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE MONDAY NIGHT,
JULY 3.

O the barbarous villany of this detestable man! And is there a man in the world who could offer violence to so sweet a creature!

And are you sure you are now out of his reach?

You command me to keep secret the particulars of the vile treatment you have met with; or else, upon an unexpected visit which Miss Harlowe favoured me with, soon after I had received your melancholy letter, I should have been tempted to own I had heard from you, and to have communicated to her such parts of your two letters as would have demonstrated your penitence, and your earnestness to obtain the revocation of your father's malediction, as well as his protection from outrages that may still be offered to you. But then your sister would probably have expected a sight of the letters, and even to have been permitted to take them with her to the family.

Yet they must one day be acquainted with the sad story:—and it is impossible but they must pity you, and forgive you, when they know your early penitence, and your unprecedented sufferings; and that you have fallen by the brutal force of a barbarous ravisher, and not by the vile arts of a seducing lover.

The wicked man gives it out at Lord M.'s, as Miss Harlowe tells me, that he is actually married to you—yet she believes it not: nor had I the heart to let her know the truth.

She put it close to me, Whether I had not corresponded with you from the time of your going away? I could safely tell her, (as I did,) that I had not: but I said, that I was well informed, that you took extremely to heart your father's imprecation; and that, if she would excuse me, I would say it would be a kind and sisterly part, if she would use her interest to get you discharged from it.

Among other severe things, she told me, that my partial fondness for you made me very little consider the honour of the rest of the family: but, if I had not heard this from you, she supposed I was set on by Miss Howe.

She expressed herself with a good deal of bitterness against that young lady: who, it seems, every where, and to every body, (for you must think that your story is the subject of all conversations,) rails against your family; treating them, as your sister says, with contempt, and even with ridicule.

I am sorry such angry freedoms are taken, for two reasons; first, because such liberties never do any good. I have heard you own, that Miss Howe has a satirical vein; but I should hope that a young lady of her sense, and right cast of mind, must know that the end of satire is not to exasperate, but amend; and should never be personal. If it be, as my good father used to say, it may make an impartial person suspect that the satirist has a natural spleen to gratify; which may be as great a fault in him, as any of those which he pretends to censure and expose in others.

Perhaps a hint of this from you will not be thrown away.

My second reason is, That these freedoms, from so warm a friend to you as Miss Howe is known to be, are most likely to be charged to your account.

My resentments are so strong against this vilest of men, that I dare not touch upon the shocking particulars which you mention of his baseness. What defence, indeed, could there be against so determined a wretch, after you was in his power? I will only repeat my earnest supplication to you, that, black as appearances are, you will not despair. Your calamities are exceeding great; but then you have talents proportioned to your trials. This every body allows.

Suppose the worst, and that your family will not be moved in your favour, your cousin Morden will soon arrive, as Miss Harlowe told me. If he should even be got over to their side, he will however see justice done you; and then may you live an exemplary life, making hundreds happy, and teaching young ladies to shun the snares in which you have been so dreadfully entangled.

As to the man you have lost, is an union with such a perjured heart as his, with such an admirable one as your's, to be wished for? A base, low-hearted wretch, as you justly call him, with all his pride of ancestry; and more an enemy to himself with regard to his present and future

happiness than to you, in the barbarous and ungrateful wrongs he has done you: I need not, I am sure, exhort you to despise such a man as this, since not to be able to do so, would be a reflection upon a sex to which you have always been an honour.

Your moral character is untainted: the very nature of your sufferings, as you will observe, demonstrates that. Cheer up, therefore, your dear heart, and do not despair; for is it not GOD who governs the world, and permits some things, and directs others, as He pleases? and will He not reward temporary sufferings, innocently incurred, and piously supported, with eternal felicity?—And what, my dear, is this poor needle's point of NOW to a boundless eternity?

My heart, however, labours under a double affliction: For my poor boy is very, very bad—a violent fever—nor can it be brought to intermit.—Pray for him, my dearest Miss—for his recovery, if God see fit.—I hope God will see fit—if not (how can I bear to suppose that!) Pray for me, that he will give me that patience and resignation which I have been wishing to you. I am, my dearest young lady,

Your ever affectionate JUDITH NORTON.

LETTER LXIV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MRS. JUDITH NORTON THURSDAY,
JULY 6.

I ought not, especially at this time, to add to your afflictions—but yet I cannot help communicating to you (who now are my only soothing friend) a new trouble that has befallen me.

I had but one friend in the world, beside you; and she is utterly displeas'd with me.* It is grievous, but for one moment, to lie under a beloved person's censure; and this through imputations that affect one's honour and prudence. There are points so delicate, you know, my dear Mrs. Norton, that it is a degree of dishonour to have a vindication of one's self from them appear to be necessary. In the present case, my misfortune is, that I know not how to account, but by guess (so subtle have been the workings of the dark spirit I have been unhappily entangled by) for some of the facts that I am called upon to explain.

Miss Howe, in short, supposes she has found a flaw in my character. I have just now received her severe letter—but I shall answer it, perhaps, in better temper, if I first consider your's: for indeed my patience is almost at an end. And yet I ought to consider, that faithful are the wounds of a friend. But so many things at once! O my dear Mrs. Norton, how shall so young a scholar in the school of affliction be able to bear such heavy and such various evils!

But to leave this subject for a while, and turn to your letter.

I am very sorry Miss Howe is so lively in her resentments on my account. I have always blamed her very freely for her liberties of this sort with my friends. I once had a good deal of influence over her kind heart, and she made all I said a law to her. But people in calamity have little weight in any thing, or with any body. Prosperity and independence are charming things on this account, that they give force to the counsels of a friendly heart; while it is thought insolence in the miserable to advise, or so much as to remonstrate.

Yet is Miss Howe an invaluable person: And is it to be expected that she should preserve the same regard for my judgment that she had before I forfeited all title to discretion? With what face can I take upon me to reproach a want of prudence in her? But if I can be so happy as to re-establish myself in her ever-valued opinion, I shall endeavour to enforce upon her your just observation on this head.

You need not, you say, exhort me to despise such a man as him, by whom I have suffered—indeed you need not: for I would choose the cruellest death rather than to be his. And yet, my dear Mrs. Norton, I will own to you, that once I could have loved him.—Ungrateful man!—had he permitted me to love him, I once could have loved him. Yet he never deserved love. And was not this a fault?—But now, if I can but keep out of his hands, and obtain a last forgiveness, and that as well for the sake of my dear friends' future reflections, as for my own present comfort, it is all I wish for.

Reconciliation with my friends I do not expect; nor pardon from them; at least, till in extremity, and as a *viaticum*.

O my beloved Mrs. Norton, you cannot imagine what I have suffered!—But indeed my heart is broken!—I am sure I shall not live to take possession of that independence, which you think would enable me to atone, in some measure, for my past conduct.

While this is my opinion, you may believe I shall not be easy till I can obtain a last forgiveness.

I wish to be left to take my own course in endeavouring to procure this grace. Yet know I not, at present, what that course shall be.

I will write. But to whom is my doubt. Calamity has not yet given me the assurance to address myself to my FATHER. My UNCLES (well as they once loved me) are hard hearted. They never had their masculine passions humanized by the tender name of FATHER. Of my BROTHER I have no hope. I have then but my MOTHER, and my SISTER, to whom I can apply.—'And may I not, my dearest Mamma, be permitted to lift up my trembling eye to your all-cheering, and your once more than indulgent, your fond eye, in hopes of seasonable mercy to the poor sick heart that yet beats with life drawn from your own dearer heart?—Especially when pardon only, and not restoration, is implored?'

Yet were I able to engage my mother's pity, would it not be a mean to make her still more unhappy than I have already made her, by the opposition she would meet with, were she to try to give force to that pity?

To my SISTER, then, I think, I will apply—Yet how hard-hearted has my sister been!—But I will not ask for protection; and yet I am in hourly dread that I shall want protection.—All I will ask for at present (preparative to the last forgiveness I will implore) shall be only to be freed from the heavy curse that seems to have operated as far as it can operate as to this life—and, surely, it was passion, and not intention, that carried it so far as to the other!

But why do I thus add to your distresses?—It is not, my dear Mrs. Norton, that I have so much feeling for my own calamity that I have none for your's: since your's is indeed an addition to my own. But you have one consolation (a very great one) which I have not:—That your afflictions, whether respecting your more or your less deserving child, rise not from any fault of your own.

But what can I do for you more than pray?—Assure yourself, that in every supplication I put up for myself, I will with equal fervour remember both you and your son. For I am and ever will be

Your truly sympathising and dutiful CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LXV

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [SUPERSCRIBED FOR MRS. RACHEL CLARK, &c.] WEDNESDAY, JULY 5.

MY DEAR CLARISSA,

I have at last heard from you from a quarter I little expected.

From my mother!

She had for some time seen me uneasy and grieving; and justly supposed it was about you: and this morning dropt a hint, which made me conjecture that she must have heard something of you more than I knew. And when she found that this added to my uneasiness, she owned she had a letter in her hands of your's, dated the 29th of June, directed for me.

You may guess, that this occasioned a little warmth, that could not be wished for by either.

[It is surprising, my dear, mighty surprising! that knowing the prohibition I lay under of corresponding with you, you could send a letter for me to our own house: since it must be fifty to one that it would fall into my mother's hands, as you find it did.]

In short, she resented that I should disobey her: I was as much concerned that she should open and withhold from me my letters: and at last she was pleased to compromise the matter with me by giving up the letter, and permitting me to write to you once or twice: she to see the contents of what I wrote. For, besides the value she has for you, she could not but have greater curiosity to know the occasion of so sad a situation as your melancholy letter shows you to be in.

[But I shall get her to be satisfied with hearing me read what I write; putting in between hooks, { }, what I intend not to read to her.]

Need I to remind you, Miss Clarissa Harlowe, of three letters I wrote to you, to none of which I had any answer; except to the first, and that of a few lines only, promising a letter at large, though you were well enough, the day after you received my second, to go joyfully back again with him to the vile house? But more of these by-and-by. I must hasten to take notice of your letter of Wednesday last week; which you could contrive should fall into my mother's hands.

