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LADY — VOLUME 7 ***

CLARISSA HARLOWE

or the

HISTORY OF A YOUNG LADY

By Samuel Richardson

Volume VII. (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 XXIX](#)

[LETTER XXX](#)

[LETTER XXXI](#)

[LETTER XXXII](#)

[LETTER XXXIII](#)

[LETTER XXXIV](#)

[LETTER XXXV](#)

[LETTER XXXVI](#)

[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](#)
[LETTER LXXIV](#)
[LETTER LXXV](#)
[LETTER LXXVI](#)
[LETTER LXXVII](#)
[LETTER LXXVIII](#)
[LETTER LXXIX](#)
[LETTER LXXX](#)
[LETTER LXXXI](#)
[LETTER LXXXII](#)
[LETTER LXXXIII](#)
[LETTER LXXXIV](#)
[LETTER LXXXV](#)

DETAILED CONTENTS

LETTER I. Miss Howe to Clarissa.— Beseeches her to take comfort, and not despair. Is dreadfully apprehensive of her own safety from Mr. Lovelace. An instruction to mothers.

LETTER II. Clarissa To Miss Howe.— Averse as she is to appear in a court of justice against Lovelace, she will consent to prosecute him, rather than Miss Howe shall live in terror. Hopes she shall not despair: but doubts not, from so many concurrent circumstances, that the blow is given.

LETTER III. IV. Lovelace to Belford.— Has no subject worth writing upon now he has lost his Clarissa. Half in jest, half in earnest, [as usual with him when vexed or disappointed,] he deplores the loss of her.—Humourous account of Lord M., of himself, and of his two cousins Montague. His Clarissa has made him eyeless and senseless to every other beauty.

LETTER V. VI. VII. VIII. From the same.— Lady Sarah Sadleir and Lady Betty Lawrance arrive, and engage Lord M. and his two cousins Montague against him, on account of his treatment of the lady. His trial, as he calls it. After many altercations, they obtain his consent that his two cousins should endeavour to engage Miss Howe to

prevail upon Clarissa to accept of him, on his unfeigned repentance. It is some pleasure to him, he however rakishly reflects, to observe how placable the ladies of his family would have been, had they met with a Lovelace. MARRIAGE, says he, with these women, is an atonement for the worst we can do to them; a true dramatic recompense. He makes several other whimsical, but characteristic observations, some of which may serve as cautions and warnings to the sex.

LETTER IX. Miss Howe to Clarissa.— Has had a visit from the two Miss Montague's. Their errand. Advises her to marry Lovelace. Reasons for her advice.

LETTER X. Miss Howe to Clarissa.— Chides her with friendly impatience for not answering her letter. Re-urges her to marry Lovelace, and instantly to put herself under Lady Betty's protection.

LETTER XI. Miss Howe to Miss Montague.— In a phrensy of her soul, writes to her to demand news of her beloved friend, spirited away, as she apprehends, by the base arts of the blackest of men.

LETTER XII. Lovelace to Belford.— The suffering innocent arrested and confined, by the execrable woman, in a sham action. He curses himself, and all his plots and contrivances. Conjures him to fly to her, and clear him of this low, this dirty villany; to set her free without conditions; and assure her, that he will never molest her more. Horribly execrates the diabolical women, who thought to make themselves a merit with him by this abominable insult.

LETTER XIII. XIV. Miss Montague to Miss Howe, with the particulars of all that has happened to the lady.—Mr. Lovelace the most miserable of men. Reflections on libertines. She, her sister, Lady Betty, Lady Sarah, Lord M., and Lovelace himself, all sign letters to Miss Howe, asserting his innocence of this horrid insult, and imploring her continued interest in his and their favour with Clarissa.

LETTER XV. Belford to Lovelace.— Particulars of the vile arrest. Insolent visits of the wicked women to her. Her unexampled meekness and patience. Her fortitude. He admires it, and prefers it to the false courage of men of their class.

LETTER XVI. From the same.— Goes to the officer's house. A description of the horrid prison-room, and of the suffering lady on her knees in one corner of it. Her great and moving behaviour. Breaks off, and sends away his letter, on purpose to harass him by suspense.

LETTER XVII. Lovelace to Belford.— Curses him for his tormenting abruption. Clarissa never suffered half what he suffers. That sex made to bear pain. Conjures him to hasten to him the rest of his soul-harrowing intelligence.

LETTER XVIII. Belford to Lovelace.— His farther proceedings. The lady returns to her lodgings at Smith's. Distinction between revenge and resentment in her character. Sends her, from the vile women, all her apparel, as Lovelace had desired.

LETTER XIX. Belford to Lovelace.— Rejoices to find he can feel. Will endeavour from time to time to add to his remorse. Insists upon his promise not to molest the lady.

LETTER XX. From the same.— Describes her lodgings, and gives a character of the people, and of the good widow Lovick. She is so ill, that they provide her an honest nurse, and send for Mr. Goddard, a worthy apothecary. Substance of a letter to Miss Howe, dictated by the lady.

LETTER XXI. From the same.— Admitted to the lady's presence. What passed on the occasion. Really believes that she still loves him. Has a reverence, and even a holy love for her. Astonished that Lovelace could hold his purposes against such an angel of a woman. Condemns him for not timely exerting himself to save her.

LETTER XXII. From the same.— Dr. H. called in. Not having a single guinea to give him, she accepts of three from Mrs. Lovick on a diamond ring. Her dutiful reasons for admitting the doctor's visit. His engaging and gentlemanly behaviour. She resolves to part with some of her richest apparel. Her reasons.

LETTER XXIII. Lovelace to Belford.— Raves at him. For what. Rallies him, with his usual gayety, on several passages in his letters. Reasons why Clarissa's heart cannot be broken by what she has suffered. Passionate girls easily subdued. Sedate ones hardly ever pardon. He has some retrograde motions: yet is in earnest to marry Clarissa. Gravely concludes, that a person intending to marry should never be a rake. His gay resolutions. Renews, however, his promises not to molest her. A charming encouragement for a man of intrigue, when a woman is known not to love her husband. Advantages which men have over women, when disappointed in love. He knows she will permit him to make her amends, after she has plagued him heartily.

LETTER XXIV. Miss Howe to Clarissa.— Is shocked at receiving a letter from her written by another hand. Tenderly consoles her, and inveighs against Lovelace. Re-urges her, however, to marry him. Her mother absolutely of her opinion. Praises Mr. Hickman's sister, who, with her Lord, had paid her a visit.

LETTER XXV. Clarissa to Miss Howe.— Her condition greatly mended. In what particulars. Her mind begins to strengthen; and she finds herself at times superior to her calamities. In what light she wishes her to think of her. Desires her to love her still, but with a weaning love. She is not now what she was when they were inseparable lovers. Their views must now be different.

LETTER XXVI. Belford to Lovelace.— A consuming malady, and a consuming mistress,

as in Belton's case, dreadful things to struggle with. Farther reflections on the life of keeping. The poor man afraid to enter into his own house. Belford undertakes his cause. Instinct in brutes equivalent to natural affection in men. Story of the ancient Sarmatians, and their slaves. Reflects on the lives of rakes, and free-livers; and how ready they are in sickness to run away from one another. Picture of a rake on a sick bed. Will marry and desert them all.

LETTER XXVII. From the same.— The lady parts with some of her laces. Instances of the worthiness of Dr. H. and Mr. Goddard. He severely reflects upon Lovelace.

LETTER XXVIII. Lovelace to Belford.— Has an interview with Mr. Hickman. On what occasion. He endeavours to disconcert him, by assurance and ridicule; but finds him to behave with spirit.

LETTER XXIX. From the same.— Rallies him on his intentional reformation. Ascribes the lady's ill health entirely to the arrest, (in which, he says, he had no hand,) and to her relations' cruelty. Makes light of her selling her clothes and laces. Touches upon Belton's case. Distinguishes between companionship and friendship. How he purposes to rid Belton of his Thomasine and her cubs.

LETTER XXX. Belford to Lovelace.— The lady has written to her sister, to obtain a revocation of her father's malediction. Defends her parents. He pleads with the utmost earnestness to her for his friend.

LETTER XXXI. From the same.— Can hardly forbear prostration to her. Tenders himself as her banker. Conversation on this subject. Admires her magnanimity. No wonder that a virtue so solidly based could baffle all his arts. Other instances of her greatness of mind. Mr. Smith and his wife invite him, and beg of her to dine with them, it being their wedding day. Her affecting behaviour on the occasion. She briefly, and with her usual noble simplicity, relates to them the particulars of her life and misfortunes.

LETTER XXXII. Lovelace to Belford.— Ridicules him on his address to the lady as her banker, and on his aspirations and prostrations. Wants to come at letters she has written. Puts him upon engaging Mrs. Lovick to bring this about. Weight that proselytes have with the good people that convert them. Reasons for it. He has hopes still of the lady's favour; and why. Never adored her so much as now. Is about to go to a ball at Colonel Ambrose's. Who to be there. Censures affectation and finery in the dress of men; and particularly with a view to exalt himself, ridicules Belford on this subject.

LETTER XXXIII. XXXIV. XXXV. XXXVI. XXXVII. Sharp letters that pass between Miss Howe and Arabella Harlowe.

LETTER XXXVIII. Mrs. Harlowe to Mrs. Howe.— Sent with copies of the five foregoing letters.

LETTER XXXIX. Mrs. Howe to Mrs. Harlowe. In answer.

LETTER XL. Miss Howe to Clarissa.— Desires an answer to her former letters for her to communicate to Miss Montague. Farther enforces her own and her mother's opinion, that she should marry Lovelace. Is obliged by her mother to go to a ball at Colonel Ambrose's. Fervent professions of her friendly love.

LETTER XLI. Clarissa to Miss Howe.— Her noble reasons for refusing Lovelace. Desires her to communicate extracts from this letter to the Ladies of his family.

LETTER XLII. From the same.— Begs, for her sake, that she will forbear treating her relations with freedom and asperity. Endeavours, in her usual dutiful manner, to defend their conduct towards her. Presses her to make Mr. Hickman happy.

LETTER XLIII. Mrs. Norton to Clarissa.— Excuses her long silence. Her family, who were intending to favour her, incensed against her by means of Miss Howe's warm letters to her sister.

LETTER XLIV. Clarissa to Mrs. Norton.— Is concerned that Miss Howe should write about her to her friends. Gives her a narrative of all that has befallen her since her last. Her truly christian frame of mind. Makes reflections worthy of herself, upon her present situation, and upon her hopes, with regard to a happy futurity.

LETTER XLV. Copy of Clarissa's humble letter to her sister, imploring the revocation of her father's heavy malediction.

LETTER XLVI. Belford to Lovelace.— Defends the lady from the perverseness he (Lovelace) imputes to her on parting with some of her apparel. Poor Belton's miserable state both of body and mind. Observations on the friendship of libertines. Admires the noble simplicity, and natural ease and dignity of style, of the sacred books. Expatiates upon the pragmatical folly of man. Those who know least, the greatest scoffers.

LETTER XLVII. From the same.— The lady parts with one of her best suits of clothes. Reflections upon such purchasers as take advantage of the necessities of their fellow-creatures. Self an odious devil. A visible alteration in the lady for the worse. She gives him all Mr. Lovelace's letters. He (Belford) takes this opportunity to plead for him. Mr. Hickman comes to visit her.

LETTER XLVIII. From the same.— Breaks next morning with the lady and Mr. Hickman. His advantageous opinion of that gentleman. Censures the conceited pride and narrow-mindedness of rakes and libertines. Tender and affecting parting between Mr. Hickman and the lady. Observations in praise of intellectual friendship.

LETTER XLIX. Miss Howe to Clarissa.— Has no notion of coldness in friendship. Is

not a daughter of those whom she so freely treats. Delays giving the desired negative to the solicitation of the ladies of Lovelace's family; and why. Has been exceedingly fluttered by the appearance of Lovelace at the ball given by Colonel Ambrose. What passed on that occasion. Her mother and all the ladies of their select acquaintance of opinion that she should accept of him.

LETTER L. Clarissa. In answer.— Chides her for suspending the decisive negative. Were she sure she should live many years, she would not have Mr. Lovelace. Censures of the world to be but of second regard with any body. Method as to devotion and exercise she was in when so cruelly arrested.

LETTER LI. Clarissa to Miss Howe.— Designed to be communicated to Mr. Lovelace's relations.

LETTER LII. LIII. Lovelace to Belford.— Two letters entirely characteristic yet intermingled with lessons and observations not unworthy of a better character. He has great hopes from Miss Howe's mediation in his favour. Picture of two rakes turned Hermits, in their penitentials.

LETTER LIV. Miss Howe to Clarissa.— She now greatly approves of her rejection of Lovelace. Admires the noble example she has given her sex of a passion conquered. Is sorry she wrote to Arabella: but cannot imitate her in her self-accusations, and acquittals of others who are all in fault. Her notions of a husband's prerogative. Hopes she is employing herself in penning down the particulars of her tragical story. Use to be made of it to the advantage of her sex. Her mother earnest about it.

LETTER LV. Miss Howe to Miss Montague.— With Clarissa's Letter, No. XLI. of this volume. Her own sentiments of the villanous treatment her beloved friend had met with from their kinsman. Prays for vengeance upon him, if she do not recover.

LETTER LVI. Mrs. Norton to Clarissa.— Acquaints her with some of their movements at Harlowe-place. Almost wishes she would marry the wicked man; and why. Useful reflections on what has befallen a young lady so universally beloved. Must try to move her mother in her favour. But by what means, will not tell her, unless she succeed.

LETTER LVII. Mrs. Norton to Mrs. Harlowe.

LETTER LVIII. Mrs. Harlowe's affecting answer.

LETTER LIX. Clarissa to Mrs. Norton.— Earnestly begs, for reasons equally generous and dutiful, that she may be left to her own way of working with her relations. Has received her sister's answer to her letter, No. XLV. of this volume. She tries to find an excuse for the severity of it, though greatly affected by it. Other affecting and dutiful reflections.

LETTER LX. Her sister's cruel letter, mentioned in the preceding.

LETTER LXI. Clarissa to Miss Howe.— Is pleased that she now at last approved of her rejecting Lovelace. Desires her to be comforted as to her. Promises that she will not run away from life. Hopes she has already got above the shock given her by the ill treatment she has met with from Lovelace. Has had an escape, rather than a loss. Impossible, were it not for the outrage, that she could have been happy with him; and why. Sets in the most affecting, the most dutiful and generous lights, the grief of her father, mother, and other relations, on her account. Had begun the particulars of her tragical story; but would fain avoid proceeding with it; and why. Opens her design to make Mr. Belford her executor, and gives her reasons for it. Her father having withdrawn his malediction, she now has only a last blessing to supplicate for.

LETTER LXII. Clarissa to her sister.— Beseeching her, in the most humble and earnest manner, to procure her a last blessing.

LETTER LXIII. Mrs. Norton to Clarissa.— Mr. Brand to be sent up to inquire after her way of life and health. His pedantic character. Believes they will withhold any favour till they hear his report. Doubts not that matters will soon take a happy turn.

LETTER LXIV. Clarissa. In answer.— The grace she asks for is only a blessing to die with, not to live with. Their favour, if they design her any, may come too late. Doubts her mother can do nothing for her of herself. A strong confederacy against a poor girl, their daughter, sister, niece. Her brother perhaps got it renewed before he went to Edinburgh. He needed not, says she: his work is done, and more than done.

LETTER LXV. Lovelace to Belford.— Is mortified at receiving letters of rejection. Charlotte writes to the lady in his favour, in the name of all the family. Every body approves of what she has written; and he has great hopes from it.

LETTER LXVI. Copy of Miss Montague's letter to Clarissa.— Beseeching her, in the names of all their noble family, to receive Lovelace to favour.

LETTER LXVII. Belford to Lovelace.— Proposes to put Belton's sister into possession of Belton's house for him. The lady visibly altered for the worse. Again insists upon his promise not to molest her.

LETTER LXVIII. Clarissa to Miss Montague.— In answer to her's, No. LXVI.

LETTER LXIX. Belford to Lovelace.— Has just now received a letter from the lady, which he encloses, requesting extracts from the letters written to him by Mr. Lovelace within a particular period. The reasons which determine him to oblige her.

LETTER LXX. Belford to Clarissa.— With the requested extracts; and a plea in his friend's favour.

LETTER LXXI. Clarissa to Belford.— Thanks him for his communications. Requests that he will be her executor; and gives her reasons for her choice of him for that solemn office.

LETTER LXXII. Belford to Clarissa.— His cheerful acceptance of the trust.

LETTER LXXIII. Belford to Lovelace.— Brief account of the extracts delivered to the lady. Tells him of her appointing him her executor. The melancholy pleasure he shall have in the perusal of her papers. Much more lively and affecting, says he, must be the style of those who write in the height of a present distress than the dry, narrative, unanimated style of a person relating difficulties surmounted, can be.

LETTER LXXIV. Arabella to Clarissa.— In answer to her letter, No. LXII., requesting a last blessing.

LETTER LXXV. Clarissa to her mother.— Written in the fervour of her spirit, yet with the deepest humility, and on her knees, imploring her blessing, and her father's, as what will sprinkle comfort through her last hours.

LETTER LXXVI. Miss Montague to Clarissa.— In reply to her's, No. LXVIII.—All their family love and admire her. Their kinsman has not one friend among them. Beseech her to oblige them with the acceptance of an annuity, and the first payment now sent her, at least till she can be put in possession of her own estate. This letter signed by Lord M., Lady Sarah, Lady Betty, and her sister and self.

LETTER LXXVII. Lovelace to Belford.— Raves against the lady for rejecting him; yet adores her the more for it. Has one half of the house to himself, and that the best; having forbid Lord M. and the ladies to see him, in return for their forbidding him to see them. Incensed against Belford for the extracts he has promised from his letters. Is piqued to death at her proud refusal of him. Curses the vile women, and their potions. But for these latter, the majesty of her virtue, he says, would have saved her, as it did once before.

LETTER LXXVIII. Lovelace to Belford.— He shall not, he tells him, be her executor. Nobody shall be any thing to her but himself. What a reprobation of a man, who was once so dear to her! Farther instances of his raving impatience.

LETTER LXXIX. Lovelace to Clarissa.— A letter full of penitence, promises, praises, and admiration of her virtue. Has no hopes of escaping from perdition but by her precepts and example. All he begs for the present is a few lines to encourage him to hope for forgiveness, if he can justify his vows by his future conduct.

LETTER LXXX. Clarissa to Lord M. and the ladies of the house.— Thankfully declines accepting of their offered bounty. Pleads for their being reconciled to their kinsman, for reasons respecting her own peace. Hopes that they may be enabled to rejoice in the effects of his reformation many years after she is laid low and forgotten.

LETTER LXXXI. Belford to Lovelace.— Brief account of his expelling Thomasine, her sons, and her gallant. Farther reflections on keeping. A state not calculated for a sick bed. Gives a short journal of what had passed relating to the lady since his last. Mr. Brand inquires after her character and behaviour of Mrs. Smith. His starchedness, conceit, and pedantry.

LETTER LXXXII. From the same.— Farther particulars relating to the lady. Power left her by her grandfather's will.

LETTER LXXXIII. Clarissa to Lovelace.— In answer to his letter, No. LXXIX.

LETTER LXXXIV. Her uncle Harlowe's cruel answer, in answer to her's to her mother, No. LXXV. Meditation stitched to it with black silk.

LETTER LXXXV. Clarissa to her uncle Harlowe. In reply.

THE HISTORY OF CLARISSA HARLOWE

VOLUME SEVEN

LETTER I

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE WED. NIGHT, JULY 12.

I write, my dearest creature, I cannot but write, to express my concern on your dejection. Let me beseech you, my charming excellence, let me beseech you, not to give way to it.

Comfort yourself, on the contrary, in the triumphs of a virtue unsullied; a will wholly faultless. Who could have withstood the trials you have surmounted?—Your cousin Morden will soon come. He will see justice

done you, I make no doubt, as well with regard to what concerns your person as your estate. And many happy days may you yet see; and much good may you still do, if you will not heighten unavoidable accidents into guilty despondency.

But why, why, my dear, this pining solicitude continued after a reconciliation with relations as unworthy as implacable; whose wills are governed by an all-grasping brother, who finds his account in keeping the breach open? On this over-solicitude it is now plain to me, that the vilest of men built all his schemes. He saw that you thirsted after it beyond all reason for hope. The view, the hope, I own, extremely desirable, had your family been Christians: or even had they been Pagans who had had bowels.

I shall send this short letter [I am obliged to make it a short one] by young Rogers, as we call him; the fellow I sent to you to Hampstead; an innocent, though pragmatical rustic. Admit him, I pray you, into your presence, that he may report to me how you look, and how you are.

Mr. Hickman should attend you; but I apprehend, that all his motions, and mine own too, are watched by the execrable wretch: and indeed his are by an agent of mine; for I own, that I am so apprehensive of his plots and revenge, now I know that he has intercepted my vehement letters against him, that he is the subject of my dreams, as well as of my waking fears.

My mother, at my earnest importunity, has just given me leave to write, and to receive your letters—but fastened this condition upon the concession, that your's must be under cover to Mr. Hickman, [this is a view, I suppose, to give him consideration with me]; and upon this further consideration, that she is to see all we write.—'When girls are set upon a point,' she told one who told me again, 'it is better for a mother, if possible, to make herself of their party, than to oppose them; since there will be then hopes that she will still hold the reins in her own hands.'

Pray let me know what the people are with whom you lodge?—Shall I send Mrs. Townsend to direct you to lodgings either more safe or more convenient for you?

Be pleased to write to me by Rogers; who will wait on you for your answer, at your own time.

Adieu, my dearest creature. Comfort yourself, as you would in the like unhappy circumstances comfort

Your own ANNA HOWE.

LETTER II

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE THURSDAY, JULY 13.

I am extremely concerned, my dear Miss Howe, for being primarily the occasion of the apprehensions you have of this wicked man's vindictive attempts. What a wide-spreading error is mine!—

If I find that he has set foot on any machination against you, or against Mr. Hickman, I do assure you I will consent to prosecute him, although I were sure I could not survive my first appearance at the bar he should be arraigned at.

I own the justice of your mother's arguments on that subject; but must say, that I think there are circumstances in my particular case, which will excuse me, although on a slighter occasion than that you are apprehensive of I should decline to appear against him. I have said, that I may one day enter more particularly into this argument.

Your messenger has now indeed seen me. I talked with him on the cheat put upon him at Hampstead: and am sorry to have reason to say, that had not the poor young man been very simple, and very self-sufficient, he had not been so grossly deluded. Mrs. Bevis has the same plea to make for herself. A good-natured, thoughtless woman; not used to converse with so vile and so specious a deceiver as him, who made his advantage of both these shallow creatures.

I think I cannot be more private than where I am. I hope I am safe. All the risque I run, is in going out, and returning from morning-prayers; which I have two or three times ventured to do; once at Lincoln's-inn chapel, at eleven; once at St. Dunstan's, Fleet-street, at seven in the morning,* in a chair both times; and twice, at six in the morning, at the neighbouring church in Covent-garden. The wicked wretches I have escaped from, will not, I hope, come to church to look for me; especially at so early prayers; and I have fixed upon the privatest pew in the latter church to hide myself in; and perhaps I may lay out a little matter in an ordinary gown, by way of disguise; my face half hid by my mob.—I am very careless, my dear, of my appearance now. Neat and clean takes up the whole of my attention.

* The seven-o'clock prayers at St. Dunstan's have been since discontinued.

The man's name at whose house I belong, is Smith—a glove maker, as well as seller. His wife is the shop-keeper. A dealer also in stockings, ribbands, snuff, and perfumes. A matron-like woman, plain-hearted, and prudent. The husband an honest, industrious man. And they live in good understanding with each other: a proof with me that their hearts are right; for where a married couple live together upon ill terms, it is a sign, I think, that each knows something amiss of the other, either with regard to temper or morals, which if the world knew as well as themselves, it would perhaps as little like them as such people like each other. Happy the marriage, where neither man nor wife has any wilful or premeditated evil in their general conduct to reproach the other with!— for even persons who have bad hearts will have a veneration for those who have good ones.

Two neat rooms, with plain, but clean furniture, on the first floor, are mine; one they call the dining-room.

There is, up another pair of stairs, a very worthy widow-lodger, Mrs. Lovick by name; who, although of low fortunes, is much respected, as Mrs. Smith assures me, by people of condition of her acquaintance, for her piety, prudence, and understanding. With her I propose to be well acquainted.

I thank you, my dear, for your kind, your seasonable advice and consolation. I hope I shall have more grace given me than to despond, in the religious sense of the word: especially as I can apply to myself the comfort you give me, that neither my will, nor my inconsiderateness, has contributed to my calamity. But, nevertheless, the irreconcilableness of my relations, whom I love with an unabated reverence; my apprehensions of fresh violences, [this wicked man, I doubt, will not let me rest]; my being destitute of protection; my youth, my sex, my unacquaintedness with the world, subjecting me to insults; my reflections on the scandal I have given, added to the sense of the indignities I have received from a man, of whom I deserved not ill; all together will undoubtedly bring on the effect that cannot be undesirable to me.—The situation; and, as I presume to imagine, from principles which I hope will, in due time, and by due reflection, set me above the sense of all worldly disappointments.

At present, my head is much disordered. I have not indeed enjoyed it with any degree of clearness, since the violence done to that, and to my heart too, by the wicked arts of the abandoned creatures I was cast among.

I must have more conflicts. At times I find myself not subdued enough to my condition. I will welcome those conflicts as they come, as probationary ones.—But yet my father's malediction—the temporary part so strangely and so literally completed!—I cannot, however, think, when my mind is strongest—But what is the story of Isaac, and Jacob, and Esau, and of Rebekah's cheating the latter of the blessing designed for him, (in favour of Jacob,) given us for in the 27th chapter of Genesis? My father used, I remember, to enforce the doctrine deducible from it, on his children, by many arguments. At least, therefore, he must believe there is great weight in the curse he has announced; and shall I not be solicitous to get it revoked, that he may not hereafter be grieved, for my sake, that he did not revoke it?

All I will at present add, are my thanks to your mother for her indulgence to us; due compliments to Mr. Hickman; and my request, that you will believe me to be, to my last hour, and beyond it, if possible, my beloved friend, and my dearer self (for what is now myself!)

Your obliged and affectionate CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER III

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY, JULY 7.

I have three of thy letters at once before me to answer; in each of which thou complainest of my silence; and in one of them tellest me, that thou canst not live without I scribble to thee every day, or every other day at least.

Why, then, die, Jack, if thou wilt. What heart, thinkest thou, can I have to write, when I have lost the only subject worth writing upon?

Help me again to my angel, to my CLARISSA; and thou shalt have a letter from me, or writing at least part of a letter, every hour. All that the charmer of my heart shall say, that will I put down. Every motion, every air of her beloved person, every look, will I try to describe; and when she is silent, I will endeavour to tell thee her thoughts, either what they are, or what I would have them to be—so that, having her, I shall never want a subject. Having lost her, my whole soul is a blank: the whole creation round me, the elements above, beneath, and every thing I behold, (for nothing can I enjoy,) are a blank without her.

Oh! return, return, thou only charmer of my soul! return to thy adoring Lovelace! What is the light, what the air, what the town, what the country, what's any thing, without thee? Light, air, joy, harmony, in my notion, are but parts of thee; and could they be all expressed in one word, that word would be CLARISSA.

O my beloved CLARISSA, return thou then; once more return to bless thy LOVELACE, who now, by the loss of thee, knows the value of the jewel he has slighted; and rises every morning but to curse the sun that shines upon every body but him!

Well, but, Jack, 'tis a surprising thing to me, that the dear fugitive cannot be met with; cannot be heard of. She is so poor a plotter, (for plotting is not her talent,) that I am confident, had I been at liberty, I should have found her out before now; although the different emissaries I have employed about town, round the adjacent villages, and in Miss Howe's vicinage, have hitherto failed of success. But my Lord continues so weak and low-spirited, that there is no getting from him. I would not disoblige a man whom I think in danger still: for would his gout, now it has got him down, but give him, like a fair boxer, the rising-blow, all would be over with him. And here [pox of his fondness for me! it happens at a very bad time] he makes me sit hours together entertaining him with my rogueries: (a pretty amusement for a sick man!) and yet, whenever he has the gout, he prays night and morning with his chaplain. But what must his notions of religion be, who after he has nosed and mumbled over his responses, can give a sigh or groan of satisfaction, as if he thought he had made up with Heaven; and return with a new appetite to my stories? —encouraging them, by shaking his sides with laughing at them, and calling me a sad fellow, in such an accent as shows he takes no small delight in his kinsman.

The old peer has been a sinner in his day, and suffers for it now: a sneaking sinner, sliding, rather than rushing into vices, for fear of his reputation.—Paying for what he never had, and never daring to rise to the joy of an enterprise at first hand, which could bring him within view of a tilting, or of the honour of being considered as a principal man in a court of justice.

To see such an old Trojan as this, just dropping into the grave, which I hoped ere this would have been dug, and filled up with him; crying out with pain, and grunting with weakness; yet in the same moment crack his leathern face into an horrible laugh, and call a young sinner charming varlet, encoreing him, as formerly he used to do to the Italian eunuchs; what a preposterous, what an unnatural adherence to old habits!

My two cousins are generally present when I entertain, as the old peer calls it. Those stories must drag horribly, that have not more hearers and applauders than relaters.

Applauders!

Ay, Belford, applauders, repeat I; for although these girls pretend to blame me sometimes for the facts, they praise my manner, my invention, my intrepidity.—Besides, what other people call blame, that call I praise: I ever did; and so I very early discharged shame, that cold-water damper to an enterprising spirit.

These are smart girls; they have life and wit; and yesterday, upon Charlotte's raving against me upon a related enterprise, I told her, that I had had in debate several times, whether she were or were not too near of kin to me: and that it was once a moot point with me, whether I could not love her dearly for a month or so: and perhaps it was well for her, that another pretty little puss started up, and diverted me, just as I was entering upon the course.

They all three held up their hands and eyes at once. But I observed that, though the girls exclaimed against me, they were not so angry at this plain speaking as I have found my beloved upon hints so dark that I have wondered at her quick apprehension.

I told Charlotte, that, grave as she pretended to be in her smiling resentments on this declaration, I was sure I should not have been put to the expense of above two or three stratagems, (for nobody admired a good invention more than she,) could I but have disentangled her conscience from the embarrasses of consanguinity.

She pretended to be highly displeased: so did her sister for her. I told her, she seemed as much in earnest as if she had thought me so; and dared the trial. Plain words, I said, in these cases, were more shocking to their sex than gradatim actions. And I bid Patty not be displeased at my distinguishing her sister; since I had a great respect for her likewise.

An Italian air, in my usual careless way, a half-struggled-for kiss from me, and a shrug of the shoulder, by way of admiration, from each pretty cousin, and sad, sad fellow, from the old peer, attended with a side-shaking laugh, made us all friends.

There, Jack!—Wilt thou, or wilt thou not, take this for a letter? there's quantity, I am sure.—How have I filled a sheet (not a short-hand one indeed) without a subject! My fellow shall take this; for he is going to town. And if thou canst think tolerably of such execrable stuff, I will send thee another.

LETTER IV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SIX, SATURDAY MORNING, JULY 8.

Have I nothing new, nothing diverting, in my whimsical way, thou askest, in one of thy three letters before me, to entertain thee with?—And thou tellest me, that, when I have least to narrate, to speak, in the Scottish phrase, I am most diverting. A pretty compliment, either to thyself, or to me. To both indeed!—a sign that thou hast as frothy a heart as I a head. But canst thou suppose that this admirable woman is not all, is not every thing with me? Yet I dread to think of her too; for detection of all my contrivances, I doubt, must come next.

The old peer is also full of Miss Harlowe: and so are my cousins. He hopes I will not be such a dog [there's a specimen of his peer-like dialect] as to think of doing dishonourably by a woman of so much merit, beauty, and fortune; and he says of so good a family. But I tell him, that this is a string he must not touch: that it is a very tender point: in short, is my sore place; and that I am afraid he would handle it too roughly, were I to put myself in the power of so ungentle an operator.

He shakes his crazy head. He thinks all is not as it should be between us; longs to have me present her to him as my wife; and often tells me what great things he will do, additional to his former proposals; and what presents he will make on the birth of the first child. But I hope the whole of his estate will be in my hands before such an event takes place. No harm in hoping, Jack! Lord M. says, were it not for hope, the heart would break.

Eight o'clock at Midsummer, and these lazy varletesses (in full health) not come down yet to breakfast!—What a confounded indecency in young ladies, to let a rake know that they love their beds so dearly, and, at the same time, where to have them! But I'll punish them—they shall breakfast with their old uncle, and yawn at one another as if for a wager; while I drive my phaëton to Colonel Ambroses's, who yesterday gave me an invitation both to breakfast and dine, on account of two Yorkshire nieces, celebrated toasts, who have been with him this fortnight past; and who, he says, want to see me. So, Jack, all women do not run away from me, thank Heaven!—I wish I could have leave of my heart, since the dear fugitive is so ungrateful, to drive her out of it with another beauty. But who can supplant her? Who can be admitted to a place in it after Miss Clarissa Harlowe?

At my return, if I can find a subject, I will scribble on, to oblige thee.

My phaëton's ready. My cousins send me word they are just coming down: so in spite I'll be gone.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON.

I did stay to dine with the Colonel, and his lady, and nieces: but I could not pass the afternoon with them, for the heart of me. There was enough in the persons and faces of the two young ladies to set me upon comparisons. Particular features held my attention for a few moments: but these served but to whet my impatience to find the charmer of my soul; who, for person, for air, for mind, never had any equal. My heart recoiled and sickened upon comparing minds and conversation. Pert wit, a too-studied desire to please; each in high good humour with herself; an open-mouth affectation in both, to show white teeth, as if the principal

excellence; and to invite amorous familiarity, by the promise of a sweet breath; at the same time reflecting tacitly upon breaths arrogantly implied to be less pure.

Once I could have borne them.

They seemed to be disappointed that I was so soon able to leave them. Yet have I not at present so much vanity [my Clarissa has cured me of my vanity] as to attribute their disappointment so much to particular liking of me, as to their own self-admiration. They looked upon me as a connoisseur in beauty. They would have been proud of engaging my attention, as such: but so affected, so flimsy-witted, mere skin-deep beauties!—They had looked no farther into themselves than what their glasses were flattering-glasses too; for I thought them passive-faced, and spiritless; with eyes, however, upon the hunt for conquests, and bespeaking the attention of others, in order to countenance their own. —I believe I could, with a little pains, have given them life and soul, and to every feature of their faces sparkling information—but my Clarissa!—O Belford, my Clarissa has made me eyeless and senseless to every other beauty!—Do thou find her for me, as a subject worthy of my pen, or this shall be the last from

Thy LOVELACE.

LETTER V

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SUNDAY NIGHT, JULY 9.

Now, Jack, have I a subject with a vengeance. I am in the very height of my trial for all my sins to my beloved fugitive. For here to-day, at about five o'clock, arrived Lady Sarah Sadleir and Lady Betty Lawrance, each in her chariot-and-six. Dowagers love equipage; and these cannot travel ten miles without a sett, and half a dozen horsemen.

My time had hung heavy upon my hands; and so I went to church after dinner. Why may not handsome fellows, thought I, like to be looked at, as well as handsome wenches? I fell in, when service was over, with Major Warneton; and so came not home till after six; and was surprised, at entering the court-yard here, to find it littered with equipages and servants. I was sure the owners of them came for no good to me.

Lady Sarah, I soon found, was raised to this visit by Lady Betty; who has health enough to allow her to look out to herself, and out of her own affairs, for business. Yet congratulation to Lord M. on his amendment, [spiteful devils on both accounts!] was the avowed errand. But coming in my absence, I was their principal subject; and they had opportunity to set each other's heart against me.

Simon Parsons hinted this to me, as I passed by the steward's office; for it seems they talked loud; and he was making up some accounts with old Pritchard.

However, I hastened to pay my duty to them—other people not performing theirs, is no excuse for the neglect of our own, you know.

And now I enter upon my TRIAL.

With horrible grave faces was I received. The two antiquities only bowed their tabby heads; making longer faces than ordinary; and all the old lines appearing strong in their furrowed foreheads and fallen cheeks; How do you, Cousin? And how do you, Mr. Lovelace? looking all round at one another, as who should say, do you speak first: and, do you: for they seemed resolved to lose no time.

I had nothing for it, but an air as manly, as theirs was womanly. Your servant, Madam, to Lady Betty; and, Your servant, Madam, I am glad to see you abroad, to Lady Sarah.

I took my seat. Lord M. looked horribly glum; his fingers claspt, and turning round and round, under and over, his but just disgouted thumb; his sallow face, and goggling eyes, on his two kinswomen, by turns; but not once deigning to look upon me.

Then I began to think of the laudanum, and wet cloth, I told thee of long ago; and to call myself in question for a tenderness of heart that will never do me good.

At last, Mr. Lovelace!—Cousin Lovelace!—Hem!—Hem!—I am sorry, very sorry, hesitated Lady Sarah, that there is no hope of your ever taking up—

What's the matter now, Madam?

The matter now!—Why Lady Betty has two letters from Miss Harlowe, which have told us what's the matter—Are all women alike with you?

Yes; I could have answered; 'bating the difference which pride makes.

Then they all chorus'd upon me—Such a character as Miss Harlowe's! cried one—A lady of so much generosity and good sense! Another—How charmingly she writes! the two maiden monkeys, looking at her find handwriting: her perfections my crimes. What can you expect will be the end of these things! cried Lady Sarah—d—d, d—d doings! vociferated the Peer, shaking his loose-fleshe'd wabbling chaps, which hung on his shoulders like an old cow's dewlap.

For my part, I hardly knew whether to sing or say what I had to reply to these all-at-once attacks upon me! Fair and softly, Ladies—one at a time, I beseech you. I am not to be hunted down without being heard, I hope. Pray let me see these letters. I beg you will let me see them.

There they are:—that's the first—read it out, if you can.

I opened a letter from my charmer, dated Thursday, June 29, our wedding-day, that was to be, and written to Lady Betty Lawrance. By the contents, to my great joy, I find the dear creature is alive and well, and in charming spirits. But the direction where to send an answer to was so scratched out that I could not read it; which afflicted me much.

She puts three questions in it to Lady Betty.

1st. About a letter of her's, dated June 7, congratulating me on my nuptials, and which I was so good as to save Lady Betty the trouble of writing—A very civil thing of me, I think!

Again—'Whether she and one of her nieces Montague were to go to town, on an old chancery suit?'—And, 'Whether they actually did go to town accordingly, and to Hampstead afterwards?' and, 'Whether they brought to town from thence the young creature whom they visited?' was the subject of the second and third questions.

A little inquisitive, dear rogue! and what did she expect to be the better for these questions?—But curiosity, d—d curiosity, is the itch of the sex—yet when didst thou know it turned to their benefit?— For they seldom inquire, but what they fear—and the proverb, as my Lord has it, says, It comes with a fear. That is, I suppose, what they fear generally happens, because there is generally occasion for the fear.

Curiosity indeed she avows to be her only motive for these interrogatories: for, though she says her Ladyship may suppose the questions are not asked for good to me, yet the answer can do me no harm, nor her good, only to give her to understand, whether I have told her a parcel of d—d lyes; that's the plain English of her inquiry.

Well, Madam, said I, with as much philosophy as I could assume; and may I ask—Pray, what was your Ladyship's answer?

There's a copy of it, tossing it to me, very disrespectfully.

This answer was dated July 1. A very kind and complaisant one to the lady, but very so-so to her poor kinsman—That people can give up their own flesh and blood with so much ease!—She tells her 'how proud all our family would be of an alliance with such an excellence.' She does me justice in saying how much I adore her, as an angel of a woman; and begs of her, for I know not how many sakes, besides my soul's sake, 'that she will be so good as to have me for a husband.' and answers—thou wilt guess how—to the lady's questions.

Well, Madam; and pray, may I be favoured with the lady's other letter? I presume it is in reply to your's.

It is, said the Peer: but, Sir, let me ask you a few questions, before you read it—give me the letter, Lady Betty.

There it is, my Lord.

Then on went the spectacles, and his head moved to the lines—a charming pretty hand!—I have often heard that this lady is a genius.

And so, Jack, repeating my Lord's wise comments and questions will let thee into the contents of this merciless letter.

'Monday, July 3,' [reads my Lord.]—Let me see!—that was last Monday; no longer ago! 'Monday, July the third—Madam—I cannot excuse myself—um, um, um, um, um, [humming inarticulately, and skipping,] —'I must own to you, Madam, that the honour of being related'—

Off went the spectacles—Now, tell me, Sir-r, Has not this lady lost all the friends she had in the world for your sake?

She has very implacable friends, my Lord: we all know that.

But has she not lost them all for your sake?—Tell me that.

I believe so, my Lord.

Well then!—I am glad thou art not so graceless as to deny that.

On went the spectacles again—'I must own to you, Madam, that the honour of being related to ladies as eminent for their virtue as for their descent.'—Very pretty, truly! saith my Lord, repeating, '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.'

There is dignity, born-dignity, in this lady, cried my Lord.

Lady Sarah. She would have been a grace to our family.

Lady Betty. Indeed she would.

Lovel. To a royal family, I will venture to say.

Lord M. Then what a devil—

Lovel. Please to read on, my Lord. It cannot be her letter, if it does not make you admire her more and more as you read. Cousin Charlotte, Cousin Patty, pray attend—Read on, my Lord.

Miss Charlotte. Amazing fortitude!

Miss Patty only lifted up her dove's eyes.

Lord M. [Reading.] 'And the rather, as I was determined, had it come to effect, to do every thing in my power to deserve your favourable opinion.'

Then again they chorus'd upon me!

A blessed time of it, poor I!—I had nothing for it but impudence!

Lovel. Pray read on, my Lord—I told you how you would all admire her —or, shall I read?

Lord M. D—d assurance! [Then reading.] 'I had another motive, which I knew would of itself give me merit with your whole family: [they were all ear:] 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 at bottom to be reclaimed; or at least gratitude enough to acknowledge the intended obligation, whether the generous hope were to succeed or not.' —Excellent young creature!—

Excellent young creature! echoed the Ladies, with their handkerchiefs at their eyes, attended with music.

Lovel. By my soul, Miss Patty, you weep in the wrong place: you shall never go with me to a tragedy.

Lady Betty. Hardened wretch.

His Lordship had pulled off his spectacles to wipe them. His eyes were misty; and he thought the fault in his

spectacles.

I saw they were all cocked and primed—to be sure that is a very pretty sentence, said I—that is the excellency of this lady, that in every line, as she writes on, she improves upon herself. Pray, my Lord, proceed—I know her style; the next sentence will still rise upon us.

Lord M. D—d fellow! [Again saddling, and reading.] 'But I have been most egregiously mistaken in Mr. Lovelace!' [Then they all clamoured again.]—'The only man, I persuade myself'—

Lovel. Ladies may persuade themselves to any thing; but how can she answer for what other men would or would not have done in the same circumstances?

I was forced to say any thing to stifle their outcries. Pox take ye altogether, thought I; as if I had not vexation enough in losing her!

Lord M. [Reading.] 'The only man, I persuade myself, pretending to be a gentleman, in whom I could have been so much mistaken.'

They were all beginning again—Pray, my Lord, proceed!—Hear, hear—pray, Ladies, hear!—Now, my Lord, be pleased to proceed. The Ladies are silent.

So they were; lost in admiration of me, hands and eyes uplifted.

Lord M. I will, to thy confusion; for he had looked over the next sentence.

What wretches, Belford, what spiteful wretches, are poor mortals!—So rejoiced to sting one another! to see each other stung!

Lord M. [Reading.] '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.'—What say you to that, Sir-r?

Lady S. | Ay, Sir, what say you to this? Lady B. |

Lovel. Say! Why I say it is a very pretty metaphor, if it would but hold.—But, if you please, my Lord, read on. Let me hear what is further said, and I will speak to it all together.

Lord M. I will. '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.'

They all looked at me, as expecting me to speak.

Lovel. Be pleased to proceed, my Lord: I will speak to this by-and-by— How came she to know I kept a list?—I will speak to this by-and-by.

Lord M. [Reading on.] 'And this, Madam, by means that would shock humanity to be made acquainted with.'

Then again, in a hurry, off went the spectacles.

This was a plaguy stroke upon me. I thought myself an oak in impudence; but, by my troth, this almost felled me.

Lord M. What say you to this, SIR-R!

Remember, Jack, to read all their Sirs in this dialogue with a double rr, Sir-r! denoting indignation rather than respect.

They all looked at me as if to see if I could blush.

Lovel. Eyes off, my Lord!—Eyes off, Ladies! [Looking bashfully, I believe.]—What say I to this, my Lord!—Why, I say, that this lady has a strong manner of expressing herself!—That's all.—There are many things that pass among lovers, which a man cannot explain himself upon before grave people.

Lady Betty. Among lovers, Sir-r! But, Mr. Lovelace, can you say that this lady behaved either like a weak, or a credulous person?—Can you say—

Lovel. I am ready to do the lady all manner of justice.—But, pray now, Ladies, if I am to be thus interrogated, let me know the contents of the rest of the letter, that I may be prepared for my defence, as you are all for my arraignment. For, to be required to answer piecemeal thus, without knowing what is to follow, is a cursed ensnaring way of proceeding.

They gave me the letter: I read it through to myself:—and by the repetition of what I said, thou wilt guess at the remaining contents.

You shall find, Ladies, you shall find, my Lord, that I will not spare myself. Then holding the letter in my hand, and looking upon it, as a lawyer upon his brief,

Miss Harlowe says, 'That when your Ladyship,' [turning to Lady Betty,] 'shall know, that, in the progress to her ruin, wilful falsehoods, repeated forgeries, and numberless perjuries, were not the least of my crimes, you will judge that she can have no principles that will make her worthy of an alliance with ladies of your's, and your noble sister's character, if she could not, from her soul, declare, that such an alliance can never now take place.'

Surely, Ladies, this is passion! This is not reason. If our family would not think themselves dishonoured by my marrying a person whom I had so treated; but, on the contrary, would rejoice that I did her this justice: and if she has come out pure gold from the assay; and has nothing to reproach herself with; why should it be an impeachment of her principles, to consent that such an alliance take place?

She cannot think herself the worse, justly she cannot, for what was done against her will.

Their countenances menaced a general uproar—but I proceeded.

Your Lordship read to us, that she had an hope, a presumptuous one: nay, a punishably-presumptuous one, she calls it; 'that she might be a mean, in the hand of Providence, to reclaim me; and that this, she knew, if effected, would give her a merit with you all.' But from what would she reclaim me?—She had heard, you'll say, (but she had only heard, at the time she entertained that hope,) that, to express myself in the women's dialect, I was a very wicked fellow!—Well, and what then?—Why, truly, the very moment she was convinced, by her own experience, that the charge against me was more than hearsay; and that, of consequence, I was a fit subject for her generous endeavours to work upon; she would needs give me up. Accordingly, she flies out, and declares, that the ceremony which would repair all shall never take place!—Can this be from any other

motive than female resentment?

This brought them all upon me, as I intended it should: it was as a tub to a whale; and after I had let them play with it a while, I claimed their attention, and, knowing that they always loved to hear me prate, went on.

The lady, it is plain, thought, that the reclaiming of a man from bad habits was a much easier task than, in the nature of things, it can be.

She writes, as your Lordship has read, 'That, in endeavouring to save a drowning wretch, she had been, not accidentally, but premeditatedly, and of set purpose, drawn in after him.' But how is this, Ladies?—You see by her own words, that I am still far from being out of danger myself. Had she found me, in a quagmire suppose, and I had got out of it by her means, and left her to perish in it; that would have been a crime indeed. —But is not the fact quite otherwise? Has she not, if her allegory prove what she would have it prove, got out herself, and left me floundering still deeper and deeper in?—What she should have done, had she been in earnest to save me, was, to join her hand with mine, that so we might by our united strength help one another out.—I held out my hand to her, and besought her to give me her's:—But, no truly! she was determined to get out herself as fast as she could, let me sink or swim: refusing her assistance (against her own principles) because she saw I wanted it.—You see, Ladies, you see, my Lord, how pretty tinkling words run away with ears inclined to be musical.

They were all ready to exclaim again: but I went on, proleptically, as a rhetorician would say, before their voices would break out into words.

But my fair accuser says, that, 'I have added to the list of those I have ruined, a name that would not have disparaged my own.' It is true, I have been gay and enterprising. It is in my constitution to be so. I know not how I came by such a constitution: but I was never accustomed to check or controul; that you all know. When a man finds himself hurried by passion into a slight offence, which, however slight, will not be forgiven, he may be made desperate: as a thief, who only intends a robbery, is often by resistance, and for self-preservation, drawn in to commit murder.

I was a strange, a horrid wretch, with every one. But he must be a silly fellow who has not something to say for himself, when every cause has its black and its white side.—Westminster-hall, Jack, affords every day as confident defences as mine.

But what right, proceeded I, has this lady to complain of me, when she as good as says—Here, Lovelace, you have acted the part of a villain by me! —You would repair your fault: but I won't let you, that I may have the satisfaction of exposing you; and the pride of refusing you.

But, was that the case? Was that the case? Would I pretend to say, I would now marry the lady, if she would have me?

Lovel. You find she renounces Lady Betty's mediation——

Lord M. [Interrupting me.] Words are wind; but deeds are mind: What signifies your cursed quibbling, Bob? —Say plainly, if she will have you, will you have her? Answer me, yes or no; and lead us not a wild-goose chase after your meaning.

Lovel. She knows I would. But here, my Lord, if she thus goes on to expose herself and me, she will make it a dishonour to us both to marry.

Charl. But how must she have been treated—

Lovel. [Interrupting her.] Why now, Cousin Charlotte, chucking her under the chin, would you have me tell you all that has passed between the lady and me? Would you care, had you a bold and enterprising lover, that proclamation should be made of every little piece of amorous roguery, that he offered to you?

Charlotte reddened. They all began to exclaim. But I proceeded.

The lady says, 'She has been dishonoured' (devil take me, if I spare myself!) 'by means that would shock humanity to be made acquainted with them.' She is a very innocent lady, and may not be a judge of the means she hints at. Over-niceness may be under-niceness: Have you not such a proverb, my Lord?—tantamount to, One extreme produces another!—Such a lady as this may possibly think her case more extraordinary than it is. This I will take upon me to say, that if she has met with the only man in the world who would have treated her, as she says I have treated her, I have met in her with the only woman in the world who would have made such a rout about a case that is uncommon only from the circumstances that attend it.

This brought them all upon me; hands, eyes, voices, all lifted at once. But my Lord M. who has in his head (the last seat of retreating lewdness) as much wickedness as I have in my heart, was forced (upon the air I spoke this with, and Charlotte's and all the rest reddening) to make a mouth that was big enough to swallow up the other half of his face; crying out, to avoid laughing, Oh! Oh!—as if under the power of a gouty twinge.

Hadst thou seen how the two tabbies and the young grimalkins looked at one another, at my Lord, and at me, by turns, thou would have been ready to split thy ugly face just in the middle. Thy mouth hath already done half the work. And, after all, I found not seldom in this conversation, that my humourous undaunted airs forced a smile into my service from the prim mouths of the young ladies. They perhaps, had they met with such another intrepid fellow as myself, who had first gained upon their affections, would not have made such a rout as my beloved has done, about such an affair as that we were assembled upon. Young ladies, as I have observed on an hundred occasions, fear not half so much for themselves as their mothers do for them. But here the girls were forced to put on grave airs, and to seem angry, because the antiques made the matter of such high importance. Yet so lightly sat anger and fellow-feeling at their hearts, that they were forced to purse in their mouths, to suppress the smiles I now-and-then laid out for: while the elders having had roses (that is to say, daughters) of their own, and knowing how fond men are of a trifle, would have been very loth to have had them nipt in the bud, without saying to the mother of them, By your leave, Mrs. Rose-bush.

The next article of my indictment was for forgery; and for personating of Lady Betty and my cousin Charlotte.

Two shocking charges, thou'lt say: and so they were!—The Peer was outrageous upon the forgery charge. The Ladies vowed never to forgive the personating part.

Not a peace-maker among them. So we all turned women, and scolded.

My Lord told me, that he believed in his conscience there was not a viler fellow upon God's earth than me.—What signifies mincing the matter? said he—and that it was not the first time I had forged his hand.

To this I answered, that I supposed, when the statute of Scandalum Magnatum was framed, there were a good many in the peerage who knew they deserved hard names; and that that law therefore was rather made to privilege their qualities, than to whiten their characters.

He called upon me to explain myself, with a Sir-r, so pronounced, as to show that one of the most ignominious words in our language was in his head.

People, I said, that were fenced in by their quality, and by their years, should not take freedoms that a man of spirit could not put up with, unless he were able heartily to despise the insulter.

This set him in a violent passion. He would send for Pritchard instantly. Let Pritchard be called. He would alter his will; and all he could leave from me, he would.

Do, do, my Lord, said I: I always valued my own pleasure above your estate. But I'll let Pritchard know, that if he draws, he shall sign and seal.

Why, what would I do to Pritchard?—shaking his crazy head at me.

Only, what he, or any man else, writes with his pen, to despoil me of what I think my right, he shall seal with his ears; that's all, my Lord.

Then the two Ladies interposed.

Lady Sarah told me, that I carried things a great way; and that neither Lord M. nor any of them, deserved the treatment I gave them.

I said, I could not bear to be used ill by my Lord, for two reasons; first, because I respected his Lordship above any man living; and next, because it looked as if I were induced by selfish considerations to take that from him, which nobody else would offer to me.

And what, returned he, shall be my inducement to take what I do at your hands?—Hay, Sir?

Indeed, Cousin Lovelace, said Lady Betty, with great gravity, we do not any of us, as Lady Sarah says, deserve at your hands the treatment you give us: and let me tell you, that I don't think my character and your cousin Charlotte's ought to be prostituted, in order to ruin an innocent lady. She must have known early the good opinion we all have of her, and how much we wished her to be your wife. This good opinion of ours has been an inducement to her (you see she says so) to listen to your address. And this, with her friends' folly, has helped to throw her into your power. How you have requited her is too apparent. It becomes the character we all bear, to disclaim your actions by her. And let me tell you, that to have her abused by wicked people raised up to personate us, or any of us, makes a double call upon us to disclaim them.

Lovel. Why this is talking somewhat like. I would have you all disclaim my actions. I own I have done very vilely by this lady. One step led to another. I am curst with an enterprizing spirit. I hate to be foiled—

Foiled! interrupted Lady Sarah. What a shame to talk at this rate!—Did the lady set up a contention with you? All nobly sincere, and plain-hearted, have I heard Miss Clarissa Harlowe is: above art, above disguise; neither the coquette, nor the prude!—Poor lady! she deserved a better fare from the man for whom she took the step which she so freely blames!

This above half affected me.—Had this dispute been so handled by every one, I had been ashamed to look up. I began to be bashful.

Charlotte asked if I did not still seem inclinable to do the lady justice, if she would accept of me? It would be, she dared to say, the greatest felicity the family could know (she would answer for one) that this fine lady were of it.

They all declared to the same effect; and Lady Sarah put the matter home to me.

But my Lord Marplot would have it that I could not be serious for six minutes together.

I told his Lordship that he was mistaken; light as he thought I made of his subject, I never knew any that went so near my heart.

Miss Patty said she was glad to hear that: and her soft eyes glistened with pleasure.

Lord M. called her sweet soul, and was ready to cry.

Not from humanity neither, Jack. This Peer has no bowels; as thou mayest observe by this treatment of me. But when people's minds are weakened by a sense of their own infirmities, and when they are drawing on to their latter ends, they will be moved on the slightest occasions, whether those offer from within or without them. And this, frequently, the unpenetrating world, calls humanity; when all the time, in compassionating the miseries of human nature, they are but pitying themselves; and were they in strong health and spirits, would care as little for any body else as thou or I do.

Here broke they off my trial for this sitting. Lady Sarah was much fatigued. It was agreed to pursue the subject in the morning. They all, however, retired together, and went into private conference.

LETTER VI

MR. LOVELACE [IN CONTINUATION.]

The Ladies, instead of taking up the subject where we had laid it down, must needs touch upon passage in my fair accuser's letter, which I was in hopes they would have let rest, as we were in a tolerable way. But, truly, they must hear all they could hear of our story, and what I had to say to those passages, that they might be better enabled to mediate between us, if I were really and indeed inclined to do her the hoped-for justice.

These passages were, 1st, 'That, after I had compulsorily tricked her into the act of going off with me, I carried her to one of the worst houses in London.'

2nd, 'That I had made a wicked attempt upon her; in resentment of which she fled to Hampstead privately.'

3dly, Came the forgery, and personating charges again; and we were upon the point of renewing our quarrel, before we could get to the next charge: which was still worse.

For that (4thly) was 'That having betrayed her back to the vile house, I first robbed her of her senses, and then her honour; detaining her afterwards a prisoner there.'

Were I to tell thee the glosses I put upon these heavy charges, what would it be, but repeat many of the extenuating arguments I have used in my letters to thee?—Suffice it, therefore, to say, that I insisted much, by way of palliation, on the lady's extreme niceness: on her diffidence in my honour: on Miss Howe's contriving spirit; plots on their parts begetting plots on mine: on the high passions of the sex. I asserted, that my whole view, in gently restraining her, was to oblige her to forgive me, and to marry me; and this for the honour of both families. I boasted of my own good qualities; some of which none that knew me deny; and to which few libertines can lay claim.

They then fell into warm admirations and praises of the lady; all of them preparatory, as I knew, to the grand question: and thus it was introduced by Lady Sarah.

We have said as much as I think we can say upon these letters of the poor lady. To dwell upon the mischiefs that may ensue from the abuse of a person of her rank, if all the reparation be not made that now can be made, would perhaps be to little purpose. But you seem, Sir, still to have a just opinion of her, as well as affection for her. Her virtue is not in the least questionable. She could not resent as she does, had she any thing to reproach herself with. She is, by every body's account, a fine woman; has a good estate in her own right; is of no contemptible family; though I think, with regard to her, they have acted as imprudently as unworthily. For the excellency of her mind, for good economy, the common speech of her, as the worthy Dr. Lewen once told me, is that her prudence would enrich a poor man, and her piety reclaim a licentious one. I, who have not been abroad twice this twelvemonth, came hither purposely, so did Lady Betty, to see if justice may not be done her; and also whether we, and my Lord M. (your nearest relations, Sir,) have, or have not, any influence over you. And, for my own part, as your determination shall be in this article, such shall be mine, with regard to the disposition of all that is within my power.

Lady Betty. And mine.

And mine, said my Lord: and valiantly he swore to it.

Lovel. Far be it from me to think slightly of favours you may any of you be glad I would deserve! but as far be it from me to enter into conditions against my own liking, with sordid views!—As to future mischiefs, let them come. I have not done with the Harlowes yet. They were the aggressors; and I should be glad they would let me hear from them, in the way they should hear from me in the like case. Perhaps I should not be sorry to be found, rather than be obliged to seek, on this occasion.

