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Title: Clarissa Harlowe; or the history of a young lady — Volume 3

Author: Samuel Richardson

Release date: February 1, 2006 [EBook #9881]

Most recently updated: December 22, 2014

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Julie C. Sparks, and David Widger

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CLARISSA HARLOWE; OR THE HISTORY OF A YOUNG LADY —
VOLUME 3 ***

CLARISSA HARLOWE

or the

HISTORY OF A YOUNG LADY

By Samuel Richardson

Nine Volumes

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LETTER XXVIII. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—Lovelace complains, she hears, to Mrs. Greme, of her adhering to her injunctions. What means he by it, she asks, yet forego such opportunities as he had? She is punished for her vanity in hoping to be an example. Blames Miss Howe for her behaviour to Hickman.

LETTER XXIX. From the same.—Warm dialogues with Lovelace. She is displeased with him for his affectedly-bashful hints of matrimony. Mutual recriminations. He looks upon her as his, she says, by a strange sort of obligation, for having run away with her against her will. Yet but touches on the edges of matrimony neither. She is sick of herself.

LETTER XXX. From the same.—Mr. Lovelace a perfect Proteus. He now applauds her for that treatment of him which before he had resented; and communicates to her two letters, one from Lady Betty Lawrance, the other from Miss Montague. She wonders he did not produce those letters before, as he must know they would be highly acceptable to her.

LETTER XXXI. XXXII. XXXIII. XXXIV. From the same.—The contents of the letters from Lady Betty and Miss Montague put Clarissa in good humour with Mr. Lovelace. He hints at marriage; but pretends to be afraid of pursuing the hint. She is earnest with him to leave her: and why. He applauds her reasonings. Her serious questions, and his ludicrous answer.—He makes different proposals.—He offers to bring Mrs. Norton to her. She is ready to blame herself for her doubts of him: but gives reasons for her caution.—He writes by her consent to his friend Doleman, to procure lodgings for her in town.

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LETTER XXXVI. Miss Howe to Clarissa.—Humourously touches on her reproofs in relation to Hickman. Observations on smooth love. Lord M.'s family greatly admire her. Approves of her spirited treatment of Lovelace, and of her going to London. Hints at the narrowness of her own mother. Advises her to keep fair with Lovelace.

LETTER XXXVII. XXXVIII. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—Wonders not that her brother has weight to make her father irreconcilable.—Copy of Mr. Doleman's answer about London lodgings. Her caution in her choice of them. Lovelace has given her five guineas for Hannah. Other instances of his considerateness. Not displeased with her present prospects.

LETTER XXXIX. Lovelace to Belford.—Explains what is meant by Doleman's answer about the lodgings. Makes Belford object to his scheme, that he may answer the objections. Exults. Swells. Despises every body. Importance of the minutiae. More of his arts, views, and contrivances.

LETTER XL. Miss Howe to Clarissa.—Acquaints her with a scheme formed by her brother and captain Singleton, to carry her off. Hickman's silent charities. She despises all his sex, as well as him. Ill terms on which her own father and mother lived. Extols Clarissa for her domestic good qualities. Particulars of a great contest with her mother, on their correspondence. Has been slapt by her. Observations on managing wives.

LETTER XLI. XLII. XLIII. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—A strong remonstrance on her behaviour to her mother; in which she lays down the duty of children. Accuses her of want of generosity to Hickman. Farther excuses herself on declining to accept of her money offers. Proposes a condition on which Mrs. Howe may see all they write.

LETTER XLIV. Miss Howe to Clarissa.—Her mother rejects the proposed condition. Miss Howe takes thankfully her reprehensions: but will continue the correspondence. Some excuses for herself. Humorous story of game-chickens.

LETTER XLV. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—Lovelace communicates her brother's and Singleton's project; but treats it with seeming contempt. She asks his advice what to do upon it. This brings on an offer of marriage from him. How it went off.

LETTER XLVI. Lovelace to Belford.—He confesses his artful intentions in the offer of marriage: yet had like, he says, to have been caught in his own snares.

LETTER XLVII. Joseph Leman to Mr. Lovelace.—With intelligence of a design formed against him by the Harlowes. Joseph's vile hypocrisy and selfishness.

LETTER XLVIII. Lovelace. In answer.—Story of Miss Betterton. Boast of his treatment of his mistresses. The artful use he makes of Joseph's intelligence.

LETTER XLIX. Clarissa to her aunt Hervey.—Complains of her silence. Hints at her not having designed to go away with Lovelace. She will open her whole heart to her, if she encourage her to do so, by the hopes of a reconciliation.

LETTER L. Miss Howe to Clarissa.—Observations on Lovelace's meanness, pride, and revenge. Politeness not to be expected from him. She raves at him for the artful manner in which he urges Clarissa to marry him. Advises her how to act in her present situation.

LETTER LI. Belford to Lovelace.—Becomes a warm advocate for the lady. Gives many instructive reasons to enforce his arguments in her favour.

LETTER LII. Mrs. Hervey to Clarissa.—A severe and cruel letter in answer to her's, Letter XLIX. It was not designed, she says, absolutely to force her to marry to her dislike.

LETTER LIII. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—Her deep regret on this intelligence, for having met Lovelace. The finer sensibilities make not happy. Her fate too visibly in her power. He is unpolite, cruel, insolent, unwise, a trifler in his own happiness. Her reasons why she less likes him than ever. Her soul his soul's superior. Her fortitude. Her prayer.

LETTER LIV. LV. From the same.—Now indeed is her heart broken, she says. A solemn curse laid upon her by her father. Her sister's barbarous letters on the occasion.

LETTER LVI. Miss Howe to Clarissa.—A letter full of generous consolation and advice. Her friendly vow. Sends her fifty guineas in the leaves of a Norris's miscellanies.

LETTER LVII. Clarissa to Miss Howe.—A faithful friend the medicine of life. She is just setting out for London. Lovelace has offered marriage to her in so unreserved a manner, that she wishes she had never written with diffidence of him. Is sorry it was not in her power to comply with his earnest solicitations. Returns her Norris: and why.

LETTER LVIII. LIX. Miss Howe to Clarissa.—Sorry she has returned her Norris. Wishes she had accepted of Lovelace's unreserved offer of marriage. Believes herself to have a sneaking kindness for Hickman: and why. She blames Mrs. Harlowe: and why.

In answer to Letter VIII. Clarissa states the difference in the characters of Mr. Lovelace and Mr. Hickman; and tells her, that her motives for suspending marriage were not merely ceremonious ones. Regrets Mrs. Howe's forbidding the correspondence between them. Her dutiful apology for her own mother. Lesson to children.

LETTER LX. Lovelace to Belford.—Thinks he shall be inevitably manacled at last. The lady's extreme illness. Her filial piety gives her dreadful faith in a father's curses. She lets not Miss Howe know how very ill she was. His vows of marriage bring her back to life. Absolutely in earnest in those vows. [The only time he was so.] He can now talk of love and marriage without check. Descants upon Belford's letter, No. LI.

LETTER LXI. From the same.—Is setting out for London. A struggle with his heart. Owns it to be a villain of a heart. A fit of strong, but transitory remorse. If he do marry, he doubts he shall have a vapourish wife. Thinks it would be better for both not to marry. His libertine reasons. Lessons to the sex.

LETTER LXII. From the same.—They arrive at Mrs. Sinclair's. Sally Martin and Polly Horton set upon him. He wavers in his good purposes. Dorcas Wykes proposed, and reluctantly accepted for a servant, till Hannah can come. Dorcas's character. He has two great points to carry. What they are.

THE HISTORY OF CLARISSA HARLOWE

LETTER I

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE TUESDAY, NINE O'CLOCK.

I write, because you enjoin me to do so. Love you still!—How can I help it, if I would? You may believe how I stand aghast, your letter communicating the first news—Good God of Heaven and Earth!—But what shall I say?—I am all impatient for particulars.

Lord have mercy upon me!—But can it be?

My mother will indeed be astonished!—How can I tell it her!—It was but last night (upon some jealousies put into her head by your foolish uncle) that I assured her, and this upon the strength of your own assurances, that neither man nor devil would be able to induce you to take a step that was in the least derogatory to the most punctilious honour.

But, once more, can it be? What woman at this rate!—But, God preserve you!

Let nothing escape you in your letters. Direct them for me, however, to Mrs. Knolly's, till further notice.

Observe, my dear, that I don't blame you by all this—Your relations only are in fault!—Yet how you came to change your mind is the surprising thing.

How to break it to my mother, I know not. Yet if she hear it first from any other, and find I knew it before, she will believe it to be my connivance!—Yet, as I hope to live, I know not how to break it to her.

But this is teasing you.—I am sure, without intention.

Let me now repeat my former advice—If you are not married by this time, be sure delay not the ceremony. Since things are as they are, I wish it were thought that you were privately married before you went away. If these men plead AUTHORITY to our pain, when we are theirs—Why should we not, in such a case as this, make some good out of the hated word, for our reputation, when we are induced to violate a more natural one?

Your brother and sister [that vexes me almost as much as any thing!] have now their ends. Now, I suppose, will go forward alterations of wills, and such-like spiteful doings.

Miss Lloyd and Miss Biddulph this moment send up their names. They are out of breath, Kitty says, to speak to me—easy to guess their errand;—I must see my mother, before I see them. I have no way but to shew her your letter to clear myself. I shall not be able to say a word, till she has run herself out of her first breath.—Forgive me, my dear—surprise makes me write thus. If your messenger did not wait, and were not those young ladies below, I could write it over again, for fear of afflicting you.

I send what you write for. If there be any thing else you want that is in my power, command without reserve

Your ever affectionate ANNA HOWE.

LETTER II.

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE. TUESDAY NIGHT.

I think myself obliged to thank you, my dear Miss Howe, for your condescension, in taking notice of a creature who has occasioned you so much scandal.

I am grieved on this account, as much, I verily think, as for the evil itself.

Tell me—but yet I am afraid to know—what your mother said.

I long, and yet I dread, to be told, what the young ladies my companions, now never more perhaps to be so, say of me.

They cannot, however, say worse of me than I will of myself. Self accusation shall flow in every line of my narrative where I think I am justly censurable. If any thing can arise from the account I am going to give you, for extenuation of my fault (for that is all a person can hope for, who cannot excuse herself) I know I may expect it from your friendship, though not from the charity of any other: since by this time I doubt not every mouth is opened against me; and all that know Clarissa Harlowe condemn the fugitive daughter.

After I had deposited my letter to you, written down to the last hour, as I may say, I returned to the ivy summer-house; first taking back my letter from the loose bricks: and there I endeavoured, as coolly as my situation would permit, to recollect and lay together several incidents that had passed between my aunt and me; and, comparing them with some of the contents of my cousin Dolly's letter, I began to hope, that I needed not to be so very apprehensive as I have been of next Wednesday. And thus I argued with myself.

'Wednesday cannot possibly be the day they intend, although to intimidate me they may wish me to think it is: for the settlements are unsigned: nor have they been offered me to sign. I can choose whether I will or will not put my hand to them; hard as it will be to refuse if my father and mother propose, if I made compulsion necessary, to go to my uncle's themselves in order to be out of the way of my appeals? Whereas they intend to be present on Wednesday. And, however affecting to me the thought of meeting them and all my friends in full assembly is, perhaps it is the very thing I ought to wish for: since my brother and sister had such an opinion of my interest in them, that they got me excluded from their presence, as a measure which they thought previously necessary to carry on their designs.

'Nor have I reason to doubt, but that (as I had before argued with myself) I shall be able to bring over some of my relations to my party; and, being brought face to face with my brother, that I shall expose his malevolence, and of consequence weaken his power.

'Then supposing the very worst, challenging the minister as I shall challenge him, he will not presume to proceed: nor surely will Mr. Solmes dare to accept my refusing and struggling hand. And finally, if nothing else will do, nor procure me delay, I can plead scruples of conscience, and even pretend prior obligation; for, my dear, I have give Mr. Lovelace room to hope (as you will see in one of my letters in your hands) that I will be no other man's while he is single, and gives me not wilful and premeditated cause of offence against him; and this in order to rein-in his resentment on the declared

animosity of my brother and uncles to him. And as I shall appeal, or refer my scruples on this head, to the good Dr. Lewen, it is impossible but that my mother and aunt (if nobody else) must be affected with this plea.'

Revolving cursorily these things, I congratulated myself, that I had resolved against going away with Mr. Lovelace.

I told you, my dear, that I would not spare myself: and I enumerate these particulars as so many arguments to condemn the actions I have been so unhappily betrayed into. An argument that concludes against me with the greater force, as I must acknowledge, that I was apprehensive, that what my cousin Dolly mentions as from Betty, and from my sister who told her, that she should tell me, in order to make me desperate, and perhaps to push me upon some such step as I have been driven to take, as the most effectual means to ruin me with my father and uncles.

God forgive me, if I judge too harshly of their views!—But if I do not, it follows, that they laid a wicked snare for me; and that I have been caught in it.—And now they triumph, if they can triumph, in the ruin of a sister, who never wished or intended to hurt them!

As the above kind of reasoning had lessened my apprehensions as to the Wednesday, it added to those I had of meeting Mr. Lovelace—now, as it seemed, not only the nearest, but the heaviest evil; principally indeed because nearest; for little did I dream (foolish creature that I was, and every way beset!) of the event proving what it has proved. I expected a contention with him, 'tis true, as he had not my letter: but I thought it would be very strange, as I mentioned in one of my former,* if I, who had so steadily held out against characters so venerable, against authorities so sacred, as I may say, when I thought them unreasonably exerted, should not find myself more equal to such a trial as this; especially as I had so much reason to be displeased with him for not having taken away my letter.

On what a point of time may one's worldly happiness depend! Had I but two hours more to consider of the matter, and to attend to and improve upon these new lights, as I may call them—but even then, perhaps, I might have given him a meeting.—Fool that I was! what had I to do to give him hope that I would personally acquaint him with the reason for my change of mind, if I did change it?

O my dear! an obliging temper is a very dangerous temper!—By endeavouring to gratify others, it is evermore disobliging itself!

When the bell rang to call the servants to dinner, Betty came to me and asked, if I had any commands before she went to hers; repeating her hint, that she should be employed; adding, that she believed it was expected that I should not come up till she came down, or till I saw my aunt or Miss Hervey.

I asked her some questions about the cascade, which had been out of order, and lately mended; and expressed a curiosity to see how it played, in order to induce her [how cunning to cheat myself, as it proved!] to go thither, if she found me not where she left me; it being a part of the garden most distant from the ivy summer-house.

She could hardly have got into the house when I heard the first signal—O how my heart fluttered!—but no time was to be lost. I stept to the garden-door; and seeing a clear coast, unbolted the already-unlocked door—and there was he, all impatience, waiting for me.

A panic next to fainting seized me when I saw him. My heart seemed convulsed; and I trembled so, that I should hardly have kept my feet, had he not supported me.

Fear nothing, dearest creature, said he—let us hasten away—the chariot is at hand—and, by this sweet condescension, you have obliged me beyond expression or return.

Recovering my spirits a little, as he kept drawing me after him, O Mr. Lovelace, said I, I cannot go with you—indeed I cannot—I wrote you word so—let go my hand, and you shall see my letter. It is lain there from yesterday morning, till within this half-hour. I bid you watch to the last for a letter from me, lest I should be obliged to revoke the appointment; and, had you followed the direction, you would have found it.

I have been watched, my dearest life, said he, half out of breath—I have been watched in every step I took: and my trusty servant has been watched too, ever since Saturday; and dared not to come near your wall. And here we shall be discovered in a moment.—Speed away, my charmer—this is the moment of your deliverance—if you neglect this opportunity, you can never have such another.

What is it you mean, Sir?—Let go my hand: for I tell you [struggling vehemently] that I will sooner die than go with you.

Good God! said he, with a look of wildness and surprise, what is it I hear?—But [still drawing me after him, as he retreated farther from the door] it is no time to argue—by all that's good you must go—surely you cannot doubt my honour, nor give me cause to question your own.

As you value me, Mr. Lovelace, urge me no farther. I come fixed and resolved. Let me give you the letter I have written. My further reasons shall follow; and they will convince you that I ought not to go.

Nothing, Madam, can convince me—by all that's sacred, I will not leave you. To leave you now, would be to lose you for ever—

Am I to be thus compelled? interrupted I, with equal indignation and vehemence.—Let go my hands—I am resolved not to go with you—and I will convince you that I ought not.

All my friends expect you, Madam—all your own are determined against you—Wednesday next is the day, the important, perhaps the fatal day! Would you stay to be Solmes's wife?—Can this be your determination at last?

No, never, never will I be that man's—But I will not go with you! [draw me not thus—How dare you, Sir? I would not have seen you, but to tell you so]. I had not met you, but for fear you would have been guilty of some rashness—and, once more, I will not go—What mean you?—striving with all my force to get from him.

What can have possessed my angel, said he [quitting my hands, and with a gentler voice] that after so much ill-usage from your relations; vows so solemn on my part; an affection so ardent; you stab me with a refusal to stand by your own appointment?

We have no time to talk, Mr. Lovelace. I will give you my reasons at a better opportunity. I cannot go with you now—and once more urge me no farther—surely, I am not to be compelled by every body!

I see how it is, said he, with a dejected but passionate air—What a severe fate is mine!—At length your spirit is subdued!—Your brother and sister have prevailed; and I must give up all my hopes to a wretch so truly despicable—

Once more I tell you, interrupted I, I never will be his—all may end on Wednesday differently from what you expect—

And it may not!—And then, good heavens!

It is to be their last effort, as I have reason to believe—

And I have reason to believe so too—since if you stay, you will inevitably be Solmes's wife.

Not so, interrupted I—I have obliged them in one point. They will be in good-humour with me. I shall gain time at least. I am sure I shall. I have several ways to gain time.

And what, Madam, will gaining time do? It is plain you have not a hope beyond that—it is plain you have not, by putting all upon that precarious issue. O my dearest, dearest life, let me beseech you not to run a risque of this consequence. I can convince you that it will be more than a risque if you go back, that you will on Wednesday next be Solmes's wife.—Prevent, therefore, now that it is in your power to prevent, the fatal mischief that will follow such a dreadful certainty.

While I have any room for hope, it concerns your honour, Mr. Lovelace, as well as mine, (if you have the value for me you pretend, and wish me to believe you,) that my conduct in this great point should justify my prudence.

Your prudence, Madam! When has that been questionable? Yet what stead has either your prudence or your duty stood you in, with people so strangely determined?

And then he pathetically enumerated the different instances of the harsh treatment I had met with; imputing all to the malice and caprice of a brother, who set every body against him: and insisting, that I had no other way to bring about a reconciliation with my father and uncles, than by putting myself out of the power of my brother's inveterate malice.

Your brother's whole reliance, proceeded he, has been upon your easiness to bear his insults. Your whole family will seek to you, when you have freed yourself from this disgraceful oppression. When they know you are with those who can and will right you, they will give up to you your own estate. Why then, putting his arms around me, and again drawing me with a gentle force after him, do you hesitate a moment?—Now is the time—Fly with me, then, I beseech you, my dearest creature! Trust your persecuted adorer. Have we not suffered in the same cause? If any imputations are cast upon you, give me the honour (as I shall be found to deserve it) to call you mine; and, when you are so, shall I not be able to protect both your person and character?

Urge me no more, Mr. Lovelace, I conjure you. You yourself have given me a hint, which I will speak plainer to, than prudence, perhaps, on any other occasion, would allow. I am convinced, that Wednesday next (if I had time I would give you my reasons) is not intended to be the day we had both so much dreaded: and if after that day shall be over, I find my friends determined in Mr. Solmes's favour, I will then contrive some way to meet you with Miss Howe, who is not your enemy: and when the solemnity has passed, I shall think that step a duty, which till then will be criminal to take: since now my father's authority is unimpeached by any greater.

Dearest Madam—

Nay, Mr. Lovelace, if you now dispute—if, after this more favourable declaration, than I had the thought of making, you are not satisfied, I shall know what to think both of your gratitude and generosity.

The case, Madam, admits not of this alternative. I am all gratitude upon it. I cannot express how much I should be delighted with the charming hope you have given me, were you not next Wednesday, if you stay, to be another man's. Think, dearest creature! what an heightening of my anguish the distant hope you bid me look up to is, taken in this light!

Depend, depend upon it, I will die sooner than be Mr. Solmes's. If you would have me rely upon your honour, why should you doubt of mine?

I doubt not your honour, Madam; your power is all I doubt. You never, never can have such another opportunity.—Dearest creature, permit me—and he was again drawing me after him.

Whither, Sir, do you draw me?—Leave me this moment—Do you seek to keep me till my return shall grow dangerous or impracticable? This moment let me go, if you would have me think tolerably of you.

My happiness, Madam, both here and hereafter, and the safety of all your implacable family, depend upon this moment.

To Providence, Mr. Lovelace, and to the law, will I leave the safety of my friends. You shall not threaten me into a rashness that my heart condemns!—Shall I, to promote your happiness, as you call it, depend upon future peace of mind?

You trifle with me, my dear life, just as our better prospects begin to open. The way is clear; just now it is clear; but you may be prevented in a moment. What is it you doubt?—May I perish eternally, if your will shall not be a law to me in every thing! All my relations expect you.—Next Wednesday!—Dearest creature! think of next Wednesday!—And to what is it I urge you, but to take a step that sooner than any other will reconcile you to all whom you have most reason to value in your family?

Let my judge for myself, Sir. Do not you, who blame my friends for endeavouring to compel me, yourself seek to compel. I won't bear it. Your earnestness gives me greater apprehensions, and greater reluctance. Let me go back, then—let me, before it is too late, go back, that it may not be worse for both—What mean you by this forcible treatment? Is it thus that I am to judge of the entire submission to my will which you have so often vowed?—Unhand me this moment, or I will cry out for help.

I will obey you, my dearest creature!—And quitted my hand with a look full of tender despondency, that, knowing the violence of his temper, half-concerned me for him. Yet I was hastening from him, when, with a solemn air, looking upon his sword, but catching, as it were, his hand from it, he folded both his arms, as if a sudden thought had recovered him from an intended rashness.

Stay, one moment—but one moment stay, O best beloved of my soul!—Your retreat is secure, if you will go: the key lies at the door.—But, O Madam, next Wednesday, and you are Mr. Solmes's!—Fly me not so eagerly—hear me but a few words.

When near the garden-door, I stopped; and was the more satisfied, as I saw the key there, by which I could let myself in again at pleasure. But, being uneasy lest I should be missed, I told him, I could stay no longer. I had already staid too long. I would write to him all my reasons. And depend upon it, Mr. Lovelace, said I [just upon the point of stooping for the key, in order to return] I will die, rather than have that man. You know what I have promised, if I find myself in danger.

One word, Madam, however; one word more [approaching me, his arms still folded, as if, I thought, he would not be tempted to mischief]. Remember only, that I come at your appointment, to redeem you, at the hazard of my life, from your gaolers and persecutors, with a resolution, God is my witness, or may he for ever blast me! [that was his shocking imprecation] to be a father, uncle, brother, and, as I humbly hoped, in your own good time, a husband to you, all in one. But since I find you are so ready to cry out for help against me, which must bring down upon me the vengeance of all your family, I am contented to run all risques. I will not ask you to retreat with me; I will attend you into the garden, and into the house, if I am not intercepted.

Nay, be not surprised, Madam. The help you would have called for, I will attend you to; for I will face them all: but not as a revenger, if they provoke me not too much. You shall see what I can further bear for your sake—and let us both see, if expostulation, and the behaviour of a gentleman to them, will not procure me the treatment due to a gentleman from them.

Had he offered to draw his sword upon himself, I was prepared to have despised him for supposing me such a poor novice, as to be intimidated by an artifice so common. But this resolution, uttered with so serious an air, of accompanying me in to my friends, made me gasp with terror.

What mean you, Mr. Lovelace? said I: I beseech you leave me—leave me, Sir, I beseech you.

Excuse me, Madam! I beg you to excuse me. I have long enough skulked like a thief about these lonely walls—long, too long, have I borne the insults of your brother, and other of your relations. Absence but heightens malice. I am desperate. I have but this one chance for it; for is not the day after to-morrow Wednesday? I have encouraged virulence by my tameness.—Yet tame I will still be. You shall see, Madam, what I will bear for your sake. My sword shall be put sheathed into your hands [and he offered it to me in the scabbard].—My heart, if you please, clapping one hand upon his breast, shall afford a sheath for your brother's sword. Life is nothing, if I lose you—be pleased, Madam, to shew me the way into the garden [moving toward the door]. I will attend you, though to my fate!—But too happy, be it what it will, if I receive it

in your presence. Lead on, dear creature! [putting his sword into his belt]—You shall see what I can bear for you. And he stooped and took up the key; and offered it to the lock; but dropped it again, without opening the door, upon my earnest expostulations.

What can you mean, Mr. Lovelace?—said I—Would you thus expose yourself? Would you thus expose me?—Is this your generosity? Is every body to take advantage thus of the weakness of my temper?

And I wept. I could not help it.

He threw himself upon his knees at my feet—Who can bear, said he, [with an ardour that could not be feigned, his own eyes glistening,] who can bear to behold such sweet emotion?—O charmer of my heart, [and, respectfully still kneeling, he took my hand with both his, pressing it to his lips,] command me with you, command me from you; in every way I am implicit to obedience—but I appeal to all you know of your relations' cruelty to you, their determined malice against me, and as determined favour to the man you tell me you hate, (and, O Madam, if you did not hate him, I should hardly think there would be a merit in your approbation, place it where you would)—I appeal to every thing you know, to all you have suffered, whether you have not reason to be apprehensive of that Wednesday, which is my terror!—whether you can possibly have another opportunity—the chariot ready: my friends with impatience expecting the result of your own appointment: a man whose will shall be entirely your will, imploring you, thus, on his knees, imploring you—to be your own mistress; that is all: nor will I ask for your favour, but as upon full proof I shall appear to deserve it. Fortune, alliance, unobjectionable!—O my beloved creature! pressing my hand once more to his lips, let not such an opportunity slip. You never, never will have such another.

I bid him rise. He arose; and I told him, that were I not thus unaccountably hurried by his impatience, I doubted not to convince him, that both he and I had looked upon next Wednesday with greater apprehension than was necessary. I was proceeding to give him my reasons; but he broke in upon me—

Had I, Madam, but the shadow of a probability to hope what you hope, I would be all obedience and resignation. But the license is actually got: the parson is provided: the pedant Brand is the man. O my dearest creature, do these preparations mean only a trial?

You know not, Sir, were the worst to be intended, and weak as you think me, what a spirit I have: you know not what I can do, and how I can resist when I think myself meanly or unreasonably dealt with: nor do you know what I have already suffered, what I have already borne, knowing to whose unbrotherly instigations all is to be ascribed—

I may expect all things, Madam, interrupted he, from the nobleness of your mind. But your spirits may fail you. What may not be apprehended from the invincible temper of a father so positive, to a daughter so dutiful?—Fainting will not save you: they will not, perhaps, be sorry for such an effect of their barbarity. What will signify expostulations against a ceremony performed? Must not all, the dreadful all follow, that is torture to my heart but to think of? Nobody to appeal to, of what avail will your resistance be against the consequences of a rite witnessed to by the imposers of it, and those your nearest relations?

I was sure, I said, of procuring a delay at least. Many ways I had to procure a delay. Nothing could be so fatal to us both, as for me now to be found with him. My apprehensions on this score, I told him, grew too strong for my heart. I should think very hardly of him, if he sought to detain me longer. But his acquiescence should engage my gratitude.

And then stooping to take up the key to let myself into the garden, he started, and looked as if he had heard somebody near the door, on the inside; clapping his hand on his sword.

This frightened me so, that I thought I should have sunk down at his feet. But he instantly re-assured me: He thought, he said, he had heard a rustling against the door: but had it been so, the noise would have been stronger. It was only the effect of his apprehension for me.

And then taking up the key, he presented it to me.—If you will go, Madam—Yet, I cannot, cannot leave you!—I must enter the garden with you—forgive me, but I must enter the garden with you.

And will you, will you thus ungenerously, Mr. Lovelace, take advantage of my fears? of my wishes to prevent mischief? I, vain fool, to be concerned for every one; nobody for me!

Dearest creature! interrupted he, holding my hand, as I tremblingly offered to put the key to the lock—let me, if you will go, open the door. But once more, consider, could you possibly obtain that delay which seems to be your only dependence, whether you may not be closer confined? I know they have already had that in consideration. Will you not, in this case, be prevented from corresponding either with Miss Howe, or with me?—Who then shall assist you in your escape, if escape you would?—From your chamber-window only permitted to view the garden you must not enter into, how will you wish for the opportunity you now have, if your hatred to Solmes continue!—But alas! that cannot continue. If you go back, it must be from the impulses of a yielding (which you'll call, a dutiful) heart, tired and teased out of your own will.

I have no patience, Sir, to be thus constrained. Must I never be at liberty to follow my own judgment? Be the consequence what it may, I will not be thus constrained.

And then, freeing my hand, I again offered the key to the door.

Down the ready kneeler dropt between me and that: And can you, can you, Madam, once more on my knees let me ask you, look with an indifferent eye upon the evils that may follow? Provoked as I have been, and triumphed over as I shall be, if your brother succeeds, my own heart shudders, at times, at the thoughts of what must happen: And can yours be unconcerned? Let me beseech you, dearest creature, to consider all these things; and lose not this only opportunity. My intelligence—

Never, Mr. Lovelace, interrupted I, give so much credit to the words of a traitor. Your base intelligencer is but a servant. He may pretend to know more than he has grounds for, in order to earn the wages of corruption. You know not what contrivances I can find out.

I was once more offering the key to the lock, when, starting from his knees, with a voice of affrightment, loudly whispering, and as if out of breath, they are at the door, my beloved creature! and taking the key from me, he fluttered with it, as if he would double lock it. And instantly a voice from within cried out, bursting against the door, as if to break it open, the person repeating his violent pushes, Are you there?—come up this moment!—this moment!—here they are—here they are both together!—your pistol this moment!—your gun!—Then another push, and another. He at the same moment drew his sword, and clapping it naked under his arm, took both my trembling hands in his; and drawing me swiftly after him, Fly, fly, my charmer; this moment is all you have for it, said he.—Your brother!—your uncles!—or this Solmes!—they will instantly burst the door—fly, my dearest life, if you would not be more cruelly used than ever—if you would not see two or three murders committed at your feet, fly, fly, I beseech you.

O Lord!—help, help, cried the fool, all in amaze and confusion, frightened beyond the power of controuling.

Now behind me, now before me, now on this side, now on that, turned I my affrighted face, in the same moment; expecting a furious brother here, armed servants there, an enraged sister screaming, and a father armed with terror in his countenance more dreadful than even the drawn sword which I saw, or those I apprehended. I ran as fast as he; yet knew not that I ran; my fears adding wings to my feet, at the same time that they took all power of thinking from me—my fears, which probably would not have suffered me to know what course to take, had I not had him to urge and draw me

after him: especially as I beheld a man, who must have come out of the door, keeping us in his eye, running now towards us; then back to the garden; beckoning and calling to others, whom I supposed he saw, although the turning of the wall hindered me from seeing them; and whom I imagined to be my brother, my father, and their servants.

Thus terrified, I was got out of sight of the door in a very few minutes: and then, although quite breathless between running and apprehension, he put my arm under his, his drawn sword in the other hand, and hurried me on still faster: my voice, however, contradicting my action; crying, no, no, no, all the while; straining my neck to look back, as long as the walls of the garden and park were within sight, and till he brought me to the chariot: where, attending, were two armed servants of his own, and two of Lord M.'s on horseback.

Here I must suspend my relation for a while: for now I am come to this sad period of it, my indiscretion stares me in the face; and my shame and my grief give me a compunction that is more poignant methinks than if I had a dagger in my heart. To have it to reflect, that I should so inconsiderately give in to an interview, which, had I known either myself or him, or in the least considered the circumstances of the case, I might have supposed would put me into the power of his resolution, and out of that of my own reason.

For, might I not have believed, that he, who thought he had cause to apprehend that he was on the point of losing a person who had cost him so much pains and trouble, would not hinder her, if possible, from returning? That he, who knew I had promised to give him up for ever, if insisted as a condition of reconciliation, would not endeavour to put it out of my power to do so? In short, that he, who had artfully forborne to send for my letter, (for he could not be watched, my dear,) lest he should find in it a countermand to my appointment, (as I myself could apprehend, although I profited by the apprehension,) would want a device to keep me with him till the danger of having our meeting discovered might throw me absolutely into his power, to avoid my own worse usage, and the mischiefs which might have ensued (perhaps in my very sight) had my friends and he met?

But if it shall come out, that the person within the garden was his corrupted implement, employed to frighten me away with him, do you think, my dear, that I shall not have reason to hate him and myself still more? I hope his heart cannot be so deep and so vile a one: I hope it cannot! But how came it to pass, that one man could get out at the garden-door, and no more? how, that that man kept aloof, as it were, and pursued us not; nor ran back to alarm the house? my fright, and my distance, would not let me be certain; but really this man, as I now recollect, had the air of that vile Joseph Leman.

O why, why, my dear friends!—But wherefore blame I them, when I had argued myself into a hope, not improbable, that even the dreadful trial I was to undergo so soon might turn out better than if I had been directly carried away from the presence of my once indulgent parents, who might possibly intend that trial to be the last I should have had?

Would to Heaven, that I had stood it, however! then if I had afterwards done, what now I have been prevailed upon, or perhaps foolishly frightened to do, I should not have been stung so much by inward reproach as now I am: and this would have been a great evil avoided.

You know, my dear, that your Clarissa's mind was ever above justifying her own failings by those of others. God forgive those of my friends who have acted cruelly by me! But their faults are their own, and not excuses for mine. And mine began early: for I ought not to have corresponded with him.

O the vile encroacher! how my indignation, at times, rises at him! thus to lead a young creature (too much indeed relying upon her own strength) from evil to evil!—This last evil, although the remote, yet sure consequence of my first—my prohibited correspondence! by a father early prohibited.

How much more properly had I acted, with regard to that correspondence, had I, once for all, when he was forbidden to visit me, and I to receive his visits, pleaded the authority by which I ought to have been bound, and denied to write to him!—But I thought I could proceed, or stop, as I pleased. I supposed it concerned me, more than any other, to be the arbitress of the quarrels of unruly spirits.—And now I find my presumption punished—punished, as other sins frequently are, by itself!

As to this last rashness; now, that it is too late, I plainly see how I ought to have conducted myself. As he knew I had but one way of transmitting to him the knowledge of what befel me; as he knew that my fate was upon a crisis with my friends; and that I had in my letter to him reserved the liberty of revocation; I should not have been solicitous whether he had got my letter or not: when he had come, and found I did not answer to his signal, he would presently have resorted to the loose bricks, and there been satisfied, by the date of my letter, that it was his own fault that he had it not before. But, governed by the same pragmatistical motives which induced me to correspond with him at first, I was again afraid, truly, with my foolish and busy prescience; and the disappointment would have thrown him into the way of receiving fresh insults from the same persons; which might have made him guilty of some violence to them. And so to save him an apprehended rashness, I rushed into a real one myself. And what vexes me more is, that it is plain to me now, by all his behaviour, that he had as great a confidence in my weakness, as I had in my own strength. And so, in a point entirely relative to my honour, he has triumphed; for he has not been mistaken in me, while I have in myself!