Let me tell you, that that letter has almost broken my heart. Good God!—What have you brought yourself to, Miss Clarissa Harlowe?—Could I have believed, that after you had escaped from the miscreant, (with such mighty pains and earnestness escaped,) and after such an attempt as he had made, you would have been prevailed upon not only to forgive him, but (without being married too) to return with him to that horrid house!—A house I had given you such an account of!—Surprising!—What an intoxicating thing is this love?—I always feared, that you, even you, were not proof against its inconsistent effects.

You your best self have not escaped!—Indeed I see not how you could expect to escape.

What a tale have you to unfold!—You need not unfold it, my dear: I would have engaged to prognosticate all that has happened, had you but told me that you would once more have put yourself in his power, after you had taken such pains to get out of it.

Your peace is destroyed!—I wonder not at it: since now you must reproach yourself for a credulity so ill-placed.

Your intellect is touched!—I am sure my heart bleeds for you! But, excuse me, my dear, I doubt your intellect was touched before you left Hampstead: or you would never have let him find you out there; or, when he did, suffer him to prevail upon you to return to the horrid brothel.

I tell you, I sent you three letters: The first of which, dated the 7th and 8th of June* (for it was written at twice) came safely to your hands, as you sent me word by a few lines dated the 9th: had it not, I should have doubted my own safety; since in it I give you such an account of the abominable house, and threw such cautions in your way, in relation to that Tomlinson, as the more surprised me that you could think of going back to it again, after you had escaped from it, and from Lovelace.—O my dear—but nothing now will I ever wonder at!

* See Vol. V. Letter XX.

The second, dated June 10,* was given into your own hand at Hampstead, on Sunday the 11th, as you was lying upon a couch, in a strange way, according to my messenger's account of you, bloated, and flush-coloured; I don't know how.

* See Letter VII. of this volume.

The third was dated the 20th of June.* Having not heard one word from you since the promising billet of the 9th, I own I did not spare you in it. I ventured it by the usual conveyance, by that Wilson's, having no other: so cannot be sure you received it. Indeed I rather think you might not; because in your's, which fell into my mother's hands, you make no mention of it: and if you had had it, I believe it would have touched you too much to have been passed by unnoticed.

* See Letter XXX. of this volume.

You have heard, that I have been ill, you say. I had a cold, indeed; but it was so slight a one that it confined me not an hour. But I doubt not that strange things you have heard, and been told, to induce you to take the step you took. And, till you did take that step (the going back with this villain, I mean,) I knew not a more pitiable case than your's: since every body must have excused you before, who knew how you were used at home, and was acquainted with your prudence and vigilance. But, alas! my dear, we see that the wisest people are not to be depended upon, when love, like an *ignis fatuus*, holds up its misleading lights before their eyes.

My mother tells me, she sent you an answer, desiring you not to write to me, because it would grieve me. To be sure I am grieved; exceedingly grieved; and, disappointed too, you must permit me to say. For I had always thought that there never was such a woman, at your years, in the world.

But I remember once an argument you held, on occasion of a censure passed in company upon an excellent preacher, who was not a very excellent liver: preaching and practising, you said, required very different talents:* which, when united in the same person, made the man a saint; as wit and judgment, going together, constituted a genius.

* See Vol. II. Letter IV.

You made it out, I remember, very prettily: but you never made it out, excuse me, my dear, more convincingly, than by that part of your late conduct, which I complain of.

My love for you, and my concern for your honour, may possibly have made me a little of the severest. If you think so, place it to its proper account; to that love, and to that concern: which will but do justice to

Your afflicted and faithful A.H.

P.S. My mother would not be satisfied without reading my letter herself; and that before I had fixed all the proposed hooks. She knows, by this means, and has excused, our former correspondence.

She indeed suspected it before: and so she very well might; knowing my love of you.

She has so much real concern for your misfortunes, that, thinking it will be a consolation to you, and that it will oblige me, she consents that you shall write to me the particulars at large of your sad story. But it is on condition that I show her all that has passed between us, relating to yourself and the vilest of men. I have the more cheerfully complied, as the communication cannot be to your disadvantage.

You may therefore write freely, and direct to our own house.

My mother promises to show me the copy of her letter to you, and your reply to it; which latter she has but just told me of. She already apologizes for the severity of her's: and thinks the sight of your reply will affect me too much. But, having her promise, I will not dispense with it.

I doubt her's is severe enough. So I fear you will think mine: but you have taught me never to spare the fault for the friend's sake; and that a great error ought rather to be the more inexcusable in the person we value, than in one we are indifferent to; because it is a reflection upon our choice of that person, and tends to a breach of the love of mind, and to expose us to the world for our partiality. To the love of mind, I repeat; since it is impossible but the errors of the dearest friend must weaken our inward opinion of that friend; and thereby lay a foundation for future distance, and perhaps disgust.

God grant that you may be able to clear your conduct after you had escaped from Hampstead; as all before that time was noble, generous, and prudent; the man a devil and you a saint!—Yet I hope you can; and therefore expect it from you.

I send by a particular hand. He will call for your answer at your own appointment.

I am afraid this horrid wretch will trace out by the post-offices where you are, if not careful.

To have money, and will, and head, to be a villain, is too much for the rest of the world, when they meet in one man.

LETTER LXVI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE THURSDAY, JULY 6.

Few young persons have been able to give more convincing proofs than myself how little true happiness lies in the enjoyment of our own wishes.

To produce one instance only of the truth of this observation; what would I have given for weeks past, for the favour of a letter from my dear Miss Howe, in whose friendship I placed all my remaining comfort! Little did I think, that the next letter she would honour me with, should be in such a style, as should make me look more than once at the subscription, that I might be sure (the name not being written at length) that it was not signed by another A.H. For surely, thought I, this is my sister Arabella's style: surely Miss Howe (blame me as she pleases in other points) could never repeat so sharply upon her friend, words written in the bitterness of spirit, and in the disorder of head; nor remind her, with asperity, and with mingled strokes of wit, of an argument held in the gaiety of a heart elated with prosperous fortunes, (as mine then was,) and very little apprehensive of the severe turn that argument would one day take against herself.

But what have I, sink in my fortunes; my character forfeited; my honour lost, [while I know it, I care not who knows it;] destitute of friends, and even of hope; what have I to do to show a spirit of repining and expostulation to a dear friend, because she is not more kind than a sister?—

You have till now, my dear, treated me with great indulgence. If it was with greater than I had deserved, I may be to blame to have built upon it, on the consciousness that I deserve it now as much as ever. But I find, by the rising bitterness which will mingle with the gall in my ink, that I am not yet subdued enough to my condition.—I lay down my pen for one moment.

Pardon me, my Miss Howe. I have recollected myself: and will endeavour to give a particular answer to your letter; although it will take me up too much time to think of sending it by your messenger tomorrow: he can put off his journey, he says, till Saturday. I will endeavour to have the whole narrative ready for you by Saturday.

But how to defend myself in every thing that has happened, I cannot tell: since in some part of the time, in which my conduct appears to have been censurable, I was not myself; and to this hour know not all the methods taken to deceive and ruin me.

You tell me, that in your first letter you gave me such an account of the vile house I was in, and such cautions about that Tomlinson, as made you wonder how I could think of going back.

Alas, my dear! I was tricked, most vilely tricked back, as you shall hear in its place.

Without knowing the house was so very vile a house from your intended information, I disliked the people too much, ever voluntarily to have returned to it. But had you really written such cautions about Tomlinson, and the house, as you seem to have purposed to do, they must, had they come in time, have been of infinite service to me. But not one word of either, whatever was your intention, did you mention to me, in that first of the three letters you so warmly TELL me you did send me. I will enclose it to convince you.*

* The letter she encloses was Mr. Lovelace's forged one. See Vol. V. Letter XXX.

But your account of your messenger's delivering to me your second letter, and the description he gives of me, as lying upon a couch, in a strange way, bloated, and flush-coloured; you don't know how, absolutely puzzles and confounds me.

Lord have mercy upon the poor Clarissa Harlowe! What can this mean!—Who was the messenger you sent? Was he one of Lovelace's creatures too!—Could nobody come near me but that man's confederates, either setting out so, or made so? I know not what to make of any one syllable of this! Indeed I don't.

Let me see. You say, this was before I went from Hampstead! My intellects had not then been touched!—nor had I ever been surprised by wine, [strange if I had!]: How then could I be found in such a strange

way, bloated and flush-coloured; you don't know how!—Yet what a vile, what a hateful figure has your messenger represented me to have made!

But indeed I know nothing of any messenger from you.

Believing myself secure at Hampstead, I staid longer there than I would have done, in hopes of the letter promised me in your short one of the 9th, brought me by my own messenger, in which you undertake to send for and engage Mrs. Townsend in my favour.*

* See Vol. V. Letter XXIX.

I wondered I had not heard from you: and was told you were sick; and, at another time, that your mother and you had had words on my account, and that you had refused to admit Mr. Hickman's visits upon it: so that I supposed, at one time, that you were not able to write; at another, that your mother's prohibition had its due force with you. But now I have no doubt that the wicked man must have intercepted your letter; and I wish he found not means to corrupt your messenger to tell you so strange a story.

It was on Sunday, June 11, you say, that the man gave it me. I was at church twice that day with Mrs. Moore. Mr. Lovelace was at her house the while, where he boarded, and wanted to have lodged; but I would not permit that, though I could not help the other. In one of these spaces it must be that he had time to work upon the man. You'll easily, my dear, find that out, by inquiring the time of his arrival at Mrs. Moore's and other circumstances of the strange way he pretended to see me in, on a couch, and the rest.

Had any body seen me afterwards, when I was betrayed back to the vile house, struggling under the operation of wicked potions, and robbed indeed of my intellects (for this, as you shall hear, was my dreadful case,) I might then, perhaps, have appeared bloated and flush-coloured, and I know not how myself. But were you to see your poor Clarissa, now (or even to have seen her at Hampstead before she suffered the vilest of all outrages,) you would not think her bloated or flush-coloured: indeed you would not.