Miss Charlotte. [Reddening.] Spoke like a man of violence, rather than a man of reason! I hope you'll allow that, Cousin.

Lady Sarah. Well, but since what is done, and cannot be undone, let us think of the next best, Have you any objection against marrying Miss Harlowe, if she will have you?

Lovel. There can possibly be but one: That she is to every body, no doubt, as well as to Lady Betty, pursuing that maxim peculiar to herself, (and let me tell you so it ought to be:) that what she cannot conceal from herself, she will publish to the world.

Miss Patty. The lady, to be sure, writes this in the bitterness of her grief, and in despair.—

Lovel. And so when her grief is allayed; when her despairing fit is over—and this from you, Cousin Patty!—Sweet girl! And would you, my dear, in the like case [whispering her] have yielded to entreaty—would you have meant no more by the like exclamations?

I had a rap with her fan, and blush; and from Lord M. a reflection, That I turn'd into jest every thing they said.

I asked, if they thought the Harlowes deserved any consideration from me? And whether that family would not exult over me, were I to marry their daughter, as if I dared not to do otherwise?

Lady Sarah. Once I was angry with that family, as we all were. But now I pity them; and think, that you have but too well justified the worse treatment they gave you.

Lord M. Their family is of standing. All gentlemen of it, and rich, and reputable. Let me tell you, that many of our coronets would be glad they could derive their descents from no worse a stem than theirs.

Lovel. The Harlowes are a narrow-souled and implacable family. I hate them: and, though I revere the lady, scorn all relation to them.

Lady Betty. I wish no worse could be said of him, who is such a scorner of common failings in others.

Lord M. How would my sister Lovelace have reproached herself for all her indulgent folly to this favourite boy of her's, had she lived till now, and been present on this occasion!

Lady Sarah. Well, but, begging your Lordship's pardon, let us see if any thing can be done for this poor lady.

Miss Ch. If Mr. Lovelace has nothing to object against the lady's character, (and I presume to think he is not ashamed to do her justice, though it may make against himself,) I cannot but see her honour and generosity will compel from him all that we expect. If there be any levities, any weaknesses, to be charged upon the lady, I should not open my lips in her favour; though in private I would pity her, and deplore her hard hap. And yet, even then, there might not want arguments, from honour to gratitude, in so particular a case, to engage you, Sir, to make good the vows it is plain you have broken.

Lady Betty. My niece Charlotte has called upon you so justly, and has put the question to you so properly, that I cannot but wish you would speak to it directly, and without evasion.

All in a breath then bespoke my seriousness, and my justice: and in this manner I delivered myself, assuming an air sincerely solemn.

'I am very sensible that the performance of the task you have put me upon will leave me without excuse: but I will not have recourse either to evasion or palliation.

'As my cousin Charlotte has severely observed, I am not ashamed to do justice to Miss Harlowe's merit.

'I own to you all, and, what is more, with high regret, (if not with shame, cousin Charlotte,) that I have a great deal to answer for in my usage of this lady. The sex has not a nobler mind, nor a lovelier person of it. And, for virtue, I could not have believed (excuse me, Ladies) that there ever was a woman who gave, or could have given, such illustrious, such uniform proofs of it: for, in her whole conduct, she has shown herself to be equally above temptation and art; and, I had almost said, human frailty.

'The step she so freely blames herself for taking, was truly what she calls compulsory: for though she was provoked to think of going off with me, she intended it not, nor was provided to do so: neither would she ever have had the thought of it, had her relations left her free, upon her offered composition to renounce the man she did not hate, in order to avoid the man she did.

'It piqued my pride, I own, that I could so little depend upon the force of those impressions which I had the vanity to hope I had made in a heart so delicate; and, in my worst devices against her, I encouraged myself that I abused no confidence; for none had she in my honour.

'The evils she has suffered, it would have been more than a miracle had she avoided. Her watchfulness rendered more plots abortive than those which contributed to her fall; and they were many and various. And all her greater trials and hardships were owing to her noble resistance and just resentment.

'I know, proceeded I, how much I condemn myself in the justice I am doing to this excellent creature. But yet I will do her justice, and cannot help it if I would. And I hope this shows that I am not so totally abandoned as I have been thought to be.

'Indeed, with me, she has done more honour to her sex in her fall, if it be to be called a fall, (in truth it ought not,) than ever any other could do in her standing.

'When, at length, I had given her watchful virtue cause of suspicion, I was then indeed obliged to make use of power and art to prevent her escaping from me. She then formed contrivances to elude mine; but all her's were such as strict truth and punctilious honour would justify. She could not stoop to deceit and falsehood, no, not to save herself. More than once justly did she tell me, fired by conscious worthiness, that her soul was my soul's superior!—Forgive me, Ladies, for saying, that till I knew her, I questioned a soul in a sex, created, as I was willing to suppose, only for temporary purposes.—It is not to be imagined into what absurdities men of free principle run in order to justify to themselves their free practices; and to make a religion to their minds: and yet, in this respect, I have not been so faulty as some others.

'No wonder that such a noble creature as this looked upon every studied artifice as a degree of baseness not to be forgiven: no wonder that she could so easily become averse to the man (though once she beheld him with an eye not wholly indifferent) whom she thought capable of premeditated guilt. Nor, give me leave, on the other hand, to say, is it to be wondered at, that the man who found it so difficult to be forgiven for the slightest offences, and who had not the grace to recede or repent, (made desperate,) should be hurried on to the commission of the greater.

'In short, Ladies, in a word, my Lord, Miss Clarissa Harlowe is an angel; if ever there was or could be one in human nature: and is, and ever was, as pure as an angel in her will: and this justice I must do her, although the question, I see by every glistening eye, is ready to be asked, What then, Lovelace, art thou?—

Lord M. A devil!—a d—d devil! I must answer. And may the curse of God follow you in all you undertake, if you do not make her the best amends now in your power to make her!

Level. From you, my Lord, I could expect no other: but from the Ladies I hope for less violence from the ingenuousness of my confession.

The Ladies, elder and younger, had their handkerchiefs to their eyes, at the just testimony which I bore to the merits of this exalted creature; and which I would make no scruple to bear at the bar of a court of justice, were I to be called to it.

Lady Betty. Well, Sir, this is a noble character. If you think as you speak, surely you cannot refuse to do the lady all the justice now in your power to do her.

They all joined in this demand.

I pleaded, that I was sure she would not have me: that, when she had taken a resolution, she was not to be moved. Unpersuadableness was an Harlowe sin: that, and her name, I told them, were all she had of theirs.

All were of opinion, that she might, in her present desolate circumstances, be brought to forgive me. Lady Sarah said, that Lady Betty and she would endeavour to find out the noble sufferer, as they justly called her; and would take her into their protection, and be guarantees of the justice that I would do her; as well after marriage as before.

It was some pleasure to me, to observe the placability of these ladies of my own family, had they, any or either of them, met with a LOVELACE. But 'twould be hard upon us honest fellows, Jack, if all women were CLARISSAS.

Here I am obliged to break off.

LETTER VII

MR. LOVELACE [IN CONTINUATION.]

It is much better, Jack, to tell your own story, when it must be known, than to have an adversary tell it for you. Conscious of this, I gave them a particular account how urgent I had been with her to fix upon the Thursday after I left her (it being her uncle Harlowe's anniversary birth-day, and named to oblige her) for the private celebration; having some days before actually procured a license, which still remained with her.

That, not being able to prevail upon her to promise any thing, while under a supposed restraint! I offered to leave her at full liberty, if she would give me the least hope for that day. But neither did this offer avail me.

That this inflexibleness making me desperate, I resolved to add to my former fault, by giving directions that she should not either go or correspond out of the house, till I returned from M. Hall; well knowing, that if she were at full liberty, I must for ever lose her.

That this constraint had so much incensed her, that although I wrote no less than four different letters, I could not procure a single word in answer; though I pressed her but for four words to signify the day and the church.

I referred to my two cousins to vouch for me the extraordinary methods I took to send messengers to town, though they knew not the occasion; which now I told them was this.

I acquainted them, that I even had wrote to you, Jack, and to another gentleman of whom I thought she had a good opinion, to attend her, in order to press for her compliance; holding myself in readiness the last day, at Salt-hill, to meet the messenger they should send, and proceed to London, if his message were favourable. But that, before they could attend her, she had found means to fly away once more: and is now, said I, perched perhaps somewhere under Lady Betty's window at Glenham-hall; and there, like the sweet Philomela, a thorn in her breast, warbles forth her melancholy complaints against her barbarous Tereus.

Lady Betty declared that she was not with her; nor did she know where she was. She should be, she added, the most welcome guest to her that she ever received.

In truth, I had a suspicion that she was already in their knowledge, and taken into their protection; for Lady Sarah I imagined incapable of being roused to this spirit by a letter only from Miss Harlowe, and that not directed to herself; she being a very indolent and melancholy woman. But her sister, I find had wrought her up to it: for Lady Betty is as officious and managing a woman as Mrs. Howe; but of a much more generous and noble disposition—she is my aunt, Jack.

I supposed, I said, that her Ladyship might have a private direction where to send to her. I spoke as I wished: I would have given the world to have heard that she was inclined to cultivate the interest of any of my family.

Lady Betty answered that she had no direction but what was in the letter; which she had scratched out, and which, it was probable, was only a temporary one, in order to avoid me: otherwise she would hardly have directed an answer to be left at an inn. And she was of opinion, that to apply to Miss Howe would be the only certain way to succeed in any application for forgiveness, would I enable that young lady to interest herself in procuring it.

Miss Charlotte. Permit me to make a proposal.—Since we are all of one mind, in relation to the justice due to Miss Harlowe, if Mr. Lovelace will oblige himself to marry her, I will make Miss Howe a visit, little as I am acquainted with her; and endeavour to engage her interest to forward the desired reconciliation. And if this can be done, I make no question but all may be happily accommodated; for every body knows the love there is between Miss Harlowe and Miss Howe.

MARRIAGE, with these women, thou seest, Jack, is an atonement for all we can do to them. A true dramatic recompense!

This motion was highly approved of; and I gave my honour, as desired, in the fullest manner they could wish.

Lady Sarah. Well then, Cousin Charlotte, begin your treaty with Miss Howe, out of hand.

Lady Betty. Pray do. And let Miss Harlowe be told, that I am ready to receive her as the most welcome of guests: and I will not have her out of my sight till the knot is tied.

Lady Sarah. Tell her from me, that she shall be my daughter, instead of my poor Betsey!—And shed a tear in remembrance of her lost daughter.

Lord M. What say you, Sir, to this?

Lovel. CONTENT, my Lord, I speak in the language of your house.

Lord M. We are not to be fooled, Nephew. No quibbling. We will have no slur put upon us.

Lovel. You shall not. And yet, I did not intend to marry, if she exceeded the appointed Thursday. But, I think (according to her own notions) that I have injured her beyond reparation, although I were to make her the best of husbands; as I am resolved to be, if she will condescend, as I will call it, to have me. And be this, Cousin Charlotte, my part of your commission to say.

This pleased them all.

Lord M. Give me thy hand, Bob!—Thou talkest like a man of honour at last. I hope we may depend upon what thou sayest!

The Ladies eyes put the same question to me.

Lovel. You may, my Lord—You may, Ladies—absolutely you may.

Then was the personal character of the lady, as well as her more extraordinary talents and endowments again expatiated upon: and Miss Patty, who had once seen her, launched out more than all the rest in her praise. These were followed by such inquiries as are never forgotten to be made in marriage-treaties, and which generally are the principal motives with the sages of a family, though the least to be mentioned by the parties themselves, and yet even by them, perhaps, the first thought of: that is to say, inquisition into the lady's fortune; into the particulars of the grandfather's estate; and what her father, and her single-souled uncles, will probably do for her, if a reconciliation be effected; as, by their means, they make no doubt but it will be between both families, if it be not my fault. The two venerables [no longer tabbies with me now] hinted at rich presents on their own parts; and my Lord declared that he would make such overtures in my

behalf, as should render my marriage with Miss Harlowe the best day's work I ever made; and what, he doubted not, would be as agreeable to that family as to myself.

Thus, at present, by a single hair, hangs over my head the matrimonial sword. And thus ended my trial. And thus are we all friends, and Cousin and Cousin, and Nephew and Nephew, at every word.

Did ever comedy end more happily than this long trial?

LETTER VIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. WEDN. JULY 12.

So, Jack, they think they have gained a mighty point. But, were I to change my mind, were I to repent, I fancy I am safe.—And yet this very moment it rises to my mind, that 'tis hard trusting too; for surely there must be some embers, where there was fire so lately, that may be stirred up to give a blaze to combustibles strewed lightly upon them. Love, like some self-propagating plants, or roots, (which have taken strong hold in the earth) when once got deep into the heart, is hardly ever totally extirpated, except by matrimony indeed, which is the grave of love, because it allows of the end of love. Then these ladies, all advocates for herself, with herself, Miss Howe at their head, perhaps,—not in favour to me—I don't expect that from Miss Howe—but perhaps in favour to herself: for Miss Howe has reason to apprehend vengeance from me, I ween. Her Hickman will be safe too, as she may think, if I marry her beloved friend: for he has been a busy fellow, and I have long wished to have a slap at him!—The lady's case desperate with her friends too; and likely to be so, while single, and her character exposed to censure.

A husband is a charming cloke, a fig-leaved apron for a wife: and for a lady to be protected in liberties, in diversions, which her heart pants after—and all her faults, even the most criminal, were she to be detected, to be thrown upon the husband, and the ridicule too; a charming privilege for a wife!

But I shall have one comfort, if I marry, which pleases me not a little. If a man's wife has a dear friend of her sex, a hundred liberties may be taken with that friend, which could not be taken, if the single lady (knowing what a title to freedoms marriage had given him with her friend) was not less scrupulous with him than she ought to be as to herself. Then there are broad freedoms (shall I call them?) that may be taken by the husband with his wife, that may not be quite shocking, which, if the wife bears before her friends, will serve for a lesson to that friend; and if that friend bears to be present at them without check or bashfulness, will show a sagacious fellow that she can bear as much herself, at proper time and place.

Chastity, Jack, like piety, is an uniform thing. If in look, if in speech, a girl give way to undue levity, depend upon it the devil has got one of his cloven feet in her heart already—so, Hickman, take care of thyself, I advise thee, whether I marry or not.

Thus, Jack, have I at once reconciled myself to all my relations—and if the lady refuses me, thrown the fault upon her. This, I knew, would be in my power to do at any time: and I was the more arrogant to them, in order to heighten the merit of my compliance.

But, after all, it would be very whimsical, would it not, if all my plots and contrivances should end in wedlock? What a punishment should this come out to be, upon myself too, that all this while I have been plundering my own treasury?

And then, can there be so much harm done, if it can be so easily repaired by a few magical words; as I Robert take thee, Clarissa; and I Clarissa take thee, Robert, with the rest of the for-better and for-worse legerdemain, which will hocus pocus all the wrongs, the crying wrongs, that I have done to Miss Harlowe, into acts of kindness and benevolence to Mrs. Lovelace?

But, Jack, two things I must insist upon with thee, if this is to be the case.—Having put secrets of so high a nature between me and my spouse into thy power, I must, for my own honour, and for the honour of my wife and illustrious progeny, first oblige thee to give up the letters I have so profusely scribbled to thee; and in the next place, do by thee, as I have heard whispered in France was done by the true father of a certain monarch; that is to say, cut thy throat, to prevent thy telling of tales.

I have found means to heighten the kind opinion my friends here have begun to have of me, by communicating to them the contents of the four last letters which I wrote to press my elected spouse to solemnize. My Lord repeated one of his phrases in my favour, that he hopes it will come out, that the devil is not quite so black as he is painted.

Now pr'ythee, dear Jack, since so many good consequences are to flow from these our nuptials, (one of which to thyself; since the sooner thou diest, the less thou wilt have to answer for); and that I now-and-then am apt to believe there may be something in the old fellow's notion, who once told us, that he who kills a man, has all that man's sins to answer for, as well as his own, because he gave him not the time to repent of them that Heaven designed to allow him, [a fine thing for thee, if thou consentest to be knocked of the head; but a cursed one for the manslayer!] and since there may be room to fear that Miss Howe will not give us her help; I pr'ythee now exert thyself to find out my Clarissa Harlowe, that I may make a LOVELACE of her. Set all the city bellmen, and the country criers, for ten miles round the metropolis, at work, with their 'Oye's! and if any man, woman, or child can give tale or tidings.'—Advertise her in all the news-papers; and let her know, 'That if she will repair to Lady Betty Lawrance, or to Miss Charlotte Montague, she may hear of something greatly to her advantage.'

My two cousins Montague are actually to set out to-morrow to Mrs. Howe's, to engage her vixen daughter's interest with her friend. They will flaunt it away in a chariot-and-six, for the greater state and significance.

Confounded mortification to be reduced this low!—My pride hardly knows how to brook it.

Lord M. has engaged the two venerables to stay here to attend the issue: and I, standing very high at present in their good graces, am to gallant them to Oxford, to Blenheim, and to several other places.

LETTER IX

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE THURSDAY NIGHT, JULY 13.

Collins sets not out to-morrow. Some domestic occasion hinders him. Rogers is but now returned from you, and cannot be well spared. Mr. Hickman is gone upon an affair of my mother's, and has taken both his servants with him, to do credit to his employer: so I am forced to venture this by post, directed by your assumed name.

I am to acquaint you, that I have been favoured with a visit from Miss Montague and her sister, in Lord M.'s chariot-and-six. My Lord's gentleman rode here yesterday, with a request that I would receive a visit from the two young ladies, on a very particular occasion; the greater favour if it might be the next day.

As I had so little personal knowledge of either, I doubted not but it must be in relation to the interests of my dear friend; and so consulting with my mother, I sent them an invitation to favour me (because of the distance) with their company at dinner; which they kindly accepted.

I hope, my dear, since things have been so very bad, that their errand to me will be as agreeable to you, as any thing that can now happen. They came in the name of Lord M. and Lady Sarah and Lady Betty his two sisters, to desire my interest to engage you to put yourself into the protection of Lady Betty; who will not part with you till she sees all the justice done you that now can be done.

Lady Sarah had not stirred out for a twelve-month before; never since she lost her agreeable daughter whom you and I saw at Mrs. Benson's: but was induced to take this journey by Lady Betty, purely to procure you reparation, if possible. And their joint strength, united with Lord M.'s, has so far succeeded, that the wretch has bound himself to them, and to these young ladies, in the solemnest manner, to wed you in their presence, if they can prevail upon you to give him your hand.

This consolation you may take to yourself, that all this honourable family have a due (that is, the highest) sense of your merit, and greatly admire you. The horrid creature has not spared himself in doing justice to your virtue; and the young ladies gave us such an account of his confessions, and self-condemnation, that my mother was quite charmed with you; and we all four shed tears of joy, that there is one of our sex [I, that that one is my dearest friend,] who has done so much honour to it, as to deserve the exalted praises given you by a wretch so self-conceited; though pity for the excellent creature mixed with our joy.

He promises by them to make the best of husbands; and my Lord, and Lady Sarah, and Lady Betty, are all three to be guarantees that he will be so. Noble settlements, noble presents, they talked of: they say, they left Lord M. and his two sisters talking of nothing else but of those presents and settlements, how most to do you honour, the greater in proportion for the indignities you have suffered; and of changing of names by act of parliament, preparative to the interest they will all join to make to get the titles to go where the bulk of the estate must go, at my Lord's death, which they apprehend to be nearer than they wish. Nor doubt they of a thorough reformation in his morals, from your example and influence over him.

I made a great many objections for you—all, I believe, that you could have made yourself, had you been present. But I have no doubt to advise you, my dear, (and so does my mother,) instantly to put yourself into Lady Betty's protection, with a resolution to take the wretch for your husband. All his future grandeur [he wants not pride] depends upon his sincerity to you; and the young ladies vouch for the depth of his concern for the wrongs he has done you.

All his apprehension is, in your readiness to communicate to every one, as he fears, the evils you have suffered; which he thinks will expose you both. But had you not revealed them to Lady Betty, you had not had so warm a friend; since it is owing to two letters you wrote to her, that all this good, as I hope it will prove, was brought about. But I advise you to be more sparing in exposing what is past, whether you have thoughts of accepting him or not: for what, my dear, can that avail now, but to give a handle to vile wretches to triumph over your friends; since every one will not know how much to your honour your very sufferings have been?

Your melancholy letter brought by Rogers,* with his account of your indifferent health, confirmed to him by the woman of the house, as well as by your looks and by your faintness while you talked with him, would have given me inexpressible affliction, had I not been cheered by this agreeable visit from the young ladies. I hope you will be equally so on my imparting the subject of it to you.

* See Letter II. of this volume.

Indeed, my dear, you must not hesitate. You must oblige them. The alliance is splendid and honourable. Very few will know any thing of his brutal baseness to you. All must end, in a little while, in a general reconciliation; and you will be able to resume your course of doing the good to every deserving object, which procured you blessings wherever you set your foot.

I am concerned to find, that your father's inhuman curse affects you so much as it does. Yet you are a noble creature to put it, as you put it— I hope you are indeed more solicitous to get it revoked for their sakes than for your own. It is for them to be penitent, who hurried you into evils you could not well avoid. You are apt to judge by the unhappy event, rather than upon the true merits of your case. Upon my honour, I think you faultless almost in every step you have taken. What has not that vilely-insolent and ambitious, yet stupid, brother of your's to answer for?—that spiteful thing your sister too!

But come, since what is past cannot be helped, let us look forward. You have now happy prospects opening to you: a family, already noble, prepared to receive you with open arms and joyful heart; and who, by their

love to you, will teach another family (who know not what an excellence they have confederated to persecute) how to value you. Your prudence, your piety, will crown all. You will reclaim a wretch that, for an hundred sakes more than for his own, one would wish to be reclaimed.

Like a traveller, who has been put out of his way, by the overflowing of some rapid stream, you have only had the fore-right path you were in overwhelmed. A few miles about, a day or two only lost, as I may say, and you are in a way to recover it; and, by quickening your speed, will get up the lost time. The hurry upon your spirits, mean time, will be all your inconvenience; for it was not your fault you were stopped in your progress.

Think of this, my dear; and improve upon the allegory, as you know how. If you can, without impeding your progress, be the means of assuaging the inundation, of bounding the waters within their natural channel, and thereby of recovering the overwhelmed path for the sake of future passengers who travel the same way, what a merit will your's be!

I shall impatiently expect your next letter. The young ladies proposed that you should put yourself, if in town, or near it, into the Reading stage-coach, which inns somewhere in Fleet-street: and, if you give notice of the day, you will be met on the road, and that pretty early in your journey, by some of both sexes; one of whom you won't be sorry to see.

Mr. Hickman shall attend you at Slough; and Lady Betty herself, and one of the Miss Montagues, with proper equipages, will be at Reading to receive you; and carry you directly to the seat of the former: for I have expressly stipulated, that the wretch himself shall not come into your presence till your nuptials are to be solemnized, unless you give leave.

Adieu, my dearest friend. Be happy: and hundreds will then be happy of consequence. Inexpressibly so, I am sure, will then be

Your ever affectionate ANNA HOWE.

LETTER X

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE SUNDAY NIGHT, JULY 16.
MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Why should you permit a mind, so much devoted to your service, to labour under such an impatience as you must know it would labour under, for want of an answer to a letter of such consequence to you, and therefore to me, as was mine of Thursday night?—Rogers told me, on Thursday, you were so ill; your letter sent by him was so melancholy!—Yet you must be ill indeed, if you could not write something to such a letter; were it but a line, to say you would write as soon as you could. Sure you have received it. The master of your nearest post-office will pawn his reputation that it went safe: I gave him particular charge of it.

God send me good news of your health, of your ability to write; and then I will chide you—indeed I will—as I never yet did chide you.

I suppose your excuse will be, that the subject required consideration— Lord! my dear, so it might; but you have so right a mind, and the matter in question is so obvious, that you could not want half an hour to determine.—Then you intended, probably, to wait Collins's call for your letter as on to-morrow!—Suppose something were to happen, as it did on Friday, that he should not be able to go to town to-morrow?—How, child, could you serve me so!—I know not how to leave off scolding you!

Dear, honest Collins, make haste: he will: he will. He sets out, and travels all night: for I have told him, that the dearest friend I have in the world has it in her own choice to be happy, and to make me so; and that the letter he will bring from her will assure it to me.

I have ordered him to go directly (without stopping at the Saracen's-head-inn) to you at your lodgings. Matters are now in so good a way, that he safely may.

Your expected letter is ready written I hope: if it can be not, he will call for it at your hour.

You can't be so happy as you deserve to be: but I doubt not that you will be as happy as you can; that is, that you will choose to put yourself instantly into Lady Betty's protection. If you would not have the wretch for your own sake; have him you must, for mine, for your family's, for your honour's, sake!—Dear, honest Collins, make haste! make haste! and relieve the impatient heart of my beloved's

Ever faithful, ever affectionate, ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XI

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CHARLOTTE MONTAGUE TUESDAY MORN. JULY 18.
MADAM,

I take the liberty to write to you, by this special messenger. In the phrensy of my soul I write to you, to demand of you, and of any of your family who can tell news of my beloved friend, who, I doubt, has been spirited away by the base arts of one of the blackest—O help me to a name black enough to call him by! Her piety is proof against self-attempts. It must, it must be he, the only wretch, who could injure such an innocent; and now—who knows what he has done with her!

If I have patience, I will give you the occasion of this distracted vehemence.

I wrote to her the very moment you and your sister left me. But being unable to procure a special messenger, as I intended, was forced to send by the post. I urged her, [you know I promised that I would: I urged her,] with earnestness, to comply with the desires of all your family. Having no answer, I wrote again on Sunday night; and sent it by a particular hand, who travelled all night; chiding her for keeping a heart so impatient as mine in such cruel suspense, upon a matter of so much importance to her, and therefore to me. And very angry I was with her in my mind.

But, judge my astonishment, my distraction, when last night, the messenger, returning post-haste, brought me word, that she had not been heard of since Friday morning! and that a letter lay for her at her lodgings, which came by the post; and must be mine!

She went out about six that morning; only intending, as they believe, to go to morning-prayers at Covent-Garden church, just by her lodgings, as she had done divers times before—Went on foot!—Left word she should be back in an hour!—Very poorly in health!

Lord, have mercy upon me! What shall I do!—I was a distracted creature all last night!

O Madam! you know not how I love her!—My own soul is not dearer to me, than my Clarissa Harlowe!—Nay! she is my soul—for I now have none—only a miserable one, however—for she was the joy, the stay, the prop of my life. Never woman loved woman as we love one another. It is impossible to tell you half her excellencies. It was my glory and my pride, that I was capable of so fervent a love of so pure and matchless a creature.— But now—who knows, whether the dear injured has not all her woes, her undeserved woes, completed in death; or is not reserved for a worse fate! —This I leave to your inquiry—for—your—[shall I call the man— your?] relation I understand is still with you.

Surely, my good Ladies, you were well authorized in the proposals you made in presence of my mother!—Surely he dare not abuse your confidence, and the confidence of your noble relations! I make no apology for giving you this trouble, nor for desiring you to favour with a line, by this messenger,

Your almost distracted ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. M. HALL, SAT. NIGHT, JUNE 15.

All undone, undone, by Jupiter!—Zounds, Jack, what shall I do now! a curse upon all my plots and contrivances!—But I have it—in the very heart and soul of me I have it!

Thou toldest me, that my punishments were but beginning—Canst thou, O fatal prognosticator, canst thou tell me, where they will end?

Thy assistance I bespeak. The moment thou receivest this, I bespeak thy assistance. This messenger rides for life and death—and I hope he'll find you at your town-lodgings; if he meet not with you at Edgware; where, being Sunday, he will call first.

This cursed, cursed woman, on Friday dispatched man and horse with the joyful news (as she thought it would be to me) in an exulting letter from Sally Martin, that she had found out my angel as on Wednesday last; and on Friday morning, after she had been at prayers at Covent-Garden church —praying for my reformation perhaps—got her arrested by two sheriff's officers, as she was returning to her lodgings, who (villains!) put her into a chair they had in readiness, and carried her to one of the cursed fellow's houses.

She has arrested her for 150£. pretendedly due for board and lodging; a sum (besides the low villany of the proceeding) which the dear soul could not possibly raise: all her clothes and effects, except what she had on and with her when she went away, being at the old devil's.

And here, for an aggravation, has the dear creature lain already two days; for I must be gallanting my two aunts and my two cousins, and giving Lord M. an airing after his lying-in—pox upon the whole family of us! and returned not till within this hour: and now returned to my distraction, on receiving the cursed tidings, and the exulting letter.

Hasten, hasten, dear Jack; for the love of God, hasten to the injured charmer! my heart bleeds for her!—she deserved not this!—I dare not stir. It will be thought done by my contrivance—and if I am absent from this place, that will confirm the suspicion.

Damnation seize quick this accursed woman!—Yet she thinks she has made no small merit with me. Unhappy, thrice unhappy circumstances!—At a time too, when better prospects were opening for the sweet creature!

Hasten to her!—Clear me of this cursed job. Most sincerely, by all that's sacred, I swear you may!—Yet have I been such a villanous plotter, that the charming sufferer will hardly believe it: although the proceeding be so dirtily low.

Set her free the moment you see her: without conditioning, free!—On your knees, for me, beg her pardon: and assure her, that, wherever she goes, I will not molest her: no, nor come near her without her leave: and be sure allow not any of the d—d crew to go near her—only let her permit you to receive her commands from time to time.—You have always been her friend and advocate. What would I now give, had I permitted you to have been a successful one!

Let her have all her clothes and effects sent her instantly, as a small proof of my sincerity. And force upon the dear creature, who must be moneyless, what sums you can get her to take. Let me know how she has been treated. If roughly, woe be to the guilty!

Take thy watch in thy hand, after thou hast freed her, and d—n the whole brood, dragon and serpents, by the hour, till thou'rt tired; and tell them, I bid thee do so for their cursed officiousness.

They had nothing to do when they had found her, but to wait my orders how to proceed.

The great devil fly away with them all, one by one, through the roof of their own cursed house, and dash them to pieces against the tops of chimneys as he flies; and let the lesser devils collect the scattered scraps, and bag them up, in order to put them together again in their allotted place, in the element of fire, with cements of molten lead.

A line! a line! a kingdom for a line! with tolerable news, the first moment thou canst write!—This fellow waits to bring it.

LETTER XIII

MISS CHARLOTTE MONTAGUE, TO MISS HOWE M. HALL, TUESDAY AFTERNOON.

DEAR MISS HOWE,

Your letter has infinitely disturbed us all.

This wretched man has been half distracted ever since Saturday night.

We knew not what ailed him, till your letter was brought.

Vile wretch, as he is, he is however innocent of this new evil.

Indeed he is, he must be; as I shall more at large acquaint you.

But will not now detain your messenger.

Only to satisfy your just impatience, by telling you, that the dear young lady is safe, and we hope well.

A horrid mistake of his general orders has subjected her to the terror and disgrace of an arrest.

Poor dear Miss Harlowe!—Her sufferings have endeared her to us, almost as much as her excellencies can have endeared her to you.

But she must now be quite at liberty.

He has been a distracted man, ever since the news was brought him; and we knew not what ailed him.

But that I said before.

My Lord M. my Lady Sarah Sadleir, and my Lady Betty Lawrance, will all write to you this very afternoon.

And so will the wretch himself.

And send it by a servant of their own, not to detain your's.

I know not what I write.

But you shall have all the particulars, just, and true, and fair, from

Dear Madam, Your most faithful and obedient servant, CH. MONTAGUE.

LETTER XIV

MISS MONTAGUE, TO MISS HOWE M. HALL, JULY 18.

DEAR MADAM,

In pursuance of my promise, I will minutely inform you of every thing we know relating to this shocking transaction.

When we returned from you on Thursday night, and made our report of the kind reception both we and our message met with, in that you had been so good as to promise to use your interest with your dear friend, it put us all into such good humour with one another, and with my cousin Lovelace, that we resolved upon a little tour of two days, the Friday and Saturday, in order to give an airing to my Lord, and Lady Sarah, both having been long confined, one by illness, the other by melancholy. My Lord, Lady Sarah, Lady Betty, and myself, were in the coach; and all our talk was of dear Miss Harlowe, and of our future happiness with her: Mr. Lovelace and my sister (who is his favourite, as he is her's) were in his phaëton: and, whenever we joined company, that was still the subject.

As to him, never man praised woman as he did her: Never man gave greater hopes, and made better resolutions. He is none of those that are governed by interest. He is too proud for that. But most sincerely delighted was he in talking of her; and of his hopes of her returning favour. He said, however, more than once, that he feared she would not forgive him; for, from his heart, he must say, he deserved not her forgiveness: and often and often, that there was not such a woman in the world.

This I mention to show you, Madam, that he could not at this time be privy to such a barbarous and disgraceful treatment of her.

We returned not till Saturday night, all in as good humour with one another as we went out. We never had such pleasure in his company before. If he would be good, and as he ought to be, no man would be better beloved by relations than he. But never was there a greater alteration in man when he came home, and received a letter from a messenger, who, it seems, had been flattering himself in hopes of a reward, and had been waiting for his return from the night before. In such a fury!—The man fared but badly. He instantly shut himself up to write, and ordered man and horse to be ready to set out before day-light the next morning, to carry the letter to a friend in London.

He would not see us all that night; neither breakfast nor dine with us next day. He ought, he said, never to see the light; and bid my sister, whom he called an innocent, (and who was very desirous to know the occasion of all this,) shun him, saying, he was a wretch, and made so by his own inventions, and the consequences of them.

None of us could get out of him what so disturbed him. We should too soon hear, he said, to the utter dissipation of all his hopes, and of all ours.

We could easily suppose that all was not right with regard to the worthy young lady and him.

He went out each day; and said he wanted to run away from himself.

Late on Monday night he received a letter from Mr. Belford, his most favoured friend, by his own messenger; who came back in a foam, man and horse. Whatever were the contents, he was not easier, but like a madman rather: but still would not let us know the occasion. But to my sister he said, nobody, my dear Patsey, who can think but of half the plagues that pursue an intriguing spirit, would ever quit the fore-right path.

He was out when your messenger came: but soon came in; and bad enough was his reception from us all. And he said, that his own torments were greater than ours, than Miss Harlowe's, or your's, Madam, all put together. He would see your letter. He always carries every thing before him: and said, when he had read it, that he thanked God, he was not such a villain, as you, with too great an appearance of reason, thought him.

Thus, then, he owned the matter to be.

He had left general instructions to the people of the lodgings the dear lady went from, to find out where she was gone to, if possible, that he might have an opportunity to importune her to be his, before their difference was public. The wicked people (officious at least, if not wicked) discovered where she was on Wednesday; and, for fear she should remove before they could have his orders, they put her under a gentle restraint, as they call it; and dispatched away a messenger to acquaint him with it; and to take his orders.

This messenger arrived Friday afternoon; and staid here till we returned on Saturday night:—and, when he read the letter he brought—I have told you, Madam, what a fury he was in.

The letter he retired to write, and which he dispatched away so early on Sunday morning, was to conjure his friend, Mr. Belford, on receipt of it, to fly to the lady, and set her free; and to order all her things to be sent to her; and to clear him of so black and villanous a fact, as he justly called it.

And by this time he doubts not that all is happily over; and the beloved of his soul (as he calls her at ever word) in an easier and happier way than she was before the horrid fact. And now he owns that the reason why Mr. Belford's letter set him into stronger ravings was, because of his keeping him wilfully (and on purpose to torment him) in suspense; and reflecting very heavily upon him, (for Mr. Belford, he says, was ever the lady's friend and advocate); and only mentioning, that he had waited upon her; referring to his next for further particulars; which Mr. Belford could have told him at the time.

He declares, and we can vouch for him, that he has been, ever since last Saturday night, the most miserable of men.

He forbore going up himself, that it might not be imagined he was guilty of so black a contrivance; and that he went up to complete any base views in consequence of it.

Believe us all, dear Miss Howe, under the deepest concern at this unhappy accident; which will, we fear, exasperate the charming sufferer; not too much for the occasion, but too much for our hopes.

O what wretches are these free-living men, who love to tread in intricate paths; and, when once they err, know not how far out of the way their headstrong course may lead them!

My sister joins her thanks with mine to your good mother and self, for the favours you heaped upon us last Thursday. We beseech your continued interest as to the subject of our visit. It shall be all our studies to oblige and recompense the dear lady to the utmost of our power, and for what she has suffered from the unhappy man.

We are, dear Madam,

Your obliged and faithful servants,

CHARLOTTE | MONTAGUE. MARTHA | *** DEAR MISS HOWE,

We join in the above request of Miss Charlotte and Miss Patty Montague, for your favour and interest; being convinced that the accident was an accident, and no plot or contrivance of a wretch too full of them. We are, Madam,

Your most obedient humble servants,

M. SARAH SADLEIR. ELIZ. LAWRANCE.

*** DEAR MISS HOWE,

After what is written above, by names and characters of unquestionable honour, I might have been excused signing a name almost as hateful to myself, as I KNOW it is to you. But the above will have it so. Since, therefore, I must write, it shall be the truth; which is, that if I may be once more admitted to pay my duty to the most deserving and most injured of her sex, I will be content to do it with a halter about my neck; and, attended by a parson on my right hand, and the hangman on my left, be doomed, at her will, either to the church or the gallows.

Your most humble servant, ROBERT LOVELACE.

TUESDAY, JULY 18.

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. SUNDAY NIGHT, JULY 16.

What a cursed piece of work hast thou made of it, with the most excellent of women! Thou mayest be in earnest, or in jest, as thou wilt; but the poor lady will not be long either thy sport, or the sport of fortune!

I will give thee an account of a scene that wants but her affecting pen to represent it justly; and it would wring all the black blood out of thy callous heart.

Thou only, who art the author of her calamities, shouldst have attended her in her prison. I am unequal to such a task: nor know I any other man but would.

This last act, however unintended by thee, yet a consequence of thy general orders, and too likely to be thought agreeable to thee, by those who know thy other villainies by her, has finished thy barbarous work. And I advise thee to trumpet forth every where, how much in earnest thou art to marry her, whether true or not.

Thou mayest safely do it. She will not live to put thee to the trial; and it will a little palliate for thy enormous usage of her, and be a mean to make mankind, who know not what I know of the matter, herd a little longer with thee, and forbear to hunt thee to thy fellow-savages in the Lybian wilds and desarts.

Your messenger found me at Edgware expecting to dinner with me several friends, whom I had invited three days before. I sent apologies to them, as in a case of life and death; and speeded to town to the woman's: for how knew I but shocking attempts might be made upon her by the cursed wretches: perhaps by your connivance, in order to mortify her into your measures?

Little knows the public what villainies are committed by vile wretches, in these abominable houses upon innocent creatures drawn into their snares.

Finding the lady not there, I posted away to the officer's, although Sally told me that she had but just come from thence; and that she had refused to see her, or (as she sent down word) any body else; being resolved to have the remainder of that Sunday to herself, as it might, perhaps, be the last she should ever see.

I had the same thing told me, when I got thither.

I sent up to let her know, that I came with a commission to set her at liberty. I was afraid of sending up the name of a man known to be your friend. She absolutely refused to see any man, however, for that day, or to answer further to any thing said from me.

Having therefore informed myself of all that the officer, and his wife, and servant, could acquaint me with, as well in relation to the horrid arrest, as to her behaviour, and the women's to her; and her ill state of health; I went back to Sinclair's, as I will still call her, and heard the three women's story. From all which I am enabled to give you the following shocking particulars: which may serve till I can see the unhappy lady herself to-morrow, if then I gain admittance to her. You will find that I have been very minute in my inquiries.

Your villain it was that set the poor lady, and had the impudence to appear, and abet the sheriff's officers in the cursed transaction. He thought, no doubt, that he was doing the most acceptable service to his blessed master. They had got a chair; the head ready up, as soon as service was over. And as she came out of the church, at the door fronting Bedford-street, the officers, stepping up to her, whispered that they had an action against her.

She was terrified, trembled, and turned pale.

Action, said she! What is that!—I have committed no bad action!— Lord bless me! men, what mean you?

That you are our prisoner, Madam.

Prisoner, Sirs!—What—How—Why—What have I done?

You must go with us. Be pleased, Madam, to step into this chair.

With you!—With men! Must go with men!—I am not used to go with strange men!—Indeed you must excuse me!

We can't excuse you. We are sheriff's officers, We have a writ against you. You must go with us, and you shall know at whose suit.

Suit! said the charming innocent; I don't know what you mean. Pray, men, don't lay hands upon me; (they offering to put her into the chair.) I am not used to be thus treated—I have done nothing to deserve it.

She then spied thy villain—O thou wretch, said she, where is thy vile master?—Am I again to be his prisoner? Help, good people!

A crowd had begun to gather.

My master is in the country, Madam, many miles off. If you please to go with these men, they will treat you civilly.

The people were most of them struck with compassion. A fine young creature!—A thousand pities cried some. While some few threw out vile and shocking reflections! But a gentleman interposed, and demanded to see the fellow's authority.

They showed it. Is your name Clarissa Harlowe, Madam? said he.

Yes, yes, indeed, ready to sink, my name was Clarissa Harlowe:—but it is now Wretchedness!—Lord be merciful to me, what is to come next?

You must go with these men, Madam, said the gentleman: they have authority for what they do.

He pitied her, and retired.

Indeed you must, said one chairman.

Indeed you must, said the other.

Can nobody, joined in another gentleman, be applied to, who will see that so fine a creature is not ill used?

Thy villain answered, orders were given particularly for that. She had rich relations. She need but ask and have. She would only be carried to the officer's house till matters could be made up. The people she had lodged with loved her:—but she had left her lodgings privately.

Oh! had she those tricks already? cried one or two.

She heard not this—but said—Well, if I must go, I must—I cannot resist—but I will not be carried to the woman's! I will rather die at your feet, than be carried to the woman's.

You won't be carried there, Madam, cried thy fellow.

Only to my house, Madam, said one of the officers.

Where is that?

In High-Holborn, Madam.

I know not where High-Holborn is: but any where, except to the woman's. —But am I to go with men only?

Looking about her, and seeing the three passages, to wit, that leading to Henrietta-street, that to King-street, and the fore-right one, to Bedford-street, crowded, she started—Any where—any where, said she, but to the woman's! And stepping into the chair, threw herself on the seat, in the utmost distress and confusion—Carry me, carry me out of sight—cover me—cover me up—for ever—were her words.

Thy villain drew the curtain: she had not power: and they went away with her through a vast crowd of people.

Here I must rest. I can write no more at present.

Only, Lovelace, remember, all this was to a Clarissa.

The unhappy lady fainted away when she was taken out of the chair at the officer's house.

Several people followed the chair to the very house, which is in a wretched court. Sally was there; and satisfied some of the inquirers, that the young gentlewoman would be exceedingly well used: and they soon dispersed.

Dorcas was also there; but came not in her sight. Sally, as a favour, offered to carry her to her former lodgings: but she declared they should carry her thither a corpse, if they did.

Very gentle usage the women boast of: so would a vulture, could it speak, with the entrails of its prey upon its rapacious talons. Of this you'll judge from what I have to recite.

She asked, what was meant by this usage of her? People told me, said she, that I must go with the men: that they had authority to take me: so I submitted. But now, what is to be the end of this disgraceful violence?

The end, said the vile Sally Martin, is, for honest people to come at their own.

Bless me! have I taken away any thing that belongs to those who have obtained the power over me?—I have left very valuable things behind me; but have taken away that is not my own.

And who do you think, Miss Harlowe; for I understand, said the cursed creature, you are not married; who do you think is to pay for your board and your lodgings! such handsome lodgings! for so long a time as you were at Mrs. Sinclair's?

Lord have mercy upon me!—Miss Martin, (I think you are Miss Martin!)—And is this the cause of such a disgraceful insult upon me in the open streets?

And cause enough, Miss Harlowe! (fond of gratifying her jealous revenge, by calling her Miss,)—One hundred and fifty guineas, or pounds, is no small sum to lose—and by a young creature who would have bilked her lodgings.

You amaze me, Miss Martin!—What language do you talk in?—Bilk my lodgings?—What is that?

She stood astonished and silent for a few moments.

But recovering herself, and turning from her to the window, she wrung her hands [the cursed Sally showed me how!] and lifting them up—Now, Lovelace: now indeed do I think I ought to forgive thee!—But who shall forgive Clarissa Harlowe!—O my sister!—O my brother!—Tender mercies were your cruelties to this!

After a pause, her handkerchief drying up her falling tears, she turned to Sally: Now, have I nothing to do but acquiesce—only let me say, that if this aunt of your's, this Mrs. Sinclair, or this man, this Mr. Lovelace, come near me; or if I am carried to the horrid house; (for that, I suppose, is the design of this new outrage;) God be merciful to the poor Clarissa Harlowe!—Look to the consequence!—Look, I charge you, to the consequence!

The vile wretch told her, it was not designed to carry her any where against her will: but, if it were, they should take care not to be frightened again by a penknife.

She cast up her eyes to Heaven, and was silent—and went to the farthest corner of the room, and, sitting down, threw her handkerchief over her face.

Sally asked her several questions; but not answering her, she told her, she would wait upon her by-and-by, when she had found her speech.

She ordered the people to press her to eat and drink. She must be fasting—nothing but her prayers and tears, poor thing!—were the merciless devil's words, as she owned to me.—Dost think I did not curse her?

She went away; and, after her own dinner, returned.

The unhappy lady, by this devil's account of her, then seemed either mortified into meekness, or to have made a resolution not to be provoked by the insults of this cursed creature.

Sally inquired, in her presence, whether she had eat or drank any thing; and being told by the woman, that she could not prevail upon her to taste a morsel, or drink a drop, she said, this is wrong, Miss Harlowe! Very wrong!—Your religion, I think, should teach you, that starving yourself is self-murder.

She answered not.

The wretch owned she was resolved to make her speak.

She asked if Mabell should attend her, till it were seen what her friends would do for her in discharge of the debt? Mabell, said she, had not yet earned the clothes you were so good as to give her.

Am I not worthy an answer, Miss Harlowe?

I would answer you (said the sweet sufferer, without any emotion) if I knew how.

I have ordered pen, ink, and paper, to be brought you, Miss Harlowe. There they are. I know you love writing. You may write to whom you please. Your friend, Miss Howe, will expect to hear from you.

I have no friend, said she, I deserve none.

Rowland, for that's the officer's name, told her, she had friends enow to pay the debt, if she would write.

She would trouble nobody; she had no friends; was all they could get from her, while Sally staid: but yet spoken with a patience of spirit, as if she enjoyed her griefs.

The insolent creature went away, ordering them, in the lady's hearing, to be very civil to her, and to let her want for nothing. Now had she, she owned, the triumph of her heart over this haughty beauty, who kept them all at such a distance in their own house!

What thinkest thou, Lovelace, of this!—This wretch's triumph was over a Clarissa!

About six in the evening, Rowland's wife pressed her to drink tea. She said, she had rather have a glass of water; for her tongue was ready to cleave to the roof of her mouth.

The woman brought her a glass, and some bread and butter. She tried to taste the latter; but could not swallow it: but eagerly drank the water; lifting up her eyes in thankfulness for that!!!

The divine Clarissa, Lovelace,—reduced to rejoice for a cup of cold water!—By whom reduced?

About nine o'clock she asked if any body were to be her bedfellow.

Their maid, if she pleased; or, as she was so weak and ill, the girl should sit up with her, if she chose she should.

She chose to be alone both night and day, she said. But might she not be trusted with the key of the room where she was to lie down; for she should not put off her clothes!

That, they told her, could not be.

She was afraid not, she said.—But indeed she would not get away, if she could.

They told me, that they had but one bed, besides that they lay in themselves, (which they would fain have had her accept of,) and besides that their maid lay in, in a garret, which they called a hole of a garret: and that that one bed was the prisoner's bed; which they made several apologies to me about. I suppose it is shocking enough.

But the lady would not lie in theirs. Was she not a prisoner? she said —let her have the prisoner's room.

Yet they owned that she started, when she was conducted thither. But recovering herself, Very well, said she—why should not all be of a piece?—Why should not my wretchedness be complete?

She found fault, that all the fastenings were on the outside, and none within; and said, she could not trust herself in a room where others could come in at their pleasure, and she not go out. She had not been used to it!!!

Dear, dear soul!—My tears flow as I write!—Indeed, Lovelace, she had not been used to such treatment.

They assured her, that it was as much their duty to protect her from other persons' insults, as from escaping herself.

Then they were people of more honour, she said, than she had been of late used to.

She asked if they knew Mr. Lovelace?

No, was their answer.

Have you heard of him?

No.

Well, then, you may be good sort of folks in your way.

Pause here for a moment, Lovelace!—and reflect—I must.

Again they asked her if they should send any word to her lodgings?

These are my lodgings now; are they not?—was all her answer.

She sat up in a chair all night, the back against the door; having, it seems, thrust a piece of a poker through the staples where a bolt had been on the inside.

Next morning Sally and Polly both went to visit her.

She had begged of Sally, the day before, that she might not see Mrs. Sinclair, nor Dorcas, nor the broken-toothed servant, called William.

Polly would have ingratiated herself with her; and pretended to be concerned for her misfortunes. But she took no more notice of her than of the other.

They asked if she had any commands?—If she had, she only need to mention what they were, and she should be obeyed.

None at all, she said.

How did she like the people of the house? Were they civil to her?

Pretty well, considering she had no money to give them.

Would she accept of any money? they could put it to her account.

She would contract no debts.

Had she any money about her?

She meekly put her hand in her pocket, and pulled out half a guinea, and a little silver. Yes, I have a little. —But here should be fees paid, I believe. Should there not? I have heard of entrance-money to compound for not being stript. But these people are very civil people, I fancy; for they have not offered to take away my clothes.

They have orders to be civil to you.

It is very kind.

But we two will bail you, Miss, if you will go back with us to Mrs. Sinclair's.

Not for the world!

Her's are very handsome apartments.

The fitter for those who own them!

These are very sad ones.

The fitter for me!

You may be happy yet, Miss, if you will.

I hope I shall.

If you refuse to eat or drink, we will give bail, and take you with us.

Then I will try to eat and drink. Any thing but go with you.

Will you not send to your new lodgings; the people will be frightened.

So they will, if I send. So they will, if they know where I am.

But have you no things to send for from thence?

There is what will pay for their lodgings and trouble: I shall not lessen their security.

But perhaps letters or messages may be left for you there.

I have very few friends; and to those I have I will spare the mortification of knowing what has befallen me.

We are surprised at your indifference, Miss Harlowe! Will you not write to any of your friends?

No.

Why, you don't think of tarrying here always?

I shall not live always.

Do you think you are to stay here as long as you live?

That's as it shall please God, and those who have brought me hither.

Should you like to be at liberty?

I am miserable!—What is liberty to the miserable, but to be more miserable.

How miserable, Miss?—You may make yourself as happy as you please.

I hope you are both happy.

We are.

May you be more and more happy!

But we wish you to be so too.

I shall never be of your opinion, I believe, as to what happiness is.

What do you take our opinion of happiness to be?

To live at Mrs. Sinclair's.

Perhaps, said Sally, we were once as squeamish and narrow-minded as you.

How came it over with you?

Because we saw the ridiculousness of prudery.

Do you come hither to persuade me to hate prudery, as you call it, as much as you do?

We came to offer our service to you.

It is out of your power to serve me.

Perhaps not.

It is not in my inclination to trouble you.

You may be worse offered.

Perhaps I may.

You are mighty short, Miss.

As I wish your visit to be, Ladies.

They owned to me, that they cracked their fans, and laughed.

Adieu, perverse beauty!

Your servant, Ladies.

Adieu, haughty airs!

You see me humbled—

As you deserve, Miss Harlowe. Pride will have a fall.

Better fall, with what you call pride, than stand with meanness.

Who does?

I had once a better opinion of you, Miss Horton!—Indeed you should not insult the miserable.

Neither should the miserable, said Sally, insult people for their civility.

I should be sorry if I did.

Mrs. Sinclair shall attend you by-and-by, to know if you have any commands for her.

I have no wish for any liberty, but that of refusing to see her, and one more person.

What we came for, was to know if you had any proposals to make for your enlargement.

Then, it seems, the officer put in. You have very good friends, Madam, I understand. Is it not better that you make it up? Charges will run high. A hundred and fifty guineas are easier paid than two hundred. Let these

ladies bail you, and go along with them; or write to your friends to make it up.

Sally said, There is a gentleman who saw you taken, and was so much moved for you, Miss Harlowe, that he would gladly advance the money for you, and leave you to pay it when you can.

See, Lovelace, what cursed devils these are! This is the way, we know, that many an innocent heart is thrown upon keeping, and then upon the town. But for these wretches thus to go to work with such an angel as this!—How glad would have been the devilish Sally, to have had the least handle to report to thee a listening ear, or patient spirit, upon this hint!

Sir, said she, with high indignation, to the officer, did not you say, last night, that it was as much your business to protect me from the insults of others, as from escaping?—Cannot I be permitted to see whom I please? and to refuse admittance to those I like not?

Your creditors, Madam, will expect to see you.

Not if I declare I will not treat with them.

Then, Madam, you will be sent to prison.

Prison, friend!—What dost thou call thy house?

Not a prison, Madam.

Why these iron-barred windows, then? Why these double locks and bolts all on the outside, none on the in?

And down she dropt into her chair, and they could not get another word from her. She threw her handkerchief over her face, as one before, which was soon wet with tears; and grievously, they own, she sobbed.

Gentle treatment, Lovelace!—Perhaps thou, as well as these wretches, will think it so!

Sally then ordered a dinner, and said, They would soon be back a gain, and see that she eat and drank, as a good christian should, comporting herself to her condition, and making the best of it.

What has not this charming creature suffered, what has she not gone through, in these last three months, that I know of!—Who would think such a delicately-framed person could have sustained what she has sustained! We sometimes talk of bravery, of courage, of fortitude!—Here they are in perfection!—Such bravoes as thou and I should never have been able to support ourselves under half the persecutions, the disappointments, and contumelies, that she has met with; but, like cowards, should have slid out of the world, basely, by some back-door; that is to say, by a sword, by a pistol, by a halter, or knife;—but here is a fine-principled woman, who, by dint of this noble consideration, as I imagine, [What else can support her?] that she has not deserved the evils she contends with; and that this world is designed but as a transitory state of the probation; and that she is travelling to another and better; puts up with all the hardships of the journey; and is not to be diverted from her course by the attacks of thieves and robbers, or any other terrors and difficulties; being assured of an ample reward at the end of it.

If thou thinkest this reflection uncharacteristic from a companion and friend of thine, imaginest thou, that I profited nothing by my long attendance on my uncle in his dying state; and from the pious reflections of the good clergyman, who, day by day, at the poor man's own request, visited and prayed by him?—And could I have another such instance, as this, to bring all these reflections home to me?

Then who can write of good persons, and of good subjects, and be capable of admiring them, and not be made serious for the time? And hence may we gather what a benefit to the morals of men the keeping of good company must be; while those who keep only bad, must necessarily more and more harden, and be hardened.

'Tis twelve of the clock, Sunday night—I can think of nothing but this excellent creature. Her distresses fill my head and my heart. I was drowsy for a quarter of an hour; but the fit is gone off. And I will continue the melancholy subject from the information of these wretches. Enough, I dare say, will arise in the visit I shall make, if admitted to-morrow, to send by thy servant, as to the way I am likely to find her in.

After the women had left her, she complained of her head and her heart; and seemed terrified with apprehensions of being carried once more to Sinclair's.

Refusing any thing for breakfast, Mrs. Rowland came up to her, and told her, (as these wretches owned they had ordered her, for fear she should starve herself,) that she must and should have tea, and bread and butter: and that, as she had friends who could support her, if she wrote to them, it was a wrong thing, both for herself and them, to starve herself thus.

If it be for your own sakes, said she, that is another thing: let coffee, or tea, or chocolate, or what you will, be got: and put down a chicken to my account every day, if you please, and eat it yourselves. I will taste it, if I can. I would do nothing to hinder you. I have friends will pay you liberally, when they know I am gone.

They wondered, they told her, at her strange composure in such distresses.

They were nothing, she said, to what she had suffered already from the vilest of all men. The disgrace of seizing her in the street; multitudes of people about her; shocking imputations wounding her ears; had indeed been very affecting to her. But that was over.—Every thing soon would! —And she should be still more composed, were it not for the apprehensions of seeing one man, and one woman; and being tricked or forced back to the vilest house in the world.

Then were it not better to give way to the two gentlewoman's offer to bail her?—They could tell her, it was a very kind proffer; and what was not to be met every day.

She believed so.

The ladies might, possibly, dispense with her going back to the house to which she had such an antipathy. Then the compassionate gentleman, who was inclined to make it up with her creditors on her own bond—it was very strange to them she hearkened not to so generous a proposal.

Did the two ladies tell you who the gentleman was?—Or, did they say any more on the subject?

Yes, they did! and hinted to me, said the woman, that you had nothing to do but to receive a visit from the gentleman, and the money, they believed, would be laid down on your own bond or note.

She was startled.

I charge you, said she, as you will answer it one day to my friends, I charge you don't. If you do, you know not what may be the consequence.

They apprehended no bad consequence, they said, in doing their duty: and if she knew not her own good, her friends would thank them for taking any innocent steps to serve her, though against her will.

Don't push me upon extremities, man!—Don't make me desperate, woman!—I have no small difficulty, notwithstanding the seeming composure you just now took notice of, to bear, as I ought to bear, the evils I suffer. But if you bring a man or men to me, be the pretence what it will—

She stopt there, and looked so earnestly, and so wildly, they said, that they did not know but she would do some harm to herself, if they disobeyed her; and that would be a sad thing in their house, and might be their ruin. They therefore promised, that no man should be brought to her but by her own consent.

Mrs. Rowland prevailed on her to drink a dish of tea, and taste some bread and butter, about eleven on Saturday morning: which she probably did to have an excuse not to dine with the women when they returned.

But she would not quit her prison-room, as she called it, to go into their parlour.

'Unbarred windows, and a lightsomer apartment,' she said, 'had too cheerful an appearance for her mind.'

A shower falling, as she spoke, 'What,' said she, looking up, 'do the elements weep for me?'

At another time, 'The light of the sun was irksome to her. The sun seemed to shine in to mock her woes.'

'Methought,' added she, 'the sun darting in, and gilding these iron bars, plays upon me like the two women, who came to insult my haggard looks, by the word beauty; and my dejected heart, by the word haughty airs!'

Sally came again at dinner-time, to see how she fared, as she told her; and that she did not starve herself: and, as she wanted to have some talk with her, if she gave her leave, she would dine with her.

I cannot eat.

You must try, Miss Harlowe.

And, dinner being ready just then, she offered her hand, and desired her to walk down.