Tell me, my dear Miss Howe, tell me truly, if your unbiassed heart does not despise me?—It must! for your mind and mine were ever one; and I despise myself!—And well I may: For could the giddiest and most inconsiderate girl in England have done worse than I shall appear to have done in the eye of the world? Since my crime will be known without the provocations, and without the artifices of the betrayer too; while it will be a high aggravation, that better things were expected from me than from many others.

You charge me to marry the first opportunity—Ah! my dear! another of the blessed effects of my folly—That's as much in my power now as—as I am myself!—And can I besides give a sanction immediately to his deluding arts?—Can I avoid being angry with him for tricking me thus, as I may say, (and as I have called it to him,) out of myself?—For compelling me to take a step so contrary to all my resolutions and assurances given to you; a step so dreadfully inconvenient to myself; so disgraceful and so grievous (as it must be) to my dear mother, were I to be less regardful of any other of my family or friends?—You don't know, nor can you imagine, my dear, how I am mortified!—How much I am sunk in my own opinion! I, that was proposed for an example, truly, to others!—O that I were again in my father's house, stealing down with a letter to you; my heart beating with expectation of finding one from you!

This is the Wednesday morning I dreaded so much, that I once thought of it as the day of my doom: but of the Monday, it is plain, I ought to have been most apprehensive. Had I staid, and had the worst I dreaded happened, my friends would then have been answerable for the consequences, if any bad ones had followed:—but now, I have only this consolation left me (a very poor one, you'll say!) that I have cleared them of blame, and taken it all upon myself!

You will not wonder to see this narrative so dismally scrawled. It is owing to different pens and ink, all bad, and written in snatches of time; my hand trembling too with fatigue and grief.

I will not add to the length of it, by the particulars of his behaviour to me, and of our conversation at St. Alban's, and since; because those will come in course in the continuation of my story; which, no doubt, you will expect from me.

Only thus much will I say, that he is extremely respectful (even obsequiously so) at present, though I am so much dissatisfied with him and myself that he has hitherto had no great cause to praise my complaisance to him. Indeed, I can hardly, at times, bear the seducer in my sight.

The lodgings I am in are inconvenient. I shall not stay in them: so it signifies nothing to tell you how to direct to me

hither. And where my next may be, as yet I know not.

He knows that I am writing to you; and has offered to send my letter, when finished, by a servant of his. But I thought I could not be too cautious, as I am now situated, in having a letter of this importance conveyed to you. Who knows what such a man may do? So very wicked a contriver! The contrivance, if a contrivance, to get me away, so insolently mean!—But I hope it is not a contrivance neither!—Yet, be that as it will, I must say, that the best of him, and of my prospects with him, are bad; and yet, having enrolled myself among the too-late repenters, who shall pity me?

Nevertheless, I will dare to hope for a continued interest in your affections [I shall be miserable indeed if I may not!] and to be remembered in your daily prayers. For neither time nor accident shall ever make me cease to be

Your faithful and affectionate CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER III

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOSEPH LEMAN SAT. APRIL 8.

HONEST JOSEPH,

At length your beloved young lady has consented to free herself from the cruel treatment she has so long borne. She is to meet me without the garden-door at about four o'clock on Monday afternoon. I told you she had promised to do so. She has confirmed her promise. Thank Heaven she has confirmed her promise!

I shall have a chariot-and-six ready in the by-road fronting the private path to Harlowe-paddock; and several of my friends and servants not far off, armed to protect her, if there be occasion: but every one charged to avoid mischief. That, you know, has always been my principal care.

All my fear is, that, when she comes to the point, the over-niceness of her principles will make her waver, and want to go back: although her honour is my honour, you know, and mine is her's. If she should, and should I be unable to prevail upon her, all your past services will avail nothing, and she will be lost to me for ever: the prey then of that cursed Solmes, whose vile stinginess will never permit him to do good to any of the servants of the family.

I have no doubt of your fidelity, honest Joseph; nor of your zeal to serve an injured gentleman, and an oppressed young lady. You see by the confidence I repose in you, that I have not; more particularly, on this very important occasion, in which your assistance may crown the work: for, if she waver, a little innocent contrivance will be necessary.

Be very mindful, therefore, of the following directions; take them into your heart. This will probably be your last trouble, until my beloved and I are joined in holy wedlock: and then we will be sure to take care of you. You know what I have promised. No man ever reproached me for breach of word.

These, then, honest Joseph, are they:

Contrive to be in the garden, in disguise, if possible, and unseen by your young lady. If you find the garden-door unbolted, you will know that she and I are together, although you should not see her go out at it. It will be locked, but my key shall be on the ground just without the door, that you may open it with your's, as it may be needful.

If you hear our voices parleying, keep at the door till I cry Hem, hem, twice: but be watchful for this signal; for I must not hem very loud, lest she should take it for a signal. Perhaps, in struggling to prevail upon the dear creature, I may have an opportunity to strike the door hard with my elbow, or heel, to confirm you—then you are to make a violent burst against the door, as if you would break it open, drawing backward and forward the bolt in a hurry: then, with another push, but with more noise than strength, lest the lock give way, cry out (as if you saw some of the family) Come up, come up, instantly!—Here they are! Here they are!—Hasten!—This instant! hasten! And mention swords, pistols, guns, with as terrible a voice as you can cry out with. Then shall I prevail upon her, no doubt, if loth before, to fly. If I cannot, I will enter the garden with her, and the house too, be the consequence what it will. But, so affrighted, these is no question but she will fly.

When you think us at a sufficient distance [and I shall raise my voice urging her swifter flight, that you may guess at that] then open the door with your key: but you must be sure to open it very cautiously, lest we should not be far enough off. I would not have her know you have a hand in this matter, out of my great regard to you.

When you have opened the door, take your key out of the lock, and put it in your pocket: then, stooping for mine, put it in the lock on the inside, that it may appear as if the door was opened by herself, with a key, which they will suppose to be of my procuring (it being new) and left open by us.

They should conclude she is gone off by her own consent, that they may not pursue us: that they may see no hopes of tempting her back again. In either case, mischief might happen, you know.

But you must take notice, that you are only to open the door with your key, in case none of the family come up to interrupt us, and before we are quite gone: for, if they do, you'll find by what follows, that you must not open the door at all. Let them, on breaking it open, or by getting over the wall, find my key on the ground, if they will.

If they do not come to interrupt us, and if you, by help of your key, come out, follow us at a distance; and, with uplifted hands, and wild impatient gestures, (running backward and forward, for fear you should come up too near us, and as if you saw somebody coming to your assistance,) cry out for help, help, and to hasten. Then shall we be soon at the chariot.

Tell the family that you saw me enter a chariot with her: a dozen, or more, men on horseback, attending us; all armed; some with blunderbusses, as you believe; and that we took quite the contrary way to that we should take.

You see, honest Joseph, how careful I am, as well as you, to avoid mischief.

Observe to keep at such a distance that she may not discover who you are. Take long strides, to alter your gait; and hold up your head, honest Joseph; and she'll not know it to be you. Men's airs and gaits are as various and peculiar as their faces. Pluck a stake out of one of the hedges: and tug at it, though it may come easy: this, if she turn back, will look terrible, and account for your not following us faster. Then, returning with it, shouldered, to brag to the family what you would have done, could you have overtaken us, rather than your young lady should be carried off by such a ——— And you may call me names, and curse me. And these airs will make you look valiant, and in earnest. You see, honest Joseph, I am always contriving to give you reputation. No man suffers by serving me.

But, if our parley should last longer than I wish; and if any of her friends miss her before I cry, Hem, hem, twice; then, in order to save yourself, (which is a very great point with me, I assure you,) make the same noise as above: but as I directed before, open not the door with your key. On the contrary, wish for a key with all your heart; but for fear any of them should by accident have a key about them, keep in readiness half a dozen little gravel-stones, no bigger than peas, and thrust two or three slyly into the key-hole; which will hinder their key from turning round. It is good, you know, Joseph, to provide against every accident in such an important case, as this. And let this be your cry, instead of the other,

if any of my enemies come in your sight, as you seem to be trying to burst the door open, Sir! Sir! or Madam! Madam! O Lord, hasten! O Lord, hasten! Mr. Lovelace! Mr. Lovelace!—And very loud—and that shall quicken me more than it shall those you call to.—If it be Betty, and only Betty, I shall think worse of your art of making love* than of your fidelity, if you can't find a way to amuse her, and put her upon a false scent.

* See Vol. II. Letter XXIX.

You must tell them that your young lady seemed to run as fast off with me as I with her. This will also confirm to them that all pursuit is in vain. An end will hereby be put to Solmes's hopes: and her friends, after a while, will be more studious to be reconciled to her than to get her back. So you will be a happy instrument of great good to all round. And this will one day be acknowledged by both families. You will then be every one's favourite; and every good servant, for the future, will be proud to be likened to honest Joseph Leman.

If she should guess at you, or find you out, I have it already in my head to write a letter for you to copy,* which, occasionally produced, will set you right with her.

* See Vol. III. Letter XXI.

This one time be diligent, be careful: this will be the crown of all: and once more, depend, for a recompense, upon the honour of

Your assured friend, R. LOVELACE.

You need not be so much afraid of going too far with Betty. If you should make a match with her, she is a very likely creature, though a vixen, as you say. I have an admirable receipt to cure a termagant wife.—Never fear, Joseph, but thou shalt be master of thine house. If she be very troublesome, I can teach thee how to break her heart in a twelvemonth; and honestly too;—or the precept would not be mine.

I enclose a new earnest of my future favour.

LETTER IV

TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQUIER, HIS HONNER SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 9.

HONNERED SIR,

I must confesse I am infinitely obliged to your Honner's bounty. But this last command!—It seems so intricket! Lord be merciful to me, how have I been led from littel steps to grate steps!—And if I should be found out!—But your Honner says you will take me into your Honner's sarvise, and protect me, if as I should at any time be found out; and raise my wages besides; or set me upp in a good inne; which is my ambition. And you will be honnerable and kind to my dearest young lady, God love her.—But who can be unkind to she?

I will do my best I am able, since your Honner will be apt to lose her, as your Honner says, if I do not; and a man so stingie will be apt to gain her. But mayhap my dearest young lady will not make all this trubble needful. If she has promised, she will stand to it, I dare to say.

I love your Honner for contriveing to save mischiff so well. I thought till I know'd your Honner, that you was verry mischevous, and plesse your Honner: but find it to be clene contrary. Your Honner, it is plane, means mighty well by every body, as far as I see. As I am sure I do myself; for I am, althoff a very plane man, and all that, a very honnest one, I thank my God. And have good principels, and have kept my young lady's pressepts always in mind: for she goes no where, but saves a soul or two, more or less.

So, commending myself to your Honner's further favour, not forgetting the inne, when your Honner shall so please, and good one offers; for plases are no inherritanses now-a-days. And, I hope, your Honner will not think me a dishonest man for sarving your Honner agenst my duty, as it may look; but only as my consence clears me.

Be pleased, howsoever, if it like your Honner, not to call me honest Joseph, so often. For, althoff I think myself verry honnest, and all that, yet I am touched a littel, for fear I should not do the quite right thing: and too besides, your Honner has such a fesseshious way with you, as that I hardly know whether you are in jest or earnest, when your Honner calls me honnest so often.

I am a very plane man, and seldom have writ to such honourable gentlemen; so you will be good enuff to pass by every thing, as I have often said, and need not now say over again.

As to Mrs. Betty; I tho'te, indeed, she looked above me. But she comes on vere well, natheless. I could like her better, iff she was better to my young lady. But she has too much wit for so plane a man. Natheless, if she was to angre me, althoff it is a shame to bete a woman, yet I colde make shift to throe my hat at her, or so, your Honner.

But that same reseit, iff your Honner so please, to cure a shrewish wife. It would more encurrege to wed, iff so be one know'd it before-hand, as one may say. So likewise, if one knoed one could honnestly, as your Honner says, and as of the handy-work of God, in one twelvemonth—

But, I shall grow impertinent to such a grate man.—And hereafter may do for that, as she turnes out: for one mought be loth to part with her, mayhap, so verry soon too; espessially if she was to make the notable landlady your Honner put into my head.

Butt wonce moer, begging your Honner's parden, and promising all dilligence and exsackness, I reste,

Your Honner's dewtiful sarvant to command, JOSEPH LEMAN.

LETTER V

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. ST. ALBAN'S, MONDAY NIGHT.

I snatch a few moments while my beloved is retired, [as I hope, to rest,] to perform my promise. No pursuit—nor have I

apprehensions of any; though I must make my charmer dread that there will be one.

And now, let me tell thee, that never was joy so complete as mine!—But let me inquire, is not the angel flown away?

O no! She is in the next apartment!—Securely mine!—Mine for ever!

*O ecstasy!—My heart will burst my breast,
To leap into her bosom!*

I knew that the whole stupid family were in a combination to do my business for me. I told thee that they were all working for me, like so many ground moles; and still more blind than the moles are said to be, unknowing that they did so. I myself, the director of their principal motions; which falling in with the malice of their little hearts, they took to be all their own.

But did I say my joy was perfect?—O no!—It receives some abatement from my disgusted bride. For how can I endure to think that I owe more to her relations' precautions than to her favour for me?—Or even, as far as I know, to her preference of me to another man?

But let me not indulge this thought. Were I to do so, it might cost my charmer dear. Let me rejoice, that she has passed the rubicon: that she cannot return: that, as I have ordered it, the flight will appear to the implacables to be altogether with her own consent: and that if I doubt her love, I can put her to trials as mortifying to her niceness, as glorious to my pride.—For, let me tell thee, dearly as I love her, if I thought there was but the shadow of a doubt in her mind whether she preferred me to any man living, I would shew her no mercy.

TUESDAY, DAY-DAWN.

But, on the wings of love, I fly to my charmer, who perhaps by this time is rising to encourage the tardy dawn. I have not slept a wink of the hour and half I lay down to invite sleep. It seems to me, that I am not so much body, as to require such a vulgar renovation.

But why, as in the chariot, as in the inn, at alighting, all heart-bursting grief, my dearest creature? SO persecuted as thou wert persecuted!—So much in danger of the most abhorred compulsion!—Yet grief so unsuspectedly sincere for an escape so critical!—Take care, take care, O beloved of my soul! for jealous is the heart in which love has erected a temple to thee.

Yet, it must be allowed, that such a sudden transition must affect her; must ice her over. When a little more used to her new situation; when her hurries are at an end; when she sees how religiously I shall observe all her INJUNCTIONS; she will undoubtedly have the gratitude to distinguish between the confinement she has escaped from, and the liberty she has reason to rejoice in.

She comes! She comes! And the sun is just rising to attend her! Adieu! Be half as happy as I am (for all diffidencies, like night-fogs before the sun, disperse at her approach) and, next myself, thou wilt be the happiest man in the world.

LETTER VI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12.

I will pursue my melancholy story.

Being thus hurried to the chariot, it would have been to no purpose to have refused entering into it, had he not in my fright lifted me in, as he did: and it instantly drove away a full gallop, and stopped not till it brought us to St. Alban's; which was just as the day shut in.

I thought I should have fainted several times by the way. With uplifted hands and eyes, God protect me! said I often to myself: Can it be I, that am here! My eyes running over, and my heart ready to burst with sighs as involuntarily as my flight.

How different, how inexpressibly different, the gay wretch; visibly triumphing (as I could not but construe his almost rapturous joy) in the success of his arts! But overflowing with complimentary flourishes, yet respectfully distant his address, all the way we flew; for that, rather than galloping, was the motion of the horses; which took, as I believe, a round-about way, to prevent being traced.

I have reason to think, there were other horsemen at his devotion; three or four different persons, above the rank of the servants, galloping by us now-and-then, on each side of the chariot: but he took no notice of them; and I had too much grief, mingled with indignation, notwithstanding all his blandishments, to ask any questions about them, or any thing else.

Think, my dear, what were my thoughts on alighting from the chariot; having no attendant of my own sex; no clothes but what I had on, and those little suited to such a journey as I had already taken, and was still to take: neither hood nor hat, nor any thing but a handkerchief round my head and shoulders: fatigued to death: my mind still more fatigued than my body: and in such a foam the horses, that every one in the inn we put up at guessed [they could not do otherwise] that I was a young giddy creature, who had run away from her friends. This it was easy to see, by their whispering and gaping: more of the people of the house also coming in by turns, than were necessary for the attendance.

The mistress of the house, whom he sent in to me, showed me another apartment; and, seeing me ready to faint, brought me hartshorn and water; and then, upon my desiring to be left alone for half an hour, retired: for I found my heart ready to burst, on revolving every thing in my thoughts: and the moment she was gone, fastening the door, I threw myself into an old great chair, and gave way to a violent flood of tears, which a little relieved me.

Mr. Lovelace, sooner than I wished, sent up the gentlewoman, who pressed me, in his name, to admit my brother, or to come down to him: for he had told her I was his sister; and that he had brought me, against my will, and without warning, from a friend's house, where I had been all the winter, in order to prevent my marrying against the consent of my friends; to whom he was now conducting me; and that, having given me no time for a travelling-dress, I was greatly offended at him.

So, my dear, your frank, your open-hearted friend, was forced to countenance this tale; which indeed suited me the better, because I was unable for some time to talk, speak, or look up; and so my dejection, and grief, and silence, might very well pass before the gentlewoman and her niece who attended me, as a fit of sullenness.

The room I was in being a bed-chamber, I chose to go down, at his repeated message, attended by the mistress of the house, to that in which he was. He approached me with great respect, yet not exceeding a brotherly politeness, where a brother is polite; and, calling me his dearest sister, asked after the state of my mind; and hoped I would forgive him; for never brother half so well loved a sister, as he me.

A wretch! how naturally did he fall into the character, although I was so much out of mine!

Unthinking creatures have some comfort in the shortness of their views; in their unapprehensiveness; and that they penetrate not beyond the present moment: in short that they are unthinking!—But, for a person of my thoughtful disposition, who has been accustomed to look forward, as well to the possible, as to the probable, what comfort can I have in my reflections?

But let me give you the particulars of our conversation a little before and after our supper-time, joining both in one.

When we were alone, he besought me (I cannot say but with all the tokens of a passionate and respectful tenderness) to be better reconciled to myself and to him: he repeated all the vows of honour and inviolable affection that he ever made me: he promised to be wholly governed by me in every future step. He asked me to give him leave to propose, whether I chose to set out next day to either of his aunts?

I was silent. I knew not what to say, nor what to do.

Whether I chose to have private lodgings procured for me in either of those ladies' neighbourhood, as were once my thoughts?

I was still silent.

Whether I chose to go to either of Lord M.'s seats; that of Berks, or that in the county we were in?

In lodgings, I said, any where, where he was not to be.

He had promised this, he owned; and he would religiously keep to his word, as soon as he found all danger of pursuit over; and that I was settled to my mind. But, if the place were indifferent to me, London was the safest, and the most private: and his relations should all visit me there, the moment I thought fit to admit them. His cousin Charlotte, particularly, should attend me, as my companion, if I would accept of her, as soon as she was able to go abroad. Mean time, would I go to Lady Betty Lawrance's (Lady Sarah was a melancholy woman)? I should be the most welcome guest she ever received.

I told him, I wished not to go (immediately, however, and in the frame I was in, and not likely to be out of) to any of his relations: that my reputation was concerned, to have him absent from me: that, if I were in some private lodging, the meaner the less to be suspected, (as it would be known, that I went away by his means; and he would be supposed to have provided me handsome accommodations,) it would be most suitable both to my mind and to my situation: that this might be best, I should think, in the country for me; in town for him. And no matter how soon he was known to be there.

If he might deliver his opinion, he said, it was, that since I declined going to any of his relations, London was the only place in the world to be private in. Every new comer in a country town or village excited a curiosity: A person of my figure [and many compliments he made me] would excite more. Even messages and letters, where none used to be brought, would occasion inquiry. He had not provided a lodging any where, supposing I would choose to go either to London, where accommodations of that sort might be fixed upon in an hour's time, or to Lady Betty's; or to Lord M.'s Herfordshire seat, where was the housekeeper, an excellent woman, Mrs. Greme, such another as my Norton.

To be sure, I said, if I were pursued, it would be in their first passion; and some one of his relations' houses would be the place they would expect to find me at—I knew not what to do.

My pleasure should determine him, he said, be it what it would. Only that I were safe, was all he was solicitous about. He had lodgings in town; but he did not offer to propose them. He knew, I would have more objections to go to them, than I could to go to Lord M.'s, or to Lady Betty's.

No doubt of it, I replied, with such an indignation in my manner, as made him run over with professions, that he was far from proposing them, or wishing for my acceptance of them. And again he repeated, that my honour and safety were all he was solicitous about; assuring me, that my will should be a law to him in every particular.

I was too peevish, and too much afflicted, and indeed too much incensed against him, to take well any thing he said.

I thought myself, I said, extremely unhappy. I knew not what to determine upon: my reputation now, no doubt, utterly ruined: destitute of clothes: unfit to be seen by any body: my very indigence, as I might call it, proclaiming my folly to every one who saw me; who would suppose that I had been taken at advantage, or had given an undue one; and had no power over either my will or my actions: that I could not but think I had been dealt artfully with: that he had seemed to have taken, what he might suppose, the just measure of my weakness, founded on my youth and inexperience: that I could not forgive myself for meeting him: that my heart bled for the distresses of my father and mother, on this occasion: that I would give the world, and all my hopes in it, to have been still in my father's house, whatever had been my usage: that, let him protest and vow what he would, I saw something low and selfish in his love, that he could study to put a young creature upon making such a sacrifice of her duty and conscience: when a person, actuated by a generous love, must seek to oblige the object of it, in every thing essential to her honour, and to her peace of mind.

He was very attentive to all I said, never offering to interrupt me once. His answer to every article, almost methodically, shewed his memory.

'What I had said, he told me, made him very grave; and he would answer accordingly.

'He was grieved at his heart, to find that he had so little share in my favour or confidence.

'As to my reputation, (he must be very sincere with me,) that could not suffer half so much by the step I so regretted to have taken, as by the confinement, and equally foolish and unjust treatment, I had met with from my relations: that every mouth was full of blame of them, of my brother and sister particularly; and of wonder at my patience: that he must repeat what he had written to me he believed more than once, That my friends themselves expected that I should take a proper opportunity to free myself from their persecutions; why else did they confine me? That my exalted character, as he called it, would still bear me out, with those who knew me; who knew my brother's and sister's motives; and who knew the wretch they were for compelling me to have.

'With regard to clothes; who, as matters were circumstanced, could expect that I should be able to bring away any others than those I had on at the time? For present use or wear, all the ladies of his family would take a pride to supply me: for future, the product of the best looms, not only in England, but throughout the world, were at my command.

'If I wanted money, as no doubt I must, he should be proud to supply me: Would to heaven, he might presume to hope, there were but one interest between us!

And then he would fain have had me to accept of a bank note of a hundred pounds; which, unawares to me, he put into my hand: but which, you may be sure, I refused with warmth.

'He was inexpressibly grieved and surprised, he said, to hear me say he had acted artfully by me. He came provided, according to my confirmed appointment, [a wretch to upbraid me thus!] 'to redeem me from my persecutors; and little expected a change of sentiment, and that he should have so much difficulty to prevail upon me, as he had met with: that perhaps I might think his offer to go into the garden with me, and to face my assembled relations, was a piece of art only: but that if I did, I wronged him: since to this hour, seeing my excessive uneasiness, he wished, with all his soul he had been permitted to accompany me in. It was always his maxim to brave a threatened danger. Threateners, where they have an opportunity to put in force their threats, were seldom to be feared. But had he been assured of a private stab, or of as many death's wounds as there were persons in my family, (made desperate as he should have been by my return,) he

would have attended me into the house.'

So, my dear, what I have to do, is to hold myself inexcusable for meeting such a determined and audacious spirit; that's all! I have hardly any question now, but that he would have contrived some wicked stratagem or other to have got me away, had I met him at a midnight hour, as once or twice I had thoughts to do; and that would have been more terrible still.

He concluded this part of his talk, with saying, 'That he doubted not but that, had he attended me in, he should have come off in every one's opinion well, that he should have had general leave to renew his visits.'

He went on—'He must be so bold as to tell me, that he should have paid a visit of this kind, (but indeed accompanied by several of his trusty friends,) had I not met him; and that very afternoon too; for he could not tamely let the dreadful Wednesday come, without making some effort to change their determinations.'

What, my dear, was to be done with such a man!

'That therefore for my sake, as well as for his own, he had reason to wish that a disease so desperate had been attempted to be overcome by as desperate a remedy. We all know, said he, that great ends are sometimes brought about by the very means by which they are endeavoured to be frustrated.'

My present situation, I am sure, thought I, affords a sad evidence of this truth!

I was silent all this time. My blame was indeed turned inward. Sometimes, too, I was half-frighted at his audaciousness: at others, had the less inclination to interrupt him, being excessively fatigued, and my spirits sunk to nothing, with a view even of the best prospects with such a man.

This gave his opportunity to proceed: and that he did; assuming a still more serious air.

'As to what further remained for him to say, in answer to what I had said, he hoped I would pardon him; but, upon his soul, he was concerned, infinitely concerned, he repeated, (his colour and his voice rising,) that it was necessary for him to observe, how much I chose rather to have run the risque of being Solmes's wife, than to have it in my power to reward a man who, I must forgive him, had been as much insulted on my account, as I had been on his—who had watched my commands, and (pardon me, Madam) ever changeable motion of your pen, all hours, in all weathers, and with a cheerfulness and ardour, that nothing but the most faithful and obsequious passion could inspire.'

I now, my dear, began to revive into a little more warmth of attention.—

'And all, Madam, for what?'—How I stared! for he stopt then a moment or two—'Only,' went he on, 'to prevail upon you to free yourself from ungenerous and base oppressions'—

Sir, Sir, indignantly said I—

'Hear me but out, dearest Madam!—My heart is full—I must speak what I have to say—To be told (for your words are yet in my ears, and at my heart!) that you would give the world, and all your hopes in it, to have been still in your cruel and gloomy father's house'—

Not a word, Sir, against my father!—I will not bear that—

'Whatever had been your usage:—and you have a credulity, Madam, against all probability, if you believe you should have avoided being Solmes's wife: That I have put you upon sacrificing your duty and conscience—yet, dearest creature! see you not the contradiction that your warmth of temper has surprised you into, when the reluctance you shewed to the last to leave your persecutors, has cleared your conscience from the least reproach of this sort?'—

O Sir! Sir! are you so critical then? Are you so light in your anger as to dwell upon words?—

Indeed, my dear, I have since thought that his anger was not owing to that sudden impetus, which cannot be easily bridled; but rather was a sort of manageable anger let loose to intimidate me.

'Forgive me, Madam—I have just done—Have I not, in your opinion, hazarded my life to redeem you from oppression? Yet is not my reward, after all, precarious?—For, Madam, have you not conditioned with me (and, hard as the condition is, most sacredly will I observe it) that all my hope must be remote? That you are determined to have it in your power to favour or reject me totally, as you please?'

See, my dear! in every respect my condition changed for the worse! Is it in my power to take your advice, if I should think it ever so right to take it?*

** Clarissa had been censured as behaving to Mr. Lovelace, in their first conversation at St. Alban's, and afterwards, with too much reserve, and even with haughtiness. Surely those, who have thought her to blame on this account, have not paid a due attention to the story. How early, as above, and in what immediately follows, does he remind her of the terms of distance which she had prescribed to him, before she was in his power, in hopes to leave the door open for a reconciliation with her friends, which her heart was set upon? And how artfully does he (unrequired) promise to observe the conditions in which she in her present circumstances and situation (in pursuance of Miss Howe's advice) would gladly have dispensed with?—To say nothing of the resentment she was under a necessity to shew, at the manner of his getting her away, in order to justify to him the sincerity of her refusal to go off with him. See, in her subsequent Letter to Miss Howe, No. IX., her own sense upon the subject.*

'And have you not furthermore declared,' proceeded he 'that you will engage to renounce me for ever, if your friends insist upon that cruel renunciation, as the terms of being reconciled to you?'

'But nevertheless, Madam, all the merit of having saved you from an odious compulsion, shall be mine. I glory in it, though I were to lose you for ever. As I see I am but too likely to do, from your present displeasure; and especially, if your friends insist upon the terms you are ready to comply with.

'That you are your own mistress, through my means, is, I repeat, my boast. As such, I humbly implore your favour, and that only upon the conditions I have yielded to hope for it. As I do now, thus humbly, [the proud wretch falling on one knee,] your forgiveness, for so long detaining your ear, and for all the plain dealing that my undesigning heart would not be denied to utter by my lips.'

O Sir, pray rise! Let the obliged kneel, if one of us must kneel! But, nevertheless, proceed not in this strain, I beseech you. You have had a great deal of trouble about me: but had you let me know in time, that you expected to be rewarded for it at the price of my duty, I should have spared you much of it.

Far be it from me, Sir, to depreciate merit so extraordinary. But let me say, that had it not been for the forbidden correspondence I was teased by you into; and which I had not continued (every letter, for many letters, intended to be the last) but because I thought you a sufferer from my friends; I had not been either confined or ill treated: nor would my brother's low-meant violence have had a foundation to work upon.

I am far from thinking my case would have been so very desperate as you imagine had I staid. My father loved me in his heart: he would not see me before; and I wanted only to see him, and to be heard; and a delay of his sentence was the least thing I expected from the trial I was to stand.

You are boasting of your merits, Sir: let merit be your boast; nothing else can attract me. If personal considerations had principal weight with me, either in Solmes's disfavour, or in your favour, I shall despise myself: if you value yourself upon them, in preference to the person of the poor Solmes, I shall despise you!

You may glory in your fancied merits in getting me away: but the cause of your glory, I tell you plainly, is my shame.

Make to yourself a title to my regard, which I can better approve of; or else you will not have so much merit with me, as you have with yourself.

But here, Sir, like the first pair, (I, at least, driven out of my paradise,) are we recriminating. No more shall you need to tell me of your sufferings, and your merits! your all hours, and all weathers! For I will bear them in memory as long as I live; and if it be impossible for me to reward them, be ever ready to own the obligation. All that I desire of you now is, to leave it to myself to seek for some private abode: to take the chariot with you to London, or elsewhere: and, if I have any further occasion for your assistance and protection, I will signify it to you, and be still further obliged to you.

You are warm, my dearest life!—But indeed there is no occasion for it. Had I any views unworthy of my faithful love for you, I should not have been so honest in my declarations.

Then he began again to vow the sincerity of his intentions—

But I took him up short: I am willing to believe you, Sir. It would be insupportable but to suppose there were a necessity for such solemn declarations. [At this he seemed to collect himself, as I may say, into a little more circumspection.] If I thought there were, I would not sit with you here, in a public inn, I assure you, although cheated hither, as far as I know, by methods (you must excuse me, Sir) which, but to suspect, will hardly let me have patience either with you or with myself—but no more of this, just now: Let me, I beseech you, good Sir, bowing [I was very angry!] let me only know whether you intend to leave me; or whether I have only escaped from one confinement to another?

Cheated hither, as far as I know, Madam! Let you know (and with that air, too, charming, though grievous to my heart!) if you have only escaped from one confinement to another—amazing! perfectly amazing! And can there be a necessity for me to answer this? You are absolutely your own mistress—it was very strange, if you were not. The moment you are in a place of safety, I will leave you. To one condition only, give me leave to beg your consent: it is this, that you will be pleased, now you are so entirely in your own power, to renew a promise voluntarily made before; voluntarily, or I would not now presume to request it; for although I would not be thought capable of growing upon concession, yet I cannot bear to think of losing the ground your goodness had given me room to hope I had gained; 'That, make up how you please with your relations, you will never marry any other man, while I am living and single, unless I should be so wicked as to give new cause for high displeasure.'

I hesitate not to confirm this promise, Sir, upon your own condition. In what manner do you expect to confirm it?

Only, Madam, by your word.

Then I never will.

He had the assurance (I was now in his power) to salute me as a sealing of my promise, as he called it. His motion was so sudden, that I was not aware of it. It would have looked affected to be very angry; yet I could not be pleased, considering this as a leading freedom, from a spirit so audacious and encroaching: and he might see, that I was not.

He passed all that by with an air peculiar to himself—Enough, enough, dearest Madam! And now let me beg of you but to conquer this dreadful uneasiness, which gives me to apprehend too much for my jealous love to bear; and it shall be my whole endeavour to deserve your favour, and to make you the happiest woman in the world; as I shall be the happiest of men.

I broke from him to write to you my preceding letter; but refused to send it by his servant, as I told you. The mistress of the house helped me to a messenger, who was to carry what you should give him to Lord M.'s seat in Hertfordshire, directed for Mrs. Greme, the housekeeper there. And early in the morning, for fear of pursuit, we were to set out that way: and there he proposed to change the chariot and six for a chaise and pair of his own, which he had at that seat, as it would be a less-noticed conveyance.

I looked over my little stock of money; and found it to be no more than seven guineas and some silver: the rest of my stock was but fifty guineas, and that five more than I thought it was, when my sister challenged me as to the sum I had by me:* and those I left in my escritoire, little intending to go away with him.

* See Vol. I. Letter XLIII.

Indeed my case abounds with a shocking number of indelicate circumstances. Among the rest, I was forced to account to him, who knew I could have no clothes but what I had on, how I came to have linen with me (for he could not but know I sent for it); lest he should imagine I had an early design to go away with him, and made that part of the preparation.

He most heartily wished, he said, for my mind's sake, that your mother would have afforded me her protection; and delivered himself upon this subject with equal freedom and concern.

There are, my dear Miss Howe, a multitude of punctilios and decorums, which a young creature must dispense with, who, in a situation like mine, makes a man the intimate attendant of her person. I could now, I think, give twenty reasons stronger than any I have heretofore mentioned, why women of the least delicacy should never think of incurring the danger and the disgrace of taking the step I have been drawn in to take, but with horror and aversion; and why they should look upon the man who should tempt them to it, as the vilest and most selfish of seducers.

Before five o'clock (Tuesday morning) the maidservant came up to tell me that my brother was ready, and that breakfast also waited for me in the parlour. I went down with a heart as heavy as my eyes, and received great acknowledgements and compliments from him on being so soon dressed, and ready (as he interpreted it) to continue on our journey.

He had the thought which I had not (for what had I to do with thinking, who had it not when I stood most in need of it?) to purchase for me a velvet hood, and a short cloke, trimmed with silver, without saying any thing to me. He must reward himself, the artful encroacher said, before the landlady and her maids and niece, for his forethought; and would salute his pretty sullen sister!—He took his reward; and, as he said before, a tear with it. While he assured me, still before them [a vile wretch!] that I had nothing to fear from meeting with parents who so dearly loved me.—

How could I be complaisant, my dear, to such a man as this?

When we had got in the chariot, and it began to move, he asked me, whether I had any objection to go to Lord M.'s Hertfordshire seat? His Lordship, he said, was at his Berkshire one.