In a word, it could not be me your messenger saw; nor (if any body) who it was can I divine.

I will now, as briefly as the subject will permit, enter into the darker part of my sad story: and yet I must be somewhat circumstantial, that you may not think me capable of reserve or palliation. The latter I am not conscious that I need. I should be utterly inexcusable were I guilty of the former to you. And yet, if you know how my heart sinks under the thoughts of a recollection so painful, you would pity me.

As I shall not be able, perhaps, to conclude what I have to write in even two or three letters, I will begin a new one with my story; and send the whole of it together, although written at different periods, as I am able.

Allow me a little pause, my dear, at this place; and to subscribe myself
Your ever affectionate and obliged, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LXVII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE [REFERRED TO IN LETTER XII.] THURSDAY NIGHT.

He had found me out at Hampstead: strangely found me out; for I am still at a loss to know by what means.

I was loth, in my billet of the 6th,* to tell you so, for fear of giving you apprehensions for me; and besides, I hoped then to have a shorter and happier issue to account to you for, through your assistance, than I met with.

* See Vol. V. Letter XXXI.

[She then gives a narrative of all that passed at Hampstead between herself, Mr. Lovelace, Capt. Tomlinson, and the women there, to the same effect with that so amply given by Mr. Lovelace.]

Mr. Lovelace, finding all he could say, and all Captain Tomlinson could urge, ineffectual, to prevail upon me to forgive an outrage so flagrantly premeditated; rested all his hopes on a visit which was to be paid me by Lady Betty Lawrance and Miss Montague.

In my uncertain situation, my prospects all so dark, I knew not to whom I might be obliged to have recourse in the last resort: and as those ladies had the best of characters, insomuch that I had reason to regret that I had not from the first thrown myself upon their protection, (when I had forfeited that of my own friends,) I thought I would not shun an interview with them, though I was too indifferent to their kinsman to seek it, as I doubted not that one end of their visit would be to reconcile me to him.

On Monday, the 12th of June, these pretended ladies came to Hampstead; and I was presented to them, and they to me by their kinsman.

They were richly dressed, and stuck out with jewels; the pretended Lady Betty's were particularly very fine.

They came in a coach-and-four, hired, as was confessed, while their own was repairing in town: a pretence made, I now perceive, that I should not guess at the imposture by the want of the real lady's arms upon it. Lady Betty was attended by her woman, who she called Morrison; a modest country-looking person.

I had heard, that Lady Betty was a fine woman, and that Miss Montague was a beautiful young lady, genteel, and graceful, and full of vivacity.—Such were these impostors: and having never seen either of them, I had not the least suspicion, that they were not the ladies they personated; and being put a little out of countenance by the richness of their dresses, I could not help, (fool that I was!) to apologize for my own.

The pretended Lady Betty then told me, that her nephew had acquainted them with the situation of affairs between us. And although she could not but say, that she was very glad that she had not put such a slight upon his Lordship and them, as report had given them cause to apprehend, (the reasons for which report, however, she must have approved of;) yet it had been matter of great concern to her, and to her niece Montague, and would to the whole family, to find so great a misunderstanding subsisting between us, as, if not made up, might distance all their hopes.

She could easily tell who was in fault, she said. And gave him a look both of anger and disdain; asking him, How it was possible for him to give an offence of such a nature to so charming a lady, [so she called me,] as should occasion a resentment so strong?

He pretended to be awed into shame and silence.

My dearest niece, said she, and took my hand, (I must call you niece, as well from love, as to humour your uncle's laudable expedient,) permit me to be, not an advocate, but a mediatrix for him; and not for his sake, so much as for my own, my Charlotte's, and all our family's. The indignity he has offered to you, may be of too tender a nature to be inquired into. But as he declares, that it was not a premeditated offence; whether, my dear, [for I was going to rise upon it in my temper,] it were or not; and as he declares his sorrows for it, (and never did creature express a deeper sorrow for any offence than he); and as it is a repairable one; let us, for this one time, forgive him; and thereby lay an obligation upon this man of errors—Let US, I say, my dear: for, Sir, [turning to him,] an offence against such a peerless lady as this, must be an offence against me, against your cousin here, and against all the virtuous of our sex.

See, my dear, what a creature he had picked out! Could you have thought there was a woman in the world who could thus express herself, and yet be vile? But she had her principal instructions from him, and those written down too, as I have reason to think: for I have recollected since, that I once saw this Lady Betty, (who often rose from her seat, and took a turn to the other end of the room with such an emotion, as if the joy of her heart would not let her sit still) take out a paper from her stays, and look into it, and put it there again. She might oftener, and I not observe it; for I little thought that there could be such impostors in the world.

I could not forbear paying great attention to what she said. I found my tears ready to start; I drew out my handkerchief, and was silent. I had not been so indulgently treated a great while by a person of character and distinction, [such I thought her;] and durst not trust to the accent of my voice.

The pretended Miss Montague joined in on this occasion: and drawing her chair close to me, took my other hand, and besought me to forgive her cousin; and consent to rank myself as one of the principals of a family that had long, very long, coveted the honour of my alliance.

I am ashamed to repeat to you, my dear, now I know what wretches they are, the tender, the obliging, and the respectful things I said to them.

The wretch himself then came forward. He threw himself at my feet. How was I beset!—The women grasping, one my right hand, the other my left: the pretended Miss Montague pressing to her lips more than once the hand she held: the wicked man on his knees, imploring my forgiveness; and setting before me my happy and my unhappy prospects, as I should forgive and not forgive him. All that he thought would affect me in former pleas, and those of Capt. Tomlinson, he repeated. He vowed, he promised, he bespoke the pretended ladies to answer for him; and they engaged their honours in his behalf.

Indeed, my dear, I was distressed, perfectly distressed. I was sorry that I had given way to this visit. For I knew not how, in tenderness to relations, (as I thought them,) so worthy, to treat so freely as he deserved, a man nearly allied to them: so that my arguments and my resolutions were deprived of their greatest force.

I pleaded, however, my application to you. I expected every hour, I told them, an answer from you to a letter I had written, which would decide my future destiny.

They offered to apply to you themselves in person, in their own behalf, as they politely termed it. They besought me to write to you to hasten your answer.

I said, I was sure that you would write the moment that the event of an application to be made to a third person enabled you to write. But as to the success of their request in behalf of their kinsman, that depended not upon the expected answer; for that, I begged their pardon, was out of the question. I wished him well. I wished him happy. But I was convinced, that I neither could make him so, nor he me.

Then! how the wretch promised!—How he vowed!—How he entreated!—And how the women pleaded!—And they engaged themselves, and the honour of their whole family, for his just, his kind, his tender behaviour to me.

In short, my dear, I was so hard set, that I was obliged to come to a more favourable compromise with them than I had intended. I would wait for your answer to my letter, I said: and if that made doubtful or difficult the change of measures I had resolved upon, and the scheme of life I had formed, I would then consider of the matter; and, if they would permit me, lay all before them, and take their advice upon it, in conjunction with your's, as if the one were my own aunt, and the other were my own cousin.

They shed tears upon this—of joy they called them:—But since, I believe, to their credit, bad as they are, that they were tears of temporary remorse; for, the pretended Miss Montague turned about, and, as I remember, said, There was no standing it.

But Mr. Lovelace was not so easily satisfied. He was fixed upon his villanous measures perhaps; and so might not be sorry to have a pretence against me. He bit his lip—he had been but too much used, he said, to such indifference, such coldness, in the very midst of his happiest prospects. I had on twenty occasions shown him, to his infinite regret, that any favour I was to confer upon him was to be the result of—there he stopt—and not of my choice.

This had like to have set all back again. I was exceedingly offended.

But the pretended ladies interposed. The elder severely took him to task. He ought, she told him, to be satisfied with what I had said. She desired no other condition. And what, Sir, said she, with an air of authority, would you commit errors, and expect to be rewarded for them?

They then engaged me in a more agreeable conversation—the pretended lady declared, that she, Lord M. and Lady Sarah, would directly and personally interest themselves to bring about a general reconciliation between the two families, and this either in open or private concert with my uncle Harlowe, as should be thought fit. Animosities on one side had been carried a great way, she said; and too little care had been shown on the other to mollify or heal. My father should see that they could treat him as a brother and a friend; and my brother and sister should be convinced that there was no room either for the jealousy or envy they had conceived from motives too unworthy to be avowed.

Could I help, my dear, being pleased with them?—

Permit me here to break off. The task grows too heavy, at present, for the heart of

Your CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LXVIII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [IN CONTINUATION.]

I was very ill, and obliged to lay down my pen. I thought I should have fainted. But am better now—so will proceed.

The pretended ladies, the more we talked, the fonder they seemed to be of me. And the Lady Betty had Mrs. Moore called up; and asked her, If she had accommodations for her niece and self, her woman, and two men servants, for three or four days?

Mr. Lovelace answered for her that she had.

She would not ask her dear niece Lovelace, [Permit me, my dear, whispered she, this charming style before strangers! I will keep your uncle's secret,] whether she should be welcome or not to be so near her. But for the time she should stay in these parts, she would come up every night—What say you, niece Charlotte?

The pretended Charlotte answered, she should like to do so, of all things.

The Lady Betty called her an obliging girl. She liked the place, she said. Her cousin Leeson would excuse her. The air, and my company, would do her good. She never chose to lie in the smoky town, if she could help it. In short, my dear, said she to me, I will stay with you till you hear from Miss Howe; and till I have your consent to go with me to Glenham-hall. Not one moment will I be out of your company, when I can have it. Stedman, my solicitor, as the distance from town is so small, may attend me here for instructions. Niece Charlotte, one word with you, child.

They retired to the further end of the room, and talked about their night-dresses.

The Miss Charlotte said, Morrison might be dispatched for them.

True, said the other—but I have some letters in my private box, which I must have up. And you know, Charlotte, that I trust nobody with the keys of that.