No; she would not stir out of her prison-room.

These sullen airs won't do, Miss Harlowe: indeed they won't.

She was silent.

You will have harder usage than any you have ever yet known, I can tell you, if you come not into some humour to make matters up.

She was still silent.

Come, Miss, walk down to dinner. Let me entreat you, do. Miss Horton is below: she was once your favourite.

She waited for an answer: but received none.

We came to make some proposals to you, for your good; though you affronted us so lately. And we would not let Mrs. Sinclair come in person, because we thought to oblige you.

This is indeed obliging.

Come, give me your hand. Miss Harlowe: you are obliged to me, I can tell you that: and let us go down to Miss Horton.

Excuse me: I will not stir out of this room.

Would you have me and Miss Horton dine in this filthy bed-room?

It is not a bed-room to me. I have not been in bed; nor will, while I am here.

And yet you care not, as I see, to leave the house.—And so, you won't go down, Miss Harlowe?

I won't, except I am forced to it.

Well, well, let it alone. I sha'n't ask Miss Horton to dine in this room, I assure you. I will send up a plate.

And away the little saucy toad fluttered down.

When they had dined, up they came together.

Well, Miss, you would not eat any thing, it seems?—Very pretty sullen airs these!—No wonder the honest gentleman had such a hand with you.

She only held up her hands and eyes; the tears trickling down her cheeks.

Insolent devils!—how much more cruel and insulting are bad women even than bad men!

Methinks, Miss, said Sally, you are a little soily, to what we have seen you. Pity such a nice lady should not have changes of apparel! Why won't you send to your lodgings for linen, at least?

I am not nice now.

Miss looks well and clean in any thing, said Polly. But, dear Madam, why won't you send to your lodgings? Were it but in kindness to the people? They must have a concern about you. And your Miss Howe will wonder what's become of you; for, no doubt, you correspond.

She turned from them, and, to herself, said, Too much! Too much!—She tossed her handkerchief, wet before with her tears, from her, and held her apron to her eyes.

Don't weep, Miss! said the vile Polly.

Yet do, cried the viler Sally, it will be a relief. Nothing, as Mr. Lovelace once told me, dries sooner than tears. For once I too wept mightily.

I could not bear the recital of this with patience. Yet I cursed them not so much as I should have done, had I not had a mind to get from them all the particulars of their gentle treatment: and this for two reasons; the one, that I might stab thee to the heart with the repetition; and the other, that I might know upon what terms I am likely to see the unhappy lady to-morrow.

Well, but, Miss Harlowe, cried Sally, do you think these forlorn airs pretty? You are a good christian, child.

Mrs. Rowland tells me, she has got you a Bible-book.—O there it lies!—I make no doubt but you have doubled down the useful places, as honest Matt. Prior says.

Then rising, and taking it up.—Ay, so you have.—The Book of Job! One opens naturally here, I see—My mamma made me a fine Bible-scholar.—You see, Miss Horton, I know something of the book.

They proposed once more to bail her, and to go home with them. A motion which she received with the same indignation as before.

Sally told her, That she had written in a very favourable manner, in her behalf, to you; and that she every hour expected an answer; and made no doubt, that you would come up with a messenger, and generously pay the whole debt, and ask her pardon for neglecting it.

This disturbed her so much, that they feared she would have fallen into fits. She could not bear your name, she said. She hoped she should never see you more: and, were you to intrude yourself, dreadful consequences might follow.

Surely, they said, she would be glad to be released from her confinement.

Indeed she should, now they had begun to alarm her with his name, who was the author of all her woes: and who, she now saw plainly, gave way to this new outrage, in order to bring her to his own infamous terms.

Why then, they asked, would she not write to her friends, to pay Mrs. Sinclair's demand?

Because she hoped she should not trouble any body; and because she knew that the payment of the money if she should be able to pay it, was not what was aimed at.

Sally owned that she told her, That, truly, she had thought herself as well descended, and as well educated, as herself, though not entitled to such considerable fortunes. And had the impudence to insist upon it to me to be truth.

She had the insolence to add, to the lady, That she had as much reason as she to expect Mr. Lovelace would marry her; he having contracted to do so before he knew Miss Clarissa Harlowe: and that she had it under his hand and seal too—or else he had not obtained his end: therefore it was not likely she should be so officious as to do his work against herself, if she thought Mr. Lovelace had designs upon her, like what she presumed to hint at: that, for her part, her only view was, to procure liberty to a young gentlewoman, who made those things grievous to her which would not be made such a rout about by any body else—and to procure the payment of a just debt to her friend Mrs. Sinclair.

She besought them to leave her. She wanted not these instances, she said, to convince her of the company she was in; and told them, that, to get rid of such visiters, and of the still worse she was apprehensive of, she would write to one friend to raise the money for her; though it would be death for her to do so; because that friend could not do it without her mother, in whose eye it would give a selfish appearance to a friendship that was above all sordid alloys.

They advised her to write out of hand.

But how much must I write for? What is the sum? Should I not have had a bill delivered me? God knows, I took not your lodgings. But he that could treat me as he has done, could do this!

Don't speak against Mr. Lovelace, Miss Harlowe. He is a man I greatly esteem. [Cursed toad!] And, 'bating that he will take his advantage, where he can, of US silly credulous women, he is a man of honour.

She lifted up her hands and eyes, instead of speaking: and well she might! For any words she could have used could not have expressed the anguish she must feel on being comprehended in the US.

She must write for one hundred and fifty guineas, at least: two hundred, if she were short of more money, might well be written for.

Mrs. Sinclair, she said, had all her clothes. Let them be sold, fairly sold, and the money go as far as it would go. She had also a few other valuables; but no money, (none at all,) but the poor half guinea, and the little silver they had seen. She would give bond to pay all that her apparel, and the other maters she had, would fall short of. She had great effects belonging to her of right. Her bond would, and must be paid, were it for a thousand pounds. But her clothes she should never want. She believed, if not too much undervalued, those, and her few valuables, would answer every thing. She wished for no surplus but to discharge the last expenses; and forty shillings would do as well for those as forty pounds. 'Let my ruin, said she, lifting up her eyes, be LARGE! Let it be COMPLETE, in this life!—For a composition, let it be COMPLETE.'—And there she stopped.

The wretches could not help wishing to me for the opportunity of making such a purchase for their own wear. How I cursed them! and, in my heart, thee!—But too probable, thought I, that this vile Sally Martin may hope, [though thou art incapable of it,] that her Lovelace, as she has the assurance, behind thy back, to call thee, may present her with some of the poor lady's spoils!

Will not Mrs. Sinclair, proceeded she, think my clothes a security, till they can be sold? They are very good clothes. A suit or two but just put on, as it were; never worn. They cost much more than it demanded of me. My father loved to see me fine.—All shall go. But let me have the particulars of her demand. I suppose I must pay for my destroyer [that was her well-adapted word!] and his servants, as well as for myself. I am content to do so—I am above wishing that any body, who could thus act, should be so much as expostulated with, as to the justice and equity of this payment. If I have but enough to pay the demand, I shall be satisfied; and will leave the baseness of such an action as this, as an aggravation of a guilt which I thought could not be aggravated.

I own, Lovelace, I have malice in this particularity, in order to sting thee on the heart. And, let me ask thee, what now thou can'st think of thy barbarity, thy unprecedented barbarity, in having reduced a person of her rank, fortune, talents, and virtue, so low?

The wretched women, it must be owned, act but in their profession: a profession thou hast been the principal means of reducing these two to act in. And they know what thy designs have been, and how far prosecuted. It is, in their opinions, using her gently, that they have forborne to bring her to the woman so justly odious to her: and that they have not threatened her with the introducing to her strange men: nor yet

brought into her company their spirit-breakers, and humbling-drones, (fellows not allowed to carry stings,) to trace and force her back to their detested house; and, when there, into all their measures.

Till I came, they thought thou wouldst not be displeas'd at any thing she suffer'd, that could help to mortify her into a state of shame and disgrace; and bring her to comply with thy views, when thou shouldst come to release her from these wretches, as from a greater evil than cohabiting with thee.

When thou considerest these things, thou wilt make no difficulty of believing, that this their own account of their behaviour to this admirable woman has been far short of their insults: and the less, when I tell thee, that, all together, their usage had such effect upon her, that they left her in violent hysterics; ordering an apothecary to be sent for, if she should continue in them, and be worse; and particularly (as they had done from the first) that they kept out of her way any edged or pointed instrument; especially a pen-knife; which, pretending to mend a pen, they said, she might ask for.

At twelve, Saturday night, Rowland sent to tell them, that she was so ill, that he knew not what might be the issue; and wish'd her out of his house.

And this made them as heartily wish to hear from you. For their messenger, to their great surprise, was not then returned from M. Hall. And they were sure he must have reach'd that place by Friday night.

Early on Sunday morning, both devils went to see how she did. They had such an account of her weakness, lowness, and anguish, that they forebore (out of compassion, they said, finding their visits so disagreeable to her) to see her. But their apprehension of what might be the issue was, no doubt, their principal consideration: nothing else could have soften'd such flinty bosoms.

They sent for the apothecary Rowland had had to her, and gave him, and Rowland, and his wife and maid, strict orders, many times repeated, for the utmost care to be taken of her—no doubt, with an Old-Bailey forecast. And they sent up to let her know what orders they had given: but that, understanding she had taken something to compose herself, they would not disturb her.

She had scrupled, it seems, to admit the apothecary's visit over night, because he was a MAN. Nor could she be prevail'd upon to see him, till they pleas'd their own safety to her.

They went again, from church, [Lord, Bob., these creatures go to church!] but she sent them down word that she must have all the remainder of the day to herself.

When I first came, and told them of thy execrations for what they had done, and join'd my own to them, they were astonish'd. The mother said, she had thought she had known Mr. Lovelace better; and expected thanks, and not curses.

While I was with them, came back halting and cursing, most horribly, their messenger; by reason of the ill-usage he had received from you, instead of the reward he had been taught to expect for the supposed good news that he carried down.—A pretty fellow, art thou not, to abuse people for the consequences of thy own faults?

Dorcas, whose acquaintance this fellow is, and who recommended him for the journey, had condition'd with him, it seems, for a share in the expected bounty from you. Had she been to have had her share made good, I wish thou hadst broken every bone in his skin.

Under what shocking disadvantages, and with this addition to them, that I am thy friend and intimate, am I to make a visit to this unhappy lady to-morrow morning! In thy name, too!—Enough to be refus'd, that I am of a sex, to which, for thy sake, she has so justifiable an aversion: nor, having such a tyrant of a father, and such an implacable brother, has she the reason to make an exception in favour of any of it on their accounts.

It is three o'clock. I will close here; and take a little rest: what I have written will be a proper preparative for what shall offer by-and-by.

Thy servant is not to return without a letter, he tells me; and that thou expectest him back in the morning. Thou hast fellows enough where thou art at thy command. If I find any difficulty in seeing the lady, thy messenger shall post away with this.—Let him look to broken bones, and other consequences, if what he carries answer not thy expectation. But, if I am admitted, thou shalt have this and the result of my audience both together. In the former case, thou mayest send another servant to wait the next advices from

J. BELFORD.

LETTER XVI

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. MONDAY, JULY 17.

About six this morning, I went to Rowland's. Mrs. Sinclair was to follow me, in order to dismiss the action; but not to come in sight.

Rowland, upon inquiry, told me, that the lady was extremely ill; and that she had desired, that no one but his wife or maid should come near her.

I said, I must see her. I had told him my business over-night, and I must see her.

His wife went up: but return'd presently, saying, she could not get her to speak to her; yet that her eyelids mov'd; though she either would not, or could not, open them, to look up at her.

Oons, woman, said I, the lady may be in a fit: the lady may be dying—let me go up. Show me the way.

A horrid hole of a house, in an alley they call a court; stairs wretchedly narrow, even to the first-floor rooms: and into a den they led me, with broken walls, which had been papered, as I saw by a multitude of tacks, and some torn bits held on by the rusty heads.

The floor indeed was clean, but the ceiling was smok'd with variety of figures, and initials of names, that had been the woeful employment of wretches who had no other way to amuse themselves.

A bed at one corner, with coarse curtains tacked up at the feet to the ceiling; because the curtain-rings were broken off; but a coverlid upon it with a cleanish look, though plaguily in tatters, and the corners tied up in tassels, that the rents in it might go no farther.

The windows dark and double-barred, the tops boarded up to save mending; and only a little four-paned eyelet-hole of a casement to let in air; more, however, coming in at broken panes than could come in at that.

Four old Turkey-worked chairs, bursten-bottomed, the stuffing staring out.

An old, tottering, worm-eaten table, that had more nails bestowed in mending it to make it stand, than the table cost fifty years ago, when new.

On the mantle-piece was an iron shove-up candlestick, with a lighted candle in it, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, four of them, I suppose, for a penny.

Near that, on the same shelf, was an old looking-glass, cracked through the middle, breaking out into a thousand points; the crack given it, perhaps, in a rage, by some poor creature, to whom it gave the representation of his heart's woes in his face.

The chimney had two half-tiles in it on one side, and one whole one on the other; which showed it had been in better plight; but now the very mortar had followed the rest of the tiles in every other place, and left the bricks bare.

An old half-barred stove grate was in the chimney; and in that a large stone-bottle without a neck, filled with baleful yew, as an evergreen, withered southern-wood, dead sweet-briar, and sprigs of rue in flower.

To finish the shocking description, in a dark nook stood an old broken-bottomed cane couch, without a squab, or coverlid, sunk at one corner, and unmortised by the failing of one of its worm-eaten legs, which lay in two pieces under the wretched piece of furniture it could no longer support.

And this, thou horrid Lovelace, was the bed-chamber of the divine Clarissa!!!

I had leisure to cast my eye on these things: for, going up softly, the poor lady turned not about at our entrance; nor, till I spoke, moved her head.

She was kneeling in a corner of the room, near the dismal window, against the table, on an old bolster (as it seemed to be) of the cane couch, half-covered with her handkerchief; her back to the door; which was only shut to, [no need of fastenings;] her arms crossed upon the table, the fore-finger of her right-hand in her Bible. She had perhaps been reading in it, and could read no longer. Paper, pens, ink, lay by her book on the table. Her dress was white damask, exceeding neat; but her stays seemed not tight-laced. I was told afterwards, that her laces had been cut, when she fainted away at her entrance into this cursed place; and she had not been solicitous enough about her dress to send for others. Her head-dress was a little discomposed; her charming hair, in natural ringlets, as you have heretofore described it, but a little tangled, as if not lately combed, irregularly shading one side of the loveliest neck in the world; as her disordered ruffled handkerchief did the other. Her face [O how altered from what I had seen it! yet lovely in spite of all her griefs and sufferings!] was reclined, when we entered, upon her crossed arms; but so, as not more than one side of it could be hid.

When I surveyed the room around, and the kneeling lady, sunk with majesty too in her white flowing robes, (for she had not on a hoop,) spreading the dark, though not dirty, floor, and illuminating that horrid corner; her linen beyond imagination white, considering that she had not been undressed every since she had been here; I thought my concern would have choked me. Something rose in my throat, I know not what, which made me, for a moment, guggle, as it were, for speech: which, at last, forcing its way, con—con—confound you both, said I, to the man and woman, is this an apartment for such a lady? and could the cursed devils of her own sex, who visited this suffering angel, see her, and leave her, in so d—d a nook?

Sir, we would have had the lady to accept of our own bed-chamber: but she refused it. We are poor people—and we expect nobody will stay with us longer than they can help it.

You are people chosen purposely, I doubt not, by the d—d woman who has employed you: and if your usage of this lady has been but half as bad as your house, you had better never to have seen the light.

Up then raised the charming sufferer her lovely face; but with such a significance of woe overspreading it, that I could not, for the soul of me, help being visibly affected.

She waved her hand two or three times towards the door, as if commanding me to withdraw; and displeased at my intrusion; but did not speak.

Permit me, Madam—I will not approach one step farther without your leave—permit me, for one moment, the favour of your ear!

No—no—go, go, MAN! with an emphasis—and would have said more; but, as if struggling in vain for words, she seemed to give up speech for lost, and dropped her head down once more, with a deep sigh, upon her left arm; her right, as if she had not the use of it (numbed, I suppose) self-moved, dropping on her side.

O that thou hadst been there! and in my place!—But by what I then felt, in myself, I am convinced, that a capacity of being moved by the distresses of our fellow creatures, is far from being disgraceful to a manly heart. With what pleasure, at that moment, could I have given up my own life, could I but first have avenged this charming creature, and cut the throat of her destroyer, as she emphatically calls thee, though the friend that I best love: and yet, at the same time, my heart and my eyes gave way to a softness of which (though not so hardened a wretch as thou) they were never before so susceptible.

I dare not approach you, dearest lady, without your leave: but on my knees I beseech you to permit me to release you from this d—d house, and out of the power of the cursed woman, who was the occasion of your being here!

She lifted up her sweet face once more, and beheld me on my knees. Never knew I before what it was to pray so heartily.

Are you not—are you not Mr. Belford, Sir? I think your name is Belford?

It is, Madam, and I ever was a worshipper of your virtues, and an advocate for you; and I come to release you from the hands you are in.

And in whose to place me?—O leave me, leave me! let me never rise from this spot! let me never, never more believe in man!

This moment, dearest lady, this very moment, if you please, you may depart whithersoever you think fit. You are absolutely free, and your own mistress.

I had now as lieve die here in this place, as any where. I will owe no obligation to any friend of him in whose company you have seen me. So, pray, Sir, withdraw.

Then turning to the officer, Mr. Rowland I think your name is? I am better reconciled to your house than I was at first. If you can but engage that I shall have nobody come near me but your wife, (no man!) and neither of those women who have sported with my calamities, I will die with you, and in this very corner. And you shall be well satisfied for the trouble you have had with me—I have value enough for that—for, see, I have a diamond ring; taking it out of her bosom; and I have friends will redeem it at a high price, when I am gone.

But for you, Sir, looking at me, I beg you to withdraw. If you mean well by me, God, I hope, will reward you for your good meaning; but to the friend of my destroyer will I not owe an obligation.

You will owe no obligation to me, nor to any body. You have been detained for a debt you do not owe. The action is dismissed; and you will only be so good as to give me your hand into the coach, which stands as near to this house as it could draw up. And I will either leave you at the coach-door, or attend you whithersoever you please, till I see you safe where you would wish to be.

Will you then, Sir, compel me to be beholden to you?

You will inexpressibly oblige me, Madam, to command me to do you either service or pleasure.

Why then, Sir, [looking at me]—but why do you mock me in that humble posture! Rise, Sir! I cannot speak to you else.

I rose.

Only, Sir, take this ring. I have a sister, who will be glad to have it, at the price it shall be valued at, for the former owner's sake!—Out of the money she gives, let this man be paid! handsomely paid: and I have a few valuables more at my lodging, (Dorcas, or the MAN William, can tell where that is;) let them, and my clothes at the wicked woman's, where you have seen me, be sold for the payment of my lodging first, and next of your friend's debts, that I have been arrested for, as far as they will go; only reserving enough to put me into the ground, any where, or any how, no matter—Tell your friend, I wish it may be enough to satisfy the whole demand; but if it be not, he must make it up himself; or, if he think fit to draw for it on Miss Howe, she will repay it, and with interest, if he insist upon it.—And this, Sir, if you promise to perform, you will do me, as you offer, both pleasure and service: and say you will, and take the ring and withdraw. If I want to say any thing more to you (you seem to be an humane man) I will let you know—and so, Sir, God bless you!

I approached her, and was going to speak—

Don't speak, Sir: here's the ring.

I stood off.

And won't you take it? won't you do this last office for me?—I have no other person to ask it of; else, believe me, I would not request it of you. But take it, or not, laying it upon the table—you must withdraw, Sir: I am very ill. I would fain get a little rest, if I could. I find I am going to be bad again.

And offering to rise, she sunk down through excess of weakness and grief, in a fainting fit.

Why, Lovelace, was thou not present thyself?—Why dost thou commit such villainies, as even thou art afraid to appear in; and yet puttest a weaker heart and head upon encountering with them?

The maid coming in just then, the woman and she lifted her up on a decrepit couch; and I withdrew with this Rowland; who wept like a child, and said, he never in his life was so moved.

Yet so hardened a wretch art thou, that I question whether thou wilt shed a tear at my relation.

They recovered her by hartshorn and water. I went down mean while; for the detestable woman had been below some time. O how I did curse her! I never before was so fluent in curses.

She tried to wheedle me; but I renounced her; and, after she had dismissed the action, sent her away crying, or pretending to cry, because of my behaviour to her.

You will observe, that I did not mention one word to the lady about you. I was afraid to do it. For 'twas plain, that she could not bear your name: your friend, and the company you have seen me in, were the words nearest to naming you she could speak: and yet I wanted to clear your intention of this brutal, this sordid-looking villany.

I sent up again, by Rowland's wife, when I heard that the lady was recovered, beseeching her to quit that devilish place; and the woman assured her that she was at liberty to do so, for that the action was dismissed.

But she cared not to answer her: and was so weak and low, that it was almost as much out of her power as inclination, the woman told me, to speak.

I would have hastened away for my friend Doctor H., but the house is such a den, and the room she was in such a hole, that I was ashamed to be seen in it by a man of his reputation, especially with a woman of such an appearance, and in such uncommon distress; and I found there was no prevailing upon her to quit it for the people's bed-room, which was neat and lightsome.

The strong room she was in, the wretches told me, should have been in better order, but that it was but the very morning that she was brought in that an unhappy man had quitted it; for a more eligible prison, no doubt; since there could hardly be a worse.

Being told that she desired not to be disturbed, and seemed inclined to doze, I took this opportunity to go to her lodgings in Covent-garden: to which Dorcas (who first discovered her there, as Will. was the setter from church) had before given me a direction.

The man's name is Smith, a dealer in gloves, snuff, and such petty merchandize: his wife the shopkeeper: he a maker of the gloves they sell. Honest people, it seems.

I thought to have got the woman with me to the lady; but she was not within.

I talked with the man, and told him what had befallen the lady; owing, as I said, to a mistake of orders; and gave her the character she deserved; and desired him to send his wife, the moment she came in, to the lady; directing him whither; not doubting that her attendance would be very welcome to her; which he promised.

He told me that a letter was left for her there on Saturday; and, about half an hour before I came, another, superscribed by the same hand; the first, by the post; the other, by a countryman; who having been informed of her absence, and of all the circumstances they could tell him of it, posted away, full of concern, saying, that the lady he was sent from would be ready to break her heart at the tidings.

I thought it right to take the two letters back with me; and, dismissing my coach, took a chair, as a more proper vehicle for the lady, if I (the friend of her destroyer) could prevail upon her to leave Rowland's.

And here, being obliged to give way to an indispensable avocation, I will make thee taste a little, in thy turn, of the plague of suspense; and break off, without giving thee the least hint of the issue of my further proceedings. I know, that those least bear disappointment, who love most to give it. In twenty instances, hast thou afforded me proof of the truth of this observation. And I matter not thy raving.

Another letter, however, shall be ready, send for it as soon as thou wilt. But, were it not, have I not written enough to convince thee, that I am

Thy ready and obliging friend, J. BELFORD.

LETTER XVII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. MONDAY, JULY 17, ELEVEN AT NIGHT.

Curse upon thy hard heart, thou vile caitiff! How hast thou tortured me, by thy designed abruption! 'tis impossible that Miss Harlowe should have ever suffered as thou hast made me suffer, and as I now suffer!

That sex is made to bear pain. It is a curse that the first of it entailed upon all her daughters, when she brought the curse upon us all. And they love those best, whether man or child, who give them most—But to stretch upon thy d—d tender-hooks such a spirit as mine—No rack, no torture, can equal my torture!

And must I still wait the return of another messenger?

Confound thee for a malicious devil! I wish thou wert a post-horse, and I upon the back of thee! how would I whip and spur, and harrow up thy clumsy sides, till I make thee a ready-roasted, ready-flayed, mess of dog's meat; all the hounds in the country howling after thee, as I drove thee, to wait my dismounting, in order to devour thee piece-meal; life still throbbing in each churned mouthful!

Give this fellow the sequel of thy tormenting scribble.

Dispatch him away with it. Thou hast promised it shall be ready. Every cushion or chair I shall sit upon, the bed I shall lie down upon (if I go to bed) till he return, will be stuffed with bolt-upright awls, bodkins, corking-pins, and packing needles: already I can fancy that, to pink my body like my mind, I need only to be put into a hogshead stuck full of steel-pointed spikes, and rolled down a hill three times as high as the Monument.

But I lose time; yet know not how to employ it till this fellow returns with the sequel of thy soul-harrowing intelligence!

LETTER XVIII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. MONDAY NIGHT, JULY 17.

On my return to Rowland's, I found that the apothecary was just gone up. Mrs. Rowland being above with him, I made the less scruple to go up too, as it was probable, that to ask for leave would be to ask to be denied; hoping also, that the letters had with me would be a good excuse.

She was sitting on the side of the broken couch, extremely weak and low; and, I observed, cared not to speak to the man: and no wonder; for I never saw a more shocking fellow, of a profession tolerably genteel, nor heard a more illiterate one prate—physician in ordinary to this house, and others like it, I suppose! He put me in mind of Otway's apothecary in his Caius Marius; as borrowed from the immortal Shakspeare:

*Meagre and very rueful were his looks:
Sharp misery had worn him to the bones.
—— Famine in his cheeks:
Need and oppression staring in his eyes:
Contempt and beggary hanging on his back:
The world no friend of his, nor the world's law.*

As I am in black, he took me, at my entrance, I believe, to be a doctor; and slunk behind me with his hat upon his two thumbs, and looked as if he expected the oracle to open, and give him orders.

The lady looked displeas'd, as well at me as at Rowland, who followed me, and at the apothecary. It was not, she said, the least of her present misfortunes, that she could not be left to her own sex; and to her option to see whom she pleas'd.

I besought her excuse; and winking for the apothecary to withdraw, [which he did,] told her, that I had been at her new lodgings, to order every thing to be got ready for reception, presuming she would choose to go thither: that I had a chair at the door: that Mr. Smith and his wife [I named their names, that she should not have room for the least fear of Sinclair's] had been full of apprehensions for her safety: that I had brought

two letters, which were left there for her; the one by the post, the other that very morning.

This took her attention. She held out her charming hand for them; took them, and, pressing them to her lips—From the only friend I have in the world! said she; kissing them again; and looking at the seals, as if to see whether they had been opened. I can't read them, said she, my eyes are too dim; and put them into her bosom.

I besought her to think of quitting that wretched hole.

Whither could she go, she asked, to be safe and uninterrupted for the short remainder of her life; and to avoid being again visited by the creatures who had insulted her before?

I gave her the solemnest assurances that she should not be invaded in her new lodgings by any body; and said that I would particularly engage my honour, that the person who had most offended her should not come near her, without her own consent.

Your honour, Sir! Are you not that man's friend!

I am not a friend, Madam, to his vile actions to the most excellent of women.

Do you flatter me, Sir? then you are a MAN.—But Oh, Sir, your friend, holding her face forward with great earnestness, your barbarous friend, what has he not to answer for!

There she stopt: her heart full; and putting her hand over her eyes and forehead, the tears tricked through her fingers: resenting thy barbarity, it seemed, as Caesar did the stab from his distinguished Brutus!

Though she was so very much disordered, I thought I would not lose this opportunity to assert your innocence of this villanous arrest.

There is no defending the unhappy man in any of his vile actions by you, Madam; but of this last outrage, by all that's good and sacred, he is innocent.

O wretches; what a sex is your's!—Have you all one dialect? good and sacred!—If, Sir, you can find an oath, or a vow, or an adjuration, that my ears have not been twenty times a day wounded with, then speak it, and I may again believe a MAN.

I was excessively touched at these words, knowing thy baseness, and the reason she had for them.

But say you, Sir, for I would not, methinks, have the wretch capable of this sordid baseness!—Say you, that he is innocent of this last wickedness? can you truly say that he is?

By the great God of Heaven!—

Nay, Sir, if you swear, I must doubt you!—If you yourself think your WORD insufficient, what reliance can I have on your OATH!—O that this my experience had not cost me so dear! but were I to love a thousand years, I would always suspect the veracity of a swearer. Excuse me, Sir; but is it likely, that he who makes so free with his GOD, will scruple any thing that may serve his turn with his fellow creature?

This was a most affecting reprimand!

Madam, said I, I have a regard, a regard a gentleman ought to have, to my word; and whenever I forfeit it to you—

Nay, Sir, don't be angry with me. It is grievous to me to question a gentleman's veracity. But your friend calls himself a gentleman—you know not what I have suffered by a gentleman!—And then again she wept.

I would give you, Madam, demonstration, if your grief and your weakness would permit it, that he has no hand in this barbarous baseness: and that he resents it as it ought to be resented.

Well, well, Sir, [with quickness,] he will have his account to make up somewhere else; not to me. I should not be sorry to find him able to acquit his intention on this occasion. Let him know, Sir, only one thing, that when you heard me in the bitterness of my spirit, most vehemently exclaim against the undeserved usage I have met with from him, that even then, in that passionate moment, I was able to say [and never did I see such an earnest and affecting exultation of hands and eyes,] 'Give him, good God! repentance and amendment; that I may be the last poor creature, who shall be ruined by him!—and, in thine own good time, receive to thy mercy the poor wretch who had none on me!—'

By my soul, I could not speak.—She had not her Bible before her for nothing.

I was forced to turn my head away, and to take out my handkerchief.

What an angel is this!—Even the gaoler, and his wife and maid, wept.

Again I wish thou hadst been there, that thou mightest have sunk down at her feet, and begun that moment to reap the effect of her generous wishes for thee; undeserving, as thou art, of any thing but perdition.

I represented to her that she would be less free where she was from visits she liked not, than at her own lodgings. I told her, that it would probably bring her, in particular, one visiter, who, otherwise I would engage, [but I durst not swear again, after the severe reprimand she had just given me,] should not come near her, without her consent. And I expressed my surprize, that she should be unwilling to quit such a place as this; when it was more than probable that some of her friends, when it was known how bad she was, would visit her.

She said the place, when she was first brought into it, was indeed very shocking to her: but that she had found herself so weak and ill, and her griefs had so sunk her, that she did not expect to have lived till now: that therefore all places had been alike to her; for to die in a prison, was to die; and equally eligible as to die in a palace, [palaces, she said, could have no attractions for a dying person:] but that, since she feared she was not so soon to be released, as she had hoped; since she was suffered to be so little mistress of herself here; and since she might, by removal, be in the way of her dear friend's letters; she would hope that she might depend upon the assurances I gave her of being at liberty to return to her last lodgings, (otherwise she would provide herself with new ones, out of my knowledge, as well as your's;) and that I was too much of a gentleman, to be concerned in carrying her back to the house she had so much reason to abhor, and to which she had been once before most vilely betrayed to her ruin.

I assured her, in the strongest terms [but swore not,] that you were resolved not to molest her: and, as a proof of the sincerity of my professions, besought her to give me directions, (in pursuance of my friend's

express desire,) about sending all her apparel, and whatever belonged to her, to her new lodgings.

She seemed pleased; and gave me instantly out of her pocket her keys; asking me, If Mrs. Smith, whom I had named, might not attend me; and she would give her further directions? To which I cheerfully assented; and then she told me that she would accept of the chair I had offered her.

I withdrew; and took the opportunity to be civil to Rowland and his maid; for she found no fault with their behaviour, for what they were; and the fellow seems to be miserably poor. I sent also for the apothecary, who is as poor as the officer, (and still poorer, I dare say, as to the skill required in his business,) and satisfied him beyond his hopes.

The lady, after I had withdrawn, attempted to read the letters I had brought her. But she could read but a little way in one of them, and had great emotions upon it.

She told the woman she would take a speedy opportunity to acknowledge her civilities and her husband's, and to satisfy the apothecary, who might send her his bill to her lodgings.

She gave the maid something; probably the only half-guinea she had: and then with difficulty, her limbs trembling under her, and supported by Mrs. Rowland, got down stairs.

I offered my arm: she was pleased to lean upon it. I doubt, Sir, said she, as she moved, I have behaved rudely to you: but, if you knew all, you would forgive me.

I know enough, Madam, to convince me, that there is not such purity and honour in any woman upon earth, nor any one that has been so barbarously treated.

She looked at me very earnestly. What she thought, I cannot say; but, in general, I never saw so much soul in a woman's eyes as in her's.

I ordered my servant, (whose mourning made him less observable as such, and who had not been in the lady's eye,) to keep the chair in view; and to bring me word, how she did, when set down. The fellow had the thought to step into the shop, just before the chair entered it, under pretence of buying snuff; and so enabled himself to give me an account, that she was received with great joy by the good woman of the house; who told her, she was but just come in; and was preparing to attend her in High Holborn.—O Mrs. Smith, said she, as soon as she saw her, did you not think I was run away?—You don't know what I have suffered since I saw you. I have been in a prison!—Arrested for debts I owe not!—But, thank God, I am here!—Will your maid—I have forgot her name already—

Catharine, Madam—

Will you let Catharine assist me to bed?—I have not had my clothes off since Thursday night.

What she further said the fellow heard not, she leaning upon the maid, and going up stairs.

But dost thou not observe, what a strange, what an uncommon openness of heart reigns in this lady? She had been in a prison, she said, before a stranger in the shop, and before the maid-servant: and so, probably, she would have said, had there been twenty people in the shop.

The disgrace she cannot hide from herself, as she says in her letter to Lady Betty, she is not solicitous to conceal from the world!

But this makes it evident to me, that she is resolved to keep no terms with thee. And yet to be able to put up such a prayer for thee, as she did in her prison; [I will often mention the prison-room, to tease thee!] Does this not show, that revenge has very little sway in her mind; though she can retain so much proper resentment?

And this is another excellence in this admirable woman's character: for whom, before her, have we met with in the whole sex, or in ours either, that knew how, in practice, to distinguish between REVENGE and RESENTMENT, for base and ungrateful treatment?

'Tis a cursed thing, after all, that such a woman as this should be treated as she has been treated. Hadst thou been a king, and done as thou hast done by such a meritorious innocent, I believe, in my heart, it would have been adjudged to be a national sin, and the sword, the pestilence, or famine, must have atoned for it!—But as thou art a private man, thou wilt certainly meet with thy punishment, (besides what thou mayest expect from the justice of the country, and the vengeance of her friends,) as she will her reward, **HEREAFTER**.

It must be so, if there be really such a thing as future remuneration; as now I am more and more convinced there must:—Else, what a hard fate is her's, whose punishment, to all appearance, has so much exceeded her fault? And, as to thine, how can temporary burnings, wert thou by some accident to be consumed in thy bed, expiate for thy abominable vileness to her, in breach of all obligations moral and divine?

I was resolved to lose no time in having every thing which belonged to the lady at the cursed woman's sent her. Accordingly, I took coach to Smith's, and procured the lady, (to whom I sent up my compliments, and inquiries how she bore her removal,) ill as she sent down word she was, to give proper direction to Mrs. Smith: whom I took with me to Sinclair's: and who saw every thing looked out, and put into the trunks and boxes they were first brought in, and carried away in two coaches.

Had I not been there, Sally and Polly would each of them have taken to herself something of the poor lady's spoils. This they declared: and I had some difficulty to get from Sally a fine Brussels-lace head, which she had the confidence to say she would wear for Miss Harlowe's sake. Nor should either I or Mrs. Smith have known she had got it, had she not been in search of the ruffles belonging to it.

My resentment on this occasion, and the conversation which Mrs. Smith and I had, (in which I not only expatiated on the merits of the lady, but expressed my concern for her sufferings; though I left her room to suppose her married, yet without averring it,) gave me high credit with the good woman: so that we are perfectly well acquainted already: by which means I shall be enabled to give you accounts from time to time of all that passes; and which I will be very industrious to do, provided I may depend upon the solemn promises I have given the lady, in your name, as well as in my own, that she shall be free from all personal molestation from you. And thus shall I have it in my power to return in kind your writing favours; and preserve my short-hand besides: which, till this correspondence was opened, I had pretty much neglected.

I ordered the abandoned women to make out your account. They answered, That they would do it with a vengeance. Indeed they breathe nothing but vengeance. For now, they say, you will assuredly marry; and your example will be followed by all your friends and companions—as the old one says, to the utter ruin of her poor house.

LETTER XIX

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. TUESDAY MORN. JULY 18, SIX O'CLOCK.

Having sat up so late to finish and seal in readiness my letter to the above period, I am disturbed before I wished to have risen, by the arrival of thy second fellow, man and horse in a foam.

While he baits, I will write a few lines, most heartily to congratulate thee on thy expected rage and impatience, and on thy recovery of mental feeling.

How much does the idea thou givest me of thy deserved torments, by thy upright awls, bodkins, pins, and packing-needles, by thy rolling hogshead with iron spikes, and by thy macerated sides, delight me!

I will, upon every occasion that offers, drive more spikes into thy hogshead, and roll thee down hill, and up, as thou recoverest to sense, or rather returnest back to senselessness. Thou knowest therefore the terms on which thou art to enjoy my correspondence. Am not I, who have all along, and in time, protested against thy barbarous and ungrateful perfidies to a woman so noble, entitled to drive remorse, if possible, into thy hitherto-callous heart?

Only let me repeat one thing, which perhaps I mentioned too slightly before. That the lady was determined to remove to new lodgings, where neither you nor I should be able to find her, had I not solemnly assured her, that she might depend upon being free from your visits.

These assurances I thought I might give her, not only because of your promise, but because it is necessary for you to know where she is, in order to address yourself to her by your friends.

Enable me therefore to make good to her this my solemn engagement; or adieu to all friendship, at least to all correspondence, with thee for ever.

J. BELFORD.

LETTER XX

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. TUESDAY, JULY 18. AFTERNOON.

I renewed my inquiries after the lady's health, in the morning, by my servant: and, as soon as I had dined, I went myself.

I had but a poor account of it: yet sent up my compliments. She returned me thanks for all my good offices; and her excuses, that they could not be personal just then, being very low and faint: but if I gave myself the trouble of coming about six this evening, she should be able, she hoped, to drink a dish of tea with me, and would then thank me herself.

I am very proud of this condescension; and think it looks not amiss for you, as I am your avowed friend. Methinks I want fully to remove from her mind all doubts of you in this last villanous action: and who knows then what your noble relations may be able to do for you with her, if you hold your mind? For your servant acquainted me with their having actually engaged Miss Howe in their and your favour, before this cursed affair happened. And I desire the particulars of all from yourself, that I may the better know how to serve you.

She has two handsome apartments, a bed-chamber and dining-room, with light closets in each. She has already a nurse, (the people of the house having but one maid,) a woman whose care, diligence, and honesty, Mrs. Smith highly commends. She has likewise the benefit of a widow gentlewoman, Mrs. Lovick her name, who lodges over her apartment, and of whom she seems very fond, having found something in her, she thinks, resembling the qualities of her worthy Mrs. Norton.

About seven o'clock this morning, it seems, the lady was so ill, that she yielded to their desires to have an apothecary sent for—not the fellow, thou mayest believe, she had had before at Rowland's; but one Mr. Goddard, a man of skill and eminence; and of conscience too; demonstrated as well by general character, as by his prescriptions to this lady: for pronouncing her case to be grief, he ordered, for the present, only innocent juleps, by way of cordial; and, as soon as her stomach should be able to bear it, light kitchen-diet; telling Mrs. Lovick, that that, with air, moderate exercise, and cheerful company, would do her more good than all the medicines in his shop.

This has given me, as it seems it has the lady, (who also praises his modest behaviour, paternal looks, and genteel address,) a very good opinion of the man; and I design to make myself acquainted with him, and, if he advises to call in a doctor, to wish him, for the fair patient's sake, more than the physician's, (who wants not practice,) my worthy friend Dr. H.—whose character is above all exception, as his humanity, I am sure, will distinguish him to the lady.

Mrs. Lovick gratified me with an account of a letter she had written from the lady's mouth to Miss Howe; she being unable to write herself with steadiness.

It was to this effect; in answer, it seems, to her two letters, whatever were the contents of them:

'That she had been involved in a dreadful calamity, which she was sure, when known, would exempt her

from the effects of her friendly displeasure, for not answering her first; having been put under an arrest.—Could she have believed it?—That she was released but the day before: and was now so weak and so low, that she was obliged to account thus for her silence to her [Miss Howe's] two letters of the 13th and 16th: that she would, as soon as able, answer them—begged of her, mean time, not to be uneasy for her; since (only that this was a calamity which came upon her when she was far from being well, a load laid upon the shoulders of a poor wretch, ready before to sink under too heavy a burden) it was nothing to the evil she had before suffered: and one felicity seemed likely to issue from it; which was, that she would be at rest, in an honest house, with considerate and kind-hearted people; having assurance given her, that she should not be molested by the wretch, whom it would be death for her to see: so that now she, [Miss Howe,] needed not to send to her by private and expensive conveyances: nor need Collins to take precautions for fear of being dogged to her lodgings; nor need she write by a fictitious name to her, but by her own.'

You can see I am in a way to oblige you: you see how much she depends upon my engaging for your forbearing to intrude yourself into her company: let not your flaming impatience destroy all; and make me look like a villain to a lady who has reason to suspect every man she sees to be so.—Upon this condition, you may expect all the services that can flow from

Your sincere well-wisher, J. BELFORD.

LETTER XXI

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. TUESDAY NIGHT, JULY 18.

I am just come from the lady. I was admitted into the dining-room, where she was sitting in an elbow-chair, in a very weak and low way. She made an effort to stand up when I entered; but was forced to keep her seat. You'll excuse me, Mr. Belford: I ought to rise to thank you for all your kindness to me. I was to blame to be so loth to leave that sad place; for I am in heaven here, to what I was there; and good people about me too!—I have not had good people about me for a long, long time before; so that [with a half-smile] I had begun to wonder whither they were all gone.

Her nurse and Mrs. Smith, who were present, took occasion to retire: and, when we were alone, You seem to be a person of humanity, Sir, said she: you hinted, as I was leaving my prison, that you were not a stranger to my sad story. If you know it truly, you must know that I have been most barbarously treated; and have not deserved it at the man's hands by whom I have suffered.

I told her I knew enough to be convinced that she had the merit of a saint, and the purity of an angel: and was proceeding, when she said, No flighty compliments! no undue attributes, Sir!

I offered to plead for my sincerity; and mentioned the word politeness; and would have distinguished between that and flattery. Nothing can be polite, said she, that is not just: whatever I may have had; I have now no vanity to gratify.

I disclaimed all intentions of compliment: all I had said, and what I should say, was, and should be, the effect of sincere veneration. My unhappy friend's account of her had entitled her to that.

I then mentioned your grief, your penitence, your resolutions of making her all the amends that were possible now to be made her: and in the most earnest manner, I asserted your innocence as to the last villanous outrage.

Her answer was to this effect—It is painful to me to think of him. The amends you talk of cannot be made. This last violence you speak of, is nothing to what preceded it. That cannot be atoned for: nor palliated: this may: and I shall not be sorry to be convinced that he cannot be guilty of so very low a wickedness.—Yet, after his vile forgeries of hands—after his baseness in imposing upon me the most infamous persons as ladies of honour of his own family—what are the iniquities he is not capable of?

I would then have given her an account of the trial you stood with your friends: your own previous resolutions of marriage, had she honoured you with the requested four words: all your family's earnestness to have the honour of her alliance: and the application of your two cousins to Miss Howe, by general consent, for that young lady's interest with her: but, having just touched upon these topics, she cut me short, saying, that was a cause before another tribunal: Miss Howe's letters to her were upon the subject; and as she would write her thoughts to her as soon as she was able.

I then attempted more particularly to clear you of having any hand in the vile Sinclair's officious arrest; a point she had the generosity to wish you cleared of: and, having mentioned the outrageous letter you had written to me on this occasion, she asked, If I had that letter about me?

I owned I had.

She wished to see it.

This puzzled me horribly: for you must needs think that most of the free things, which, among us rakes, pass for wit and spirit, must be shocking stuff to the ears or eyes of persons of delicacy of that sex: and then such an air of levity runs through thy most serious letters; such a false bravery, endeavouring to carry off ludicrously the subjects that most affect thee; that those letters are generally the least fit to be seen, which ought to be most to thy credit.

Something like this I observed to her; and would fain have excused myself from showing it: but she was so earnest, that I undertook to read some parts of it, resolving to omit the most exceptionable.

I know thou'lt curse me for that; but I thought it better to oblige her than to be suspected myself; and so not have it in my power to serve thee with her, when so good a foundation was laid for it; and when she knows as bad of thee as I can tell her.

Thou rememberest the contents, I suppose, of thy furious letter.* Her remarks upon the different parts of it,

which I read to her, were to the following effect:

* See Letter XII. of this volume.

Upon the last two lines, All undone! undone, by Jupiter! Zounds, Jack, what shall I do now? a curse upon all my plots and contrivances! thus she expressed herself:

'O how light, how unaffected with the sense of its own crimes, is the heart that could dictate to the pen this libertine froth?'

The paragraph which mentions the vile arrest affected her a good deal.

In the next I omitted thy curse upon thy relations, whom thou wert gallanting: and read on the seven subsequent paragraphs down to thy execrable wish; which was too shocking to read to her. What I read produced the following reflections from her:

'The plots and contrivances which he curses, and the exultings of the wicked wretches on finding me out, show me that all his guilt was premeditated: nor doubt I that his dreadful perjuries, and inhuman arts, as he went along, were to pass for fine stratagems; for witty sport; and to demonstrate a superiority of inventive talents!—O my cruel, cruel brother! had it not been for thee, I had not been thrown upon so pernicious and so despicable a plotter!—But proceed, Sir; pray proceed.'

At that part, Canst thou, O fatal prognosticator! tell me where my punishment will end?—she sighed. And when I came to that sentence, praying for my reformation, perhaps—Is that there? said she, sighing again. Wretched man!—and shed a tear for thee.—By my faith, Lovelace, I believe she hates thee not! she has at least a concern, a generous concern for thy future happiness—What a noble creature hast thou injured!

She made a very severe reflection upon me, on reading the words—On your knees, for me, beg her pardon—'You had all your lessons, Sir, said she, when you came to redeem me—You was so condescending as to kneel: I thought it was the effect of your own humanity, and good-natured earnestness to serve me—excuse me, Sir, I knew not that it was in consequence of a prescribed lesson.'

This concerned me not a little; I could not bear to be thought such a wretched puppet, such a Joseph Leman, such a Tomlinson. I endeavoured, therefore, with some warmth, to clear myself of this reflection; and she again asked my excuse: 'I was avowedly, she said, the friend of a man, whose friendship, she had reason to be sorry to say, was no credit to any body.'—And desired me to proceed.

I did; but fared not much better afterwards: for on that passage where you say, I had always been her friend and advocate, this was her unanswerable remark: 'I find, Sir, by this expression, that he had always designs against me; and that you all along knew that he had. Would to Heaven, you had had the goodness to have contrived some way, that might not have endangered your own safety, to give me notice of his baseness, since you approved not of it! But you gentlemen, I suppose, had rather see an innocent fellow-creature ruined, than be thought capable of an action, which, however generous, might be likely to loosen the bands of a wicked friendship!'

After this severe, but just reflection, I would have avoided reading the following, although I had unawares begun the sentence, (but she held me to it:) What would I now give, had I permitted you to have been a successful advocate! And this was her remark upon it—'So, Sir, you see, if you had been the happy means of preventing the evils designed me, you would have had your friend's thanks for it when he came to his consideration. This satisfaction, I am persuaded every one, in the long run, will enjoy, who has the virtue to withstand, or prevent, a wicked purpose. I was obliged, I see, to your kind wishes—but it was a point of honour with you to keep his secret; the more indispensable with you, perhaps, the viler the secret. Yet permit me to wish, Mr. Belford, that you were capable of relishing the pleasures that arise to a benevolent mind from VIRTUOUS friendship!—none other is worthy of the sacred name. You seem an humane man: I hope, for your own sake, you will one day experience the difference: and, when you do, think of Miss Howe and Clarissa Harlowe, (I find you know much of my sad story,) who were the happiest creatures on earth in each other's friendship till this friend of your's—And there she stopt, and turned from me.

Where thou callest thyself a villanous plotter; 'To take a crime to himself, said she, without shame, O what a hardened wretch is this man!'

On that passage, where thou sayest, Let me know how she has been treated: if roughly, woe be to the guilty! this was her remark, with an air of indignation: 'What a man is your friend, Sir!—Is such a one as he to set himself up to punish the guilty?—All the rough usage I could receive from them, was infinitely less'—And there she stopt a moment or two: then proceeding—'And who shall punish him? what an assuming wretch!—Nobody but himself is entitled to injure the innocent;—he is, I suppose, on the earth, to act the part which the malignant fiend is supposed to act below—dealing out punishments, at his pleasure, to every inferior instrument of mischief!'

What, thought I, have I been doing! I shall have this savage fellow think I have been playing him booty, in reading part of his letter to this sagacious lady!—Yet, if thou art angry, it can only, in reason, be at thyself; for who would think I might not communicate to her some of thy sincerity in exculpating thyself from a criminal charge, which thou wrotest to thy friend, to convince him of thy innocence? But a bad heart, and a bad cause are confounded things: and so let us put it to its proper account.

I passed over thy charge to me, to curse them by the hour; and thy names of dragon and serpents, though so applicable; since, had I read them, thou must have been supposed to know from the first what creatures they were; vile fellow as thou wert, for bringing so much purity among them! And I closed with thy own concluding paragraph, A line! a line! a kingdom for a line! &c. However, telling her (since she saw that I omitted some sentences) that there were farther vehemences in it; but as they were better fitted to show to me the sincerity of the writer than for so delicate an ear as her's to hear, I chose to pass them over.

You have read enough, said she—he is a wicked, wicked man!—I see he intended to have me in his power at any rate; and I have no doubt of what his purposes were, by what his actions have been. You know his vile Tomlinson, I suppose—You know—But what signifies talking?—Never was there such a premeditated false heart in man, [nothing can be truer, thought I!] What has he not vowed! what has he not invented! and all for what?—Only to ruin a poor young creature, whom he ought to have protected; and whom he had first

deceived of all other protection!

She arose and turned from me, her handkerchief at her eyes: and, after a pause, came towards me again—'I hope, said she, I talk to a man who has a better heart: and I thank you, Sir, for all your kind, though ineffectual pleas in my favour formerly, whether the motives for them were compassion, or principle, or both. That they were ineffectual, might very probably be owing to your want of earnestness; and that, as you might think, to my want of merit. I might not, in your eye, deserve to be saved!—I might appear to you a giddy creature, who had run away from her true and natural friends; and who therefore ought to take the consequence of the lot she had drawn.'

I was afraid, for thy sake, to let her know how very earnest I had been: but assured her that I had been her zealous friend; and that my motives were founded upon a merit, that, I believed, was never equaled: that, however indefensible Mr. Lovelace was, he had always done justice to her virtue: that to a full conviction of her untainted honour it was owing that he so earnestly desired to call so inestimable a jewel his—and was proceeding, when she again cut me short—

Enough, and too much, of this subject, Sir!—If he will never more let me behold his face, that is all I have now to ask of him.—Indeed, indeed, clasping her hands, I never will, if I can, by any means not criminally desperate, avoid it.

What could I say for thee?—There was no room, however, at that time, to touch this string again, for fear of bringing upon myself a prohibition, not only of the subject, but of ever attending her again.

I gave some distant intimations of money-matters. I should have told thee, when I read to her that passage, where thou biddest me force what sums upon her I can get her to take—she repeated, No, no, no, no! several times with great quickness; and I durst no more than just intimate it again—and that so darkly, as left her room to seem not to understand me.

Indeed I know not the person, man or woman, I should be so much afraid of disobliging, or incurring a censure from, as from her. She has so much true dignity in her manner, without pride or arrogance, (which, in those who have either, one is tempted to mortify,) such a piercing eye, yet softened so sweetly with rays of benignity, that she commands all one's reverence.

Methinks I have a kind of holy love for this angel of a woman; and it is matter of astonishment to me, that thou couldst converse with her a quarter of an hour together, and hold thy devilish purposes.

Guarded as she was by piety, prudence, virtue, dignity, family, fortune, and a purity of heart that never woman before her boasted, what a real devil must he be (yet I doubt I shall make thee proud!) who could resolve to break through so many fences!

For my own part, I am more and more sensible that I ought not to have contented myself with representing against, and expostulating with thee upon, thy base intentions: and indeed I had it in my head, more than once, to try to do something for her. But, wretch that I was! I was with-held by notions of false honour, as she justly reproached me, because of thy own voluntary communications to me of thy purposes: and then, as she was brought into such a cursed house, and was so watched by thyself, as well as by thy infernal agents, I thought (knowing my man!) that I should only accelerate the intended mischiefs.—Moreover, finding thee so much over-awed by her virtue, that thou hadst not, at thy first carrying her thither, the courage to attempt her; and that she had, more than once, without knowing thy base views, obliged thee to abandon them, and to resolve to do her justice, and thyself honour; I hardly doubted, that her merit would be triumphant at last.

It is my opinion, (if thou holdest thy purposes to marry,) that thou canst not do better than to procure thy real aunts, and thy real cousins, to pay her a visit, and to be thy advocates. But if they decline personal visits, letters from them, and from my Lord M. supported by Miss Howe's interest, may, perhaps, effect something in thy favour.

But these are only my hopes, founded on what I wish for thy sake. The lady, I really think, would choose death rather than thee: and the two women are of opinion, though they knew not half of what she has suffered, that her heart is actually broken.

At taking my leave, I tendered my best services to her, and besought her to permit me frequently to inquire after her health.

She made me no answer, but by bowing her head.

LETTER XXII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. WEDNESDAY, JULY 19.

This morning I took a chair to Smith's; and, being told that the lady had a very bad night, but was up, I sent for her worthy apothecary; who, on his coming to me, approving of my proposal of calling in Dr. H., I bid the woman acquaint her with the designed visit.

It seems she was at first displeased; yet withdrew her objection: but, after a pause, asked them, What she should do? She had effects of value, some of which she intended, as soon as she could, to turn into money, but, till then, had not a single guinea to give the doctor for his fee.

Mrs. Lovick said, she had five guineas by her; they were at her service.

She would accept of three, she said, if she would take that (pulling a diamond ring from her finger) till she repaid her; but on no other terms.

Having been told I was below with Mr. Goddard, she desired to speak one word with me, before she saw the Doctor.

She was sitting in an elbow-chair, leaning her head on a pillow; Mrs. Smith and the widow on each side her

chair; her nurse, with a phial of hartshorn, behind her; in her own hand her salts.

Raising her head at my entrance, she inquired if the Doctor knew Mr. Lovelace.

I told her no; and that I believed you never saw him in your life.

Was the Doctor my friend?

He was; and a very worthy and skilful man. I named him for his eminence in his profession: and Mr. Goddard said he knew not a better physician.

I have but one condition to make before I see the gentleman; that he refuse not his fees from me. If I am poor, Sir, I am proud. I will not be under obligation, you may believe, Sir, I will not. I suffer this visit, because I would not appear ungrateful to the few friends I have left, nor obstinate to such of my relations, as may some time hence, for their private satisfaction, inquire after my behaviour in my sick hours. So, Sir, you know the condition. And don't let me be vexed. 'I am very ill! and cannot debate the matter.'

Seeing her so determined, I told her, if it must be so, it should.

Then, Sir, the gentleman may come. But I shall not be able to answer many questions. Nurse, you can tell him at the window there what a night I have had, and how I have been for two days past. And Mr. Goddard, if he be here, can let him know what I have taken. Pray let me be as little questioned as possible.

The Doctor paid his respects to her with the gentlemanly address for which he is noted: and she cast up her sweet eyes to him with that benignity which accompanies her every graceful look.

I would have retired: but she forbid it.

He took her hand, the lily not of so beautiful a white: Indeed, Madam, you are very low, said he: but give me leave to say, that you can do more for yourself than all the faculty can do for you.

He then withdrew to the window. And, after a short conference with the women, he turned to me, and to Mr. Goddard, at the other window: We can do nothing here, (speaking low,) but by cordials and nourishment. What friends has the lady? She seems to be a person of condition; and, ill as she is, a very fine woman.—A single lady, I presume?

I whisperingly told him she was. That there were extraordinary circumstances in her case; as I would have apprized him, had I met with him yesterday: that her friends were very cruel to her; but that she could not hear them named without reproaching herself; though they were much more to blame than she.

I knew I was right, said the Doctor. A love-case, Mr. Goddard! a love-case, Mr. Belford! there is one person in the world who can do her more service than all the faculty.

Mr. Goddard said he had apprehended her disorder was in her mind; and had treated her accordingly: and then told the Doctor what he had done: which he approving of, again taking her charming hand, said, My good young lady, you will require very little of our assistance. You must, in a great measure, be your own assistance. You must, in a great measure, be your own doctress. Come, dear Madam, [forgive me the familiar tenderness; your aspect commands love as well as reverence; and a father of children, some of them older than yourself, may be excused for his familiar address,] cheer up your spirits. Resolve to do all in your power to be well; and you'll soon grow better.

You are very kind, Sir, said she. I will take whatever you direct. My spirits have been hurried. I shall be better, I believe, before I am worse. The care of my good friends here, looking at the women, shall not meet with an ungrateful return.

The Doctor wrote. He would fain have declined his fee. As her malady, he said, was rather to be relieved by the soothing of a friend, than by the prescriptions of a physician, he should think himself greatly honoured to be admitted rather to advise her in the one character, than to prescribe to her in the other.

She answered, That she should be always glad to see so humane a man: that his visits would keep her in charity with his sex: but that, where [sic] she able to forget that he was her physician, she might be apt to abate of the confidence in his skill, which might be necessary to effect the amendment that was the end of his visits.

And when he urged her still further, which he did in a very polite manner, and as passing by the door two or three times a day, she said she should always have pleasure in considering him in the kind light he offered himself to her: that that might be very generous in one person to offer, which would be as ungenerous in another to accept: that indeed she was not at present high in circumstance; and he saw by the tender, (which he must accept of,) that she had greater respect to her own convenience than to his merit, or than to the pleasure she should take in his visits.

We all withdrew together; and the Doctor and Mr. Goddard having a great curiosity to know something more of her story, at the motion of the latter we went into a neighbouring coffee-house, and I gave them, in confidence, a brief relation of it; making all as light for you as I could; and yet you'll suppose, that, in order to do but common justice to the lady's character, heavy must be that light.

THREE O'CLOCK, AFTERNOON.

I just now called again at Smith's; and am told she is somewhat better; which she attributed to the soothing of her Doctor. She expressed herself highly pleased with both gentlemen; and said that their behaviour to her was perfectly paternal.—

Paternal, poor lady!—never having been, till very lately, from under her parents' wings, and now abandoned by all her friends, she is for finding out something paternal and maternal in every one, (the latter qualities in Mrs. Lovick and Mrs. Smith,) to supply to herself the father and mother her dutiful heart pants after.