I told him, I chose not to go, as yet, to any of his relations; for that would indicate a plain defiance to my own. My choice was, to go to a private lodging, and for him to be at a distance from me: at least, till I heard how things were taken by my friends: for that, although I had but little hopes of a reconciliation as it was; yet if they knew I was in his protection, or in that of any of his friends, (which would be looked upon as the same thing,) there would not be room for any hopes at all.

I should govern him as I pleased, he solemnly assured me, in every thing. But he still thought London was the best place for me; and if I were once safe there, and in a lodging to my liking, he would go to M. Hall. But, as I approved not of

London, he would urge it no further.

He proposed, and I consented, to put up at an inn in the neighbourhood of The Lawn (as he called Lord M.'s seat in this county) since I chose not to go thither. And here I got two hours to myself; which I told him I should pass in writing another letter to you, (meaning my narrative, which, though greatly fatigued, I had begun at St. Alban's,) and in one to my sister, to apprise the family (whether they were solicitous about it or not) that I was well; and to beg that my clothes, some particular books, and the fifty guineas I had left in my escritoire, might be sent me.

He asked, if I had considered whither to have them directed?

Indeed, not I, I told him: I was a stranger to—

So was he, he interrupted me; but it struck him by chance—

Wicked story-teller!

But, added he, I will tell you, Madam, how it shall be managed—If you don't choose to go to London, it is, nevertheless, best that your relations should think you there; for then they will absolutely despair of finding you. If you write, be pleased to direct, to be left for you, at Mr. Osgood's, near Soho-square. Mr. Osgood is a man of reputation: and this will effectually amuse them.

Amuse them, my dear!—Amuse whom?—My father!—my uncles!—But it must be so!—All his expedients ready, you see!

I had no objection to this: and I have written accordingly. But what answer I shall have, or whether any, that is what gives me no small anxiety.

This, however, is one consolation, that if I have an answer, and although my brother should be the writer, it cannot be more severe than the treatment I have of late received from him and my sister.

Mr. Lovelace staid out about an hour and half; and then came in; impatiently sending up to me no less than four times, to desire admittance. But I sent him word as often, that I was busy; and at last, that I should be so, till dinner was ready. He then hastened that, as I heard him now-and-then, with a hearty curse upon the cook and waiters.

This is another of his perfections. I ventured afterwards to check him for his free words, as we sat at dinner.

Having heard him swear at his servant, when below, whom, nevertheless, he owns to be a good one; it is a sad life, said I, these innkeepers live, Mr. Lovelace.

No; pretty well, I believe—but why, Madam, think you, that fellows, who eat and drink at other men's cost, or they are sorry innkeepers, should be entitled to pity?

Because of the soldiers they are obliged to quarter; who are generally, I believe, wretched profligates. Bless me! said I, how I heard one of them swear and curse, just now, at a modest, meek man, as I judge by his low voice, and gentle answers!—Well do they make it a proverb—Like a trooper!

He bit his lip; arose; turned upon his heel; stept to the glass; and looking confidently abashed, if I may say so, Ay, Madam, said he, these troopers are sad swearing fellows. I think their officers should chastise them for it.

I am sure they deserve chastisement, replied I: for swearing is a most unmanly vice, and cursing as poor and low a one; since they proclaim the profligate's want of power, and his wickedness at the same time; for, could such a one punish as he speaks, he would be a fiend!

Charmingly observed, by my soul, Madam!—The next trooper I hear swear and curse, I'll tell him what an unmanly, and what a poor wretch he is.

Mrs. Greme came to pay her duty to me, as Mr. Lovelace called it; and was very urgent with me to go to her lord's house; letting me know what handsome things she had heard of her lord, and his two nieces, and all the family, say of me; and what wishes for several months past they had put up for the honour she now hoped would soon be done them all.

This gave me some satisfaction, as it confirmed from the mouth of a very good sort of woman all that Mr. Lovelace had told me.

Upon inquiry about a private lodging, she recommended me to a sister-in-law of hers, eight miles from thence—where I now am. And what pleased me the better, was, that Mr. Lovelace (of whom I could see she was infinitely observant) obliged her, of his own motion, to accompany me in the chaise; himself riding on horseback, with his two servants, and one of Lord M.'s. And here we arrived about four o'clock.

But, as I told you in my former, the lodgings are inconvenient. Mr. Lovelace indeed found great fault with them; and told Mrs. Greme (who had said, that they were not worthy of us) that they came not up even to her own account of them. As the house was a mile from a town, it was not proper for him, he said, to be so far distant from me, lest any thing should happen: and yet the apartments were not separate and distinct enough for me to like them, he was sure.

This must be agreeable enough for him, you will believe.

Mrs. Greme and I had a good deal of talk in the chaise about him: she was very easy and free in her answers to all I asked; and has, I find, a very serious turn.

I led her on to say to the following effect; some part of it not unlike what Lord M.'s dismissed bailiff had said before; by which I find that all the servants have a like opinion of him.

'That Mr. Lovelace was a generous man: that it was hard to say, whether the servants of her lord's family loved or feared him most: that her lord had a very great affection for him: that his two noble aunts were not less fond of him: that his cousins Montague were as good natured young ladies as ever lived: that Lord M. and Lady Sarah, and Lady Betty had proposed several ladies to him, before he made his addresses to me: and even since; despairing to move me and my friends in his favour.—But that he had no thoughts of marrying at all, she had heard him say, if it were not to me: that as well her lord as the two ladies his sisters were a good deal concerned at the ill-usage he received from my family: but admired my character, and wished to have him married to me (although I were not to have a shilling) in preference to any other person, from the opinion they had of the influence I should have over him. That, to be sure, Mr. Lovelace was a wild gentleman: but wildness was a distemper which would cure itself. That her lord delighted in his company, whenever he could get it: but that they often fell out; and his lordship was always forced to submit—indeed, was half afraid of him, she believed; for Mr. Lovelace would do as he pleased. She mingled a thousand pities often, that he acted not up to the talents lent him—yet would have it, that he had fine qualities to found a reformation upon: and, when the happy day came, would make amends for all: and of this all his friends were so assured, that they wished for nothing so earnestly, as for his marriage.'

This, indifferent as it is, is better than my brother says of him.

The people of the house here are very honest-looking industrious folks: Mrs. Sorlings is the gentlewoman's name. The farm seems well stocked, and thriving. She is a widow; has two sons, men grown, who vie with each other which shall take most pains in promoting the common good; and they are both of them, I already see, more respectful to two modest young women their sisters, than my brother was to his sister.

I believe I must stay here longer than at first I thought I should.

I ought to have mentioned, that, before I set out for this place, I received your kind letter.* Every thing is kind from so

dear a friend.

* See Vol. II. Letter XLVII.

I own, that after I had told you of my absolute determination not to go away with him, you might well be surprised, at your first hearing that I was actually gone. The Lord bless me, my dear, I myself, at times, can hardly believe it is I, that have been led to take so strange a step.

I have not the better opinion of Mr. Lovelace for his extravagant volubility. He is too full of professions. He says too many fine things of me, and to me. True respect, true value, I think, lies not in words: words cannot express it: the silent awe, the humble, the doubting eye, and even the hesitating voice, better shew it by much, than, as our beloved Shakespeare says,

—*The rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.*

The man indeed at times is all upon the ecstatic; one of his phrases. But, to my shame and confusion, I must say, that I know too well to what to attribute his transports. In one word, it is to his triumph, my dear. And, to impute it to that perhaps equally exposes my vanity, and condemns my folly.

We have been alarmed with notions of a pursuit, founded upon a letter from his intelligencer.

How do different circumstances either sanctify or condemn the same action!—What care ought we to take not to confound the distinctions of right and wrong, when self comes in the question!—I condemned in Mr. Lovelace the corrupting of a servant of my father's; and now I am glad to give a kind of indirect approbation of that fault, by inquiring of him what he hears, by that or any other way, of the manner in which my relations took my flight. A preconcerted, forward, and artful flight, it must undoubtedly appear to them. How grievous is that to think of! yet how, as long as I am situated, can I put them right?

Most heavily, he says, they take it; but shew not so much grief as rage. And he can hardly have patience to hear of the virulence and menaces of my brother against himself. Then a merit is made to me of his forbearance.

What a satisfaction am I robbed of, my dearest friend, when I reflect upon my inconsiderateness! O that I had it still in my power to say I suffered wrong, rather than did wrong! That others were more wanting in their kindness to me than I duty (where duty is owing) to them.

Fie upon me! for meeting the seducer!—Let all end as happily as it now may, I have laid up for myself remorse for my whole life.

What still more concerns me is, that every time I see this man, I am still at a greater loss than before what to make of him. I watch every turn of his countenance: and I think I see very deep lines in it. He looks with more meaning, I verily think, than he used to look; yet not more serious; not less gay—I don't know how he looks—but with more confidence a great deal than formerly; and yet he never wanted that.

But here is the thing; I behold him with fear now, as conscious of the power my indiscretion has given him over me. And well may he look more elate, when he sees me deprived of all the self-supposed significance, which adorns and exalts a person who has been accustomed to respect; and who now, by a conscious inferiority, allows herself to be overcome, and in a state of obligation, as I may say, to a man who from a humble suitor to her for her favour, assumes the consequence and airs of a protector.

I shall send this, as my former, by a poor man, who travels every day with pedlary matters. He will leave it at Mrs. Knolly's, as you direct.

If you hear any thing of my father and mother, and of their health, and how my friends were affected by my unhappy step, pray be so good as to write me a few lines by the messenger, if his waiting for them can be known to you.

I am afraid to ask you, Whether, upon reading that part of my narrative already in your hands, you think any sort of extenuation lies for

Your unhappy CLARISSA HARLOWE?

LETTER VII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY, WEDN.
APRIL 11, 12.

You claim my promise, that I will be as particular as possible, in all that passes between me and my goddess. Indeed, I never had a more illustrious subject to exercise my pen. And, moreover, I have leisure; for by her good will, my access would be as difficult to her, as that of the humblest slave to an Eastern monarch. Nothing, then, but inclination to write can be wanting; and since our friendship, and your obliging attendance upon me at the White Hart, will not excuse that, I will endeavour to keep my word.

I parted with thee and thy brethren, with a full resolution, thou knowest, to rejoin ye, if she once again disappointed me, in order to go together (attended by our servants, for shew sake) to the gloomy father; and demand audience of the tyrant upon the freedoms taken with my character. In short, to have tried by fair resolutions, and treat his charming daughter with less inhumanity, and me with more civility.

I told thee my reasons for not going in search of a letter of countermand. I was right; for if I had, I should have found such a one; and had I received it, she would not have met me. Did she think, that after I had been more than once disappointed, I would not keep her to her promise; that I would not hold her to it, when I had got her in so deeply?

The moment I heard the door unbolt, I was sure of her. That motion made my heart bound to my throat. But when that was followed with the presence of my charmer, flashing upon me all at once in a flood of brightness, sweetly dressed, though all unprepared for a journey, I trod air, and hardly thought myself a mortal.

Thou shalt judge of her dress, as at the moment I first beheld her she appeared to me, and as, upon a nearer observation, she really was. I am a critic, thou knowest, in women's dresses. Many a one have I taught to dress, and helped to undress. But there is such a native elegance in this lady, that she surpasses all that I could imagine surpassing. But then her person adorns what she wears, more than dress can adorn her; and that's her excellence.

Expect therefore a faint sketch of her admirable person with her dress.

Her wax-like flesh (for after all, flesh and blood I think she is) by its delicacy and firmness, answers for the soundness of her health. Thou hast often heard me launch out in praise of her complexion. I never in my life beheld a skin so illustriously fair. The lily and the driven snow it is nonsense to talk of: her lawn and her laces one might indeed compare

to those; but what a whited wall would a woman appear to be, who had a complexion which would justify such unnatural comparisons? But this lady is all glowing, all charming flesh and blood; yet so clear, that every meandering vein is to be seen in all the lovely parts of her which custom permits to be visible.

Thou has heard me also describe the wavy ringlets of her shining hair, needing neither art nor powder; of itself an ornament, defying all other ornaments; wantoning in and about a neck that is beautiful beyond description.

Her head-dress was a Brussels-lace mob, peculiarly adapted to the charming air and turn of her features. A sky-blue ribband illustrated that. But although the weather was somewhat sharp, she had not on either hat or hood; for, besides that she loves to use herself hardily (by which means and by a temperance truly exemplary, she is allowed to have given high health and vigour to an originally tender constitution) she seems to have intended to shew me, that she was determined not to stand to her appointment. O Jack! that such a sweet girl should be a rogue!

Her morning gown was a pale primrose-coloured paduasoy: the cuffs and robins curiously embroidered by the fingers of this ever-charming Arachne, in a running pattern of violets and their leaves, the light in the flowers silver, gold in the leaves. A pair of diamond snaps in her ears. A white handkerchief wrought by the same inimitable fingers concealed—O Belford! what still more inimitable beauties did it not conceal!—And I saw, all the way we rode, the bounding heart (by its throbbing motions I saw it!) dancing beneath her charming umbrage.

Her ruffles were the same as her mob. Her apron a flowered lawn. Her coat white sattin, quilted: blue sattin her shoes, braided with the same colour, without lace; for what need has the prettiest foot in the world of ornament? neat buckles in them: and on her charming arms a pair of black velvet glove-like muffs of her own invention; for she makes and gives fashions as she pleases.—Her hands velvet of themselves, thus uncovered the freer to be grasped by those of her adorer.

I have told thee what were my transports, when the undrawn bolt presented to me my long-expected goddess. Her emotions were more sweetly feminine, after the first moments; for then the fire of her starry eyes began to sink into a less dazzling languor. She trembled: nor knew she how to support the agitations of a heart she had never found so ungovernable. She was even fainting, when I clasped her in my supporting arms. What a precious moment that! How near, how sweetly near, the throbbing partners!

By her dress, I saw, as I observed before, how unprepared she was for a journey; and not doubting her intention once more to disappoint me, I would have drawn her after me. Then began a contention the most vehement that ever I had with woman. It would pain thy friendly heart to be told the infinite trouble I had with her. I begged, I prayed; on my knees, yet in vain, I begged and prayed her to answer her own appointment: and had I not happily provided for such a struggle, knowing whom I had to deal with, I had certainly failed in my design; and as certainly would have accompanied her in, without thee and thy brethren: and who knows what might have been the consequence?

But my honest agent answering my signal, though not quite so soon as I expected, in the manner thou knowest I had prescribed, They are coming! They are coming!—Fly, fly, my beloved creature, cried I, drawing my sword with a flourish, as if I would have slain half an hundred of the supposed intruders; and, seizing her trembling hands, I drew her after me so swiftly, that my feet, winged by love, could hardly keep pace with her feet, agitated by fear.—And so I became her emperor.

I'll tell thee all, when I see thee: and thou shalt then judge of my difficulties, and of her perverseness. And thou wilt rejoice with me at my conquest over such a watchful and open-eyed charmer.

But seest thou not now (as I think I do) the wind outstripping fair one flying from her love to her love? Is there not such a game?—Nay, flying from her friends she was resolved not to abandon, to the man she was determined not to go off with?—The sex! the sex, all over!—Charming contradiction!—Hah, hah, hah, hah!—I must here—I must here, lay down my pen, to hold my sides; for I must have my laugh out now the fit is upon me.

I believe—I believe—Hah, hah, hah! I believe, Jack, my dogs conclude me mad: for here has one of them popt in, as if to see what ailed me, or whom I had with me. Hah, hah, hah! An impudent dog! O Jack, knewest thou my conceit, and were but thy laugh joined to mine, I believe it would hold me for an hour longer.

But, O my best beloved fair one, repine not thou at the arts by which thou suspectest thy fruitless vigilance has been over watched. Take care, that thou provokest not new ones, that may be still more worthy of thee. If once thy emperor decrees thy fall, thou shalt greatly fall. Thou shalt have cause, if that come to pass, which may come to pass (for why wouldst thou put off marriage to so long a day, as till thou hadst reason to be convinced of my reformation, dearest?) thou shalt have cause, never fear, to sit down more dissatisfied with the stars, than with thyself. And come the worst to the worst, glorious terms will I give thee. Thy garrison, with general Prudence at the head, and governor Watchfulness bringing up the rear, shall be allowed to march out with all the honours due to so brave a resistance. And all thy sex, and all mine, that hear of my stratagems, and of thy conduct, shall acknowledge the fortress as nobly won as defended.

'Thou wilt not dare, methinks I hear thee say, to attempt to reduce such a goddess as this, to a standard unworthy of her excellencies. It is impossible, Lovelace, that thou shouldst intent to break through oaths and protestations so solemn.'

That I did not intend it, is certain. That I do intend it, I cannot (my heart, my reverence for her, will not let me) say. But knowest thou not my aversion to the state of shackles?—And is she not IN MY POWER?

'And wilt thou, Lovelace, abuse that power which—'

Which what, Belford? Which I obtained not by her own consent, but against it.

'But which thou never hadst obtained, had she not esteemed thee above all men.'

And which I had never taken so much pains to obtain, had I not loved her above all women. So far upon a par, Jack! and if thou pleadest honour, ought not honour to be mutual? If mutual, does it not imply mutual trust, mutual confidence? And what have I had of that from her to boast of?—Thou knowest the whole progress of our warfare: for a warfare it has truly been; and far, very far, from an amorous warfare too. Doubts, mistrusts, upbraidings, on her part; humiliations the most abject, on mine. Obligated to assume such airs of reformation, that every varlet of ye has been afraid I should reclaim in good earnest. And hast thou not thyself frequently observed to me, how awkwardly I returned to my usual gayety, after I had been within a mile of her father's garden-wall, although I had not seen her?

Does she not deserve to pay for all this?—To make an honest fellow look like an hypocrite, what a vile thing is that!

Then thou knowest what a false little rogue she has been. How little conscience she has made of disappointing me. Hast thou not been a witness of my ravings on this score? Have I not, in the height of them, vowed revenge upon the faithless charmer? And if I must be forsworn, whether I answer her expectations, or follow my own inclinations; and if the option be in my own power, can I hesitate a moment which to choose?

Then, I fancy by her circumspection, and her continual grief, that she expects some mischief from me. I don't care to disappoint any body I have a value for.

But O the noble, the exalted creature! Who can avoid hesitating when he thinks of an offence against her? Who can but pity—

Yet, on the other hand, so loth at last to venture, though threatened to be forced into the nuptial fetters with a man, whom to look upon as a rival, is to disgrace myself!—So sullen, now she has ventured!—What title has she to pity; and to a pity which her pride would make her disclaim?

But I resolve not any way. I will see how her will works; and how my will leads me on. I will give the combatants fair play, and yet, every time I attend her, I find that she is less in my power; I more in hers.

Yet, a foolish little rogue! to forbid me to think of marriage till I am a reformed man! Till the implacables of her family change their natures, and become placable!

It is true, when she was for making those conditions, she did not think, that without any, she should be cheated out of herself; for so the dear soul, as I may tell thee in its place, phrases it.

How it swells my pride, to have been able to outwit such a vigilant charmer! I am taller by half a yard in my imagination than I was. I look down upon every body now. Last night I was still more extravagant. I took off my hat, as I walked, to see if the lace were not scorched, supposing it had brushed down a star; and, before I put it on again, in mere wantonness and heart's ease, I was for buffeting the moon.

In short, my whole soul is joy. When I go to bed I laugh myself asleep; and I awake either laughing or singing—yet nothing nearly in view, neither—For why?—I am not yet reformed enough!

I told thee at the time, if thou rememberest, how capable this restriction was of being turned upon the over-scrupulous dear creature, could I once get her out of her father's house; and were I disposed to punish her for her family's faults, and for the infinite trouble she herself had given me. Little thinks she, that I have kept an account of both: and that, when my heart is soft, and all her own, I can but turn to my memoranda, and harden myself at once.

O my charmer, look to it! Abate of thy haughty airs! Value not thyself upon thy sincerity, if thou art indifferent to me! I will not bear it now. Art thou not in my POWER!—Nor, if thou lovest me, think, that the female affectation of denying thy love, will avail thee now, with a heart so proud and so jealous as mine?—Remember, moreover, that all thy family sins are upon thy head—!

But ah! Jack, when I see my angel, when I am admitted to the presence of this radiant beauty, what will become of all this vapouring?

But, be my end what it may, I am obliged, by thy penetration, fair one, to proceed by the sap. Fair and softly. A wife at any time! Marriage will be always in my power.

When put to the university, the same course of initial studies will qualify the yonker for the one line or the other. The genius ought to point out the future lawyer, divine, or physician!—So the same cautious conduct, with such a vigilance, will do either for the wife, or for the no-wife. When I reform, I'll marry. 'Tis time enough for the one, the lady must say—for the other, say I!

But how I ramble!—This is to be in such a situation, that I know not what to resolve upon.

I'll tell thee my inclinings, as I proceed. The pro's and the con's I'll tell thee: but being got too far from the track I set out in, I will close here. I may, however, write every day something, and send it as opportunity offers.

Regardless, nevertheless, I shall be in all I write, of connection, accuracy, or of any thing but of my own imperial will and pleasure.

LETTER VIII

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE WEDNESDAY NIGHT, APRIL 12.

I have your narrative, my dear. You are the same noble creature you ever were. Above disguise, above art, above attempting to extenuate a failing.

The only family in the world, yours, surely, that could have driven such a daughter upon such extremities.

But you must not be so very much too good for them, and for the case.

You lay the blame so properly and so unsparingly upon your meeting him, that nothing can be added to that subject by your worst enemies, were they to see what you have written.

I am not surprised, now I have read your narrative, that so bold and so contriving a man—I am forced to break off—

You stood it out much better and longer—Here again comes my bustling, jealous mother!

Don't be angry at yourself. Did you not do for the best at the time? As to your first fault, the answering his letters; it was always incumbent upon you to assume the guardianship of such a family, when the bravo of it had run riot, as he did, and brought himself into danger.

Except your mother, who has no will of her own, have any of them common sense?

Forgive me, my dear—Here is that stupid uncle Antony of yours. A pragmatist, conceited positive.—He came yesterday, in a fearful pucker, and puffed, and blowed, and stumped about our hall and parlour, while his message was carried up.

My mother was dressing. These widows are as starched as the old bachelors. She would not see him in a dishabille for the world—What can she mean by it?

His errand was to set her against you, and to shew her their determined rage on your going away. The issue proved too evidently that this was the principal end of his visit.

The odd creature desired to speak with her alone. I am not used to such exceptions whenever any visits are made to my mother.

When she was primed out, down she came to him. They locked themselves in. The two positive heads were put together—close together I suppose; for I listened, but could hear nothing distinctly, though they both seemed full of their subject.

I had a good mind, once or twice, to have made them open the door. Could I have been sure of keeping but tolerably my temper, I would have demanded admittance. But I was afraid, if I had obtained it, that I should have forgot it was my mother's house, and been for turning him out of it. To come to rave against and abuse my dearest, dearest, faultless friend! and the ravings to be encouraged, and perhaps joined in, in order to justify themselves; the one for contributing to drive that dear friend out of her father's house; the other for refusing her a temporary asylum, till the reconciliation could have been effected, which her dutiful heart was set upon; and which it would have become the love which my mother had ever pretended for you, to have mediated for—Could I have had patience!

The issue, as I said, shewed what the errand was—Its fusty appearance, after the old fusty fellow was marched off, [you must excuse me, my dear,] was in a kind of gloomy, Harlowe-like reservedness in my mother; which upon a few resenting

flirts of mine, was followed by a rigorous prohibition of correspondence.

This put us, you may suppose, upon terms not the most agreeable, I desired to know, if I were prohibited dreaming of you?—For, my dear, you have all my sleeping as well as waking hours.

I can easily allow for your correspondence with your wretch at first (and yet your notions were excellent) by the effect this prohibition has upon me; since, if possible, it has made me love you better than before; and I am more desirous than ever of corresponding with you.

But I have nevertheless a much more laudable motive—I should think myself the unworthiest of creatures, could I be brought to slight a dear friend, and such a meritorious one, in her distress. I would die first—And so I told my mother. And I have desired her not to watch me in my retired hours; nor to insist upon my lying with her constantly, which she now does more earnestly than ever. 'Twere better, I told her, that the Harlowe-Betty were borrowed to be set over me.

Mr. Hickman, who so greatly honours you, has, unknown to me, interposed so warmly in your favour with my mother, that it makes for him no small merit with me.

I cannot, at present, write to every particular, unless I would be in set defiance. Tease, tease, tease, for ever! The same thing, though answered fifty times over, in every hour to be repeated—Lord bless me! what a life must my poor father—But let me remember to whom I am writing.

If this ever-active, ever-mischievous monkey of a man, this Lovelace, contrived as you suspect—But here comes my mother again—Ay, stay a little longer, my Mamma, if you please—I can but be suspected! I can but be chidden for making you wait; and chidden I am sure to be, whether I do or not, in the way you, my good Mamma, are Antony'd into.

Bless me! how impatient she is! How she thunders at the door! This moment, Madam! How came I to double-lock myself if! What have I done with the key! Duce take the key! Dear Madam! You flutter one so!

You may believe, my dear, that I took care of my papers before I opened the door. We have had a charming dialogue—She flung from me in a passion—

So—What's now to be done? Sent for down in a very peremptory manner, I assure you. What an incoherent letter will you have, when I get it to you! But now I know where to send it, Mr. Hickman shall find me a messenger. Yet, if he be detected, poor soul, he will be Harlowed-off, as well as his meek mistress.

THURSDAY, APRIL 13.

I have this moment your continuation-letter. And am favoured, at present, with the absence of my Argus-eyes mother.—

Dear creature! I can account for all your difficulties. A young lady of your delicacy!—And with such a man!—I must be brief—

The man's a fool, my dear, with all his pride, and with all his complaisance, and affected regards to your injunctions. Yet his ready inventions—

Sometimes I think you should go to Lady Betty's. I know not what to advise you to do.—I should, if you were not so intent upon reconciling yourself to your relations. Yet they are implacable. You can have no hopes of them. Your uncle's errand to my mother may convince you of that; and if you have an answer to your letter to your sister, that will confirm you, I dare say.

You need not to have been afraid of asking me, Whether upon reading your narrative, I thought any extenuation could lie for what you have done! I have, as above, before I had your question, told you my mind as to that. And I repeat, I think, your provocations and inducements considered, that ever young creature was who took such a step.

But you took it not—You were driven on one side, and, possibly, tricked on the other.—If any woman on earth shall be circumstanced as you were, and shall hold out so long as you did, against her persecutors on one hand, and her seducer on the other, I will forgive her for all the rest of her conduct, be it what it will.

All your acquaintance, you may suppose, talk of nobody but you. Some indeed bring your admirable character for a plea against you: but nobody does, or can, acquit your father and uncles.

Every body seems apprized of your brother's and sister's motives. Your flight is, no doubt, the very thing they aimed to drive you to, by the various attacks they made upon you; unhoping (as they must do all the time) the success of their schemes in Solmes's behalf. They knew, that if once you were restored to favour, the suspended love of your father and uncles, like a river breaking down a temporary obstruction, would return with double force; and that then you would expose, and triumph over all their arts.—And now, I hear they enjoy their successful malice.

Your father is all rage and violence. He ought, I am sure, to turn his rage inward. All your family accuse you of acting with deep art; and are put upon supposing that you are actually every hour exulting over them, with your man, in the success of it.

They all pretend now, that your trial of Wednesday was to be the last.

Advantage would indeed, my mother owns, have been taken of your yielding, if you had yielded. But had you not been prevailed upon, they would have given up their scheme, and taken your promise for renouncing Lovelace—Believe them who will!

They own, however, that a minister was to be present—Mr. Solmes was to be at hand—And your father was previously to try his authority over you, in order to make you sign the settlements—All of it a romantic contrivance of your wild-headed foolish brother, I make no doubt. Is it likely that he and Bell would have given way to your restoration to favour, supposing it in their power to hinder it, on any other terms than those their hearts had been so long set upon?

How they took your flight, when they found it out, may be better supposed than described.

Your aunt Hervey, it seems, was the first that went down to the ivy summer-house, in order to acquaint you that their search was over. Betty followed her; and they not finding you there, went on towards the cascade, according to a hint of yours.

Returning by the garden-door, they met a servant [they don't say, it was Joseph Leman; but it is very likely that it was he] running, as he said, from pursuing Mr. Lovelace (a great hedge-stake in his hand, and out of breath) to alarm the family.

If it were this fellow, and if he were employed in the double agency of cheating them, and cheating you, what shall we think of the wretch you are with? Run away from him, my dear, if so—no matter to whom—or marry him, if you cannot.

Your aunt and all your family were accordingly alarmed by this fellow—evidently when too late for pursuit. They got together, and when a posse, ran to the place of interview; and some of them as far as to the tracks of the chariot wheels, without stopping. And having heard the man's tale upon the spot, a general lamentation, a mutual upbraiding, and rage, and grief, were echoed from the different persons, according to their different tempers and conceptions. And they returned like fools as they went.

Your brother, at first, ordered horses and armed men to be got ready for a pursuit. Solmes and your uncle Tony were to be of the party. But your mother and your aunt Hervey dissuaded them from it, for fear of adding evil to evil; not doubting but Lovelace had taken measures to support himself in what he had done; and especially when the servant declared, that

he saw you run with him as fast as you could set foot to the ground; and that there were several armed men on horseback at a small distance off.

My mother's absence was owing to her suspicion, that the Knolly's were to assist in our correspondence. She made them a visit upon it. She does every thing at once. And they have promised, that no more letters shall be left there, without her knowledge.

But Mr. Hickman has engaged one Filmer, a husbandman in the lane we call Finch-lane, near us, to receive them. Thither you will be pleased to direct yours, under cover, to Mr. John Soberton; and Mr. Hickman himself will call for them there; and there shall leave mine. It goes against me too, to make him so useful to me. He looks already so proud upon it! I shall have him [Who knows?] give himself airs—He had best consider, that the favour he has been long aiming at, may put him into a very dangerous, a very ticklish situation. He that can oblige, may disoblige—Happy for some people not to have it in their power to offend!

I will have patience, if I can, for a while, to see if these bustlings in my mother will subside—but upon my word, I will not long bear this usage.

Sometimes I am ready to think, that my mother carries it thus on purpose to tire me out, and to make me the sooner marry. If I find it to be so, and that Hickman, in order to make a merit with me, is in the low plot, I will never bear him in my sight.

Plotting wretch, as I doubt your man is, I wish to heaven that you were married, that you might brave them all, and not be forced to hide yourself, and be hurried from one inconvenient place to another. I charge you, omit not to lay hold on any handsome opportunity that may offer for that purpose.

Here again comes my mother—

We look mighty glum upon each other, I can tell you. She had not best Harlowe me at this rate—I won't bear it.

I have a vast deal to write. I know not what to write first. Yet my mind is full, and ready to run over.

I am got into a private corner of the garden, to be out of her way.—Lord help these mothers!—Do they think they can prevent a daughter's writing, or doing any thing she has a mind to do, by suspicion, watchfulness, and scolding?—They had better place a confidence in one by half—A generous mind scorns to abuse a generous confidence.

You have a nice, a very nice part to act with this wretch—who yet has, I think, but one plain path before him. I pity you—but you must make the best of the lot you have been forced to draw. Yet I see your difficulties.—But, if he do not offer to abuse your confidence, I would have you seem at least to place some in him.

If you think not of marrying soon, I approve of your resolution to fix somewhere out of his reach. And if he know not where to find you, so much the better. Yet I verily believe, they would force you back, could they but come at you, if they were not afraid of him.

I think, by all means, you should demand of both your trustees to be put in possession of your own estate. Mean time I have sixty guineas at your service. I beg you will command them. Before they are gone, I'll take care you shall be further supplied. I don't think you'll have a shilling or a shilling's worth of your own from your relations, unless you extort it from them.

As they believe you went away by your own consent, they are, it seems, equally surprised and glad that you have left your jewels and money behind you, and have contrived for clothes so ill. Very little likelihood this shews of their answering your requests.

Indeed every one who knows not what I now know, must be at a loss to account for your flight, as they will call it. And how, my dear, can one report it with any tolerable advantage to you?—To say, you did not intend it when you met him, who will believe it?—To say, that a person of your known steadiness and punctilio was over-persuaded when you gave him the meeting, how will that sound?—To say, you were tricked out of yourself, and people were given credit to it, how disreputable!—And while unmarried, and yet with him, the man a man of such a character, what would it not lead a censuring world to think?

I want to see how you put it in your letter for your clothes.

As you may depend upon all the little spiteful things they can offer, instead of sending what you write for, pray accept the sum that I tender. What will seven guineas do?—And I will find a way to send you also any of my clothes and linen for present supply. I beg, my dear Clarissa, that you will not put your Anna Howe upon a footing with Lovelace, in refusing to accept of my offer. If you do not oblige me, I shall be apt to think you rather incline to be obliged to him, than to favour me. And if I find this, I shall not know how to reconcile it with your delicacy in other respects.

Pray inform me of every thing that passes between you and him. My cares for you (however needless, from your own prudence) make me wish you to continue to be every minute. If any thing occur that you would tell me of if I were present, fail not to put it down in writing, although from your natural diffidence, it should not appear to you altogether so worthy of your pen, or my knowing. A stander-by may see more of the game than one that plays. Great consequences, like great folks, generally owe their greatness to small causes, and little incidents.

Upon the whole, I do not now think it is in your power to dismiss him when you please. I apprized you beforehand, that it would not. I repeat, therefore, that were I you, I would at least seem to place some confidence in him. So long as he is decent, you may. Very visibly observable, to such delicacy as yours, must be that behaviour in him, which will make him unworthy of some confidence.

Your relations, according to what old Antony says to my mother, and she to me, (by way of threatening, that you will not gain your supposed ends upon them by your flight,) seem to expect that you will throw yourself into Lady Betty's protection; and that she will offer to mediate for you. And they vow, that they will never hearken to any terms of accommodation that shall come from that quarter; for I dare aver, that your brother and sister will not let them cool—at least, till their uncles have made such dispositions, and perhaps your father too, as they would have them make.

As this letter will apprise you of an alteration in the place to which you must direct your next, I send it by a friend of Mr. Hickman, who may be depended upon. He has business in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Sorlings; and he knows her. He will return to Mr. Hickman this night; and bring back any letter you shall have ready to send, or can get ready. It is moonlight. He'll not mind waiting for you. I choose not to send by any of Mr. Hickman's servants—at present, however. Every hour is now, or may be, important; and may make an alteration in your resolutions necessary.

I hear at this instant, my mother calling about her, and putting every body into motion. She will soon, I suppose, make me and my employment the subjects of her inquiry.

Adieu, my dear. May heaven preserve you, and restore you with honour as unsullied as your mind to

Your ever affectionate ANNA HOWE.

LETTER IX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE THURSDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 13.

I am infinitely concerned, my ever dear and ever kind friend, that I am the sad occasion of the displeasure between your mother and you.—How many persons have I made unhappy.

Had I not to console myself, that my error is not owing to wicked precipitation, I should be the most miserable of all creatures. As it is, I am enough punished in the loss of my character, more valuable to me than my life; and in the cruel doubts and perplexities which, conflicting with my hopes, and each getting the victory by turns, harrow up my soul between them.