Could not Morrison bring up the box?

No. She thought it safest where it was. She had heard of a robbery committed but two days ago at the food of Hampstead-hill; and she should be ruined if she lost her box.

Well, then, it was but going to town to undress, and she would leave her jewels behind her, and return; and should be easier a great deal on all accounts.

For my part, I wondered they came up with them. But that was to be taken as a respect paid to me. And then they hinted at another visit of ceremony which they had thought to make, had they not found me so inexpressibly engaging.

They talked loud enough for me to hear them; on purpose, no doubt, though in affected whispers; and concluded with high praises of me.

I was not fool enough to believe, or to be puffed up with their encomiums; yet not suspecting them, I was not displeased at so favourable a beginning of acquaintance with Ladies (whether I were to be related to them or not) of whom I had always heard honourable mention. And yet at the time, I thought, highly as they exalted me, that in some respects (though I hardly know in what) they fell short of what I expected them to be.

The grand deluder was at the farther end of the room, another way; probably to give me an opportunity to hear these preconcerted praises—looking into a book, which had there not been a preconcert, would not have taken his attention for one moment. It was Taylor's Holy Living and Dying.

When the pretended ladies joined me, he approached me with it in his hand—a smart book, this, my dear!—this old divine affects, I see, a mighty flowery style of an ordinary country funeral, where, the young women, in honour of a defunct companion, especially if she were a virgin, or passed for such, make a flower-bed of her coffin.

And then, laying down the book, turning upon his heel, with one of his usual airs of gaiety, And are you determined, Ladies, to take up your lodgings with my charming creature?

Indeed they were.

Never were there more cunning, more artful impostors, than these women. Practised creatures, to be sure: yet genteel; and they must have been well-educated—once, perhaps, as much the delight of their parents, as I was of mine: and who knows by what arts ruined, body and mind—O

my dear! how pregnant is this reflection!

But the man!—Never was there a man so deep. Never so consummate a deceiver; except that detested Tomlinson; whose years and seriousness, joined with a solidity of sense and judgment that seemed uncommon, gave him, one would have thought, advantages in villany, the other had not time for. Hard, very hard, that I should fall into the knowledge of two such wretches; when two more such I hope are not to be met with in the world!—both so determined to carry on the most barbarous and perfidious projects against a poor young creature, who never did or wished harm to either.

Take the following slight account of these women's and of this man's behaviour to each other before me.

Mr. Lovelace carried himself to his pretended aunt with high respect, and paid a great deference to all she said. He permitted her to have all the advantage over him in the repartees and retorts that passed between them. I could, indeed, easily see, that it was permitted; and that he forbore that vivacity, that quickness, which he never spared showing to his pretended Miss Montague; and which a man of wit seldom knows how to spare showing, when an opportunity offers to display his wit.

The pretended Miss Montague was still more respectful in her behaviour to her pretended aunt. While the aunt kept up the dignity of the character she had assumed, rallying both of them with the air of a person who depends upon the superiority which years and fortune give over younger persons, who might have a view to be obliged to her, either in her life, or at her death.

The severity of her raillery, however, was turned upon Mr. Lovelace, on occasion of the character of the people who kept the lodgings, which, she said, I had thought myself so well warranted to leave privately.

This startled me. For having then no suspicion of the vile Tomlinson, I concluded (and your letter of the 7th* favoured my conclusion) that if the house were notorious, either he, or Mr. Mennell, would have given me or him some hints of it—nor, although I liked not the people, did I observe any thing in them very culpable, till the Wednesday night before, that they offered not to come to my assistance, although within hearing of my distress, (as I am sure they were,) and having as much reason as I to be frightened at the fire, had it been real.

* His forged letter. See Vol. V. Letter XXX.

I looked with indignation upon Mr. Lovelace, at this hint.

He seemed abashed. I have not patience, but to recollect the specious looks of this vile deceiver. But how was it possible, that even that florid countenance of his should enable him to command a blush at his pleasure? for blush he did, more than once: and the blush, on this occasion, was a deep-dyed crimson, unstrained for, and natural, as I thought—but he is so much of the actor, that he seems able to enter into any character; and his muscles and features appear entirely under obedience to his wicked will.*

* It is proper to observe, that there was a more natural reason than this that the Lady gives for Mr. Lovelace's blushing. It was a blush of indignation, as he owned afterwards to his friend Belford, in conversation; for the pretended Lady Betty had mistaken her cue, in condemning the house; and he had much ado to recover the blunder; being obliged to follow her lead, and vary from his first design; which was to have the people of the house spoken well of, in order to induce her to return to it, were it but on pretence to direct her clothes to be carried to Hampstead.

The pretended lady went on, saying, she had taken upon herself to inquire after the people, on hearing that I had left the house in disgust; and though she heard not any thing much amiss, yet she heard enough to make her wonder that he could carry his spouse, a person of so much delicacy, to a house, that, if it had not a bad fame, had not a good one.

You must think, my dear, that I liked the pretended Lady Betty the better for this. I suppose it was designed that I should.

He was surprised, he said, that her Ladyship should hear a bad character of the people. It was what he had never before heard that they deserved. It was easy, indeed, to see, that they had not very great delicacy, though they were not indelicate. The nature of their livelihood, letting lodgings, and taking people to board, (and yet he had understood that they were nice in these particulars,) led them to aim at being free and obliging: and it was difficult, he said, for persons of cheerful dispositions, so to behave as to avoid censure: openness of heart and countenance in the sex (more was the pity) too often subjected good people, whose fortunes did not set them above the world, to uncharitable

censure.

He wished, however, that her Ladyship would tell what she had heard: although now it signified but little, because he would never ask me to set foot within their doors again: and he begged she would not mince the matter.

Nay, no great matter, she said. But she had been informed, that there were more women-lodgers in the house than men: yet that their visitors were more men than women. And this had been hinted to her (perhaps by ill-wishers, she could not answer for that) in such a way, as if somewhat further were meant by it than was spoken.

This, he said, was the true innuendo-way of characterizing, used by detractors. Every body and every thing had a black and a white side, of which well wishers and ill wishers may make their advantage. He had observed that the front house was well let, and he believed more to the one sex than to the other; for he had seen, occasionally passing to or fro, several genteel modest looking women; and who, it was very probable, were not so ill-beloved, but they might have visitors and relations of both sexes: but they were none of them any thing to us, or we to them: we were not once in any of their companies: but in the genteelest and most retired house of the two, which we had in a manner to ourselves, with the use of a parlour to the street, to serve us for a servants' hall, or to receive common visitors, or our traders only, whom we admitted not up stairs.

He always loved to speak as he found. No man in the world had suffered more from calumny than he himself had done.

Women, he owned, ought to be more scrupulous than men needed to be where they lodged. Nevertheless he wished that fact, rather than surmise, were to be the foundation of their judgments, especially when they spoke of one another.

He meant no reflection upon her Ladyship's informants, or rather surmisants, (as he might call them,) be they who they would: nor did he think himself obliged to defend characters impeached, or not thought well of, by women of virtue and honour. Neither were these people of importance enough to have so much said about them.

The pretended Lady Betty said, all who knew her, would clear her of censoriousness: that it gave her some opinion, she must needs say, of the people, that he had continued there so long with me; that I had rather negative than positive reasons of dislike to them; and that so shrewd a man as she heard Captain Tomlinson was had not objected to them.

I think, niece Charlotte, proceeded she, as my nephew had not parted with these lodgings, you and I, (for, as my dear Miss Harlowe dislikes the people, I would not ask her for her company) will take a dish of tea with my nephew there, before we go out of town; and then we shall see what sort of people they are. I have heard that Mrs. Sinclair is a mighty forbidding creature.

With all my heart, Madam. In your Ladyship's company I shall make no scruple of going any where.

It was Ladyship at every word; and as she seemed proud of her title, and of her dress too, I might have guessed that she was not used to either.

What say you, cousin Lovelace? Lady Sarah, though a melancholy woman, is very inquisitive about all your affairs. I must acquaint her with every particular circumstance when I go down.

With all his heart. He would attend her whenever she pleased. She would see very handsome apartments, and very civil people.

The deuce is in them, said the Miss Montague, if they appear other to us.

She then fell into family talk; family happiness on my hoped-for accession into it. They mentioned Lord M.'s and Lady Sarah's great desire to see me: how many friends and admirers, with uplift hands, I should have! [Oh! my dear, what a triumph must these creatures, and he, have over the poor devoted all the time!]-What a happy man he would be!-They would not, the Lady Betty said, give themselves the mortification but to suppose that I should not be one of them!

Presents were hinted at. She resolved that I should go with her to Glenham-hall. She would not be refused, although she were to stay a week beyond her time for me.

She longed for the expected letter from you. I must write to hasten it, and to let Miss Howe know how every thing stood since I wrote last. That might dispose me absolutely in her favour and in her nephew's; and then she hoped there would be no occasion for me to think of entering upon

any new measures.

Indeed, my dear, I did at the time intend, if I heard not from you by morning, to dispatch a man and horse to you, with the particulars of all, that you might (if you thought proper) at least put off Mrs. Townsend's coming up to another day.—But I was miserably prevented.

She made me promise that I would write to you upon this subject, whether I heard from you or not. One of her servants should ride post with my letter, and wait for Miss Howe's answer.

She then launched out in deserved praises of you, my dear. How fond she should be of the honour of your acquaintance.

The pretended Miss Montague joined in with her, as well for herself as for her sister.

Abominably well instructed were they both!

O my dear! what risks may poor giddy girls run, when they throw themselves out of the protection of their natural friends, and into the wide world!

They then talked again of reconciliation and intimacy with every one of my friends; with my mother particularly; and gave the dear good lady the praises that every one gives her, who has the happiness to know her.