Mrs. Smith told me, that, after we were gone, she gave the keys of her trunk and drawers to her and the widow Lovick, and desired them to take an inventory of them; which they did in her presence.

They also informed me, that she had requested them to find her a purchaser for two rich dressed suits; one never worn, the other not above once or twice.

This shocked me exceedingly—perhaps it may thee a little!!!—Her reason for so doing, she told them, was,

that she should never live to wear them: that her sister, and other relations, were above wearing them: that her mother would not endure in her sight any thing that was her's: that she wanted the money: that she would not be obliged to any body, when she had effects by her for which she had no occasion: and yet, said she, I expect not that they will fetch a price answerable to their value.

They were both very much concerned, as they owned; and asked my advice upon it: and the richness of her apparel having given them a still higher notion of her rank than they had before, they supposed she must be of quality; and again wanted to know her story.

I told them, that she was indeed a woman of family and fortune: I still gave them room to suppose her married: but left it to her to tell them all in her own time and manner: all I would say was, that she had been very vilely treated; deserved it not; and was all innocence and purity.

You may suppose that they both expressed their astonishment, that there could be a man in the world who could ill treat so fine a creature.

As to the disposing of the two suits of apparel, I told Mrs. Smith that she should pretend that, upon inquiry, she had found a friend who would purchase the richest of them; but (that she might not mistrust) would stand upon a good bargain. And having twenty guineas about me, I left them with her, in part of payment; and bid her pretend to get her to part with it for as little more as she could induce her to take.

I am setting out for Edgeware with poor Belton—more of whom in my next. I shall return to-morrow; and leave this in readiness for your messenger, if he call in my absence.

ADIEU.

LETTER XXIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. [IN ANSWER TO LETTER XXI. OF THIS VOLUME.] M. HALL, WED. NIGHT, JULY 19.

You might well apprehend that I should think you were playing me booty in communicating my letter to the lady.

You ask, Who would think you might not read to her the least exceptionable parts of a letter written in my own defence?—I'll tell you who—the man who, in the same letter that he asks this question, tells the friend whom he exposes to her resentment, 'That there is such an air of levity runs through his most serious letters, that those of this are least fit to be seen which ought to be most to his credit:' And now what thinkest thou of thyself-condemned folly? Be, however, I charge thee, more circumspect for the future, that so this clumsy error may stand singly by itself.

'It is painful to her to think of me!' 'Libertine froth!' 'So pernicious and so despicable a plotter!' 'A man whose friendship is no credit to any body!' 'Hardened wretch!' 'The devil's counterpart!' 'A wicked, wicked man!'—But did she, could she, dared she, to say, or imply all this?—and say it to a man whom she praises for humanity, and prefers to myself for that virtue; when all the humanity he shows, and she knows it too, is by my direction—so robs me of the credit of my own works; admirably entitled, all this shows her, to thy refinement upon the words resentment and revenge. But thou wert always aiming and blundering at some thing thou never couldst make out.

The praise thou givest to her ingenuousness, is another of thy peculiars. I think not as thou dost, of her tell-tale recapitulations and exclamations:—what end can they answer?—only that thou hast a holy love for her, [the devil fetch thee for thy oddity!] or it is extremely provoking to suppose one sees such a charming creature stand upright before a libertine, and talk of the sin against her, that cannot be forgiven!—I wish, at my heart, that these chaste ladies would have a little modesty in their anger!—It would sound very strange, if I Robert Lovelace should pretend to have more true delicacy, in a point that requires the utmost, than Miss Clarissa Harlowe.

I think I will put it into the head of her nurse Norton, and her Miss Howe, by some one of my agents, to chide the dear novice for her proclamations.

But to be serious: let me tell thee, that, severe as she is, and saucy, in asking so contemptuously, 'What a man is your friend, Sir, to set himself to punish guilty people!' I will never forgive the cursed woman, who could commit this last horrid violence on so excellent a creature.

The barbarous insults of the two nymphs, in their visits to her; the choice of the most execrable den that could be found out, in order, no doubt, to induce her to go back to theirs; and the still more execrable attempt, to propose to her a man who would pay the debt; a snare, I make no question, laid for her despairing and resenting heart by that devilish Sally, (thinking her, no doubt, a woman,) in order to ruin her with me; and to provoke me, in a fury, to give her up to their remorseless cruelty; are outrages, that, to express myself in her style, I never can, never will forgive.

But as to thy opinion, and the two women's at Smith's, that her heart is broken! that is the true women's language: I wonder how thou camest into it: thou who hast seen and heard of so many female deaths and revivals.

I'll tell thee what makes against this notion of theirs.

Her time of life, and charming constitution: the good she ever delighted to do, and fancied she was born to do; and which she may still continue to do, to as high a degree as ever; nay, higher: since I am no sordid varlet, thou knowest: her religious turn: a turn that will always teach her to bear inevitable evils with patience: the contemplation upon her last noble triumph over me, and over the whole crew; and upon her succeeding escape from us all: her will unviolated: and the inward pride of having not deserved the treatment she has met with.

How is it possible to imagine, that a woman, who has all these consolations to reflect upon, will die of a broken heart?

On the contrary, I make no doubt, but that, as she recovers from the dejection into which this last scurvy villany (which none but wretches of her own sex could have been guilty of) has thrown her, returning love will re-enter her time-pacified mind: her thoughts will then turn once more on the conjugal pivot: of course she will have livelier notions in her head; and these will make her perform all her circumvolutions with ease and pleasure; though not with so high a degree of either, as if the dear proud rogue could have exalted herself above the rest of her sex, as she turned round.

Thou askest, on reciting the bitter invectives that the lady made against thy poor friend, (standing before her, I suppose, with thy fingers in thy mouth,) What couldst thou say FOR me?

Have I not, in my former letters, suggested an hundred things, which a friend, in earnest to vindicate or excuse a friend, might say on such an occasion?

But now to current topics, and the present state of matters here.—It is true, as my servant told thee, that Miss Howe had engaged, before this cursed woman's officiousness, to use her interest with her friend in my behalf: and yet she told my cousins, in the visit they made her, that it was her opinion that she would never forgive me. I send to thee enclosed copies of all that passed on this occasion between my cousins Montague, Miss Howe, myself, Lady Betty, Lady Sarah, and Lord M.

I long to know what Miss Howe wrote to her friend, in order to induce her to marry the despicable plotter; the man whose friendship is no credit to any body; the wicked, wicked man. Thou hadst the two letters in thy hand. Had they been in mine, the seal would have yielded to the touch of my warm finger, (perhaps without the help of the post-office bullet;) and the folds, as other placations have done, opened of themselves to oblige my curiosity. A wicked omission, Jack, not to contrive to send them down to me by man and horse! It might have passed, that the messenger who brought the second letter, took them both back. I could have returned them by another, when copied, as from Miss Howe, and nobody but myself and thee the wiser.

That's a charming girl! her spirit, her delightful spirit!—not to be married to it—how I wish to get that lively bird into my cage! how would I make her flutter and fly about!—till she left a feather upon every wire!

Had I begun there, I am confident, as I have heretofore said,* that I should not have had half the difficulty with her as I have had with her charming friend. For these passionate girls have high pulses, and a clever fellow may make what sport he pleases with their unevenness—now too high, now too low, you need only to provoke and appease them by turns; to bear with them, and to forbear to tease and ask pardon; and sometimes to give yourself the merit of a sufferer from them; then catching them in the moment of concession, conscious of their ill usage of you, they are all your own.

* See Vol. VI. Letter VII.

But these sedate, contemplative girls, never out of temper but with reason; when that reason is given them, hardly ever pardon, or afford you another opportunity to offend.

It was in part the apprehension that this would be so with my dear Miss Harlowe, that made me carry her to a place where I believed she would be unable to escape me, although I were not to succeed in my first attempts. Else widow Sorlings's would have been as well for me as widow Sinclair's. For early I saw that there was no credulity in her to graft upon: no pretending to whine myself into her confidence. She was proof against amorous persuasion. She had reason in her love. Her penetration and good sense made her hate all compliments that had not truth and nature in them. What could I have done with her in any other place? and yet how long, even there, was I kept in awe, in spite of natural incitement, and unnatural instigations, (as I now think them,) by the mere force of that native dignity, and obvious purity of mind and manners, which fill every one with reverence, if not with holy love, as thou callest it,* the moment he sees her!—Else, thinkest thou not, it was easy for me to be a fine gentleman, and a delicate lover, or, at least a specious and flattering one?

* See Letter XXI. of this volume.

Lady Sarah and Lady Betty, finding the treaty, upon the success of which they have set their foolish hearts, likely to run into length, are about departing to their own seats; having taken from me the best security the nature of the case will admit of, that is to say, my word, to marry the lady, if she will have me.

And after all, (methinks thou asked,) art thou still resolved to repair, if reparation be put into thy power?

Why, Jack, I must needs own that my heart has now-and-then some retrograde motions upon thinking seriously of the irrevocable ceremony. We do not easily give up the desire of our hearts, and what we imagine essential to our happiness, let the expectation or hope of compassing it be ever so unreasonable or absurd in the opinion of others. Recurrings there will be; hankerings that will, on every but-remotely-favourable incident, (however before discouraged and beaten back by ill success,) pop up, and abate the satisfaction we should otherwise take in contrariant overtures.

'Tis ungentlemanly, Jack, man to man, to lie.—But matrimony I do not heartily love—although with a CLARISSA—yet I am in earnest to marry her.

But I am often thinking that if now this dear creature, suffering time, and my penitence, my relations' prayers, and Miss Howe's mediation to soften her resentments, (her revenge thou hast prettily* distinguished away,) and to recall repulsed inclination, should consent to meet me at the altar—How vain will she then make all thy eloquent periods of execration!—How many charming interjections of her own will she spoil! And what a couple of old patriarchs shall we become, going in the mill-horse round; getting sons and daughters; providing nurses for them first, governors and governesses next; teaching them lessons their fathers never practised, nor which their mother, as her parents will say, was much the better for! And at last, perhaps, when life shall be turned into the dully sober stillness, and I become desirous to forget all my past rogueries, what comfortable reflections will it afford to find them all revived, with equal, or probably greater trouble and expense, in the persons and manners of so many young Lovelaces of the boys; and to have the girls run away with varlets, perhaps not half so ingenious as myself; clumsy fellows, as it might happen, who could not afford the baggages one excuse for their weakness, besides those disgraceful ones of sex and nature!—O Belford!

who can bear to think of these things!—Who, at my time of life especially, and with such a bias for mischief!

* See Letter XVIII. of this volume.

Of this I am absolutely convinced, that if a man ever intends to marry, and to enjoy in peace his own reflections, and not be afraid retribution, or of the consequences of his own example, he should never be a rake.

This looks like conscience; don't it, Belford?

But, being in earnest still, as I have said, all I have to do in my present uncertainty, is, to brighten up my faculties, by filing off the rust they have contracted by the town smoke, a long imprisonment in my close attendance to so little purpose on my fair perverse; and to brace up, if I can, the relaxed fibres of my mind, which have been twitched and convulsed like the nerves of some tottering paralytic, by means of the tumults she has excited in it; that so I may be able to present to her a husband as worthy as I can be of her acceptance; or, if she reject me, be in a capacity to resume my usual gaiety of heart, and show others of the misleading sex, that I am not discouraged, by the difficulties I have met with from this sweet individual of it, from endeavouring to make myself as acceptable to them as before.

In this latter case, one tour to France and Italy, I dare say, will do the business. Miss Harlowe will by that time have forgotten all she has suffered from her ungrateful Lovelace: though it will be impossible that her Lovelace should ever forget a woman, whose equal he despairs to meet with, were he to travel from one end of the world to the other.

If thou continuest paying off the heavy debts my long letters, for so many weeks together, have made thee groan under, I will endeavour to restrain myself in the desires I have, (importunate as they are,) of going to town, to throw myself at the feet of my soul's beloved. Policy and honesty, both join to strengthen the restraint my own promise and thy engagement have laid me under on this head. I would not afresh provoke: on the contrary, would give time for her resentments to subside, that so all that follows may be her own act and deed.

Hickman, [I have a mortal aversion to that fellow!] has, by a line which I have just now received, requested an interview with me on Friday at Mr. Dormer's, as at a common friend's. Does the business he wants to meet me upon require that it should be at a common friend's?—A challenge implied: Is it not, Belford?—I shall not be civil to him, I doubt. He has been an intermeddler?—Then I envy him on Miss Howe's account: for if I have a right notion of this Hickman, it is impossible that that virago can ever love him.

Every one knows that the mother, (saucy as the daughter sometimes is,) crams him down her throat. Her mother is one of the most violent-spirited women in England. Her late husband could not stand in the matrimonial contention of Who should? but tipt off the perch in it, neither knowing how to yield, nor knowing how to conquer.

A charming encouragement for a man of intrigue, when he has reason to believe that the woman he has a view upon has no love for her husband! What good principles must that wife have, who is kept in against temptation by a sense of her duty, and plighted faith, where affection has no hold of her!

Pr'ythee let's know, very particularly, how it fares with poor Belton. 'Tis an honest fellow. Something more than his Thomasine seems to stick with him.

Thou hast not been preaching to him conscience and reformation, hast thou?—Thou shouldest not take liberties with him of this sort, unless thou thoughtest him absolutely irrecoverable. A man in ill health, and crop-sick, cannot play with these solemn things as thou canst, and be neither better nor worse for them.—Repentance, Jack, I have a notion, should be set about while a man is in health and spirits. What's a man fit for, [not to begin a new work, surely!] when he is not himself, nor master of his faculties?—Hence, as I apprehend, it is that a death-bed repentance is supposed to be such a precarious and ineffectual thing.

As to myself, I hope I have a great deal of time before me; since I intend one day to be a reformed man. I have very serious reflections now-and-then. Yet am I half afraid of the truth of what my charmer once told me, that a man cannot repent when he will.—Not to hold it, I suppose she meant! By fits and starts I have repented a thousand times.

Casting my eye over the two preceding paragraphs, I fancy there is something like contradiction in them. But I will not reconsider them. The subject is a very serious one. I don't at present quite understand it. But now for one more airy.

Tourville, Mowbray, and myself, pass away our time as pleasantly as possibly we can without thee. I wish we don't add to Lord M.'s gouty days by the joy we give him.

This is one advantage, as I believe I have elsewhere observed, that we male-delinquents in love-matters have of the other sex:—for while they, poor things! sit sighing in holes and corners, or run to woods and groves to bemoan themselves on their baffled hopes, we can rant and roar, hunt and hawk; and, by new loves, banish from our hearts all remembrance of the old ones.

Merrily, however, as we pass our time, my reflections upon the injuries done to this noble creature bring a qualm upon my heart very often. But I know she will permit me to make her amends, after she has plagues me heartily; and that's my consolation.

An honest fellow still—clap thy wings, and crow, Jack!—

LETTER XXIV

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE THURSDAY MORN. JUNE* 20.

* Text error: should be JULY.

What, my dearest creature, have been your sufferings!—What must have been your anguish on so disgraceful an insult, committed in the open streets, and in the broad day!

No end, I think, of the undeserved calamities of a dear soul, who had been so unhappily driven and betrayed into the hands of a vile libertine! —How was I shocked at the receiving of your letter written by another hand, and only dictated by you!—You must be very ill. Nor is it to be wondered at. But I hope it is rather from hurry, and surprise, and lowness, which may be overcome, than from a grief given way to, which may be attended with effects I cannot bear to think of.

But whatever you do, my dear, you must not despond! Indeed you must not despond! Hitherto you have been in no fault: but despair would be all your own: and the worst fault you can be guilty of.

I cannot bear to look upon another hand instead of your's. My dear creature, send me a few lines, though ever so few, in your own hand, if possible.—For they will revive my heart; especially if they can acquaint me of your amended health.

I expect your answer to my letter of the 13th. We all expect it with impatience.

His relations are persons of so much honour—they are so very earnest to rank you among them—the wretch is so very penitent: every one of his family says he is—your own are so implacable—your last distress, though the consequence of his former villany, yet neither brought on by his direction nor with his knowledge; and so much resented by him—that my mother is absolutely of opinion that you should be his—especially if, yielding to my wishes, as expressed in my letter, and those of all his friends, you would have complied, had it not been for this horrid arrest.

I will enclose the copy of the letter I wrote to Miss Montague last Tuesday, on hearing that nobody knew what was become of you; and the answer to it, underwritten and signed by Lord M., Lady Sarah Sadleir, and Lady Betty Lawrance, as well as by the young Ladies; and also by the wretch himself.

I own, that I like not the turn of what he has written to me; and, before I will further interest myself in his favour, I have determined to inform myself, by a friend, from his own mouth, of his sincerity, and whether his whole inclination be, in his request to me, exclusive of the wishes of his relations. Yet my heart rises against him, on the supposition that there is the shadow of a reason for such a question, the woman Miss Clarissa Harlowe. But I think, with my mother, that marriage is now the only means left to make your future life tolerably easy—happy there is no saying.—His disgraces, in that case, in the eye of the world itself, will be more than your's: and, to those who know you, glorious will be your triumph.

I am obliged to accompany my mother soon to the Isle of Wight. My aunt Harman is in a declining way, and insists upon seeing us both—and Mr. Hickman too, I think.

His sister, of whom we had heard so much, with her lord, were brought t'other day to visit us. She strangely likes me, or says she does.

I can't say but that I think she answers the excellent character we heard of her.

It would be death to me to set out for the little island, and not see you first: and yet my mother (fond of exerting an authority that she herself, by that exertion, often brings into question) insists, that my next visit to you must be a congratulatory one as Mrs. Lovelace.

When I know what will be the result of the questions to be put in my name to that wretch, and what is your mind on my letter of the 13th, I shall tell you more of mine.

The bearer promises to make so much dispatch as to attend you this very afternoon. May he return with good tidings to

Your ever affectionate ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XXV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE THURSDAY AFTERNOON.

You pain me, Miss Howe, by the ardour of your noble friendship. I will be brief, because I am not well; yet a good deal better than I was; and because I am preparing an answer to your's of the 13th. But, before hand, I must tell you, my dear, I will not have that man—don't be angry with me. But indeed I won't. So let him be asked no questions about me, I beseech you.

I do not despond, my dear. I hope I may say, I will not despond. Is not my condition greatly mended? I thank Heaven it is!

I am no prisoner now in a vile house. I am not now in the power of that man's devices. I am not now obliged to hide myself in corners for fear of him. One of his intimate companions is become my warm friend, and engages to keep him from me, and that by his own consent. I am among honest people. I have all my clothes and effects restored to me. The wretch himself bears testimony to my honour.

Indeed I am very weak and ill: but I have an excellent physician, Dr. H. and as worthy an apothecary, Mr. Goddard.—Their treatment of me, my dear, is perfectly paternal!—My mind too, I can find, begins to strengthen: and methinks, at times, I find myself superior to my calamities.

I shall have sinkings sometimes. I must expect such. And my father's maledict—But you will chide me for introducing that, now I am enumerating my comforts.

But I charge you, my dear, that you do not suffer my calamities to sit too heavily upon your own mind. If you do, that will be to new-point some of those arrows that have been blunted and lost their sharpness.

If you would contribute to my happiness, give way, my dear, to your own; and to the cheerful prospects before you!

You will think very meanly of your Clarissa, if you do not believe, that the greatest pleasure she can receive in this life is in your prosperity and welfare. Think not of me, my only friend, but as we were in times past: and suppose me gone a great, great way off!—A long journey!—How often are the dearest of friends, at their country's call, thus parted— with a certainty for years—with a probability for ever.

Love me still, however. But let it be with a weaning love. I am not what I was, when we were inseparable lovers, as I may say.—Our views must now be different—Resolve, my dear, to make a worthy man happy, because a worthy man make you so.—And so, my dearest love, for the present adieu! —adieu, my dearest love!—but I shall soon write again, I hope!

LETTER XXVI

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. [IN ANSWER TO LETTER XXIII. OF THIS VOLUME.]
THURSDAY, JULY 20.

I read that part of your conclusion to poor Belton, where you inquire after him, and mention how merrily you and the rest pass your time at M. Hall. He fetched a deep sigh: You are all very happy! were his words. — I am sorry they were his words; for, poor fellow, he is going very fast. Change of air, he hopes, will mend him, joined to the cheerful company I have left him in. But nothing, I dare say, will.

A consuming malady, and a consuming mistress, to an indulgent keeper, are dreadful things to struggle with both together: violence must be used to get rid of the latter; and yet he has not spirit enough left him to exert himself. His house is Thomasine's house; not his. He has not been within his doors for a fortnight past. Vagabonding about from inn to inn; entering each for a bait only; and staying two or three days without power to remove; and hardly knowing which to go to next. His malady is within him; and he cannot run away from it.

Her boys (once he thought them his) are sturdy enough to shoulder him in his own house as they pass by him. Siding with the mother, they in a manner expel him; and, in his absence, riot away on the remnant of his broken fortunes. As to their mother, (who was once so tender, so submissive, so studious to oblige, that we all pronounced him happy, and his course of life the eligible,) she is now so termagant, so insolent, that he cannot contend with her, without doing infinite prejudice to his health. A broken-spirited defensive, hardly a defensive, therefore, reduced to: and this to a heart, for so many years waging offensive war, (not valuing whom the opponent,) what a reduction! now comparing himself to the superannuated lion in the fable, kicked in the jaws, and laid sprawling, by the spurning heel of an ignoble ass!

I have undertaken his cause. He has given me leave, yet not without reluctance, to put him into possession of his own house; and to place in it for him his unhappy sister, whom he has hitherto slighted, because unhappy. It is hard, he told me, (and wept, poor fellow, when he said it,) that he cannot be permitted to die quietly in his own house!—The fruits of blessed keeping these!—

Though but lately apprized of her infidelity, it now comes out to have been of so long continuance, that he has no room to believe the boys to be his: yet how fond did he use to be of them!

To what, Lovelace, shall we attribute the tenderness which a reputed father frequently shows to the children of another man?—What is that, I pray thee, which we call nature, and natural affection? And what has man to boast of as to sagacity and penetration, when he is as easily brought to cover and rear, and even to love, and often to prefer, the product of another's guilt with his wife or mistress, as a hen or a goose the eggs, and even young, of others of their kind?

Nay, let me ask, if instinct, as it is called, in the animal creation, does not enable them to distinguish their own, much more easily than we, with our boasted reason and sagacity, in this nice particular, can do?

If some men, who have wives but of doubtful virtue, considered this matter duly, I believe their inordinate ardour after gain would be a good deal cooled, when they could not be certain (though their mates could) for whose children they were elbowing, bustling, griping, and perhaps cheating, those with whom they have concerns, whether friends, neighbours, or more certain next-of-kin, by the mother's side however.

But I will not push this notion so far as it might be carried; because, if propagated, it might be of unsocial or unnatural consequence; since women of virtue would perhaps be more liable to suffer by the mistrusts and caprices or bad-hearted and foolish-headed husbands, than those who can screen themselves from detection by arts and hypocrisy, to which a woman of virtue cannot have recourse. And yet, were this notion duly and generally considered, it might be attended with no bad effects; as good education, good inclinations, and established virtue, would be the principally-sought-after qualities; and not money, when a man (not biased by mere personal attractions) was looking round him for a partner in his fortunes, and for a mother of his future children, which are to be the heirs of his possessions, and to enjoy the fruits of his industry.

But to return to poor Belton.

If I have occasion for your assistance, and that of our compeers, in re-instating the poor fellow, I will give you notice. Mean time, I have just now been told that Thomasine declares she will not stir; for, it seems, she suspects that measures will be fallen upon to make her quit. She is Mrs. Belton, she says, and will prove her marriage.

If she would give herself these airs in his life-time, what would she attempt to do after his death?

Her boy threatens any body who shall presume to insult their mother. Their father (as they call poor Belton) they speak of as an unnatural one. And their probably true father is for ever there, hostilely there, passing for her cousin, as usual: now her protecting cousin.

Hardly ever, I dare say, was there a keeper that did not make keeperess; who lavished away on her kept-fellow what she obtained from the extravagant folly of him who kept her.

I will do without you, if I can. The case will be only, as I conceive, that like of the ancient Sarmatians, their wives then in possession of their slaves. So that they had to contend not only with those wives, conscious of their infidelity, and with their slaves, but with the children of those slaves, grown up to manhood, resolute to defend their mothers and their long-manumitted fathers. But the noble Sarmatians, scorning to attack their slaves with equal weapons, only provided themselves with the same sort of whips with which they used formerly to chastise them. And attacking them with them, the miscreants fled before them.—In memory of which, to this day, the device on the coin in Novogrod, in Russia, a city of the antient Sarmatia, is a man on horseback, with a whip in his hand.

The poor fellow takes it ill, that you did not press him more than you did to be of your party at M. Hall. It is owing to Mowbray, he is sure, that he had so very slight an invitation from one whose invitations used to be so warm.

Mowbray's speech to him, he says, he never will forgive: 'Why, Tom,' said the brutal fellow, with a curse, 'thou droopest like a pip or roup-cloaking chicken. Thou shouldst grow perter, or submit to a solitary quarantine, if thou wouldst not infect the whole brood.'

For my own part, only that this poor fellow is in distress, as well in his affairs as in his mind, or I should be sick of you all. Such is the relish I have of the conversation, and such my admiration of the deportment and sentiments of this divine lady, that I would forego a month, even of thy company, to be admitted into her's but for one hour: and I am highly in conceit with myself, greatly as I used to value thine, for being able, spontaneously as I may say, to make this preference.

It is, after all, a devilish life we have lived. And to consider how it all ends in a very few years—to see to what a state of ill health this poor fellow is so soon reduced—and then to observe how every one of ye run away from the unhappy being, as rats from a falling house, is fine comfort to help a man to look back upon companions ill-chosen, and a life mis-spent!

It will be your turns by-and-by, every man of ye, if the justice of your country interpose not.

Thou art the only rake we have herded with, if thou wilt not except thyself, who hast preserved entire thy health and thy fortunes.

Mowbray indeed is indebted to a robust constitution that he has not yet suffered in his health; but his estate is dwindled away year by year.

Three-fourths of Tourville's very considerable fortunes are already dissipated; and the remaining fourth will probably soon go after the other three.

Poor Belton! we see how it is with him!—His own felicity is, that he will hardly live to want.

Thou art too proud, and too prudent, ever to be destitute; and, to do thee justice, hath a spirit to assist such of thy friends as may be reduced; and wilt, if thou shouldst then be living. But I think thou must, much sooner than thou imaginest, be called to thy account—knocked on the head perhaps by the friends of those whom thou hast injured; for if thou escapest this fate from the Harlowe family, thou wilt go on tempting danger and vengeance, till thou meetest with vengeance; and this, whether thou marriest, or not: for the nuptial life will not, I doubt, till age join with it, cure thee of that spirit for intrigue which is continually running away with thee, in spite of thy better sense, and transitory resolutions.

Well, then, I will suppose thee laid down quietly among thy worthier ancestors.

And now let me look forward to the ends of Tourville and Mowbray, [Belton will be crumbled into dust before thee, perhaps,] supposing thy early exit has saved thee from gallows intervention.

Reduced, probably, by riotous waste to consequential want, behold them refuged in some obscene hole or garret; obliged to the careless care of some dirty old woman, whom nothing but her poverty prevails upon to attend to perform the last offices for men, who have made such shocking ravage among the young ones.

Then how miserably will they whine through squeaking organs; their big voices turned into puling pity-begging lamentations! their now-offensive paws, how helpless then!—their now-erect necks then denying support to their aching heads; those globes of mischief dropping upon their quaking shoulders. Then what wry faces will they make! their hearts, and their heads, reproaching each other!—distended their parched mouths!—sunk their unmuscled cheeks!—dropt their under jaws!—each grunting like the swine he had resembled in his life! Oh! what a vile wretch have I been! Oh! that I had my life to come over again!—Confessing to the poor old woman, who cannot shrive them! Imaginary ghosts of deflowered virgins, and polluted matrons, flitting before their glassy eyes! And old Satan, to their apprehensions, grinning behind a looking-glass held up before them, to frighten them with the horror visible in their own countenances!

For my own part, if I can get some good family to credit me with a sister or daughter, as I have now an increased fortune, which will enable me to propose handsome settlements, I will desert ye all; marry, and live a life of reason, rather than a life of a brute, for the time to come.

LETTER XXVII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. THURSDAY NIGHT.

I was forced to take back my twenty guineas. How the women managed it I can't tell, (I suppose they too readily found a purchaser for the rich suit;) but she mistrusted, that I was the advancer of the money; and would not let the clothes go. But Mrs. Lovick has actually sold, for fifteen guineas, some rich lace worth three times the sum; out of which she repaid her the money she borrowed for fees to the doctor, in an illness occasioned by the barbarity of the most savage of men. Thou knowest his name!

The Doctor called on her in the morning it seems, and had a short debate with her about fees. She insisted that he should take one every time he came, write or not write; mistrusting that he only gave verbal

directions to Mrs. Lovick, or the nurse, to avoid taking any.

He said that it would be impossible for him, had he not been a physician, to forbear inquiries after the health and welfare of so excellent a person. He had not the thought of paying her a compliment in declining the offered fee: but he knew her case could not so suddenly vary as to demand his daily visits. She must permit him, therefore, to inquire of the women below after her health; and he must not think of coming up, if he were to be pecuniarily rewarded for the satisfaction he was so desirous to give himself.

It ended in a compromise for a fee each other time; which she unwillingly submitted to; telling him, that though she was at present desolate and in disgrace, yet her circumstances were, of right, high; and no expenses could rise so as to be scrupled, whether she lived or died. But she submitted, she added, to the compromise, in hopes to see him as often as he had opportunity; for she really looked upon him, and Mr. Goddard, from their kind and tender treatment of her, with a regard next to filial.

I hope thou wilt make thyself acquainted with this worthy Doctor when thou comest to town; and give him thy thanks, for putting her into conceit with the sex that thou hast given her so much reason to execrate.

Farewell.

LETTER XXVIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. M. HALL, FRIDAY, JULY 21.

Just returned from an interview with this Hickman: a precise fop of a fellow, as starched as his ruffles.

Thou knowest I love him not, Jack; and whom we love not we cannot allow a merit to! perhaps not the merit they should be granted. However, I am in earnest, when I say, that he seems to me to be so set, so prim, so affected, so mincing, yet so clouterly in his person, that I dare engage for thy opinion, if thou dost justice to him, and to thyself, that thou never beheldest such another, except in a pier-glass.

I'll tell thee how I play'd him off.

He came in his own chariot to Dormer's; and we took a turn in the garden, at his request. He was devilish ceremonious, and made a bushel of apologies for the freedom he was going to take: and, after half a hundred hums and haws, told me, that he came—that he came—to wait on me—at the request of dear Miss Howe, on the account—on the account—of Miss Harlowe.

Well, Sir, speak on, said I: but give me leave to say, that if your book be as long as your preface, it will take up a week to read it.

This was pretty rough, thou'lt say: but there's nothing like balking these formalities at first. When they are put out of their road, they are filled with doubts of themselves, and can never get into it again: so that an honest fellow, impertinently attacked, as I was, has all the game in his own hand quite through the conference.

He stroked his chin, and hardly knew what to say. At last, after parenthesis within parenthesis, apologizing for apologies, in imitation, I suppose, of Swift's digression in praise of digressions—I presume—I presume, Sir, you were privy to the visit made to Miss Howe by the young Ladies your cousins, in the name of Lord M., and Lady Sarah Sadleir, and Lady Betty Lawrance.

I was, Sir: and Miss Howe had a letter afterwards, signed by his Lordship and by those Ladies, and underwritten by myself. Have you seen it, Sir?

I can't say but I have. It is the principal cause of this visit: for Miss Howe thinks your part of it is written with such an air of levity—pardon me, Sir—that she knows not whether you are in earnest or not, in your address to her for her interest to her friend.*

* See Mr. Lovelace's billet to Miss Howe, Letter XIV. of this volume.

Will Miss Howe permit me to explain myself in person to her, Mr. Hickman?

O Sir, by no means. Miss Howe, I am sure, would not give you that trouble.

I should not think it a trouble. I will most readily attend you, Sir, to Miss Howe, and satisfy her in all her scruples. Come, Sir, I will wait upon you now. You have a chariot. Are alone. We can talk as we ride.

He hesitated, wriggled, winced, stroked his ruffles, set his wig, and pulled his neckcloth, which was long enough for a bib.—I am not going directly back to Miss Howe, Sir. It will be as well if you will be so good as to satisfy Miss Howe by me.

What is it she scruples, Mr. Hickman?

Why, Sir, Miss Howe observes, that in your part of the letter, you say— but let me see, Sir—I have a copy of what you wrote, [pulling it out,] will you give me leave, Sir?—Thus you begin—Dear Miss Howe—

No offence, I hope, Mr. Hickman?

None in the least, Sir!—None at all, Sir!—Taking aim, as it were, to read.

Do you use spectacles, Mr. Hickman?

Spectacles, Sir! His whole broad face lifted up at me: Spectacles!—What makes you ask me such a question? such a young man as I use spectacles, Sir!—

They do in Spain, Mr. Hickman: young as well as old, to save their eyes. —Have you ever read Prior's Alma, Mr. Hickman?

I have, Sir—custom is every thing in nations, as well as with individuals: I know the meaning of your question—but 'tis not the English custom.—

Was you ever in Spain, Mr. Hickman?

No, Sir: I have been in Holland.

In Holland, Sir?—Never to France or Italy?—I was resolved to travel with him into the land of puzzledom.

No, Sir, I cannot say I have, as yet.

That's a wonder, Sir, when on the continent!

I went on a particular affair: I was obliged to return soon.

Well, Sir; you was going to read—pray be pleased to proceed.

Again he took aim, as if his eyes were older than the rest of him; and read, After what is written above, and signed by names and characters of such unquestionable honour—to be sure, (taking off his eye,) nobody questions the honour of Lord M. nor that of the good Ladies who signed the letter.

I hope, Mr. Hickman, nobody questions mine neither?

If you please, Sir, I will read on.—I might have been excused signing a name, almost as hateful to myself [you are pleased to say]—as I KNOW it is to YOU—

Well, Mr. Hickman, I must interrupt you at this place. In what I wrote to Miss Howe, I distinguished the word KNOW. I had a reason for it. Miss Howe has been very free with my character. I have never done her any harm. I take it very ill of her. And I hope, Sir, you come in her name to make excuses for it.

Miss Howe, Sir, is a very polite young lady. She is not accustomed to treat any man's character unbecomingly.

Then I have the more reason to take it amiss, Mr. Hickman.

Why, Sir, you know the friendship—

No friendship should warrant such freedoms as Miss Howe has taken with my character.

(I believed he began to wish he had not come near me. He seemed quite disconcerted.)

Have you not heard Miss Howe treat my name with great—

Sir, I come not to offend or affront you: but you know what a love there is between Miss Howe and Miss Harlowe.—I doubt, Sir, you have not treated Miss Harlowe as so fine a young lady deserved to be treated. And if love for her friend has made Miss Howe take freedoms, as you call them, a mind not ungenerous, on such an occasion, will rather be sorry for having given the cause, than—

I know your consequence, Sir!—but I'd rather have this reproof from a lady than from a gentleman. I have a great desire to wait upon Miss Howe. I am persuaded we should soon come to a good understanding. Generous minds are always of kin. I know we should agree in every thing. Pray, Mr. Hickman, be so kind as to introduce me to Miss Howe.

Sir—I can signify your desire, if you please, to Miss Howe.

Do so. Be pleased to read on, Mr. Hickman.

He did very formally, as if I remembered not what I had written; and when he came to the passage about the halter, the parson, and the hangman, reading it, Why, Sir, says he, does not this look like a jest?—Miss Howe thinks it does. It is not in the lady's power, you know, Sir, to doom you to the gallows.

Then, if it were, Mr. Hickman, you think she would?

You say here to Miss Howe, proceeded he, that Miss Harlowe is the most injured of her sex. I know, from Miss Howe, that she highly resents the injuries you own: insomuch that Miss Howe doubts that she shall never prevail upon her to overlook them: and as your family are all desirous you should repair her wrongs, and likewise desire Miss Howe's interposition with her friend; Miss Howe fears, from this part of your letter, that you are too much in jest; and that your offer to do her justice is rather in compliment to your friends' entreaties, than proceeding from your own inclinations: and she desires to know your true sentiments on this occasion, before she interposes further.

Do you think, Mr. Hickman, that, if I am capable of deceiving my own relations, I have so much obligation to Miss Howe, who has always treated me with great freedom, as to acknowledge to her what I don't to them?

Sir, I beg pardon: but Miss Howe thinks that, as you have written to her, she may ask you, by me, for an explanation of what you have written.

You see, Mr. Hickman, something of me.—Do you think I am in jest, or in earnest?

I see, Sir, you are a gay gentleman, of fine spirits, and all that. All I beg in Miss Howe's name is, to know if you really and bonâ fide join with your friends in desiring her to use her interest to reconcile you to Miss Harlowe?

I should be extremely glad to be reconciled to Miss Harlowe; and should owe great obligations to Miss Howe, if she could bring about so happy an event.

Well, Sir, and you have no objections to marriage, I presume, as the condition of that reconciliation?

I never liked matrimony in my life. I must be plain with you, Mr. Hickman.

I am sorry for it: I think it a very happy state.

I hope you will find it so, Mr. Hickman.

I doubt not but I shall, Sir. And I dare say, so would you, if you were to have Miss Harlowe.

If I could be happy in it with any body, it would be with Miss Harlowe.

I am surprised, Sir!—Then, after all, you don't think of marrying Miss Harlowe!—After the hard usage

What hard usage, Mr. Hickman? I don't doubt but a lady of her niceness has represented what would appear trifles to any other, in a very strong light.

If what I have had hinted to me, Sir—excuse me—had been offered to the lady, she has more than trifles to complain of.

Let me know what you have heard, Mr. Hickman? I will very truly answer to the accusations.

Sir, you know best what you have done: you own the lady is the most injured, as well as the most deserving of her sex.

I do, Sir; and yet I would be glad to know what you have heard: for on that, perhaps, depends my answer to the questions Miss Howe puts to me by you.

Why then, Sir, since you ask it, you cannot be displeased if I answer you:—in the first place, Sir, you will acknowledge, I suppose, that you promised Miss Harlowe marriage, and all that?

Well, Sir, and I suppose what you have to charge me with is, that I was desirous to have all that, without marriage?

Cot-so, Sir, I know you are deemed to be a man of wit: but may I not ask if these things sit not too light upon you?

When a thing is done, and cannot be helped, 'tis right to make the best of it. I wish the lady would think so too.

I think, Sir, ladies should not be deceived. I think a promise to a lady should be as binding as to any other person, at the least.

I believe you think so, Mr. Hickman: and I believe you are a very honest, good sort of a man.

I would always keep my word, Sir, whether to man or woman.

You say well. And far be it from me to persuade you to do otherwise. But what have you farther heard?

(Thou wilt think, Jack, I must be very desirous to know in what light my elected spouse had represented things to Miss Howe; and how far Miss Howe had communicated them to Mr. Hickman.)

Sir, this is no part of my present business.

But, Mr. Hickman, 'tis part of mine. I hope you would not expect that I should answer your questions, at the same time that you refused to answer mine. What, pray, have you farther heard?

Why then, Sir, if I must say, I am told, that Miss Harlowe was carried to a very bad house.

Why, indeed, the people did not prove so good as they should be.—What farther have you heard?

I have heard, Sir, that the lady had strange advantages taken of her, very unfair ones: but what I cannot say.

And cannot you say? Cannot you guess?—Then I'll tell you, Sir. Perhaps some liberty was taken with her when she was asleep. Do you think no lady ever was taken at such an advantage?—You know, Mr. Hickman, that ladies are very shy of trusting themselves with the modestest of our sex, when they are disposed to sleep; and why so, if they did not expect that advantages would be taken of them at such times?

But, Sir, had not the lady something given her to make her sleep?

Ay, Mr. Hickman, that's the question: I want to know if the lady says she had?

I have not seen all she has written; but, by what I have heard, it is a very black affair—Excuse me, Sir.

I do excuse you, Mr. Hickman: but, supposing it were so, do you think a lady was never imposed upon by wine, or so?—Do you not think the most cautious woman in the world might not be cheated by a stronger liquor for a smaller, when she was thirsty, after a fatigue in this very warm weather? And do you think, if she was thus thrown into a profound sleep, that she is the only lady that was ever taken at such an advantage?

Even as you make it, Mr. Lovelace, this matter is not a light one. But I fear it is a great deal heavier than as you put it.

What reasons have you to fear this, Sir? What has the lady said? Pray let me know. I have reason to be so earnest.

Why, Sir, Miss Howe herself knows not the whole. The lady promises to give her all the particulars at a proper time, if she lives; but has said enough to make it out to be a very bad affair.

I am glad Miss Harlowe has not yet given all the particulars. And, since she has not, you may tell Miss Howe from me, that neither she, nor any woman in the world can be more virtuous than Miss Harlowe is to this hour, as to her own mind. Tell her, that I hope she never will know the particulars; but that she has been unworthily used: tell her, that though I know not what she has said, yet I have such an opinion of her veracity, that I would blindly subscribe to the truth of every tittle of it, though it make me ever so black. Tell her, that I have but three things to blame her for; one, that she won't give me an opportunity of repairing her wrongs: the second, that she is so ready to acquaint every body with what she has suffered, that it will put it out of my power to redress those wrongs, with any tolerable reputation to either of us. Will this, Mr. Hickman, answer any part of the intention of this visit?

Why, Sir, this is talking like a man of honour, I own. But you say there is a third thing you blame the lady for: May I ask what that is?

I don't know, Sir, whether I ought to tell it you, or not. Perhaps you won't believe it, if I do. But though the lady will tell the truth, and nothing but the truth, yet, perhaps, she will not tell the whole truth.

Pray, Sir—But it mayn't be proper—Yet you give me great curiosity. Sure there is no misconduct in the lady. I hope there is not. I am sure, if Miss Howe did not believe her to be faultless in every particular, she would not interest herself so much in her favour as she does, dearly as she loves her.

I love Miss Harlowe too well, Mr. Hickman, to wish to lessen her in Miss Howe's opinion; especially as she is abandoned of every other friend. But, perhaps, it would hardly be credited, if I should tell you.

I should be very sorry, Sir, and so would Miss Howe, if this poor lady's conduct had laid her under obligation to you for this reserve.—You have so much the appearance of a gentleman, as well as are so much distinguished in your family and fortunes, that I hope you are incapable of loading such a young lady as this, in order to lighten yourself— Excuse me, Sir.

I do, I do, Mr. Hickman. You say you came not with any intention to affront me. I take freedom, and I give it. I should be very loth, I repeat, to say any thing that may weaken Miss Harlowe in the good opinion of the only friend she thinks she has left.

It may not be proper, said he, for me to know your third article against this unhappy lady: but I never heard of any body, out of her own implacable family, that had the least doubt of her honour. Mrs. Howe, indeed, once said, after a conference with one of her uncles, that she feared all was not right on her side.—But else, I never heard—

Oons, Sir, in a fierce tone, and with an erect mien, stopping short upon him, which made him start back—'tis next to blasphemy to question this lady's honour. She is more pure than a vestal; for vestals have often

been warmed by their own fires. No age, from the first to the present, ever produced, nor will the future, to the end of the world, I dare aver, ever produce, a young blooming lady, tried as she has been tried, who has stood all trials, as she has done.—Let me tell you, Sir, that you never saw, never knew, never heard of, such another woman as Miss Harlowe.

Sir, Sir, I beg your pardon. Far be it from me to question the lady. You have not heard me say a word that could be so construed. I have the utmost honour for her. Miss Howe loves her, as she loves her own soul; and that she would not do, if she were not sure she were as virtuous as herself.

As herself, Sir!—I have a high opinion of Miss Howe, Sir—but, I dare say—

What, Sir, dare you say of Miss Howe!—I hope, Sir, you will not presume to say any thing to the disparagement of Miss Howe.

Presume, Mr. Hickman!—that is presuming language, let me tell you, Mr. Hickman!

The occasion for it, Mr. Lovelace, if designed, is presuming, if you please.—I am not a man ready to take offence, Sir—especially where I am employed as a mediator. But no man breathing shall say disparaging things of Miss Howe, in my hearing, without observation.

Well said, Mr. Hickman. I dislike not your spirit, on such a supposed occasion. But what I was going to say is this. That there is not, in my opinion, a woman in the world, who ought to compare herself with Miss Clarissa Harlowe till she has stood her trials, and has behaved under them, and after them, as she has done. You see, Sir, I speak against myself. You see I do. For, libertine as I am thought to be, I never will attempt to bring down the measures of right and wrong to the standard of my actions.

Why, Sir, this is very right. It is very noble, I will say. But 'tis pity, that the man who can pronounce so fine a sentence, will not square his actions accordingly.

That, Mr. Hickman, is another point. We all err in some things. I wish not that Miss Howe should have Miss Harlowe's trials: and I rejoice that she is in no danger of any such from so good a man.

(Poor Hickman!—he looked as if he knew not whether I meant a compliment or a reflection!)

But, proceeded I, since I find that I have excited your curiosity, that you may not go away with a doubt that may be injurious to the most admirable of women, I am enclined to hint to you what I have in the third place to blame her for.

Sir, as you please—it may not be proper—

It cannot be very improper, Mr. Hickman—So let me ask you, What would Miss Howe think, if her friend is the more determined against me, because she thinks (to revenge to me, I verily believe that!) of encouraging another lover?

How, Sir!—Sure this cannot be the case!—I can tell you, Sir, if Miss Howe thought this, she would not approve of it at all: for, little as you think Miss Howe likes you, Sir, and little as she approves of your actions by her friend, I know she is of opinion that she ought to have nobody living but you: and should continue single all her life, if she be not your's.

Revenge and obstinacy, Mr. Hickman, will make women, the best of them, do very unaccountable things. Rather than not put out both eyes of a man they are offended with, they will give up one of their own.

I don't know what to say to this, Sir: but sure she cannot encourage any other person's address!—So soon too—Why, Sir, she is, as we are told, so ill, and so weak—

Not in resentment weak, I'll assure you. I am well acquainted with all her movements—and I tell you, believe it, or not, that she refuses me in view of another lover.

Can it be?

'Tis true, by my soul!—Has she not hinted this to Miss Howe, do you think?

No, indeed, Sir. If she had I should not have troubled you at this time from Miss Howe.

Well then, you see I am right: that though she cannot be guilty of a falsehood, yet she has not told her friend the whole truth.

What shall a man say to these things!—(looking most stupidly perplexed.)

Say! Say! Mr. Hickman!—Who can account for the workings and ways of a passionate and offended woman? Endless would be the histories I could give you, within my own knowledge, of the dreadful effects of woman's passionate resentments, and what that sex will do when disappointed.

There was Miss DORRINGTON, [perhaps you know her not,] who run away with her father's groom, because he would not let her have a half-pay officer, with whom (her passions all up) she fell in love at first sight, as he accidentally passed under her window.

There was MISS SAVAGE; she married her mother's coachman, because her mother refused her a journey to Wales; in apprehension that miss intended to league herself with a remote cousin of unequal fortunes, of whom she was not a little fond when he was a visiting-guest at their house for a week.

There was the young widow SANDERSON, who believing herself slighted by a younger brother of a noble family, (Sarah Stout like,) took it into her head to drown herself.

Miss SALLY ANDERSON, [You have heard of her, no doubt?] being checked by her uncle for encouraging an address beneath her, in spite, threw herself into the arms of an ugly dog, a shoe-maker's apprentice, running away with him in a pair of shoes he had just fitted to her feet, though she never saw the fellow before, and hated him ever after: and, at last, took laudanum to make her forget for ever her own folly.

But can there be a stronger instance in point than what the unaccountable resentments of such a lady as Miss Clarissa Harlowe afford us? Who at this instant, ill as she is, not only encourages, but, in a manner, makes court to one of the most odious dogs that ever was seen? I think Miss Howe should not be told this—and yet she ought too, in order to dissuade her from such a preposterous rashness.

O fie! O strange! Miss Howe knows nothing of this! To be sure she won't look upon her, if this be true!

'Tis true, very true, Mr. Hickman! True as I am here to tell you so!— And he is an ugly fellow too; uglier to

look at than me.

Than you, Sir! Why, to be sure, you are one of the handsomest men in England.

Well, but the wretch she so spitefully prefers to me is a mis-shapen, meagre varlet; more like a skeleton than a man! Then he dresses—you never saw a devil so bedizened! Hardly a coat to his back, nor a shoe to his foot. A bald-pated villain, yet grudges to buy a peruke to his baldness: for he is as covetous as hell, never satisfied, yet plaguy rich.

Why, Sir, there is some joke in this, surely. A man of common parts knows not how to take such gentleman as you. But, Sir, if there be any truth in the story, what is he? Some Jew or miserly citizen, I suppose, that may have presumed on the lady's distressful circumstances; and your lively wit points him out as it pleases.

Why, the rascal has estates in every county in England, and out of England too.

Some East India governor, I suppose, if there be any thing in it. The lady once had thoughts of going abroad. But I fancy all this time you are in jest, Sir. If not, we must surely have heard of him—

Heard of him! Aye, Sir, we have all heard of him—But none of us care to be intimate with him—except this lady—and that, as I told you, in spite of me—his name, in short, is DEATH!—DEATH! Sir, stamping, and speaking loud, and full in his ears; which made him jump half a yard high.

(Thou never beheldest any man so disconcerted. He looked as if the frightful skeleton was before him, and he had not his accounts ready. When a little recovered, he fribbled with his waistcoat buttons, as if he had been telling his beads.)

This, Sir, proceeded I, is her wooer!—Nay, she is so forward a girl, that she woos him: but I hope it never will be a match.

He had before behaved, and now looked with more spirit than I expected from him.

I came, Sir, said he, as a mediator of differences.—It behoves me to keep my temper. But, Sir, and turned short upon me, as much as I love peace, and to promote it, I will not be ill-used.

As I had played so much upon him, it would have been wrong to take him at his more than half-menace: yet I think I owe him a grudge, for his presuming to address Miss Howe.

You mean no defiance, I presume, Mr. Hickman, any more than I do offence. On that presumption, I ask your excuse. But this is my way. I mean no harm. I cannot let sorrow touch my heart. I cannot be grave six minutes together, for the blood of me. I am a descendant of old Chancellor Moore, I believe; and should not forbear to cut a joke, were I upon the scaffold. But you may gather, from what I have said, that I prefer Miss Harlowe, and that upon the justest grounds, to all the women in the world: and I wonder that there should be any difficulty to believe, from what I have signed, and from what I have promised to my relations, and enabled them to promise for me, that I should be glad to marry that excellent creature upon her own terms. I acknowledge to you, Mr. Hickman, that I have basely injured her. If she will honour me with her hand, I declare that is my intention to make her the best of husbands.— But, nevertheless, I must say that if she goes on appealing her case, and exposing us both, as she does, it is impossible to think the knot can be knit with reputation to either. And although, Mr. Hickman, I have delivered my apprehensions under so ludicrous a figure, I am afraid that she will ruin her constitution: and, by seeking Death when she may shun him, will not be able to avoid him when she would be glad to do so.

This cool and honest speech let down his stiffened muscles into complacence. He was my very obedient and faithful humble servant several times over, as I waited on him to his chariot: and I was his almost as often.

And so exit Hickman.

LETTER XXIX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. [IN ANSWER TO LETTERS XXII. XXVI. XXVII. OF THIS VOLUME.] FRIDAY NIGHT, JULY 21.

I will throw away a few paragraphs upon the contents of thy last shocking letters just brought me; and send what I shall write by the fellow who carries mine on the interview with Hickman.

Reformation, I see, is coming fast upon thee. Thy uncle's slow death, and thy attendance upon him through every stage towards it, prepared thee for it. But go thou on in thine own way, as I will in mine. Happiness consists in being pleased with what we do: and if thou canst find delight in being sad, it will be as well for thee as if thou wert merry, though no other person should join to keep thee in countenance.

I am, nevertheless, exceedingly disturbed at the lady's ill health. It is entirely owing to the cursed arrest. She was absolutely triumphant over me and the whole crew before. Thou believest me guiltless of that: so, I hope, does she.—The rest, as I have often said, is a common case; only a little uncommonly circumstanced; that's all: Why, then, all these severe things from her, and from thee?

As to selling her clothes, and her laces, and so forth, it has, I own, a shocking sound to it. What an implacable as well as unjust set of wretches are those of her unkindredly kin, who have money of her's in their hands, as well as large arrears of her own estate; yet with-hold both, avowedly to distress her! But may she not have money of that proud and saucy friend of her's, Miss Howe, more than she wants?—And should not I be overjoyed, thinkest thou, to serve her?—What then is there in the parting with her apparel but female perverseness?—And I am not sure, whether I ought not to be glad, if she does this out of spite to me.—Some disappointed fair-ones would have hanged, some drowned themselves. My beloved only revenges herself upon her clothes. Different ways of working has passion in different bosoms, as humours or complexion induce. —Besides, dost think I shall grudge to replace, to three times the value, what she disposes of? So, Jack, there is no great matter in this.

Thou seest how sensible she is of the soothing of the polite doctor: this will enable thee to judge how dreadfully the horrid arrest, and her gloomy father's curse, must have hurt her. I have great hope, if she will but see me, that my behaviour, my contrition, my soothing, may have some happy effect upon her.

But thou art too ready to give up. Let me seriously tell thee that, all excellence as she is, I think the earnest interposition of my relations; the implored mediation of that little fury Miss Howe; and the commissions thou actest under from myself; are such instances of condescension and high value in them, and such contrition in me, that nothing farther can be done.—So here let the matter rest for the present, till she considers better of it.

But now a few words upon poor Belton's case. I own I was at first a little startled at the disloyalty of his Thomasine. Her hypocrisy to be for so many years undetected!—I have very lately had some intimations given me of her vileness; and had intended to mention them to thee when I saw thee. To say the truth, I always suspected her eye: the eye, thou knowest, is the casement at which the heart generally looks out. Many a woman, who will not show herself at the door, has tipt the sly, the intelligible wink from the windows.

But Tom. had no management at all. A very careless fellow. Would never look into his own affairs. The estate his uncle left him was his ruin: wife, or mistress, whoever was, must have had his fortune to sport with.

I have often hinted his weakness of this sort to him; and the danger he was in of becoming the property of designing people. But he hated to take pains. He would ever run away from his accounts; as now, poor fellow! he would be glad to do from himself. Had he not had a woman to fleece him, his coachman or valet, would have been his prime-minister, and done it as effectually.

But yet, for many years, I thought she was true to his bed. At least I thought the boys were his own. For though they are muscular, and big-boned, yet I supposed the healthy mother might have furnished them with legs and shoulders: for she is not of a delicate frame; and then Tom., some years ago, looked up, and spoke more like a man, than he has done of late; squeaking inwardly, poor fellow! for some time past, from contracted quail-pipes, and wheezing from lungs half spit away.

He complains, thou sayest, that we all run away from him. Why, after all, Belford, it is no pleasant thing to see a poor fellow one loves, dying by inches, yet unable to do him good. There are friendships which are only bottle-deep: I should be loth to have it thought that mine for any of my vassals is such a one. Yet, with gay hearts, which become intimate because they were gay, the reason for their first intimacy ceasing, the friendship will fade: but may not this sort of friendship be more properly distinguished by the word companionship?

But mine, as I said, is deeper than this: I would still be as ready as ever I was in my life, to the utmost of my power, to do him service.

As once instance of this my readiness to extricate him from all his difficulties as to Thomasine, dost thou care to propose to him an expedient, that is just come into my head?

It is this: I would engage Thomasine and her cubs (if Belton be convinced they are neither of them his) in a party of pleasure. She was always complaisant to me. It should be in a boat, hired for the purpose, to sail to Tilbury, to the Isle Shepey, or pleasuring up the Medway; and 'tis but contriving to turn the boat bottom upward. I can swim like a fish. Another boat shall be ready to take up whom I should direct, for fear of the worst: and then, if Tom. has a mind to be decent, one suit of mourning will serve for all three: Nay, the hostler-cousin may take his plunge from the steerage: and who knows but they may be thrown up on the beach, Thomasine and he, hand in hand?

This, thou'lt say, is no common instance of friendship.

Mean time, do thou prevail on him to come down to us: he never was more welcome in his life than he shall be now. If he will not, let him find me some other service; and I will clap a pair of wings to my shoulders, and he shall see me come flying in at his windows at the word of command.

Mowbray and Tourville each intend to give thee a letter; and I leave to those rough varlets to handle thee as thou deservest, for the shocking picture thou hast drawn of their last ends. Thy own past guilt has stared thee full in the face, one may see by it; and made thee, in consciousness of thy demerits, sketch out these cursed out-lines. I am glad thou hast got the old fiend to hold the glass* before thy own face so soon. Thou must be in earnest surely, when thou wrotest it, and have severe conviction upon thee: for what a hardened varlet must he be, who could draw such a picture as this in sport?

* See Letter XXVI. of this volume.

As for thy resolution of repenting and marrying; I would have thee consider which thou wilt set about first. If thou wilt follow my advice, thou shalt make short work of it: let matrimony take place of the other; for then thou wilt, very possibly, have repentance come tumbling in fast upon thee, as a consequence, and so have both in one.

LETTER XXX

MR. BELFORD, TO MR. ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. FRIDAY NOON, JULY 21.

This morning I was admitted, as soon as I sent up my name, into the presence of the divine lady. Such I may call her; as what I have to relate will fully prove.

She had had a tolerable night, and was much better in spirits; though weak in person; and visibly declining in looks.

Mrs. Lovick and Mrs. Smith were with her; and accused her, in a gentle manner, of having applied herself too assiduously to her pen for her strength, having been up ever since five. She said, she had rested better than she had done for many nights: she had found her spirits free, and her mind tolerably easy: and having,

as she had reason to think, but a short time, and much to do in it, she must be a good housewife of her hours.

She had been writing, she said, a letter to her sister: but had not pleased herself in it; though she had made two or three essays: but that the last must go.

By hints I had dropt from time to time, she had reason, she said, to think that I knew every thing that concerned her and her family; and, if so, must be acquainted with the heavy curse her father had laid upon her; which had been dreadfully fulfilled in one part, as to her prospects in this life, and that in a very short time; which gave her great apprehensions of the other part. She had been applying herself to her sister, to obtain a revocation of it. I hope my father will revoke it, said she, or I shall be very miserable—Yet [and she gasped as she spoke, with apprehension]—I am ready to tremble at what the answer may be; for my sister is hard-hearted.

I said something reflecting upon her friends; as to what they would deserve to be thought of, if the unmerited imprecation were not withdrawn. Upon which she took me up, and talked in such a dutiful manner of her parents as must doubly condemn them (if they remain implacable) for their inhuman treatment of such a daughter.