I think, however, that you should obey your mother, and decline a correspondence with me; at least for the present. Take care how you fall into my error; for that begun with carrying on a prohibited correspondence; a correspondence which I thought it in my power to discontinue at pleasure. My talent is scribbling; and I the readier fell into this freedom, as I found delight in writing; having motives too, which I thought laudable; and, at one time, the permission of all my friends; to write to him.*

* See Vol. I. Letter III.

Yet, as to this correspondence, What hurt could arise from it, if your mother could be prevailed upon to permit it to be continued?—So much prudence and discretion as you have; and you, in writing to me, lying under no temptation of following so bad an example as I have set—my letters too occasionally filled with self-accusation.

I thank you, my dear, most cordially I thank you, for your kind offers. You may be assured, that I will sooner be beholden to you, than to any body living. To Mr. Lovelace the last. Do not therefore think, that by declining your favours, I have an intention to lay myself under obligations to him.

I am willing to hope (notwithstanding what you write) that my friends will send me my little money, together with my clothes. They are too considerate, some of them at least, to permit that I should be put to such low difficulties. Perhaps, they will not be in haste to oblige me. But, if not, I cannot yet want. I believe you think, I must not dispute with Mr. Lovelace the expenses of the road and lodgings, till I can get a fixed abode. But I hope soon to put an end even to those small sort of obligations.

Small hopes indeed of a reconciliation from your account of my uncle's visit to your mother, in order to set her against an almost friendless creature whom once he loved! But is it not my duty to try for it? Ought I to widen my error by obstinacy and resentment, because of their resentment; which must appear reasonable to them, as they suppose my flight premeditated; and as they are made to believe, that I am capable of triumphing in it, and over them, with the man they hate? When I have done all in my power to restore myself to their favour, I shall have the less to reproach myself with.

These considerations make me waver about following your advice, in relation to marriage; and the rather, as he is so full of complaisance with regard to my former conditions, which he calls my injunctions. Nor can I now, that my friends, as you inform me, have so strenuously declared against accepting of the mediation of the ladies of Mr. Lovelace's family, put myself into their protection, unless I am resolved to give up all hopes of a reconciliation with my own.

Yet if any happy introduction could be thought of to effect this desirable purpose, how shall terms be proposed to my father, while this man is with me, or near me? On the other hand, should they in his absence get me back by force, (and this, you are of opinion, they would attempt to do, but in fear of him,) how will their severest acts of compulsion be justified by my flight from them!—Mean while, to what censures, as you remind me, do I expose myself, while he and I are together and unmarried!—Yet [can I with patience ask the question?] Is it in my power?—O my dear Miss Howe! And am I so reduced, as that, to save the poor remains of my reputation in the world's eye, I must watch the gracious motion from this man's lips?

Were my cousin Morden in England, all might still perhaps be determined happily.

If no other mediation than this can be procured to set on foot the wished-for reconciliation, and if my situation with Mr. Lovelace alter not in the interim, I must endeavour to keep myself in a state of independence till he arrive, that I may be at liberty to govern myself by his advice and direction.

I will acquaint you, as you desire, with all that passes between Mr. Lovelace and me. Hitherto I have not discovered any thing in his behaviour that is very exceptionable. Yet I cannot say, that I think the respect he shews me, an easy, unrestrained, and natural respect, although I can hardly tell where the fault is.

But he has doubtless an arrogant and encroaching spirit. Nor is he so polite as his education, and other advantages, might have made one expect him to be. He seems, in short, to be one, who has always had too much of his own will to study to accommodate himself to that of others.

As to the placing of some confidence in him, I shall be as ready to take your advice in this particular, as in all others, and as he will be to deserve it. But tricked away as I was by him, not only against my judgment, but my inclination, can he, or any body, expect, that I should immediately treat him with complaisance, as if I acknowledged obligation to him for carrying me away?—If I did, must he not either think me a vile dissembler before he gained that point, or afterwards?

Indeed, indeed, my dear, I could tear my hair, on reconsidering what you write (as to the probability that the dreaded Wednesday was more dreaded than it needed to be) to think, that I should be thus tricked by this man; and that, in all likelihood, through his vile agent Joseph Leman. So premeditated and elaborate a wickedness as it must be!—Must I not, with such a man, be wanting to myself, if I were not jealous and vigilant?—Yet what a life to live for a spirit so open, and naturally so unsuspecting, as mine?

I am obliged to Mr. Hickman for the assistance he is so kindly ready to give to our correspondence. He is so little likely to make to himself an additional merit with the daughter upon it, that I shall be very sorry, if he risk any thing with the mother by it.

I am now in a state of obligation: so must rest satisfied with whatever I cannot help. Whom have I the power, once so precious to me, of obliging?—What I mean, my dear, is, that I ought, perhaps, to expect, that my influences over you are weakened by my indiscretion. Nevertheless, I will not, if I can help it, desert myself, nor give up the privilege you used to allow me, of telling you what I think of such parts of your conduct as I may not approve.

You must permit me therefore, severe as your mother is against an undesigning offender, to say that I think your liveliness to her inexcusable—to pass over, for this time, what nevertheless concerns me not a little, the free treatment you almost indiscriminately give to my relations.

If you will not, for your duty's sake, forbear your tauntings and impatience, let me beseech you, that you will for mine.—Since otherwise, your mother may apprehend that my example, like a leaven, is working itself into the mind of her beloved daughter. And may not such an apprehension give her an irreconcilable displeasure against me?

I enclose the copy of my letter to my sister, which you are desirous to see. You will observe, that although I have not

demanded my estate in form, and of my trustees, yet that I have hinted at leave to retire to it. How joyfully would I keep my word, if they would accept of the offer I renew!—It was not proper, I believe you will think, on many accounts, to own that I was carried off against my inclination. I am, my dearest friend,

Your ever obliged and affectionate, CL. HARLOWE.

LETTER X

TO MISS ARABELLA HARLOWE [ENCLOSED TO MISS HOWE IN THE PRECEDING.] ST. ALBAN'S, APR. 11.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I have, I confess, been guilty of an action which carries with it a rash and undutiful appearance. And I should have thought it an inexcusable one, had I been used with less severity than I have been of late; and had I not had too great reason to apprehend, that I was to be made a sacrifice to a man I could not bear to think of. But what is done, is done—perhaps I could wish it had not; and that I had trusted to the relenting of my dear and honourable parents.—Yet this from no other motives but those of duty to them.—To whom I am ready to return (if I may not be permitted to retire to The Grove) on conditions which I before offered to comply with.

Nor shall I be in any sort of dependence upon the person by whose means I have taken this truly-reluctant step, inconsistent with any reasonable engagement I shall enter into, if I am not further precipitated. Let me not have it to say, now at this important crisis! that I have a sister, but not a friend in that sister. My reputation, dearer to me than life, (whatever you may imagine from the step I have taken,) is suffering. A little lenity will, even yet, in a great measure, restore it, and make that pass for a temporary misunderstanding only, which otherwise will be a stain as durable as life, upon a creature who has already been treated with great unkindness, to use no harsher a word.

For your own sake therefore, for my brother's sake, by whom (I must say) I have been thus precipitated, and for all the family's sake, aggravate not my fault, if, on recollecting every thing, you think it one; nor by widening the unhappy difference, expose a sister for ever—prays

Your affectionate CL. HARLOWE.

I shall take it for a very great favour to have my clothes directly sent me, together with fifty guineas, which you will find in my escritoire (of which I enclose the key); as also of the divinity and miscellany classes of my little library; and, if it be thought fit, my jewels—directed for me, to be left till called for, at Mr. Osgood's, near Soho-square.

LETTER XI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

Mr. Lovelace, in continuation of his last letter, (No. VII.) gives an account to his friend (pretty much to the same effect with the lady's) of all that passed between them at the inns, in the journey, and till their fixing at Mrs. Sorling's; to avoid repetition, those passages in his narrative are extracted, which will serve to embellish her's; to open his views; or to display the humourous talent he was noted for.

At their alighting at the inn at St. Alban's on Monday night, thus he writes:

The people who came about us, as we alighted, seemed by their jaw-fallen faces, and goggling eyes, to wonder at beholding a charming young lady, majesty in her air and aspect, so composedly dressed, yet with features so discomposed, come off a journey which made the cattle smoke, and the servants sweat. I read their curiosity in their faces, and my beloved's uneasiness in her's. She cast a conscious glance, as she alighted, upon her habit, which was no habit; and repulsively, as I may say, quitting my assisting hand, hurried into the house.*****

Ovid was not a greater master of metamorphoses than thy friend. To the mistress of the house I instantly changed her into a sister, brought off by surprise from a near relation's, (where she had wintered,) to prevent her marrying a confounded rake, [I love always to go as near the truth as I can,] whom her father and mother, her elder sister, and all her loving uncles, aunts, and cousins abhorred. This accounted for my charmer's expected sullens; for her displeasure when she was to join me again, were it to hold; for her unsuitable dress upon the road; and, at the same time, gave her a proper and seasonable assurance of my honourable views.

Upon the debate between the lady and him, and particularly upon that part where she upbraids him with putting a young creature upon making a sacrifice of her duty and conscience, he writes:

All these, and still more mortifying things, she said.

I heard her in silence. But when it came to my turn, I pleaded, I argued, I answered her, as well as I could.—And when humility would not do, I raised my voice, and suffered my eyes to sparkle with anger; hoping to take advantage of that sweet cowardice which is so amiable in the sex, and to which my victory over this proud beauty is principally owing.

She was not intimidated, however, and was going to rise upon me in her temper; and would have broken in upon my defence. But when a man talks to a woman upon such subjects, let her be ever so much in alt, 'tis strange, if he cannot throw out a tub to the whale;—that is to say, if he cannot divert her from resenting one bold thing, by uttering two or three full as bold; but for which more favourable interpretations will lie.

To that part, where she tells him of the difficulty she made to correspond with him at first, thus he writes:

Very true, my precious!—And innumerable have been the difficulties thou hast made me struggle with. But one day thou mayest wish, that thou hadst spared this boast; as well as those other pretty haughtinesses, 'That thou didst not reject Solmes for my sake: that my glory, if I valued myself upon carrying thee off, was thy shame: that I have more merit with myself than with thee, or any body else: [what a coxcomb she makes me, Jack!] that thou wishest thyself in thy

father's house again, whatever were to be the consequence.'—If I forgive thee, charmer, for these hints, for these reflections, for these wishes, for these contempts, I am not the Lovelace I have been reputed to be; and that thy treatment of me shews that thou thinkest I am.

In short, her whole air throughout this debate expressed a majestic kind of indignation, which implied a believed superiority of talents over the person to whom she spoke.

Thou hast heard me often expatiate upon the pitiful figure a man must make, whose wife has, or believes she has, more sense than himself. A thousand reasons could I give why I ought not to think of marrying Miss Clarissa Harlowe; at least till I can be sure, that she loves me with the preference I must expect from a wife.

I begin to stagger in my resolutions. Ever averse as I was to the hymeneal shackles, how easily will prejudices recur! Heaven give me the heart to be honest to my Clarissa!—There's a prayer, Jack! If I should not be heard, what a sad thing would that be, for the most admirable of women!—Yet, as I do no often trouble Heaven with my prayers, who knows but this may be granted?

But there lie before me such charming difficulties, such scenery for intrigue, for stratagem, for enterprize. What a horrible thing, that my talents point all that way!—When I know what is honourable and just; and would almost wish to be honest?—Almost, I say; for such a varlet am I, that I cannot altogether wish it, for the soul of me!—Such a triumph over the whole sex, if I can subdue this lady! My maiden vow, as I may call it!—For did not the sex begin with me? And does this lady spare me? Thinkest thou, Jack, that I should have spared my Rosebud, had I been set at defiance thus?—Her grandmother besought me, at first, to spare her Rosebud: and when a girl is put, or puts herself into a man's power, what can he wish for further? while I always considered opposition and resistance as a challenge to do my worst.*

* See Vol. I. Letter XXXIV.

Why, why, will the dear creature take such pains to appear all ice to me?—Why will she, by her pride, awaken mine?—Hast thou not seen, in the above, how contemptibly she treats me?—What have I not suffered for her, and even from her!—Ought I to bear being told, that she will despise me, if I value myself above that odious Solmes?

Then she cuts me short in all my ardours. To vow fidelity, is by a cursed turn upon me, to shew, that there is reason, in my own opinion, for doubt of it. The very same reflection upon me once before.*

* See Vol. II. Letter XIII.

In my power, or out of my power, all one to this lady.—So, Belford, my poor vows are crammed down my throat, before they can well rise to my lips. And what can a lover say to his mistress, if she will neither let him lie nor swear?

One little piece of artifice I had recourse to: When she pushed so hard for me to leave her, I made a request to her, upon a condition she could not refuse; and pretended as much gratitude upon her granting it, as if it were a favour of the last consequence.

And what was this? but to promise what she had before promised, 'Never to marry any other man, while I am living, and single, unless I should give her cause for high disgust against me.' This, you know, was promising nothing, because she could be offended at any time, and was to be the sole judge of the offence. But it shewed her how reasonable and just my expectations were; and that I was no encroacher.

She consented; and asked what security I expected? Her word only.

She gave me her word: but I besought her excuse for sealing it: and in the same moment (since to have waited for consent would have been asking for a denial) saluted her. And, believe me, or not, but, as I hope to live, it was the first time I had the courage to touch her charming lips with mine. And this I tell thee, Belford, that that single pressure (as modestly put too, as if I were as much a virgin as herself, that she might not be afraid of me another time) delighted me more than ever I was delighted by the ultimatum with any other woman.—So precious do awe, reverence, and apprehended prohibition, make a favour!

And now, Belford, I am only afraid that I shall be too cunning; for she does not at present talk enough for me. I hardly know what to make of the dear creature yet.

I topt the brother's part on Monday night before the landlady at St. Alban's; asking my sister's pardon for carrying her off so unprepared for a journey; prated of the joy my father and mother, and all our friends, would have in receiving her; and this with so many circumstances, that I perceived, by a look she gave me, that went through my very veins, that I had gone too far. I apologized for it indeed when alone; but could not penetrate for the soul of me, whether I made the matter better or worse by it.

But I am of too frank a nature: my success, and the joy I have because of the jewel I am half in possession of, has not only unlocked my bosom, but left the door quite open.

This is a confounded sly sex. Would she but speak out, as I do—but I must learn reserves of her.

She must needs be unprovided of money: but has too much pride to accept of any from me. I would have had her go to town [to town, if possible, must I get her to consent to go] in order to provide herself with the richest of silks which that can afford. But neither is this to be assented to. And yet, as my intelligencer acquaints me, her implacable relations are resolved to distress her all they can.

These wretches have been most gloriously raving, ever since her flight; and still, thank Heaven, continue to rave; and will, I hope, for a twelvemonth to come. Now, at last, it is my day!

Bitterly do they regret, that they permitted her poultry-visits, and garden-walks, which gave her the opportunity to effect an escape which they suppose preconcerted. For, as to her dining in the ivy-bower, they had a cunning design to answer upon her in that permission, as Betty told Joseph her lover.*

* Vol. II. Letter XLVII. paragr. 37, 38.

They lost, they say, and excellent pretence for confining her more closely on my threatening to rescue her, if they offered to carry her against her will to old Antony's moated house.* For this, as I told thee at the Hart, and as I once hinted to the dear creature herself,** they had it in deliberation to do; apprehending, that I might attempt to carry her off, either with or without her consent, on some one of those connived-at excursions.

* Ibid. Let. XXXVI. and Let. XXXIX. par. I.

** Ibid. Let. XXXVI. par. 4. See also Let. XV. par. 3.

But here my honest Joseph, who gave me the information, was of admirable service to me. I had taught him to make the Harlowes believe, that I was as communicative to my servants, as their stupid James was to Joseph:* Joseph, as they supposed, by tampering with Will,** got all my secrets, and was acquainted with all my motions: and having also undertaken to watch all those of his young lady,***** the wise family were secure; and so was my beloved; and so was I.

* Ibid. Letter XLVII. par. 6, and 39.

** This will be farther explained in Letter XXI. of this volume. ***** See Vol. I. Letters XXXI. and XXXIV.

I once had it in my head (and I hinted it to thee* in a former) in case such a step should be necessary, to attempt to carry her off by surprise from the wood-house; as it is remote from the dwelling-house. This, had I attempted, I should have certainly effected, by the help of the confraternity: and it would have been an action worthy of us all.—But Joseph's conscience, as he called it, stood in my way; for he thought it must have been known to be done by his connivance. I could, I dare say, have overcome this scruple, as easily as I did many of the others, had I not depended at one time upon her meeting me at midnight or late hour [and, if she had, she never would have gone back]; at other times, upon the cunning family's doing my work for me, equally against their knowledge or their wills.

* See Vol. I. Letter XXXV.

For well I knew, that James and Arabella were determined never to leave off their foolish trials and provocations, till, by tiring her out, they had either made her Solmes's wife, or guilty of some such rashness as should throw her for ever out of the favour of both her uncles; though they had too much malice in their heads to intend service to me by their persecutions of her.

LETTER XII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. [IN CONTINUATION.]

I obliged the dear creature highly, I could perceive, by bringing Mrs. Greme to attend her, and to suffer that good woman's recommendation of lodgings to take place, on her refusal to go to The Lawn.

She must believe all my views to be honourable, when I had provided for her no particular lodgings, leaving it to her choice, whether she would go to M. Hall, to The Lawn, to London, or to either of the dowagers of my family.

She was visibly pleased with my motion of putting Mrs. Greme into the chaise with her, and riding on horseback myself.

Some people would have been apprehensive of what might pass between her and Mrs. Greme. But as all my relations either know or believe the justice of my intentions by her, I was in no pain on that account; and the less, as I have always been above hypocrisy, or wishing to be thought better than I am. And indeed, what occasion has a man to be an hypocrite, who has hitherto found his views upon the sex better answered for his being known to be a rake? Why, even my beloved here denied not to correspond with me, though her friends had taught her to think me a libertine—Who then would be trying a new and worse character?

And then Mrs. Greme is a pious matron, and would not have been biased against truth on any consideration. She used formerly, while there were any hopes of my reformation, to pray for me. She hardly continues the good custom, I doubt; for her worthy lord makes no scruple occasionally to rave against me to man, woman, and child, as they come in his way. He is very undutiful, as thou knowest. Surely, I may say so; since all duties are reciprocal. But for Mrs. Greme, poor woman! when my lord has the gout, and is at The Lawn, and the chaplain not to be found, she prays by him, or reads a chapter to him in the Bible, or some other good book.

Was it not therefore right to introduce such a good sort of woman to the dear creature; and to leave them, without reserve, to their own talk!—And very busy in talk I saw they were, as they rode; and felt it too; for most charmingly glowed my cheeks.

I hope I shall be honest, I once more say: but as we frail mortals are not our own masters at all times, I must endeavour to keep the dear creature unapprehensive, until I can get her to our acquaintance's in London, or to some other safe place there. Should I, in the interim, give her the least room for suspicion; or offer to restrain her; she can make her appeals to strangers, and call the country in upon me; and, perhaps, throw herself upon her relations on their own terms. And were I now to lose her, how unworthy should I be to be the prince and leader of such a confraternity as ours!—How unable to look up among men! or to shew my face among women!

As things at present stand, she dare not own that she went off against her own consent; and I have taken care to make all the implacables believe, that she escaped with it.

She has received an answer from Miss Howe, to the letter written to her from St. Alban's.*

* See Vol. II. Letter XLVIII.

Whatever are the contents, I know not; but she was drowned in tears on the perusal of it. And I am the sufferer.

Miss Howe is a charming creature too; but confoundedly smart and spiritfult. I am a good deal afraid of her. Her mother can hardly keep her in. I must continue to play off old Antony, by my honest Joseph, upon that mother, in order to manage that daughter, and oblige my beloved to an absolute dependence upon myself.*

* See Vol. I. Letter XXXI.

Mrs. Howe is impatient of contradiction. So is Miss. A young lady who is sensible that she has all the materials requisites herself, to be under maternal controul;—fine ground for a man of intrigue to build upon!—A mother over-notable; a daughter over-sensible; and their Hickman, who is—over-neither: but merely a passive—

Only that I have an object still more desirable—!

Yet how unhappy, that these two young ladies lived so near each other, and are so well acquainted! Else how charmingly might I have managed them both!

But one man cannot have every woman worth having—Pity though—when the man is such a VERY clever fellow!

LETTER XIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. [IN CONTINUATION.]

Never was there such a pair of scribbling lovers as we;—yet perhaps whom it so much concerns to keep from each other what each writes. She won't have any thing else to do. I would, if she'd let me. I am not reformed enough for a husband.—Patience is a virtue, Lord M. says. Slow and sure, is another of his sentences. If I had not a great deal of that virtue, I should not have waited the Harlowes own time of ripening into execution my plots upon themselves and upon

their goddess daughter.

My beloved has been writing to her saucy friend, I believe, all that has befallen her, and what has passed between us hitherto. She will possibly have fine subjects for her pen, if she be as minute as I am.

I would not be so barbarous as to permit old Antony to set Mrs. Howe against her, did I not dread the consequences of the correspondence between the two young ladies. So lively the one, so vigilant, so prudent both, who would not wish to outwit such girls, and to be able to twirl them round his finger?

My charmer has written to her sister for her clothes, for some gold, and for some of her books. What books can tell her more than she knows? But I can. So she had better study me.

She may write. She must be obliged to me at last, with all her pride. Miss Howe indeed will be ready enough to supply her; but I question, whether she can do it without her mother, who is as covetous as the grave. And my agent's agent, old Antony, has already given the mother a hint which will make her jealous of pecuniaries.

Besides, if Miss Howe has money by her, I can put her mother upon borrowing it of her: nor blame me, Jack, for contrivances that have their foundation in generosity. Thou knowest my spirit; and that I should be proud to lay an obligation upon my charmer to the amount of half, nay, to the whole of my estate. Lord M. has more for me than I can ever wish for. My predominant passion is girl, not gold; nor value I this, but as it helps me to that, and gives me independence.

I was forced to put it into the sweet novice's head, as well for my sake as for hers (lest we should be traceable by her direction) whither to direct the sending of her clothes, if they incline to do her that small piece of justice.

If they do I shall begin to dread a reconciliation; and must be forced to muse for a contrivance or two to prevent it, and to avoid mischief. For that (as I have told honest Joseph Leman) is a great point with me.

Thou wilt think me a sad fellow, I doubt. But are not all rakes sad fellows?—And art not thou, to thy little power, as bad as any? If thou dost all that's in thy head and in thy heart to do, thou art worse than I; for I do not, I assure you.

I proposed, and she consented, that her clothes, or whatever else her relations should think fit to send her, should be directed to thy cousin Osgood's. Let a special messenger, at my charge, bring me any letter, or portable parcel, that shall come. If not portable, give me notice of it. But thou'lt have no trouble of this sort from her relations, I dare be sworn. And in this assurance, I will leave them, I think, to act upon their own heads. A man would have no more to answer for than needs must.

But one thing, while I think of it; which is of great importance to be attended to—You must hereafter write to me in character, as I shall do to you. It would be a confounded thing to be blown up by a train of my own laying. And who knows what opportunities a man in love may have against himself? In changing a coat or waistcoat, something might be forgotten. I once suffered that way. Then for the sex's curiosity, it is but remembering, in order to guard against it, that the name of their common mother was Eve.

Another thing remember; I have changed my name: changed it without an act of parliament. 'Robert Huntingford' it is now. Continue Esquire. It is a respectable addition, although every sorry fellow assumes it, almost to the banishment of the usual traveling one of Captain. 'To be left till called for, at the post-house at Hertford.'

Upon naming thee, she asked thy character. I gave thee a better than thou deservest, in order to do credit to myself. Yet I told her, that thou wert an awkward fellow; and this to do credit to thee, that she may not, if ever she be to see thee, expect a cleverer man than she'll find. Yet thy apparent awkwardness befriends thee not a little: for wert thou a slightly mortal, people would discover nothing extraordinary in thee, when they conversed with thee: whereas, seeing a bear, they are surprised to find in thee any thing that is like a man. Felicitate thyself then upon thy defects; which are evidently thy principal perfections; and which occasion thee a distinction which otherwise thou wouldst never have.

The lodgings we are in at present are not convenient. I was so delicate as to find fault with them, as communicating with each other, because I knew she would; and told her, that were I sure she was safe from pursuit, I would leave her in them, (since such was her earnest desire and expectation,) and go to London.

She must be an infidel against all reason and appearances, if I do not banish even the shadow of mistrust from her heart.

Here are two young likely girls, daughters of the widow Surlings; that's the name of our landlady.

I have only, at present, admired them in their dairy-works. How greedily do the sex swallow praise!—Did I not once, in the streets of London, see a well-dressed, handsome girl laugh, bridle, and visibly enjoy the praises of a sooty dog, a chimney-sweeper; who, with his empty sack across his shoulder, after giving her the way, stopt, and held up his brush and shovel in admiration of her?—Egad, girl, thought I, I despise thee as Lovelace: but were I the chimney-sweeper, and could only contrive to get into thy presence, my life to thy virtue, I would have thee.

So pleased was I with the young Surlings, for the elegance of her works, that I kissed her, and she made me a courtesy for my condescension; and blushed, and seemed sensible all over: encouraging, yet innocently, she adjusted her handkerchief, and looked towards the door, as much as to say, she would not tell, were I to kiss her again.

Her eldest sister popt upon her. The conscious girl blushed again, and looked so confounded, that I made an excuse for her, which gratified both. Mrs. Betty, said I, I have been so much pleased with the neatness of your dairy-works, that I could not help saluting your sister: you have your share of merit in them, I am sure—Give me leave—

Good souls!—I like them both—she courtesied too!—How I love a grateful temper! O that my Clarissa were but half so acknowledging!

I think I must get one of them to attend my charmer when she removes—the mother seems to be a notable woman. She had not best, however, be too notable: since, were she by suspicion to give me a face of difficulty to the matter, it would prepare me for a trial with one or both the daughters.

Allow me a little rhodamantade, Jack—but really and truly my heart is fixed. I can think of no creature breathing of the sex, but my Gloriana.

LETTER XIV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. [IN CONTINUATION.]

This is Wednesday; the day that I was to have lost my charmer for ever to the hideous Solmes! With what high satisfaction and heart's-ease can I now sit down, and triumph over my men in straw at Harlowe-place! Yet 'tis perhaps best for them, that she got off as she did. Who knows what consequences might have followed upon my attending her in; or (if she had not met me) upon my projected visit, followed by my myrmidons?

But had I even gone in with her unaccompanied, I think I had but little reason for apprehension: for well thou knowest, that the tame spirits which value themselves upon reputation, and are held within the skirts of the law by political considerations only, may be compared to an infectious spider; which will run into his hole the moment one of his threads is touched by a finger that can crush him, leaving all his toils defenceless, and to be brushed down at the will of the potent invader. While a silly fly, that has neither courage nor strength to resist, no sooner gives notice, by its buz and its struggles, of its being entangled, but out steps the self-circumscribed tyrant, winds round and round the poor insect, till he covers it with his bowel-spun toils; and when so fully secured, that it can neither move leg nor wing, suspends it, as if for a spectacle to be exulted over: then stalking to the door of his cell, turns about, glotes over it at a distance; and, sometimes advancing, sometimes retiring, preys at leisure upon its vitals.

But now I think of it, will not this comparison do as well for the entangled girls, as for the tame spirits?—Better o' my conscience!—"Tis but comparing the spider to us brave fellows, and it quadrates.

Whatever our hearts are in, our heads will follow. Begin with spiders, with flies, with what we will, girl is the centre of gravity, and we all naturally tend to it.

Nevertheless, to recur; I cannot but observe, that these tame spirits stand a poor chance in a fairly offensive war with such of us mad fellows as are above all law, and scorn to sculk behind the hypocritical screen of reputation.

Thou knowest that I never scruple to throw myself amongst numbers of adversaries; the more the safer: one or two, no fear, will take the part of a single adventurer, if not intentionally, in fact; holding him in, while others hold in the principal antagonist, to the augmentation of their mutual prowess, till both are prevailed upon to compromise, or one to be absent: so that, upon the whole, the law-breakers have the advantage of the law-keepers, all the world over; at least for a time, and till they have run to the end of their race. Add to this, in the question between me and the Harlowes, that the whole family of them must know that they have injured me—must therefore be afraid of me. Did they not, at their own church, cluster together like bees, when they saw me enter it? Nor knew they which should venture out first, when the service was over.

James, indeed, was not there. If he had, he would perhaps have endeavoured to look valiant. But there is a sort of valour in the face, which shews fear in the heart: just such a face would James Harlowe's have been, had I made them a visit.

When I have had such a face and such a heart as I have described to deal with, I have been all calm and serene, and left it to the friends of the blusterer (as I have done to the Harlowes) to do my work for me.

I am about mustering up in my memory, all that I have ever done, that has been thought praise-worthy, or but barely tolerable. I am afraid thou canst not help me to many remembrances of this sort; because I never was so bad as since I have known thee.

Have I not had it in my heart to do some good that thou canst not remind me of? Study for me, Jack. I have recollected some instances which I think will tell in—but see if thou canst not help me to some which I may have forgot.

This I may venture to say, that the principal blot in my escutcheon is owing to these girls, these confounded girls. But for them, I could go to church with a good conscience: but when I do, there they are. Every where does Satan spread his snares for me! But, how I think of it, what if our governor should appoint churches for the women only, and others for the men?—Full as proper, I think, for the promoting of true piety in both, [much better than the synagogue-lattices,] as separate boarding-schools for their education.

There are already male and female dedications of churches.

St. Swithin's, St. Stephen's, St. Thomas's, St. George's, and so forth, might be appropriated to the men; and Santa Catharina's, Santa Anna's, Santa Maria's, Santa Margareta's, for the women.

Yet were it so, and life to be the forfeiture of being found at the female churches, I believe that I, like a second Clodius, should change my dress, to come at my Portia or Pompeia, though one the daughter of a Cato, the other the wife of a Caesar.

But how I excuse!—Yet thou usedst to say, thou likedst my excursions. If thou dost, thou'lt have enow of them: for I never had a subject I so much adored; and with which I shall probably be compelled to have so much patience before I strike the blow; if the blow I do strike.

But let me call myself back to my recordation-subject—Thou needest not remind me of my Rosebud. I have her in my head; and moreover have contrived to give my fair-one an hint of that affair, by the agency of honest Joseph Leman;* although I have not reaped the hoped-for credit of her acknowledgement.

* See Vol. II. Letter XXVII.

That's the devil; and it was always my hard fate—every thing I do that is good, is but as I ought!—Every thing of a contrary nature is brought into the most glaring light against me—Is this fair? Ought not a balance to be struck; and the credit carried to my account?—Yet I must own too, that I half grudge Johnny this blooming maiden? for, in truth, I think a fine woman too rich a jewel to hang about a poor man's neck.

Surely, Jack, if I am guilty of a fault in my universal adorations of the sex, the women in general ought to love me the better for it.

And so they do; I thank them heartily; except here and there a covetous little rogue comes cross me, who, under the pretence of loving virtue for its own sake, wants to have me all to herself.

I have rambled enough.

Adieu, for the present.

LETTER XV

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

I always loved writing, and my unhappy situation gives me now enough of it; and you, I fear, too much. I have had another very warm debate with Mr. Lovelace. It brought on the subject which you advised me not to decline, when it was handsomely offered. And I want to have either your acquittal or blame for having suffered it to go off without effect.

The impatient wretch sent up to me several times, while I was writing my last to you, to desire my company: yet his business nothing particular; only to hear him talk. The man seems pleased with his own volubility; and, whenever he has collected together abundance of smooth things, he wants me to find an ear for them! Yet he need not; for I don't often gratify him either with giving him the praise for his verbosity, or shewing the pleasure in it that he would be fond of.

When I had finished the letter, and given it to Mr. Hickman's friend, I was going up again, and had got up half a dozen stairs; when he besought me to stop, and hear what he had to say.

Nothing, as I said, to any new purpose had he to offer; but complainings; and those in a manner, and with an air, as I thought, that bordered upon insolence. He could not live, he told me, unless he had more of my company, and of my indulgence too, that I had yet given him.

Hereupon I stepped down, and into the parlour, not a little out of humour with him; and the more, as he has very quietly taken up his quarters here, without talking of removing, as he had promised.

We began instantly our angry conference. He provoked me; and I repeated several of the plainest things I had said in our former conversations; and particularly told him, that I was every hour more and more dissatisfied with myself, and with him: that he was not a man, who, in my opinion, improved upon acquaintance: and that I should not be easy till he had left me to myself.

He might be surprised at my warmth, perhaps: but really the man looked so like a simpleton, hesitating, and having nothing to say for himself, or that should excuse the peremptoriness of his demand upon me, (when he knew I had been writing a letter which a gentleman waited for,) that I flung from him, declaring, that I would be mistress of my own time, and of my own actions, and not to be called to account for either.

He was very uneasy till he could again be admitted into my company, and when I was obliged to see him, which was sooner than I liked, never did the man put on a more humble and respectful demeanor.

He told me, that he had, upon this occasion, been entering into himself, and had found a great deal of reason to blame himself for an impertinency and inconsideration which, although he meant nothing by it, must be very disagreeable to one of my delicacy. That having always aimed at a manly sincerity and openness of heart, he had not till now discovered, that both were very consistent with that true politeness, which he feared he had too much disregarded, while he sought to avoid the contrary extreme; knowing, that in me he had to deal with a lady, who despised an hypocrite, and who was above all flattery. But from this time forth, I should find such an alteration in his whole behaviour, as might be expected from a man who knew himself to be honoured with the presence and conversation of a person, who had the most delicate mind in the world—that was his flourish.

I said, that he might perhaps expect congratulation upon the discovery he had just now made, to wit, that true politeness and sincerity were reconcilable: but that I, who had, by a perverse fate, been thrown into his company, had abundant reason to regret that he had not sooner found this out.—Since, I believed, very few men of birth and education were strangers to it.

He knew not, neither, he said, that he had so badly behaved himself, as to deserve so very severe a rebuke.

Perhaps not, I replied: but he might, if so, make another discovery from what I had said; which might be to my own disadvantage: since, if he had so much reason to be satisfied with himself, he would see what an ungenerous person he spoke to, who, when he seemed to give himself airs of humility, which, perhaps he thought beneath him to assume, had not the civility to make him a compliment upon them; but was ready to take him at his word.

He had long, with infinite pleasure, the pretended flattery-hater said, admired my superior talents, and a wisdom in so young a lady, perfectly suprising.

Let me, Madam, said he, stand ever so low in your opinion, I shall believe all you say to be just; and that I have nothing to do but to govern myself for the future by your example, and by the standard you shall be pleased to give me.

I know better, Sir, replied I, than to value myself upon your volubility of speech. As you pretend to pay so preferable a regard to sincerity, you shall confine yourself to the strict rules of truth, when you speak of me, to myself: and then, although you shall be so kind as to imagine that you have reason to make me a compliment, you will have much more to pride yourself in those arts which have made so extraordinary a young creature so great a fool.

Really, my dear, the man deserves not politer treatment.—And then has he not made a fool, an egregious fool of me?—I am afraid he himself thinks he has.