Ah, my dear Miss Howe! I had almost forgot my resentments against the pretended nephew!—So many agreeable things said, made me think, that, if you should advise it, and if I could bring my mind to forgive the wretch for an outrage so premeditatedly vile, and could forbear despising him for that and his other ungrateful and wicked ways, I might not be unhappy in an alliance with such a family. Yet, thought I at the time, with what intermixture does every thing come to me that had the appearance of good!—However, as my lucid hopes made me see fewer faults in the behaviour of these pretended ladies, than recollection and abhorrence have helped me since to see, I began to reproach myself, that I had not at first thrown myself into their protection.

But amidst all these delightful prospects, I must not, said the Lady Betty, forget that I am to go to town.

She then ordered her coach to be got to the door.—We will all go to town together, said she, and return together. Morrison shall stay here, and see every thing as I am used to have it, in relation to my apartment, and my bed; for I am very particular in some respects. My cousin Leeson's servants can do all I want to be done with regard to my night-dresses, and the like. And it will be a little airing for you, my dear, and a want of your apparel to be sent from your former lodgings to Mrs. Leeson's; and we can bring it up with us from thence.

I had no intention to comply. But as I did not imagine that she would insist upon my going to town with them, I made no answer to that part of her speech.

I must here lay down my tired pen!

Recollection! heart-affecting recollection! how it pains me!

LETTER LXIX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE

In the midst of this agreeableness, the coach came to the door. The pretended Lady Betty besought me to give them my company to their cousin Leeson's. I desired to be excused: yet suspected nothing. She would not be denied. How happy would a visit so condescending make her cousin Leeson!—Her cousin Leeson was not unworthy of my acquaintance: and would take it for the greatest favour in the world.

I objected my dress. But the objection was not admitted. She bespoke a supper of Mrs. Moore to be ready at nine.

Mr. Lovelace, vile hypocrite, and wicked deceiver! seeing, as he said, my dislike to go, desired his Ladyship not to insist upon it.

Fondness for my company was pleaded. She begged me to oblige her: made a motion to help me to my fan herself: and, in short, was so very urgent, that my feet complied against my speech and my mind: and being, in a manner, led to the coach by her, and made to step in first, she followed me: and her pretended niece, and the wretch, followed her: and away it drove.

Nothing but the height of affectionate complaisance passed all the way: over and over, what a joy would this unexpected visit give her cousin Leeson! What a pleasure must it be to such a mind as mine, to be able to give so much joy to every body I came near!

The cruel, the savage seducer (as I have since recollected) was in a rapture all the way; but yet such a sort of rapture, as he took visible pains to check.

Hateful villain! how I abhor him!—What mischief must be then in his plotting heart!—What a devoted victim must I be in all their eyes!

Though not pleased, I was nevertheless just then thoughtless of danger; they endeavouring thus to lift me up above all apprehensions of that, and above myself too.

But think, my dear, what a dreadful turn all had upon me, when, through several streets and ways I knew nothing of, the coach slackening its pace, came within sight of the dreadful house of the dreadfulest woman in the world; as she proved to me.

Lord be good unto me! cried the poor fool, looking out of the coach—Mr. Lovelace!—Madam! turning to the pretended Lady Betty!—Madam! turning to the niece, my hands and eyes lifted up—Lord be good unto me!

What! What! What! my dear.

He pulled the string—What need to have come this way? said he—But since we are, I will but ask a question—My dearest life, why this apprehension?

The coachman stopped: his servant, who, with one of her's was behind, alighted—Ask, said he, if I have any letters? Who knows, my dearest creature, turning to me, but we may already have one from the Captain?—We will not go out of the coach!—Fear nothing—Why so apprehensive?—Oh! these fine spirits!—cried the execrable insulter.

Dreadfully did my heart then misgive me: I was ready to faint. Why this terror, my life? you shall not stir out of the coach but one question, now the fellow has drove us this way.

Your lady will faint, cried the execrable Lady Betty, turning to him—My dearest Niece! (niece I will call you, taking my hand)—we must alight, if you are so ill.—Let us alight—only for a glass of water and hartshorn—indeed we must alight.

No, no, no—I am well—quite well—Won't the man drive on?—I am well—quite well—indeed I am.—Man, drive on, putting my head out of the coach—Man, drive on!—though my voice was too low to be heard.

The coach stopt at the door. How I trembled!

Dorcas came to the door, on its stopping.

My dearest creature, said the vile man, gasping, as it were for breath, you shall not alight—Any letters for me, Dorcas?

There are two, Sir. And here is a gentleman, Mr. Belton, Sir, waits for your honour; and has done so above an hour.

I'll just speak to him. Open the door—You sha'n't step out, my dear—A letter perhaps from Captain already!—You sha'n't step out, my dear.

I sighed as if my heart would burst.

But we must step out, Nephew: your lady will faint. Maid, a glass of

hartshorn and water!—My dear you must step out—You will faint, child—We must cut your laces.—[I believe my complexion was all manner of colours by turns]—Indeed, you must step out, my dear.

He knew, said I, I should be well, the moment the coach drove from the door. I should not alight. By his soul, I should not.

Lord, Lord, Nephew, Lord, Lord, Cousin, both women in a breath, what ado you make about nothing! You persuade your lady to be afraid of alighting.—See you not that she is just fainting?

Indeed, Madam, said the vile seducer, my dearest love must not be moved in this point against her will. I beg it may not be insisted upon.

Fiddle-faddle, foolish man—What a pother is here! I guess how it is: you are ashamed to let us see what sort of people you carried your lady among—but do you go out, and speak to your friend, and take your letters.

He stept out; but shut the coach-door after him, to oblige me.

The coach may go on, Madam, said I.

The coach shall go on, my dear life, said he.—But he gave not, nor intended to give, orders that it should.

Let the coach go on! said I—Mr. Lovelace may come after us.

Indeed, my dear, you are ill!—Indeed you must alight—alight but for one quarter of an hour.—Alight but to give orders yourself about your things. Whom can you be afraid of in my company, and my niece's; these people must have behaved shockingly to you! Please the Lord, I'll inquire into it!—I'll see what sort of people they are!

Immediately came the old creature to the door. A thousand pardons, dear Madam, stepping to the coach-side, if we have any way offended you—Be pleased, Ladies, [to the other two] to alight.

Well, my dear, whispered the Lady Betty, I now find that an hideous description of a person we never saw is an advantage to them. I thought the woman was a monster—but, really, she seems tolerable.

I was afraid I should have fallen into fits: but still refused to go out—Man!—Man!—Man!—cried I, gaspingly, my head out of the coach and in, by turns, half a dozen times running, drive on!—Let us go!

My heart misgave me beyond the power of my own accounting for it; for still I did not suspect these women. But the antipathy I had taken to the vile house, and to find myself so near it, when I expected no such matter, with the sight of the old creature, all together made me behave like a distracted person.

The hartshorn and water was brought. The pretended Lady Betty made me drink it. Heaven knows if there was any thing else in it!

Besides, said she, whisperingly, I must see what sort of creatures the nieces are. Want of delicacy cannot be hid from me. You could not surely, my dear, have this aversion to re-enter a house, for a few minutes, in our company, in which you lodged and boarded several weeks, unless these women could be so presumptuously vile, as my nephew ought not to know.

Out stept the pretended lady; the servant, at her command, having opened the door.

Dearest Madam, said the other to me, let me follow you, [for I was next the door.] Fear nothing: I will not stir from your presence.

Come, my dear, said the pretended lady, give me your hand; holding out her's. Oblige me this once.

I will bless your footsteps, said the old creature, if once more you honour my house with your presence.

A crowd by this time was gathered about us; but I was too much affected to mind that.

Again the pretended Miss Montague urged me; standing up as ready to go out if I would give her room.—Lord, my dear, said she, who can bear this crowd?—What will people think?

The pretended Lady again pressed me, with both her hands held out—Only, my dear, to give orders about your things.

And thus pressed, and gazed at, (for then I looked about me,) the women so richly dressed, people whispering; in an evil moment, out stepped I, trembling, forced to lean with both my hands (frighted too much for ceremony) on the pretended Lady Betty's arm—Oh! that I had dropped down dead upon the guilty threshold!

We shall stay but a few minutes, my dear!—but a few minutes! said the same specious jilt—out of breath with her joy, as I have since thought, that they had thus triumphed over the unhappy victim!

Come, Mrs. Sinclair, I think your name is, show us the way—following her, and leading me. I am very thirsty. You have frightened me, my dear, with your strange fears. I must have tea made, if it can be done in a moment. We have farther to go, Mrs. Sinclair, and must return to Hampstead this night.

It shall be ready in a moment, cried the wretch. We have water boiling.

Hasten, then—Come, my dear, to me, as she led me through the passage to the fatal inner house—lean upon me—how you tremble!—how you falter in your steps!—Dearest niece Lovelace, [the old wretch being in hearing,] why these hurries upon your spirits?—We'll be gone in a minute.

And thus she led the poor sacrifice into the old wretch's too-well-known parlour.

Never was any body so gentle, so meek, so low voiced, as the odious woman; drawling out, in a puling accent, all the obliging things she could say: awed, I then thought, by the conscious dignity of a woman of quality; glittering with jewels.

The called-for tea was ready presently.

There was no Mr. Belton, I believe: for the wretch went not to any body, unless it were while we were parlying in the coach. No such person however, appeared at the tea-table.

I was made to drink two dishes, with milk, complaisantly urged by the pretended ladies helping me each to one. I was stupid to their hands; and, when I took the tea, almost choked with vapours; and could hardly swallow.

I thought, transiently thought, that the tea, the last dish particularly, had an odd taste. They, on my palating it, observed, that the milk was London-milk; far short in goodness of what they were accustomed to from their own dairies.

I have no doubt that my two dishes, and perhaps my hartshorn, were prepared for me; in which case it was more proper for their purpose, that they should help me, than that I should help myself. Ill before, I found myself still more and more disordered in my head; a heavy torpid pain increasing fast upon me. But I imputed it to my terror.

Nevertheless, at the pretended Lady's motion, I went up stairs, attended by Dorcas; who affected to weep for joy, that she once more saw my blessed face; that was the vile creature's word: and immediately I set about taking out some of my clothes, ordering what should be put up, and what sent after me.