She said, I must not blame her parents: it was her dear Miss Howe's fault to do so. But what an enormity was there in her crime, which could set the best of parents (they had been to her, till she disobliged them) in a bad light, for resenting the rashness of a child from whose education they had reason to expect better fruits! There were some hard circumstances in her case, it was true: but my friend could tell me, that no one person, throughout the whole fatal transaction, had acted out of character, but herself. She submitted therefore to the penalty she had incurred. If they had any fault, it was only that they would not inform themselves of such circumstances, which would alleviate a little her misdeed; and that supposing her a more guilty creature than she was, they punished her without a hearing.

Lord!—I was going to curse thee, Lovelace! How every instance of excellence, in this all excelling creature, condemns thee;—thou wilt have reason to think thyself of all men the most accursed, if she die!

I then besought her, while she was capable of such glorious instances of generosity, and forgiveness, to extend her goodness to a man, whose heart bled in every vein of it for the injuries he had done her; and who would make it the study of his whole life to repair them.

The women would have withdrawn when the subject became so particular. But she would not permit them to go. She told me, that if after this time I was for entering with so much earnestness into a subject so very disagreeable to her, my visits must not be repeated. Nor was there occasion, she said, for my friendly offices in your favour; since she had begun to write her whole mind upon that subject to Miss Howe, in answer to letters from her, in which Miss Howe urged the same arguments, in compliment to the wishes of your noble and worthy relations.

Mean time, you may let him know, said she, that I reject him with my whole heart:—yet, that although I say this with such a determination as shall leave no room for doubt, I say it not however with passion. On the contrary, tell him, that I am trying to bring my mind into such a frame as to be able to pity him; [poor perjured wretch! what has he not to answer for!] and that I shall not think myself qualified for the state I am aspiring to, if, after a few struggles more, I cannot forgive him too: and I hope, clasping her hands together, uplifted as were her eyes, my dear earthly father will set me the example my heavenly one has already set us all; and, by forgiving his fallen daughter, teach her to forgive the man, who then, I hope, will not have destroyed my eternal prospects, as he has my temporal!

Stop here, thou wretch!—but I need not bid thee!——for I can go no farther!

LETTER XXXI

MR. BELFORD [IN CONTINUATION.]

You will imagine how affecting her noble speech and behaviour were to me, at the time when the bare recollecting and transcribing them obliged me to drop my pen. The women had tears in their eyes. I was silent for a few moments.—At last, Matchless excellence! Inimitable goodness! I called her, with a voice so accented, that I was half-ashamed of myself, as it was before the women—but who could stand such sublime generosity of soul in so young a creature, her loveliness giving grace to all she said? Methinks, said I, [and I really, in a manner, involuntarily bent my knee,] I have before me an angel indeed. I can hardly forbear prostration, and to beg your influence to draw me after you to the world you are aspiring to!—Yet—but what shall I say—Only, dearest excellence, make me, in some small instances, serviceable to you, that I may (if I survive you) have the glory to think I was able to contribute to your satisfaction, while among us.

Here I stopt. She was silent. I proceeded—Have you no commission to employ me in; deserted as you are by all your friends; among strangers, though I doubt not, worthy people? Cannot I be serviceable by message, by letter-writing, by attending personally, with either message or letter, your father, your uncles, your brother, your sister, Miss Howe, Lord M., or the Ladies his sisters?—any office to be employed to serve you, absolutely independent of my friend's wishes, or of my own wishes to oblige him?—Think, Madam, if I cannot?

I thank you, Sir: very heartily I thank you: but in nothing that I can at present think of, or at least resolve upon, can you do me service. I will see what return the letter I have written will bring me.—Till then ——

My life and my fortune, interrupted I, are devoted to your service. Permit me to observe, that here you are, without one natural friend; and (so much do I know of your unhappy case) that you must be in a manner destitute of the means to make friends—

She was going to interrupt me, with a prohibitory kind of earnestness in her manner.

I beg leave to proceed, Madam: I have cast about twenty ways how to mention this before, but never dared

till now. Suffer me now, that I have broken the ice, to tender myself—as your banker only.—I know you will not be obliged: you need not. You have sufficient of your own, if it were in your hands; and from that, whether you live or die, will I consent to be reimbursed. I do assure you, that the unhappy man shall never know either my offer, or your acceptance—Only permit me this small —

And down behind her chair dropt a bank note of 100£. which I had brought with me, intending some how or other to leave it behind me: nor shouldst thou ever have known it, had she favoured me with the acceptance of it; as I told her.

You give me great pain, Mr. Belford, said she, by these instances of your humanity. And yet, considering the company I have seen you in, I am not sorry to find you capable of such. Methinks I am glad, for the sake of human nature, that there could be but one such man in the world, as he you and I know. But as to your kind offer, whatever it be, if you take it not up, you will greatly disturb me. I have no need of your kindness. I have effects enough, which I never can want, to supply my present occasion: and, if needful, can have recourse to Miss Howe. I have promised that I would—So, pray, Sir, urge not upon me this favour.—Take it up yourself.—If you mean me peace and ease of mind, urge not this favour.—And she spoke with impatience.

I beg, Madam, but one word—

Not one, Sir, till you have taken back what you have let fall. I doubt not either the honour, or the kindness, of your offer; but you must not say one word more on this subject. I cannot bear it.

She was stooping, but with pain. I therefore prevented her; and besought her to forgive me for a tender, which, I saw, had been more discomposing to her than I had hoped (from the purity of my intentions) it would be. But I could not bear to think that such a mind as her's should be distressed: since the want of the conveniencies she was used to abound in might affect and disturb her in the divine course she was in.

You are very kind to me, Sir, said she, and very favourable in your opinion of me. But I hope that I cannot now be easily put out of my present course. My declining health will more and more confirm me in it. Those who arrested and confined me, no doubt, thought they had fallen upon the most ready method to distress me so as to bring me into all their measures. But I presume to hope that I have a mind that cannot be debased, in essential instances, by temporal calamities.

Little do those poor wretches know of the force of innate principles, (forgive my own implied vanity, was her word,) who imagine, that a prison, or penury, can bring a right-turned mind to be guilty of a wilful baseness, in order to avoid such short-lived evils.

She then turned from me towards the window, with a dignity suitable to her words; and such as showed her to be more of soul than of body at that instant.

What magnanimity!—No wonder a virtue so solidly founded could baffle all thy arts: and that it forced thee (in order to carry thy accursed point) to have recourse to those unnatural ones, which robbed her of her charming senses.

The women were extremely affected, Mrs. Lovick especially; who said, whisperingly to Mrs. Smith, We have an angel, not a woman, with us, Mrs. Smith!

I repeated my offers to write to any of her friends; and told her, that, having taken the liberty to acquaint Dr. H. with the cruel displeasure of her relations, as what I presumed lay nearest to her heart, he had proposed to write himself, to acquaint her friends how ill she was, if she would not take it amiss.

It was kind in the Doctor, she said: but begged, that no step of that sort might be taken without her knowledge or consent. She would wait to see what effects her letter to her sister would have. All she had to hope for was, that her father would revoke his malediction, previous to the last blessing she should then implore. For the rest, her friends would think she could not suffer too much; and she was content to suffer: for now nothing could happen that could make her wish to live.

Mrs. Smith went down; and, soon returning, asked, if the lady and I would not dine with her that day; for it was her wedding-day. She had engaged Mrs. Lovick she said; and should have nobody else, if we would do her that favour.

The charming creature sighed, and shook her head.—Wedding-day, repeated she!—I wish you, Mrs. Smith, many happy wedding-days!—But you will excuse me.

Mr. Smith came up with the same request. They both applied to me.

On condition the lady would, I should make no scruple; and would suspend an engagement: which I actually had.

She then desired they would all sit down. You have several times, Mrs. Lovick and Mrs. Smith, hinted your wishes, that I would give you some little history of myself: now, if you are at leisure, that this gentleman, who, I have reason to believe, knows it all, is present, and can tell you if I give it justly, or not, I will oblige your curiosity.

They all eagerly, the man Smith too, sat down; and she began an account of herself, which I will endeavour to repeat, as nearly in her own words as I possibly can: for I know you will think it of importance to be apprized of her manner of relating your barbarity to her, as well as what her sentiments are of it; and what room there is for the hopes your friends have in your favour for her.

'At first when I took these lodgings, said she, I thought of staying but a short time in them; and so Mrs. Smith, I told you: I therefore avoided giving any other account of myself than that I was a very unhappy young creature, seduced from good, and escaped from very vile wretches.

'This account I thought myself obliged to give, that you might the less wonder at seeing a young creature rushing through your shop, into your back apartment, all trembling and out of breath; an ordinary garb over my own; craving lodging and protection; only giving my bare word, that you should be handsomely paid: all my effects contained in a pocket-handkerchief.

'My sudden absence, for three days and nights together when arrested, must still further surprise you: and although this gentleman, who, perhaps, knows more of the darker part of my story, than I do myself, has informed you (as you, Mrs. Lovick, tell me) that I am only an unhappy, not a guilty creature; yet I think it

incumbent upon me not to suffer honest minds to be in doubt about my character.

'You must know, then, that I have been, in one instance (I had like to have said but in one instance; but that was a capital one) an undutiful child to the most indulgent of parents: for what some people call cruelty in them, is owing but to the excess of their love, and to their disappointment, having had reason to expect better from me.

'I was visited (at first, with my friends connivance) by a man of birth and fortune, but of worse principles, as it proved, than I believed any man could have. My brother, a very headstrong young man, was absent at that time; and, when he returned, (from an old grudge, and knowing the gentleman, it is plain, better than I knew him) entirely disapproved of his visits: and, having a great sway in our family, brought other gentlemen to address me: and at last (several having been rejected) he introduced one extremely disagreeable: in every indifferent person's eyes disagreeable. I could not love him. They all joined to compel me to have him; a rencounter between the gentleman my friends were set against, and my brother, having confirmed them all his enemies.

'To be short; I was confined, and treated so very hardly, that, in a rash fit, I appointed to go off with the man they hated. A wicked intention, you'll say! but I was greatly provoked. Nevertheless, I repented, and resolved not to go off with him: yet I did not mistrust his honour to me neither; nor his love; because nobody thought me unworthy of the latter, and my fortune was not to be despised. But foolishly (wickedly and contrivingly, as my friends still think, with a design, as they imagine, to abandon them) giving him a private meeting, I was tricked away; poorly enough tricked away, I must needs say; though others who had been first guilty of so rash a step as the meeting of him was, might have been so deceived and surprised as well as I.

'After remaining some time at a farm-house in the country, and behaving to me all the time with honour, he brought me to handsome lodgings in town till still better provision could be made for me. But they proved to be (as he indeed knew and designed) at a vile, a very vile creature's; though it was long before I found her to be so; for I knew nothing of the town, or its ways.

'There is no repeating what followed: such unprecedented vile arts!—For I gave him no opportunity to take me at any disreputable advantage.'—

And here (half covering her sweet face, with her handkerchief put to her tearful eyes) she stopt.

Hastily, as if she would fly from the hateful remembrance, she resumed:— 'I made escape afterward from the abominable house in his absence, and came to your's: and this gentleman has almost prevailed on me to think, that the ungrateful man did not connive at the vile arrest: which was made, no doubt, in order to get me once more to those wicked lodgings: for nothing do I owe them, except I were to pay them'—[she sighed, and again wiped her charming eyes—adding in a softer, lower voice]—'for being ruined.'

Indeed, Madam, said I, guilty, abominably guilty, as he is in all the rest, he is innocent of this last wicked outrage.

'Well, and so I wish him to be. That evil, heavy as it was, is one of the slightest evils I have suffered. But hence you'll observe, Mrs. Lovick, (for you seemed this morning curious to know if I were not a wife,) that I never was married.—You, Mr. Belford, no doubt, knew before that I am no wife: and now I never will be one. Yet, I bless God, that I am not a guilty creature!

'As to my parentage, I am of no mean family; I have in my own right, by the intended favour of my grandfather, a fortune not contemptible: independent of my father; if I had pleased; but I never will please.

'My father is very rich. I went by another name when I came to you first: but that was to avoid being discovered to the perfidious man: who now engages, by this gentleman, not to molest me.

'My real name you now know to be Harlowe: Clarissa Harlowe. I am not yet twenty years of age.

'I have an excellent mother, as well as father; a woman of family, and fine sense—worthy of a better child!—they both doated upon me.

'I have two good uncles: men of great fortune; jealous of the honour of their family; which I have wounded.

'I was the joy of their hearts; and, with theirs and my father's, I had three houses to call my own; for they used to have me with them by turns, and almost kindly to quarrel for me; so that I was two months in the year with the one; two months with the other; six months at my father's; and two at the houses of others of my dear friends, who thought themselves happy in me: and whenever I was at any one's, I was crowded upon with letters by all the rest, who longed for my return to them.

'In short, I was beloved by every body. The poor—I used to make glad their hearts: I never shut my hand to any distress, wherever I was—but now I am poor myself!

'So Mrs. Smith, so Mrs. Lovick, I am not married. It is but just to tell you so. And I am now, as I ought to be, in a state of humiliation and penitence for the rash step which has been followed by so much evil. God, I hope, will forgive me, as I am endeavouring to bring my mind to forgive all the world, even the man who has ungratefully, and by dreadful perjuries, [poor wretch! he thought all his wickedness to be wit!] reduced to this a young creature, who had his happiness in her view, and in her wish, even beyond this life; and who was believed to be of rank, and fortune, and expectations, considerable enough to make it the interest of any gentleman in England to be faithful to his vows to her. But I cannot expect that my parents will forgive me: my refuge must be death; the most painful kind of which I would suffer, rather than be the wife of one who could act by me, as the man has acted, upon whose birth, education, and honour, I had so much reason to found better expectations.

'I see, continued she, that I, who once was every one's delight, am now the cause of grief to every one—you, that are strangers to me, are moved for me! 'tis kind!—but 'tis time to stop. Your compassionate hearts, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Lovick, are too much touched,' [For the women sobbed, and the man was also affected.] 'It is barbarous in me, with my woes, thus to sadden your wedding-day.' Then turning to Mr. and Mrs. Smith—'May you see many happy ones, honest, good couple!—how agreeable is it to see you both join so kindly to celebrate it, after many years are gone over you!—I once—but no more!—All my prospects of felicity, as to this life, are at an end. My hopes, like opening buds or blossoms in an over-forward spring, have been nipt by a severe frost!—blighted by an eastern wind!—but I can but once die; and if life be spared me, but till I am

discharged from a heavy malediction, which my father in his wrath laid upon me, and which is fulfilled literally in every article relating to this world; that, and a last blessing, are all I have to wish for; and death will be welcomer to me, than rest to the most wearied traveller that ever reached his journey's end.'

And then she sunk her head against the back of her chair, and, hiding her face with her handkerchief, endeavoured to conceal her tears from us.

Not a soul of us could speak a word. Thy presence, perhaps, thou hardened wretch, might have made us ashamed of a weakness which perhaps thou wilt deride me in particular for, when thou readest this!—

She retired to her chamber soon after, and was forced, it seems, to lie down. We all went down together; and, for an hour and a half, dwelt upon her praises; Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Lovick repeatedly expressing their astonishment, that there could be a man in the world, capable of offending, much more of wilfully injuring such a lady; and repeating, that they had an angel in their house.—I thought they had; and that as assuredly as there is a devil under the roof of good Lord M.

I hate thee heartily!—by my faith I do!—every hour I hate thee more than the former!—

J. BELFORD.

LETTER XXXII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SATURDAY, JULY 22.

What dost hate me for, Belford!—and why more and more! have I been guilty of any offence thou knewest not before?—If pathos can move such a heart as thine, can it alter facts!—Did I not always do this incomparable creature as much justice as thou canst do her for the heart of thee, or as she can do herself?—What nonsense then thy hatred, thy augmented hatred, when I still persist to marry her, pursuant to word given to thee, and to faith plighted to all my relations? But hate, if thou wilt, so thou dost but write. Thou canst not hate me so much as I do myself: and yet I know if thou really hatedst me, thou wouldst not venture to tell me so.

Well, but after all, what need of her history to these women? She will certainly repent, some time hence, that she has thus needless exposed us both.

Sickness palls every appetite, and makes us hate what we loved: but renewed health changes the scene; disposes us to be pleased with ourselves; and then we are in a way to be pleased with every one else. Every hope, then, rises upon us: every hour presents itself to us on dancing feet: and what Mr. Addison says of liberty, may, with still greater propriety, be said of health, for what is liberty itself without health?

*It makes the gloomy face of nature gay;
Gives beauty to the sun, and pleasure to the day.*

And I rejoice that she is already so much better, as to hold with strangers such a long and interesting conversation.

Strange, confoundedly strange, and as perverse [that is to say, womanly] as strange, that she should refuse, and sooner choose to die [O the obscene word! and yet how free does thy pen make with it to me!] than be mine, who offended her by acting in character, while her parents acted shamefully out of theirs, and when I am now willing to act out of my own to oblige her; yet I am not to be forgiven; they to be faultless with her!—and marriage the only medium to repair all breaches, and to salve her own honour!—Surely thou must see the inconsistency of her forgiving unforgiveness, as I may call it!—yet, heavy varlet as thou art, thou wantest to be drawn up after her! And what a figure dost thou make with thy speeches, stiff as Hickman's ruffles, with thy aspirations and protestations!—unused, thy weak head, to bear the sublimities that fall, even in common conversation, from the lips of this ever-charming creature!

But the prettiest whim of all was, to drop the bank note behind her chair, instead of presenting it on thy knees to her hand!—To make such a woman as this doubly stoop—by the acceptance, and to take it from the ground!—What an ungrateful benefit-conferrer art thou!—How awkward, to take in into thy head, that the best way of making a present to a lady was to throw the present behind her chair!

I am very desirous to see what she has written to her sister; what she is about to write to Miss Howe; and what return she will have from the Harlowe-Arabella. Canst thou not form some scheme to come at the copies of these letters, or the substance of them at least, and of that of her other correspondencies? Mrs. Lovick, thou seemest to say, is a pious woman. The lady, having given such a particular history of herself, will acquaint her with every thing. And art thou not about to reform!—Won't this consent of minds between thee and the widow, [what age is she, Jack? the devil never trumped up a friendship between a man and a woman, of any thing like years, which did not end in matrimony, or in the ruin of their morals!] Won't it strike out an intimacy between ye, that may enable thee to gratify me in this particular? A proselyte, I can tell thee, has great influence upon your good people: such a one is a saint of their own creation: and they will water, and cultivate, and cherish him, as a plant of their own raising: and this from a pride truly spiritual!

One of my lovers in Paris was a devotée. She took great pains to convert me. I gave way to her kind endeavours for the good of my soul. She thought it a point gained to make me profess some religion. The catholic has its conveniencies. I permitted her to bring a father to me. My reformation went on swimmingly. The father had hopes of me: he applauded her zeal: so did I. And how dost thou think it ended?—Not a girl in England, reading thus far, but would guess!—In a word, very happily: for she not only brought me a father, but made me one: and then, being satisfied with each other's conversation, we took different routes: she into Navarre; I into Italy: both well inclined to propagate the good lessons in which we had so well instructed each other.

But to return. One consolation arises to me, from the pretty regrets which this admirable creature seems to

have in indulging reflections on the people's wedding-day.—I ONCE!—thou makest her break off with saying.

She once! What—O Belford! why didst thou not urge her to explain what she once hoped?

What once a woman hopes, in love matters, she always hopes, while there is room for hope: And are we not both single? Can she be any man's but mine? Will I be any woman's but her's?

I never will! I never can!—and I tell thee, that I am every day, every hour, more and more in love with her: and, at this instant, have a more vehement passion for her than ever I had in my life!—and that with views absolutely honourable, in her own sense of the word: nor have I varied, so much as in wish, for this week past; firmly fixed, and wrought into my very nature, as the life of honour, or of generous confidence in me, was, in preference to the life of doubt and distrust. That must be a life of doubt and distrust, surely, where the woman confides nothing, and ties up a man for his good behaviour for life, taking church-and-state sanctions in aid of the obligation she imposes upon him.

I shall go on Monday to a kind of ball, to which Colonel Ambrose has invited me. It is given on a family account. I care not on what: for all that delights me in the thing is, that Mrs. and Miss Howe are to be there;—Hickman, of course; for the old lady will not stir abroad without him. The Colonel is in hopes that Miss Arabella Harlowe will be there likewise; for all the men and women of fashion round him are invited.

I fell in by accident with the Colonel, who I believe, hardly thought I would accept of the invitation. But he knows me not, if he thinks I am ashamed to appear at any place, where women dare show their faces. Yet he hinted to me that my name was up, on Miss Harlowe's account. But, to allude to one of Lord M.'s phrases, if it be, I will not lie a bed when any thing joyous is going forward.

As I shall go in my Lord's chariot, I would have had one of my cousins Montague to go with me: but they both refused: and I shall not choose to take either of thy brethren. It would look as if I thought I wanted a bodyguard: besides, one of them is too rough, the other too smooth, and too great a fop for some of the staid company that will be there; and for me in particular. Men are known by their companions; and a fop [as Tourville, for example] takes great pains to hang out a sign by his dress of what he has in his shop. Thou, indeed, art an exception; dressing like a coxcomb, yet a very clever fellow. Nevertheless so clumsy a beau, that thou seemest to me to owe thyself a double spite, making thy ungracefulness appear the more ungraceful, by thy remarkable tawdriness, when thou art out of mourning.

I remember, when I first saw thee, my mind laboured with a strong puzzle, whether I should put thee down for a great fool, or a smatterer in wit. Something I saw was wrong in thee, by thy dress. If this fellow, thought I, delights not so much in ridicule, that he will not spare himself, he must be plaguy silly to take so much pains to make his ugliness more conspicuous than it would otherwise be.

Plain dress, for an ordinary man or woman, implies at least modesty, and always procures a kind quarter from the censorious. Who will ridicule a personal imperfection in one that seems conscious, that it is an imperfection? Who ever said an anchoret was poor? But who would spare so very absurd a wrong-head, as should bestow tinsel to make his deformity the more conspicuous?

But, although I put on these lively airs, I am sick at my soul!—My whole heart is with my charmer! with what indifference shall I look upon all the assembly at the Colonel's, my beloved in my ideal eye, and engrossing my whole heart?

LETTER XXXIII

MISS HOWE, TO MISS ARABELLA HARLOWE THURSDAY, JULY 20.

MISS HARLOWE,

I cannot help acquainting you (however it may be received, coming from me) that your poor sister is dangerously ill, at the house of one Smith, who keeps a glover's and perfume shop, in King-street, Covent-garden. She knows not that I write. Some violent words, in the nature of an imprecation, from her father, afflict her greatly in her weak state. I presume not to direct you what to do in this case. You are her sister. I therefore could not help writing to you, not only for her sake, but for your own. I am, Madam,

Your humble servant, ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XXXIV

MISS ARABELLA HARLOWE [IN ANSWER.] THURSDAY, JULY 20.

MISS HOWE,

I have your's of this morning. All that has happened to the unhappy body you mentioned, is what we foretold and expected. Let him, for whose sake she abandoned us, be her comfort. We are told he has remorse, and would marry her. We don't believe it, indeed. She may be very ill. Her disappointment may make her so, or ought. Yet is she the only one I know who is disappointed.

I cannot say, Miss, that the notification from you is the more welcome, for the liberties you have been pleased to take with our whole family for resenting a conduct, that it is a shame any young lady should justify. Excuse this freedom, occasioned by greater. I am, Miss,

Your humble servant, ARABELLA HARLOWE.

LETTER XXXV

MISS HOWE [IN REPLY.] FRIDAY, JULY 21.

MISS ARABELLA HARLOWE,

If you had half as much sense as you have ill-nature, you would (notwithstanding the exuberance of the latter) have been able to distinguish between a kind intention to you all (that you might have the less to reproach yourselves with, if a deplorable case should happen) and an officiousness I owed you not, by reason of freedoms at least reciprocal. I will not, for the unhappy body's sake, as you call a sister you have helped to make so, say all that I could say. If what I fear happen, you shall hear (whether desired or not) all the mind of ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XXXVI

MISS ARABELLA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE FRIDAY, JULY 21.

MISS ANNA HOWE,

Your pert letter I have received. You, that spare nobody, I cannot expect should spare me. You are very happy in a prudent and watchful mother.—But else mine cannot be exceeded in prudence; but we had all too good an opinion of somebody, to think watchfulness needful. There may possibly be some reason why you are so much attached to her in an error of this flagrant nature.

I help to make a sister unhappy!—It is false, Miss!—It is all her own doings!—except, indeed, what she may owe to somebody's advice—you know who can best answer for that.

Let us know your mind as soon as you please: as we shall know it to be your mind, we shall judge what attention to give it. That's all, from, &c.

AR. H. LETTER XXXVII

MISS HOWE, TO MISS ARABELLA HARLOWE SAT. JULY 22.

It may be the misfortune of some people to engage every body's notice: others may be the happier, though they may be the more envious, for nobody's thinking them worthy of any. But one would be glad people had the sense to be thankful for that want of consequence, which subject them not to hazards they would heartily have been able to manage under.

I own to you, that had it not been for the prudent advice of that admirable somebody (whose principal fault is the superiority of her talents, and whose misfortune to be brother'd and sister'd by a couple of creatures, who are not able to comprehend her excellencies) I might at one time have been plunged into difficulties. But pert as the superlatively pert may think me, I thought not myself wiser, because I was older; nor for that poor reason qualified to prescribe to, much less to maltreat, a genius so superior.

I repeat it with gratitude, that the dear creature's advice was of very great service to me—and this before my mother's watchfulness became necessary. But how it would have fared with me, I cannot say, had I had a brother or sister, who had deemed it their interest, as well as a gratification of their sordid envy, to misrepresent me.

Your admirable sister, in effect, saved you, Miss, as well as me—with this difference—you, against your will—me with mine: and but for your own brother, and his own sister, would not have been lost herself.

Would to Heaven both sisters had been obliged with their own wills!—the most admirable of her sex would never then have been out of her father's house!—you, Miss—I don't know what had become of you.—But, let what would have happened, you would have met with the humanity you have not shown, whether you had deserved it or not:—nor, at the worst, lost either a kind sister, or a pitying friend, in the most excellent of sisters.

But why run I into length to such a poor thing? why push I so weak an adversary? whose first letter is all low malice, and whose next is made up of falsehood and inconsistency, as well as spite and ill-manners! yet I was willing to give you a part of my mind. Call for more of it; it shall be at your service: from one, who, though she thanks God she is not your sister, is not your enemy: but that she is not the latter, is withheld but by two considerations; one that you bear, though unworthily, a relation to a sister so excellent; the other, that you are not of consequence enough to engage any thing but the pity and contempt of

A.H.

LETTER XXXVIII

MRS. HARLOWE, TO MRS. HOWE SAT. JULY 22.

DEAR MADAM,

I send you, enclosed, copies of five letters that have passed between Miss Howe and my Arabella. You are a

person of so much prudence and good sense, and (being a mother yourself) can so well enter into the distresses of all our family, upon the rashness and ingratitude of a child we once doated upon, that, I dare say, you will not countenance the strange freedoms your daughter has taken with us all. These are not the only ones we have to complain of; but we were silent on the others, as they did not, as these have done, spread themselves out upon paper. We only beg, that we may not be reflected upon by a young lady who knows not what we have suffered, and do suffer by the rashness of a naughty creature who has brought ruin upon herself, and disgrace upon a family which she had robbed of all comfort. I offer not to prescribe to your known wisdom in this case; but leave it to you to do as you think most proper. I am, Madam,

Your most humble servant, CHARL. HARLOWE.

LETTER XXXIX

MRS. HOWE [IN ANSWER.] SAT. JULY 22.

DEAR MADAM,

I am highly offended with my daughter's letters to Miss Harlowe. I knew nothing at all of her having taken such a liberty. These young creatures have such romantic notions, some of life, some of friendship, that there is no governing them in either. Nothing but time, and dear experience, will convince them of their absurdities in both. I have chidden Miss Howe very severely. I had before so just a notion of what your whole family's distress must be, that, as I told your brother, Mr. Antony Harlowe, I had often forbid her corresponding with the poor fallen angel—for surely never did young lady more resemble what we imagine of angels, both in person and mind. But, tired out with her headstrong ways, [I am sorry to say this of my own child,] I was forced to give way to it again. And, indeed, so sturdy was she in her will, that I was afraid it would end in a fit of sickness, as too often it did in fits of sullen.

None but parents know the trouble that children give. They are happiest, I have often thought, who have none. And these women-grown girls, bless my heart! how ungovernable!

I believe, however, you will have no more such letters from my Nancy. I have been forced to use compulsion with her upon Miss Clary's illness, [and it seems she is very bad,] or she would have run away to London, to attend upon her: and this she calls doing the duty of a friend; forgetting that she sacrifices to her romantic friendship her duty to her fond indulgent mother.

There are a thousand excellencies in the poor sufferer, notwithstanding her fault: and, if the hints she has given to my daughter be true, she has been most grievously abused. But I think your forgiveness and her father's forgiveness of her ought to be all at your own choice; and nobody should intermeddle in that, for the sake of due authority in parents: and besides, as Miss Harlowe writes, it was what every body expected, though Miss Clary would not believe it till she smarted for her credulity. And, for these reasons, I offer not to plead any thing in alleviation of her fault, which is aggravated by her admirable sense, and a judgment above her years.

I am, Madam, with compliments to good Mr. Harlowe, and all your afflicted family,

Your most humble servant, ANNABELLA HOWE.

I shall set out for the Isle of Wight in a few days, with my daughter. I will hasten our setting out, on purpose to break her mind from her friend's distresses; which afflict us as much, nearly, as Miss Clary's rashness has done you.

LETTER XL

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE SAT. JULY 22.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

We are busy in preparing for our little journey and voyage: but I will be ill, I will be very ill, if I cannot hear you are better before I go.

Rogers greatly afflicted me, by telling me the bad way you are in. But now you have been able to hold a pen, and as your sense is strong and clear, I hope that the amusement you will receive from writing will make you better.

I dispatch this by an extraordinary way, that it may reach you time enough to move you to consider well before you absolutely decide upon the contents of mine of the 13th, on the subject of the two Misses Montague's visit to me; since, according to what you write, must I answer them.

In your last, conclude very positively that you will not be his. To be sure, he rather deserves an infamous death than such a wife. But as I really believe him innocent of the arrest, and as all his family are such earnest pleaders, and will be guarantees, for him, I think the compliance with their entreaties, and his own, will be now the best step you can take; your own family remaining implacable, as I can assure you they do. He is a man of sense; and it is not impossible but he may make you a good husband, and in time may become no bad man.

My mother is entirely of my opinion: and on Friday, pursuant to a hint I gave you in my last, Mr. Hickman had a conference with the strange wretch: and though he liked not, by any means, his behaviour to himself;

nor indeed, had reason to do so; yet he is of opinion that he is sincerely determined to marry you, if you will condescend to have him.

Perhaps Mr. Hickman may make you a private visit before we set out. If I may not attend you myself, I shall not be easy except he does. And he will then give you an account of the admirable character the surprising wretch gave of you, and of the justice he does to your virtue.

He was as acknowledging to his relations, though to his own condemnation, as his two cousins told me. All he apprehends, as he said to Mr. Hickman, is that if you go on exposing him, wedlock itself will not wipe off the dishonour to both: and moreover, 'that you would ruin your constitution by your immoderate sorrow; and, by seeking death when you might avoid it, would not be able to escape it when you would wish to do so.'

So, my dearest friend, I charge you, if you can, to get over your aversion to this vile man. You may yet live to see many happy days, and be once more the delight of all your friends, neighbours, and acquaintance, as well as a stay, a comfort, and a blessing to your Anna Howe.

I long to have your answer to mine of the 13th. Pray keep the messenger till it be ready. If he return on Monday night, it will be time enough for his affairs, and to find me come back from Colonel Ambrose's; who gives a ball on the anniversary of Mrs. Ambrose's birth and marriage both in one. The gentry all round the neighbourhood are invited this time, on some good news they have received from Mrs. Ambrose's brother, the governor.

My mother promised the Colonel for me and herself, in my absence. I would fain have excused myself to her; and the rather, as I had exceptions on account of the day:* but she is almost as young as her daughter; and thinking it not so well to go without me, she told me. And having had a few sparring blows with each other very lately, I think I must comply. For I don't love jingling when I can help it; though I seldom make it my study to avoid the occasion, when it offers of itself. I don't know, if either were not a little afraid of the other, whether it would be possible that we could live together:—I, all my father!—My mamma—What?—All my mother—What else should I say?

* The 24th of July, Miss Clarissa Harlowe's birth-day.

O my dear, how many things happen in this life to give us displeasure! How few to give us joy!—I am sure I shall have none on this occasion; since the true partner of my heart, the principal of the one soul, that it used to be said, animated the pair of friends, as we were called; you, my dear, [who used to irradiate every circle you set your foot into, and to give me real significance in a second place to yourself,] cannot be there!—One hour of your company, my ever instructive friend, [I thirst for it!] how infinitely preferable would it be to me to all the diversions and amusements with which our sex are generally most delighted —Adieu, my dear!

A. HOWE.

LETTER XLI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE SUNDAY, JULY 23.

What pain, my dearest friend, does your kind solicitude for my welfare give me! How much more binding and tender are the ties of pure friendship, and the union of like minds, than the ties of nature! Well might the sweet-singer of Israel, when he was carrying to the utmost extent the praises of the friendship between him and his beloved friend, say, that the love of Jonathan to him was wonderful; that it surpassed the love of women! What an exalted idea does it give of the soul of Jonathan, sweetly attempered for the sacred band, if we may suppose it but equal to that of my Anna Howe for her fallen Clarissa?—But, although I can glory in your kind love for me, think, my dear, what concern must fill a mind, not ungenerous, when the obligation lies all on one side. And when, at the same time that your light is the brighter for my darkness, I must give pain to a dear friend, to whom I delighted to give pleasure; and not pain only, but discredit, for supporting my blighted fame against the busy tongues of uncharitable censures!

This is that makes me, in the words of my admired exclaimer, very little altered, often repeat: 'Oh! that I were as in months past! as in the days when God preserved me! when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness! As I was in the days of my childhood—when the Almighty was yet with me: when I was in my father's house: when I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil.'

You set before me your reasons, enforced by the opinion of your honoured mother, why I should think of Mr. Lovelace for a husband.*

* See the preceding Letter.

And I have before me your letter of the 13th,* containing the account of the visit and proposals, and kind interposition of the two Misses Montague, in the names of the good Ladies Sadleir and Betty Lawrance, and in that of my Lord M.

* See Letter IX. of this vol.

Also your's of the 18th,* demanding me, as I may say, of those ladies, and of that family, when I was so infamously and cruelly arrested, and you knew not what was become of me.

* See Letter XI. *ibid.*

The answer likewise of those ladies, signed in so full and generous a manner by themselves,* and by that nobleman, and those two venerable ladies; and, in his light way, by the wretch himself.

* See Letter XIV. *ibid.*

Thse, my dearest Miss Howe; and your letter of the 16th,* which came when I was under arrest, and which I received not till some days after; are all before me.

* See Letter X. of this volume.

And I have as well weighed the whole matter, and your arguments in support of your advice, as at present my head and my heart will let me weigh them.

I am, moreover, willing to believe, not only from your own opinion, but from the assurances of one of Mr. Lovelace's friends, Mr. Belford, a good-natured and humane man, who spares not to censure the author of my calamities (I think, with undissembled and undesigned sincerity) that that man is innocent of the disgraceful arrest.

And even, if you please, in sincere compliment to your opinion, and to that of Mr. Hickman, that (over-persuaded by his friends, and ashamed of his unmerited baseness to me) he would in earnest marry me, if I would have him.

*Well, and now, what is the result of all?—It is this—that I must abide by what I have already declared—and that is, [don't be angry at me, my best friend,] that I have much more pleasure in thinking of death, than of such a husband. In short, as I declared in my last, that I cannot [forgive me, if I say, I will not] ever be his.

* Those parts of this letter which are marked with an inverted comma [thus '] were afterwards transcribed by Miss Howe in Letter LV. written to the Ladies of Mr. Lovelace's family; and are thus distinguished to avoid the necessity of repeating them in that letter.

'But you will expect my reasons; I know you will: and if I give them not, will conclude me either obstinate, or implacable, or both: and those would be sad imputations, if just, to be laid to the charge of a person who thinks and talks of dying. And yet, to say that resentment and disappointment have no part in my determination, would be saying a thing hardly to be credited. For I own I have resentment, strong resentment, but not unreasonable ones, as you will be convinced, if already you are not so, when you know all my story—if ever you do know it—for I begin to fear (so many things more necessary to be thought of than either this man, or my own vindication, have I to do) that I shall not have time to compass what I have intended, and, in a manner, promised you.*

* See Vol. VI. Letter LXXIII.

'I have one reason to give in support of my resolution, that, I believe, yourself will allow of: but having owned that I have resentments, I will begin with those considerations in which anger and disappointment have too great a share; in hopes that, having once disburdened my mind upon paper, and to my Anna Howe, of those corroding uneasy passions, I shall prevent them for ever from returning to my heart, and to have their place supplied by better, milder, and more agreeable ones.

'My pride, then, my dearest friend, although a great deal mortified, is not sufficiently mortified, if it be necessary for me to submit to make that man my choice, whose actions are, and ought to be, my abhorrence!—What!—Shall I, who have been treated with such premeditated and perfidious barbarity, as is painful to be thought of, and cannot, with modesty be described, think of taking the violator to my heart? Can I vow duty to one so wicked, and hazard my salvation by joining myself to so great a profligate, now I know him to be so? Do you think your Clarissa Harlowe so lost, so sunk, at least, as that she could, for the sake of patching up, in the world's eye, a broken reputation, meanly appear indebted to the generosity, or perhaps compassion, of a man, who has, by means so inhuman, robbed her of it? Indeed, my dear, I should not think my penitence for the rash step I took, any thing better than a specious delusion, if I had not got above the least wish to have Mr. Lovelace for my husband.

'Yes, I warrant, I must creep to the violator, and be thankful to him for doing me poor justice!

'Do you not already see me (pursuing the advice you give) with a downcast eye, appear before his friends, and before my own, (supposing the latter would at last condescend to own me,) divested of that noble confidence which arises from a mind unconscious of having deserved reproach?

'Do you not see me creep about mine own house, preferring all my honest maidens to myself—as if afraid, too, to open my lips, either by way of reproof or admonition, lest their bolder eyes should bid me look inward, and not expect perfection from them?

'And shall I entitle the wretch to upbraid me with his generosity, and his pity; and perhaps to reproach me for having been capable of forgiving crimes of such a nature?

'I once indeed hoped, little thinking him so premeditatedly vile a man, that I might have the happiness to reclaim him: I vainly believed that he loved me well enough to suffer my advice for his good, and the example I humbly presumed I should be enabled to set him, to have weight with him; and the rather, as he had no mean opinion of my morals and understanding: But now what hope is there left for this my prime hope?—Were I to marry him, what a figure should I make, preaching virtue and morality to a man whom I had trusted with opportunities to seduce me from all my own duties!—And then, supposing I were to have children by such a husband, must it not, think you, cut a thoughtful person to the heart; to look round upon her little family, and think she had given them a father destined, without a miracle, to perdition; and whose immoralities, propagated among them by his vile example, might, too probably, bring down a curse upon them? And, after all, who knows but that my own sinful compliances with a man, who might think himself entitled to my obedience, might taint my own morals, and make me, instead of a reformer, an imitator of him?—For who can touch pitch, and not be defiled?

'Let me then repeat, that I truly despise this man! If I know my own heart, indeed I do!—I pity him! beneath my very pity as he is, I nevertheless pity him!—But this I could not do, if I still loved him: for, my dear, one must be greatly sensible of the baseness and ingratitude of those we love. I love him not, therefore! my soul disdains communion with him.

'But, although thus much is due to resentment, yet have I not been so far carried away by its angry effects as to be rendered incapable of casting about what I ought to do, and what could be done, if the Almighty, in order to lengthen the time of my penitence, were to bid me to live.

'The single life, at such times, has offered to me, as the life, the only life, to be chosen. But in that, must I not now sit brooding over my past afflictions, and mourning my faults till the hour of my release? And would not every one be able to assign the reason why Clarissa Harlowe chose solitude, and to sequester herself

from the world? Would not the look of every creature, who beheld me, appear as a reproach to me? And would not my conscious eye confess my fault, whether the eyes of others accused me or not? One of my delights was, to enter the cots of my poor neighbours, to leave lessons to the boys, and cautions to the elder girls: and how should I be able, unconscious, and without pain, to say to the latter, fly the delusions of men, who had been supposed to have run away with one?

'What then, my dear and only friend, can I wish for but death?—And what, after all, is death? 'Tis but a cessation from mortal life: 'tis but the finishing of an appointed course: the refreshing inn after a fatiguing journey; the end of a life of cares and troubles; and, if happy, the beginning of a life of immortal happiness.

'If I die not now, it may possibly happen that I may be taken when I am less prepared. Had I escaped the evils I labour under, it might have been in the midst of some gay promising hope; when my heart had beat high with the desire of life; and when the vanity of this earth had taken hold of me.

'But now, my dear, for your satisfaction let me say that, although I wish not for life, yet would I not, like a poor coward, desert my post when I can maintain it, and when it is my duty to maintain it.

'More than once, indeed, was I urged by thoughts so sinful: but then it was in the height of my distress: and once, particularly, I have reason to believe, I saved myself by my desperation from the most shocking personal insults; from a repetition, as far as I know, of his vileness; the base women (with so much reason dreaded by me) present, to intimidate me, if not to assist him!—O my dear, you know not what I suffered on that occasion!—Nor do I what I escaped at the time, if the wicked man had approached me to execute the horrid purposes of his vile heart.'

As I am of opinion, that it would have manifested more of revenge and despair than of principle, had I committed a violence upon myself, when the villany was perpetrated; so I should think it equally criminal, were I now wilfully to neglect myself; were I purposely to run into the arms of death, (as that man supposes I shall do,) when I might avoid it.

Nor, my dear, whatever are the suppositions of such a short-sighted, such a low-souled man, must you impute to gloom, to melancholy, to despondency, nor yet to a spirit of faulty pride, or still more faulty revenge, the resolution I have taken never to marry this: and if not this, any man. So far from deserving this imputation, I do assure you, (my dear and only love,) that I will do every thing I can to prolong my life, till God, in mercy to me, shall be pleased to call for it. I have reason to think my punishment is but the due consequence of my fault, and I will not run away from it; but beg of Heaven to sanctify it to me. When appetite serves, I will eat and drink what is sufficient to support nature. A very little, you know, will do for that. And whatever my physicians shall think fit to prescribe, I will take, though ever so disagreeable. In short, I will do every thing I can do to convince all my friends, who hereafter may think it worth their while to inquire after my last behaviour, that I possessed my soul with tolerable patience; and endeavoured to bear with a lot of my own drawing; for thus, in humble imitation of the sublimest exemplar, I often say:—Lord, it is thy will; and it shall be mine. Thou art just in all thy dealings with the children of men; and I know thou wilt not afflict me beyond what I can bear: and, if I can bear it, I ought to bear it; and (thy grace assisting me) I will bear it.

'But here, my dear, is another reason; a reason that will convince you yourself that I ought not to think of wedlock; but of a preparation for a quite different event. I am persuaded, as much as that I am now alive, that I shall not long live. The strong sense I have ever had of my fault, the loss of my reputation, my disappointments, the determined resentment of my friends, aiding the barbarous usage I have met with where I least deserved it, have seized upon my heart: seized upon it, before it was so well fortified by religious considerations as I hope it now is. Don't be concerned, my dear—But I am sure, if I may say it with as little presumption as grief, That God will soon dissolve my substance; and bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.'

And now, my dearest friend, you know all my mind. And you will be pleased to write to the ladies of Mr. Lovelace's family, that I think myself infinitely obliged to them for their good opinion of me; and that it has given me greater pleasure than I thought I had to come in this life, that, upon the little knowledge they have of me, and that not personal, I was thought worthy (after the ill usage I have received) of an alliance with their honourable family: but that I can by no means think of their kinsman for a husband: and do you, my dear, extract from the above such reasons as you think have any weight with them.

I would write myself to acknowledge their favour, had I not more employment for my head, my heart, and my fingers, than I doubt they will be able to go through.

I should be glad to know when you set out on your journey; as also your little stages; and your time of stay at your aunt Harman's; that my prayers may locally attend you whithersoever you go, and wherever you are.

CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER XLII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE SUNDAY, JULY 23.

The letter accompanying this being upon a very particular subject, I would not embarrass it, as I may say, with any other. And yet having some farther matters upon my mind, which will want your excuse for directing them to you, I hope the following lines will have that excuse.

My good Mrs. Norton, so long ago as in a letter dated the 3d of this month,* hinted to me that my relations took amiss some severe things you were pleased, in love to me, to say to them. Mrs. Norton mentioned it with that respectful love which she bears to my dearest friend: but wished, for my sake, that you would rein in a vivacity, which, on most other occasions, so charmingly becomes you. This was her sense. You know that I am warranted to speak and write freer to my Anna Howe than Mrs. Norton would do.

* See Vol. VI. Letter LXIII.

I durst not mention it to you at that time, because appearances were so strong against me, on Mr. Lovelace's getting me again into his power, (after my escape to Hampstead,) as made you very angry with me when you answered mine on my second escape. And, soon afterwards, I was put under that barbarous arrest; so that I could not well touch upon the subject till now.

Now, therefore, my dearest Miss Howe, let me repeat my earnest request (for this is not the first time by several that I have been obliged to chide you on this occasion,) that you will spare my parents, and other relations, in all your conversations about me. Indeed, I wish they had thought fit to take other measures with me: But who shall judge for them?—The event has justified them, and condemned me.—They expected nothing good of this vile man; he had not, therefore, deceived them: but they expected other things from me; and I have. And they have the more reason to be set against me, if (as my aunt Hervey wrote* formerly,) they intended not to force my inclinations in favour of Mr. Solmes; and if they believe that my going off was the effect of choice and premeditation.

* See Vol. III. Letter LII.

I have no desire to be received to favour by them: For why should I sit down to wish for what I have no reason to expect?—Besides, I could not look them in the face, if they would receive me. Indeed I could not. All I have to hope for is, first, that my father will absolve me from his heavy malediction: and next, for a last blessing. The obtaining of these favours are needful to my peace of mind.

I have written to my sister; but have only mentioned the absolution.

I am afraid I shall receive a very harsh answer from her: my fault, in the eyes of my family, is of so enormous a nature, that my first application will hardly be encouraged. Then they know not (nor perhaps will believe) that I am so very ill as I am. So that, were I actually to die before they could have time to take the necessary informations, you must not blame them too severely. You must call it a fatality. I know not what you must call it: for, alas! I have made them as miserable as I am myself. And yet sometimes I think that, were they cheerfully to pronounce me forgiven, I know not whether my concern for having offended them would not be augmented: since I imagine that nothing can be more wounding to a spirit not ungenerous than a generous forgiveness.

I hope your mother will permit our correspondence for one month more, although I do not take her advice as to having this man. When catastrophes are winding up, what changes (changes that make one's heart shudder to think of,) may one short month produce?—But if she will not— why then, my dear, it becomes us both to acquiesce.

You can't think what my apprehensions would have been, had I known Mr. Hickman was to have had a meeting (on such a questioning occasion as must have been his errand from you) with that haughty and uncontrollable man.

You give me hope of a visit from Mr. Hickman: let him expect to see me greatly altered. I know he loves me: for he loves every one whom you love. A painful interview, I doubt! But I shall be glad to see a man whom you will one day, and that on an early day, I hope, make happy; whose gentle manners, and unbounded love for you, will make you so, if it be not your own fault.

I am, my dearest, kindest friend, the sweet companion of my happy hours, the friend ever dearest and nearest to my fond heart,

Your equally obliged and faithful, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER XLIII

MRS. NORTON, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE MONDAY, JULY 24.

Excuse, my dearest young lady, my long silence. I have been extremely ill. My poor boy has also been at death's door; and, when I hoped that he was better, he has relapsed. Alas! my dear, he is very dangerously ill. Let us both have your prayers!

Very angry letters have passed between your sister and Miss Howe. Every one of your family is incensed against that young lady. I wish you would remonstrate against her warmth; since it can do no good; for they will not believe but that her interposition had your connivance; nor that you are so ill as Miss Howe assures them you are.

Before she wrote, they were going to send up young Mr. Brand, the clergyman, to make private inquiries of your health, and way of life.— But now they are so exasperated that they have laid aside their intention.

We have flying reports here, and at Harlowe-place, of some fresh insults which you have undergone: and that you are about to put yourself into Lady Betty Lawrance's protection. I believe they would not be glad (as I should be) that you would do so; and this, perhaps, will make them suspend, for the present, any determination in your favour.

How unhappy am I, that the dangerous way my son is in prevents my attendance on you! Let me beg of you to write to me word how you are, both as to person and mind. A servant of Sir Robert Beachcroft, who rides post on his master's business to town, will present you with this; and, perhaps, will bring me the favour of a few lines in return. He will be obliged to stay in town several hours for an answer to his dispatches.

This is the anniversary that used to give joy to as many as had the pleasure and honour of knowing you. May the Almighty bless you, and grant that it may be the only unhappy one that may ever be known by you, my dearest young lady, and by

Your ever affectionate JUDITH NORTON.

LETTER XLIV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MRS. NORTON MONDAY NIGHT, JULY 24.

MY DEAR MRS. NORTON,

Had I not fallen into fresh troubles, which disabled me for several days from holding a pen, I should not have forborne inquiring after your health, and that of your son; for I should have been but too ready to impute your silence to the cause to which, to my very great concern, I find it was owing. I pray to Heaven, my dear good friend, to give you comfort in the way most desirable to yourself.

I am exceedingly concerned at Miss Howe's writing about me to my friends. I do assure you, that I was as ignorant of her intention so to do as of the contents of her letter. Nor has she yet let me know (discouraged, I suppose, by her ill success) that she did write. It is impossible to share the delight which such charming spirits give, without the inconvenience that will attend their volatility.—So mixed are our best enjoyments!

It was but yesterday that I wrote to chide the dear creature for freedoms of that nature, which her unseasonably-expressed love for me had made her take, as you wrote me word in your former. I was afraid that all such freedoms would be attributed to me. And I am sure that nothing but my own application to my friends, and a full conviction of my contrition, will procure me favour. Least of all can I expect that either your mediation or her's (both of whose fond and partial love of me is so well known) will avail me.

[She then gives a brief account of the arrest: of her dejection under it: of her apprehensions of being carried to her former lodgings: of Mr. Lovelace's avowed innocence as to that insult: of her release by Mr. Belford: of Mr. Lovelace's promise not to molest her: of her clothes being sent her: of the earnest desire of all his friends, and of himself, to marry her: of Miss Howe's advice to comply with their requests: and of her declared resolution rather to die than be his, sent to Miss Howe, to be given to his relations, but as the day before. After which she thus proceeds:]

Now, my dear Mrs. Norton, you will be surprised, perhaps, that I should have returned such an answer: but when you have every thing before you, you, who know me so well, will not think me wrong. And, besides, I am upon a better preparation than for an earthly husband.

Nor let it be imagined, my dear and ever venerable friend, that my present turn of mind proceeds from gloominess or melancholy; for although it was brought on by disappointment, (the world showing me early, even at my first rushing into it, its true and ugly face,) yet I hope that it has obtained a better root, and will every day more and more, by its fruits, demonstrate to me, and to all my friends, that it has.

I have written to my sister. Last Friday I wrote. So the die is thrown. I hope for a gentle answer. But, perhaps, they will not vouchsafe me any. It is my first direct application, you know. I wish Miss Howe had left me to my own workings in this tender point.

It will be a great satisfaction to me to hear of your perfect recovery; and that my foster-brother is out of danger. But why, said I, out of danger?—When can this be justly said of creatures, who hold by so uncertain a tenure? This is one of those forms of common speech, that proves the frailty and the presumption of poor mortals at the same time.

Don't be uneasy, you cannot answer your wishes to be with me. I am happier than I could have expected to be among mere strangers. It was grievous at first; but use reconciles every thing to us. The people of the house where I am are courteous and honest. There is a widow who lodges in it [have I not said so formerly?] a good woman; who is the better for having been a proficient in the school of affliction.

An excellent school! my dear Mrs. Norton, in which we are taught to know ourselves, to be able to compassionate and bear with one another, and to look up to a better hope.

I have as humane a physician, (whose fees are his least regard,) and as worthy an apothecary, as ever patient was visited by. My nurse is diligent, obliging, silent, and sober. So I am not unhappy without: and within—I hope, my dear Mrs. Norton, that I shall be every day more and more happy within.

No doubt it would be one of the greatest comforts I could know to have you with me: you, who love me so dearly: who have been the watchful sustainer of my helpless infancy: you, by whose precepts I have been so much benefited!—In your dear bosom could I repose all my griefs: and by your piety and experience in the ways of Heaven, should I be strengthened in what I am still to go through.

But, as it must not be, I will acquiesce; and so, I hope, will you: for you see in what respects I am not unhappy; and in those that I am, they lie not in your power to remedy.

Then as I have told you, I have all my clothes in my own possession. So I am rich enough, as to this world, in common conveniencies.

You see, my venerable and dear friend, that I am not always turning the dark side of my prospects, in order to move compassion; a trick imputed to me, too often, by my hard-hearted sister; when, if I know my own heart, it is above all trick or artifice. Yet I hope at last I shall be so happy as to receive benefit rather than reproach from this talent, if it be my talent. At last, I say; for whose heart have I hitherto moved? —Not one, I am sure, that was not predetermined in my favour.

As to the day—I have passed it, as I ought to pass it. It has been a very heavy day to me!—More for my friends sake, too, than for my own!— How did they use to pass it!—What a festivity!—How have they now passed it?—To imagine it, how grievous!—Say not that those are cruel, who suffer so much for my fault; and who, for eighteen years together, rejoiced in me, and rejoiced me by their indulgent goodness!—But I will think the rest!—Adieu, my dearest Mrs. Norton!—

Adieu!

LETTER XLV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS ARABELLA HARLOWE FRIDAY, JULY 21.

If, my dearest Sister, I did not think the state of my health very precarious, and that it was my duty to take this step, I should hardly have dared to approach you, although but with my pen, after having found your censures so dreadfully justified as they have been.

I have not the courage to write to my father himself, nor yet to my mother. And it is with trembling that I address myself to you, to beg of you to intercede for me, that my father will have the goodness to revoke that heaviest part of the very heavy curse he laid upon me, which relates to HEREAFTER; for, as to the HERE, I have indeed met with my punishment from the very wretch in whom I was supposed to place my confidence.

As I hope not for restoration to favour, I may be allowed to be very earnest on this head: yet will I not use any arguments in support of my request, because I am sure my father, were it in his power, would not have his poor child miserable for ever.

I have the most grateful sense of my mother's goodness in sending me up my clothes. I would have acknowledged the favour the moment I received them, with the most thankful duty, but that I feared any line from me would be unacceptable.

I would not give fresh offence: so will decline all other commendations of duty and love: appealing to my heart for both, where both are flaming with an ardour that nothing but death can extinguish: therefore only subscribe myself, without so much as a name,

My dear and happy Sister, Your afflicted servant.

A letter directed for me, at Mr. Smith's, a glover, in King-street, Covent-garden, will come to hand.

LETTER XLVI

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. [IN ANSWER TO LETTERS XXIX. XXXII. OF THIS VOLUME.] EDGWARE, MONDAY, JULY 24.

What pains thou takest to persuade thyself, that the lady's ill health is owing to the vile arrest, and to the implacableness of her friends. Both primarily (if they were) to be laid at thy door. What poor excuses will good hearts make for the evils they are put upon by bad hearts!—But 'tis no wonder that he who can sit down premeditatedly to do a bad action, will content himself with a bad excuse: and yet what fools must he suppose the rest of the world to be, if he imagines them as easy to be imposed upon as he can impose upon himself?

In vain dost thou impute to pride or wilfulness the necessity to which thou hast reduced this lady of parting with her clothes; For can she do otherwise, and be the noble-minded creature she is?

Her implacable friends have refused her the current cash she left behind her; and wished, as her sister wrote to her, to see her reduced to want: probably therefore they will not be sorry that she is reduced to such straits; and will take it for a justification from Heaven of their wicked hard heartedness. Thou canst not suppose she would take supplies from thee: to take them from me would, in her opinion, be taking them from thee. Miss Howe's mother is an avaricious woman; and, perhaps, the daughter can do nothing of that sort unknown to her; and, if she could, is too noble a girl to deny it, if charged. And then Miss Harlowe is firmly of opinion, that she shall never want nor wear the thing she disposes of.

Having heard nothing from town that obliges me to go thither, I shall gratify poor Belton with my company till to-morrow, or perhaps till Wednesday. For the unhappy man is more and more loth to part with me. I shall soon set out for Epsom, to endeavour to serve him there, and re-instate him in his own house. Poor fellow! he is most horribly low spirited; mopes about; and nothing diverts him. I pity him at my heart; but can do him no good.—What consolation can I give him, either from his past life, or from his future prospects?

Our friendships and intimacies, Lovelace, are only calculated for strong life and health. When sickness comes, we look round us, and upon one another, like frightened birds, at the sight of a kite ready to souse upon them. Then, with all our bravery, what miserable wretches are we!

Thou tellest me that thou seest reformation is coming swiftly upon me. I hope it is. I see so much difference in the behaviour of this admirable woman in her illness, and that of poor Belton in his, that it is plain to me the sinner is the real coward, and the saint the true hero; and, sooner or later, we shall all find it to be so, if we are not cut off suddenly.

The lady shut herself up at six o'clock yesterday afternoon; and intends not to see company till seven or eight this; not even her nurse—imposing upon herself a severe fast. And why? It is her BIRTH-DAY!—Every birth-day till this, no doubt, happy!—What must be her reflections!—What ought to be thine!

What sport dost thou make with my aspirations, and my prostrations, as thou callest them; and with my dropping of the banknote behind her chair! I had too much awe of her at the time, to make it with the grace that would better have become my intention. But the action, if awkward, was modest. Indeed, the fitter subject for ridicule with thee; who canst no more taste the beauty and delicacy of modest obligingness than of modest love. For the same may be said of inviolable respect, that the poet says of unfeigned affection,

*I speak! I know not what!—
Speak ever so: and if I answer you
I know not what, it shows the more of love.
Love is a child that talks in broken language;
Yet then it speaks most plain.*

The like may be pleaded in behalf of that modest respect which made the humble offerer afraid to invade the awful eye, or the revered hand; but awkwardly to drop its incense behind the altar it should have been laid upon. But how should that soul, which could treat delicacy itself brutally, know any thing of this!

But I am still more amazed at thy courage, to think of throwing thyself in the way of Miss Howe, and Miss Arabella Harlowe!—Thou wilt not dare, surely, to carry this thought into execution!

As to my dress, and thy dress, I have only to say, that the sum total of thy observation is this: that my outside is the worst of me; and thine the best of thee: and what gettest thou by the comparison? Do thou reform the one, I'll try to mend the other. I challenge thee to begin.