I am surprised! I am amazed, Madam, returned he, at so strange a turn upon me!—I am very unhappy, that nothing I can do or say will give you a good opinion of me!—Would to heaven that I knew what I can do to obtain the honour of your confidence!

I told him, that I desired his absence, of all things. I saw not, I said, that my friends thought it worth their while to give me disturbance: therefore, if he would set out for London, or Berkshire, or whither he pleased, it would be most agreeable to me, and most reputable too.

He would do so, he said, he intended to do so, the moment I was in a place to my liking—in a place convenient for me.

This, Sir, will be so, said I, when you are not here to break in upon me, and make the apartments inconvenient.

He did not think this place safe, he replied; and as I intended not to stay here, he had not been so solicitous, as otherwise he should have been, to enjoin privacy to his servants, nor to Mrs. Grene at her leaving me; that there were two or three gentlemen at the neighbourhood, he said, with whose servants his gossiping fellows had scraped acquaintance: so that he could not think of leaving me here unguarded and unattended.—But fix upon any place in England where I could be out of danger, and he would go to the furthest part of the king's dominions, if by doing so he could make me easy.

I told him plainly that I should never be in humour with myself for meeting him; nor with him, for seducing me away: that my regrets increased, instead of diminished: that my reputation was wounded: that nothing I could do would now retrieve it: and that he must not wonder, if I every hour grew more and more uneasy both with myself and him: that upon the whole, I was willing to take care of myself; and when he had left me, I should best know what to resolve upon, and whither to go.

He wished, he said, he were at liberty, without giving me offence, or being thought to intend to infringe the articles I had stipulated and insisted upon, to make one humble proposal to me. But the sacred regard he was determined to pay to all my injunctions (reluctantly as I had on Monday last put it into his power to serve me) would not permit him to make it, unless I would promise to excuse him, if I did not approve of it.

I asked, in some confusion, what he would say?

He prefaced and paraded on; and then out came, with great diffidence, and many apologies, and a bashfulness which sat very awkwardly upon him, a proposal of speedy solemnization: which, he said, would put all right; and make my first three or four months (which otherwise must be passed in obscurity and apprehension) a round of visits and visitings to and from all his relations; to Miss Howe; to whom I pleased: and would pave the way to the reconciliation I had so much at heart.

Your advice had great weight with me just then, as well as his reasons, and the consideration of my unhappy situation: But what could I say? I wanted somebody to speak for me.

The man saw I was not angry at his motion. I only blushed; and that I am sure I did up to the ears; and looked silly, and like a fool.

He wants not courage. Would he have had me catch at his first, at his very first word?—I was silent too—and do not the

bold sex take silence for a mark of a favour!—Then, so lately in my father's house! Having also declared to him in my letters, before I had your advice, that I would not think of marriage till he had passed through a state of probation, as I may call it—How was it possible I could encourage, with very ready signs of approbation, such an early proposal? especially so soon after the free treatment he had provoked from me. If I were to die, I could not.

He looked at me with great confidence; as if (notwithstanding his contradictory bashfulness) he would look me through; while my eye but now-and-then could glance at him.—He begged my pardon with great humility: he was afraid I would think he deserved no other answer, but that of a contemptuous silence. True love was fearful of offending. [Take care, Mr. Lovelace, thought I, how your's is tried by that rule]. Indeed so sacred a regard [foolish man!] would he have to all my declarations made before I honoured him—

I would hear him no further; but withdrew in a confusion too visible, and left him to make his nonsensical flourishes to himself.

I will only add, that, if he really wishes for a speedy solemnization, he never could have had a luckier time to press for my consent to it. But he let it go off; and indignation has taken place of it. And now it shall be a point with me, to get him at a distance from me.

I am, my dearest friend, Your ever faithful and obliged CL. H.

LETTER XVI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY, APR. 13.

Why, Jack, thou needest not make such a wonderment, as the girls say, if I should have taken large strides already towards reformation: for dost thou not see, that while I have been so assiduously, night and day, pursuing this single charmer, I have infinitely less to answer for, than otherwise I should have had? Let me see, how many days and nights?—Forty, I believe, after open trenches, spent in the sap only, and never a mine sprung yet!

By a moderate computation, a dozen kites might have fallen, while I have been only trying to ensnare this single lark. Nor yet do I see when I shall be able to bring her to my lure: more innocent days yet, therefore!—But reformation for my stalking-horse, I hope, will be a sure, though a slow method to effect all my purposes.

Then, Jack, thou wilt have a merit too in engaging my pen, since thy time would be otherwise worse employed: and, after all, who knows but by creating new habits, at the expense of the old, a real reformation may be brought about? I have promised it; and I believe there is a pleasure to be found in being good, reversing that of Nat. Lee's madman,

—Which none but good men know.

By all this, seest thou not how greatly preferable it is, on twenty accounts, to pursue a difficult rather than an easy chace? I have a desire to inculcate this pleasure upon thee, and to teach thee to fly at nobler game than daws, crows, and widgeons: I have a mind to shew thee from time to time, in the course of the correspondence thou hast so earnestly wished me to begin on this illustrious occasion, that these exalted ladies may be abased, and to obviate one of the objections that thou madest to me, when we were last together, that the pleasure which attends these nobler aims, remunerates not the pains they bring with them; since, like a paltry fellow as thou wert, thou assertedst that all women are alike.

Thou knowest nothing, Jack, of the delicacies of intrigue: nothing of the glory of outwitting the witty and the watchful: of the joys that fill the mind of the inventive or contriving genius, ruminating which to use of the different webs that offer to him for the entanglement of a haughty charmer, who in her day has given him unnumbered torments. Thou, Jack, who, like a dog at his ease, contentest thyself to growl over a bone thrown out to thee, dost not know the joys of a chace, and in pursuing a winding game: these I will endeavour to rouse thee to, and then thou wilt have reason doubly and trebly to thank me, as well because of thy present delight, as with regard to thy prospect beyond the moon.

To this place I had written, purely to amuse myself, before I was admitted to my charmer. But now I have to tell thee, that I was quite right in my conjecture, that she would set up for herself, and dismiss me: for she has declared in so many words that such was her resolution: And why? Because, to be plain with me, the more she saw of me, and of my ways, the less she liked of either.

This cut me to the heart! I did not cry, indeed! Had I been a woman, I should though, and that most plentifully: but I pulled out a white cambrick handkerchief: that I could command, but not my tears.

She finds fault with my protestations, with my professions, with my vows: I cannot curse a servant, the only privilege a master is known by, but I am supposed to be a trooper*—I must not say, By my soul! nor, As I hope to be saved! Why, Jack, how particular this is! Would she not have me think I have a precious soul, as well as she? If she thinks my salvation hopeless, what a devil [another exceptionable word!] does she propose to reform me for? So I have not an ardent expression left me.

** See Letter VI. of this volume.*

What can be done with a woman who is above flattery, and despises all praise but that which flows from the approbation of her own heart?

Well, Jack, thou seest it is high time to change my measures. I must run into the pious a little faster than I had designed.

What a sad thing it would be, were I, after all, to lose her person, as well as her opinion! the only time that further acquaintance, and no blow struck, nor suspicion given, ever lessened me in a lady's favour! A cursed mortification!—'Tis certain I can have no pretence for holding her, if she will go. No such thing as force to be used, or so much as hinted at: Lord send us safe at London!—That's all I have for it now: and yet it must be the least part of my speech.

But why will this admirable creature urge her destiny? Why will she defy the power she is absolutely dependent upon? Why will she still wish to my face that she had never left her father's house? Why will she deny me her company, till she makes me lose my patience, and lay myself open to her resentment? And why, when she is offended, does she carry her indignation to the utmost length that a scornful beauty, in the very height of her power and pride, can go?

Is it prudent, thinkest thou, in her circumstances, to tell me, repeatedly to tell me, 'That she is every hour more and more dissatisfied with herself and me? That I am not one who improve upon her in my conversation and address?' [Couldst thou, Jack, bear this from a captive!] 'That she shall not be easy while she is with me? That she knows better than to value herself upon my volubility? That if I think she deserves the compliments I make her, I may pride myself in those arts, by which I have made a fool of so extraordinary a person? That she shall never forgive herself for meeting me,

nor me for seducing her away?' [Her very words.] 'That her regrets increase instead of diminish? That she will take care of herself; and, since her friends think it not worth while to pursue her, she will be left to her own care? That I shall make Mrs. Sorlings's house more agreeable by my absence?—And go to Berks, to town, or wherever I will,' [to the devil, I suppose,] 'with all her heart?'

The impolitic charmer!—To a temper so vindictive as she thins mine! To a free-liver, as she believes me to be, who has her in his power! I was before, as thou knowest, balancing; now this scale, now that, the heaviest. I only waited to see how her will would work, how mine would lead me on. Thou seest what bias here takes—And wilt thou doubt that mine will be determined by it? Were not her faults, before this, numerous enough? Why will she put me upon looking back?

I will sit down to argue with myself by-and-by, and thou shalt be acquainted with the result.

If thou didst but know, if thou hadst but beheld, what an abject slave she made me look like!—I had given myself high airs, as she called them: but they were airs that shewed my love for her: that shewed I could not live out of her company. But she took me down with a vengeance! She made me look about me. So much advantage had she over me; such severe turns upon me; by my soul, Jack, I had hardly a word to say for myself. I am ashamed to tell thee what a poor creature she made me look like! But I could have told her something that would have humbled her pretty pride at the instant, had she been in a proper place, and proper company about her.

To such a place then—and where she cannot fly me—And then to see how my will works, and what can be done with the amorous see-saw; now humble, now proud; now expecting, or demanding; now submitting, or acquiescing—till I have tried resistance.

But these hints are at present enough. I may further explain myself as I go along; and as I confirm or recede in my future motions. If she will revive past disobligations! If she will—But no more, no more, as I said, at present, of threatenings.

LETTER XVII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. [IN CONTINUATION.]

And do I not see that I shall need nothing but patience, in order to have all power with me? For what shall we say, if all these complaints of a character wounded; these declarations of increasing regrets for meeting me; of resentments never to be got over for my seducing her away; these angry commands to leaver her:—What shall we say, if all were to mean nothing but MATRIMONY? And what if my forbearing to enter upon that subject come out to be the true cause of their petulance and uneasiness!

I had once before played about the skirts of the irrevocable obligation; but thought myself obliged to speak in clouds, and to run away from the subject, as soon as she took my meaning, lest she should imagine it to be ungenerously urged, now she was in some sort in my power, as she had forbid me beforehand, to touch upon it, till I were in a state of visible reformation, and till a reconciliation with her friends were probable. But now, out-argued, out-talented, and pushed so vehemently to leave one of whom I had no good pretence to hold, if she would go; and who could so easily, if I had given her cause to doubt, have thrown herself into other protection, or have returned to Harlowe-place and Solmes; I spoke out upon the subject, and offered reasons, although with infinite doubt and hesitation, [lest she should be offended at me, Belford!] why she should assent to the legal tie, and make me the happiest of men. And O how the mantle cheek, the downcast eye, the silent yet trembling lip, and the heaving bosom, a sweet collection of heightened beauties, gave evidence that the tender was not mortally offensive!

Charming creature! thought I, [but I charge thee, that thou let not any of the sex know my exultation,*] Is it so soon come to this? Am I already lord of the destiny of a Clarissa Harlowe? Am I already the reformed man thou resolvest I should be, before I had the least encouragement given me? Is it thus, that the more thou knowest me, the less thou seest reason to approve of me?—And can art and design enter into a breast so celestial? To banish me from thee, to insist so rigorously upon my absence, in order to bring me closer to thee, and make the blessing dear? Well do thy arts justify mine; and encourage me to let loose my plotting genius upon thee.

** Mr. Lovelace might have spared this caution on this occasion, since many of the sex [we mention it with regret] who on the first publication had read thus far, and even to the lady's first escape, have been readier to censure her for over-niceness, as we have observed in a former note, page 42, than him for artifices and exultations not less cruel and ungrateful, than ungenerous and unmanly.*

But let me tell thee, charming maid, if thy wishes are at all to be answered, that thou hast yet to account to me for thy reluctance to go off with me, at a crisis when thy going off was necessary to avoid being forced into the nuptial fetters with a wretch, that, were he not thy aversion, thou wert no more honest to thy own merit than to me.

I am accustomed to be preferred, let me tell thee, by thy equals in rank too, though thy inferiors in merit: But who is not so? And shall I marry a woman, who has given me reason to doubt the preference she has for me?

No, my dearest love, I have too sacred a regard for thy injunctions, to let them be broken through, even by thyself. Nor will I take in thy full meaning by blushing silence only. Nor shalt thou give me room to doubt, whether it be necessity or love, that inspires this condescending impulse.

Upon these principles, what had I to do but to construe her silence into contemptuous displeasure? And I begged her pardon for making a motion which I had so much reason to fear would offend her: for the future I would pay a sacred regard to her previous injunctions, and prove to her by all my conduct the truth of that observation, That true love is always fearful of offending.

And what could the lady say to this? methinks thou askest.

Say!—Why she looked vexed, disconcerted, teased; was at a loss, as I thought, whether to be more angry with herself, or with me. She turned about, however, as if to hide a starting tear; and drew a sigh into two or three but just audible quavers, trying to suppress it, and withdrew—leaving me master of the field.

Tell me not of politeness; tell me not of generosity; tell me not of compassion—Is she not a match for me? More than a match? Does she not outdo me at every fair weapon? Has she not made me doubt her love? Has she not taken officious pains to declare that she was not averse to Solmes for any respect she had to me? and her sorrow for putting herself out of his reach, that is to say, for meeting me?

Then, what a triumph would it be to the Harlowe pride, were I now to marry this lady? A family beneath my own! No one in it worthy of an alliance with but her! My own estate not contemptible! Living within the bounds of it, to avoid dependence upon their betters, and obliged to no man living! My expectations still so much more considerable! My

person, my talents—not to be despised, surely—yet rejected by them with scorn. Obligated to carry on an underhand address to their daughter, when two of the most considerable families in the kingdom have made overtures, which I have declined, partly for her sake, and partly because I never will marry; if she be not the person. To be forced to steal her away, not only from them, but from herself! And must I be brought to implore forgiveness and reconciliation from the Harlowes?—Beg to be acknowledged as the son of a gloomy tyrant, whose only boast is his riches? As a brother to a wretch, who has conceived immortal hatred to me; and to a sister who was beneath my attempts, or I would have had her in my own way, and that with a tenth part of the trouble and pains that her sister has cost me; and, finally, as a nephew to uncles, who value themselves upon their acquired fortunes, would insult me as creeping to them on that account?—Forbid it in the blood of the Lovelaces, that your last, and, let me say, not the meanest of your stock, should thus creep, thus fawn, thus lick the dust, for a WIFE—!

Proceed anon.

LETTER XVIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. [IN CONTINUATION.]

But is it not the divine CLARISSA [Harlowe let me not say; my soul spurns them all but her] whom I am thus by application threatening?—If virtue be the true nobility, how is she ennobled, and how shall an alliance with her ennoble, were not contempt due to the family from whom she sprang and prefers to me!

But again, let me stop.—Is there not something wrong, has there not been something wrong, in this divine creature? And will not the reflections upon that wrong (what though it may be construed in my favour?*) make me unhappy, when novelty has lost its charms, and when, mind and person, she is all my own? Libertines are nicer, if at all nice, than other men. They seldom meet with the stand of virtue in the women whom they attempt. And, by the frailty of those they have triumphed over, they judge of all the rest. 'Importunity and opportunity no woman is proof against, especially from the persevering lover, who knows how to suit temptations to inclinations:' This, thou knowest, is a prime article of the rake's creed.

** The particular attention of such of the fair sex, as are more apt to read for the sake of amusement than instruction, is requested to this letter of Mr. Lovelace.*

And what! (methinks thou askest with surprise) Dost thou question this most admirable of women?—The virtue of a CLARISSA dost thou question?

I do not, I dare not question it. My reverence for her will not let me directly question it. But let me, in my turn, ask thee—Is not, may not her virtue be founded rather in pride than in principle? Whose daughter is she?—And is she not a daughter? If impeccable, how came she by her impeccability? The pride of setting an example to her sex has run away with her hitherto, and may have made her till now invincible. But is not that pride abated? What may not both men and women be brought to do in a mortified state? What mind is superior to calamity? Pride is perhaps the principal bulwark of female virtue. Humble a woman, and may she not be effectually humbled?

Then who says Miss Clarissa Harlowe is the paragon of virtue?—Is virtue itself?

All who know her, and have heard of her, it will be answered.

Common bruit!—Is virtue to be established by common bruit only?—Has her virtue ever been proved?—Who has dared to try her virtue?

I told thee, I would sit down to argue with myself; and I have drawn myself into argumentation before I was aware.

Let me enter into a strict discussion of this subject.

I know how ungenerous an appearance what I have said, and what I have further to say, on this topic, will have from me: But am I not bringing virtue to the touchstone, with a view to exalt it, if it come out to be proof?—'Avaunt then, for one moment, all consideration that may arise from a weakness which some would miscall gratitude; and is oftentimes the corrupter of a heart most ignoble!'

To the test then—and I will bring this charming creature to the strictest test, 'that all the sex, who may be shewn any passages in my letters,' [and I know thou cheerest the hearts of all thy acquaintance with such detached parts of mine as tend not to dishonour characters or reveal names: and this gives me an appetite to oblige thee by interlardment,] 'that all the sex, I say, may see what they ought to be; what is expected from them; and if they have to deal with a person of reflection and punctilio, [of pride, if thou wilt,] how careful they ought to be, by a regular and uniform conduct, not to give him cause to think lightly of them for favours granted, which may be interpreted into natural weakness. For is not a wife the keeper of a man's honour? And do not her faults bring more disgrace upon a husband than even upon herself?'

It is not for nothing, Jack, that I have disliked the life of shackles.

To the test then, as I said, since now I have the question brought home to me, Whether I am to have a wife? And whether she be to be a wife at the first or at the second hand?

I will proceed fairly. I do the dear creature not only strict but generous justice; for I will try her by her own judgment, as well as by our principles.

She blames herself for having corresponded with me, a man of free character; and one indeed whose first view it was to draw her into this correspondence; and who succeeded in it by means unknown to herself.

'Now, what were her inducements to this correspondence?' If not what her niceness makes her think blameworthy, why does she blame herself?

Has she been capable of error? Of persisting in that error?

Whoever was the tempter, that is not the thing; nor what the temptation. The fact, the error, is now before us.

Did she persist in it against parental prohibition?

She owns she did.

Was a daughter ever known who had higher notions of the filial duty, of the parental authority?

Never.

'What must be the inducements, how strong, that were too strong for duty, in a daughter so dutiful?—What must my thoughts have been of these inducements, what my hopes built upon them at the time, taken in this light?'

Well, but it will be said, That her principal view was to prevent mischief between her brother and her other friends, and the man vilely insulted by them all.

But why should she be more concerned for the safety of others than they were for their own? And had not the rencounter then happened? 'Was a person of virtue to be prevailed upon to break through her apparent, her acknowledged duty, upon any consideration?' And, if not, was she to be so prevailed upon to prevent an apprehended evil only?

Thou, Lovelace, the tempter (thou wilt again break out and say) to be the accuser!

But I am not the accuser. I am the arguer only, and, in my heart, all the time acquit and worship the divine creature. 'But let me, nevertheless, examine, whether the acquital be owing to her merit, or to my weakness—Weakness the true name of love!'

But shall we suppose another motive?—And that is LOVE; a motive which all the world will excuse her for. 'But let me tell all the world that do, not because they ought, but because all the world is apt to be misled by it.'

Let LOVE then be the motive:—Love of whom?

A Lovelace, is the answer.

'Is there but one Lovelace in the world? May not more Lovelaces be attracted by so fine a figure? By such exalted qualities? It was her character that drew me to her: and it was her beauty and good sense that rivetted my chains: and now all together make me think her a subject worthy of my attempts, worthy of my ambition.'

But has she had the candour, the openness, to acknowledge that love?

She has not.

'Well then, if love be at the bottom, is there not another fault lurking beneath the shadow of that love?—Has she not affectation?—Or is it pride of heart?'

And what results?—'Is then the divine Clarissa capable of loving a man whom she ought not to love? And is she capable of affectation? And is her virtue founded in pride?—And, if the answer to these questions be affirmative, must she not then be a woman?'

And can she keep this love at bay? Can she make him, who has been accustomed to triumph over other women, tremble? Can she conduct herself, as to make him, at times, question whether she loves him or any man; 'yet not have the requisite command over the passion itself in steps of the highest consequence to her honour, as she thinks,' [I am trying her, Jack, by her own thoughts,] 'but suffer herself to be provoked to promise to abandon her father's house, and go off with him, knowing his character; and even conditioning not to marry till improbably and remote contingencies were to come to pass? What though the provocations were such as would justify any other woman; yet was a CLARISSA to be susceptible to provocations which she thinks herself highly censurable for being so much moved by?'

But let us see the dear creature resolved to revoke her promise, yet meeting her lover; a bold and intrepid man, who was more than once before disappointed by her; and who comes, as she knows, prepared to expect the fruits of her appointment, and resolved to carry her off. And let us see him actually carrying her off, and having her at his mercy—'May there not be, I repeat, other Lovelaces; other like intrepid, persevering enterprizers; although they may not go to work in the same way?'

'And has then a CLARISSA (herself her judge) failed?—In such great points failed?—And may she not further fail?—Fail in the greatest point, to which all the other points, in which she has failed, have but a natural tendency?'

Nor say thou, that virtue, in the eye of Heaven, is as much a manly as a womanly grace. By virtue in this place I mean chastity, and to be superior to temptation; my Clarissa out of the question. Nor ask thou, shall the man be guilty, yet expect the woman to be guiltless, and even unsuspectible? Urge thou not these arguments, I say, since the wife, by a failure, may do much more injury to the husband, than the husband can do to the wife, and not only to her husband, but to all his family, by obtruding another man's children into his possessions, perhaps to the exclusion of (at least to a participation with) his own; he believing them all the time to be his. In the eye of Heaven, therefore, the sin cannot be equal. Besides I have read in some places that the woman was made for the man, not the man for the woman. Virtue then is less to be dispensed with in the woman than in the man.

Thou, Lovelace, (methinks some better man than thyself will say,) to expect such perfection in a woman!

Yes, I, may I answer. Was not the great Caesar a great rake as to women? Was he not called, by his very soldiers, on one of his triumphant entries into Rome, the bald-pated lecher? and warning given of him to the wives, as well as to the daughter of his fellow-citizens? Yet did not Caesar repudiate his wife for being only in company with Clodius, or rather because Clodius, though by surprise upon her, was found in hers? And what was the reason he gave for it?—It was this, (though a rake himself, as I have said,) and only this—The wife of Caesar must not be suspected!—

Caesar was not a prouder man than Lovelace.

Go to then, Jack; nor say, nor let any body say, in thy hearing, that Lovelace, a man valuing himself upon his ancestry, is singular in his expectations of a wife's purity, though not pure himself.

As to my CLARISSA, I own that I hardly think there ever was such an angel of a woman. But has she not, as above, already taken steps, which she herself condemns? Steps, which the world and her own family did not think her capable of taking? And for which her own family will not forgive her?

Nor think it strange, that I refuse to hear any thing pleaded in behalf of a standard virtue from high provocations. 'Are not provocations and temptations the tests of virtue? A standard virtue must not be allowed to be provoked to destroy or annihilate itself.'

'May not then the success of him, who could carry her thus far, be allowed to be an encouragement for him to try to carry her farther?' 'Tis but to try. Who will be afraid of a trail for this divine creature? 'Thou knowest, that I have more than once, twice, or thrice, put to the fiery trial young women of name and character; and never yet met with one who held out a month; nor indeed so long as could puzzle my invention. I have concluded against the whole sex upon it.' And now, if I have not found a virtue that cannot be corrupted, I will swear that there is not one such in the whole sex. Is not then the whole sex concerned that this trial should be made? And who is it that knows this lady, that would not stake upon her head the honour of the whole?—Let her who would refuse it come forth, and desire to stand in her place.

I must assure thee, that I have a prodigious high opinion of virtue; as I have of all those graces and excellencies which I have not been able to attain myself. Every free-liver would not say this, nor think thus—every argument he uses, condemnatory of his own actions, as some would think. But ingenuousness was ever a signal part of my character.

Satan, whom thou mayest, if thou wilt, in this case, call my instigator, put the good man of old upon the severest trial. 'To his behaviour under these trials that good man owed his honour and his future rewards.' An innocent person, if doubted, must wish to be brought to a fair and candid trial.

Rinaldo, indeed, in Ariosto, put the Mantua Knight's cup of trial from him, which was to be the proof of his wife's chastity*—This was his argument for forbearing the experiment: 'Why should I seek a think I should be loth to find? My wife is a woman. The sex is frail. I cannot believe better of her than I do. It will be to my own loss, if I find reason to think worse.' But Rinaldo would not have refused the trial of the lady, before she became his wife, and when he might have found his account in detecting her.

** The story tells us, that whoever drank of this cup, if his wife were chaste, could drink without spilling; if otherwise, the contrary.*

For my part, I would not have put the cup from me, though married, had it been but in hope of finding reason to confirm my good opinion of my wife's honour; and that I might know whether I had a snake or a dove in my bosom.

To my point—'What must that virtue be which will not stand a trial?—What that woman who would wish to shun it?'

Well, then, a trial seems necessary for the furthest establishment of the honour of so excellent a creature.

And who shall put her to this trial? Who, but the man who has, as she thinks, already induced her in lesser points to swerve?—And this for her own sake in a double sense—not only, as he has been able to make some impression, but as she regrets the impression made; and so may be presumed to be guarded against his further attempts.

The situation she is at present in, it must be confessed is a disadvantageous one to her: but, if she overcome, that will redound to her honour.

Shun not, therefore, my dear soul, further trials, nor hate me for making them.—'For what woman can be said to be virtuous till she has been tried?'

'Nor is one effort, one trial, to be sufficient. Why? Because a woman's heart may at one time be adamant, at another wax'—as I have often experienced. And so, no doubt, hast thou.

A fine time of it, methinks, thou sayest, would the woman have, if they were all to be tried—!

But, Jack, I am not for that neither. Though I am a rake, I am not a rake's friend; except thine and company's.

And be this one of the morals of my tedious discussion—'Let the little rogues who would not be put to the question, as I may call it, choose accordingly. Let them prefer to their favour good honest sober fellows, who have not been used to play dog's tricks: who will be willing to take them as they offer; and, who being tolerable themselves, are not suspicious of others.'

But what, methinks thou askest, is to become of the lady if she fail?

What?—Why will she not, 'if once subdued, be always subdued?' Another of our libertine maxims. And what an immense pleasure to a marriage-hater, what rapture to thought, to be able to prevail upon such a woman as Miss Clarissa Harlowe to live with him, without real change of name!

But if she resist—if nobly she stand her trial?—

Why then I will marry her; and bless my stars for such an angel of a wife.

But will she not hate thee?—will she not refuse—

No, no, Jack!—Circumstanced and situated as we are, I am not afraid of that. And hate me! Why should she hate the man who loves her upon proof?

And then for a little hint at reprisal—am I not justified in my resolutions of trying her virtue, who is resolved, as I may say, to try mine? Who has declared that she will not marry me, till she has hopes of my reformation?

And now, to put an end to this sober argumentation, Wilt thou not thyself (whom I have supposed an advocate for the lady, because I know that Lord M. has put thee upon using the interest he thinks thou hast in me, to persuade me to enter the pale; wilt thou not thyself) allow me to try if I cannot awaken the woman in her?—To try if she, with all that glowing symmetry of parts, and that full bloom of vernal graces, by which she attracts every eye, be really inflexible as to the grand article?

Let me begin then, as opportunity presents—I will; and watch her every step to find one sliding one; her every moment to find the moment critical. And the rather, as she spares me not, but takes every advantage that offers to puzzle and plague me; nor expect nor thinks me to be a good man.

If she be a woman, and love me, I shall surely catch her once tripping: for love was ever a traitor to its harbourer: and love within, and I without, she will be more than woman, as the poet says, or I less than man, if I succeed not.

Now, Belford, all is out. The lady is mine; shall be more mine. Marriage, I see, is in my power, now she is so. Else perhaps it had not. If I can have her without marriage, who can blame me for trying? If not, great will be her glory, and my future confidence. And well will she merit the sacrifice I shall make her of my liberty; and from all her sex honours next to divine, for giving a proof, 'that there was once a woman whose virtue no trials, no stratagems, no temptations, even from the man she hated not, could overpower.'

Now wilt thou see all my circulation: as in a glass wilt thou see it.—CABALA, however, is the word;* nor let the secret escape thee even in thy dreams.

** This word, whenever used by any of these gentlemen, was agreed to imply an inviolable secret.*

Nobody doubts that she is to be my wife. Let her pass for such when I give the word. 'Mean time reformation shall be my stalking-horse; some one of the women in London, if I can get her hither, my bird.' And so much for this time.

LETTER XIX

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [IN ANSWER TO LETTERS IX. XV.]

Do not be so much concerned, my dearest friend, at the bickerings between my mother and me. We love one another dearly notwithstanding. If my mother had not me to find fault with, she must find fault with somebody else. And as to me, I am a very saucy girl; and were not this occasion, there would be some other, to shew it.

You have heard me say, that this was always the case between us. You could not otherwise have known it. For when you was with us, you harmonized us both; and, indeed, I was always more afraid of you than of my mother. But then that awe is accompanied with love. Your reproofs, as I have always found, are so charmingly mild and instructive; so evidently calculated to improve, and not to provoke; that a generous temper must be amended by them. But hear now, mind my good mamma, when you are not with us—You shall, I tell you, Nancy. I will have it so. Don't I know best, I won't be disobeyed. How can a daughter of spirits bear such language; such looks too with the language; and not have a longing mind to disobey?

Don't advise me, my dear, to subscribe to my mother's prohibition of correspondence with you. She has no reason for it. Nor would she of her own judgment have prohibited it. That odd old ambling soul your uncle, (whose visits are frequenter than ever,) instigated by your malicious and selfish brother and sister in the occasion. And they have only borrowed my

mother's lips, at the distance they are from you, for a sort of speaking trumpet for them. The prohibition, once more I say, cannot come from her heart: But if it did, is so much danger to be apprehended from my continuing to write to one of my own sex, as if I wrote to one of the other? Don't let dejection and disappointment, and the course of oppression which you have run through, weaken your mind, my dearest creature, and make you see inconveniencies where there possibly cannot be any. If your talent is scribbling, as you call it; so is mine—and I will scribble on, at all opportunities; and to you; let them say what they will. Nor let your letters be filled with the self-accusations you mention: there is no cause for them. I wish that your Anna Howe, who continues in her mother's house, were but half so good as Miss Clarissa Harlowe, who has been driven out of her father's.

I will say nothing upon your letter to your sister till I see the effect it will have. You hope, you tell me, that you shall have your money and clothes sent you, notwithstanding my opinion to the contrary—I am sorry to have it to acquaint you, that I have just now heard, that they have sat in council upon your letter; and that your mother was the only person who was for sending you your things, and was overruled. I charge you therefore to accept of my offer, as by my last: and give me particular directions for what you want, that I can supply you with besides.

Don't set your thought so much upon a reconciliation as to prevent your laying hold of any handsome opportunity to give yourself a protector; such a one as the man will be, who, I imagine, husband-like, will let nobody insult you but himself.

What could he mean by letting slip such a one as that you mention? I don't know how to blame you; for how you go beyond silence and blushes, when the foolish fellow came with his observances of the restrictions which you laid him under when in another situation? But, as I told you above, you really strike people into awe. And, upon my word, you did not spare him.

I repeat what I said in my last, that you have a very nice part to act: and I will add, that you have a mind that is much too delicate for your part. But when the lover is exalted, the lady must be humbled. He is naturally proud and saucy. I doubt you must engage his pride, which he calls his honour: and that you must throw off a little more of the veil. And I would have you restrain your wishes before him, that you had not met him, and the like. What signifies wishing, my dear? He will not bear it. You can hardly expect that he will.

Nevertheless, it vexed me to the very bottom of my pride, that any wretch of that sex should be able to triumph over Clarissa.

I cannot, however, but say, that I am charmed with your spirit. So much sweetness, where sweetness is requisite; so much spirit, where spirit is called for—what a true magnanimity!

But I doubt, in your present circumstances, you must endeavour after a little more of the reserve, in cases where you are displeas'd with him, and palliate a little. That humility which he puts on when you rise upon him, is not natural to him.

Methinks I see the man hesitating, and looking like the fool you paint him, under your corrective superiority!—But he is not a fool. Don't put him upon mingling resentment with his love.

You are very serious, my dear, in the first of the two letters before me, in relation to Mr. Hickman and me; and in relation to my mother and me. But as to the latter, you must not be too grave. If we are not well together at one time, we are not ill together at another. And while I am able to make her smile in the midst of the most angry fit she ever fell into on the present occasion, (though sometimes she would not if she could help it,) it is a very good sign; a sign that displeasure can never go deep, or be lasting. And then a kind word, or kind look, to her favourite Hickman, sets the one into raptures, and the other in tolerable humour, at any time.

But your case pains me at heart; and with all my levity, both the good folks most sometimes partake of that pain; nor will it be over, as long as you are in a state of uncertainty; and especially as I was not able to prevail for that protection for you which would have prevented the unhappy step, the necessity for which we both, with so much reason, deplore.

I have only to add (and yet it is needless to tell you) that I am, and will ever be,

Your affectionate friend and servant, ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE

You tell me, my dear, that my clothes and the little sum of money I left behind me, will not be sent me.—But I will still hope. It is yet early days. When their passions subside, they will better consider of the matter; and especially as I have my ever dear and excellent mother for my friend in this request! O the sweet indulgence! How has my heart bled, and how does it still bleed for her!

You advise me not to depend upon a reconciliation. I do not, I cannot depend upon it. But nevertheless, it is the wish next my heart. And as to this man, what can I do? You see, that marriage is not absolutely in my own power, if I were inclined to prefer it to the trial which I think I ought to have principally in view to make for a reconciliation.

You say, he is proud and insolent—indeed he is. But can it be your opinion, that he intends to humble me down to the level of his mean pride?

And what mean you, my dear friend, when you say, that I must throw off a little more of the veil?—Indeed I never knew that I wore one. Let me assure you, that if I never see any thing in Mr. Lovelace that looks like a design to humble me, his insolence shall never make me discover a weakness unworthy of a person distinguished by your friendship; that is to say, unworthy either of my sex, or of my former self.

But I hope, as I am out of all other protection, that he is not capable of mean or low resentments. If he has had any extraordinary trouble on my account, may he not thank himself for it? He may; and lay it, if he pleases, to his character; which, as I have told him, gave at least a pretence to my brother against him. And then, did I ever make him any promises? Did I ever profess a love for him? Did I ever wish for the continuance of his address? Had not my brother's violence precipitated matters, would not my indifference to him in all likelihood (as I designed it should) have tired out his proud spirit,* and make him set out for London, where he used chiefly to reside? And if he had, would not there have been an end of all his pretensions and hopes? For no encouragement had I given him; nor did I then correspond with him. Nor, believe me, should I have begun to do so—the fatal rencounter not having then happened; which drew me in afterwards for others' sakes (fool that I was!) and not for my own. And can you think, or can he, that even this but temporarily-intended correspondence (which, by the way, my mother* connived at) would have ended thus, had I not been driven on one hand, and teased on the other, to continue it, the occasion which had at first induced it continuing? What pretence then has he, were I to be absolutely in his power, to avenge himself on me for the faults of others, and through which I

have suffered more than he? It cannot, cannot be, that I should have cause to apprehend him to be so ungenerous, so bad a man.