While I was thus employed, up came the pretended Lady Betty, in a hurrying way—My dear, you won't be long before you are ready. My nephew is very busy in writing answers to his letters: so, I'll just whip away, and change my dress, and call upon you in an instant.

O Madam!—I am ready! I am now ready!—You must not leave me here. And down I sunk, affrighted, into a chair.

This instant, this instant, I will return—before you can be ready—before you can have packed up your things—we would not be late—the robbers we have heard of may be out—don't let us be late.

And away she hurried before I could say another word. Her pretended niece went with her, without taking notice to me of her going.

I had no suspicion yet that these women were not indeed the ladies they personated; and I blamed myself for my weak fears.—It cannot be, thought I, that such ladies will abet treachery against a poor creature they are so fond of. They must undoubtedly be the persons they appear to be—what folly to doubt it! The air, the dress, the dignity of women of quality. How unworthy of them, and of my charity, concluded I, is this ungenerous shadow of suspicion!

So, recovering my stupefied spirits, as well as they could be recovered, (for I was heavier and heavier! and wondered to Dorcas what ailed me, rubbing my eyes, and taking some of her snuff, pinch after pinch, to very little purpose,) I pursued my employment: but when that was over, all packed up that I designed to be packed up; and I had nothing to do but to think; and found them tarry so long; I thought I should have gone distracted. I shut myself into the chamber that had been mine; I kneeled, I prayed; yet knew not what I prayed for: then ran out again: it was almost dark night, I said: where, where, where was Mr. Lovelace?

He came to me, taking no notice at first of my consternation and wildness, [what they had given me made me incoherent and wild:] All goes well, said he, my dear!—A line from Capt. Tomlinson!

All indeed did go well for the villanous project of the most cruel and most villanous of men!

I demanded his aunt!—I demanded his cousin!—The evening, I said, was closing!—My head was very, very bad, I remember I said—and it grew worse and worse.—

Terror, however, as yet kept up my spirits; and I insisted upon his going himself to hasten them.

He called his servant. He raved at the sex for their delay: 'twas well that business of consequence seldom depended upon such parading, unpunctual triflers!

His servant came.

He ordered him to fly to his cousin Leeson's, and to let Lady Betty and his cousin know how uneasy we both were at their delay: adding, of his own accord, desire them, if they don't come instantly, to send their coach, and we will go without them. Tell them I wonder they'll serve me so!

I thought this was considerably and fairly put. But now, indifferent as my head was, I had a little time to consider the man and his behaviour. He terrified me with his looks, and with his violent emotions, as he gazed upon me. Evident joy-suppressed emotions, as I have since recollected. His sentences short, and pronounced as if his breath were touched. Never saw I his abominable eyes look as then they looked—Triumph in them!—fierce and wild; and more disagreeable than the women's at the vile house appeared to me when I first saw them: and at times, such a leering, mischief-boding cast!—I would have given the world to have been an hundred miles from him. Yet his behaviour was decent—a decency, however, that I might have seen to be struggled for—for he snatched my hand two or three times, with a vehemence in his grasp that hurt me; speaking words of tenderness through his shut teeth, as it seemed; and let it go with a beggar-voiced humbled accent, like the vile woman's just before; half-inward; yet his words and manner carrying the appearance of strong and almost convulsed passion!—O my dear! what mischief was he not then meditating!

I complained once or twice of thirst. My mouth seemed parched. At the time, I supposed that it was my terror (gasping often as I did for breath) that parched up the roof of my mouth. I called for water: some table-beer was brought me: beer, I suppose, was a better vehicle for their potions. I told the maid, that she knew I seldom tasted malt liquor: yet, suspecting nothing of this nature, being extremely thirsty, I drank it, as what came next: and instantly, as it were, found myself much worse than before: as if inebriated, I should fancy: I know not how.

His servant was gone twice as long as he needed: and, just before his return, came one of the pretended Lady Betty's with a letter for Mr. Lovelace.

He sent it up to me. I read it: and then it was that I thought myself a lost creature; it being to put off her going to Hampstead that night, on account of violent fits which Miss Montague was pretended to be seized with; for then immediately came into my head his vile attempt upon me in this house; the revenge that my flight might too probably inspire him with on that occasion, and because of the difficulty I made to forgive him, and to be reconciled to him; his very looks wild and dreadful to me; and the women of the house such as I had more reason than ever, even from the pretended Lady Betty's hint, to be afraid of: all these crowding together in my apprehensive mind, I fell into a kind of phrensy.

I have no remembrance how I was for this time it lasted: but I know that, in my first agitations, I pulled off my head-dress, and tore my ruffles in twenty tatters, and ran to find him out.

When a little recovered, I insisted upon the hint he had given me of their coach. But the messenger, he said, had told him, that it was sent to fetch a physician, lest his chariot should be put up, or not ready.

I then insisted upon going directly to Lady Betty's lodgings.

Mrs. Leeson's was now a crowded house, he said: and as my earnestness could be owing to nothing but groundless apprehensions, [and Oh! what vows, what protestations of his honour, did he then make!] he hoped I would not add to their present concern. Charlotte, indeed, was used to fits, he said, upon any great surprises, whether of joy or grief; and they would hold her for one week together, if not got off in a few hours.

You are an observer of eyes, my dear, said the villain; perhaps in secret insult: Saw you not in Miss Montague's, now-and-then at Hampstead, something wildish? I was afraid for her then. Silence and quiet only do her good: your concern for her, and her love for you, will but augment the poor girl's disorder, if you should go.

All impatient with grief and apprehension, I still declared myself

resolved not to stay in that house till morning. All I had in the world, my rings, my watch, my little money, for a coach; or, if one were not to be got, I would go on foot to Hampstead that night, though I walked it by myself.

A coach was hereupon sent for, or pretended to be sent for. Any price, he said, he would give to oblige me, late as it was; and he would attend me with all his soul. But no coach was to be got.

Let me cut short the rest. I grew worse and worse in my head! now stupid, now raving, now senseless. The vilest of vile women was brought to frighten me. Never was there so horrible a creature as she appeared to me at this time.

I remember I pleaded for mercy. I remember that I said I would be his—indeed I would be his—to obtain his mercy. But no mercy found I! My strength, my intellects failed me—And then such scenes followed—O my dear, such dreadful scenes!—fits upon fits, (faintly indeed and imperfectly remembered,) procuring me no compassion—But death was withheld from me. That would have been too great a mercy!

Thus was I tricked and deluded back by blacker hearts of my own sex than I thought there were in the world; who appeared to me to be persons of honour; and, when in his power, thus barbarously was I treated by this villanous man!

I was so senseless, that I dare not aver, that the horrid creatures of the house were personally aiding and abetting: but some visionary remembrances I have of female figures, flitting, as I may say, before my sight; the wretched woman's particularly. But as these confused ideas might be owing to the terror I had conceived of the worse than masculine violence she had been permitted to assume to me, for expressing my abhorrence of her house; and as what I suffered from his barbarity wants not that aggravation; I will say no more on a subject so shocking as this must ever be to my remembrance.

I never saw the personating wretches afterwards. He persisted to the last, (dreadfully invoking Heaven as a witness to the truth of his assertion) that they were really and truly the ladies they pretended to be; declaring, that they could not take leave of me, when they left town, because of the state of senselessness and phrensy I was in. For their intoxicating, or rather stupefying, potions had almost deleterious effects upon my intellects, as I have hinted; insomuch that, for several days together, I was under a strange delirium; now moping, now dozing, now weeping, now raving, now scribbling, tearing what I scribbled as fast as I wrote it: most miserable when now-and-then a ray of reason brought confusedly to my remembrance what I had suffered.

LETTER LXX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [IN CONTINUATION.]

[The lady next gives an account,

Of her recovery from her delirium and sleepy disorder:

Of her attempt to get away in his absence:

Of the conversations that followed, at his return, between them:

Of the guilty figure he made:

Of her resolution not to have him:

Of her several efforts to escape:

Of her treaty with Dorcas to assist her in it:

Of Dorcas's dropping the promissory note, undoubtedly, as she says, on purpose to betray her:

Of her triumph over all the creatures of the house, assembled to terrify her; and perhaps to commit fresh outrages upon her:

Of his setting out for M. Hall:

Of his repeated letters to induce her to meet him at the altar, on her uncle's anniversary:

Of her determined silence to them all:

Of her second escape, effected, as she says, contrary to her own expectation: the attempt being at first but the intended prelude to a more promising one, which she had formed in her mind:

And of other particulars; which being to be found in Mr. Lovelace's letters preceding, and the letter of his friend Belford, are omitted. She then proceeds:]

The very hour that I found myself in a place of safety, I took pen to write to you. When I began, I designed only to write six or eight lines, to inquire after your health: for, having heard nothing from you, I feared indeed, that you had been, and still were, too ill to write. But no sooner did my pen begin to blot the paper, but my sad heart hurried it into length. The apprehensions I had lain under, that I should not be able to get away; the fatigue I had in effecting my escape: the difficulty of procuring a lodging for myself; having disliked the people of two houses, and those of a third disliking me; for you must think I made a frightened appearance—these, together with the recollection of what I had suffered from him, and my farther apprehensions of my insecurity, and my desolate circumstances, had so disordered me, that I remember I rambled strangely in that letter.

In short, I thought it, on re-perusal, a half-distracted one: but I then despaired, (were I to begin again,) of writing better: so I let it go: and can have no excuse for directing it as I did, if the cause of the incoherence in it will not furnish me with a very pitiable one.

The letter I received from your mother was a dreadful blow to me. But nevertheless it had the good effect upon me (labouring, as I did just then, under a violent fit of vapourish despondency, and almost yielding to it) which profuse bleeding and blisterings have in paralytic or apoplectical strokes; reviving my attention, and restoring me to spirits to combat the evils I was surrounded by—sluicing off, and diverting into a new channel, (if I may be allowed another metaphor,) the overcharging woes which threatened once more to overwhelm my intellects.