Mrs. Lovick gave me, at my request, the copy of a meditation she showed me, which was extracted by the lady from the scriptures, while under arrest at Rowland's, as appears by the date. The lady is not to know that I have taken a copy.

You and I always admired the noble simplicity, and natural ease and dignity of style, which are the distinguishing characteristics of these books, whenever any passages from them, by way of quotation in the works of other authors, popt upon us. And once I remember you, even you, observed, that those passages always appeared to you like a rich vein of golden ore, which runs through baser metals; embellishing the work they were brought to authenticate.

Try, Lovelace, if thou canst relish a Divine beauty. I think it must strike transient (if not permanent) remorse into thy heart. Thou boastest of thy ingenuousness: let this be the test of it; and whether thou canst be serious on a subject too deep, the occasion of it resulting from thyself.

MEDITATION Saturday, July 15.

O that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balance together!

For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up!

For the arrows of the Almighty are within me; the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit. The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.

When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise? When will the night be gone? And I am full of tossings to and fro, unto the dawning of the day.

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope— mine eye shall no more see good.

Wherefore is light given to her that is in misery; and life unto the bitter in soul?

Who longeth for death; but it cometh not; and diggeth for it more than for hid treasures?

Why is light given to one whose way is hid; and whom God hath hedged in?

For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me!

I was not in safety; neither had I rest; neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.

But behold God is mighty, and despiseth not any.

He giveth right to the poor—and if they be found in fetters, and holden in cords of affliction, then he showeth them their works and their transgressions.

I have a little leisure, and am in a scribbling vein: indulge me, Lovelace, a few reflections on these sacred books.

We are taught to read the Bible, when children, as a rudiment only; and, as far as I know, this may be the reason why we think ourselves above it when at a maturer age. For you know that our parents, as well as we, wisely rate our proficiency by the books we are advanced to, and not by our understanding of those we have passed through. But, in my uncle's illness, I had the curiosity, in some of my dull hours, (lighting upon one in his closet,) to dip into it: and then I found, wherever I turned, that there were admirable things in it. I have borrowed one, on receiving from Mrs. Lovick the above meditation; for I had a mind to compare the passages contained in it by the book, hardly believing they could be so exceedingly apposite as I find they are. And one time or another, it is very likely, that I shall make a resolution to give the whole Bible a perusal, by way of course, as I may say.

This, meantime, I will venture to repeat, is certain, that the style is that truly easy, simple, and natural one, which we should admire in each other authors excessively. Then all the world join in an opinion of the antiquity, and authenticity too, of the book; and the learned are fond of strengthening their different arguments by its sanctions. Indeed, I was so much taken with it at my uncle's, that I was half ashamed that it appeared so new to me. And yet, I cannot but say, that I have some of the Old Testament history, as it is called, in my head: but, perhaps, am more obliged for it to Josephus than to the Bible itself.

Odd enough, with all our pride of learning, that we choose to derive the little we know from the under currents, perhaps muddy ones too, when the clear, the pellucid fountain-head, is much nearer at hand, and easier to be come at—slighted the more, possibly, for that very reason!

But man is a pragmatical, foolish creature; and the more we look into him, the more we must despise him—Lords of the creation!—Who can forbear indignant laughter! When we see not one of the individuals of that creation (his perpetually-eccentric self excepted) but acts within its own natural and original appointment: is of fancied and self-dependent excellence, he is obliged not only for the ornaments, but for the necessaries of life, (that is to say, for food as well as raiment,) to all the other creatures; strutting with their blood and spirits in his veins, and with their plumage on his back: for what has he of his own, but a very mischievous, monkey-like, bad nature! Yet thinks himself at liberty to kick, and cuff, and elbow out every worthier creature: and when he has none of the animal creation to hunt down and abuse, will make use of his power, his strength, or his wealth, to oppress the less powerful and weaker of his own species!

When you and I meet next, let us enter more largely into this subject: and, I dare say, we shall take it by

turns, in imitation of the two sages of antiquity, to laugh and to weep at the thoughts of what miserable, yet conceited beings, men in general, but we libertines in particular, are.

I fell upon a piece at Dorrell's, this very evening, intituled, *The Sacred Classics*, written by one Blackwell.

I took it home with me, and had not read a dozen pages, when I was convinced that I ought to be ashamed of myself to think how greatly I have admired less noble and less natural beauties in Pagan authors; while I have known nothing of this all-exciting collection of beauties, the Bible! By my faith, Lovelace, I shall for the future have a better opinion of the good sense and taste of half a score of parsons, whom I have fallen in with in my time, and despised for magnifying, as I thought they did, the language and the sentiments to be found in it, in preference to all the ancient poets and philosophers. And this is now a convincing proof to me, and shames as much an infidel's presumption as his ignorance, that those who know least are the greatest scoffers. A pretty pack of would-be wits of us, who censure without knowledge, laugh without reason, and are most noisy and loud against things we know least of!

LETTER XLVII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. WEDNESDAY, JULY 26.

I came not to town till this morning early: poor Belton clinging to me, as a man destitute of all other hold.

I hastened to Smith's, and had but a very indifferent account of the lady's health. I sent up my compliments; and she desired to see me in the afternoon.

Mrs. Lovick told me, that after I went away on Saturday, she actually parted with one of her best suits of clothes to a gentlewoman who is her [Mrs. Lovick's] benefactress, and who bought them for a niece who is very speedily to be married, and whom she fits out and portions as her intended heiress. The lady was so jealous that the money might come from you or me, that she would see the purchaser: who owned to Mrs. Lovick that she bought them for half their worth: but yet, though her conscience permitted her to take them at such an under rate, the widow says her friend admired the lady, as one of the loveliest of her sex: and having been let into a little of her story, could not help shedding tears at taking away her purchase.

She may be a good sort of woman: Mrs. Lovick says she is: but SELF is an odious devil, that reconciles to some people the most cruel and dishonest actions. But, nevertheless, it is my opinion, that those who can suffer themselves to take advantage of the necessities of their fellow-creatures, in order to buy any thing at a less rate than would allow them the legal interest of their purchase-money (supposing they purchase before they want) are no better than robbers for the difference. —To plunder a wreck, and to rob at a fire, are indeed higher degrees of wickedness: but do not those, as well as these, heighten the distresses of the distressed, and heap misery on the miserable, whom it is the duty of every one to relieve?

About three o'clock I went again to Smith's. The lady was writing when I sent up my name; but admitted of my visit. I saw a miserable alteration in her countenance for the worse; and Mrs. Lovick respectfully accusing her of too great assiduity to her pen, early and late, and of her abstinence the day before, I took notice of the alteration; and told her, that her physician had greater hopes of her than she had of herself; and I would take the liberty to say, that despair of recovery allowed not room for cure.

She said she neither despaired nor hoped. Then stepping to the glass, with great composure, My countenance, said she, is indeed an honest picture of my heart. But the mind will run away with the body at any time.

Writing is all my diversion, continued she: and I have subjects that cannot be dispensed with. As to my hours, I have always been an early riser: but now rest is less in my power than ever. Sleep has a long time ago quarreled with me, and will not be friends, although I have made the first advances. What will be, must.

She then stopt to her closet, and brought me a parcel sealed up with three seals: Be so kind, said she, as to give this to your friend. A very grateful present it ought to be to him: for, Sir, this packet contains such letters of his to me, as, compared with his actions, would reflect dishonour upon all his sex, were they to fall into other hands.

As to my letters to him, they are not many. He may either keep or destroy them, as he pleases.

I thought, Lovelace, I ought not to forego this opportunity to plead for you: I therefore, with the packet in my hand, urged all the arguments I could think of in your favour.

She heard me out with more attention than I could have promised myself, considering her determined resolution.

I would not interrupt you, Mr. Belford, said she, though I am far from being pleased with the subject of your discourse. The motives for your pleas in his favour are generous. I love to see instances of generous friendship in either sex. But I have written my full mind on this subject to Miss Howe, who will communicate it to the ladies of his family. No more, therefore, I pray you, upon a topic that may lead to disagreeable recrimination.

Her apothecary came in. He advised her to the air, and blamed her for so great an application, as he was told she made to her pen; and he gave it as the doctor's opinion, as well as his own, that she would recover, if she herself desired to recover, and would use the means.

She may possibly write too much for her health: but I have observed, on several occasions, that when the medical men are at a loss what to prescribe, they inquire what their patients like best, or are most diverted with, and forbid them that.

But, noble minded as they see this lady is, they know not half her nobleness of mind, nor how deeply she is wounded; and depend too much upon her youth, which I doubt will not do in this case; and upon time, which will not alleviate the woes of such a mind: for, having been bent upon doing good, and upon reclaiming a

libertine whom she loved, she is disappointed in all her darling views, and will never be able, I fear, to look up with satisfaction enough in herself to make life desirable to her. For this lady had other views in living, than the common ones of eating, sleeping, dressing, visiting, and those other fashionable amusements, which fill up the time of most of her sex, especially of those of it who think themselves fitted to shine in and adorn polite assemblies. Her grief, in short, seems to me to be of such a nature, that time, which alleviates most other person's afflictions, will, as the poet says, give increase to her's.

Thou, Lovelace, mightest have seen all this superior excellence, as thou wentest along. In every word, in every sentiment, in every action, is it visible.—But thy cursed inventions and intriguing spirit ran away with thee. 'Tis fit that the subject of thy wicked boast, and thy reflections on talents so egregiously misapplied, should be thy punishment and thy curse.

Mr. Goddard took his leave; and I was going to do so too, when the maid came up, and told her a gentleman was below, who very earnestly inquired after her health, and desired to see her: his name Hickman.

She was overjoyed; and bid the maid desire the gentleman to walk up.

I would have withdrawn; but I supposed she thought it was likely I should have met him upon the stairs; and so she forbid it.

She shot to the stairs-head to receive him, and, taking his hand, asked half a dozen questions (without waiting for any answer) in relation to Miss Howe's health; acknowledging, in high terms, her goodness in sending him to see her, before she set out upon her little journey.

He gave her a letter from that young lady, which she put into her bosom, saying, she would read it by-and-by.

He was visibly shocked to see how ill she looked.

You look at me with concern, Mr. Hickman, said she—O Sir! times are strangely altered with me since I saw you last at my dear Miss Howe's!—What a cheerful creature was I then!—my heart at rest! my prospects charming! and beloved by every body!—but I will not pain you!

Indeed, Madam, said he, I am grieved for you at my soul.

He turned away his face, with visible grief in it.

Her own eyes glistened: but she turned to each of us, presenting one to the other—him to me, as a gentleman truly deserving to be called so—me to him, as your friend, indeed, [how was I at that instant ashamed of myself!] but, nevertheless, as a man of humanity; detesting my friend's baseness; and desirous of doing her all manner of good offices.

Mr. Hickman received my civilities with a coldness, which, however, was rather to be expected on your account, than that it deserved exception on mine. And the lady invited us both to breakfast with her in the morning; he being obliged to return the next day.

I left them together, and called upon Mr. Dorrell, my attorney, to consult him upon poor Belton's affairs; and then went home, and wrote thus far, preparative to what may occur in my breakfasting-visit in the morning.

LETTER XLVIII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. THURSDAY, JULY 27.

I went this morning, according to the lady's invitation, to breakfast, and found Mr. Hickman with her.

A good deal of heaviness and concern hung upon his countenance: but he received me with more respect than he did yesterday; which, I presume, was owing to the lady's favourable character of me.

He spoke very little; for I suppose they had all their talk out yesterday, and before I came this morning.

By the hints that dropped, I perceived that Miss Howe's letter gave an account of your interview with her at Col. Ambrose's—of your professions to Miss Howe; and Miss Howe's opinion, that marrying you was the only way now left to repair her wrongs.

Mr. Hickman, as I also gathered, had pressed her, in Miss Howe's name, to let her, on her return from the Isle of Wight, find her at a neighbouring farm-house, where neat apartments would be made ready to receive her. She asked how long it would be before they returned? And he told her, it was proposed to be no more than a fortnight out and in. Upon which she said, she should then perhaps have time to consider of that kind proposal.

He had tendered her money from Miss Howe; but could not induce her to take any. No wonder I was refused! she only said, that, if she had occasion, she would be obliged to nobody but Miss Howe.

Mr. Goddard, her apothecary, came in before breakfast was over. At her desire he sat down with us. Mr. Hickman asked him, if he could give him any consolation in relation to Miss Harlowe's recovery, to carry down to a friend who loved her as she loved her own life?

The lady, said he, will do very well, if she will resolve upon it herself. Indeed you will, Madam. The doctor is entirely of this opinion; and has ordered nothing for you but weak jellies and innocent cordials, lest you should starve yourself. And let me tell you, Madam, that so much watching, so little nourishment, and so much grief, as you seem to indulge, is enough to impair the most vigorous health, and to wear out the strongest constitution.

What, Sir, said she, can I do? I have no appetite. Nothing you call nourishing will stay on my stomach. I do what I can: and have such kind directors in Dr. H. and you, that I should be inexcusable if I did not.

I'll give you a regimen, Madam, replied he; which, I am sure, the doctor will approve of, and will make physic unnecessary in your case. And that is, 'go to rest at ten at night. Rise not till seven in the morning. Let

your breakfast be watergruel, or milk-pottage, or weak broths: your dinner any thing you like, so you will but eat: a dish of tea, with milk, in the afternoon; and sago for your supper: and, my life for your's, this diet, and a month's country air, will set you up.'

We were much pleased with the worthy gentleman's disinterested regimen: and she said, referring to her nurse, (who vouched for her,) Pray, Mr. Hickman, let Miss Howe know the good hands I am in: and as to the kind charge of the gentleman, assure her, that all I promised to her, in the longest of my two last letters, on the subject of my health, I do and will, to the utmost of my power, observe. I have engaged, Sir, (to Mr. Goddard,) I have engaged, Sir, (to me,) to Miss Howe, to avoid all wilful neglects. It would be an unpardonable fault, and very ill become the character I would be glad to deserve, or the temper of mind I wish my friends hereafter to think me mistress of, if I did not.

Mr. Hickman and I went afterwards to a neighbouring coffee-house; and he gave me some account of your behaviour at the ball on Monday night, and of your treatment of him in the conference he had with you before that; which he represented in a more favourable light than you had done yourself: and yet he gave his sentiments of you with great freedom, but with the politeness of a gentleman.

He told me how very determined the lady was against marrying you; that she had, early this morning, set herself to write a letter to Miss Howe, in answer to one he brought her, which he was to call for at twelve, it being almost finished before he saw her at breakfast; and that at three he proposed to set out on his return.

He told me that Miss Howe, and her mother, and himself, were to begin their little journey for the Isle of Wight on Monday next: but that he must make the most favourable representation of Miss Harlowe's bad health, or they should have a very uneasy absence. He expressed the pleasure he had in finding the lady in such good hands. He proposed to call on Dr. H. to take his opinion whether it were likely she would recover; and hoped he should find it favourable.

As he was resolved to make the best of the matter, and as the lady had refused to accept of the money offered by Mr. Hickman, I said nothing of her parting with her clothes. I thought it would serve no other end to mention it, but to shock Miss Howe: for it has such a sound with it, that a woman of her rank and fortune should be so reduced, that I cannot myself think of it with patience; nor know I but one man in the world who can.

This gentleman is a little finical and formal. Modest or diffident men wear not soon off those little precisenesses, which the confident, if ever they had them, presently get above; because they are too confident to doubt any thing. But I think Mr. Hickman is an agreeable, sensible man, and not at all deserving of the treatment or the character you give him.

But you are really a strange mortal: because you have advantages in your person, in your air, and intellect, above all the men I know, and a face that would deceive the devil, you can't think any man else tolerable.

It is upon this modest principle that thou deridest some of us, who, not having thy confidence in their outside appearance, seek to hide their defects by the tailor's and peruke-maker's assistance; (mistakenly enough, if it be really done so absurdly as to expose them more;) and sayest, that we do but hang out a sign, in our dress, of what we have in the shop of our minds. This, no doubt, thou thinkest, is smartly observed: but pr'ythee, Lovelace, let me tell thee, if thou canst, what sort of a sign must thou hang out, wert thou obliged to give us a clear idea by it of the furniture of thy mind?

Mr. Hickman tells me, he should have been happy with Miss Howe some weeks ago, (for all the settlements have been some time engrossed;) but that she will not marry, she declares, while her dear friend is so unhappy.

This is truly a charming instance of the force of female friendship; which you and I, and our brother rakes, have constantly ridiculed as a chimerical thing in women of equal age, and perfections.

But really, Lovelace, I see more and more that there are not in the world, with our conceited pride, narrower-souled wretches than we rakes and libertines are. And I'll tell thee how it comes about.

Our early love of roguery makes us generally run away from instruction; and so we become mere smatterers in the sciences we are put to learn; and, because we will know no more, think there is no more to be known.

With an infinite deal of vanity, un-reined imaginations, and no judgments at all, we next commence half-wits, and then think we have the whole field of knowledge in possession, and despise every one who takes more pains, and is more serious, than ourselves, as phlegmatic, stupid fellows, who have no taste for the most poignant pleasures of life.

This makes us insufferable to men of modesty and merit, and obliges us to herd with those of our own cast; and by this means we have no opportunities of seeing or conversing with any body who could or would show us what we are; and so we conclude that we are the cleverest fellows in the world, and the only men of spirit in it; and looking down with supercilious eyes on all who gave not themselves the liberties we take, imagine the world made for us, and for us only.

Thus, as to useful knowledge, while others go to the bottom, we only skim the surface; are despised by people of solid sense, of true honour, and superior talents; and shutting our eyes, move round and round, like so many blind mill-horses, in one narrow circle, while we imagine we have all the world to range in.

I threw myself in Mr. Hickman's way, on his return from the lady.

He was excessively moved at taking leave of her; being afraid, as he said to me, (though he would not tell her so,) that he should never see her again. She charged him to represent every thing to Miss Howe in the most favourable light that the truth would bear.

He told me of a tender passage at parting; which was, that having saluted her at her closet-door, he could not help once more taking the same liberty, in a more fervent manner, at the stairs-head, whither she accompanied him; and this in the thought, that it was the last time he should ever have that honour; and offering to apologize for his freedom (for he had pressed her to his heart with a vehemence, that he could neither account for or resist)—'Excuse you, Mr. Hickman! that I will: you are my brother and my friend: and

to show you that the good man, who is to be happy with my beloved Miss Howe, is very dear to me, you shall carry to her this token of my love,' [offering her sweet face to his salute, and pressing his hand between her's:] 'and perhaps her love of me will make it more agreeable to her, than her punctilio would otherwise allow it to be: and tell her, said she, dropping on one knee, with clasped hands, and uplifted eyes, that in this posture you see me, in the last moment of our parting, begging a blessing upon you both, and that you may be the delight and comfort of each other, for many, very many happy years!'

Tears, said he, fell from my eyes: I even sobbed with mingled joy and sorrow; and she retreating as soon as I raised her, I went down stairs highly dissatisfied with myself for going; yet unable to stay; my eyes fixed the contrary way to my feet, as long as I could behold the skirts of her raiment.

I went to the back-shop, continued the worthy man, and recommended the angelic lady to the best care of Mrs. Smith; and, when I was in the street, cast my eye up at her window: there, for the last time, I doubt, said he, that I shall ever behold her, I saw her; and she waved her charming hand to me, and with such a look of smiling goodness, and mingled concern, as I cannot describe.

Pr'ythee tell me, thou vile Lovelace, if thou hast not a notion, even from these jejune descriptions of mine, that there must be a more exalted pleasure in intellectual friendship, than ever thou couldst taste in the gross fumes of sensuality? And whether it may not be possible for thee, in time, to give that preference to the infinitely preferable, which I hope, now, that I shall always give?

I will leave thee to make the most of this reflection, from

Thy true friend, J. BELFORD.

LETTER XLIX

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE THURSDAY, JULY 25.*

* Text error: should be Tuesday.

Your two affecting letters were brought to me (as I had directed any letter from you should be) to the Colonel's, about an hour before we broke up. I could not forbear dipping into them there; and shedding more tears over them than I will tell you of; although I dried my eyes as well as I could, that the company I was obliged to return to, and my mother, should see as little of my concern as possible.

I am yet (and was then still more) excessively fluttered. The occasion I will communicate to you by-and-by: for nothing but the flutters given by the stroke of death could divert my first attention from the sad and solemn contents of your last favour. These therefore I must begin with.

How can I bear the thoughts of losing so dear a friend! I will not so much as suppose it. Indeed I cannot! such a mind as your's was not vested in humanity to be snatched away from us so soon. There must still be a great deal for you to do for the good of all who have the happiness to know you.

You enumerate in your letter of Thursday last,* the particulars in which your situation is already mended: let me see by effects that you are in earnest in that enumeration; and that you really have the courage to resolve to get above the sense of injuries you could not avoid; and then will I trust to Providence and my humble prayers for your perfect recovery: and glad at my heart shall I be, on my return from the little island, to find you well enough to be near us according to the proposal Mr. Hickman has to make to you.

* See Vol. VII. Letter XXV.

You chide me in your's of Sunday on the freedom I take with your friends.*

* Ibid. Letter XLII.

I may be warm. I know I am—too warm. Yet warmth in friendship, surely, cannot be a crime; especially when our friend has great merit, labours under oppression, and is struggling with undeserved calamity.

I have no opinion of coolness in friendship, be it dignified or distinguished by the name of prudence, or what it will.

You may excuse your relations. It was ever your way to do so. But, my dear, other people must be allowed to judge as they please. I am not their daughter, nor the sister of your brother and sister—I thank Heaven, I am not.

But if you are displeased with me for the freedoms I took so long ago as you mention, I am afraid, if you knew what passed upon an application I made to your sister very lately, (in hopes to procure you the absolution your heart is so much set upon,) that you would be still more concerned. But they have been even with me—but I must not tell you all. I hope, however, that these unforgivers [my mother is among them] were always good, dutiful, passive children to their parents.

Once more forgive me. I owned I was too warm. But I have no example to the contrary but from you: and the treatment you meet with is very little encouragement to me to endeavour to imitate you in your dutiful meekness.

You leave it to me to give a negative to the hopes of the noble family, whose only disgrace is, that so very vile a man is so nearly related to them. But yet—alas! my dear, I am so fearful of consequences, so selfishly fearful, if this negative must be given—I don't know what I should say—but give me leave to suspend, however, this negative till I hear from you again.

This earnest courtship of you into their splendid family is so very honourable to you—they so justly admire you—you must have had such a noble triumph over the base man—he is so much in earnest—the world knows so much of the unhappy affair—you may do still so much good—your will is so inviolate—your relations are so implacable—think, my dear, and re-think.

And let me leave you to do so, while I give you the occasion of the flutter I mentioned at the beginning of

this letter; in the conclusion of which you will find the obligation I have consented to lay myself under, to refer this important point once more to your discussion, before I give, in your name, the negative that cannot, when given, be with honour to yourself repented of or recalled.

Know, then, my dear, that I accompanied my mother to Colonel Ambrose's on the occasion I mentioned to you in my former. Many ladies and gentlemen were there whom you know; particularly Miss Kitty D'Oily, Miss Lloyd, Miss Bidly D'Ollyffe, Miss Biddulph, and their respective admirers, with the Colonel's two nieces; fine women both; besides many whom you know not; for they were strangers to me but by name. A splendid company, and all pleased with one another, till Colonel Ambrose introduced one, who, the moment he was brought into the great hall, set the whole assembly into a kind of agitation.

It was your villain.

I thought I should have sunk as soon as I set my eyes upon him. My mother was also affected; and, coming to me, Nancy, whispered she, can you bear the sight of that wretch without too much emotion?—If not, withdraw into the next apartment.

I could not remove. Every body's eyes were glanced from him to me. I sat down and fanned myself, and was forced to order a glass of water. Oh! that I had the eye the basilisk is reported to have, thought I, and that his life were within the power of it!—directly would I kill him.

He entered with an air so hateful to me, but so agreeable to every other eye, that I could have looked him dead for that too.

After the general salutations he singled out Mr. Hickman, and told him he had recollected some parts of his behaviour to him, when he saw him last, which had made him think himself under obligation to his patience and politeness.

And so, indeed, he was.

Miss D'Oily, upon his complimenting her, among a knot of ladies, asked him, in their hearing, how Miss Clarissa Harlowe did?

He heard, he said, you were not so well as he wished you to be, and as you deserved to be.

O Mr. Lovelace, said she, what have you to answer for on that young lady's account, if all be true that I have heard.

I have a great deal to answer for, said the unblushing villain: but that dear lady has so many excellencies, and so much delicacy, that little sins are great ones in her eye.

Little sins! replied Miss D'Oily: Mr. Lovelace's character is so well known, that nobody believes he can commit little sins.

You are very good to me, Miss D'Oily.

Indeed I am not.

Then I am the only person to whom you are not very good: and so I am the less obliged to you.

He turned, with an unconcerned air, to Miss Playford, and made her some genteel compliments. I believe you know her not. She visits his cousins Montague. Indeed he had something in his specious manner to say to every body: and this too soon quieted the disgust each person had at his entrance.

I still kept my seat, and he either saw me not, or would not yet see me; and addressing himself to my mother, taking her unwilling hand, with an air of high assurance, I am glad to see you here, Madam, I hope Miss Howe is well. I have reason to complain greatly of her: but hope to owe to her the highest obligation that can be laid on man.

My daughter, Sir, is accustomed to be too warm and too zealous in her friendships for either my tranquility or her own.

There had indeed been some late occasion given for mutual displeasure between my mother and me: but I think she might have spared this to him; though nobody heard it, I believe, but the person to whom it was spoken, and the lady who told it me; for my mother spoke it low.

We are not wholly, Madam, to live for ourselves, said the vile hypocrite: it is not every one who had a soul capable of friendship: and what a heart must that be, which can be insensible to the interests of a suffering friend?

This sentiment from Mr. Lovelace's mouth! said my mother—forgive me, Sir; but you can have no end, surely, in endeavouring to make me think as well of you as some innocent creatures have thought of you to their cost.

She would have flung from him. But, detaining her hand—Less severe, dear Madam, said he, be less severe in this place, I beseech you. You will allow, that a very faulty person may see his errors; and when he does, and owns them, and repents, should he not be treated mercifully?

Your air, Sir, seems not to be that of a penitent. But the place may as properly excuse this subject, as what you call my severity.

But, dearest Madam, permit me to say, that I hope for your interest with your charming daughter (was his syncopant word) to have it put in my power to convince all the world that there never was a truer penitent. And why, why this anger, dear Madam, (for she struggled to get her hand out of his,) these violent airs—so maidenly! [impudent fellow!]
—May I not ask, if Miss Howe be here?

She would not have been here, replied my mother, had she known whom she had been to see.

And is she here, then?—Thank Heaven!—he disengaged her hand, and stepped forward into company.

Dear Miss Lloyd, said he, with an air, (taking her hand as he quitted my mother's,) tell me, tell me, is Miss Arabella Harlowe here? Or will she be here? I was informed she would—and this, and the opportunity of paying my compliments to your friend Miss Howe, were great inducements with me to attend the Colonel.

Superlative assurance! was it not, my dear?

Miss Arabella Harlowe, excuse me, Sir, said Miss Lloyd, would be very little inclined to meet you here, or

any where else.

Perhaps so, my dear Miss Lloyd: but, perhaps, for that very reason, I am more desirous to see her.

Miss Harlowe, Sir, and Miss Biddulph, with a threatening air, will hardly be here without her brother. I imagine, if one comes, both will come.

Heaven grant they both may! said the wretch. Nothing, Miss Biddulph, shall begin from me to disturb this assembly, I assure you, if they do. One calm half-hour's conversation with that brother and sister, would be a most fortunate opportunity to me, in presence of the Colonel and his lady, or whom else they should choose.

Then, turning round, as if desirous to find out the one or the other, he 'spied me, and with a very low bow, approached me.

I was all in a flutter, you may suppose. He would have taken my hand. I refused it, all glowing with indignation: every body's eyes upon us.

I went down from him to the other end of the room, and sat down, as I thought, out of his hated sight; but presently I heard his odious voice, whispering, behind my chair, (he leaning upon the back of it, with impudent unconcern,) Charming Miss Howe! looking over my shoulder: one request—[I started up from my seat; but could hardly stand neither, for very indignation]—O this sweet, but becoming disdain! whispered on the insufferable creature—I am sorry to give you all this emotion: but either here, or at your own house, let me entreat from you one quarter of an hour's audience.—I beseech you, Madam, but one quarter of an hour, in any of the adjoining apartments.

Not for a kingdom, fluttering my fan. I knew not what I did.—But I could have killed him.

We are so much observed—else on my knees, my dear Miss Howe, would I beg your interest with your charming friend.

She'll have nothing to say to you.

(I had not then your letters, my dear.)

Killing words!—But indeed I have deserved them, and a dagger in my heart besides. I am so conscious of my demerits, that I have no hope, but in your interposition—could I owe that favour to Miss Howe's mediation which I cannot hope for on any other account—

My mediation, vilest of men!—My mediation!—I abhor you!—From my soul, I abhor you, vilest of men!—Three or four times I repeated these words, stammering too.—I was excessively fluttered.

You can tell me nothing, Madam, so bad as I will call myself. I have been, indeed, the vilest of men; but now I am not so. Permit me—every body's eyes are upon us!—but one moment's audience—to exchange but ten words with you, dearest Miss Howe—in whose presence you please—for your dear friend's sake—but ten words with you in the next apartment.

It is an insult upon me to presume that I would exchange with you, if I could help it!—Out of my way! Out of my sight—fellow!

And away I would have flung: but he took my hand. I was excessively disordered—every body's eyes more and more intent upon us.

Mr. Hickman, whom my mother had drawn on one side, to enjoin him a patience, which perhaps needed not to have been enforced, came up just then, with my mother who had him by his leading-strings—by his sleeve I should say.

Mr. Hickman, said the bold wretch, be my advocate but for ten words in the next apartment with Miss Howe, in your presence; and in your's, Madam, to my mother.

Hear, Nancy, what he has to say to you. To get rid of him, hear his ten words.

Excuse me, Madam! his very breath—Unhand me, Sir!

He sighed and looked—O how the practised villain sighed and looked! He then let go my hand, with such a reverence in his manner, as brought blame upon me from some, that I would not hear him.—And this incensed me the more. O my dear, this man is a devil! This man is indeed a devil!—So much patience when he pleases! So much gentleness!—Yet so resolute, so persisting, so audacious!

I was going out of the assembly in great disorder. He was at the door as soon as I.

How kind this is, said the wretch; and, ready to follow me, opened the door for me.

I turned back upon this: and, not knowing what I did, snapped my fan just in his face, as he turned short upon me; and the powder flew from his hair.

Every body seemed as much pleased as I was vexed.

He turned to Mr. Hickman, nettled at the powder flying, and at the smiles of the company upon him; Mr. Hickman, you will be one of the happiest men in the world, because you are a good man, and will do nothing to provoke this passionate lady; and because she has too much good sense to be provoked without reason: but else the Lord have mercy upon you!

This man, this Mr. Hickman, my dear, is too meek for a man. Indeed he is.—But my patient mother twits me, that her passionate daughter ought to like him the better for that. But meek men abroad are not always meek at home. I have observed that in more instances than one: and if they were, I should not, I verily think, like them the better for being so.

He then turned to my mother, resolved to be even with her too: Where, good Madam, could Miss Howe get all this spirit?

The company around smiled; for I need not tell you that my mother's high spiritedness is pretty well known; and she, sadly vexed, said, Sir, you treat me, as you do the rest of the world—but—

I beg pardon, Madam, interrupted he: I might have spared my question—and instantly (I retiring to the other end of the hall) he turned to Miss Playford; What would I give, Madam, to hear you sing that song you obliged us with at Lord M.'s!

He then, as if nothing had happened, fell into a conversation with her and Miss D'Ollyffe, upon music; and

whisperingly sung to Miss Playford; holding her two hands, with such airs of genteel unconcern, that it vexed me not a little to look round, and see how pleased half the giddy fools of our sex were with him, notwithstanding his notorious wicked character. To this it is that such vile fellows owe much of their vileness: whereas, if they found themselves shunned, and despised, and treated as beasts of prey, as they are, they would run to their caverns; there howl by themselves; and none but such as sad accident, or unpitiable presumption, threw in their way, would suffer by them.

He afterwards talked very seriously, at times, to Mr. Hickman: at times, I say; for it was with such breaks and starts of gaiety, turning to this lady, and to that, and then to Mr. Hickman again, resuming a serious or a gay air at pleasure, that he took every body's eye, the women's especially; who were full of their whispering admirations of him, qualified with if's and but's, and what pity's, and such sort of stuff, that showed in their very dispraises too much liking.

Well may our sex be the sport and ridicule of such libertines! Unthinking eye-governed creatures!—Would not a little reflection teach us, that a man of merit must be a man of modesty, because a diffident one? and that such a wretch as this must have taken his degrees in wickedness, and gone through a course of vileness, before he could arrive at this impenetrable effrontery? an effrontery which can produce only from the light opinion he has of us, and the high one of himself.

But our sex are generally modest and bashful themselves, and are too apt to consider that which in the main is their principal grace, as a defect: and finely do they judge, when they think of supplying that defect by choosing a man that cannot be ashamed.

His discourse to Mr. Hickman turned upon you, and his acknowledged injuries of you: though he could so lightly start from the subject, and return to it.

I have no patience with such a devil—man he cannot be called. To be sure he would behave in the same manner any where, or in any presence, even at the altar itself, if a woman were with him there.

It shall ever be a rule with me, that he who does not regard a woman with some degree of reverence, will look upon her and occasionally treat her with contempt.

He had the confidence to offer to take me out; but I absolutely refused him, and shunned him all I could, putting on the most contemptuous airs; but nothing could mortify him.

I wished twenty times I had not been there.

The gentlemen were as ready as I to wish he had broken his neck, rather than been present, I believe: for nobody was regarded but he. So little of the fop; yet so elegant and rich in his dress: his person so specious: his air so intrepid: so much meaning and penetration in his face: so much gaiety, yet so little affectation; no mere toupet-man; but all manly; and his courage and wit, the one so known, the other so dreaded, you must think the *petits-maitres* (of which there were four or five present) were most deplorably off in his company; and one grave gentleman observed to me, (pleased to see me shun him as I did,) that the poet's observation was too true, that the generality of ladies were rakes in their hearts, or they could not be so much taken with a man who had so notorious a character.

I told him the reflection both of the poet and applier was much too general, and made with more ill-nature than good manners.

When the wretch saw how industriously I avoided him, (shifting from one part of the hall to another,) he at last boldly stepped up to me, as my mother and Mr. Hickman were talking to me; and thus before them accosted me:

I beg your pardon, Madam; but by your mother's leave, I must have a few moments' conversation with you, either here, or at your own house; and I beg you will give me the opportunity.

Nancy, said my mother, hear what he has to say to you. In my presence you may: and better in the adjoining apartment, if it must be, than to come to you at our own house.

I retired to one corner of the hall, my mother following me, and he, taking Mr. Hickman under his arm, following her—Well, Sir, said I, what have you to say?—Tell me here.

I have been telling Mr. Hickman, said he, how much I am concerned for the injuries I have done to the most excellent woman in the world: and yet, that she obtained such a glorious triumph over me the last time I had the honour to see her, as, with my penitence, ought to have abated her former resentments: but that I will, with all my soul, enter into any measures to obtain her forgiveness of me. My cousins Montague have told you this. Lady Betty and Lady Sarah and my Lord M. are engaged for my honour. I know your power with the dear creature. My cousins told me you gave them hopes you would use it in my behalf. My Lord M. and his two sisters are impatiently expecting the fruits of it. You must have heard from her before now: I hope you have. And will you be so good as to tell me, if I may have any hopes?

If I must speak on this subject, let me tell you that you have broken her heart. You know not the value of the lady you have injured. You deserve her not. And she despises you, as she ought.

Dear Miss Howe, mingle not passion with denunciations so severe. I must know my fate. I will go abroad once more, if I find her absolutely irreconcilable. But I hope she will give me leave to attend upon her, to know my doom from her own mouth.

It would be death immediate for her to see you. And what must you be, to be able to look her in the face?

I then reproached him (with vehemence enough you may believe) on his baseness, and the evils he had made you suffer: the distress he had reduced you to; all your friends made your enemies: the vile house he had carried you to; hinted at his villanous arts; the dreadful arrest: and told him of your present deplorable illness, and resolution to die rather than to have him.

He vindicated not any part of his conduct, but that of the arrest; and so solemnly protested his sorrow for his usage of you, accusing himself in the freest manner, and by deserved appellations, that I promised to lay before you this part of our conversation. And now you have it.

My mother, as well as Mr. Hickman, believes, from what passed on this occasion, that he is touched in conscience for the wrongs he has done you: but, by his whole behaviour, I must own, it seems to me that

nothing can touch him for half an hour together. Yet I have no doubt that he would willingly marry you; and it piques his pride, I could see, that he should be denied; as it did mine, that such a wretch had dared to think it in his power to have such a woman whenever he pleased; and that it must be accounted a condescension, and matter of obligation (by all his own family at least) that he would vouchsafe to think of marriage.

Now, my dear, you have before you the reason why I suspend the decisive negative to the ladies of his family. My mother, Miss Lloyd, and Miss Biddulph, who were inquisitive after the subject of our retired conversation, and whose curiosity I thought it was right, in some degree, to gratify, (especially as these young ladies are of our select acquaintance,) are all of opinion that you should be his.

You will let Mr. Hickman know your whole mind; and when he acquaint me with it, I will tell you all my own.

Mean time, may the news he will bring me of the state of your health be favourable! prays, with the utmost fervency,

Your ever faithful and affectionate ANNA HOWE.

LETTER L

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE THURSDAY, JULY 27.

MY DEAREST MISS HOWE,

After I have thankfully acknowledged your favour in sending Mr. Hickman to visit me before you set out upon your intended journey, I must chide you (in the sincerity of that faithful love, which could not be the love it is if it would not admit of that cementing freedom) for suspending the decisive negative, which, upon such full deliberation, I had entreated you to give to Mr. Lovelace's relations.

I am sorry that I am obliged to repeat to you, my dear, who know me so well, that, were I sure I should live many years, I would not have Mr. Lovelace; much less can I think of him, as it is probable I may not live one.

As to the world and its censures, you know, my dear, that, however desirous I always was of a fair fame, yet I never thought it right to give more than a second place to the world's opinion. The challenges made to Mr. Lovelace, by Miss D'Oily, in public company, are a fresh proof that I have lost my reputation: and what advantage would it be to me, were it retrievable, and were I to live long, if I could not acquit myself to myself?

Having in my former said so much on the freedoms you have taken with my friends, I shall say the less now; but your hint, that something else has newly passed between some of them and you, gives me great concern, and that as well for my own sake as for theirs, since it must necessarily incense them against me. I wise, my dear, that I had been left to my own course on an occasion so very interesting to myself. But, since what is done cannot be helped, I must abide the consequences: yet I dread more than before, what may be my sister's answer, if an answer will be at all vouchsafed.

Will you give me leave, my dear, to close this subject with one remark? —It is this: that my beloved friend, in points where her own laudable zeal is concerned, has ever seemed more ready to fly from the rebuke, than from the fault. If you will excuse this freedom, I will acknowledge thus far in favour of your way of thinking, as to the conduct of some parents in these nice cases, that indiscreet opposition does frequently as much mischief as giddy love.

As to the invitation you are so kind as to give me, to remove privately into your neighbourhood, I have told Mr. Hickman that I will consider of it; but believe, if you will be so good as to excuse me, that I shall not accept of it, even should I be able to remove. I will give you my reasons for declining it; and so I ought, when both my love and my gratitude would make a visit now-and-then from my dear Miss Howe the most consolate thing in the world to me.

You must know then, that this great town, wicked as it is, wants not opportunities of being better; having daily prayers at several churches in it; and I am desirous, as my strength will permit, to embrace those opportunities. The method I have proposed to myself (and was beginning to practise when that cruel arrest deprived me of both freedom and strength) is this: when I was disposed to gentle exercise, I took a chair to St. Dunstan's church in Fleet-street, where are prayers at seven in the morning; I proposed if the weather favoured, to walk (if not, to take chair) to Lincoln's-inn chapel, where, at eleven in the morning, and at five in the afternoon, are the same desirable opportunities; and at other times to go no farther than Covent-garden church, where are early morning prayers likewise.

This method pursued, I doubt not, will greatly help, as it has already done, to calm my disturbed thoughts, and to bring me to that perfect resignation after which I aspire: for I must own, my dear, that sometimes still my griefs and my reflections are too heavy for me; and all the aid I can draw from religious duties is hardly sufficient to support my staggering reason. I am a very young creature you know, my dear, to be left to my own conduct in such circumstances as I am in.

Another reason why I choose not to go down into your neighbourhood, is the displeasure that might arise, on my account, between your mother and you.

If indeed you were actually married, and the worthy man (who would then have a title to all your regard) were earnestly desirous of near neighbourhood, I know not what I might do: for although I might not perhaps intend to give up my other important reasons at the time I should make you a congratulatory visit, yet I might not know how to deny myself the pleasure of continuing near you when there.

I send you enclosed the copy of my letter to my sister. I hope it will be thought to be written with a true penitent spirit; for indeed it is. I desire that you will not think I stoop too low in it; since there can be no such thing as that in a child to parents whom she has unhappily offended.

But if still (perhaps more disgusted than before at your freedom with them) they should pass it by with the contempt of silence, (for I have not yet been favoured with an answer,) I must learn to think it right in them to do so; especially as it is my first direct application: for I have often censured the boldness of those, who, applying for a favour, which it is in a person's option to grant or refuse, take the liberty of being offended, if they are not gratified; as if the petitioned had not as good a right to reject, as the petitioner to ask.

But if my letter should be answered, and that in such terms as will make me loth to communicate it to so warm a friend—you must not, my dear, take it upon yourself to censure my relations; but allow for them as they know not what I have suffered; as being filled with just resentments against me, (just to them if they think them just;) and as not being able to judge of the reality of my penitence.

And after all, what can they do for me?—They can only pity me: and what will that but augment their own grief; to which at present their resentment is an alleviation? for can they by their pity restore to me my lost reputation? Can they by it purchase a sponge that will wipe out from the year the past fatal four months of my life?*

* She takes in the time that she appointed to meet Mr. Lovelace.

Your account of the gay, unconcerned behaviour of Mr. Lovelace, at the Colonel's, does not surprise me at all, after I am told that he had the intrepidity to go there, knowing who were invited and expected.—Only this, my dear, I really wonder at, that Miss Howe could imagine that I could have a thought of such a man for a husband.

Poor wretch! I pity him, to see him fluttering about; abusing talents that were given him for excellent purposes; taking in consideration for courage; and dancing, fearless of danger, on the edge of a precipice!

But indeed his threatening to see me most sensibly alarms and shocks me. I cannot but hope that I never, never more shall see him in this world.

Since you are so loth, my dear, to send the desired negative to the ladies of his family, I will only trouble you to transmit the letter I shall enclose for that purpose; directed indeed to yourself, because it was to you that those ladies applied themselves on this occasion; but to be sent by you to any one of the ladies, at your own choice.

I commend myself, my dearest Miss Howe, to your prayers; and conclude with repeated thanks for sending Mr. Hickman to me; and with wishes for your health and happiness, and for the speedy celebration of your nuptials;

Your ever affectionate and obliged, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE [ENCLOSED IN THE PRECEDING.] THURSDAY, JULY 27.

MY DEAREST MISS HOWE,

Since you seem loth to acquiesce in my determined resolution, signified to you as soon as I was able to hold a pen, I beg the favour of you, by this, or by any other way you think most proper, to acquaint the worthy ladies, who have applied to you in behalf of their relation, that although I am infinitely obliged to their generous opinion of me, yet I cannot consent to sanctify, as I may say, Mr. Lovelace's repeated breaches of all moral sanctions, and hazard my future happiness by a union with a man, through whose premeditated injuries, in a long train of the basest contrivances, I have forfeited my temporal hopes.

He himself, when he reflects upon his own actions, must surely bear testimony to the justice as well as fitness of my determination. The ladies, I dare say, would, were they to know the whole of my unhappy story.

Be pleased to acquaint them that I deceive myself, if my resolution on this head (however ungratefully and even inhumanely he has treated me) be not owing more to principle than passion. Nor can I give a stronger proof of the truth of this assurance, on this one easy condition, that he will never molest me more.

In whatever way you choose to make this declaration, be pleased to let my most respectful compliments to the ladies of that noble family, and to my Lord M., accompany it. And do you, my dear, believe that I shall be, to the last moment of my life,

Your ever obliged and affectionate CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY, JULY 28.

I have three letters of thine to take notice of:* but am divided in my mind, whether to quarrel with thee on thy unmerciful reflections, or to thank thee for thy acceptable particularity and diligence. But several of my sweet dears have I, indeed, in my time, made to cry and laugh before the cry could go off the other: Why may I not, therefore, curse and applaud thee in the same moment? So take both in one: and what follows, as it shall rise from my pen.

* Letters XLVI. XLVII. and XLVIII. of this volume.

How often have I ingenuously confessed my sins against this excellent creature?—Yet thou never sparest me, although as bad a man as myself. Since then I get so little by my confessions, I had a good mind to try to

defend myself; and that not only from antient and modern story, but from common practice; and yet avoid repeating any thing I have suggested before in my own behalf.

I am in a humour to play the fool with my pen: briefly then, from antient story first:—Dost thou not think that I am as much entitled to forgiveness on Miss Harlowe's account, as Virgil's hero was on Queen Dido's? For what an ungrateful varlet was that vagabond to the hospitable princess, who had willingly conferred upon him the last favour?—Stealing away, (whence, I suppose, the ironical phrase of trusty Trojan to this day,) like a thief—pretendedly indeed at the command of the gods; but could that be, when the errand he went upon was to rob other princes, not only of their dominions, but of their lives?—Yet this fellow is, at every word, the pious Æneas, with the immortal bard who celebrates him.

Should Miss Harlowe even break her heart, (which Heaven forbid!) for the usage she has received, (to say nothing of her disappointed pride, to which her death would be attributable, more than to reason,) what comparison will her fate hold to Queen Dido's? And have I half the obligation to her, that Æneas had to the Queen of Carthage? The latter placing a confidence, the former none, in her man?—Then, whom else have I robbed? Whom else have I injured? Her brother's worthless life I gave him, instead of taking any man's; while the Trojan vagabond destroyed his thousands. Why then should it not be the pious Lovelace, as well as the pious Æneas? For, dost thou think, had a conflagration happened, and had it been in my power, that I would not have saved my old Anchises, (as he did his from the Ilion bonfire,) even at the expense of my Creüsa, had I a wife of that name?

But for a more modern instance in my favour—Have I used Miss Harlowe, as our famous Maiden Queen, as she was called, used one of her own blood, a sister-queen, who threw herself into her protection from her rebel-subjects, and whom she detained prisoner eighteen years, and at last cut off her head? Yet do not honest protestants pronounce her pious too?—And call her particularly their Queen?

As to common practice—Who, let me ask, that has it in his power to gratify a predominant passion, be it what it will, denies himself the gratification?—Leaving it to cooler deliberation, (and, if he be a great man, to his flatterers,) to find a reason for it afterwards?

Then, as to the worst part of my treatment of this lady, How many men are there, who, as well as I, have sought, by intoxicating liquors, first to inebriate, then to subdue? What signifies what the potations were, when the same end was in view?

Let me tell thee, upon the whole, that neither the Queen of Carthage, nor the Queen of Scots, would have thought they had any reason to complain of cruelty, had they been used no worse than I have used the queen of my heart: And then do I not aspire with my whole soul to repair by marriage? Would the pious Æneas, thinkest thou, have done such a piece of justice by Dido, had she lived?

Come, come, Belford, let people run away with notions as they will, I am comparatively a very innocent man. And if by these, and other like reasonings, I have quieted my own conscience, a great end is answered. What have I to do with the world?

And now I sit me peaceably down to consider thy letters.

I hope thy pleas in my favour,* when she gave thee, (so generously gave thee,) for me my letters, were urged with an honest energy. But I suspect thee much for being too ready to give up thy client. Then thou hast such a misgiving aspect, an aspect rather inviting rejection than carrying persuasion with it; and art such an hesitating, such a humming and hawing caitiff; that I shall attribute my failure, if I do fail, rather to the inability and ill looks of my advocate, than to my cause. Again, thou art deprived of the force men of our cast give to arguments; for she won't let thee swear!—Art, moreover, a very heavy, thoughtless fellow; tolerable only at a second rebound; a horrid dunce at the impromptu. These, encountering with such a lady, are great disadvantages.—And still a greater is thy balancing, (as thou dost at present,) between old rakery and new reformation; since this puts thee into the same situation with her, as they told me, at Leipsick, Martin Luther was in, at the first public dispute which he held in defence of his supposed new doctrines with Eckius. For Martin was then but a linsey-wolsey reformer. He retained some dogmas, which, by natural consequence, made others, that he held, untenable. So that Eckius, in some points, had the better of him. But, from that time, he made clear work, renouncing all that stood in his way: and then his doctrines ran upon all fours. He was never puzzled afterwards; and could boldly declare that he would defend them in the face of angels and men; and to his friends, who would have dissuaded him from venturing to appear before the Emperor Charles at Spires, That, were there as many devils at Spires, as tiles upon the houses, he would go. An answer that is admired by every protestant Saxon to this day.

* See Letter XLVII. of this volume.

Since then thy unhappy awkwardness destroys the force of thy arguments, I think thou hadst better (for the present, however) forbear to urge her on the subject of accepting the reparation I offer; lest the continual teasing of her to forgive me should but strengthen her in her denials of forgiveness; till, for consistency sake, she'll be forced to adhere to a resolution so often avowed—Whereas, if left to herself, a little time, and better health, which will bring on better spirits, will give her quicker resentments; those quicker resentments will lead her into vehemence; that vehemence will subside, and turn into expostulation and parley: my friends will then interpose, and guaranty for me: and all our trouble on both sides will be over.—Such is the natural course of things.

I cannot endure thee for thy hopelessness in the lady's recovery;* and that in contradiction to the doctor and apothecary.

* See Letter XLVII. of this volume.

Time, in the words of Congreve, thou sayest, will give increase to her afflictions. But why so? Knowest thou not that those words (so contrary to common experience) were applied to the case of a person, while passion was in its full vigour?—At such a time, every one in a heavy grief thinks the same: but as enthusiasts do by Scripture, so dost thou by the poets thou hast read: any thing that carries the most distant allusion from either to the case in hand, is put down by both for gospel, however incongruous to the general scope of either, and to that case. So once, in a pulpit, I heard one of the former very vehemently declare himself to be a dead dog; when every man, woman, and child, were convinced to the contrary by his howling.

I can tell thee that, if nothing else will do, I am determined, in spite of thy buskin-airs, and of thy engagements for me to the contrary, to see her myself.

Face to face have I known many a quarrel made up, which distance would have kept alive, and widened. Thou wilt be a madder Jack than he in the tale of a Tub, if thou givest an active opposition to this interview.

In short, I cannot bear the thought, that a woman whom once I had bound to me in the silken cords of love, should slip through my fingers, and be able, while my heart flames out with a violent passion for her, to despise me, and to set both love and me at defiance. Thou canst not imagine how much I envy thee, and her doctor, and her apothecary, and every one who I hear are admitted to her presence and conversation; and wish to be the one or the other in turn.

Wherefore, if nothing else will do, I will see her. I'll tell thee of an admirable expedient, just come cross me, to save thy promise, and my own.

Mrs. Lovick, you say, is a good woman: if the lady be worse, you shall advise her to send for a parson to pray by her: unknown to her, unknown to the lady, unknown to thee, (for so it may pass,) I will contrive to be the man, petticoated out, and vested in a gown and cassock. I once, for a certain purpose, did assume the canonicals; and I was thought to make a fine sleek appearance; my broad rose-bound beaver became me mightily; and I was much admired upon the whole by all who saw me.

Methinks it must be charmingly a propos to see me kneeling down by her bed-side, (I am sure I shall pray heartily,) beginning out of the common-prayer book the sick-office for the restoration of the languishing lady, and concluding with an exhortation to charity and forgiveness for myself.

I will consider of this matter. But, in whatever shape I shall choose to appear, of this thou mayest assure thyself, I will apprise thee beforehand of my visit, that thou mayst contrive to be out of the way, and to know nothing of the matter. This will save thy word; and, as to mine, can she think worse of me than she does at present?

An indispensable of true love and profound respect, in thy wise opinion,* is absurdity or awkwardness.—'Tis surprising that thou shouldst be one of those partial mortals who take their measures of right and wrong from what they find themselves to be, and cannot help being!—So awkwardness is a perfection in the awkward!—At this rate, no man ever can be in the wrong. But I insist upon it, that an awkward fellow will do every thing awkwardly: and, if he be like thee, will, when he has done foolishly, rack his unmeaning brain for excuses as awkward as his first fault. Respectful love is an inspirer of actions worthy of itself; and he who cannot show it, where he most means it, manifests that he is an unpolite rough creature, a perfect Belford, and has it not in him.

* See Letter XLVI. of this volume.

But here thou'lt throw out that notable witticism, that my outside is the best of me, thine the worst of thee; and that, if I set about mending my mind, thou wilt mend thy appearance.

But, pr'ythee, Jack, don't stay for that; but set about thy amendment in dress when thou leavest off thy mourning; for why shouldst thou prepossess in thy disfavour all those who never saw thee before?—It is hard to remove early-taken prejudices, whether of liking or distaste. People will hunt, as I may say, for reasons to confirm first impressions, in compliment to their own sagacity: nor is it every mind that has the ingenuousness to confess itself half mistaken, when it finds itself to be wrong. Thou thyself art an adept in the pretended science of reading men; and, whenever thou art out, wilt study to find some reasons why it was more probable that thou shouldst have been right; and wilt watch every motion and action, and every word and sentiment, in the person thou hast once censured, for proofs, in order to help thee to revive and maintain thy first opinion. And, indeed, as thou seldom errest on the favourable side, human nature is so vile a thing that thou art likely to be right five times in six on what thou findest in thine own heart, to have reason to compliment thyself on thy penetration.

Here is preachment for thy preachment: and I hope, if thou likest thy own, thou wilt thank me for mine; the rather, as thou mayest be the better for it, if thou wilt: since it is calculated for thy own meridian.

Well, but the lady refers my destiny to the letter she has written, actually written, to Miss Howe; to whom it seems she has given her reasons why she will not have me. I long to know the contents of this letter: but am in great hopes that she has so expressed her denials, as shall give room to think she only wants to be persuaded to the contrary, in order to reconcile herself to herself.

I could make some pretty observations upon one or two places of the lady's mediation: but, wicked as I am thought to be, I never was so abandoned as to turn into ridicule, or even to treat with levity, things sacred. I think it the highest degree of ill manners to jest upon those subjects which the world in general look upon with veneration, and call divine. I would not even treat the mythology of the heathen to a heathen, with the ridicule that perhaps would fairly lie from some of the absurdities that strike every common observer. Nor, when at Rome, and in other popish countries, did I ever behave indecently at those ceremonies which I thought very extraordinary: for I saw some people affected, and seemingly edified, by them; and I contented myself to think, though they were any good end to the many, there was religion enough in them, or civil policy at least, to exempt them from the ridicule of even a bad man who had common sense and good manners.

For the like reason I have never given noisy or tumultuous instances of dislike to a new play, if I thought it ever so indifferent: for I concluded, first, that every one was entitled to see quietly what he paid for: and, next, as the theatre (the epitome of the world) consisted of pit, boxes, and gallery, it was hard, I thought, if there could be such a performance exhibited as would not please somebody in that mixed multitude: and, if it did, those somebodies had as much right to enjoy their own judgments, undisturbedly, as I had to enjoy mine.

This was my way of showing my disapprobation; I never went again. And as a man is at his option, whether he will go to a play or not, he has not the same excuse for expressing his dislike clamorously as if he were compelled to see it.

I have ever, thou knowest, declared against those shallow libertines, who could not make out their pretensions to wit, but on two subjects, to which every man of true wit will scorn to be beholden:

PROFANENESS and OBSCENITY, I mean; which must shock the ears of every man or woman of sense, without answering any end, but of showing a very low and abandoned nature. And, till I came acquainted with the brutal Mowbray, [no great praise to myself from such a tutor,] I was far from making so free as I do now, with oaths and curses; for then I was forced to out-swear him sometimes in order to keep him in his allegiance to me his general: nay, I often check myself to myself, for this empty unprofitable liberty of speech; in which we are outdone by the sons of the common-sewer.

All my vice is women, and the love of plots and intrigues; and I cannot but wonder how I fell into those shocking freedoms of speech; since, generally speaking, they are far from helping forward my main end: only, now-and-then, indeed, a little novice rises to one's notice, who seems to think dress, and oaths, and curses, the diagnostics of the rakish spirit she is inclined to favour: and indeed they are the only qualifications that some who are called rakes and pretty fellows have to boast of. But what must the women be, who can be attracted by such empty-souled profligates!—since wickedness with wit is hardly tolerable; but, without it, is equally shocking and contemptible.

There again is preachment for thy preachment; and thou wilt be apt to think that I am reforming too: but no such matter. If this were new light darting in upon me, as thy morality seems to be to thee, something of this kind might be apprehended: but this was always my way of thinking; and I defy thee, or any of thy brethren, to name a time when I have either ridiculed religion, or talked obscenely. On the contrary, thou knowest how often I have checked that bear, in love-matters, Mowbray, and the finical Tourville, and thyself too, for what ye have called the double-entendre. In love, as in points that required a manly-resentment, it has always been my maxim, to act, rather than to talk; and I do assure thee, as to the first, the women themselves will excuse the one sooner than the other.

As to the admiration thou expressest for the books of scripture, thou art certainly right in it. But 'tis strange to me, that thou wert ignorant of their beauty, and noble simplicity, till now. Their antiquity always made me reverence them: And how was it possible that thou couldest not, for that reason, if for no other, give them a perusal?

I'll tell thee a short story, which I had from my tutor, admonishing me against exposing myself by ignorant wonder, when I should quit college, to go to town, or travel.

'The first time Dryden's Alexander's Feast fell into his hands, he told me, he was prodigiously charmed with it: and, having never heard any body speak of it before, thought, as thou dost of the Bible, that he had made a new discovery.

'He hastened to an appointment which he had with several wits, (for he was then in town,) one of whom was a noted critic, who, according to him, had more merit than good fortune; for all the little nibblers in wit, whose writings would not stand the test of criticism, made it, he said, a common cause to run him down, as men would a mad dog.

'The young gentleman (for young he then was) set forth magnificently in the praises of that inimitable performance; and gave himself airs of second-hand merit, for finding out its beauties.

'The old bard heard him out with a smile, which the collegian took for approbation, till he spoke; and then it was in these mortifying words: 'Sdeath, Sir, where have you lived till now, or with what sort of company have you conversed, young as you are, that you have never before heard of the finest piece in the English language?'