** See Vol. I. Letter IV.*

You bid me not to be concerned at the bickerings between your mother and you. Can I avoid concern, when those bickerings are on my account? That they are raised (instigated shall I say?) by my uncle, and my other relations, surely must add to my concern.

But I must observe, perhaps too critically for the state my mind is in at present, that the very sentences you give from your mother, as in so many imperatives, which you take amiss, are very severe reflections upon yourself. For instance—You shall, I tell you, Nancy, implies that you had disputed her will—and so of the rest.

And further let me observe, with respect to what you say, that there cannot be the same reason for a prohibition of correspondence with me, as there was of mine with Mr. Lovelace; that I thought as little of bad consequences from my correspondence with him at the time, as you can do from yours with me now. But, if obedience be a duty, the breach of it is a fault, however circumstances may differ. Surely there is no merit in setting up our own judgment against the judgments of our parents. And if it is punishable so to do, I have been severely punished; and that is what I warned you of from my own dear experience.

Yet, God forgive me! I advise thus against myself with very great reluctance: and, to say truth, have not strength of mind, at present, to decline it myself. But, if my occasion go not off, I will take it into further consideration.

You give me very good advice in relation to this man; and I thank you for it. When you bid me be more upon the reserve with him in expressing my displeasure, perhaps I may try for it: but to palliate, as you call it, that, my dearest Miss Howe, cannot be done, by

Your own, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER XXI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE

You may believe, my dear Miss Howe, that the circumstances of the noise and outcry within the garden-door, on Monday last, gave me no small uneasiness, to think that I was in the hands of a man, who could, by such vile premeditation, lay a snare to trick me out of myself, as I have so frequently called it.

Whenever he came in my sight, the thought of this gave me an indignation that made his presence disgusting to me; and the more, as I fancied I beheld in his face a triumph which reproached my weakness on that account; although perhaps it was only the same vivacity and placidness that generally sit upon his features.

I was resolved to task him upon this subject, the first time I could have patience to enter upon it with him. For, besides that it piqued me excessively from the nature of the artifice, I expected shuffling and evasion, if he were guilty, that would have incensed me: and, if not confessedly guilty, such unsatisfactory declarations as still would have kept my mind doubtful and uneasy; and would, upon every new offence that he might give me, sharpen my disgust to me.

I have had the opportunity I waited for; and will lay before you the result.

He was making his court to my good opinion in very polite terms, and with great seriousness lamenting that he had lost it; declaring, that he knew not how he had deserved to do so; attributing to me an indifference to him, that seemed, to his infinite concern, hourly to increase. And he besought me to let him know my whole mind, that he might have an opportunity either to confess his faults and amend them, or clear his conduct to my satisfaction, and thereby entitle himself to a greater share of my confidence.

I answered him with quickness—Then, Mr. Lovelace, I will tell you one thing with a frankness, that is, perhaps, more suitable to my character than to yours, [He hoped not, he said,] which gives me a very bad opinion of you, as a designing, artful man.

I am all attention, Madam.

I never can think tolerably of you, while the noise and voice I heard at the garden-door, which put me into the terror you took so much advantage of, remains unaccounted for. Tell me fairly, tell me candidly, the whole of that circumstance; and of your dealings with that wicked Joseph Leman; and, according to your explicitness in this particular, I shall form a judgment of your future professions.

I will, without reserve, my dearest life, said he, tell you the whole; and hope that my sincerity in the relation will atone for any thing you may think wrong in the fact.

'I knew nothing, said he, of this man, this Leman, and should have scorned a resort to so low a method as bribing the servant of any family to let me into the secrets of that family, if I had not detected him in attempting to corrupt a servant of mine, to inform him of all my motions, of all my supposed intrigues, and, in short, of every action of my private life, as well as of my circumstances and engagements; and this for motives too obvious to be dwelt upon.

'My servant told me of his offers, and I ordered him, unknown to the fellow, to let me hear a conversation that was to pass between them.

'In the midst of it, and just as he had made an offer of money for a particular piece of intelligence, promising more when procured, I broke in upon them, and by bluster, calling for a knife to cut off his ears (one of which I took hold of) in order to make a present of it, as I said, to his employers, I obliged him to tell me who they were.

'Your brother, Madam, and your uncle Antony, he named.

'It was not difficult, when I had given him my pardon on naming them, (after I had set before him the enormity of the task he had undertaken, and the honourableness of my intentions to your dear self,) to prevail upon him, by a larger reward, to serve me; since, at the same time, he might preserve the favour of your uncle and brother, as I desired to know nothing but what related to myself and to you, in order to guard us both against the effects of an ill-will, which all his fellow-servants, as well as himself, as he acknowledged, thought undeserved.

'By this means, I own to you, Madam, I frequently turned his principals about upon a pivot of my own, unknown to themselves: and the fellow, who is always calling himself a plain man, and boasting of his conscience, was the easier, as I condescended frequently to assure him of my honourable views; and as he knew that the use I made of his intelligence, in all likelihood, prevented fatal mischiefs.

'I was the more pleased with his services, as (let me acknowledge to you, Madam) they procured to you, unknown to yourself, a safe and uninterrupted egress (which perhaps would not otherwise have been continued to you so long as it

was) to the garden and wood-house: for he undertook, to them, to watch all your motions: and the more cheerfully, (for the fellow loves you,) as it kept off the curiosity of others.*

** See Vol.II. Letter XXXVI.*

So, my dear, it comes out, that I myself was obliged to this deep contriver.

I sat in silent astonishment; and thus he went on.

'As to the circumstance, for which you think so hardly of me, I do freely confess, that having a suspicion that you would revoke your intention of getting away, and in that case apprehending that we should not have the time together that was necessary for that purpose; I had ordered him to keep off every body he could keep off, and to be himself within a view of the garden-door; for I was determined, if possible, to induce you to adhere to your resolution.'—

But pray, Sir, interrupting him, how came you to apprehend that I should revoke my intention? I had indeed deposited a letter to that purpose; but you had it not: and how, as I had reserved to myself the privilege of a revocation, did you know, but I might have prevailed upon my friends, and so have revoked upon good grounds?

'I will be very ingenuous, Madam—You had made me hope that if you changed your mind, you would give me a meeting to apprise me of the reasons for it. I went to the loose bricks, and I saw the letter there: and as I knew your friends were immovably fixed in their schemes, I doubted not but the letter was to revoke or suspend your resolution; and probably to serve instead of a meeting too. I therefore let it lie, that if you did revoke, you might be under the necessity of meeting me for the sake of the expectation you had given me: and as I came prepared, I was resolved, pardon me, Madam, whatever were your intentions, that you should not go back. Had I taken your letter I must have been determined by the contents of it, for the present at least: but not having received it, and you having reason to think I wanted not resolution in a situation so desperate, to make your friends a personal visit, I depended upon the interview you had bid me hope for.'

Wicked wretch, said I; it is my grief, that I gave you opportunity to take so exact a measure of my weakness!—But would you have presumed to visit the family, had I not met you?

Indeed I would. I had some friends in readiness, who were to have accompanied me to them. And had your father refused to give me audience, I would have taken my friends with me to Solmes.

And what did you intend to do to Mr. Solmes?

Not the least hurt, had the man been passive.

But had he not been passive, as you call it, what would you have done to Mr. Solmes?

He was loth, he said to tell me—yet not the least hurt to his person.

I repeated my question.

If he must tell me, he only proposed to carry off the poor fellow, and to hide him for a month or two. And this he would have done, let what would have been the consequence.

Was ever such a wretch heard of!—I sighed from the bottom of my heart; but bid him proceed from the part I had interrupted him at.

'I ordered the fellow, as I told you, Madam, said he, to keep within view of the garden-door: and if he found any parley between us, and any body coming (before you could retreat undiscovered) whose coming might be attended with violent effects, he should cry out; and this not only in order to save himself from their suspicions of him, but to give me warning to make off, and, if possible, to induce you (I own it, Madam) to go off with me, according to your own appointment. And I hope all circumstances considered, and the danger I was in of losing you for ever, that the acknowledgement of that contrivance, or if you had not met me, that upon Solmes, will not procure me your hatred: for, had they come as I expected as well as you, what a despicable wretch had I been, could I have left you to the insults of a brother and other of your family, whose mercy was cruelty when they had not the pretence with which this detected interview would have furnished them!'

What a wretch! said I.—But if, Sir, taking your own account of this strange matter to be fact, any body were coming, how happened it, that I saw only that man Leman (I thought it was he) out at the door, and at a distance, look after us?

Very lucky! said he, putting his hand first in one pocket, then in another—I hope I have not thrown it away—it is, perhaps, in the coat I had on yesterday—little did I think it would be necessary to be produced—but I love to come to a demonstration whenever I can—I may be giddy—I may be heedless. I am indeed—but no man, as to you, Madam, ever had a sincerer heart.

He then stepping to the parlour-door, called his servant to bring him the coat he had on yesterday.

The servant did. And in the pocket, rumbled up as a paper he regarded not, he pulled out a letter, written by that Joseph, dated Monday night; in which 'he begs pardon for crying out so soon—says, That his fears of being discovered to act on both sides, had made him take the rushing of a little dog (that always follows him) through the phyllirea-hedge, for Betty's being at hand, or some of his masters: and that when he found his mistake, he opened the door by his own key (which the contriving wretch confessed he had furnished him with) and inconsiderately ran out in a hurry, to have apprized him that his crying out was owing to his fright only:' and he added, 'that they were upon the hunt for me, by the time he returned.*

** See his Letter to Joseph Leman, Vol.III. No.III. towards the end, where he tells him, he would contrive for him a letter of this nature to copy.*

I shook my head—Deep! deep! deep! said I, at the best!—O Mr. Lovelace! God forgive and reform you!—But you are, I see plainly, (upon the whole of your own account,) a very artful, a very designing man.

Love, my dearest life, is ingenious. Night and day have I racked my stupid brain [O Sir, thought I, not stupid! 'Twere well perhaps if it were] to contrive methods to prevent the sacrifice designed to be made of you, and the mischief that must have ensued upon it: so little hold in your affections: such undeserved antipathy from your friends: so much danger of losing you for ever from both causes. I have not had for the whole fortnight before last Monday, half an hour's rest at a time. And I own to you, Madam, that I should never have forgiven myself, had I omitted any contrivance or forethought that would have prevented your return without me.

Again I blamed myself for meeting him: and justly; for there were many chances to one, that I had not met him. And if I had not, all his fortnight's contrivances, as to me, would have come to nothing; and, perhaps, I might nevertheless have escaped Solmes.

Yet, had he resolved to come to Harlowe-place with his friends, and been insulted, as he certainly would have been, what mischiefs might have followed!

But his resolutions to run away with and to hide the poor Solmes for a month or so, O my dear! what a wretch have I let run away with me, instead of Solmes!

I asked him, if he thought such enormities as these, such defiances of the laws of society, would have passed unpunished?

He had the assurance to say, with one of his usual gay airs, That he should by this means have disappointed his

enemies, and saved me from a forced marriage. He had no pleasure in such desperate pushes. Solmes he would not have personally hurt. He must have fled his country, for a time at least: and, truly, if he had been obliged to do so, (as all his hopes of my favour must have been at an end,) he would have had a fellow-traveller of his own sex out of our family, whom I little thought of.

Was ever such a wretch!—To be sure he meant my brother!

And such, Sir, said I, in high resentment, are the uses you make of your corrupt intelligencer—

My corrupt intelligencer, Madam! interrupted he, He is to this hour your brother's as well as mine. By what I have ingenuously told you, you may see who began this corruption. Let me assure you, Madam, that there are many free things which I have been guilty of as reprisals, in which I would not have been the aggressor.

All that I shall further say on this head, Mr. Lovelace, is this: that as this vile double-faced wretch has probably been the cause of great mischief on both sides, and still continues, as you own, his wicked practices, I think it would be but just, to have my friends apprized what a creature he is whom some of them encourage.

What you please, Madam, as to that—my service, as well as your brother's is now almost over for him. The fellow has made a good hand of it. He does not intend to stay long in his place. He is now actually in treaty for an inn, which will do his business for life. I can tell you further, that he makes love to your sister's Betty: and that by my advice. They will be married when he is established. An innkeeper's wife is every man's mistress; and I have a scheme in my head to set some engines at work to make her repent her saucy behaviour to you to the last day of her life.

What a wicked schemer you are, Sir!—Who shall avenge upon you the still greater evils which you have been guilty of? I forgive Betty with all my heart. She was not my servant; and but too probably, in what she did, obeyed the commands of her to whom she owed duty, better than I obeyed those to whom I owed more.

No matter for that, the wretch said [To be sure, my dear, he must design to make me afraid of him]: The decree was gone out—Betty must smart—smart too by an act of her own choice. He loved, he said, to make bad people their own punishers.—Nay, Madam, excuse me; but if the fellow, if this Joseph, in your opinion, deserves punishment, mine is a complicated scheme; a man and his wife cannot well suffer separately, and it may come home to him too.

I had no patience with him. I told him so. I see, Sir, said I, I see, what a man I am with. Your rattle warns me of the snake.—And away I flung: leaving him seemingly vexed, and in confusion.

LETTER XXII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE

My plain-dealing with Mr. Lovelace, on seeing him again, and the free dislike I expressed to his ways, his manners, and his contrivances, as well as to his speeches, have obliged him to recollect himself a little. He will have it, that the menaces which he threw out just now against my brother and Mr. Solmes, are only the effect of an unmeaning pleasantry. He has too great a stake in his country, he says, to be guilty of such enterprises as should lay him under a necessity of quitting it for ever. Twenty things, particularly, he says, he has suffered Joseph Leman to tell him of, that were not, and could not be true, in order to make himself formidable in some people's eyes, and this purely with a view to prevent mischief. He is unhappy, as far as he knows, in a quick invention; in hitting readily upon expedients; and many things are reported of him which he never said, and many which he never did, and others which he has only talked of, (as just now,) and which he has forgot as soon as the words have passed his lips.

This may be so, in part, my dear. No one man so young could be so wicked as he has been reported to be. But such a man at the head of such wretches as he is said to have at his beck, all men of fortune and fearlessness, and capable of such enterprises as I have unhappily found him capable of, what is not to be apprehended from him!

His carelessness about his character is one of his excuses: a very bad one. What hope can a woman have of a man who values not his own reputation?—These gay wretches may, in mixed conversation, divert for an hour, or so: but the man of probity, the man of virtue, is the man that is to be the partner for life. What woman, who could help it, would submit it to the courtesy of a wretch, who avows a disregard to all moral sanctions, whether he will perform his part of the matrimonial obligation, and treat her with tolerable politeness?

With these notions, and with these reflections, to be thrown upon such a man myself!—Would to Heaven—But what avail wishes now?—To whom can I fly, if I would fly from him?

LETTER XXIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY, APRIL 14.

Never did I hear of such a parcel of foolish toads as these Harlowes!—Why, Belford, the lady must fall, if every hair of her head were a guardian angel, unless they were to make a visible appearance for her, or, snatching her from me at unawares, would draw her after them into the starry regions.

All I had to apprehend, was, that a daughter, so reluctantly carried off, would offer terms to her father, and would be accepted upon a mutual concession; they to give up Solmes; she to give up me. And so I was contriving to do all I could to guard against the latter. But they seem resolved to perfect the work they have begun.

What stupid creatures are there in the world! This foolish brother not to know, that he who would be bribed to undertake a base thing by one, would be over-bribed to retort the baseness; especially when he could be put into the way to serve himself by both!—Thou, Jack, wilt never know one half of my contrivances.

He here relates the conversation between him and the Lady (upon the subject of the noise and exclamations his agent made at the garden-door) to the same effect as in the Lady's Letter, No. XXI. and proceeds exulting:

What a capacity for glorious mischief has thy friend!—Yet how near the truth all of it! The only derivation, my asserting that the fellow made the noises by mistake, and through fright, and not by previous direction: had she known the precise truth, her anger, to be so taken in, would never have let her forgive me.

Had I been a military hero, I should have made gunpowder useless; for I should have blown up all my adversaries by dint of stratagem, turning their own devices upon them.

But these fathers and mothers—Lord help 'em!—Were not the powers of nature stronger than those of discretion, and were not that busy dea bona to afford her genial aids, till tardy prudence qualified parents to manage their future offspring, how few people would have children!

James and Arabella may have their motives; but what can be said for a father acting as this father has acted? What for a mother? What for an aunt? What for uncles?—Who can have patience with such fellows and fellowesses?

Soon will the fair one hear how high their foolish resentments run against her: and then will she, it is to be hoped, have a little more confidence in me. Then will I be jealous that she loves me not with the preference my heart builds upon: then will I bring her to confessions of grateful love: and then will I kiss her when I please; and not stand trembling, as now, like a hungry hound, who sees a delicious morsel within his reach, (the froth hanging upon his vermilion jaws,) yet dares not leap at it for his life.

But I was originally a bashful mortal. Indeed I am bashful still with regard to this lady—Bashful, yet know the sex so well!—But that indeed is the reason that I know it so well:—For, Jack, I have had abundant cause, when I have looked into myself, by way of comparison with the other sex, to conclude that a bashful man has a good deal of the soul of a woman; and so, like Tiresias, can tell what they think, and what they drive at, as well as themselves.

The modest ones and I, particularly, are pretty much upon a par. The difference between us is only, what they think, I act. But the immodest ones out-do the worst of us by a bar's length, both in thinking and acting.

One argument let me plead in proof of my assertion; That even we rakes love modesty in a woman; while the modest woman, as they are accounted, (that is to say, the slyest,) love, and generally prefer, an impudent man. Whence can this be, but from a likeness in nature? And this made the poet say, That ever woman is a rake in her heart. It concerns them, by their actions, to prove the contrary, if they can.

Thus have I read in some of the philosophers, That no wickedness is comparable to the wickedness of a woman.* Canst thou tell me, Jack, who says this? Was it Socrates? for he had the devil of a wife—Or who? Or is it Solomon?—King Solomon—Thou remembrest to have read of such a king, dost thou not? SOL-O-MON, I learned, in my infant state [my mother was a good woman] to answer, when asked, Who was the wisest man?—But my indulgent questioner never asked me how he came by the uninspired part of his wisdom.

** Mr. Lovelace is as much out in his conjecture of Solomon, as of Socrates. The passage is in Ecclesiasticus, chap. xxv.*

Come, come, Jack, you and I are not so very bad, could we but stop where we are.

He then gives the particulars of what passed between him and the Lady on his menaces relating to her brother and Mr. Solmes, and of his design to punish Betty Barnes and Joseph Leman.

LETTER XXIV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE FRIDAY, APR. 14.

I will now give you the particulars of a conversation that has just passed between Mr. Lovelace and me, which I must call agreeable.

It began with his telling me, that he had just received intelligence that my friends were on a sudden come to a resolution to lay aside all thoughts of pursuing me, or of getting me back: and that therefore he attended me to know of my pleasure; and what I would do, or have him do?

I told him, that I would have him leave me directly; and that, when it was known to every body that I was absolutely independent of him, it would pass, that I had left my father's house because of my brother's ill usage of me: which was a plea that I might make with justice, and to the excuse of my father, as well as of myself.

He mildly replied, that if we could be certain that my relations would adhere to this their new resolution, he could have no objection, since such was my pleasure; but, as he was well assured that they had taken it only from apprehensions, that a more active one might involve my brother (who had breathed nothing but revenge) in some fatal misfortune, there was too much reason to believe that they would resume their former purpose the moment they should think they safely might.

This, Madam, said he, is a risque I cannot run. You would think it strange if I could. And yet, as soon as I knew they had so given out, I thought it proper to apprise you of it, and take your commands upon it.

Let me hear, said I, (willing to try if he had any particular view,) what you think most advisable?

'Tis very easy to say that, if I durst—if I might not offend you—if it were not to break conditions that shall be inviolable with me.

Say then, Sir, what you would say. I can approve or disapprove, as I think fit.

Had not the man a fine opportunity here to speak out?—He had. And thus he used it.

To wave, Madam, what I would say till I have more courage to speak out [More courage,—Mr. Lovelace more courage, my dear!]
—I will only propose what I think will be most agreeable to you—suppose, if you choose not to go to Lady Betty's, that you take a turn cross the country to Windsor?

Why to Windsor?

Because it is a pleasant place: because it lies in the way either to Berkshire, to Oxford, or to London: Berkshire, where Lord M. is at present: Oxford, in the neighbourhood of which lives Lady Betty: London, whither you may retire at your pleasure: or, if you will have it so, whither I may go, you staying at Windsor; and yet be within an easy distance of you, if any thing should happen, or if your friends should change their new-taken resolution.

This proposal, however, displeased me not. But I said, my only objection was, the distance of Windsor from Miss Howe, of whom I should be glad to be always within two or three hours reach of by messenger, if possible.

If I had thoughts of any other place than Windsor, or nearer to Miss Howe, he wanted but my commands, and would seek for proper accommodations: but, fix as I pleased, farther or nearer, he had servants, and they had nothing else to do but to obey me.

A grateful thing then he named to me—To send for my Hannah, as soon as I shall be fixed,* unless I would choose one of the young gentlewomen here to attend me; both of whom, as I had acknowledged, were very obliging; and he knew I

had generosity enough to make it worth their while.

** See his reasons for proposing Windsor, Letter XXV.—and her Hannah, Letter XXVI.*

This of Hannah, he might see, I took very well. I said I had thoughts of sending for her, as soon as I got to more convenient lodgings. As to these young gentlewomen, it were pity to break in upon that usefulness which the whole family were of to each other; each having her proper part, and performing it with an agreeable alacrity: insomuch, that I liked them all so well, that I could even pass my days among them, were he to leave me; by which means the lodgings would be more convenient to me than now they were.

He need not repeat his objections to this place, he said: but as to going to Windsor, or wherever else I thought fit, or as to his personal attendance, or leaving me, he would assure me (he very agreeably said) that I could propose nothing in which I thought my reputation, and even my punctilio, concerned, that he would not cheerfully come into. And since I was so much taken up with my pen, he would instantly order his horse to be got ready, and would set out.

Not to be off my caution. Have you any acquaintance at Windsor? said I.—Know you of any convenient lodgings there?

Except the forest, replied he, where I have often hunted, I know the least of Windsor of any place so noted and so pleasant. Indeed I have not a single acquaintance there.

Upon the whole, I told him, that I thought his proposal of Windsor, not amiss; and that I would remove thither, if I could get a lodging only for myself, and an upper chamber for Hannah; for that my stock of money was but small, as was easy to be conceived and I should be very loth to be obliged to any body. I added, that the sooner I removed the better; for that then he could have no objection to go to London, or Berkshire, as he pleased: and I should let every body know my independence.

He again proposed himself, in very polite terms, for my banker. But I, as civilly, declined his offer.

This conversation was to be, all of it, in the main, agreeable. He asked whether I would choose to lodge in the town of Windsor, or out of it?

As near the castle, I said, as possible, for the convenience of going constantly to the public worship; an opportunity I had been very long deprived of.

He should be very glad, he told me, if he could procure me accommodations in any one of the canon's houses; which he imagined would be more agreeable to me than any other, on many accounts. And as he could depend upon my promise, Never to have any other man but himself, on the condition to which he had so cheerfully subscribed, he should be easy; since it was now his part, in earnest, to set about recommending himself to my favour, by the only way he knew it would be done. Adding, with a very serious air—I am but a young man, Madam; but I have run a long course: let not your purity of mind incline you to despise me for the acknowledgement. It is high time to be weary of it, and to reform; since, like Solomon, I can say, There is nothing new under the sun: but that it is my belief, that a life of virtue can afford such pleasures, on reflection, as will be for ever blooming, for ever new!

I was agreeably surprised. I looked at him, I believe, as if I doubted my ears and my eyes. His aspect however became his words.

I expressed my satisfaction in terms so agreeable to him, that he said, he found a delight in this early dawning of a better day to him, and in my approbation, which he had never received from the success of the most favoured of his pursuits.

Surely, my dear, the man must be in earnest. He could not have said this; he could not have thought it, had he not. What followed made me still readier to believe him.

In the midst of my wild vagaries, said he, I have ever preserved a reverence for religion, and for religious men. I always called another cause, when any of my libertine companions, in pursuance of Lord Shaftesbury's test (which is a part of the rake's creed, and what I may call the whetstone of infidelity,) endeavoured to turn the sacred subject into ridicule. On this very account I have been called by good men of the clergy, who nevertheless would have it that I was a practical rake, the decent rake: and indeed I had too much pride in my shame, to disown the name of rake.

This, Madam, I am the readier to confess, as it may give you hope, that the generous task of my reformation, which I flatter myself you will have the goodness to undertake, will not be so difficult a one as you may have imagined; for it has afforded me some pleasure in my retired hours, when a temporary remorse has struck me for any thing I have done amiss, that I should one day delight in another course of life: for, unless we can, I dare say, no durable good is to be expected from the endeavour. Your example, Madam, must do all, must confirm all.*

** That he proposes one day to reform, and that he has sometimes good motions, see Vol.I. Letter XXXIV.*

The divine grace, or favour, Mr. Lovelace, must do all, and confirm all. You know not how much you please me, that I can talk to you in this dialect.

And I then thought of his generosity to his pretty rustic; and of his kindness to his tenants.

Yet, Madam, be pleased to remember one thing; reformation cannot be a sudden work. I have infinite vivacity: it is that which runs away with me. Judge, dearest Madam, by what I am going to confess, that I have a prodigious way to journey on, before a good person will think me tolerable; since though I have read in some of our perfectionists enough to make a better man than myself either run into madness or despair about the grace you mention, yet I cannot enter into the meaning of the word, nor into the modus of its operation. Let me not then be checked, when I mention your example for my visible reliance; and instead of using such words, till I can better understand them, suppose all the rest included in the profession of that reliance.

I told him, that, although I was somewhat concerned at his expression, and surprised at so much darkness, as (for want of another word) I would call it, in a man of his talents and learning, yet I was pleased with his ingenuousness. I wished him to encourage this way of thinking. I told him, that his observation, that no durable good was to be expected from any new course, where there was not a delight taken in it, was just; but that the delight would follow by use.

And twenty things of this sort I even preached to him; taking care, however, not to be tedious, nor to let my expanded heart give him a contracted or impatient blow. And, indeed, he took visible pleasure in what I said, and even hung upon the subject, when I, to try him, once or twice, seemed ready to drop it: and proceeded to give me a most agreeable instance, that he could at times think both deeply and seriously.—Thus it was.

He was once, he said, dangerously wounded in a duel, in the left arm, baring it, to shew me the scar: that this (notwithstanding a great effusion of blood, it being upon an artery) was followed by a violent fever, which at last fixed upon his spirits; and that so obstinately, that neither did he desire life, nor his friends expect it: that, for a month together, his heart, as he thought, was so totally changed, that he despised his former courses, and particularly that rashness which had brought him to the state he was in, and his antagonist (who, however, was the aggressor) into a much worse: that in this space he had thought which at times still gave him pleasure to reflect upon: and although these promising prospects changed, as he recovered health and spirits, yet he parted with them with so much reluctance, that

he could not help shewing it in a copy of verses, truly blank ones, he said; some of which he repeated, and (advantaged by the grace which he gives to every thing he repeats) I thought them very tolerable ones; the sentiments, however, much graver than I expected from him.

He has promised me a copy of the lines; and then I shall judge better of their merit; and so shall you. The tendency of them was, 'That, since sickness only gave him a proper train of thinking, and that his restored health brought with it a return to his evil habits, he was ready to renounce those gifts of nature for those of contemplation.'

He farther declared, that although these good motions went off (as he had owned) on his recovery, yet he had better hopes now, from the influence of my example, and from the reward before him, if he persevered: and that he was the more hopeful that he should, as his present resolution was made in a full tide of health and spirits; and when he had nothing to wish for but perseverance, to entitle himself to my favour.

I will not throw cold water, Mr. Lovelace, said I, on a rising flame: but look to it! for I shall endeavour to keep you up to this spirit. I shall measure your value of me by this test: and I would have you bear those charming lines of Mr. Rowe for ever in your mind; you, who have, by your own confession, so much to repent of; and as the scar, indeed, you shewed me, will, in one instance, remind you to your dying day.

The lines, my dear, are from the poet's Ulysses; you have heard me often admire them; and I repeated them to him:

*Habitual evils change not on a sudden:
But many days must pass, and many sorrows;
Conscious remorse and anguish must be felt,
To curb desire, to break the stubborn will,
And work a second nature in the soul,
Ere Virtue can resume the place she lost:
'Tis else dissimulation—*

He had often read these lines, he said; but never tasted them before.—By his soul, (the unmortified creature swore,) and as he hoped to be saved, he was now in earnest in his good resolutions. He had said, before I repeated those lines from Rowe, that habitual evils could not be changed on a sudden: but he hoped he should not be thought a dissembler, if he were not enabled to hold his good purposes; since ingratitude and dissimulation were vices that of all others he abhorred.

May you ever abhor them, said I. They are the most odious of all vices.

I hope, my dear Miss Howe, I shall not have occasion, in my future letters, to contradict these promising appearances. Should I have nothing on his side to combat with, I shall be very far from being happy, from the sense of my fault, and the indignation of all my relations. So shall not fail of condign punishment for it, from my inward remorse on account of my forfeited character. But the least ray of hope could not dart in upon me, without my being willing to lay hold of the very first opportunity to communicate it to you, who take so generous a share in all my concerns.

Nevertheless, you may depend upon it, my dear, that these agreeable assurances, and hopes of his begun reformation, shall not make me forget my caution. Not that I think, at worst, any more than you, that he dare to harbour a thought injurious to my honour: but he is very various, and there is an apparent, and even an acknowledged unfixedness in his temper, which at times gives me uneasiness. I am resolved therefore to keep him at a distance from my person and my thoughts, as much as I can: for whether all men are or are not encroachers, I am sure Mr. Lovelace is one.

Hence it is that I have always cast about, and will continue to cast about, what ends he may have in view from this proposal, or from that report. In a word, though hopeful of the best, I will always be fearful of the worst, in every thing that admits of doubt. For it is better, in such a situation as mine, to apprehend without cause, than to subject myself to surprise for want of forethought.

Mr. Lovelace is gone to Windsor, having left two servants to attend me. He purposes to be back to-morrow.

I have written to my aunt Hervey, to supplicate her interest in my behalf, for my clothes, books, and money; signifying to her, 'That, if I may be restored to the favour of my family, and allowed a negative only, as to any man who may be proposed to me, and be used like a daughter, a niece, and a sister, I will stand by my offer to live single, and submit, as I ought, to a negative from my father.' Intimating, nevertheless, 'That it were perhaps better, after the usage I have received from my brother and sister, that I may be allowed to be distant from them, as well for their sakes as for my own,' (meaning, as I suppose it will be taken, at my Dairy-house)—offering, 'to take my father's directions as to the manner I shall live in, the servants I shall have, and in every thing that shall shew the dutiful subordination to which I am willing to conform.'

My aunt will know by my letter to my sister how to direct to me, if she be permitted to favour me with a line.

I am equally earnest with her in this letter, as I was with my sister in that I wrote to her, to obtain for me a speedy reconciliation, that I not be further precipitated; intimating, 'That, by a timely lenity, all may pass for a misunderstanding only, which, otherwise, will be thought equally disgraceful to them, and to me; appealing to her for the necessity I was under to do what I did.'—

Had I owned that I was overreached, and forced away against my intention, might they not, as a proof of the truth of my assertion, have insisted upon my immediate return to them? And, if I did not return, would they not have reason to suppose, that I had now altered my mind (if such were my mind) or had not the power to return?—Then were I to have gone back, must it not have been upon their own terms? No conditioning with a father! is a maxim with my father, and with my uncles. If I would have gone, Mr. Lovelace would have opposed it. So I must have been under his controul, or have run away from him, as it is supposed I did to him, from Harlowe-place. In what a giddy light would this have made me appear!—Had he constrained me, could I have appealed to my friends for their protection, without risking the very consequences, to prevent which (setting up myself presumptuously, as a middle person between flaming spirits,) I have run into such terrible inconveniencies.

But, after all, must it not give me great anguish of mind, to be forced to sanctify, as I may say, by my seeming approbation, a measure I was so artfully tricked into, and which I was so much resolved not to take?

How one evil brings on another, is sorrowfully witnessed to by

Your ever-obliged and affectionate, CL. HARLOWE.

LETTER XXV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY, APR. 14.

Thou hast often reproached me, Jack, with my vanity, without distinguishing the humourous turn that accompanies it;

and for which, at the same time that thou robbest me of the merit of it thou admirest me highly. Envy gives thee the indistinction: Nature inspires the admiration: unknown to thyself it inspires it. But thou art too clumsy and too short-sighted a mortal, to know how to account even for the impulses by which thou thyself art moved.

Well, but this acquits thee not of my charge of vanity, Lovelace, methinks thou sayest.

And true thou sayest: for I have indeed a confounded parcel of it. But, if men of parts may not be allowed to be in vain, who should! and yet, upon second thoughts, men of parts have the least occasion of any to be vain; since the world (so few of them are there in it) are ready to find them out, and extol them. If a fool can be made sensible that there is a man who has more understanding than himself, he is ready enough to conclude, that such a man must be a very extraordinary creature.

And what, at this rate, is the general conclusion to be drawn from the premises?—Is it not, That no man ought to be vain? But what if a man can't help it!—This, perhaps, may be my case. But there is nothing upon which I value myself so much as upon my inventions. And for the soul of me, I cannot help letting it be seen, that I do. Yet this vanity may be a mean, perhaps, to overthrow me with this sagacious lady.

She is very apprehensive of me I see. I have studied before her and Miss Howe, as often as I have been with them, to pass for a giddy thoughtless creature. What a folly then to be so expatiatingly sincere, in my answer to her home put, upon the noises within the garden?—But such success having attended that contrivance [success, Jack, has blown many a man up!] my cursed vanity got uppermost, and kept down my caution. The menace to have secreted Solmes, and that other, that I had thoughts to run away with her foolish brother, and of my project to revenge her upon the two servants, so much terrified the dear creature, that I was forced to sit down to muse after means to put myself right in her opinion.

Some favourable incidents, at the time, tumbled in from my agent in her family; at least such as I was determined to make favourable: and therefore I desired admittance; and this before she could resolve any thing against me; that is to say, while her admiration of my intrepidity kept resolution in suspense.

Accordingly, I prepared myself to be all gentleness, all obligingness, all serenity; and as I have now and then, and always had, more or less, good motions pop up in my mind, I encouraged and collected every thing of this sort that I had ever had from novicehood to maturity, [not long in recollecting, Jack,] in order to bring the dear creature into good humour with me:* And who knows, thought I, if I can hold it, and proceed, but I may be able to lay a foundation fit to build my grand scheme upon!—LOVE, thought I, is not naturally a doubter: FEAR is, I will try to banish the latter: nothing then but love will remain. CREDULITY is the God of Love's prime minister, and they never are asunder.