But yet I most sincerely lamented, (and still lament,) in your mother's words, That I cannot be unhappy by myself: and was grieved, not only for the trouble I had given you before; but for the new one I had brought upon you by my inattention.

[She then gives the substance of the letters she wrote to Mrs. Norton, to Lady Betty Lawrance, and to Mrs. Hodges; as also of their answers; whereby she detected all Mr. Lovelace's impostures. She proceeds as follows:]

I cannot, however, forbear to wonder how the vile Tomlinson could come at the knowledge of several of the things he told me of, and which contributed to give me confidence in him.*

* The attentive reader need not be referred back for what the Lady nevertheless could not account for, as she knew not that Mr. Lovelace had come at Miss Howe's letters; particularly that in Vol. IV. Letter XXIX. which he comments upon in Letter XLIV. of the same volume.

I doubt not that the stories of Mrs. Fretchville and her house would be found as vile as any of the rest, were I to inquire; and had I not enough, and too much, already against the perjured man.

How have I been led on!—What will be the end of such a false and perjured creature! Heaven not less profaned and defied by him than myself deceived and abused! This, however, against myself I must say, That if what I have suffered be the natural consequence of my first error, I never can forgive myself, although you are so partial in my favour, as to say, that I was not censurable for what passed before my first escape.

And now, honoured Madam, and my dearest Miss Howe, who are to sit in judgment upon my case, permit me to lay down my pen with one request, which, with the greatest earnestness, I make to you both: and that is, That you will neither of you open your lips in relation to the potions and the violences I have hinted at.—Not that I am solicitous, that my disgrace should be hidden from the world, or that it should not be generally known, that the man has proved a villain to me: for this, it seems, every body but myself expected from his character. But suppose, as his actions by me are really of a capital nature, it were insisted upon that I should appear to prosecute him and his accomplices in a court of justice, how do you think I could bear that?

But since my character, before the capital enormity, was lost in the eye of the world; and that from the very hour I left my father's house; and since all my own hopes of worldly happiness are entirely over; let me slide quietly into my grave; and let it be not remembered, except by one friendly tear, and no more, dropt from your gentle eye, mine own dear Anna Howe, on the happy day that shall shut up all my sorrows, that there was such a creature as

CLARISSA HARLOWE SATURDAY, JULY 8.

LETTER LXXI

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE SUNDAY, JULY 9.

May Heaven signalize its vengeance, in the face of all the world, upon the most abandoned and profligate of men!—And in its own time, I doubt not but it will.—And we must look to a WORLD BEYOND THIS for the reward of your sufferings!

Another shocking detection, my dear!—How have you been deluded!—Very watchful I have thought you; very sagacious:—but, alas! not watchful, not sagacious enough, for the horrid villain you have had to deal with!—

The letter you sent me enclosed as mine, of the 7th of June, is a villanous forgery.*

* See Vol. V. Letter XXX.

The hand, indeed, is astonishingly like mine; and the cover, I see, is actually my cover: but yet the letter is not so exactly imitated, but that, (had you had any suspicions about his vileness at the time,) you, who so well know my hand, might have detected it.

In short, this vile, forged letter, though a long one, contains but a few extracts from mine. Mine was a very long one. He has omitted every thing, I see, in it that could have shown you what a detestable house the house is; and given you suspicions of the vile Tomlinson.—You will see this, and how he has turned Miss Lardner's information, and my advices to you, [execrable villain!] to his own horrid ends, by the rough draught of the genuine letter, which I shall enclose.*

* See Vol. V. Letter XX.

Apprehensive for both our safeties from the villany of such a daring and profligate contriver, I must call upon you, my dear, to resolve upon taking legal vengeance of the infernal wretch. And this not only for our own sakes, but for the sakes of innocents who otherwise may yet be deluded and outraged by him.

[She then gives the particulars of the report made by the young fellow whom she sent to Hampstead with her letter; and who supposed he had delivered it into her own hand;* and then proceeds:]

* See Vol. VI. Letter VI.

I am astonished, that the vile wretch, who could know nothing of the time my messenger, (whose honesty I can vouch for) would come, could have a creature ready to personate you! Strange, that the man should happen to arrive just as you were gone to church, (as I find was the fact, on comparing what he says with your hint that you were at church twice that day,) when he might have got to Mrs. Moore's two hours before!—But had you told me, my dear, that the villain had found you out, and was about you!—You should have done that—yet I blame you upon a judgment founded on the event only!

I never had any faith in the stories that go current among country girls, of specters, familiars, and demons; yet I see not any other way to account for this wretch's successful villany, and for his means of working up his specious delusions, but by supposing, (if he be not the devil himself,) that he has a familiar constantly at his elbow. Sometimes it seems to me that this familiar assumes the shape of that solemn villain Tomlinson: sometimes that of the execrable Sinclair, as he calls her: sometimes it is permitted to take that of Lady Betty Lawrance—but, when it would assume the angelic shape and mien of my beloved friend, see what a bloated figure it made!

'Tis my opinion, my dear, that you will be no longer safe where you are, than while the V. is in the country. Words are poor!—or how could I execrate him! I have hardly any doubt that he has sold himself for a time. Oh! may the time be short!—or may his infernal prompter no more keep covenant with him than he does with others!

I enclose not only the rough draught of my long letter mentioned above, but the heads of that which the young fellow thought he delivered into your own hands at Hampstead. And when you have perused them, I will leave to you to judge how much reason I had to be surprised that you wrote me not an answer to either of those letters; one of which you owned you had received, (though it proved to be his forged one,) the other delivered into your own hands, as I was assured; and both of them of so much concern to your honour; and still now much more surprised I must be, when I received a letter from Mrs. Townsend, dated June 15, from Hampstead, importing, 'That Mr. Lovelace, who had been with you several days, had, on the Monday before, brought Lady Betty and his

cousin, richly dressed, and in a coach-and-four, to visit you: who, with your own consent, had carried you to town with them—to your former lodgings; where you still were: that the Hampstead women believed you to be married; and reflected upon me as a fomenter of differences between man and wife: that he himself was at Hampstead the day before; viz. Wednesday the 14th; and boasted of his happiness with you; inviting Mrs. Moore, Mrs. Bevis, and Miss Rawlins, to go to town, to visit his spouse; which they promised to do: that he declared that you were entirely reconciled to your former lodgings:—and that, finally, the women at Hampstead told Mrs. Townsend, that he had very handsomely discharged theirs.’

I own to you, my dear, that I was so much surprised and disgusted at these appearances against a conduct till then unexceptionable, that I was resolved to make myself as easy as I could, and wait till you should think fit to write to me. But I could rein-in my impatience but for a few days; and on the 20th of June I wrote a sharp letter to you; which I find you did not receive.

What a fatality, my dear, has appeared in your case, from the very beginning till this hour! Had my mother permitted—

But can I blame her; when you have a father and mother living, who have so much to answer for?—So much!—as no father and mother, considering the child they have driven, persecuted, exposed, renounced, ever had to answer for!

But again I must execrate the abandoned villain—yet, as I said before, all words are poor, and beneath the occasion.

But see we not, in the horrid perjuries and treachery of this man, what rakes and libertines will do, when they get a young creature into their power! It is probable that he might have the intolerable presumption to hope an easier conquest: but, when your unexampled vigilance and exalted virtue made potions, and rapes, and the utmost violences, necessary to the attainment of his detestable end, we see that he never boggled at them. I have no doubt that the same or equal wickedness would be oftener committed by men of his villanous cast, if the folly and credulity of the poor inconsiderates who throw themselves into their hands, did not give them an easier triumph.

With what comfort must those parents reflect upon these things who have happily disposed of their daughters in marriage to a virtuous man! And how happy the young women who find themselves safe in a worthy protection!—If such a person as Miss Clarissa Harlowe could not escape, who can be secure?—Since, though every rake is not a LOVELACE, neither is every woman a CLARISSA: and his attempts were but proportioned to your resistance and vigilance.

My mother has commanded me to let you know her thoughts upon the whole of your sad story. I will do it in another letter; and send it to you with this, by a special messenger.

But, for the future, if you approve of it, I will send my letters by the usual hand, (Collins’s,) to be left at the Saracen’s Head, on Snow-hill: whither you may send your’s, (as we both used to do, to Wilson’s,) except such as we shall think fit to transmit by the post: which I am afraid, after my next, must be directed to Mr. Hickman, as before: since my mother is fixing a condition to our correspondence, which, I doubt, you will not comply with, though I wish you would. This condition I shall acquaint you with by-and-by.

Mean time, begging excuse for all the harsh things in my last, of which your sweet meekness and superior greatness of soul have now made me most heartily ashamed, I beseech you, my dearest creature, to believe me to be

Your truly sympathising, and unalterable friend, ANNA HOWE.

LETTER LXXII

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE MONDAY, JULY 10.

I now, my dearest friend, resume my pen, to obey my mother, in giving you her opinion upon your unhappy story.

She still harps upon the old string, and will have it that all your calamities are owing to your first fatal step; for she believes, (what I cannot,) that your relations had intended after one general trial more, to comply with your aversion, if they had found it to be as riveted a one, as, let me say, it was a folly to suppose it would not be found to be, after so many ridiculously-repeated experiments.

As to your latter sufferings from that vilest of miscreants, she is unalterably of opinion that if all be as you have related (which she doubts not) with regard to the potions, and to the violences you have sustained, you ought by all means to set on foot a prosecution against him, and against his devilish accomplices.

She asks, What murderers, what ravishers, would be brought to justice, if modesty were to be a general plea, and allowable, against appearing in a court to prosecute?

She says, that the good of society requires, that such a beast of prey should be hunted out of it: and, if you do not prosecute him, she thinks you will be answerable for all the mischiefs he may do in the course of his future villanous life.