This story had such an effect upon me, who had ever a proud heart, and wanted to be thought a clever fellow, that, in order to avoid the like disgrace, I laid down two rules to myself. The first, whenever I went into company where there were strangers, to hear every one of them speak, before I gave myself liberty to prate: The other, if I found any of them above my match, to give up all title to new discoveries, contenting myself to praise what they praised, as beauties familiar to me, though I had never heard of them before. And so, by degrees, I got the reputation of a wit myself: and when I threw off all restraint, and books, and learned conversation, and fell in with some of our brethren who are now wandering in Erebus, and with such others as Belton, Mowbray, Tourville, and thyself, I set up on my own stock; and, like what we have been told of Sir Richard, in his latter days, valued myself on being the emperor of the company; for, having fathomed the depth of them all, and afraid of no rival but thee, whom also I had got a little under, (by my gaiety and promptitude at least) I proudly, like Addison's Cato, delighted to give laws to my little senate.

Proceed with thee by-and-by.

LETTER LIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

But now I have cleared myself of any intentional levity on occasion of my beloved's meditation; which, as you observe, is finely suited to her case, (that is to say, as she and you have drawn her case;) I cannot help expressing my pleasure, that by one or two verses of it, [the arrow, Jack, and what she feared being come upon her!] I am encouraged to hope, what it will be very surprising to me if it do not happen: that is, in plain English, that the dear creature is in the way to be a mamma.

This cursed arrest, because of the ill effects the terror might have had upon her, in that hoped-for circumstance, has concerned me more than on any other account. It would be the pride of my life to prove, in this charming frost-piece, the triumph of Nature over principle, and to have a young Lovelace by such an angel: and then, for its sake, I am confident she will live, and will legitimate it. And what a meritorious little cherub would it be, that should lay an obligation upon both parents before it was born, which neither of them would be able to repay!—Could I be sure it is so, I should be out of all pain for her recovery: pain, I say; since,

were she to die—[die! abominable word! how I hate it!] I verily think I should be the most miserable man in the world.

As for the earnestness she expresses for death, she has found the words ready to her hand in honest Job; else she would not have delivered herself with such strength and vehemence.

Her innate piety (as I have more than once observed) will not permit her to shorten her own life, either by violence or neglect. She has a mind too noble for that; and would have done it before now, had she designed any such thing: for to do it, like the Roman matron, when the mischief is over, and it can serve no end; and when the man, however a Tarquin, as some may think me in this action, is not a Tarquin in power, so that no national point can be made of it; is what she has too much good sense to think of.

Then, as I observed in a like case, a little while ago, the distress, when this was written, was strong upon her; and she saw no end of it: but all was darkness and apprehension before her. Moreover, has she it not in her power to disappoint, as much as she has been disappointed? Revenge, Jack, has induced many a woman to cherish a life, to which grief and despair would otherwise have put an end.

And, after all, death is no such eligible thing, as Job in his calamities, makes it. And a death desired merely from worldly disappointments shows not a right mind, let me tell this lady, whatever she may think of it.* You and I Jack, although not afraid, in the height of passion or resentment, to rush into those dangers which might be followed by a sudden and violent death, whenever a point of honour calls upon us, would shudder at his cool and deliberate approach in a lingering sickness, which had debilitated the spirits.

* Mr. Lovelace could not know, that the lady was so thoroughly sensible of the solidity of this doctrine, as she really was: for, in her letter to Mrs. Norton, (Letter XLIV. of this volume,) she says,—'Nor let it be imagined, that my present turn of mind proceeds from gloominess or melancholy: for although it was brought on by disappointment, (the world showing me early, even at my first rushing into it, its true and ugly face,) yet I hope, that it has obtained a better root, and will every day more and more, by its fruits, demonstrate to me, and to all my friends, that it has.'

So we read of a famous French general [I forget as well the reign of the prince as the name of the man] who, having faced with intrepidity the ghastly varlet on an hundred occasions in the field, was the most dejected of wretches, when, having forfeited his life for treason, he was led with all the cruel parade of preparation, and surrounding guards, to the scaffold.

The poet says well:

*'Tis not the stoic lesson, got by rote,
The pomp of words, and pedant dissertation,
That can support us in the hour of terror.
Books have taught cowards to talk nobly of it:
But when the trial comes, they start, and stand aghast.*

Very true: for then it is the old man in the fable, with his bundle of sticks.

The lady is well read in Shakspeare, our English pride and glory; and must sometimes reason with herself in his words, so greatly expressed, that the subject, affecting as it is, cannot produce any thing greater.

*Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
This sensible, warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice:
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
Or blown, with restless violence, about
The pendant worlds; or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and uncertain thought
Imagines howling: 'tis too horrible!
The weariest and most loaded worldly life,
That pain, age, penury, and imprisonment,
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.—*

I find, by one of thy three letters, that my beloved had some account from Hickman of my interview with Miss Howe, at Col. Ambrose's. I had a very agreeable time of it there; although severely rallied by several of the assembly. It concerns me, however, not a little, to find our affair so generally known among the flippanti of both sexes. It is all her own fault. There never, surely, was such an odd little soul as this.—Not to keep her own secret, when the revealing of it could answer no possible good end; and when she wants not (one would think) to raise to herself either pity or friends, or to me enemies, by the proclamation!—Why, Jack, must not all her own sex laugh in their sleeves at her weakness? what would become of the peace of the world, if all women should take it into their heads to follow her example? what a fine time of it would the heads of families have? Their wives always filling their ears with their confessions; their daughters with theirs: sisters would be every day setting their brothers about cutting of throats, if the brothers had at heart the honour of their families, as it is called; and the whole world would either be a scene of confusion; or cuckoldom as much the fashion as it is in Lithuania.*

* In Lithuania, the women are said to have so allowedly their gallants, called adjutores, that the husbands hardly ever enter upon any part of pleasure without them.

I am glad, however, that Miss Howe (as much as she hates me) kept her word with my cousins on their visit to her, and with me at the Colonel's, to endeavour to persuade her friend to make up all matters by matrimony; which, no doubt, is the best, nay, the only method she can take, for her own honour, and that of her family.

I had once thoughts of revenging myself on that vixen, and, particularly, as thou mayest* remember, had planned something to this purpose on the journey she is going to take, which had been talked of some time. But, I think—let me see—yet, I think, I will let this Hickman have her safe and entire, as thou believest the fellow to be a tolerable sort of a mortal, and that I have made the worst of him: and I am glad, for his own

sake, he has not launched out too virulently against me to thee.

* See Vol. IV. Letter LIV.

But thou seest, Jack, by her refusal of money from him, or Miss Howe,* that the dear extravagant takes a delight in oddnesses, choosing to part with her clothes, though for a song. Dost think she is not a little touched at times? I am afraid she is. A little spice of that insanity, I doubt, runs through her, that she had in a stronger degree, in the first week of my operations. Her contempt of life; her proclamations; her refusal of matrimony; and now of money from her most intimate friends; are sprinklings of this kind, and no other way, I think, to be accounted for.

* See Letter XLVIII. of this volume.

Her apothecary is a good honest fellow. I like him much. But the silly dear's harping so continually upon one string, dying, dying, dying, is what I have no patience with. I hope all this melancholy jargon is owing entirely to the way I would have her to be in. And it being as new to her, as the Bible beauties to thee,* no wonder she knows not what to make of herself; and so fancies she is breeding death, when the event will turn out quite the contrary.

* See Letter XLVI. of this volume.

Thou art a sorry fellow in thy remarks on the education and qualification of smarts and beaux of the rakish order; if by thy we's and us's thou meanest thyself or me:* for I pretend to say, that the picture has no resemblance of us, who have read and conversed as we have done. It may indeed, and I believe it does, resemble the generality of the fops and coxcombs about town. But that let them look to; for, if it affects not me, to what purpose thy random shot?—If indeed thou findest, by the new light darted in upon thee, since thou hast had the honour of conversing with this admirable creature, that the cap fits thy own head, why then, according to the qui capit rule, e'en take and clap it on: and I will add a string of bells to it, to complete thee for the fore-horse of the idiot team.

* Ibid. and Letter LXVIII.

Although I just now said a kind thing or two for this fellow Hickman; yet I can tell thee, I could (to use one of my noble peer's humble phrases) eat him up without a corn of salt, when I think of his impudence to salute my charmer twice at parting:* And have still less patience with the lady herself for presuming to offer her cheek or lip [thou sayest not which] to him, and to press his clumsy fist between her charming hands. An honour worth a king's ransom; and what I would give—what would I not give? to have!—And then he, in return, to press her, as thou sayest he did, to his stupid heart; at that time, no doubt, more sensible, than ever it was before!

* See Letter XLVIII. of this volume.

By thy description of their parting, I see thou wilt be a delicate fellow in time. My mortification in this lady's displeasure, will be thy exaltation from her conversation. I envy thee as well for thy opportunities, as for thy improvements: and such an impression has thy concluding paragraph* made upon me, that I wish I do not get into a reformation-humour as well as thou: and then what a couple of lamentable puppies shall we make, howling in recitative to each other's discordant music!

* Ibid.

Let me improve upon the thought, and imagine that, turned hermits, we have opened the two old caves at Hornsey, or dug new ones; and in each of our cells set up a death's head, and an hour-glass, for objects of contemplation—I have seen such a picture: but then, Jack, had not the old penitent fornicator a suffocating long grey beard? What figures would a couple of brocaded or laced-waistcoated toupets make with their sour screw'd up half-cock'd faces, and more than half shut eyes, in a kneeling attitude, recapitulating their respective rogueries? This scheme, were we only to make trial of it, and return afterwards to our old ways, might serve to better purpose by far, than Horner's in the Country Wife, to bring the pretty wenches to us.

Let me see; the author of Hudibras has somewhere a description that would suit us, when met in one of our caves, and comparing our dismal notes together. This is it. Suppose me described—

*—He sat upon his rump,
His head like one in doleful dump:
Betwixt his knees his hands apply'd
Unto his cheeks, on either side:
And by him, in another hole,
Sat stupid Belford, cheek by jowl.*

I know thou wilt think me too ludicrous. I think myself so. It is truly, to be ingenuous, a forced put: for my passions are so wound up, that I am obliged either to laugh or cry. Like honest drunken Jack Daventry, [poor fellow!—What an unhappy end was his!]—thou knowest, I used to observe, that whenever he rose from an entertainment, which he never did sober, it was his way, as soon as he got to the door, to look round him like a carrier pigeon just thrown up, in order to spy out his course; and then, taking to his heels, he would run all the way home, though it were a mile or two, when he could hardly stand, and must have tumbled on his nose if he had attempted to walk moderately. This then must be my excuse, in this my unconverted estate, for a conclusion so unworthy of the conclusion to thy third letter.

What a length have I run!—Thou wilt own, that if I pay thee not in quality, I do in quantity: and yet I leave a multitude of things unobserved upon. Indeed I hardly at this present know what to do with myself but scribble. Tired with Lord M. who, in his recovery, has played upon me the fable of the nurse, the crying child, and the wolf—tired with my cousins Montague, though charming girls, were they not so near of kin—tired with Mowbray and Tourville, and their everlasting identity—tired with the country—tired of myself—longing for what I have not—I must go to town; and there have an interview with the charmer of my soul: for desperate diseases must have desperate remedies; and I only wait to know my doom from Miss Howe! and then, if it be rejection, I will try my fate, and receive my sentence at her feet.—But I will apprise thee of it beforehand, as I told thee, that thou mayest keep thy parole with the lady in the best manner thou canst.

LETTER LIV

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [IN ANSWER TO HER'S OF JULY 27, SEE LETTERS L. LI. OF THIS VOLUME.] FRIDAY NIGHT, JULY 28.

I will now, my dearest friend, write to you all my mind, without reserve, on your resolution not to have this vilest of men. You gave me, in your's of Sunday the 23d, reasons so worthy of the pure mind of my Clarissa, in support of this your resolution, that nothing but self-love, lest I should lose my ever-amiable friend, could have prevailed upon me to wish you to alter it.

Indeed, I thought it was impossible there could be (however desirable) so noble an instance given by any of our sex, of a passion conquered, when there were so many inducements to give way to it. And, therefore, I was willing to urge you once more to overcome your just indignation, and to be prevailed upon by the solicitations of his friends, before you carried your resentments to so great a height, that it would be more difficult for you, and less to your honour to comply, than if you had complied at first.

But now, my dear, that I see you fixed in your noble resolution; and that it is impossible for your pure mind to join itself with that of so perjured a miscreant; I congratulate you most heartily upon it; and beg your pardon for but seeming to doubt that theory and practice were not the same thing with my beloved Clarissa.

I have only one thing that saddens my heart on this occasion; and that is, the bad state of health Mr. Hickman (unwillingly) owns you are in. Hitherto you have well observed the doctrine you always laid down to me, That a cursed person should first seek the world's opinion of her; and, in all cases where the two could not be reconciled, have preferred the first to the last; and are, of consequence, well justified to your own heart, as well as to your Anna Howe. Let me therefore beseech you to endeavour, by all possible means, to recover your health and spirits: and this, as what, if it can be effected, will crown the work, and show the world, that you were indeed got above the base wretch; and, though put out of your course for a little while, could resume it again, and go on blessing all within your knowledge, as well by your example as by your precepts.

For Heaven's sake, then, for the world's sake, for the honour of our sex, and for my sake, once more I beseech you, try to overcome this shock: and, if you can overcome it, I shall then be as happy as I wish to be; for I cannot, indeed I cannot, think of parting with you, for many, many years to come.

The reasons you give for discouraging my wishes to have you near us are so convincing, that I ought at present to acquiesce in them: but, my dear, when your mind is fully settled, as, (now you are so absolutely determined in it, with regard this wretch,) I hope it will soon be, I shall expect you with us, or near us: and then you shall chalk out every path that I will set my foot in; nor will I turn aside either to the right hand or to the left.

You wish I had not mediated for you to your friends. I wish so too; because my mediation was ineffectual; because it may give new ground for the malice of some of them to work upon; and because you are angry with me for doing so. But how, as I said in my former, could I sit down in quiet, when I knew how uneasy their implacableness made you?—But I will tear myself from the subject; for I see I shall be warm again—and displease you—and there is not one thing in the world that I would do, however agreeable to myself, if I thought it would disoblige you; nor any one that I would omit to do, if I knew it would give you pleasure. And indeed, my dear half-severe friend, I will try if I cannot avoid the fault as willingly as I would the rebuke.

For this reason, I forbear saying any thing on so nice a subject as your letter to your sister. It must be right, because you think it so—and if it be taken as it ought, that will show you that it is. But if it beget insults and revilings, as it is but too likely, I find you don't intend to let me know it.

You were always so ready to accuse yourself for other people's faults, and to suspect your own conduct rather than the judgment of your relations, that I have often told you I cannot imitate you in this. It is not a necessary point of belief with me, that all people in years are therefore wise; or that all young people are therefore rash and headstrong: it may be generally the case, as far as I know: and possibly it may be so in the case of my mother and her girl: but I will venture to say that it has not yet appeared to be so between the principals of Harlowe-place and their second daughter.

You are for excusing them beforehand for their expected cruelty, as not knowing what you have suffered, nor how ill you are: they have heard of the former, and are not sorry for it: of the latter they have been told, and I have most reason to know how they have taken it—but I shall be far from avoiding the fault, and as surely shall incur the rebuke, if I say any more upon this subject. I will therefore only add at present, That your reasonings in their behalf show you to be all excellence; their returns to you that they are all—Do, my dear, let me end with a little bit of spiteful justice—but you won't, I know—so I have done, quite done, however reluctantly: yet if you think of the word I would have said, don't doubt the justice of it, and fill up the blank with it.

You intimate that were I actually married, and Mr. Hickman to desire it, you would think of obliging me with a visit on the occasion; and that, perhaps, when with me, it would be difficult for you to remove far from me.

Lord, my dear, what a stress do you seem to lay upon Mr. Hickman's desiring it!—To be sure he does and would of all things desire to have you near us, and with us, if we might be so favoured—policy, as well as veneration for you, would undoubtedly make the man, if not a fool, desire this. But let me tell you, that if Mr. Hickman, after marriage, should pretend to dispute with me my friendships, as I hope I am not quite a fool, I should let him know how far his own quiet was concerned in such an impertinence; especially if they were such friendships as were contracted before I knew him.

I know I always differed from you on this subject: for you think more highly of a husband's prerogative than most people do of the royal one. These notions, my dear, from a person of your sense and judgment, are no way advantageous to us; inasmuch as they justify the assuming sex in their insolence; when hardly one out of

ten of them, their opportunities considered, deserves any prerogative at all. Look through all the families we know; and we shall not find one-third of them have half the sense of their wives. And yet these are to be vested with prerogatives! And a woman of twice their sense has nothing to do but hear, tremble, and obey—and for conscience-sake too, I warrant!

But Mr. Hickman and I may perhaps have a little discourse upon these sorts of subjects, before I suffer him to talk of the day: and then I shall let him know what he has to trust to; as he will me, if he be a sincere man, what he pretends to expect from me. But let me tell you, my dear, that it is more in your power than, perhaps, you think it, to hasten the day so much pressed for by my mother, as well as wished for by you—for the very day that you can assure me that you are in a tolerable state of health, and have discharged your doctor and apothecary, at their own motions, on that account—some day in a month from that desirable news shall be it. So, my dear, make haste and be well, and then this matter will be brought to effect in a manner more agreeable to your Anna Howe than it otherwise ever can.

I sent this day, by a particular hand, to the Misses Montague, your letter of just reprobation of the greatest profligate in the kingdom; and hope I shall not have done amiss that I transcribe some of the paragraphs of your letter of the 23d, and send them with it, as you at first intended should be done.

You are, it seems, (and that too much for your health,) employed in writing. I hope it is in penning down the particulars of your tragical story. And my mother has put me in mind to press you to it, with a view that one day, if it might be published under feigned names, it would be as much use as honour to the sex. My mother says she cannot help admiring you for the propriety of your resentment of the wretch; and she would be extremely glad to have her advice of penning your sad story complied with. And then, she says, your noble conduct throughout your trials and calamities will afford not only a shining example to your sex, but at the same time, (those calamities befalling SUCH a person,) a fearful warning to the inconsiderate young creatures of it.

On Monday we shall set out on our journey; and I hope to be back in a fortnight, and on my return will have one pull more with my mother for a London journey: and, if the pretence must be the buying of clothes, the principal motive will be that of seeing once more my dear friend, while I can say I have not finally given consent to the change of a visiter into a relation, and so can call myself MY OWN, as well as

Your ANNA HOWE.

LETTER LV

MISS HOWE, TO THE TWO MISSES MONTAGUE SAT. JULY 29.

DEAR LADIES,

I have not been wanting to use all my interest with my beloved friend, to induce her to forgive and be reconciled to your kinsman, (though he has so ill deserved it;) and have even repeated my earnest advice to her on this head. This repetition, and the waiting for her answer, having taken up time, have been the cause that I could not sooner do myself the honour of writing to you on this subject.

You will see, by the enclosed, her immovable resolution, grounded on noble and high-souled motives, which I cannot but regret and applaud at the same time: applaud, for the justice of her determination, which will confirm all your worthy house in the opinion you had conceived of her unequalled merit; and regret, because I have but too much reason to apprehend, as well by that, as by the report of a gentleman just come from her, that she is in a declining way, as to her health, that her thoughts are very differently employed than on a continuance here.

The enclosed letter she thought fit to send to me unsealed, that, after I had perused it, I might forward it to you: and this is the reason it is superscribed by myself, and sealed with my seal. It is very full and peremptory; but as she had been pleased, in a letter to me, dated the 23d instant, (as soon as she could hold a pen,) to give me more ample reasons why she could not comply with your pressing requests, as well as mine, I will transcribe some of the passages in that letter, which will give one of the wickedest men in the world, (if he sees them,) reason to think himself one of the most unhappy, in the loss of so incomparable a wife as he might have gloried in, had he not been so superlatively wicked. These are the passages.

[See, for these passages, Miss Harlowe's letter, No. XLI. of this volume, dated July 23, marked with a turned comma, thus ']

And now, Ladies, you have before you my beloved friend's reasons for her refusal of a man unworthy of the relation he bears to so many excellent persons: and I will add, [for I cannot help it,] that the merit and rank of the person considered, and the vile manner of his proceedings, there never was a greater villany committed: and since she thinks her first and only fault cannot be expiated but by death, I pray to God daily, and will hourly from the moment I shall hear of that sad catastrophe, that He will be pleased to make him the subject of His vengeance, in some such way, as that all who know of his perfidious crime, may see the hand of Heaven in the punishment of it!

You will forgive me, Ladies: I love not mine own soul better than I do Miss Clarissa Harlowe. And the distresses she has gone through; the persecution she suffers from all her friends; the curse she lies under, for his sake, from her implacable father; her reduced health and circumstances, from high health and affluence; and that execrable arrest and confinement, which have deepened all her other calamities, [and which must be laid at his door, as it was the act of his vile agents, that, whether from his immediate orders or not, naturally flowed from his preceding baseness;] the sex dishonoured in the eye of the world, in the person of one of the greatest ornaments of it; the unmanly methods, whatever they were, [for I know not all as yet,] by which he compassed her ruin; all these considerations join to justify my warmth, and my execrations of a man whom I

think excluded by his crimes from the benefit even of christian forgiveness—and were you to see all she writes, and to know the admirable talents she is mistress of, you yourselves would join with me to admire her, and execrate him.

Believe me to be, with a high sense of your merits,

Dear Ladies, Your most obedient and humble servant, ANNA HOWE.

LETTER LVI

MRS. NORTON, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE FRIDAY, JULY 28.

MY DEAREST YOUNG LADY,

I have the consolation to tell you that my son is once again in a hopeful way, as to his health. He desires his duty to you. He is very low and weak. And so am I. But this is the first time that I have been able, for several days past, to sit up to write, or I would not have been so long silent.

Your letter to your sister is received and answered. You have the answer by this time, I suppose. I wish it may be to your satisfaction: but am afraid it will not: for, by Betty Barnes, I find they were in a great ferment on receiving your's, and much divided whether it should be answered or not. They will not yet believe that you are so ill, as [to my infinite concern] I find you are. What passed between Miss Harlowe and Miss Howe has been, as I feared it would be, an aggravation.

I showed Betty two or three passages in your letter to me; and she seemed moved, and said, She would report them favourably, and would procure me a visit from Miss Harlowe, if I would promise to show the same to her. But I have heard no more of that.

Methinks, I am sorry you refuse the wicked man: but doubt not, nevertheless, that your motives for doing so are more commendable than my wishes that you would not. But as you would be resolved, as I may say, on life, if you gave way to such a thought; and as I have so much interest in your recovery; I cannot forbear showing this regard to myself; and to ask you, If you cannot get over your just resentments?— But I dare say no more on this subject.

What a dreadful thing indeed was it for my dearest tender young lady to be arrested in the streets of London!—How does my heart go over again and again for you, what your's must have suffered at that time!— Yet this, to such a mind as your's, must be light, compared to what you had suffered before.

O my dearest Miss Clary, how shall we know what to pray for, when we pray, but that God's will may be done, and that we may be resigned to it! —When at nine years old, and afterwards at eleven, you had a dangerous fever, how incessantly did we grieve, and pray, and put up our vows to the Throne of Grace, for your recovery!—For all our lives were bound up in your life—yet now, my dear, as it has proved, [especially if we are soon to lose you,] what a much more desirable event, both for you and for us, would it have been, had we then lost you!

A sad thing to say! But as it is in pure love to you that I say it, and in full conviction that we are not always fit to be our own choosers, I hope it may be excusable; and the rather, as the same reflection will naturally lead both you and me to acquiesce under the dispensation; since we are assured that nothing happens by chance; and the greatest good may, for aught we know, be produced from the heaviest evils.

I am glad you are with such honest people; and that you have all your effects restored. How dreadfully have you been used, that one should be glad of such a poor piece of justice as that!

Your talent at moving the passions is always hinted at; and this Betty of your sister's never comes near me that she is not full of it. But, as you say, whom has it moved, that you wished to move? Yet, were it not for this unhappy notion, I am sure your mother would relent. Forgive me, my dear Miss Clary; for I must try one way to be convinced if my opinion be not just. But I will not tell you what that is, unless it succeeds. I will try, in pure duty and love to them, as to you.

May Heaven be your support in all your trials, is the constant prayer, my dearest young lady, of

Your ever affectionate friend and servant, JUDITH NORTON.

LETTER LVII

MRS. NORTON, TO MRS. HARLOWE FRIDAY, JULY 28.

HONOURED MADAM,

Being forbid (without leave) to send you any thing I might happen to receive from my beloved Miss Clary, and so ill, that I cannot attend you to ask your leave, I give you this trouble, to let you know that I have received a letter from her; which, I think, I should hereafter be held inexcusable, as things may happen, if I did not desire permission to communicate to you, and that as soon as possible.

Applications have been made to the dear young lady from Lord M., from the two ladies his sisters, and from both his nieces, and from the wicked man himself, to forgive and marry him. This, in noble indignation for the usage she has received from him, she has absolutely refused. And perhaps, Madam, if you and the honoured family should be of opinion that to comply with their wishes is now the properest measure that can be taken, the circumstances of things may require your authority or advice, to induce her to change her mind.

I have reason to believe that one motive for her refusal is her full conviction that she shall not long be a trouble to any body; and so she would not give a husband a right to interfere with her family, in relation to the estate her grandfather devised to her. But of this, however, I have not the least intimation from her. Nor would she, I dare say, mention it as a reason, having still stronger reasons, from his vile treatment of her, to refuse him.

The letter I have received will show how truly penitent the dear creature is; and, if I have your permission, I will send it sealed up, with a copy of mine, to which it is an answer. But as I resolve upon this step without her knowledge, [and indeed I do,] I will not acquaint her with it, unless it be attended with desirable effects: because, otherwise, besides making me incur her displeasure, it might quite break her already half-broken heart. I am,

Honoured Madam, Your dutiful and ever-obliged servant, JUDITH NORTON.

LETTER LVIII

MRS. HARLOWE, TO MRS. JUDITH NORTON SUNDAY, JULY 30.

We all know your virtuous prudence, worthy woman: we all do. But your partiality to this your rash favourite is likewise known. And we are no less acquainted with the unhappy body's power of painting her distresses so as to pierce a stone.

Every one is of opinion that the dear naughty creature is working about to be forgiven and received: and for this reason it is that Betty has been forbidden, [not by me, you may be assured!] to mention any more of her letters; for she did speak to my Bella of some moving passages you read to her.

This will convince you that nothing will be heard in her favour. To what purpose then should I mention any thing about her?—But you may be sure that I will, if I can have but one second. However, that is not at all likely, until we see what the consequences of her crime will be: And who can tell that?—She may—How can I speak it, and my once darling daughter unmarried?—She may be with child!—This would perpetuate her stain. Her brother may come to some harm; which God forbid!—One child's ruin, I hope, will not be followed by another's murder!

As to her grief, and her present misery, whatever it be, she must bear with it; and it must be short of what I hourly bear for her! Indeed I am afraid nothing but her being at the last extremity of all will make her father, and her uncles, and her other friends, forgive her.

The easy pardon perverse children meet with, when they have done the rashest and most rebellious thing they can do, is the reason (as is pleaded to us every day) that so may follow their example. They depend upon the indulgent weakness of their parents' tempers, and, in that dependence, harden their own hearts: and a little humiliation, when they have brought themselves into the foretold misery, is to be a sufficient atonement for the greatest perverseness.

But for such a child as this [I mention what others hourly say, but what I must sorrowfully subscribe to] to lay plots and stratagems to deceive her parents as well as herself! and to run away with a libertine! Can there be any atonement for her crime? And is she not answerable to God, to us, to you, and to all the world who knew her, for the abuse of such talents as she has abused?

You say her heart is half-broken: Is it to be wondered at? Was not her sin committed equally against warning and the light of her own knowledge?

That he would now marry her, or that she would refuse him, if she believed him in earnest, as she has circumstanced herself, is not at all probable; and were I inclined to believe it, nobody else here would. He values not his relations; and would deceive them as soon as any others: his aversion to marriage he has always openly declared; and still occasionally declares it. But, if he be now in earnest, which every one who knows him must doubt, which do you think (hating us too as he professes to hate and despise us all) would be most eligible here, To hear of her death, or of her marriage to such a vile man?

To all of us, yet, I cannot say! For, O my good Mrs. Norton, you know what a mother's tenderness for the child of her heart would make her choose, notwithstanding all that child's faults, rather than lose her for ever!

But I must sail with the tide; my own judgment also joining with the general resentment; or I should make the unhappiness of the more worthy still greater, [my dear Mr. Harlowe's particularly,] which is already more than enough to make them unhappy for the remainder of their days. This I know; if I were to oppose the rest, our son would fly out to find this libertine; and who could tell what would be the issue of that with such a man of violence and blood as that Lovelace is known to be?

All I can expect to prevail for her is, that in a week, or so, Mr. Brand may be sent up to inquire privately about her present state and way of life, and to see she is not altogether destitute: for nothing she writes herself will be regarded.

Her father indeed has, at her earnest request, withdrawn the curse, which, in a passion, he laid upon her, at her first wicked flight from us. But Miss Howe, [it is a sad thing, Mrs. Norton, to suffer so many ways at once,] had made matters so difficult by her undue liberties with us all, as well by speech in all companies, as by letters written to my Bella, that we could hardly prevail upon him to hear her letter read.

These liberties of Miss Howe with us; the general cry against us abroad wherever we are spoken of; and the visible, and not seldom audible, disrespectfulness, which high and low treat us with to our faces, as we go to and from church, and even at church, (for no where else have we the heart to go,) as if none of us had been regarded but upon her account; and as if she were innocent, we all in fault; are constant aggravations, you must needs think, to the whole family.

She has made my lot heavy, I am sure, that was far from being light before!—To tell you truth, I am enjoined not to receive any thing of her's, from any hand, without leave. Should I therefore gratify my yearnings after her, so far as to receive privately the letter you mention, what would the case be, but to torment myself, without being able to do her good?—And were it to be known—Mr. Harlowe is so passionate—And should it throw his gout into his stomach, as her rash flight did—Indeed, indeed, I am very unhappy!—For, O my good woman, she is my child still!—But unless it were more in my power—Yet do I long to see the letter—you say it tells of her present way and circumstances. The poor child, who ought to be in possession of thousands!—And will!—For her father will be a faithful steward for her.—But it must be in his own way, and at his own time.

And is she really ill?—so very ill?—But she ought to sorrow—she has given a double measure of it.

But does she really believe she shall not long trouble us?—But, O my Norton!—She must, she will, long trouble us—For can she think her death, if we should be deprived of her, will put an end to our afflictions?—Can it be thought that the fall of such a child will not be regretted by us to the last hour of our lives?

But, in the letter you have, does she, without reserve, express her contrition? Has she in it no reflecting hints? Does she not aim at extenuations?—If I were to see it, will it not shock me so much, that my apparent grief may expose me to harshnesses?—Can it be contrived—

But to what purpose?—Don't send it—I charge you don't—I dare not see it—

Yet—

But alas!—

Oh! forgive the almost distracted mother! You can.—You know how to allow for all this—so I will let it go.—I will not write over again this part of my letter.

But I choose not to know more of her than is communicated to us all— no more than I dare own I have seen—and what some of them may rather communicate to me, than receive from me; and this for the sake of my outward quiet: although my inward peace suffers more and more by the compelled reserve.

I was forced to break off. But I will now try to conclude my long letter.

I am sorry you are ill. But if you were well, I could not, for your own sake, wish you to go up, as Betty tells us you long to do. If you went, nothing would be minded that came from you. As they already think you too partial in her favour, your going up would confirm it, and do yourself prejudice, and her no good. And as every body values you here, I advise you not to interest yourself too warmly in her favour, especially before my Bella's Betty, till I can let you know a proper time. Yet to forbid you to love the dear naughty creature, who can? O my Norton! you must love her!—And so must I!

I send you five guineas, to help you in your present illness, and your son's; for it must have lain heavy upon you. What a sad, sad thing, my dear good woman, that all your pains, and all my pains, for eighteen or nineteen years together, have, in so few months, been rendered thus deplorably vain! Yet I must be always your friend, and pity you, for the very reason that I myself deserve every one's pity.

Perhaps I may find an opportunity to pay you a visit, as in your illness; and then may weep over the letter you mention with you. But, for the future, write nothing to me about the poor girl that you think may not be communicated to us all.

And I charge you, as you value my friendship, as you wish my peace, not to say any thing of a letter you have from me, either to the naughty one, or to any body else. It was with some little relief (the occasion given) to write to you, who must, in so particular a manner, share my affliction. A mother, Mrs. Norton, cannot forget her child, though that child could abandon her mother; and, in so doing, run away with all her mother's comforts!—As I truly say is the case of

Your unhappy friend, CHARLOTTE HARLOWE.

LETTER LIX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MRS. JUDITH NORTON SAT. JULY 29.

I congratulate you, my dear Mrs. Norton, with all my heart, on your son's recovery; which I pray to God, with all your own health, to perfect.

I write in some hurry, being apprehensive of the sequence of the hints you give of some method you propose to try in my favour [with my relations, I presume, you mean]: but you will not tell me what, you say, if it prove unsuccessful.

Now I must beg of you that you will not take any step in my favour, with which you do not first acquaint me.

I have but one request to make to them, besides what is contained in my letter to my sister; and I would not, methinks, for the sake of their own future peace of mind, that they should be teased so by your well-meant kindness, and that of Miss Howe, as to be put upon denying me that. And why should more be asked for me than I can partake of? More than is absolutely necessary for my own peace?

You suppose I should have my sister's answer to my letter by the time your's reached my hand. I have it: and a severe one, a very severe one, it is. Yet, considering my fault in their eyes, and the provocations I am to suppose they so newly had from my dear Miss Howe, I am to look upon it as a favour that it was answered at all. I will send you a copy of it soon; as also of mine, to which it is an answer.

I have reason to be very thankful that my father has withdrawn that heavy malediction, which affected me so much—A parent's curse, my dear Mrs. Norton! What child could die in peace under a parent's curse? so literally fulfilled too as this has been in what relates to this life!

My heart is too full to touch upon the particulars of my sister's letter. I can make but one atonement for my fault. May that be accepted! And may it soon be forgotten, by every dear relation, that there was such an unhappy daughter, sister, or niece, as Clarissa Harlowe!

My cousin Morden was one of those who was so earnest in prayer for my recovery, at nine and eleven years of age, as you mention. My sister thinks he will be one of those who wish I never had had a being. But pray, when he does come, let me hear of it with the first.

You think that, were it not for that unhappy notion of my moving talent, my mother would relent. What would I give to see her once more, and, although unknown to her, to kiss but the hem of her garment!

Could I have thought that the last time I saw her would have been the last, with what difficulty should I have been torn from her embraced feet!—And when, screened behind the yew-hedge on the 5th of April last,* I saw my father, and my uncle Antony, and my brother and sister, how little did I think that that would be the last time I should ever see them; and, in so short a space, that so many dreadful evils would befall me!

* See Vol. II. Letter XXXVI.

But I can write nothing but what must give you trouble. I will therefore, after repeating my desire that you will not intercede for me but with my previous consent, conclude with the assurance, that I am, and ever will be,

Your most affectionate and dutiful CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LX

MISS AR. HARLOWE, TO MISS CL. HARLOWE [IN ANSWER TO HER'S OF FRIDAY, JULY 21, LETTER XLV. OF THIS VOLUME.] THURSDAY, JULY 27.

O MY UNHAPPY LOST SISTER!

What a miserable hand have you made of your romantic and giddy expedition!—I pity you at my heart.

You may well grieve and repent!—Lovelace has left you!—In what way or circumstances you know best.

I wish your conduct had made your case more pitiable. But 'tis your own seeking!

God help you!—For you have not a friend will look upon you!—Poor, wicked, undone creature!—Fallen, as you are, against warning, against expostulation, against duty!

But it signifies nothing to reproach you. I weep over you.

My poor mother!—Your rashness and folly have made her more miserable than you can be.—Yet she has besought my father to grant your request.

My uncles joined with her: for they thought there was a little more modesty in your letter than in the letters of your pert advocate: and my father is pleased to give me leave to write; but only these words for him, and no more: 'That he withdraws the curse he laid upon you, at the first hearing of your wicked flight, so far as it is in his power to do it; and hopes that your present punishment may be all that you will meet with. For the rest, he will never own you, nor forgive you; and grieves he has such a daughter in the world.'

All this, and more you have deserved from him, and from all of us: But what have you done to this abandoned libertine, to deserve what you have met with at his hands?—I fear, I fear, Sister!—But no more!—A blessed four months' work have you made of it.

My brother is now at Edinburgh, sent thither by my father, [though he knows not this to be the motive,] that he may not meet your triumphant deluder.

We are told he would be glad to marry you: But why, then, did he abandon you? He had kept you till he was tired of you, no question; and it is not likely he would wish to have you but upon the terms you have already without all doubt been his.

You ought to advise your friend Miss Howe to concern herself less in your matters than she does, except she could do it with more decency. She has written three letters to me: very insolent ones. Your favourer, poor Mrs. Norton, thinks you know nothing of the pert creature's writing. I hope you don't. But then the more impertinent the writer. But, believing the fond woman, I sat down the more readily to answer your letter; and I write with less severity, I can tell you, than otherwise I should have done, if I had answered it all.

Monday last was your birth-day. Think, poor ungrateful wretch, as you are! how we all used to keep it; and you will not wonder to be told, that we ran away from one another that day. But God give you true penitence, if you have it not already! and it will be true, if it be equal to the shame and the sorrow you have given us all.

Your afflicted sister, ARABELLA HARLOWE.

Your cousin Morden is every day expected in England. He, as well as others of the family, when he comes to hear what a blessed piece of work you have made of it, will wish you never had had a being.

LETTER LXI

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

You have given me great pleasure, my dearest friend, by your approbation of my reasonings, and of my

resolution founded upon them, never to have Mr. Lovelace. This approbation is so right a thing, give me leave to say, from the nature of the case, and from the strict honour and true dignity of mind, which I always admired in my Anna Howe, that I could hardly tell to what, but to my evil destiny, which of late would not let me please any body, to attribute the advice you gave me to the contrary.

But let not the ill state of my health, and what that may naturally tend to, sadden you. I have told you, that I will not run away from life, nor avoid the means that may continue it, if God see fit: and if He do not, who shall repine at His will!

If it shall be found that I have not acted unworthy of your love, and of my own character, in my greater trials, that will be a happiness to both on reflection.

The shock which you so earnestly advise me to try to get above, was a shock, the greatest that I could receive. But, my dear, as it was not occasioned by my fault, I hope I am already got above it. I hope I am.

I am more grieved (at times however) for others, than for myself. And so I ought. For as to myself, I cannot but reflect that I have had an escape, rather than a loss, in missing Mr. Lovelace for a husband—even had he not committed the vilest of all outrages.

Let any one, who knows my story, collect his character from his behaviour to me before that outrage; and then judge whether it was in the least probable that such a man should make me happy. But to collect his character from his principles with regard to the sex in general, and from his enterprizes upon many of them, and to consider the cruelty of his nature, and the sportiveness of his invention, together with the high opinion he has of himself, it will not be doubted that a wife of his must have been miserable; and more miserable if she loved him, than she could have been were she to be indifferent to him.

A twelvemonth might very probably have put a period to my life; situated as I was with my friends; persecuted and harassed as I had been by my brother and sister; and my very heart torn in pieces by the wilful, and (as it is now apparent) premeditated suspenses of the man, whose gratitude I wished to engage, and whose protection I was the more entitled to expect, as he had robbed me of every other, and reduced me to an absolute dependence upon himself. Indeed I once thought that it was all his view to bring me to this, (as he hated my family;) and uncomfortable enough for me, if it had been all.

Can it be thought, my dear, that my heart was not more than half broken (happy as I was before I knew Mr. Lovelace) by a grievous change in my circumstances?—Indeed it was. Nor perhaps was the wicked violence wanting to have cut short, though possibly not so very short, a life that he has sported with.

Had I been his but a month, he must have possessed the estate on which my relations had set their hearts; the more to their regret, as they hated him as much as he hated them.

Have I not reason, these things considered, to think myself happier without Mr. Lovelace than I could have been with him?—My will too unviolated; and very little, nay, not any thing as to him, to reproach myself with?

But with my relations it is otherwise. They indeed deserve to be pitied. They are, and no doubt will long be, unhappy.

To judge of their resentments, and of their conduct, we must put ourselves in their situation:—and while they think me more in fault than themselves, (whether my favourers are of their opinion, or not,) and have a right to judge for themselves, they ought to have great allowances made for them; my parents especially. They stand at least self-acquitted, (that I cannot;) and the rather, as they can recollect, to their pain, their past indulgencies to me, and their unquestionable love.

Your partiality for the friend you so much value will not easily let you come into this way of thinking. But only, my dear, be pleased to consider the matter in the following light.

'Here was my MOTHER, one of the most prudent persons of her sex, married into a family, not perhaps so happily tempered as herself; but every one of which she had the address, for a great while, absolutely to govern as she pleased by her directing wisdom, at the same time that they knew not but her prescriptions were the dictates of their own hearts; such a sweet heart had she of conquering by seeming to yield. Think, my dear, what must be the pride and the pleasure of such a mother, that in my brother she could give a son to the family she distinguished with her love, not unworthy of their wishes; a daughter, in my sister, of whom she had no reason to be ashamed; and in me a second daughter, whom every body complimented (such was their partial favour to me) as being the still more immediate likeness of herself? How, self pleased, could she smile round upon a family she had so blessed! What compliments were paid her upon the example she had given us, which was followed with such hopeful effects! With what a noble confidence could she look upon her dear Mr. Harlowe, as a person made happy by her; and be delighted to think that nothing but purity streamed from a fountain so pure!

'Now, my dear, reverse, as I daily do, this charming prospect. See my dear mother, sorrowing in her closet; endeavouring to suppress her sorrow at her table, and in those retirements where sorrow was before a stranger: hanging down her pensive head: smiles no more beaming over her benign aspect: her virtue made to suffer for faults she could not be guilty of: her patience continually tried (because she has more of it than any other) with repetitions of faults she is as much wounded by, as those can be from whom she so often hears of them: taking to herself, as the fountain-head, a taint which only had infected one of the under-currents: afraid to open her lips (were she willing) in my favour, lest it should be thought she has any bias in her own mind to failings that never could have been suspected in her: robbed of that pleasing merit, which the mother of well-nurtured and hopeful children may glory in: every one who visits her, or is visited by her, by dumb show, and looks that mean more than words can express, condoling where they used to congratulate: the affected silence wounding: the compassionating look reminding: the half-suppressed sigh in them, calling up deeper sighs from her; and their averted eyes, while they endeavour to restrain the rising tear, provoking tears from her, that will not be restrained.

'When I consider these things, and, added to these, the pangs that tear in pieces the stronger heart of my FATHER, because it cannot relieve itself by those which carry the torturing grief to the eyes of softer spirits: the overboiling tumults of my impatient and uncontrollable BROTHER, piqued to the heart of his honour, in the fall of a sister, in whom he once gloried: the pride of an ELDER SISTER, who had given unwilling way to

the honours paid over her head to one born after her: and, lastly, the dishonour I have brought upon two UNCLES, who each contended which should most favour their then happy niece:—When, I say, I reflect upon my fault in these strong, yet just lights, what room can there be to censure any body but my unhappy self? and how much reason have I to say, If I justify myself, mine own heart shall condemn me: if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse?’

Here permit me to lay down my pen for a few moments.

You are very obliging to me, intentionally, I know, when you tell me, it is in my power to hasten the day of Mr. Hickman's happiness. But yet, give me leave to say, that I admire this kind assurance less than any other paragraph of your letter.

In the first place you know it is not in my power to say when I can dismiss my physician; and you should not put the celebration of a marriage intended by yourself, and so desirable to your mother, upon so precarious an issue. Nor will I accept of a compliment, which must mean a slight to her.

If any thing could give me a relish for life, after what I have suffered, it would be the hopes of the continuance of the more than sisterly love, which has, for years, uninterruptedly bound us together as one mind.—And why, my dear, should you defer giving (by a tie still stronger) another friend to one who has so few?

I am glad you have sent my letter to Miss Montague. I hope I shall hear no more of this unhappy man.

I had begun the particulars of my tragical story: but it is so painful a task, and I have so many more important things to do, and, as I apprehend, so little time to do them in, that, could I avoid it, I would go no farther in it.

Then, to this hour, I know not by what means several of his machinations to ruin me were brought about; so that some material parts of my sad story must be defective, if I were to sit down to write it. But I have been thinking of a way that will answer the end wished for by your mother and you full as well, perhaps better.

Mr. Lovelace, it seems, had communicated to his friend Mr. Belford all that has passed between himself and me, as he went on. Mr. Belford has not been able to deny it. So that (as we may observe by the way) a poor young creature, whose indiscretion has given a libertine power over her, has a reason she little thinks of, to regret her folly; since these wretches, who have no more honour in one point than in another, scruple not to make her weakness a part of their triumph to their brother libertines.

I have nothing to apprehend of this sort, if I have the justice done me in his letters which Mr. Belford assures me I have: and therefore the particulars of my story, and the base arts of this vile man, will, I think, be best collected from those very letters of his, (if Mr. Belford can be prevailed upon to communicate them;) to which I dare appeal with the same truth and fervour as he did, who says—O that one would hear me! and that mine adversary had written a book!—Surely, I would take it upon my shoulders, and bind it to me as a crown! for I covered not my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom.

There is one way which may be fallen upon to induce Mr. Belford to communicate these letters; since he seems to have (and declares he always had) a sincere abhorrence of his friend's baseness to me: but that, you'll say, when you hear it, is a strange one. Nevertheless, I am very earnest upon it at present.

It is no other than this:

I think to make Mr. Belford the executor of my last will: [don't be surprised:] and with this view I permit his visits with the less scruple: and every time I see him, from his concern for me, am more and more inclined to do so. If I hold in the same mind, and if he accept the trust, and will communicate the materials in his power, those, joined with what you can furnish, will answer the whole end.

I know you will start at my notion of such an executor; but pray, my dear, consider, in my present circumstances, what I can do better, as I am empowered to make a will, and have considerable matters in my own disposal.

Your mother, I am sure, would not consent that you should take this office upon you. It might subject Mr. Hickman to the insults of that violent man. Mrs. Norton cannot, for several reasons respecting herself. My brother looks upon what I ought to have as his right. My uncle Harlowe is already one of my trustees (as my cousin Morden is the other) for the estate my grandfather left me: but you see I could not get from my own family the few guineas I left behind me at Harlowe-place; and my uncle Antony once threatened to have my grandfather's will controverted. My father!—To be sure, my dear, I could not expect that my father would do all I wish should be done: and a will to be executed by a father for a daughter, (parts of it, perhaps, absolutely against his own judgment,) carries somewhat daring and prescriptive in the very word.

If indeed my cousin Morden were to come in time, and would undertake this trust—but even him it might subject to hazards; and the more, as he is a man of great spirit; and as the other man (of as great) looks upon me (unprotected as I have long been) as his property.

Now Mr. Belford, as I have already mentioned, knows every thing that has passed. He is a man of spirit, and, it seems, as fearless as the other, with more humane qualities. You don't know, my dear, what instances of sincere humanity this Mr. Belford has shown, not only on occasion of the cruel arrest, but on several occasions since. And Mrs. Lovick has taken pains to inquire after his general character; and hears a very good one of him, his justice and generosity in all his concerns of meum and tuum, as they are called: he has a knowledge of law-matters; and has two executorships upon him at this time, in the discharge of which his honour is unquestioned.

All these reasons have already in a manner determined me to ask this favour of him; although it will have an odd sound with it to make an intimate friend of Mr. Lovelace my executor.

This is certain: my brother will be more acquiescent a great deal in such a case with the articles of the will, as he will see that it will be to no purpose to controvert some of them, which else, I dare say, he would controvert, or persuade my other friends to do so. And who would involve an executor in a law-suit, if they could help it?—Which would be the case, if any body were left, whom my brother could hope to awe or controul; since my father has possession of all, and is absolutely governed by him. [Angry spirits, my dear, as

I have often seen, will be overcome by more angry ones, as well as sometimes be disarmed by the meek.]—Nor would I wish, you may believe, to have effects torn out of my father's hands: while Mr. Belford, who is a man of fortune, (and a good economist in his own affairs) would have no interest but to do justice.

Then he exceedingly presses for some occasion to show his readiness to serve me: and he would be able to manage his violent friend, over whom he has more influence than any other person.

But after all, I know not if it were not more eligible by far, that my story, and myself too, should be forgotten as soon as possible. And of this I shall have the less doubt, if the character of my parents [you will forgive my, my dear] cannot be guarded against the unqualified bitterness which, from your affectionate zeal for me, has sometimes mingled with your ink—a point that ought, and (I insist upon it) must be well considered of, if any thing be done which your mother and you are desirous to have done. The generality of the world is too apt to oppose a duty—and general duties, my dear, ought not to be weakened by the justification of a single person, however unhappily circumstanced.

My father has been so good as to take off the heavy malediction he laid me under. I must be now solicitous for a last blessing; and that is all I shall presume to petition for. My sister's letter, communicating this grace, is a severe one: but as she writes to me as from every body, how could I expect it to be otherwise?

If you set out to-morrow, this letter cannot reach you till you get to your aunt Harman's. I shall therefore direct it thither, as Mr. Hickman instructed me.

I hope you will have met with no inconveniencies in your little journey and voyage; and that you will have found in good health all whom you wish to see well.

If your relations in the little island join their solicitations with your mother's commands, to have your nuptials celebrated before you leave them, let me beg of you, my dear, to oblige them. How grateful will the notification that you have done so be to

Your ever faithful and affectionate CL. HARLOWE.

LETTER LXII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HARLOWE SATURDAY, JULY 29.

I repine not, my dear Sister, at the severity you have been pleased to express in the letter you favoured me with; because that severity was accompanied with the grace I had petitioned for; and because the reproaches of mine own heart are stronger than any other person's reproaches can be: and yet I am not half so culpable as I am imagined to be: as would be allowed, if all the circumstances of my unhappy story were known: and which I shall be ready to communicate to Mrs. Norton, if she be commissioned to inquire into them; or to you, my Sister, if you can have patience to hear them.

I remembered with a bleeding heart what day the 24th of July was. I began with the eve of it; and I passed the day itself—as it was fit I should pass it. Nor have I any comfort to give to my dear and ever-honoured father and mother, and to you, my Bella, but this—that, as it was the first unhappy anniversary of my birth, in all probability, it will be the last.

Believe me, my dear Sister, I say not this merely to move compassion, but from the best grounds. And as, on that account, I think it of the highest importance to my peace of mind to obtain one farther favour, I would choose to owe to your intercession, as my sister, the leave I beg, to address half a dozen lines (with the hope of having them answered as I wish) to either or to both my honoured parents, to beg their last blessing.

This blessing is all the favour I have now to ask: it is all I dare to ask: yet am I afraid to rush at once, though by letter, into the presence of either. And if I did not ask it, it might seem to be owing to stubbornness and want of duty, when my heart is all humility penitence. Only, be so good as to embolden me to attempt this task—write but this one line, 'Clary Harlowe, you are at liberty to write as you desire.' This will be enough—and shall, to my last hour, be acknowledged as the greatest favour, by

Your truly penitent sister, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LXIII

MRS. NORTON, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE MONDAY, JULY 31.

MY DEAREST YOUNG LADY,

I must indeed own that I took the liberty to write to your mother, offering to enclose to her, if she gave me leave, your's of the 24th: by which I thought she would see what was the state of your mind; what the nature of your last troubles was from the wicked arrest; what the people are where you lodge; what proposals were made you from Lord M.'s family; also your sincere penitence; and how much Miss Howe's writing to them, in the terms she wrote in, disturbed you—but, as you have taken the matter into your own hands, and forbid me, in your last, to act in this nice affair unknown to you, I am glad the letter was not required of me—and indeed it may be better that the matter lie wholly between you and them; since my affection for you is thought to proceed from partiality.

They would choose, no doubt, that you should owe to themselves, and not to my humble mediation, the favour for which you so earnestly sue, and of which I would not have your despair: for I will venture to assure you, that your mother is ready to take the first opportunity to show her maternal tenderness: and this I gather

from several hints I am not at liberty to explain myself upon.

I long to be with you, now I am better, and now my son is in a fair way of recovery. But is it not hard to have it signified to me that at present it will not be taken well if I go?—I suppose, while the reconciliation, which I hope will take place, is negotiating by means of the correspondence so newly opened between you and your sister. But if you will have me come, I will rely on my good intentions, and risque every one's displeasure.

Mr. Brand has business in town; to solicit for a benefice which it is expected the incumbent will be obliged to quit for a better preferment: and, when there, he is to inquire privately after your way of life, and of your health.

He is a very officious young man; and, but that your uncle Harlowe (who has chosen him for this errand) regards him as an oracle, your mother had rather any body else had been sent.

He is one of those puzzling, over-doing gentlemen, who think they see farther into matters than any body else, and are fond of discovered mysteries where there are none, in order to be thought shrewd men.

I can't say I like him, either in the pulpit or out of it: I, who had a father one of the soundest divines and finest scholars in the kingdom; who never made an ostentation of what he knew; but loved and venerated the gospel he taught, preferring it to all other learning: to be obliged to hear a young man depart from his text as soon as he has named it, (so contrary, too, to the example set him by his learned and worthy principal,* when his health permits him to preach;) and throwing about, to a christian and country audience, scraps of Latin and Greek from the Pagan Classics; and not always brought in with great propriety neither, (if I am to judge by the only way given me to judge of them, by the English he puts them into;) is an indication of something wrong, either in his head, or his heart, or both; for, otherwise, his education at the university must have taught him better. You know, my dear Miss Clary, the honour I have for the cloth: it is owing to that, that I say what I do.

* Dr. Lewen.

I know not the day he is to set out; and, as his inquiries are to be private, be pleased to take no notice of this intelligence. I have no doubt that your life and conversation are such as may defy the scrutinies of the most officious inquirer.

I am just now told that you have written a second letter to your sister: but am afraid they will wait for Mr. Brand's report, before farther favour will be obtained from them; for they will not yet believe you are so ill as I fear you are.

But you would soon find that you have an indulgent mother, were she at liberty to act according to her own inclination. And this gives me great hopes that all will end well at last: for I verily think you are in the right way to a reconciliation. God give a blessing to it, and restore your health, and you to all your friends, prays

Your ever affectionate, JUDITH NORTON.

Your mother has privately sent me five guineas: she is pleased to say to help us in the illness we have been afflicted with; but, more likely, that I might send them to you, as from myself. I hope, therefore, I may send them up, with ten more I have still left.

I will send you word of Mr. Morden's arrival, the moment I know it.

If agreeable, I should be glad to know all that passes between your relations and you.

LETTER LXIV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MRS. NORTON WEDNESDAY, AUG. 2.

You give me, my dear Mrs. Norton, great pleasure in hearing of your's and your son's recovery. May you continue, for many, many years, a blessing to each other!

You tell me that you did actually write to my mother, offering to enclose to her mine of the 24th past: and you say it was not required of you. That is to say, although you cover it over as gently as you could, that your offer was rejected; which makes it evident that no plea could be made for me. Yet, you bid me hope, that the grace I sued for would, in time, be granted.

The grace I then sued for was indeed granted; but you are afraid, you say, that they will wait for Mr. Brand's report, before favour will be obtained in return to the second letter which I wrote to my sister; and you add, that I have an indulgent mother, were she at liberty to act according to her own inclination; and that all will end well at last.

But what, my dear Mrs. Norton, what is the grace I sue for in my second letter?—It is not that they will receive me into favour—If they think it is, they are mistaken. I do not, I cannot expect that. Nor, as I have often said, should I, if they would receive me, bear to live in the eye of those dear friends whom I have so grievously offended. 'Tis only, simply, a blessing I ask: a blessing to die with; not to lie with.—Do they know that? and do they know that their unkindness will perhaps shorten my date; so that their favour, if ever they intend to grant it, may come too late?

Once more, I desire you not to think of coming to me. I have no uneasiness now, but what proceeds from the apprehension of seeing a man I would not see for the world, if I could help it; and from the severity of my nearest and dearest relations: a severity entirely their own, I doubt; for you tell me that my brother is at Edinburgh! You would therefore heighten their severity, and make yourself enemies besides, if you were to come to me—Don't you see you would?

Mr. Brand may come, if he will. He is a clergyman, and must mean well; or I must think so, let him say of

me what he will. All my fear is, that, as he knows I am in disgrace with a family whose esteem he is desirous to cultivate; and as he has obligations to my uncle Harlowe and to my father; he will be but a languid acquitter—not that I am afraid of what he, or any body in the world, can hear as to my conduct. You may, my revered and dear friend, indeed you may, rest satisfied, that that is such as may warrant me to challenge the inquiries of the most officious.

I will send you copies of what passes, as you desire, when I have an answer to my second letter. I now begin to wish that I had taken the heart to write to my father himself; or to my mother, at least; instead of to my sister; and yet I doubt my poor mother can do nothing for me of herself. A strong confederacy, my dear Mrs. Norton, (a strong confederacy indeed!) against a poor girl, their daughter, sister, niece!—My brother, perhaps, got it renewed before he left them. He needed not—his work is done; and more than done.

Don't afflict yourself about money-matters on my account. I have no occasion for money. I am glad my mother was so considerate to you. I was in pain for you on the same subject. But Heaven will not permit so good a woman to want the humble blessings she was always satisfied with. I wish every individual of our family were but as rich as you!—O my mamma Norton, you are rich! you are rich indeed!—the true riches are such content as you are blessed with.—And I hope in God that I am in the way to be rich too.

Adieu, my ever-indulgent friend. You say all will be at last happy—and I know it will—I confide that it will, with as much security, as you may, that I will be, to my last hour,

Your ever grateful and affectionate CL. HARLOWE.

LETTER LXV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY, AUG. 1.

I am most confoundedly chagrined and disappointed: for here, on Saturday, arrived a messenger from Miss Howe, with a letter to my cousins;* which I knew nothing of till yesterday; when Lady Sarah and Lady Betty were procured to be here, to sit in judgment upon it with the old Peer, and my two kinswomen. And never was bear so miserably baited as thy poor friend!—And for what?—why for the cruelty of Miss Harlowe: For have I committed any new offence? and would I not have re-instated myself in her favour upon her own terms, if I could? And is it fair to punish me for what is my misfortune, and not my fault? Such event-judging fools as I have for my relations! I am ashamed of them all.

* See Letter LV. of this volume.

In that of Miss Howe was enclosed one to her from Miss Harlowe,* to be transmitted to my cousins, containing a final rejection of me; and that in very vehement and positive terms; yet she pretends that, in this rejection, she is governed more by principle than passion—[D—d lie, as ever was told!] and, as a proof that she is, says, that she can forgive me, and does, on this one condition, that I will never molest her more—the whole letter so written as to make herself more admired, me more detested.