** He had said, Letter XVIII. that he would make reformation his stalking-horse, &c.*

He then acquaints his friend with what passed between him and the Lady, in relation to his advices from Harlowe-place, and to his proposal about lodgings, pretty much to the same purpose as in her preceding Letter.

When he comes to mention his proposal of the Windsor lodgings, thus he expresses himself:

Now, Belford, can it enter into thy leaden head, what I meant by this proposal!—I know it cannot. And so I'll tell thee.

To leave her for a day or two, with a view to serve her by my absence, would, as I thought, look like a confiding in her favour. I could not think of leaving her, thou knowest, while I had reason to believe her friends would pursue us; and I began to apprehend that she would suspect that I made a pretence of that intentional pursuit to keep about her and with her. But now that they had declared against it, and that they would not receive her if she went back, (a declaration she had better hear first from me, than from Miss Howe, or any other,) what should hinder me from giving her this mark of my obedience; especially as I could leave Will, who is a clever fellow, and can do any thing but write and spell, and Lord M.'s Jonas (not as guards, to be sure, but as attendants only); the latter to be dispatched to me occasionally by the former, whom I could acquaint with my motions?

Then I wanted to inform myself, why I had not congratulatory letters from Lady Sarah and Lady Betty, and from my cousins Montague, to whom I had written, glorying in my beloved's escape; which letters, if properly worded, might be made necessary to shew her as matters proceed.

As to Windsor, I had no design to carry her particularly thither: but somewhere it was proper to name, as she condescended to ask my advice about it. London, I durst not; but very cautiously; and so as to make it her own option: for I must tell thee, that there is such a perverseness in the sex, that when they ask your advice, they do it only to know your opinion, that they may oppose it; though, had not the thing in question been your choice, perhaps it had been theirs.

I could easily give reasons against Windsor, after I had pretended to be there; and this would have looked the better, as it was a place of my own nomination; and shewn her that I had no fixed scheme. Never was there in woman such a sagacious, such an all-alive apprehension, as in this. Yet it is a grievous thing to an honest man to be suspected.

Then, in my going or return, I can call upon Mrs. Greme. She and my beloved had a great deal of talk together. If I knew what it was about; and that either, upon their first acquaintance, was for benefiting herself by the other; I might contrive to serve them both, without hurting myself: for these are the most prudent ways of doing friendships, and what are not followed by regrets, though the served should prove ingrateful. Then Mrs. Greme corresponds by pen-and-ink with her farmer-sister where we are: something may possibly arise that way, either of a convenient nature, which I may pursue; or of an inconvenient nature, which I may avoid.

Always be careful of back doors, is a maxim with me in all my exploits. Whoever knows me, knows that I am no proud man. I can talk as familiarly to servants as to principals, when I have a mind to make it worth their while to oblige me in any thing. Then servants are but as the common soldiers in an army, they do all the mischief frequently without malice, and merely, good souls! for mischief-sake.

I am most apprehensive about Miss Howe. She has a confounded deal of wit, and wants only a subject, to shew as much roguery: and should I be outwitted with all my sententious boasting of conceit of my own nostrum-mongership—[I love to plague thee, who art a pretender to accuracy, and a surface-skimmer in learning, with out-of-the-way words and phrases] I should certainly hang, drown, or shoot myself.

Poor Hickman! I pity him for the prospect he has with such a virago! But the fellow's a fool, God wot! And now I think of it, it is absolutely necessary for complete happiness in the married state, that one should be a fool [an argument I once held with this very Miss Howe.] But then the fool should know the other's superiority; otherwise the obstinate one will disappoint the wise one.

But my agent Joseph has helped me to secure this quarter, as I have hinted to thee more than once.

LETTER XXVI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. [IN CONTINUATION.]

But is it not a confounded thing that I cannot fasten an obligation upon this proud beauty? I have two motives in endeavouring to prevail upon her to accept of money and raiment from me: one; the real pleasure I should have in the accommodating of the haughty maid; and to think there was something near her, and upon her, that I could call mine: the other, in order to abate her severity and humble her a little.

Nothing more effectually brings down a proud spirit, than a sense of lying under pecuniary obligations. This has always made me solicitous to avoid laying myself under any such: yet, sometimes, formerly, have I been put to it, and cursed the tardy resolution of the quarterly periods. And yet I ever made shift to avoid anticipation: I never would eat the calf in the cow's belly, as Lord M.'s phrase is: for what is that, but to hold our lands upon tenant-courtesy, the vilest of all tenures? To be denied a fox-chace, for breaking down a fence upon my own grounds? To be clamoured at for repairs studied for, rather than really wanted? To be prated to by a bumpkin with his hat on, and his arms folded, as if he defied your expectations of that sort; his foot firmly fixed, as if upon his own ground, and you forced to take his arch leers, and stupid gybes; he intimating, by the whole of his conduct, that he had had it in his power to oblige you, and, if you behave civilly, may oblige you again? I, who think I have a right to break every man's head I pass by, if I like not his looks, to bear this!—No more could I do it, then I could borrow of an insolent uncle, or inquisitive aunt, who would thence think themselves entitled to have an account of all my life and actions laid before them for their review and censure.

My charmer, I see, has a pride like my own: but she has no distinction in her pride: nor knows the pretty fool that there is nothing nobler, nothing more delightful, than for loves to be conferring and receiving obligations from each other. In this very farm-yard, to give thee a familiar instance, I have more than once seen this remark illustrated. A strutting rascal of a cock have I beheld chuck, chuck, chuck, chuck-ing his mistress to him, when he has found a single barley-corn, taking it up with his bill, and letting it drop five or six times, still repeating his chucking invitation: and when two or three of his feathered ladies strive who shall be the first for it [O Jack! a cock is a grand signor of a bird!] he directs the bill of the foremost to it; and when she has got the dirty pearl, he struts over her with an erected crest, cling round her with dropt wings, sweeping the dust in humble courtship: while the obliged she, half-shy, half-willing, by her cowering tail, prepared wings, yet seemingly affrighted eyes, and contracted neck, lets one see that she knows the barley-corn was not all he called her for.

When he comes to that part of his narrative, where he mentions of the proposing of the Lady's maid Hannah, or one of the young Sorlings, to attend her, thus he writes:

Now, Belford, canst thou imagine what I meant by proposing Hannah, or one of the girls here, for her attendant? I'll give thee a month to guess.

Thou wilt not pretend to guess, thou say'st.

Well, then I'll tell thee.

Believing she would certainly propose to have that favourite wench about her, as soon as she was a little settled, I had caused the girl to be inquired after, with an intent to make interest, some how or other, that a month's warning should be insisted on by her master or mistress, or by some other means, which I had not determined upon, to prevent her coming to her. But fortune fights for me. The wench is luckily ill; a violent rheumatic disorder, which has obliged her to leave her place, confines her to her chamber. Poor Hannah! How I pity the girl! These things are very hard upon industrious servants!—I intend to make the poor wench a small present on the occasion—I know it will oblige my charmer.

And so, Jack, pretending not to know any thing of the matter, I pressed her to send for Hannah. She knew I had always a regard for this servant, because of her honest love to her lady: but now I have greater regard for her than ever. Calamity, though a poor servant's calamity, will rather increase than diminish good will, with a truly generous master or mistress.

As to one of the young Sorling's attendance, there was nothing at all in proposing that; for if either of them had been chosen by her, and permitted by the mother [two chances in that!] it would have been only till I had fixed upon another. And, if afterwards they had been loth to part, I could easily have given my beloved to a jealousy, which would have done the business; or to the girl, who would have quitted her country dairy, such a relish for a London one, and as would have made it very convenient for her to fall in love with Will; or perhaps I could have done still better for her with Lord M.'s chaplain, who is very desirous of standing well with his lord's presumptive heir.

A blessing on thy honest heart, Lovelace! thou'lt say; for thou art for providing for every body!

He gives an account of the serious part of their conversation, with no great variation from the Lady's account of it: and when he comes to that part of it, where he bids her remember, that reformation cannot be a sudden thing, he asks his friend:

Is not this fair play? Is it not dealing ingenuously? Then the observation, I will be bold to say, is founded in truth and nature. But there was a little touch of policy in it besides; that the lady, if I should fly out again, should not think me too gross an hypocrite: for, as I plainly told her, I was afraid, that my fits of reformation were but fits and sallies; but I hoped her example would fix them into habits. But it is so discouraging a thing to have my monitress so very good!—I protest I know not how to look up at her! Now, as I am thinking, if I could pull her down a little nearer to my own level; that is to say, could prevail upon her to do something that would argue imperfection, something to repent of; we should jog on much more equally, and be better able to comprehend one another: and so the comfort would be mutual, and the remorse not all on one side.

He acknowledges that he was greatly affected and pleased with the Lady's serious arguments at the time: but even then was apprehensive that his temper would not hold. Thus he writes:

This lady says serious things in so agreeable a manner (and then her voice is all harmony when she touches a subject she is pleased with) that I could have listened to her for half a day together. But yet I am afraid, if she falls, as they call it, she will lose a good deal of that pathos, of that noble self-confidence, which gives a good person, as I now see, a visible superiority over one not so good.

But, after all, Belford, I would fain know why people call such free-livers as you and me hypocrites.—That's a word I hate; and should take it very ill to be called by it. For myself, I have as good motions, and, perhaps, have them as frequently as any body: all the business is, they don't hold; or, to speak more in character, I don't take the care some do to conceal my lapses.

LETTER XXVII

MISS HOWE, TO MIS CLARISSA HARLOWE SATURDAY, APRIL
15.

Though pretty much pressed in time, and oppressed by my mother's watchfulness, I will write a few lines upon the new light that has broken in upon your gentleman; and send it by a particular hand.

I know not what to think of him upon it. He talks well; but judge him by Rowe's lines, he is certainly a dissembler, odious as the sin of hypocrisy, and, as he says, that other of ingratitude, are to him.

And, pray, my dear, let me ask, could he have triumphed, as it is said he has done, over so many of our sex, had he not been egregiously guilty of both sins?

His ingenuousness is the thing that staggers me: yet is he cunning enough to know, that whoever accuses him first, blunts the edge of an adversary's accusation.

He is certainly a man of sense: there is more hope of such a one than a fool: and there must be a beginning to a reformation. These I will allow in his favour.

But this, that follows, I think, is the only way to judge of his specious confessions and self-accusations—Does he confess any thing that you knew not before, or that you are not likely to find out from others?—If nothing else, what does he confess to his own disadvantage? You have heard of his duels: you have heard of his seductions.—All the world has. He owns, therefore, what it would be to no purpose to conceal; and his ingenuousness is a salvo—'Why, this, Madam, is no more than Mr. Lovelace himself acknowledges.'

Well, but what is now to be done?—You must make the best of your situation: and as you say, so he has proposed to you of Windsor, and his canon's house. His readiness to leave you, and go himself in quest of a lodging, likewise looks well. And I think there is nothing can be so properly done, as (whether you get to a canon's house or not) that the canon should join you together in wedlock as soon as possible.

I much approve, however, of all your cautions, of all your vigilance, and of every thing you have done, but of your meeting him. Yet, in my disapprobation of that, I judge by that event only: for who would have divined it would have been concluded as it did? But he is the devil by his own account: and had he run away with the wretched Solmes, and your more wretched brother, and himself been transported for life, he should have had my free consent for all three.

What use does he make of that Joseph Leman!—His ingenuousness, I must more than once say, confounds me; but if, my dear, you can forgive your brother for the part he put that fellow upon acting, I don't know whether you ought to be angry at Lovelace. Yet I have wished fifty times, since Lovelace got you away, that you were rid of him, whether it were by a burning fever, by hanging, by drowning, or by a broken neck; provided it were before he laid you under a necessity to go into mourning for him.

I repeat my hitherto rejected offer. May I send it safely by your old man? I have reasons for not sending it by Hickman's servant; unless I had a bank note. Inquiring for such may cause distrust. My mother is so busy, so inquisitive—I don't love suspicious tempers.

And here she is continually in and out—I must break off.

Mr. Hickman begs his most respectful compliments to you, with offer of his services. I told him I would oblige him, because minds in trouble take kindly any body's civilities: but that he was not to imagine that he particularly obliged me by this; since I should think the man or woman either blind or stupid who admired not a person of your exalted merit for your own sake, and wished not to serve you without view to other reward than the honour of serving you.

To be sure, that was his principal motive, with great daintiness he said it: but with a kiss of his hand, and a bow to my feet, he hoped, that a fine lady's being my friend did not lessen the merit of the reverence he really had for her.

Believe me ever, what you, my dear, shall ever find me,

Your faithful and affectionate, ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XXVIII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE SAT. AFTERNOON.

I detain your messenger while I write an answer to yours; the poor old man not being very well.

You dishearten me a good deal about Mr. Lovelace. I may be too willing from my sad circumstances to think the best of him. If his pretences to reformation are but pretences, what must be his intent? But can the heart of man be so very vile? Can he, dare he, mock the Almighty? But I may not, from one very sad reflection, think better of him; that I am thrown too much into his power, to make it necessary for him (except he were to intend the very utmost villany by me) to be such a shocking hypocrite? He must, at least be in earnest at the time he gives the better hopes. Surely he must. You yourself must join with me in this hope, or you could not wish me to be so dreadfully yoked.

But after all, I had rather, much rather, be independent of him, and of his family, although I have an high opinion of them; at least till I see what my own may be brought to.—Otherwise, I think, it were best for me, at once, to cast myself into Lady Betty's protection. All would then be conducted with decency, and perhaps many mortifications would be spared me. But then I must be his, at all adventures, and be thought to defy my own family. And shall I not first see the issue of one application? And yet I cannot make this, till I am settled somewhere, and at a distance from him.

Mrs. Sorlings shewed me a letter this morning, which she had received from her sister Greme last night; in which Mrs. Greme (hoping I would forgive her forward zeal if her sister thinks fit to shew her letter to me) 'wishes (and that for all the noble family's sake, and she hopes she may say for my own) that I will be pleased to yield to make his honour, as she calls him, happy.' She grounds her officiousness, as she calls it, upon what he was so condescending [her word also] to say to her yesterday, in his way to Windsor, on her presuming to ask, if she might soon give him joy? 'That no man ever loved a woman as he loves me: that no woman ever so well deserved to be beloved: that he loves me with such a purity as he had never believed himself capable of, or that a mortal creature could have inspired him with; looking upon me as all soul; as an angel sent down to save his;' and a great deal more of this sort: 'but that he apprehends my consent to make

him happy is at a greater distance than he wishes; and complained of too severe restrictions I had laid upon him before I honoured him with my confidence: which restrictions must be as sacred to him, as if they were parts of the marriage contract,' &c.

What, my dear, shall I say to this? How shall I take it? Mrs. Greme is a good woman. Mrs. Sorlings is a good woman. And this letter agrees with the conversation between Mr. Lovelace and me, which I thought, and still think, so agreeable.* Yet what means the man by foregoing the opportunities he has had to declare himself?—What mean his complaints of my restrictions to Mrs. Greme? He is not a bashful man.—But you say, I inspire people with an awe of me.—An awe, my dear!—As how?

** This letter Mrs. Greme (with no bad design on her part) was put upon writing by Mr. Lovelace himself, as will be seen in Letter XXXV.*

I am quite petulant, fretful, and peevish, with myself, at times, to find that I am bound to see the workings of the subtle, or this giddy spirit, which shall I call it?

How am I punished, as I frequently think, for my vanity, in hoping to be an example to young persons of my sex! Let me be but a warning, and I will now be contented. For, be my destiny what it may, I shall never be able to hold up my head again among my best friends and worthiest companions.

It is one of the cruelest circumstances that attends the faults of the inconsiderate, that she makes all who love her unhappy, and gives joy only to her own enemies, and to the enemies of her family.

What an useful lesson would this afford, were it properly inculcated at the time that the tempted mind was balancing upon a doubtful adventure?

You know not, my dear, the worth of a virtuous man; and, noble-minded as you are in most particulars, you partake of the common weakness of human nature, in being apt to slight what is in your own power.

You would not think of using Mr. Lovelace, were he your suitor, as you do the much worthier Mr. Hickman—would you?—You know who says in my mother's case, 'Much will bear, much shall bear, all the world through.'* Mr. Hickman, I fancy, would be glad to know the lady's name, who made such an observation. He would think it hardly possible, but such a one should benefit by her own remark; and would be apt to wish his Miss Howe acquainted with her.

** See Vol. I. Letter X.*

Gentleness of heart, surely, is not despicable in a man. Why, if it be, is the highest distinction a man can arrive at, that of a gentleman?—A distinction which a prince may not deserve. For manners, more than birth, fortune, or title, are requisite in this character. Manners are indeed the essence of it. And shall it be generally said, and Miss Howe not be an exception to it (as you once wrote), that our sex are best dealt with by boisterous and unruly spirits?*

** See Vol. II. Letter III.*

Forgive me, my dear, and love me as you used to do. For although my fortunes are changed, my heart is not: Nor ever will, while it bids my pen tell you, that it must cease to bear, when it is not as much yours as

Your CL. HARLOWE.

LETTER XXIX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE. SATURDAY EVENING.

Mr. Lovelace has seen divers apartments at Windsor; but not one, he says, that he thought fit for me, and which, at the same time, answered my description.

He has been very solicitous to keep to the letter of my instructions: which looked well: and the better I like him, as, although he proposed that town, he came back, dissuading me from it: for he said, that, in his journey from thence, he had thought Windsor, although of his own proposal, a wrong choice; because I coveted privacy, and that was a place generally visited and admired.*

** This inference of the Lady in his favour is exactly what he had hoped for. See Letter XXV. of this volume.*

I told him, that if Mrs. Sorlings thought me not an incumbrance, I would be willing to stay here a little longer; provided he would leave me, and go to Lord M.'s, or to London, which ever he thought best.

He hoped, he said, that he might suppose me absolutely safe from the insults or attempts of my brother; and, therefore, if it should make me easier, he would obey, for a few days at least.

He again proposed to send for Hannah. I told him I designed to do so, through you—And shall I beg of you, my dear, to cause the honest creature to be sent to? Your faithful Robert, I think, knows where she is. Perhaps she will be permitted to quit her place directly, by allowing a month's wages, which I will repay her. He took notice of the serious humour he found me in, and of the redness of my eyes. I had just been answering your letter; and had he not approached me, on his coming off his journey, in a very respectful manner; had he not made an unexceptionable report of his inquiries, and been so ready to go from me, at the very first word; I was prepared (notwithstanding the good terms we parted upon when he set out for Windsor) to have given him a very unwelcome reception: for the contents of your last letter had so affected me, that the moment I saw him, I beheld with indignation the seducer, who had been the cause of all the evils I suffer, and have suffered.

He hinted to me, that he had received a letter from Lady Betty, and another (as I understood him) from one of the Miss Montagues. If they take notice of me in them, I wonder that he did not acquaint me with the contents. I am afraid, my dear, that his relations are among those who think I have taken a rash and inexcusable step. It is not to my credit to let even them know how I have been frightened out of myself: and yet perhaps they would hold me unworthy of their alliance, if they were to think my flight a voluntary one. O my dear, how uneasy to us are our reflections upon every doubtful occurrence, when we know we have been prevailed upon to do a wrong thing!

SUNDAY MORNING.

Ah! this man, my dear! We have had warmer dialogues than ever yet we have had. At fair argument, I find I need not fear him;* but he is such a wild, such an ungovernable creature [he reformed!] that I am half afraid of him.

** See this confirmed by Mr. Lovelace, Letter XI. of this volume.*

He again, on my declaring myself uneasy at his stay with me here, proposed that I would put myself into Lady Betty's protection; assuring me that he thought he could not leave me at Mrs. Sorlings's with safety to myself. And upon my declining to do that, for the reasons I gave you in my last,* he urged me to make a demand of my estate.

** See Letter XXVIII. of this volume.*

He knew it, I told him, to be my resolution not to litigate with my father.

Nor would he put me upon it, he replied, but as the last thing. But if my spirit would not permit me to be obliged, as I called it, to any body, and yet if my relations would refuse me my own, he knew not how I could keep up that spirit, without being put to inconveniences, which would give him infinite concern—Unless—unless—unless, he said, hesitating, as if afraid to speak out—unless I would take the only method I could take, to obtain the possession of my own.

What is that, Sir?

Sure the man saw by my looks, when he came with his creeping unless's, that I guessed what he meant.

Ah! Madam, can you be at a loss to know what that method is?—They will not dispute with a man that right which they contest with you.

Why said he with a man, instead of with him? Yet he looked as if he wanted to be encouraged to say more.

So, Sir, you would have me employ a lawyer, would you, notwithstanding what I have ever declared as to litigating with my father?

No, I would not, my dearest creature, snatching my hand, and pressing it with his lips—except you would make me the lawyer.

Had he said me at first, I should have been above the affectation of mentioning a lawyer.

I blushed. The man pursued not the subject so ardently, but that it was more easy as well as more natural to avoid it than to fall into it.

Would to Heaven he might, without offending!—But I so over-awed him!—[over-awed him!—Your* notion, my dear!—And so the over-awed, bashful man went off from the subject, repeating his proposal, that I would demand my own estate, or empower some man of the law to demand it, if I would not [he put in] empower a happier man to demand it. But it could not be amiss, he thought, to acquaint my two trustees, that I intended to assume it.

** See Letter XIX. of this volume.*

I should know better what to do, I told him, when he was at a distance from me, and known to be so. I suppose, Sir, that if my father propose my return, and engage never to mention Solmes to me, nor any other man, but by my consent, and I agree, upon that condition, to think no more of you, you will acquiesce.

I was willing to try whether he had the regard to all of my previous declarations, which he pretended to have to some of them.

He was struck all of a heap.

What say you, Mr. Lovelace? You know, all you mean is for my good. Surely I am my own mistress: surely I need not ask your leave to make what terms I please for myself, so long as I break none with you?

He hemm'd twice or thrice—Why, Madam—why, Madam, I cannot say—then pausing—and rising from his seat with petulance; I see plainly enough, said he, the reason why none of my proposals can be accepted: at last I am to be a sacrifice to your reconciliation with your implacable family.

It has always been your respectful way, Mr. Lovelace, to treat my family in this free manner. But pray, Sir, when you call others implacable, see that you deserve not the same censure yourself.

He must needs say, there was no love lost between some of my family and him; but he had not deserved of them what they had of him.

Yourself being judge, I suppose, Sir?

All the world, you yourself, Madam, being judge.

Then, Sir, let me tell you, had you been less upon your defiances, they would not have been irritated so much against you. But nobody ever heard, that avowed despite to the relations of a person was a proper courtship, either to that person, or to her friends.

Well, Madam, all that I know is, that their malice against me is such, that, if you determine to sacrifice me, you may be reconciled when you please.

And all I know, Sir, is, that if I do give my father the power of a negative, and he will be contented with that, it will be but my duty to give it him; and if I preserve one to myself, I shall break through no obligation to you.

Your duty to your capricious brother, not to your father, you mean, Madam.

If the dispute lay between my brother and me at first, surely, Sir, a father may choose which party he will take.

He may, Madam—but that exempts him not from blame for all that, if he take the wrong—

Different people will judge differently, Mr. Lovelace, of the right and the wrong. You judge as you please. Shall not others as they please? And who has a right to controul a father's judgment in his own family, and in relation to his own child?

I know, Madam, there is no arguing with you. But, nevertheless, I had hoped to have made myself some little merit with you, so as that I might not have been the preliminary sacrifice to a reconciliation.

Your hope, Sir, had been better grounded if you had had my consent to my abandoning of my father's house—

Always, Madam, and for ever, to be reminded of the choice you would have made of that damn'd Solmes—rather than—

Not so hasty! not so rash, Mr. Lovelace! I am convinced that there was no intention to marry me to that Solmes on Wednesday.

So I am told they now give out, in order to justify themselves at your expense. Every body living, Madam, is obliged to you for your kind thoughts but I.

Excuse me, good Mr. Lovelace [waving my hand, and bowing], that I am willing to think the best of my father.

Charming creature! said he, with what a bewitching air is that said!—And with a vehemence in his manner would have snatched my hand. But I withdrew it, being much offended with him.

I think, Madam, my sufferings for your sake might have entitled me to some favour.

My sufferings, Sir, for your impetuous temper, set against your sufferings for my sake, I humbly conceive, leave me very little your debtor.

Lord! Madam, [assuming a drawling air] What have you suffered?—Nothing but what you can easily forgive. You have been only made a prisoner in your father's house, by way of doing credit to your judgment!—You have only had an innocent and faithful servant turned out of your service, because you loved her!—You have only had your sister's

confident servant set over you, with leave to tease and affront you—!

Very well, Sir!

You have only had an insolent brother take upon him to treat you like a slave, and as insolent a sister to undermine you in every body's favour, on pretence to keep you out of hands, which, if as vile as they vilely report, are not, however, half so vile and cruel as their own.

Go on, Sir, if you please!

You have only been persecuted, in order to oblige you to have a sordid fellow, whom you have professed to hate, and whom every body despises! The license has been only got! The parson has only been had in readiness! The day, a near, a very near day, had been only fixed! And you were only to be searched for your correspondencies, and still closer confined till the day came, in order to deprive you of all means of escaping the snare laid for you!—But all this you can forgive! You can wish you had stood all this; inevitable as the compulsion must have been!—And the man who, at the hazard of his life, had delivered you from all these mortifications, is the only person you cannot forgive!

Can't you go on, Sir? You see I have patience to hear you. Can't you go on, Sir?

I can, Madam, with my sufferings: which I confess ought not to be mentioned, were I at last to be rewarded in the manner I hoped.

Your sufferings then, if you please, Sir?

Affrontingly forbidden your father's house, after encouragement given, without any reasons they knew not before to justify the prohibition: forced upon a rencounter I wished to avoid: the first I ever, so provoked, wished to avoid. And that, because the wretch was your brother!

Wretch, Sir!—And my brother!—This could be from no man breathing, but from him before me!

Pardon me, Madam!—But oh! how unworthy to be your brother!—The quarrel grafted upon an old one, when at college; he universally known to be the aggressor; and revived for views equally sordid and injurious both to yourself and me—giving life to him, who would have taken away mine!

Your generosity THIS, Sir; not your sufferings: a little more of your sufferings, if you please!—I hope you do not repent, that you did not murder my brother!

My private life hunted into! My morals decried! Some of the accusers not unfaulty!

That's an aspersion, Sir!

Spies set upon my conduct! One hired to bribe my own servant's fidelity; perhaps to have poisoned me at last, if the honest fellow had not—

Facts, Mr. Lovelace!—Do you want facts in the display of your sufferings?—None of your perhaps's, I beseech you!

Menaces every day, and defiances, put into every one's mouth against me! Forced to creep about in disguises—and to watch all hours—

And in all weathers, I suppose, Sir—That, I remember, was once your grievance! In all weathers, Sir!* and all these hardships arising from yourself, not imposed by me.

** See Letter VI. of this volume.*

Like a thief, or an eaves-dropper, proceeded he: and yet neither by birth nor alliances unworthy of their relation, whatever I may be and am of their admirable daughter: of whom they, every one of them, are at least as unworthy!—These, Madam, I call sufferings: justly call so; if at last I am to be sacrificed to an imperfect reconciliation—imperfect, I say: for, can you expect to live so much as tolerably under the same roof, after all that has passed, with that brother and sister?

O Sir, Sir! What sufferings have yours been! And all for my sake, I warrant!—I can never reward you for them!—Never think of me more I beseech you—How can you have patience with me?—Nothing has been owing to your own behaviour, I presume: nothing to your defiances for defiances: nothing to your resolution declared more than once, that you would be related to a family, which, nevertheless, you would not stoop to ask a relation of: nothing, in short to courses which every body blamed you for, you not thinking it worth your while to justify yourself. Had I not thought you used in an ungentlemanly manner, as I have heretofore told you, you had not had my notice by pen and ink.* That notice gave you a supposed security, and you generously defied my friends the more for it: and this brought upon me (perhaps not undeservedly) my father's displeasure; without which, my brother's private pique, and selfish views, would have wanted a foundation to build upon: so that for all that followed of my treatment, and your redundant only's, I might thank you principally, as you may yourself for all your sufferings, your mighty sufferings!—And if, voluble Sir, you have founded any merit upon them, be so good as to revoke it: and look upon me, with my forfeited reputation, as the only sufferer—For what—pray hear me out, Sir [for he was going to speak] have you suffered in but your pride? Your reputation could not suffer: that it was beneath you to be solicitous about. And had you not been an unmanageable man, I should not have been driven to the extremity I now every hour, as the hour passes, deplore—with this additional reflection upon myself, that I ought not to have begun, or, having begun, not continued a correspondence with one who thought it not worth his while to clear his own character for my sake, or to submit to my father for his own, in a point wherein every father ought to have an option—

** See Letter VI. of this volume.*

Darkness, light; light, darkness; by my soul;—just as you please to have it. O charmer of my heart! snatching my hand, and pressing it between both of his, to his lips, in a strange wild way, take me, take me to yourself: mould me as you please: I am wax in your hands; give me your own impression; and seal me for ever yours—we were born for each other!—You to make me happy, and save a soul—I am all error, all crime. I see what I ought to have done. But do you think, Madam, I can willingly consent to be sacrificed to a partial reconciliation, in which I shall be so great, so irreparable a sufferer!—Any thing but that—include me in your terms: prescribe to me: promise for me as you please—put a halter about my neck, and lead me by it, upon condition of forgiveness on that disgraceful penance, and of a prostration as servile, to your father's presence (your brother absent), and I will beg his consent at his feet, and bear any thing but spurning from him, because he is your father. But to give you up upon cold conditions, d—n me [said the shocking wretch] if I either will, or can!

These were his words, as near as I can remember them; for his behaviour was so strangely wild and fervent, that I was perfectly frightened. I thought he would have devoured my hand. I wished myself a thousand miles distant from him.

I told him, I by no means approved of his violent temper: he was too boisterous a man for my liking. I saw now, by the conversation that had passed, what was his boasted regard to my injunctions; and should take my measures accordingly, as he should soon find. And, with a half frightened earnestness, I desired him to withdraw, and leave me to myself.

He obeyed; and that with extreme complaisance in his manner, but with his complexion greatly heightened, and a countenance as greatly dissatisfied.

But, on recollecting all that passed, I plainly see that he means not, if he can help it, to leave me to the liberty of

refusing him; which I had nevertheless preserved a right to do; but looks upon me as his, by a strange sort of obligation, for having run away with me against my will.

Yet you see he but touches upon the edges of matrimony neither. And that at a time, generally, when he has either excited one's passions or apprehensions; so that one cannot at once descend. But surely this cannot be his design.—And yet such seemed to be his behaviour to my sister,* when he provoked her to refuse him, and so tamely submitted, as he did, to her refusal. But he dare not—What can one say of so various a man?—I am now again out of conceit with him. I wish I were fairly out of his power.

** See Vol. I. Letters II. and III.*

He has sent up three times to beg admittance; in the two last with unusual earnestness. But I have sent him word, I will finish what I am about.

What to do about going from this place, I cannot tell. I could stay here with all my heart, as I have said to him: the gentlewoman and her daughters are desirous that I will: although not very convenient for them, I believe, neither: but I see he will not leave me, while I do—so I must remove somewhere.

I have long been sick of myself: and now I am more and more so. But let me not lose your good opinion. If I do, that loss will complete the misfortunes of

Your CL. HARLOWE.

LETTER XXX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE SUNDAY NIGHT, APRIL 16.

I may send to you, although you are forbid to write to me; may I not?—For that is not a correspondence (is it?) where letters are not answered.

I am strangely at a loss what to think of this man. He is a perfect Proteus. I can but write according to the shape he assumes at the time. Don't think me the changeable person, I beseech you, if in one letter I contradict what I wrote in another; nay, if I seem to contradict what I said in the same letter: for he is a perfect camelinion; or rather more variable than the camelinion; for that, it is said, cannot assume the red and the white; but this man can. And though black seems to be his natural colour, yet has he taken great pains to make me think him nothing but white.

But you shall judge of him as I proceed. Only, if I any where appear to you to be credulous, I beg you to set me right: for you are a stander-by, as you say in a former*—Would to Heaven I were not to play! for I think, after all, I am held to a desperate game.

** See Letter VIII. of this volume.*

Before I could finish my last to you, he sent up twice more to beg admittance. I returned for answer, that I would see him at my own time: I would neither be invaded nor prescribed to.

Considering how we parted, and my delaying his audience, as he sometimes calls it, I expected him to be in no very good humour, when I admitted of his visit; and by what I wrote, you will conclude that I was not. Yet mine soon changed, when I saw his extreme humility at his entrance, and heard what he had to say.

I have a letter, Madam, said he, from Lady Betty Lawrance, and another from my cousin Charlotte. But of these more by-and-by. I came now to make my humble acknowledgement to you upon the arguments that passed between us so lately.

I was silent, wondering what he was driving at.

I am a most unhappy creature, proceeded he: unhappy from a strange impatience of spirit, which I cannot conquer. It always brings upon me deserved humiliation. But it is more laudable to acknowledge, than to persevere when under the power of conviction.

I was still silent.

I have been considering what you proposed to me, Madam, that I should acquiesce with such terms as you should think proper to comply with, in order to a reconciliation with your friends.

Well, Sir.

And I find all just, all right, on your side; and all impatience, all inconsideration on mine.

I stared, you may suppose. Whence this change, Sir? and so soon?

I am so much convinced that you must be in the right in all you think fit to insist upon, that I shall for the future mistrust myself; and, if it be possible, whenever I differ with you, take an hour's time for recollection, before I give way to that vehemence, which an opposition, to which I have not been accustomed, too often gives me.

All this is mighty good, Sir: But to what does it tend?

Why, Madam, when I came to consider what you had proposed, as to the terms of reconciliation with your friends; and when I recollected that you had always referred to yourself to approve or reject me, according to my merits or demerits; I plainly saw, that it was rather a condescension in you, that you were pleased to ask my consent to those terms, than that you were imposing a new law: and I now, Madam, beg your pardon for my impatience: whatever terms you think proper to come into with your relations, which will enable you to honour me with the conditional effect of your promise to me, to these be pleased to consent: and if I lose you, insupportable as that thought is to me; yet, as it must be by my own fault, I ought to thank myself for it.

What think you, Miss Howe?—Do you believe he can have any view in this?—I cannot see any he could have; and I thought it best, as he put it in so right a manner, to appear not to doubt the sincerity of his confession, and to accept of it as sincere.

He then read to me part of Lady Betty's letter; turning down the beginning, which was a little too severe upon him, he said, for my eye: and I believe, by the style, the remainder of it was in a corrective strain.

It was too plain, I told him, that he must have great faults, that none of his relations could write to him, but with a mingled censure for some bad action.

And it is as plain, my dearest creature, said he, that you, who know not of any such faults, but by surmise, are equally ready to condemn me.—Will not charity allow you to infer, that their charges are no better grounded?—And that my principal fault has been carelessness of my character, and too little solicitude to clear myself, when aspersed? Which, I do

assure you, is the case.