Will it be thought, Nancy, said she, that Miss Clarissa Harlowe can be in earnest, when she says, she is not solicitous to have her disgraces concealed from the world, if she be afraid or ashamed to appear in court, to do justice to herself and her sex against him? Will it not be rather surmised, that she may be apprehensive that some weakness, or lurking love, will appear upon the trial of the strange cause? If, inferred she, such complicated villany as this (where perjury, potions, forgery, subornation, are all combined to effect the ruin of an innocent creature, and to dishonour a family of eminence, and where the very crimes, as may be supposed, are proofs of her innocence) is to go off with impunity, what case will deserve to be brought into judgment? or what malefactor ought to be hanged?

Then she thinks, and so do I, that the vile creatures, his accomplices, ought, by all means, to be brought to condign punishment, as they must and will be upon bringing him to trial: and this may be a mean to blow up and root out a whole nest of vipers, and save many innocent creatures.

She added, that if Miss Clarissa Harlowe could be so indifferent about having this public justice done upon such a wretch for her own sake, she ought to overcome her scruples out of regard to her family, her acquaintance, and her sex, which are all highly injured and scandalized by his villany to her.

For her own part, she declares, that were she your mother, she would forgive you upon no other terms: and, upon your compliance with these, she herself will undertake to reconcile all your family to you.

These, my dear, are my mother's sentiments upon your sad story.

I cannot say but there are reason and justice in them: and it is my opinion, that it would be very right for the law to oblige an injured woman to prosecute, and to make seduction on the man's part capital, where his studied baseness, and no fault in her will, appeared.

To this purpose the custom in the Isle of Man is a very good one——

'If a single woman there prosecutes a single man for a rape, the ecclesiastical judges impanel a jury; and, if this jury find him guilty, he is returned guilty to the temporal courts: where if he be convicted, the deemster, or judge, delivers to the woman a rope, a sword, and a ring; and she has it in her choice to have him hanged, beheaded, or to marry him.'

One of the two former, I think, should always be her option.

I long for the particulars of your story. You must have too much time upon your hands for a mind so active as your's, if tolerable health and spirits be afforded you.

The villany of the worst of men, and the virtue of the most excellent of women, I expect will be exemplified in it, were it to be written in the same connected and particular manner in which you used to write to me.

Try for it, my dearest friend; and since you cannot give the example without the warning, give both, for the sakes of all those who shall hear of your unhappy fate; beginning from your's of June 5, your prospects

then not disagreeable. I pity you for the task; though I cannot willingly exempt you from it.

My mother will have me add, that she must insist upon your prosecuting the villain. She repeats, that she makes that a condition on which she permits our future correspondence. Let me therefore know your thoughts upon it. I asked her, if she would be willing that I should appear to support you in court, if you complied?—By all means, she said, if that would induce you to begin with him, and with the horrid women. I think I could probably attend you, I am sure I could, were there but a probability of bringing the monster to his deserved end.

Once more your thoughts of it, supposing it were to meet with the approbation of your relations.

But whatever be your determination on this head, it shall be my constant prayer, that God will give you patience to bear your heavy afflictions, as a person ought to do who has not brought them upon herself by a faulty will: that He will speak peace and comfort to your wounded mind; and give you many happy years. I am, and ever will be,

Your affectionate and faithful ANNA HOWE.

[The two preceding letters were sent by a special messenger: in the cover were written the following lines:]

MONDAY, JULY 10.

I cannot, my dearest friend, suffer the enclosed to go unaccompanied by a few lines, to signify to you that they are both less tender in some places than I would have written, had they not been to pass my mother's inspection. The principal reason, however, of my writing thus separately is, to beg of you to permit me to send you money and necessaries, which you must needs want; and that you will let me know, if either I, or any body I can influence, can be of service to you. I am excessively apprehensive that you are not enough out of the villain's reach where you are. Yet London, I am persuaded, is the place, of all others, to be private in.

I could tear my hair for vexation, that I have it not in my power to afford you personal protection!—I am

Your ever devoted ANNA HOWE.

Once more forgive me, my dearest creature, for my barbarous taunting in mine of the 5th! Yet I can hardly forgive myself. I to be so cruel, yet to know you so well!—Whence, whence, had I this vile impatency of spirit!

LETTER LXXIII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE TUESDAY, JULY 11.

Forgive you, my dear!—Most cordially do I forgive you—Will you forgive me for some sharp things I wrote in return to your's of the 5th? You could not have loved me as you do, nor had the concern you have always shown for my honour, if you had not been utterly displeased with me, on the appearance which my conduct wore to you when you wrote that letter. I most heartily thank you, my best and only love, for the opportunity you gave me of clearing it up; and for being generously ready to acquit me of intentional blame, the moment you had read my melancholy narrative.

As you are so earnest to have all the particulars of my sad story before you, I will, if life and spirits be lent me, give you an ample account of all that has befallen me, from the time you mention. But this, it is very probable, you will not see, till after the close of my last scene: and as I shall write with a view to that, I hope no other voucher will be wanted for the veracity of the writer, be who will the reader.

I am far from thinking myself out of the reach of this man's further violence. But what can I do? Whither can I fly?—Perhaps my bad state of health (which must grow worse, as recollection of the past evils, and reflections upon them, grow heavier and heavier upon me) may be my protection. Once, indeed, I thought of going abroad; and, had I the prospect of many years before me, I would go.—But, my dear, the blow is given.—Nor have you reason now, circumstanced as I am, to be concerned that it is. What a heart must I have, if it be not broken—and indeed, my dear friend, I do so earnestly wish for the last closing scene, and with so much comfort find myself in a declining way, that I even sometimes ungratefully regret that naturally-healthy constitution, which used to double upon me all my enjoyments.

As to the earnestly-recommended prosecution, I may possibly touch upon it more largely hereafter, if ever I shall have better spirits; for they are at present extremely sunk and low. But just now, I will only say, that I would sooner suffer every evil (the repetition of the capital one excepted) than appear publicly in a court to do myself justice.* And I am heartily grieved that your mother prescribes such a measure as the condition of our future correspondence: for the continuance of your friendship, my dear, and the desire I had to correspond with you to my life's end, were all my remaining hopes and consolation. Nevertheless, as that friendship is in the power of the heart, not of the hand only, I hope I shall not forfeit that.

* Dr. Lewen, in Letter XXIV. of Vol. VIII. presses her to this public prosecution, by arguments worthy of his character; which she answers in a manner worthy of her's. See Letter XXV. of that volume.

O my dear! what would I give to obtain a revocation of my father's malediction! a reconciliation is not to be hoped for. You, who never loved my father, may think my solicitude on this head a weakness: but the motive for it, sunk as my spirits at times are, is not always weak.

I approve of the method you prescribe for the conveyance of our letters; and have already caused the porter of the inn to be engaged to bring to me your's, the moment that Collins arrives with them. And the servant of the house where I am will be permitted to carry mine to Collins for you.

I have written a letter to Miss Rawlins, of Hampstead; the answer to which, just now received, has helped me to the knowledge of the vile contrivance, by which the wicked man got your letter of June the 10th. I will give you the contents of both.

In mine to her, I briefly acquainted her 'with what had befallen me, through the vileness of the women who had passed upon me as the aunt and cousin of the wickedest of men; and own, that I never was married to him. I desire her to make particular inquiry, and to let me know, who it was at Mrs. Moore's that, on Sunday afternoon, June 11, while I was at church, received a letter from Miss Howe, pretending to be me, and lying on a couch:—which letter, had it come to my hands, would have saved me from ruin. I excuse myself (on the score of the delirium, which the horrid usage I had received threw me into, and from a confinement as barbarous as illegal) that I had not before applied to Mrs. Moore for an account of what I was indebted to her: which account I now desired.

And, for fear of being traced by Mr. Lovelace, I directed her to superscribe her answer, To Mrs. Mary Atkins; to be left till called for, at the Belle Savage Inn, on Ludgate-hill.'

In her answer, she tells me, 'that the vile wretch prevailed upon Mrs. Bevis to personate me, [a sudden motion of his, it seems, on the appearance of your messenger,] and persuaded her to lie along a couch: a handkerchief over her neck and face; pretending to be ill; the credulous woman drawn in by false notions of your ill offices to keep up a variance between a man and his wife—and so taking the letter from your messenger as me.

'Miss Rawlins takes pains to excuse Mrs. Bevis's intention. She expresses their astonishment, and concern at what I communicate: but is glad, however, and so they are all, that they know in time the vileness of the base man; the two widows and herself having, at his earnest invitation, designed me a visit at Mrs. Sinclair's: supposing all to be happy between him and me; as he assured them was the case. Mr. Lovelace, she informs me, had handsomely satisfied Mrs. Moore. And Miss Rawlins concludes with wishing to be favoured with the particulars of so extraordinary a story, as these particulars may be of use, to let her see what wicked creatures (women as well as men) there are in the world.'

I thank you, my dear, for the draughts of your two letters which were intercepted by this horrid man. I see the great advantage they were of to him, in the prosecution of his villanous designs against the poor wretch whom he had so long made the sport of his abhorred inventions.

Let me repeat, that I am quite sick of life; and of an earth, in which innocent and benevolent spirits are sure to be considered as aliens, and to be made sufferers by the genuine sons and daughters of that earth.

How unhappy, that those letters only which could have acquainted me with his horrid views, and armed me against them, and against the vileness of the base women, should fall into his hands!—Unhappier still, in that my very escape to Hampstead gave him the opportunity of receiving them.

Nevertheless, I cannot but still wonder, how it was possible for that Tomlinson to know what passed between Mr. Hickman and my uncle Harlowe:* a circumstance which gave the vile impostor most of his credit with me.

* See the note in Letter LXX. of this volume.

How the wicked wretch himself could find me out at Hampstead, must also remain wholly a mystery to me. He may glory in his contrivances—he, who has more wickedness than wit, may glory in his contrivances!—But, after all, I shall, I humbly presume to hope, be happy, when he, poor wretch, will be—alas!—who can say what!—

Adieu, my dearest friend!—May you be happy!—And then your Clarissa cannot be wholly miserable!

END OF VOL. 6.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CLARISSA HARLOWE;
OR THE HISTORY OF A YOUNG LADY — VOLUME 6 ***

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