* See Letter XLI. of this volume.

What we have been told of the agitations and workings, and sighings and sobbings, of the French prophets among us formerly, was nothing at all to the scene exhibited by these maudlin souls, at the reading of these letters; and of some affecting passages extracted from another of my fair implacable's to Miss Howe—such lamentations for the loss of so charming a relation! such applaudings of her virtue, of her exaltedness of soul and sentiment! such menaces of disinherisons! I, not needing their reproaches to be stung to the heart with my own reflections, and with the rage of disappointment; and as sincerely as any of them admiring her—'What the devil,' cried I, 'is all this for? Is it not enough to be despised and rejected? Can I help her implacable spirit? Would I not repair the evils I have made her suffer?'—Then was I ready to curse them all, herself and Miss Howe for company: and heartily swore that she should yet be mine.

I now swear it over again to thee—'Were her death to follow in a week after the knot is tied, by the Lord of Heaven, it shall be tied, and she shall die a Lovelace!'—Tell her so, if thou wilt: but, at the same time, tell her that I have no view to her fortune; and that I will solemnly resign that, and all pretensions to it, in whose favour she pleases, if she resign life issueless.—I am not so low-minded a wretch, as to be guilty of any sordid views to her fortune.—Let her judge for herself, then, whether it be not for her honour rather to leave this world a Lovelace than a Harlowe.

But do not think I will entirely rest a cause so near my heart upon an advocate who so much more admires his client's adversary than his client. I will go to town, in a few days, in order to throw myself at her feet: and I will carry with me, or have at hand, a resolute, well-prepared parson; and the ceremony shall be performed, let what will be the consequence.

But if she will permit me to attend her for this purpose at either of the churches mentioned in the license, (which she has by her, and, thank Heaven! has not returned me with my letters,) then will I not disturb her; but meet her at the altar in either church, and will engage to bring my two cousins to attend her, and even Lady Sarah and Lady Betty; and my Lord M. in person shall give her to me.

Or, if it be still more agreeable to her, I will undertake that either Lady Sarah or Lady Betty, or both, shall go to town and attend her down; and the marriage shall be celebrated in their presence, and in that of Lord M., either here or elsewhere, at her own choice.

Do not play me booty, Belford; but sincerely and warmly use all the eloquence thou art master of, to prevail upon her to choose one of these three methods. One of them she must choose—by my soul, she must.

Here is Charlotte tapping at my closet-door for admittance. What a devil wants Charlotte?—I will hear no more reproaches!—Come in, girl!

My cousin Charlotte, finding me writing on with too much earnestness to have any regard for politeness to her, and guessing at my subject, besought me to let her see what I had written.

I obliged her. And she was so highly pleased on seeing me so much in earnest, that she offered, and I accepted her offer, to write a letter to Miss Harlowe; with permission to treat me in it as she thought fit.

I shall enclose a copy of her letter.

When she had written it, she brought it to me, with apologies for the freedom taken with me in it: but I excused it; and she was ready to give me a kiss for it; telling her I had hopes of success from it; and that I thought she had luckily hit it off.

Every one approves of it, as well as I; and is pleased with me for so patiently submitting to be abused, and undertaken for.—If it do not succeed, all the blame will be thrown upon the dear creature's perverseness: her charitable or forgiving disposition, about which she makes such a parade, will be justly questioned; and the piety, of which she is now in full possession, will be transferred to me.

Putting, therefore, my whole confidence in this letter, I postpone all my other alternatives, as also my going to town, till my empress send an answer to my cousin Montague.

But if she persist, and will not promise to take time to consider of the matter, thou mayest communicate to her what I had written, as above, before my cousin entered; and, if she be still perverse, assure her, that I must and will see her—but this with all honour, all humility: and, if I cannot move her in my favour, I will then go abroad, and perhaps never more return to England.

I am sorry thou art, at this critical time, so busily employed, as thou informest me thou art, in thy Watford affairs, and in preparing to do Belton justice. If thou wantest my assistance in the latter, command me. Though engrossed by this perverse beauty, and plagued as I am, I will obey thy first summons.

I have great dependence upon thy zeal and thy friendship: hasten back to her, therefore, and resume a task so interesting to me, that it is equally the subject of my dreams, as of my waking hours.

LETTER LXVI

MISS MONTAGUE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE TUESDAY, AUG. 1.

DEAREST MADAM,

All our family is deeply sensible of the injuries you have received at the hands of one of it, whom you only can render in any manner worthy of the relation he stands in to us all: and if, as an act of mercy and charity, the greatest your pious heart can show, you will be pleased to look over his past wickedness and ingratitude, and suffer yourself to be our kinswoman, you will make us the happiest family in the world: and I can engage, that Lord M., and Lady Sarah Sadleir, and Lady Betty Lawrance, and my sister, who are all admirers of your virtues, and of your nobleness of mind, will for ever love and reverence you, and do every thing in all their powers to make you amends for what you have suffered from Mr. Lovelace. This, Madam, we should not, however, dare to petition for, were we not assured, that Mr. Lovelace is most sincerely sorry for his past vileness to you; and that he will, on his knees, beg your pardon, and vow eternal love and honour to you.

Wherefore, my dearest cousin, [how you will charm us all, if this agreeable style may be permitted!] for all our sakes, for his soul's sake, [you must, I am sure, be so good a lady, as to wish to save a soul!] and allow me to say, for your own fame's sake, condescend to our joint request: and if, by way of encouragement, you will but say you will be glad to see, and to be as much known personally, as you are by fame, to Charlotte Montague, I will, in two days' time from the receipt of your permission, wait upon you with or without my sister, and receive your farther commands.

Let me, our dearest cousin, [we cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of calling you so; let me] entreat you to give me your permission for my journey to London; and put it in the power of Lord M. and of the ladies of the family, to make you what reparation they can make you, for the injuries which a person of the greatest merit in the world has received from one of the most audacious men in it; and you will infinitely oblige us all; and particularly her, who repeatedly presumes to style herself

Your affectionate cousin, and obliged servant, CHARLOTTE MONTAGUE.

LETTER LXVII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. THURSDAY MORNING, AUG. 3. SIX O'CLOCK.

I have been so much employed in my own and Belton's affairs, that I could not come to town till last night; having contented myself with sending to Mrs. Lovick, to know, from time to time, the state of the lady's health; of which I received but very indifferent accounts, owing, in a great measure, to letters or advices brought her from her implacable family.

I have now completed my own affairs; and, next week, shall go to Epsom, to endeavour to put Belton's sister into possession of his own house for him: after which, I shall devote myself wholly to your service, and to that of the lady.

I was admitted to her presence last night; and found her visibly altered for the worse. When I went home, I had your letter of Tuesday last put into my hands. Let me tell thee, Lovelace, that I insist upon the performance of thy engagement to me that thou wilt not personally molest her.

[Mr. Belford dates again on Thursday morning, ten o'clock; and gives an account of a conversation which he had just held with the Lady upon the subject of Miss Montague's letter to her, preceding, and upon Mr. Lovelace's alternatives, as mentioned in Letter LXV., which Mr. Belford supported with the utmost earnestness. But, as the result of this conversation will be found in the subsequent letters, Mr. Belford's pleas and arguments in favour of his friend, and the Lady's answers, are omitted.]

LETTER LXVIII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS MONTAGUE THURSDAY, AUG. 3.

DEAR MADAM,

I am infinitely obliged to you for your kind and condescending letter. A letter, however, which heightens my regrets, as it gives me a new instance of what a happy creature I might have been in an alliance so much approved of by such worthy ladies; and which, on their accounts, and on that of Lord M. would have been so reputable to myself, and was once so desirable.

But indeed, indeed, Madam, my heart sincerely repulses the man who, descended from such a family, could be guilty, first, of such premeditated violence as he has been guilty of; and, as he knows, farther intended me, on the night previous to the day he set out for Berkshire; and, next, pretending to spirit, could be so mean as to wish to lift into that family a person he was capable of abasing into a companionship with the most abandoned of her sex.

Allow me then, dear Madam, to declare with favour, that I think I never could be ranked with the ladies of a family so splendid and so noble, if, by vowing love and honour at the altar to such a violator, I could sanctify, as I may say, his unprecedented and elaborate wickedness.

Permit me, however, to make one request to my good Lord M., and to Lady Betty, and Lady Sarah, and to your kind self, and your sister.—It is, that you will all be pleased to join your authority and interests to prevail upon Mr. Lovelace not to molest me farther.

Be pleased to tell him, that, if I am designed for life, it will be very cruel in him to attempt to hunt me out of it; for I am determined never to see him more, if I can help it. The more cruel, because he knows that I have nobody to defend me from him: nor do I wish to engage any body to his hurt, or to their own.

If I am, on the other hand, destined for death, it will be no less cruel, if he will not permit me to die in peace—since a peaceable and happy end I wish him; indeed I do.

Every worldly good attend you, dear Madam, and every branch of the honourable family, is the wish of one, whose misfortune it is that she is obliged to disclaim any other title than that of,

Dear Madam, Your and their obliged and faithful servant, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LXIX

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. THURSDAY AFTERNOON, AUG. 3.

I am just now agreeably surprised by the following letter, delivered into my hands by a messenger from the lady. The letter she mentions, as enclosed,* I have returned, without taking a copy of it. The contents of it will soon be communicated to you, I presume, by other hands. They are an absolute rejection of thee—Poor Lovelace!

* See Miss Harlowe's Letter, No. LXVIII.

TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. AUG. 3.

SIR,

You have frequently offered to oblige me in any thing that shall be within your power: and I have such an opinion of you, as to be willing to hope that, at the times you made these offers, you meant more than mere compliment.

I have therefore two requests to make to you: the first I will now mention; the other, if this shall be complied with, otherwise not.

It behoves me to leave behind me such an account as may clear up my conduct to several of my friends who will not at present concern themselves about me: and Miss Howe, and her mother, are very solicitous that I will do so.

I am apprehensive that I shall not have time to do this; and you will not wonder that I have less and less inclination to set about such a painful task; especially as I find myself unable to look back with patience on what I have suffered; and shall be too much discomposed by the retrospection, were I obliged to make it, to proceed with the requisite temper in a task of still greater importance which I have before me.

It is very evident to me that your wicked friend has given you, from time to time, a circumstantial account of all his behaviour to me, and devices against me; and you have more than once assured me, that he has done my character all the justice I could wish for, both by writing and speech.

Now, Sir, if I may have a fair, a faithful specimen from his letters or accounts to you, written upon some of

the most interesting occasions, I shall be able to judge whether there will or will not be a necessity for me, for my honour's sake, to enter upon the solicited task.

You may be assured, from my enclosed answer to the letter which Miss Montague has honoured me with, (and which you'll be pleased to return me as soon as read,) that it is impossible for me ever to think of your friend in the way I am importuned to think of him: he cannot therefore receive any detriment from the requested specimen: and I give you my honour, that no use shall be made of it to his prejudice, in law, or otherwise. And that it may not, after I am no more, I assure you, that it is a main part of my view that the passages you shall oblige me with shall be always in your own power, and not in that of any other person.

If, Sir, you think fit to comply with my request, the passages I would wish to be transcribed (making neither better nor worse of the matter) are those which he has written to you, on or about the 7th and 8th of June, when I was alarmed by the wicked pretence of a fire; and what he has written from Sunday, June 11, to the 19th. And in doing this you will much oblige

Your humble servant, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

Now, Lovelace, since there are no hopes for thee of her returning favour—since some praise may lie for thy ingenuousness, having neither offered [as more diminutive-minded libertines would have done] to palliate thy crimes, by aspersing the lady, or her sex—since she may be made easier by it—since thou must fare better from thine own pen than from her's—and, finally, since thy actions have manifested that thy letters are not the most guilty part of what she knows of thee—I see not why I may not oblige her, upon her honour, and under the restrictions, and for the reasons she has given; and this without breach of the confidence due to friendly communication; especially, as I might have added, since thou gloriest in thy pen and in thy wickedness, and canst not be ashamed.

But, be this as it may, she will be obliged before thy remonstrances or clamours against it can come; so, pr'ythee now, make the best of it, and rave not; except for the sake of a pretence against me, and to exercise thy talent of execration:—and, if thou likest to do so for these reasons, rave and welcome.

I long to know what the second request is: but this I know, that if it be any thing less than cutting thy throat, or endangering my own neck, I will certainly comply; and be proud of having it in my power to oblige her.

And now I am actually going to be busy in the extracts.

LETTER LXX

MR. BELFORD, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE AUG. 3, 4.

MADAM,

You have engaged me to communicate to you, upon my honour, (making neither better nor worse of the matter,) what Mr. Lovelace has written to me, in relation to yourself, in the period preceding your going to Hampstead, and in that between the 11th and 19th of June: and you assure me you have no view in this request, but to see if it be necessary for you, from the account he gives, to touch upon the painful subjects yourself, for the sake of your own character.

Your commands, Madam, are of a very delicate nature, as they may seem to affect the secrets of private friendship: but as I know you are not capable of a view, the motives to which you will not own; and as I think the communication may do some credit to my unhappy friend's character, as an ingenuous man; though his actions by the most excellent woman in the world have lost him all title to that of an honourable one; I obey you with the greater cheerfulness.

[He then proceeds with his extracts, and concludes them with an address to her in his friend's behalf, in the following words:]

'And now, Madam, I have fulfilled your commands; and, I hope, have not dis-served my friend with you; since you will hereby see the justice he does to your virtue in every line he writes. He does the same in all his letters, though to his own condemnation: and, give me leave to add, that if this ever-amiable sufferer can think it in any manner consistent with her honour to receive his vows on the altar, on his truly penitent turn of mind, I have not the least doubt but that he will make her the best and tenderest of husbands. What obligation will not the admirable lady hereby lay upon all his noble family, who so greatly admire her! and, I will presume to say, upon her own, when the unhappy family aversion (which certainly has been carried to an unreasonable height against him) shall be got over, and a general reconciliation takes place! For who is it that would not give these two admirable persons to each other, were not his morals an objection?

However this be, I would humbly refer to you, Madam, whether, as you will be mistress of very delicate particulars from me his friend, you should not in honour think yourself concerned to pass them by, as if you had never seen them; and not to take advantage of the communication, not even in an argument, as some perhaps might lie, with respect to the premeditated design he seems to have had, not against you, as you; but as against the sex; over whom (I am sorry I can bear witness myself) it is the villanous aim of all libertines to triumph: and I would not, if any misunderstanding should arise between him and me, give him room to reproach me that his losing of you, and (through his usage of you) of his own friends, were owing to what perhaps he would call breach of trust, were he to judge rather by the event than by my intention.

I am, Madam, with the most profound veneration,

Your most faithful humble servant, J. BELFORD.

LETTER LXXI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY, AUG. 4.

SIR,

I hold myself extremely obliged to you for your communications. I will make no use of them, that you shall have reason to reproach either yourself or me with. I wanted no new lights to make the unhappy man's premeditated baseness to me unquestionable, as my answer to Miss Montague's letter might convince you.*

* See Letter LXVIII. of this volume.

I must own, in his favour, that he has observed some decency in his accounts to you of the most indecent and shocking actions. And if all his strangely-communicative narrations are equally decent, nothing will be rendered criminally odious by them, but the vile heart that could meditate such contrivances as were much stronger evidences of his inhumanity than of his wit: since men of very contemptible parts and understanding may succeed in the vilest attempts, if they can once bring themselves to trample on the sanctions which bind man to man; and sooner upon an innocent person than upon any other; because such a one is apt to judge of the integrity of others' hearts by its own.

I find I have had great reason to think myself obliged to your intention in the whole progress of my sufferings. It is, however, impossible, Sir, to miss the natural inference on this occasion that lies against his predetermined baseness. But I say the less, because you shall not think I borrow, from what you have communicated, aggravations that are not needed.

And now, Sir, that I may spare you the trouble of offering any future arguments in his favour, let me tell you that I have weighed every thing thoroughly—all that human vanity could suggest—all that a desirable reconciliation with my friends, and the kind respects of his own, could bid me hope for—the enjoyment of Miss Howe's friendship, the dearest consideration to me, now, of all the worldly ones—all these I have weighed: and the result is, and was before you favoured me with these communications, that I have more satisfaction in the hope that, in one month, there will be an end of all with me, than in the most agreeable things that could happen from an alliance with Mr. Lovelace, although I were to be assured he would make the best and tenderest of husbands. But as to the rest; if, satisfied with the evils he has brought upon me, he will forbear all further persecutions of me, I will, to my last hour, wish him good: although he hath overwhelmed the fatherless, and digged a pit for his friend: fatherless may she well be called, and motherless too, who has been denied all paternal protection, and motherly forgiveness.

And now, Sir, acknowledging gratefully your favour in the extracts, I come to the second request I had to make you; which requires a great deal of courage to mention; and which courage nothing but a great deal of distress, and a very destitute condition, can give. But, if improper, I can but be denied; and dare to say I shall be at least excused. Thus, then, I preface it:

'You see, Sir, that I am thrown absolutely into the hands of strangers, who, although as kind and compassionate as strangers can be wished to be, are, nevertheless, persons from whom I cannot expect any thing more than pity and good wishes; nor can my memory receive from them any more protection than my person, if either should need it.

'If then I request it, of the only person possessed of materials that will enable him to do my character justice;

'And who has courage, independence, and ability to oblige me;

'To be the protector of my memory, as I may say;

'And to be my executor; and to see some of my dying requests performed;

'And if I leave it to him to do the whole in his own way, manner, and time; consulting, however, in requisite cases, my dear Miss Howe;

'I presume to hope that this my second request may be granted.'

And if it may, these satisfactions will accrue to me from the favour done me, and the office undertaken:

'It will be an honour to my memory, with all those who shall know that I was so well satisfied of my innocence, that, having not time to write my own story, I could intrust it to the relation which the destroyer of my fame and fortunes has given of it.

'I shall not be apprehensive of involving any one in my troubles or hazards by this task, either with my own relations, or with your friend; having dispositions to make which perhaps my own friends will not be so well pleased with as it were to be wished they would be;' as I intend not unreasonable ones; but you know, Sir, where self is judge, matters, even with good people, will not always be rightly judged of.

'I shall also be freed from the pain of recollecting things that my soul is vexed at; and this at a time when its tumults should be allayed, in order to make way for the most important preparation.

'And who knows, but that Mr. Belford, who already, from a principle of humanity, is touched at my misfortunes, when he comes to revolve the whole story, placed before him in one strong light: and when he shall have the catastrophe likewise before him; and shall become in a manner interested in it; who knows, but that, from a still higher principle, he may so regulate his future actions as to find his own reward in the everlasting welfare which is wished him by his

'Obliged servant, 'CLARISSA HARLOWE?'

LETTER LXXII

MR. BELFORD, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE FRIDAY, AUG. 4.

MADAM,

I am so sensible of the honour done me in your's of this day, that I would not delay for one moment the answering of it. I hope you will live to see many happy years; and to be your own executrix in those points which your heart is most set upon. But, in the case of survivorship, I most cheerfully accept of the sacred office you are pleased to offer me; and you may absolutely rely upon my fidelity, and, if possible, upon the literal performance of every article you shall enjoin me.

The effect of the kind wish you conclude with, had been my concern ever since I have been admitted to the honour of your conversation. It shall be my whole endeavour that it be not vain. The happiness of approaching you, which this trust, as I presume, will give me frequent opportunities of doing, must necessarily promote the desired end: since it will be impossible to be a witness of your piety, equanimity, and other virtues, and not aspire to emulate you. All I beg is, that you will not suffer any future candidate, or event, to displace me; unless some new instances of unworthiness appear either in the morals or behaviour of,

Madam, Your most obliged and faithful servant, J. BELFORD.

LETTER LXXIII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. FRIDAY NIGHT, AUG. 4.

I have actually delivered to the lady the extracts she requested me to give her from your letters. I do assure you that I have made the very best of the matter for you, not that conscience, but that friendship, could oblige me to make. I have changed or omitted some free words. The warm description of her person in the fire-scene, as I may call it, I have omitted. I have told her, that I have done justice to you, in the justice you have done to her by her unexampled virtue. But take the very words which I wrote to her immediately following the extracts:

'And now, Madam,'—See the paragraph marked with an inverted comma [thus '], Letter LXX. of this volume.

The lady is extremely uneasy at the thoughts of your attempting to visit her. For Heaven's sake, (your word being given,) and for pity's sake, (for she is really in a very weak and languishing way,) let me beg of you not to think of it.

Yesterday afternoon she received a cruel letter (as Mrs. Lovick supposes it to be, by the effect it had upon her) from her sister, in answer to one written last Saturday, entreating a blessing and forgiveness from her parents.

She acknowledges, that if the same decency and justice are observed in all of your letters, as in the extracts I have obliged her with, (as I have assured her they are,) she shall think herself freed from the necessity of writing her own story: and this is an advantage to thee which thou oughtest to thank me for.

But what thinkest thou is the second request she had to make to me? no other than that I would be her executor!—Her motives will appear before thee in proper time; and then, I dare to answer, will be satisfactory.

You cannot imagine how proud I am of this trust. I am afraid I shall too soon come into the execution of it. As she is always writing, what a melancholy pleasure will be the perusal and disposition of her papers afford me! such a sweetness of temper, so much patience and resignation, as she seems to be mistress of; yet writing of and in the midst of present distresses! how much more lively and affecting, for that reason, must her style be; her mind tortured by the pangs of uncertainty, (the events then hidden in the womb of fate,) than the dry, narrative, unanimated style of persons, relating difficulties and dangers surmounted; the relater perfectly at ease; and if himself unmoved by his own story, not likely greatly to affect the reader!

*** SATURDAY MORNING, AUG. 5.

I am just returned from visiting the lady, and thanking her in person for the honour she has done me; and assuring her, if called to the sacred trust, of the utmost fidelity and exactness.

I found her very ill. I took notice of it. She said, she had received a second hard-hearted letter from her sister; and she had been writing a letter (and that on her knees) directly to her mother; which, before, she had not had the courage to do. It was for a last blessing and forgiveness. No wonder, she said, that I saw her affected. Now that I had accepted of the last charitable office for her, (for which, as well as for complying with her other request, she thanked me,) I should one day have all these letters before me: and could she have a kind one in return to that she had been now writing, to counterbalance the unkind one she had from her sister, she might be induced to show me both together— otherwise, for her sister's sake, it were no matter how few saw the poor Bella's letter.

I knew she would be displeased if I had censured the cruelty of her relations: I therefore only said, that surely she must have enemies, who hoped to find their account in keeping up the resentments of her friends against her.

It may be so, Mr. Belford, said she: the unhappy never want enemies. One fault, wilfully committed, authorizes the imputation of many more. Where the ear is opened to accusations, accusers will not be wanting; and every one will officiously come with stories against a disgraced child, where nothing dare be said in her favour. I should have been wise in time, and not have needed to be convinced, by my own

misfortunes, of the truth of what common experience daily demonstrates. Mr. Lovelace's baseness, my father's inflexibility, my sister's reproaches, are the natural consequences of my own rashness; so I must make the best of my hard lot. Only, as these consequences follow one another so closely, while they are new, how can I help being anew affected?

I asked, if a letter written by myself, by her doctor or apothecary, to any of her friends, representing her low state of health, and great humility, would be acceptable? or if a journey to any of them would be of service, I would gladly undertake it in person, and strictly conform to her orders, to whomsoever she should direct me to apply.

She earnestly desired that nothing of this sort might be attempted, especially without her knowledge and consent. Miss Howe, she said, had done harm by her kindly-intended zeal; and if there were room to expect favour by mediation, she had ready at hand a kind friend, Mrs. Norton, who for piety and prudence had few equals; and who would let slip no opportunity to endeavour to do her service.

I let her know that I was going out of town till Monday: she wished me pleasure; and said she should be glad to see me on my return.

Adieu!

LETTER LXXIV

MISS AR. HARLOWE, TO MISS CL. HARLOWE [IN ANSWER TO HER'S OF JULY 29. SEE LETTER LXII. OF THIS VOLUME.] THURSDAY MORN. AUG. 3.

SISTER CLARY,

I wish you would not trouble me with any more of your letters. You had always a knack at writing; and depended upon making every one do what you would when you wrote. But your wit and folly have undone you. And now, as all naughty creatures do, when they can't help themselves, you come begging and praying, and make others as uneasy as yourself.

When I wrote last to you, I expected that I should not be at rest.

And so you'd creep on, by little and little, till you'll want to be received again.

But you only hope for forgiveness and a blessing, you say. A blessing for what, sister Clary? Think for what!—However, I read your letter to my father and mother.

I won't tell you what my father said—one who has the true sense you boast to have of your misdeeds, may guess, without my telling you, what a justly-incensed father would say on such an occasion.

My poor mother—O wretch! what has not your ungrateful folly cost my poor mother!—Had you been less a darling, you would not, perhaps, have been so graceless: But I never in my life saw a cockered favourite come to good.

My heart is full, and I can't help writing my mind; for your crimes have disgraced us all; and I am afraid and ashamed to go to any public or private assembly or diversion: And why?—I need not say why, when your actions are the subjects either of the open talk, or of the affronting whispers, of both sexes at all such places.

Upon the whole, I am sorry I have no more comfort to send you: but I find nobody willing to forgive you.

I don't know what time may do for you; and when it is seen that your penitence is not owing more to disappointment than to true conviction: for it is too probable, Miss Clary, that, had not your feather-headed villain abandoned you, we should have heard nothing of these moving supplications; nor of any thing but defiance from him, and a guilt gloried in from you. And this is every one's opinion, as well as that of

Your afflicted sister, ARABELLA HARLOWE.

I send this by a particular hand, who undertakes to give it you or leave it for you by to-morrow night.

LETTER LXXV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO HER MOTHER SATURDAY, AUG. 5

HONOURED MADAM,

No self-convicted criminal ever approached her angry and just judge with greater awe, nor with a truer contrition, than I do you by these lines.

Indeed I must say, that if the latter of my humble prayer had not respected my future welfare, I had not dared to take this liberty. But my heart is set upon it, as upon a thing next to God Almighty's forgiveness necessary for me.

Had my happy sister known my distresses, she would not have wrung my heart, as she has done, by a severity, which I must needs think unkind and unsisterly.

But complaint of any unkindness from her belongs not to me: yet, as she is pleased to write that it must be seen that my penitence is less owing to disappointment than to true conviction, permit me, Madam, to insist upon it, that, if such a plea can be allowed me, I am actually entitled to the blessing I sue for; since my humble prayer is founded upon a true and unfeigned repentance: and this you will the readier believe, if the creature

who never, to the best of her remembrance, told her mamma a wilful falsehood may be credited, when she declares, as she does, in the most solemn manner, that she met the seducer with a determination not to go off with him: that the rash step was owing more to compulsion than to infatuation: and that her heart was so little in it, that she repented and grieved from the moment she found herself in his power; and for every moment after, for several weeks before she had any cause from him to apprehend the usage she met with.

Wherefore, on my knees, my ever-honoured Mamma, (for on my knees I write this letter,) I do most humbly beg your blessing: say but, in so many words, (I ask you not, Madam, to call me your daughter,)—Lost, unhappy wretch, I forgive you! and may God bless you!—This is all! Let me, on a blessed scrap of paper, but see one sentence to this effect, under your dear hand, that I may hold it to my heart in my most trying struggles, and I shall think it a passport to Heaven. And, if I do not too much presume, and it were WE instead of I, and both your honoured names subjoined to it, I should then have nothing more to wish. Then would I say, 'Great and merciful God! thou seest here in this paper thy poor unworthy creature absolved by her justly-offended parents: Oh! join, for my Redeemer's sake, thy all-gracious fiat, and receive a repentant sinner to the arms of thy mercy!'

I can conjure you, Madam, by no subject of motherly tenderness, that will not, in the opinion of my severe censurers, (before whom this humble address must appear,) add to reproach: let me therefore, for God's sake, prevail upon you to pronounce me blest and forgiven, since you will thereby sprinkle comfort through the last hours of

Your CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LXXVI

MISS MONTAGUE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [IN ANSWER TO HER'S OF AUG. 3. SEE LETTER LXVIII. OF THIS VOLUME.] MONDAY, AUG. 7.

DEAR MADAM,

We were all of opinion, before your letter came, that Mr. Lovelace was utterly unworthy of you, and deserved condign punishment, rather than to be blessed with such a wife: and hoped far more from your kind consideration for us, than any we supposed you could have for so base an injurer. For we were all determined to love you, and admire you, let his behaviour to you be what it would.

But, after your letter, what can be said?

I am, however, commanded to write in all the subscribing names, to let you know how greatly your sufferings have affected us: to tell you that my Lord M. has forbid him ever more to enter the doors of the apartments where he shall be: and as you labour under the unhappy effects of your friends' displeasure, which may subject you to inconveniencies, his Lordship, and Lady Sarah, and Lady Betty, beg of you to accept, for your life, or, at least, till you are admitted to enjoy your own estate, of one hundred guineas per quarter, which will be regularly brought you by an especial hand, and of the enclosed bank-bill for a beginning. And do not, dearest Madam, we all beseech you, do not think you are beholden (for this token of Lord M.'s, and Lady Sarah's, and Lady Betty's, love to you) to the friends of this vile man; for he has not one friend left among us.

We each of us desire to be favoured with a place in your esteem; and to be considered upon the same foot of relationship as if what once was so much our pleasure to hope would be, had been. And it shall be our united prayer, that you may recover health and spirits, and live to see many happy years: and, since this wretch can no more be pleaded for, that, when he is gone abroad, as he now is preparing to do, we may be permitted the honour of a personal acquaintance with a lady who has no equal. These are the earnest requests, dearest young lady, of

Your affectionate friends, and most faithful servants, M. SARAH SADLEIR. ELIZ. LAWRANCE. CHARL. MONTAGUE. MARTH. MONTAGUE.

You will break the hearts of the three first-named more particularly, if you refuse them your acceptance. Dearest young lady, punish not them for his crimes. We send by a particular hand, which will bring us, we hope, your accepting favour.

Mr. Lovelace writes by the same hand; but he knows nothing of our letter, nor we of his: for we shun each other; and one part of the house holds us, another him, the remotest from each other.

LETTER LXXVII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SAT. AUG. 23.

I am so disturbed at the contents of Miss Harlowe's answer to my cousin Charlotte's letter of Tuesday last, (which was given her by the same fellow that gave me your's,) that I have hardly patience or consideration enough to weigh what you write.

She had need indeed to cry out for mercy for herself from her friends, who knows not how to show any! She is a true daughter of the Harlowes!— By my soul, Jack, she is a true daughter of the Harlowes! Yet has she so many excellencies, that I must love her; and, fool that I am, love her the more for despising me.

Thou runnest on with thy cursed nonsensical reformed rote, of dying, dying, dying! and, having once got the word by the end, canst not help foisting it in at every period! The devil take me, if I don't think thou wouldst rather give her poison with thy own hands, rather than she should recover, and rob thee of the merit of being a conjurer!

But no more of thy cursed knell; thy changes upon death's candlestick turned bottom-upwards: she'll live to bury me; I see that: for, by my soul, I can neither eat, drink, nor sleep, nor, what is still worse, love any woman in the world but her. Nor care I to look upon a woman now: on the contrary, I turn my head from every one I meet: except by chance an eye, an air, a feature, strikes me, resembling her's in some glancing-by face; and then I cannot forbear looking again: though the second look recovers me; for there can be nobody like her.

But surely, Belford, the devil's in this woman! The more I think of her nonsense and obstinacy, the less patience I have with her. Is it possible she can do herself, her family, her friends, so much justice any other way, as by marrying me? Were she sure she should live but a day, she ought to die a wife. If her christian revenge will not let her wish to do so for her own sake, ought she not for the sake of her family, and of her sex, which she pretends sometimes to have so much concern for? And if no sake is dear enough to move her Harlowe-spirit in my favour, has she any title to the pity thou so pitifully art always bespeaking for her?

As to the difference which her letter has made between me and the stupid family here, [and I must tell thee we are all broke in pieces,] I value not that of a button. They are fools to anathematize and curse me, who can give them ten curses for one, were they to hold it for a day together.

I have one half of the house to myself; and that the best; for the great enjoy that least which costs them most: grandeur and use are two things: the common part is their's; the state part is mine: and here I lord it, and will lord it, as long as I please; while the two pury sisters, the old gouty brother, and the two musty nieces, are stived up in the other half, and dare not stir for fear of meeting me: whom, (that's the jest of it,) they have forbidden coming into their apartments, as I have them into mine. And so I have them all prisoners, while I range about as I please. Pretty dogs and doggeses to quarrel and bark at me, and yet, whenever I appear, afraid to pop out of their kennels; or, if out before they see me, at the sight of me run growling in again, with their flapt ears, their sweeping dewlaps, and their quivering tails curling inwards.

And here, while I am thus worthily waging war with beetles, drones, wasps, and hornets, and am all on fire with the rage of slighted love, thou art regaling thyself with phlegm and rock-water, and art going on with thy reformation-scheme and thy exultations in my misfortunes!

The devil take thee for an insensible dough-baked varlet! I have no more patience with thee than with the lady; for thou knowest nothing either of love or friendship, but art as unworthy of the one, as incapable of the other; else wouldst thou not rejoice, as thou dost under the grimace of pity, in my disappointments.

And thou art a pretty fellow, art thou not? to engage to transcribe for her some parts of my letters written to thee in confidence? Letters that thou shouldest sooner have parted with thy cursed tongue, than have owned that thou ever hadst received such: yet these are now to be communicated to her! But I charge thee, and woe be to thee if it be too late! that thou do not oblige her with a line of mine.

If thou hast done it, the least vengeance I will take is to break through my honour given to thee not to visit her, as thou wilt have broken through thine to me, in communicating letters written under the seal of friendship.

I am now convinced, too sadly for my hopes, by her letter to my cousin Charlotte, that she is determined never to have me.

Unprecedented wickedness, she calls mine to her. But how does she know what love, in its flaming ardour, will stimulate men to do? How does she know the requisite distinctions of the words she uses in this case?—To think the worst, and to be able to make comparisons in these very delicate situations, must she not be less delicate than I had imagined her to be?—But she has heard that the devil is black; and having a mind to make one of me, brays together, in the mortar of her wild fancy, twenty chimney-sweepers, in order to make one sootier than ordinary rise out of the dirty mass.

But what a whirlwind does she raise in my soul by her proud contempts of me! Never, never, was mortal man's pride so mortified! How does she sink me, even in my own eyes!—'Her heart sincerely repulses me, she says, for my MEANNESS!'—Yet she intends to reap the benefit of what she calls so!—Curse upon her haughtiness, and her meanness, at the same time!—Her haughtiness to me, and her meanness to her own relations; more unworthy of kindred with her, than I can be, or I am mean indeed.

Yet who but must admire, who but must adore her; Oh! that cursed, cursed house! But for the women of that!—Then their d—d potions! But for those, had her unimpaired intellects, and the majesty of her virtue, saved her, as once it did by her humble eloquence,* another time by her terrifying menaces against her own life.**

* In the fire-scene, Vol. V. Letter XVI. ** Vol. VI. Letter XXXVI. in the pen-knife-scene.

Yet in both these to find her power over me, and my love for her, and to hate, to despise, and to refuse me!—She might have done this with some show of justice, had the last-intended violation been perpetrated:—but to go away conqueress and triumphant in every light!—Well may she despise me for suffering her to do so.

She left me low and mean indeed!—And the impression holds with her.—I could tear my flesh, that I gave her not cause—that I humbled her not indeed;—or that I staid not in town to attend her motions instead of Lord M.'s, till I could have exalted myself, by giving to myself a wife superior to all trial, to all temptation.

I will venture one more letter to her, however; and if that don't do, or procure me an answer, then will I endeavour to see her, let what will be the consequence. If she get out of my way, I will do some noble mischief to the vixen girl whom she most loves, and then quit the kingdom for ever.

And now, Jack, since thy hand is in at communicating the contents of private letters, tell her this, if thou wilt. And add to it, That if SHE abandon me, GOD will: and what then will be the fate of

Her LOVELACE.

LETTER LXXVIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. [IN ANSWER TO LETTER LXV. OF THIS VOLUME.] MONDAY, AUG. 7.

And so you have actually delivered to the fair implacable extracts of letters written in the confidence of friendship! Take care—take care, Belford—I do indeed love you better than I love any man in the world: but this is a very delicate point. The matter is grown very serious to me. My heart is bent upon having her. And have her I will, though I marry her in the agonies of death.

She is very earnest, you say, that I will not offer to molest her. That, let me tell her, will absolutely depend upon herself, and the answer she returns, whether by pen and ink, or the contemptuous one of silence, which she bestowed upon my last four to her: and I will write it in such humble, and in such reasonable terms, that, if she be not a true Harlowe, she shall forgive me. But as to the executorship which she is for conferring upon thee—thou shalt not be her executor: let me perish if thou shalt.—Nor shall she die. Nobody shall be any thing, nobody shall dare to be any thing, to her, but I—thy happiness is already too great, to be admitted daily to her presence; to look upon her, to talk to her, to hear her talk, while I am forbid to come within view of her window— What a reprobation is this, of the man who was once more dear to her than all the men in the world!—And now to be able to look down upon me, while her exalted head is hid from me among the stars, sometimes with scorn, at other times with pity; I cannot bear it.

This I tell thee, that if I have not success in my effort by letter, I will overcome the creeping folly that has found its way to my heart, or I will tear it out in her presence, and throw it at her's, that she may see how much more tender than her own that organ is, which she, and you, and every one else, have taken the liberty to call callous.

Give notice of the people who live back and edge, and on either hand, of the cursed mother, to remove their best effects, if I am rejected: for the first vengeance I shall take will be to set fire to that den of serpents. Nor will there be any fear of taking them when they are in any act that has the relish of salvation in it, as Shakspeare says—so that my revenge, if they perish in the flames I shall light up, will be complete as to them.

LETTER LXXIX

MR. LOVELACE TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE MONDAY, AUG. 7.

Little as I have reason to expect either your patient ear, or forgiving heart, yet cannot I forbear to write to you once more, (as a more pardonable intrusion, perhaps, than a visit would be,) to beg of you to put it in my power to atone, as far as it is possible to atone, for the injuries I have done you.

Your angelic purity, and my awakened conscience, are standing records of your exalted merit, and of my detestable baseness: but your forgiveness will lay me under an eternal obligation to you.—Forgive me then, my dearest life, my earthly good, the visible anchor of my future hope!—As you, (who believe you have something to be forgiven for,) hope for pardon yourself, forgive me, and consent to meet me, upon your own conditions, and in whose company you please, at the holy altar, and to give yourself a title to the most repentant and affectionate heart that ever beat in a human bosom.

But, perhaps, a time of probation may be required. It may be impossible for you, as well from indisposition as doubt, so soon to receive me to absolute favour as my heart wishes to be received. In this case, I will submit to your pleasure; and there shall be no penance which you can impose that I will not cheerfully undergo, if you will be pleased to give me hope that, after an expiation, suppose of months, wherein the regularity of my future life and actions shall convince you of my reformation, you will at last be mine.

Let me beg then the favour of a few lines, encouraging me in this conditional hope, if it must not be a still nearer hope, and a more generous encouragement.

If you refuse me this, you will make me desperate. But even then I must, at all events, throw myself at your feet, that I may not charge myself with the omission of any earnest, any humble effort, to move you in my favour: for in YOU, Madam, in YOUR forgiveness, are centred my hopes as to both worlds: since to be reprobated finally by you, will leave me without expectation of mercy from above! For I am now awakened enough to think that to be forgiven by injured innocents is necessary to the Divine pardon; the Almighty putting into the power of such, (as is reasonable to believe,) the wretch who causelessly and capitally offends them. And who can be entitled to this power, if YOU are not?

Your cause, Madam, in a word, I look upon to be the cause of virtue, and, as such, the cause of God. And may I not expect that He will assert it in the perdition of a man, who has acted by a person of the most spotless purity as I have done, if you, by rejecting me, show that I have offended beyond the possibility of forgiveness.

I do most solemnly assure you that no temporal or worldly views induce me to this earnest address. I deserve not forgiveness from you. Nor do my Lord M. and his sisters from me. I despise them from my heart for presuming to imagine that I will be controuled by the prospect of any benefits in their power to confer. There is not a person breathing, but yourself, who shall prescribe to me. Your whole conduct, Madam, has been so nobly principled, and your resentments are so admirably just, that you appear to me even in a divine light; and in an infinitely more amiable one at the same time than you could have appeared in, had you not suffered the barbarous wrongs, that now fill my mind with anguish and horror at my own recollected villany

to the most excellent of women.

I repeat, that all I beg for the present is a few lines to guide my doubtful steps; and, if possible for you so far to condescend, to encourage me to hope that, if I can justify my present vows by my future conduct, I may be permitted the honour to style myself,

Eternally your's, R. LOVELACE.

LETTER LXXX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO LORD M. AND TO THE LADIES OF HIS HOUSE [IN REPLY TO MISS MONTAGUE'S OF AUG. 7. SEE LETTER LXXVI. OF THIS VOLUME.] TUESDAY, AUG. 8.

Excuse me, my good Lord, and my ever-honoured Ladies, from accepting of your noble quarterly bounty; and allow me to return, with all grateful acknowledgement, and true humility, the enclosed earnest of your goodness to me. Indeed I have no need of the one, and cannot possibly want the other: but, nevertheless have such a sense of your generous favour, that, to my last hour, I shall have pleasure in contemplating upon it, and be proud of the place I hold in the esteem of such venerable persons, to whom I once had the ambition to hope to be related.

But give me leave to express my concern that you have banished your kinsman from your presence and favour: since now, perhaps, he will be under less restraint than ever; and since I in particular, who had hoped by your influence to remain unmolested for the remainder of my days, may again be subjected to his persecutions.

He has not, my good Lord, and my dear Ladies, offended against you, as he has against me; yet you could all very generously intercede for him with me: and shall I be very improper, if I desire, for my own peace-sake; for the sake of other poor creatures, who may still be injured by him, if he be made quite desperate; and for the sake of all your worthy family; that you will extend to him that forgiveness which you hope for from me? and this the rather, as I presume to think, that his daring and impetuous spirit will not be subdued by violent methods; since I have no doubt that the gratifying of a present passion will be always more prevalent with him than any future prospects, however unwarrantable the one, or beneficial the other.

Your resentments on my account are extremely generous, as your goodness to me is truly noble: but I am not without hope that he will be properly affected by the evils he has made me suffer; and that, when I am laid low and forgotten, your whole honourable family will be enabled to rejoice in his reformation; and see many of those happy years together, which, my good Lord, and my dear Ladies, you so kindly wish to

Your ever-grateful and obliged CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LXXXI

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. THURSDAY NIGHT, AUG. 10.

You have been informed by Tourville, how much Belton's illness and affairs have engaged me, as well as Mowbray and him, since my former. I called at Smith's on Monday, in my way to Epsom.

The lady was gone to chapel: but I had the satisfaction to hear she was not worse; and left my compliments, and an intimation that I should be out of town for three or four days.

I refer myself to Tourville, who will let you know the difficulty we had to drive out this meek mistress, and frugal manager, with her cubs, and to give the poor fellow's sister possession for him of his own house; he skulking mean while at an inn at Croydon, too dispirited to appear in his own cause.

But I must observe that we were probably but just in time to save the shattered remains of his fortune from this rapacious woman, and her accomplices: for, as he cannot live long, and she thinks so, we found she had certainly taken measures to set up a marriage, and keep possession of all for herself and her sons.

Tourville will tell you how I was forced to chastise the quondam hostler in her sight, before I could drive him out of the house. He had the insolence to lay hands on me: and I made him take but one step from the top to the bottom of a pair of stairs. I thought his neck and all his bones had been broken. And then, he being carried out neck-and-heels, Thomasine thought fit to walk out after him.

Charming consequences of keeping; the state we have been so fond of extolling!—Whatever it may be thought of in strong health, sickness and declining spirits in the keeper will bring him to see the difference.

She should soon have him, she told a confidant, in the space of six foot by five; meaning his bed: and then she would let nobody come near him but whom she pleased. This hostler-fellow, I suppose, would then have been his physician; his will ready made for him; and widows' weeds probably ready provided; who knows, but she to appear in them in his own sight? as once I knew an instance in a wicked wife; insulting a husband she hated, when she thought him past recovery: though it gave the man such spirits, and such a turn, that he got over it, and lived to see her in her coffin, dressed out in the very weeds she had insulted him in.

So much, for the present, for Belton and his Thomasine.

I begin to pity thee heartily, now I see thee in earnest in the fruitless love thou expressest to this angel of a woman; and the rather, as, say what thou wilt, it is impossible she should get over her illness, and her friends' implacableness, of which she has had fresh instances.

I hope thou art not indeed displeas'd with the extracts I have made from thy letters for her. The letting her know the justice thou hast done to her virtue in them, is so much in favour of thy ingenuousness, (a quality, let me repeat, that gives thee a superiority over common libertines,) that I think in my heart I was right; though to any other woman, and to one who had not known the worst of thee that she could know, it might have been wrong.

If the end will justify the means, it is plain, that I have done well with regard to ye both; since I have made her easier, and thee appear in a better light to her, than otherwise thou wouldst have done.

But if, nevertheless, thou art dissatisfied with my having oblig'd her in a point, which I acknowledge to be delicate, let us canvas this matter at our first meeting; and then I will show thee what the extracts were, and what connections I gave them in thy favour.

But surely thou dost not pretend to say what I shall, or shall not do, as to the executorship.

I am my own man, I hope. I think thou shouldst be glad to have the justification of her memory left to one, who, at the same time, thou mayest be assured, will treat thee, and thy actions, with all the lenity the case will admit.

I cannot help expressing my surprise at one instance of thy self-partiality; and that is, where thou sayest she has need, indeed, to cry out for mercy herself from her friends, who knows not how to show any.

Surely thou canst not think the cases alike—for she, as I understand, desires but a last blessing, and a last forgiveness, for a fault in a manner involuntary, if a fault at all; and does not so much as hope to be received; thou, to be forgiven premeditated wrongs, (which, nevertheless, she forgives, on condition to be no more molested by thee;) and hopest to be received into favour, and to make the finest jewel in the world thy absolute property in consequence of that forgiveness.

I will now briefly proceed to relate what has passed since my last, as to the excellent lady. By the account I shall give thee, thou wilt see that she has troubles enough upon her, all springing originally from thyself, without needing to add more to them by new vexations. And as long as thou canst exert thyself so very cavalierly at M. Hall, where every one is thy prisoner, I see not but the bravery of thy spirit may be as well gratified in domineering there over half a dozen persons of rank and distinction, as it could be over an helpless orphan, as I may call this lady, since she has not a single friend to stand by her, if I do not; and who will think herself happy, if she can refuge herself from thee, and from all the world, in the arms of death.

My last was dated on Saturday.

On Sunday, in compliance with her doctor's advice, she took a little airing. Mrs. Lovick, and Mr. Smith and his wife, were with her. After being at Highgate chapel at divine service, she treated them with a little repast; and in the afternoon was at Islington church, in her way home; returning tolerably cheerful.

She had received several letters in my absence, as Mrs. Lovick acquainted me, besides your's. Your's, it seems, much distressed her; but she ordered the messenger, who pressed for an answer, to be told that it did not require an immediate one.

On Wednesday she received a letter from her uncle Harlowe,* in answer to one she had written to her mother on Saturday on her knees. It must be a very cruel one, Mrs. Lovick says, by the effects it had upon her: for, when she received it, she was intending to take an afternoon airing in a coach: but was thrown into so violent a fit of hysterics upon it, that she was forced to lie down; and (being not recovered by it) to go to bed about eight o'clock.

* See Letter LXXXIV. of this volume.

On Thursday morning she was up very early; and had recourse to the Scriptures to calm her mind, as she told Mrs. Lovick: and, weak as she was, would go in a chair to Lincoln's-inn chapel, about eleven. She was brought home a little better; and then sat down to write to her uncle. But was oblig'd to leave off several times—to struggle, as she told Mrs. Lovick, for an humble temper. 'My heart, said she to the good woman, is a proud heart, and not yet, I find, enough mortified to my condition; but, do what I can, will be for prescribing resenting things to my pen.'

I arriv'd in town from Belton's this Thursday evening; and went directly to Smith's. She was too ill to receive my visit. But, on sending up my compliments, she sent me down word that she should be glad to see me in the morning.

Mrs. Lovick oblig'd me with the copy of a meditation collected by the lady from the Scriptures. She has entitl'd it Poor mortals the cause of their own misery; so entitl'd, I presume, with intention to take off the edge of her repinings at hardships so disproportion'd to her fault, were her fault even as great as she is inclin'd to think it. We may see, by this, the method she takes to fortify her mind, and to which she owes, in a great measure, the magnanimity with which she bears her undeserv'd persecutions.

MEDITATION POOR MORTALS THE CAUSE OF THEIR OWN MISERY.

Say not thou, it is through the Lord that I fell away; for thou oughtest not to do the thing that he hateth.

Say not thou, he hath caus'd me to err; for he hath no need of the sinful man.

He himself made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his own counsel;

If thou wilt, to keep the commandments, and to perform acceptable faithfulness.

He hath set fire and water before thee: stretch forth thine hand to whither thou wilt.

He hath command'd no man to do wickedly: neither hath he given any man license to sin.

And now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope is only in thee.

Deliver me from all my offences: and make me not a rebuke unto the foolish.

When thou with rebuke dost chasten man for sin, thou makest his beauty to consume away, like as it were a moth fretting a garment: every man, therefore, is vanity.

Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.

The troubles of my heart are enlarg'd. O bring thou me out of my distresses!

Mrs. Smith gave me the following particulars of a conversation that passed between herself and a young clergyman, on Tuesday afternoon, who, as it appears, was employed to make inquiries about the lady by her friends.

He came into the shop in a riding-habit, and asked for some Spanish snuff; and finding only Mrs. Smith there, he desired to have a little talk with her in the back-shop.

He beat about the bush in several distant questions, and at last began to talk more directly about Miss Harlowe.

He said he knew her before her fall, [that was his impudent word;] and gave the substance of the following account of her, as I collected it from Mrs. Smith:

'She was then, he said, the admiration and delight of every body: he lamented, with great solemnity, her backsliding; another of his phrases. Mrs. Smith said, he was a fine scholar; for he spoke several things she understood not; and either in Latin or Greek, she could not tell which; but was so good as to give her the English of them without asking. A fine thing, she said, for a scholar to be so condescending!'

He said, 'Her going off with so vile a rake had given great scandal and offence to all the neighbouring ladies, as well as to her friends.'

He told Mrs. Smith 'how much she used to be followed by every one's eye, whenever she went abroad, or to church; and praised and blessed by every tongue, as she passed; especially by the poor: that she gave the fashion to the fashionable, without seeming herself to intend it, or to know she did: that, however, it was pleasant to see ladies imitate her in dress and behaviour, who being unable to come up to her in grace and ease, exposed but their own affectation and awkwardness, at the time that they thought themselves secure of general approbation, because they wore the same things, and put them on in the same manner, that she did, who had every body's admiration; little considering, that were her person like their's, or if she had their defects, she would have brought up a very different fashion; for that nature was her guide in every thing, and ease her study; which, joined with a mingled dignity and condescension in her air and manner, whether she received or paid a compliment, distinguished her above all her sex.

'He spoke not, he said, his own sentiments only on this occasion, but those of every body: for that the praises of Miss Clarissa Harlowe were such a favourite topic, that a person who could not speak well upon any other subject, was sure to speak well upon that; because he could say nothing but what he had heard repeated and applauded twenty times over.'

Hence it was, perhaps, that this novice accounted for the best things he said himself; though I must own that the personal knowledge of the lady, which I am favoured with, made it easy to me to lick into shape what the good woman reported to me, as the character given her by the young Levite: For who, even now, in her decline of health, sees not that all these attributes belong to her?

I suppose he has not been long come from college, and now thinks he has nothing to do but to blaze away for a scholar among the ignorant; as such young fellows are apt to think those who cannot cap verses with them, and tell us how an antient author expressed himself in Latin on a subject, upon which, however, they may know how, as well as that author, to express themselves in English.

Mrs. Smith was so taken with him, that she would fain have introduced him to the lady, not questioning but it would be very acceptable to her to see one who knew her and her friends so well. But this he declined for several reasons, as he call them; which he gave. One was, that persons of his cloth should be very cautious of the company they were in, especially where sex was concerned, and where a woman had slurred her reputation—[I wish I had been there when he gave himself these airs.] Another, that he was desired to inform himself of her present way of life, and who her visitors were; for, as to the praises Mrs. Smith gave the lady, he hinted, that she seemed to be a good-natured woman, and might (though for the lady's sake he hoped not) be too partial and short-sighted to be trusted to, absolutely, in a concern of so high a nature as he intimated the task was which he had undertaken; nodding out words of doubtful import, and assuming airs of great significance (as I could gather) throughout the whole conversation. And when Mrs. Smith told him that the lady was in a very bad state of health, he gave a careless shrug—She may be very ill, says he: her disappointments must have touched her to the quick: but she is not bad enough, I dare say, yet, to atone for her very great lapse, and to expect to be forgiven by those whom she has so much disgraced.

A starched, conceited coxcomb! what would I give he had fallen in my way!

He departed, highly satisfied with himself, no doubt, and assured of Mrs. Smith's great opinion of his sagacity and learning: but bid her not say any thing to the lady about him or his inquiries. And I, for very different reasons, enjoined the same thing.

I am glad, however, for her peace of mind's sake, that they begin to think it behoves them to inquire about her.

LETTER LXXXII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. FRIDAY, AUG. 11.

[Mr. Belford acquaints his friend with the generosity of Lord M. and the Ladies of his family; and with the Lady's grateful sentiments upon the occasion.

He says, that in hopes to avoid the pain of seeing him, (Mr. Lovelace,) she intends to answer his letter of the 7th, though much against her inclination.]

'She took great notice,' says Mr. Belford, 'of that passage in your's, which makes necessary to the Divine

pardon, the forgiveness of a person causelessly injured.

'Her grandfather, I find, has enabled her at eighteen years of age to make her will, and to devise great part of his estate to whom she pleases of the family, and the rest out of it (if she die single) at her own discretion; and this to create respect to her! as he apprehended that she would be envied: and she now resolves to set about making her will out of hand.'

[Mr. Belford insists upon the promise he had made him, not to molest the Lady: and gives him the contents of her answer to Lord M. and the Ladies of his Lordship's family, declining their generous offers. See Letter LXXX. of this volume.]

LETTER LXXXIII

MISS CL. HARLOWE, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. FRIDAY, AUG. 11.

It is a cruel alternative to be either forced to see you, or to write to you. But a will of my own has been long denied me; and to avoid a greater evil, nay, now I may say, the greatest, I write.

Were I capable of disguising or concealing my real sentiments, I might safely, I dare say, give you the remote hope you request, and yet keep all my resolutions. But I must tell you, Sir, (it becomes my character to tell you, that, were I to live more years than perhaps I may weeks, and there were not another man in the world, I could not, I would not, be your's).

There is no merit in performing a duty.

Religion enjoins me not only to forgive injuries, but to return good for evil. It is all my consolation, and I bless God for giving me that, that I am now in such a state of mind, with regard to you, that I can cheerfully obey its dictates. And accordingly I tell you, that, wherever you go, I wish you happy. And in this I mean to include every good wish.

And now having, with great reluctance I own, complied with one of your compulsory alternatives, I expect the fruits of it.

CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER LXXXIV

MR. JOHN HARLOWE, TO MISS CL. HARLOWE [IN ANSWER TO HER'S TO HER MOTHER. SEE LETTER LXXV. OF THIS VOLUME.] MONDAY, AUG. 7.

POOR UNGRATEFUL, NAUGHTY KINSWOMAN!

Your mother neither caring, nor being permitted, to write, I am desired to set pen to paper, though I had resolved against it.

And so I am to tell you, that your letters, joined to the occasion of them, almost break the hearts of us all.

Were we sure you had seen your folly, and were truly penitent, and, at the same time, that you were so very ill as you pretend, I know not what might be done for you. But we are all acquainted with your moving ways when you want to carry a point.

Unhappy girl! how miserable have you made us all! We, who used to visit with so much pleasure, now cannot endure to look upon one another.

If you had not know, upon an hundred occasions, how dear you once was to us, you might judge of it now, were you to know how much your folly has unhinged us all.

Naughty, naughty girl! You see the fruits of preferring a rake and libertine to a man of sobriety and morals, against full warning, against better knowledge. And such a modest creature, too, as you were! How could you think of such an unworthy preference!

Your mother can't ask, and your sister knows not in modesty how to ask; and so I ask you, if you have any reason to think yourself with child by this villain?—You must answer this, and answer it truly, before any thing can be resolved upon about you.

You may well be touched with a deep remorse for your misdeeds. Could I ever have thought that my doting-piece, as every one called you, would have done thus? To be sure I loved you too well. But that is over now. Yet, though I will not pretend to answer for any body but myself, for my own part I say God forgive you! and this is all from

Your afflicted uncle, JOHN HARLOWE.

The following MEDITATION was stitched to the bottom of this letter with black silk.

MEDITATION

O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave! that thou wouldst keep me secret, till thy wrath be past!

My face is foul with weeping; and on my eye-lid is the shadow of death.

My friends scorn me; but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.

A dreadful sound is in my ears; in prosperity the destroyer came upon me!

I have sinned! what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men! why hast thou set me as a mark against thee; so that I am a burden to myself!

When I say my bed shall comfort me; my couch shall ease my complaint;

Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions.

So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than life.

I loath it! I would not live always!—Let me alone; for my days are vanity!

He hath made me a bye-word of the people; and aforetime I was as a tabret.

My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart.

When I looked for good, then evil came unto me; and when I waited for light, then came darkness.

And where now is my hope?—

Yet all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.

LETTER LXXXV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO JOHN HARLOWE, ESQ. THURSDAY, AUG. 10.

HONOURED SIR,

It was an act of charity I begged: only for a last blessing, that I might die in peace. I ask not to be received again, as my severe sister [Oh! that I had not written to her!] is pleased to say, is my view. Let that grace be denied me when I do.

I could not look forward to my last scene with comfort, without seeking, at least, to obtain the blessing I petitioned for; and that with a contrition so deep, that I deserved not, were it known, to be turned over from the tender nature of a mother, to the upbraiding pen of an uncle! and to be wounded by a cruel question, put by him in a shocking manner: and which a little, a very little time, will better answer than I can: for I am not either a hardened or shameless creature: if I were, I should not have been so solicitous to obtain the favour I sued for.

And permit me to say that I asked it as well for my father and mother's sake, as for my own; for I am sure they at least will be uneasy, after I am gone, that they refused it to me.

I should still be glad to have theirs, and your's, Sir, and all your blessings, and your prayers: but, denied in such a manner, I will not presume again to ask it: relying entirely on the Almighty's; which is never denied, when supplicated for with such true penitence as I hope mine is.

God preserve my dear uncle, and all my honoured friends! prays

Your unhappy

CLARISSA HARLOWE. END OF VOL. 7.

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