Lady Betty, in her letter, expresses herself in the most obliging manner in relation to me. 'She wishes him so to behave, as to encourage me to make him soon happy. She desires her compliments to me; and expresses her impatience to see, as her niece, so celebrated a lady [those are her high words]. She shall take it for an honour, she says, to be put into a way to oblige me. She hopes I will not too long delay the ceremony; because that performed, will be to her, and to Lord M. and Lady Sarah, a sure pledge of her nephew's merits and good behaviour.'

She says, 'she was always sorry to hear of the hardships I had met with on his account: that he will be the most ungrateful of men, if he make it not all up to me: and that she thinks it incumbent upon all their family to supply to me the lost favour of my own: and, for her part, nothing of that kind, she bids him assure me, shall be wanting.'

Her ladyship observes, 'That the treatment he had received from my family would have been much more unaccountable than it was, with such natural and accidental advantages as he had, had it not been owing to his own careless manners. But she hopes that he will convince the Harlowe family that they had thought worse of him than he had deserved; since now it was in his power to establish his character for ever. This she prays to God to enable him to do, as well for his own honour, as for the honour of their house,' was the magnificent word.

She concludes, with 'desiring to be informed of our nuptials the moment they are celebrated, that she may be with the earliest in felicitating me on the happy occasion.'

But her Ladyship gives me no direct invitation to attend her before the marriage: which I might have expected from what he had told me.

He then shewed me part of Miss Montague's more sprightly letter, 'congratulating him upon the honour he had obtained, of the confidence of so admirable a lady.' These are her words. Confidence, my dear! Nobody, indeed, as you say, will believe otherwise, were they to be told the truth: and you see that Miss Montague (and all his family, I suppose) think that the step I have taken an extraordinary one. 'She also wishes for his speedy nuptials; and to see her new cousin at M. Hall: as do Lord M. she tells him, and her sister; and in general all the well-wishers of their family.

'Whenever this happy day shall be passed, she proposes, she says, to attend me, and to make one in my train to M. Hall, if his Lordship shall continue as ill of the gout as he is at present. But that, should he get better, he will himself attend me, she is sure, and conduct me thither; and afterwards quit either of his three seats to us, till we shall be settled to our mind.'

This young lady says nothing in excuse for not meeting me on the road, or St. Alban's, as he had made me expect she would: yet mentions her having been indisposed. Mr. Lovelace had also told me, that Lord M. was ill of the gout; which Miss Montague's letter confirms.

But why did not the man show me these letters last night? Was he afraid of giving me too much pleasure?

LETTER XXXI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE

You may believe, my dear, that these letters put me in good humour with him. He saw it in my countenance, and congratulated himself upon it. Yet I cannot but repeat my wonder, that I could not have the contents of them communicated to me last night.*

** The reader will see how Miss Howe accounts for this, in Letter XXXV.*

He then urged me to go directly to Lady Betty's, on the strength of her letter.

But how, said I, can I do that, were I even out of all hope of a reconciliation with my friends, (which yet, however unlikely to be effected, is my duty to attempt,) as her Ladyship has given me no particular invitation?

That, he was sure, was owing to her doubt that it would be accepted—Else she had done it with the greatest pleasure in the world.

That doubt itself, I said, was enough to deter me: since her Ladyship, who knew so well the boundaries to the fit and the unfit, by her not expecting I would accept of the invitation, had she given it, would have reason to think me very forward, if I had accepted it; and much more forward to go without it. Then, said I, I thank you, Sir, I have no clothes fit to go any where, or to be seen by any body.

O, I was fit to appear in the drawing-room, were full dress and jewels to be excused; and should make the most amiable [he must mean extraordinary] figure there. He was astonished at the elegance of my dress. By what art he knew not, but I appeared to such advantage, as if I had a different suit every day.

Besides, his cousins Montague would supply me with all I wanted for the present; and he would write to Miss Charlotte accordingly, if I would give him leave.

Do you think me the jay in the fable? said I. Would you have me visit the owners of the borrowed dresses in their own clothes? Surely, Mr. Lovelace, you think I have either a very low, or a very confident mind.

Would I choose to go to London (for a very few days only) in order to furnish myself with clothes?

Not at your expense, Sir, said I, in an angry tone.

I could not have appeared in earnest to him, in my displeasure at his artful contrivances to get me away, if I were not occasionally to shew my real fretfulness upon the destitute condition to which he has reduced me. When people set out wrong together, it is very difficult to avoid recriminations.

He wished he knew but my mind—That should direct him in his proposals, and it would be his delight to observe it, whatever it were.

My mind is, that you, Sir, should leave me out of hand—How often must I tell you so?

If I were any where but here, he would obey me, he said, if I insisted upon it. But if I would assert my right, that would be infinitely preferable, in his opinion, to any other measure but one (which he durst only hint at:) for then admitting his visits, or refusing them, as I pleased, (Granting a correspondence by letter only) it would appear to all the world, that what I had done, was but in order to do myself justice.

How often, Mr. Lovelace, must I repeat, that I will not litigate with my father? Do you think that my unhappy circumstances will alter my notions of my own duty so far as I shall be enabled to perform it? How can I obtain possession without litigation, and but by my trustees? One of them will be against me; the other is abroad. Then the remedy proposed by this measure, were I disposed to fall in with it, will require time to bring it into effect; and what I want, is present independence, and your immediate absence.

Upon his soul, the wretch swore, he did not think it safe, for the reasons he had before given, to leave me here. He wished I would think of some place, to which I should like to go. But he must take the liberty to say, that he hoped his behaviour had not been so exceptionable, as to make me so very earnest for his absence in the interim: and the less, surely, as I was almost eternally shutting up myself from him; although he presumed to assure me, that he never went from me, but with a corrected heart, and with strengthened resolutions of improving by my example.

Externally shutting myself up from you! repeated I—I hope, Sir, that you will not pretend to take it amiss, that I expect to be uninvaded in my retirements. I hope you do not think me so weak a creature (novice as you have found me in a very capital instance) as to be fond of occasions to hear your fond speeches, especially as no differing circumstances require your over-frequent visits; nor that I am to be addressed to, as if I thought hourly professions needful to assure me of your honour.

He seemed a little disconcerted.

You know, Mr. Lovelace, proceeded I, why I am so earnest for your absence. It is, that I may appear to the world independent of you; and in hopes, by that means, to find it less difficult to set on foot a reconciliation with my friends. And now let me add, (in order to make you easier as to the terms of that hoped-for reconciliation,) that since I find I have the good fortune to stand so well with your relations, I will, from time to time, acquaint you, by letter, when you are absent, with every step I shall take, and with every overture that shall be made to me: but not with an intention to render myself accountable to you, neither, as to my acceptance or non-acceptance of those overtures. They know that I have a power given me by my grandfather's will, to bequeath the estate he left me, with other of his bounties, in a way that may affect them, though not absolutely from them. This consideration, I hope, will procure me some from them, when their passion subsides, and when they know I am independent of you.

Charming reasoning!—And let him tell me, that the assurance I had given him was all he wished for. It was more than he could ask. What a happiness to have a woman of honour and generosity to depend upon! Had he, on his first entrance into the world, met with such a one, he had never been other than a man of strict virtue.—But all, he hoped, was for the best; since, in that case, he had never perhaps had the happiness he now had in view; because his relations had always been urging him to marry; and that before he had the honour to know me. And now, as he had not been so bad as some people's malice reported him to be, he hoped he should have near as much merit in his repentance, as if he had never erred.—A fine rakish notion and hope! And too much encouraged, I doubt, my dear, by the generality of our sex!

This brought on a more serious question or two. You'll see by it what a creature an unmortified libertine is.

I asked him, if he knew what he had said, alluded to a sentence in the best of books, That there was more joy in heaven

—
He took the words out of my mouth,

Over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-and-nine just persons, which need no repentance,* were his words.

** Luke xv. 7. The parable is concerning the Ninety-nine Sheep, not the Prodigal Son, as Mr. Lovelace erroneously imagines.*

Yes, Madam, I thought of it, as soon as I said it, but not before. I have read the story of the Prodigal Son, I'll assure you; and one day, when I am settled as I hope to be, will write a dramatic piece on the subject. I have at times had it in my head; and you will be too ready, perhaps, to allow me to be qualified fro it.

You so lately, Sir, stumbled at a word, with which you must be better acquainted, ere you can be thoroughly master of such a subject, that I am amazed you should know any thing of the Scripture, and be so ignorant of that.*

** See Letter XXIV. of this volume.*

O Madam, I have read the Bible, as a fine piece of ancient history—But as I hope to be saved, it has for some years past made me so uneasy, when I have popped upon some passages in it, that I have been forced to run to music or company to divert myself.

Poor wretch! lifting up my hands and eyes.

The denunciations come so slap-dash upon one, so unceremoniously, as I may say, without even the By-your-leave of a rude London chairman, that they overturn one, horse and man, as St. Paul was overturned. There's another Scripture allusion, Madam! The light, in short, as his was, is too glaring to be borne.

O Sir, do you want to be complimented into repentance and salvation? But pray, Mr. Lovelace, do you mean any thing at all, when you swear so often as you do, By your soul, or bind an asseveration with the words, As you hope to be saved?

O my beloved creature, shifting his seat; let us call another cause.

Why, Sir, don't I neither use ceremony enough with you?

Dearest Madam, forbear for the present: I am but in my noviciate. Your foundation must be laid brick by brick: you'll hinder the progress of the good work you would promote, if you tumble in a whole wagon-load at once upon me.

Lord bless me, thought I, what a character is that of a libertine! What a creature am I, who have risked what I have risked with such a one!—What a task before me, if my hopes continue of reforming such a wild Indian as this!—Nay, worse than a wild Indian; for a man who errs with his eyes open, and against conviction, is a thousand times worse for what he knows, and much harder to be reclaimed, than if he had never known any thing at all.

I was equally shocked at him, and concerned for him; and having laid so few bricks (to speak to his allusion) and those so ill-cemented, I was as willing as the gay and inconsiderate to call another cause, as he termed it—another cause, too, more immediately pressing upon me, from my uncertain situation.

I said, I took it for granted that he assented to the reasoning he seemed to approve, and would leave me. And then I asked him, what he really, and in his most deliberate mind, would advise me to, in my present situation? He must needs see, I said, that I was at a great loss what to resolve upon; entirely a stranger to London, having no adviser, no protector, at present: himself, he must give me leave to tell him, greatly deficient in practice, if not in the knowledge, of those decorums, which, I had supposed, were always to be found in a man of birth, fortune, and education.

He imagines himself, I find, to be a very polite man, and cannot bear to be thought otherwise. He put up his lip—I am sorry for it, Madam—a man of breeding, a man of politeness, give me leave to say, [colouring,] is much more of a black swan with you, than with any lady I ever met with.

Then that is your misfortune, Mr. Lovelace, as well as mine, at present. Every woman of discernment, I am confident, knowing what I know of you now, would say as I say, [I had a mind to mortify a pride, that I am sure deserves to be mortified;] that your politeness is not regular, nor constant. It is not habit. It is too much seen by fits and starts, and sallies, and those not spontaneous. You must be reminded into them.

O Lord! O Lord!—Poor I!—was the light, yet the half-angry wretch's self-pitying expression!

I proceeded.—Upon my word, Sir, you are not the accomplished man, which your talents and opportunities would have led one to expect you to be. You are indeed in your noviciate, as to every laudable attainment.

LETTER XXXII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE [IN CONTINUATION.]

As this subject was introduced by himself, and treated so lightly by him, I was going on to tell him more of my mind; but he interrupted me—Dear, dear Madam, spare me. I am sorry that I have lived to this hour for nothing at all. But surely you could not have quitted a subject so much more agreeable, and so much more suitable, I will say, to your present situation, if you had not too cruel a pleasure in mortifying a man, who the less needed to be mortified, as he before looked up to you with a diffidence in his own merits too great to permit him to speak half of his mind to you. Be pleased but to return to the subject we were upon; and at another time I will gladly embrace correction from the only lips in the world so qualified to give it.

You talk of reformation sometimes, Mr. Lovelace, and in so talking, acknowledge errors. But I see you can very ill bear the reproof, for which perhaps you are not solicitous to avoid giving occasion. Far be it from me to take delight in finding fault; I should be glad for both our sakes, since my situation is what it is, that I could do nothing but praise you. But failures which affect a mind that need not be very delicate to be affected by them, are too grating to be passed over in silence by a person who wishes to be thought in earnest in her own duties.

I admire your delicacy, Madam, again interrupted he. Although I suffer by it, yet would I not have it otherwise: indeed I would not, when I consider of it. It is an angelic delicacy, which sets you above all our sex, and even above your own. It is natural to you, Madam; so you may think it extraordinary: but there is nothing like it on earth, said the flatterer—What company has he kept!

But let us return to the former subject—You were so good as to ask me what I would advise you to do: I want but to make you easy; I want but to see you fixed to your liking: your faithful Hannah with you; your reconciliation with those to whom you wish to be reconciled, set on foot, and in a train. And now let me mention to you different expedients; in hopes that some one of them may be acceptable to you.

'I will go to Mrs. Howe, or to Miss Howe, or to whomsoever you would have me to go, and endeavour to prevail upon them to receive you.*

** The reader, perhaps, need not be reminded that he had taken care from the first (see Vol. I. Letter XXXI.) to deprive her of any protection from Mrs. Howe. See in his next letter, a repeated account of the same artifices, and his exultations upon his inventions to impose upon the two such watchful ladies as Clarissa and Miss Howe.*

'Do you incline to go to Florence to your cousin Morden? I will furnish you with an opportunity of going thither, either by sea to Leghorn, or by land through France. Perhaps I may be able to procure one of the ladies of my family to attend you. Either Charlotte or Patty would rejoice in such an opportunity of seeing France and Italy. As for myself, I will only be your escort, in disguise, if you will have it so, even in your livery, that your punctilio may not receive offence by my attendance.'

I told him, I would consider of all he had said: but that I hoped for a line or two from my aunt Hervey, if not from my sister, to both of whom I had written, which, if I were to be so favoured, might help to determine me. Mean time, if he would withdraw, I would particularly consider of this proposal of his, in relation to my cousin Morden. And if it held its weight with me, so far as to write for your opinion upon it, he should know my mind in an hour's time.

He withdrew with great respect: and in an hour's time returned. And I then told him it was unnecessary to trouble you for your opinion about it. My cousin Morden was soon expected. If he were not, I could not admit him to accompany me to him upon any condition. It was highly improbable that I should obtain the favour of either of his cousins' company: and if that could be brought about, it would be the same thing in the world's eye as if he went himself.

This led us into another conversation; which shall be the subject of my next.

LETTER XXXIII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [IN CONTINUATION.]

Mr. Lovelace told me, that on the supposition that his proposal in relation to my cousin Morden might not be accepted, he had been studying to find out, if possible, some other expedient that might be agreeable, in order to convince me, that he preferred my satisfaction to his own.

He then offered to go himself, and procure my Hannah to come and attend me. As I had declined the service of either of the young Misses Sorlings, he was extremely solicitous, he said, that I should have a servant in whose integrity I might confide.

I told him, that you would be so kind as to send to engage Hannah, if possible.

If any thing, he said, should prevent Hannah from coming, suppose he himself waited upon Miss Howe, to desire her to lend me her servant till I was provided to my mind?

I said, your mother's high displeasure at the step I had taken, (as she supposed, voluntarily,) had deprived me of an open assistance of that sort from you.

He was amazed, so much as Mrs. Howe herself used to admire me, and so great an influence as Miss Howe was supposed, and deserved to have over her mother, that Mrs. Howe should take upon herself to be so much offended with me. He wished that the man, who took such pains to keep up and enflame the passions of my father and uncles, were not at the bottom of this mischief too.

I was afraid, I said, that my brother was: or else my uncle Antony, I dared to say, would not have taken such pains to set Mrs. Howe against me, as I understood he had done.

Since I had declined visiting Lady Sarah, and Lady Betty, he asked me, if I should admit of a visit from his cousin Montague, and accept of a servant of hers for the present?

That was not, I said, an acceptable proposal: but I would first see if my friends would send me my clothes, that I might

not make such a giddy and runaway appearance to any of his relations.

If I pleased, he would take another journey to Windsor, to make a more particular inquiry amongst the canons, or in any worthy family.

Were not his objections as to the publicness of the place, I asked him, as strong now as before?

I remember, my dear, in one of your former letters, you mentioned London as the most private place to be in:* and I said, that since he made such pretences against leaving me here, as shewed he had no intention to do so; and since he engaged to go from me, and leave me to pursue my own measures, if I were elsewhere; and since his presence made these lodgings inconvenient to me; I should not be disinclined to go to London, did I know any body there.

** See Vol. II. Letter XXXVII.*

As he had several times proposed London to me, I expected that he would eagerly have embraced that motion from me. But he took not ready hold of it: yet I thought his eye approved of it.

We are both great watchers of each other's eyes; and, indeed, seem to be more than half afraid of each other.

He then made a grateful proposal to me: 'that I would send for my Norton to attend me.'*

** The reader is referred to Mr. Lovelace's next letter, for his motives in making the several proposals of which the Lady is willing to think so well.*

He saw by my eyes, he said, that he had at last been happy in an expedient, which would answer the wishes of us both. Why, says he, did I not think of it before?—And snatching my hand, Shall I write, Madam? Shall I send? Shall I go and fetch the worthy woman myself?

After a little consideration, I told him that this was indeed a grateful motion: but that I apprehended it would put her to a difficulty which she would not be able to get over; as it would make a woman of her known prudence appear to countenance a fugitive daughter in opposition to her parents; and as her coming to me would deprive her of my mother's favour, without its being in my power to make it up to her.

O my beloved creature! said he, generously enough, let not this be an obstacle. I will do every thing for Mrs. Norton you wish to have done.—Let me go for her.

More coolly than perhaps his generosity deserved, I told him it was impossible but I must soon hear from my friends. I should not, mean time, embroil any body with them. Not Mrs. Norton especially, from whose interest in, and mediation with, my mother, I might expect some good, were she to keep herself in a neutral state: that, besides, the good woman had a mind above her fortune; and would sooner want than be beholden to any body improperly.

Improperly! said he.—Have not persons of merit a right to all the benefits conferred upon them?—Mrs. Norton is so good a woman, that I shall think she lays me under an obligation if she will put it in my power to serve her; although she were not to augment it, by giving me the opportunity, at the same time, of contributing to your pleasure and satisfaction.

How could this man, with such powers of right thinking, be so far depraved by evil habits, as to disgrace his talents by wrong acting?

Is there not room, after all, thought I, at the time, to hope (as he so lately led me to hope) that the example it will behove me, for both our sakes, to endeavour to set him, may influence him to a change of manners, in which both may find our account?

Give me leave, Sir, said I, to tell you, there is a strange mixture in your mind. You must have taken pains to suppress many good motions and reflections as they arose, or levity must have been surprisingly predominant in it.—But as to the subject we were upon, there is no taking any resolutions till I hear from my friends.

Well, Madam, I can only say, I would find out some expedient, if I could, that should be agreeable to you. But since I cannot, will you be so good as to tell me what you would wish to have done? Nothing in the world but I will comply with, excepting leaving you here, at such a distance from the place I shall be in, if any thing should happen; and in a place where my gossiping rascals have made me in a manner public, for want of proper cautions at first.

These vermin, added he, have a pride they can hardly rein-in, when they serve a man of family. They boast of their master's pedigree and descent, as if they were related to him. Nor is any thing they know of him, or of his affairs, a secret to one another, were it a matter that would hang him.

If so, thought I, men of family should take care to give them subjects worth boasting of.

I am quite at a loss, said I, what to do or where to go. Would you, Mr. Lovelace, in earnest, advise me to think of going to London?

And I looked at him with steadfastness. But nothing could I gather from his looks.

At first, Madam, said he, I was for proposing London, as I was then more apprehensive of pursuit. But as your relations seem cooler on that head, I am the more indifferent about the place you go to.—So as you are pleased, so as you are easy, I shall be happy.

This indifference of his to London, I cannot but say, made me incline the more to go thither. I asked him (to hear what he would say) if he could recommend me to any particular place in London?

No, he said: none that was fit for me, or that I should like. His friend Belford, indeed, had very handsome lodgings near Soho-square, at a relation's, whose wife was a woman of virtue and honour. These, as Mr. Belford was generally in the country, he could borrow till I was better accommodated.

I was resolved to refuse these at the first mention, as I should any other he had named. Nevertheless, I will see, thought I, if he has really thought of these for me. If I break off the talk here, and he resume this proposal with earnestness in the morning, I shall apprehend that he is less indifferent than he seems to be about my going to London, and that he has already a lodging in his eye for me. And then I will not go at all.

But after such generous motions from him, I really think it a little barbarous to act and behave as if I thought him capable of the blackest and most ungrateful baseness. But his character, his principles, are so faulty! He is so light, so vain, so various, that there is no certainty that he will be next hour what he is this. Then, my dear, I have no guardian now; no father, no mother! only God and my vigilance to depend upon. And I have no reason to expect a miracle in my favour.

Well, Sir, said I, [rising to leave him,] something must be resolved upon: but I will postpone this subject till to-morrow morning.

He would fain have engaged me longer: but I said I would see him as early as he pleased in the morning. He might think of any convenient place in London, or near it, in mean time.

And so I retired from him. As I do from my pen; hoping for better rest for the few hours that remain of this night than I have had of a long time.

CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER XXXIV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [IN CONTINUATION.] MONDAY
MORNING, APRIL 17.

Late as I went to bed, I have had very little rest. Sleep and I have quarreled; and although I court it, it will not be friends. I hope its fellow-irreconcilables at Harlowe-place enjoy its balmy comforts. Else that will be an aggravation of my fault. My brother and sister, I dare say, want it not.

Mr. Lovelace, who is an early riser, as well as I, joined me in the garden about six; and after the usual salutations, asked me to resume our last night's subject. It was upon lodgings at London, he said.

I think you mentioned one to me, Sir—Did you not?

Yes, Madam, [but, watching the turn of my countenance,] rather as what you would be welcome to, than perhaps approve of.

I believe so too. To go to town upon an uncertainty, I own, is not agreeable: but to be obliged to any persons of your acquaintance, when I want to be thought independent of you; and to a person, especially, to whom my friends are to direct to me, if they vouchsafe to take notice of me at all, is an absurd thing to mention.

He did not mention it as what he imagined I would accept, but only to confirm to me what he had said, that he himself knew of none fit for me.

Has not your family, Madam, some one tradesman they deal with, who has conveniences of this kind? I would make it worth such a person's while to keep his secret of your being at his house. Traders are dealers in pins, said he, and will be more obliged by a penny customer, than by a pound present, because it is in their way: yet will refuse neither, any more than a lawyer or a man of office his fee.

My father's tradesmen, I said, would, no doubt, be the first employed to find me out. So that that proposal was as wrong as the other. And who is it that a creature so lately in favour with all her friends can apply to, in such a situation as mine, but must be (at least) equally the friends of her relations.

We had a good deal of discourse upon the same topic. But, at last, the result was this—He wrote a letter to one Mr. Doleman, a married man, of fortune and character, (I excepting to Mr. Belford,) desiring him to provide decent apartments ready furnished [I had told him what they should be] for a single woman; consisting of a bed-chamber; another for a maidservant; with the use of a dining-room or parlour. This letter he gave me to peruse; and then sealed it up, and dispatched it away in my presence, by one of his own servants, who, having business in town, is to bring back an answer.

I attend the issue of it; holding myself in readiness to set out for London, unless you, my dear, advise the contrary.

LETTER XXXV

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

He gives, in several letters, the substance of what is contained in the last seven of the Lady's.

He tells his friend, that calling at The Lawn, in his way to M. Hall, (for he owns that he went not to Windsor,) he found the letters from Lady Betty Lawrance, and his cousin Montague, which Mrs. Greme was about sending to him by a special messenger.

He gives the particulars, from Mrs. Greme's report, of what passed between the Lady and her, as in Letter VI. and makes such declarations to Mrs. Greme of his honour and affection to the Lady, as put her upon writing the letter to her sister Sorlings, the contents of which are in Letter XXVIII.

He then accounts, as follows, for the serious humour he found her in on his return:

Upon such good terms when we parted, I was surprised to find so solemn a brow upon my return, and her charming eyes red with weeping. But when I had understood she had received letters from Miss Howe, it was natural to imagine that that little devil had put her out of humour with me.

It is easy for me to perceive, that my charmer is more sullen when she receives, and has perused, a letter from that vixen, than at other times. But as the sweet maid shews, even then, more of passive grief, than of active spirit, I hope she is rather lamenting than plotting. And, indeed, for what now should she plot? when I am become a reformed man, and am hourly improving in my morals?—Nevertheless, I must contrive some way or other to get at their correspondence—only to see the turn of it; that's all.

But no attempt of this kind must be made yet. A detected invasion, in an article so sacred, would ruin me beyond retrieve. Nevertheless, it vexes me to the heart to think that she is hourly writing her whole mind on all that passes between her and me, I under the same roof with her, yet kept at such awful distance, that I dare not break into a correspondence, that may perhaps be a mean to defeat all my devices.

Would it be very wicked, Jack, to knock her messenger on the head, as he is carrying my beloved's letters, or returning from Miss Howe's?—To attempt to bribe him, and not succeed, would utterly ruin me. And the man seems to be one used to poverty, one who can sit down satisfied with it, and enjoy it; contented with hand-to-mouth conveniences, and not aiming to live better to-morrow, than he does to-day, and than he did yesterday. Such a one is above temptation, unless it could come clothed in the guise of truth and trust. What likelihood of corrupting a man who has no hope, no ambition?

Yet the rascal has but half life, and groans under that. Should I be answerable in his case for a whole life?—But hang

the fellow! Let him live. Were I king, or a minister of state, an Antonio Perez,* it were another thing. And yet, on second thoughts, am I not a rake, as it is called? And who ever knew a rake stick at any thing? But thou knowest, Jack, that the greatest half of my wickedness is vapour, to shew my invention; and to prove that I could be mischievous if I would.

** Antonio Perez was first minister of Philip II. king of Spain, by whose command he caused Don Juan de Escovedo to be assassinated: which brought on his own ruin, through the perfidy of his viler master.—Gedde's Tracts.*

When he comes to that part where the Lady says (Letter XXXIX.) in a sarcastic way, waving her hand, and bowing, 'Excuse me, good Mr. Lovelace, that I am willing to think the best of my father,' he gives a description of her air and manner, greatly to her advantage; and says,

I could hardly forbear taking her into my arms upon it, in spite of an expected tempest. So much wit, so much beauty, such a lively manner, and such exceeding quickness and penetration! O Belford! she must be nobody's but mine. I can now account for and justify Herod's command to destroy his Mariamne, if he returned not alive from his interview with Caesar: for were I to know that it were but probable that any other man were to have this charming creature, even after my death, the very thought would be enough to provoke me to cut that man's throat, were he a prince.

I may be deemed by this lady a rapid, a boisterous lover—and she may like me the less for it: but all the ladies I have met with, till now, loved to raise a tempest, and to enjoy it: nor did they ever raise it, but I enjoyed it too!—Lord send us once happily to London!

Mr. Lovelace gives the following account of his rude rapture, when he seized her hand, and put her, by his WILD manner, as she expresses it, Letter XXXIX. into such terror.

Darkness and light, I swore, were convertible at her pleasure: she could make any subject plausible. I was all error: she all perfection. And I snatched her hand; and, more than kissed it, I was ready to devour it. There was, I believe, a kind of phrensy in my manner, which threw her into a panic, like that of Semele perhaps, when the Thunderer, in all his majesty, surrounded with ten thousand celestial burning-glasses, was about to scorch her into a cinder.

Had not my heart misgiven me, and had I not, just in time, recollected that she was not so much in my power, but that she might abandon me at her pleasure, having more friends in that house than I had, I should at that moment have made offers, that would have decided all, one way or other.—But, apprehending that I had shewn too much meaning in my passion, I gave it another turn.—But little did the charmer think that an escape either she or I had (as the event might have proved) from that sudden gust of passion, which had like to have blown me into her arms.—She was born, I told her, to make me happy and to save a soul.—

He gives the rest of his vehement speech pretty nearly in the same words as the Lady gives them: and then proceeds:

I saw she was frightened: and she would have had reason had the scene been London, and that place in London, which I have in view to carry her to. She confirmed me in my apprehension, that I had alarmed her too much: she told me, that she saw what my boasted regard to her injunctions was; and she would take proper measures upon it, as I should find: that she was shocked at my violent airs; and if I hoped any favour from her, I must that instant withdraw, and leave her to her recollection.

She pronounced this in such a manner as shewed she was set upon it; and, having stepped out of the gentle, and polite part I had so newly engaged to act, I thought ready obedience was the best atonement. And indeed I was sensible, from her anger and repulses, that I wanted time myself for recollection. And so I withdrew, with the same veneration as a petitioning subject would withdraw from the presence of his sovereign. But, O Belford! had she had but the least patience with me—had she but made me think she would forgive this initiatory ardour—surely she will not be always thus guarded.

I had not been a moment by myself, but I was sensible that I had half forfeited my newly-assumed character. It is exceedingly difficult, thou seest, for an honest man to act in disguises: as the poet says, Thrust Nature back with a pitchfork, it will return. I recollected, that what she had insisted upon was really a part of that declared will before she left her father's house, to which in another case (to humble her) I had pretended to have an inviolable regard. And when I had remembered her words of taking her measures accordingly, I was resolved to sacrifice a leg or an arm to make all up again, before she had time to determine upon any new measures.

How seasonably to this purpose have come in my aunt's and cousin's letters!

I have sent in again and again to implore her to admit me to her presence. But she will conclude a letter she is writing to Miss Howe, before she will see me.—I suppose to give her an account of what has just passed.

Curse upon her perverse tyranny! How she makes me wait for an humble audience, though she has done writing for some time! A prince begging for her upon his knees should not prevail upon me to spare her, if I can but get her to London—Oons! Jack, I believe I have bit my lip through for vexation!—But one day her's shall smart for it.

Mr. Lovelace, beginning a new date, gives an account of his admittance, and of the conversation that followed: which differing only in style from that of the Lady gives in the next letter is omitted.

He collects the lady's expressions, which his pride cannot bear: such as, That he is a stranger to the decorums which she thought inseparable from a man of birth and education; and that he is not the accomplished man he imagines himself to be; and threatens to remember them against her.

He values himself upon his proposals and speeches, which he gives to his friend pretty much to the same purpose that the Lady does in her four last letters.

After mentioning his proposal to her that she would borrow a servant from Miss Howe, till Hannah could come, he writes as follows:

Thou seest, Belford, that my charmer has no notion that Miss Howe herself is but a puppet danced upon my wires at second or third hand. To outwit, and impel, as I please, two such girls as these, who think they know every thing; and, by taking advantage of the pride and ill-nature of the old ones of both families, to play them off likewise at the very time they think they are doing me spiteful displeasure; what charming revenge!—Then the sweet creature, when I wished that her

brother was not at the bottom of Mrs. Howe's resentment, to tell me, that she was afraid he was, or her uncle would not have appeared against her to that lady!—Pretty dear! how innocent!

But don't think me the cause neither of her family's malice and resentment. It is all in their hearts. I work but with their materials. They, if left to their own wicked direction, would perhaps express their revenge by fire and faggot; that is to say, by the private dagger, or by Lord Chief Justices' warrants, by law, and so forth: I only point the lightning, and teach it where to dart, without the thunder. In other words, I only guide the effects: the cause is in their malignant hearts: and while I am doing a little mischief, I prevent a great deal.

Thus he exalts on her mentioning London:

I wanted her to propose London herself. This made me again mention Windsor. If you would have a woman do one thing, you must always propose another, and that the very contrary: the sex! the very sex! as I hope to be saved!—Why, Jack, they lay a man under a necessity to deal doubly with them! And, when they find themselves outwitted, they cry out upon an honest fellow, who has been too hard for them at their own weapons.

I could hardly contain myself. My heart was at my throat.—Down, down, said I to myself, exuberant exultation! A sudden cough befriended me; I again turned to her, all as indifferenced over as a girl at the first long-expected question, who waits for two more. I heard out the rest of her speech: and when she had done, instead of saying any thing to her for London, I advised her to send for Mrs. Norton.

As I knew she would be afraid of lying under obligation, I could have proposed to do so much for the good woman and her son, as would have made her resolve that I should do nothing: this, however, not merely to avoid expense. But there was no such thing as allowing of the presence of Mrs. Norton. I might as well have had her mother or her aunt Hervey with her. Hannah, had she been able to come, and had she actually come, I could have done well enough with. What do I keep fellows idling in the country for, but to fall in love, and even to marry those whom I would have them marry? Nor, upon second thoughts, would the presence of her Norton, or of her aunt, or even of her mother, have saved the dear creature, had I decreed her fall.

How unequal is a modest woman to the adventure, when she throws herself into the power of a rake! Punctilio will, at any time, stand for reason with such an one. She cannot break through a well-tested modesty. None but the impudent little rogues, who can name the parson and the church before you think of either, and undress and go to bed before you the next hour, should think of running away with a man.

I am in the right train now. Every hour, I doubt not, will give me an increasing interest in the affections of this proud beauty. I have just carried unpoliteness far enough to make her afraid of me; and to shew her, that I am no whiner. Every instance of politeness, now, will give me double credit with her. My next point will be to make her acknowledge a lambent flame, a preference of me to all other men, at least: and then my happy hour is not far off. An acknowledged reciprocity in love sanctifies every little freedom: and little freedoms beget greater. And if she call me ungenerous, I can call her cruel. The sex love to be called cruel. Many a time have I complained of cruelty, even in the act of yielding, because I knew it gratified the fair one's pride.

Mentioning that he had only hinted at Mr. Belford's lodgings as an instance to confirm what he had told her, that he knew of none London fit for her, he says,

I had a mind to alarm her with something furthest from my purpose; for (as much as she disliked my motion) I intend nothing by it: Mrs. Osgood is too pious a woman; and would have been more her friend than mine.

I had a view, moreover, to give her an high opinion of her own sagacity. I love, when I dig a put, to have my prey tumble in with secure feet, and open eyes: then a man can look down upon her, with an O-ho, charmer, how came you there?

MONDAY, APRIL 17.

I have just now received a fresh piece of intelligence from my agent, honest Joseph Leman. Thou knowest the history of poor Miss Betterton of Nottingham. James Harlowe is plotting to revive the resentments of her family against me. The Harlowes took great pains, some time ago, to endeavour to get to the bottom of that story. But now the foolish devils are resolved to do something in it, if they can. My head is working to make this booby 'squire a plotter, and a clever fellow, in order to turn his plots to my advantage, supposing his sister shall aim to keep me at arm's length when in town, and to send me from her. But I will, in proper time, let thee see Joseph's letter, and what I shall answer to it.* To know in time a designed mischief, is, with me, to disappoint it, and to turn it upon the contriver's head.

** See Letters XLVII., XLVIII. of this volume.*

Joseph is plaguy squeamish again; but I know he only intends by his qualms to swell his merits with me. O Belford! Belford! what a vile corruptible rogue, whether in poor or rich, is human nature!

LETTER XXXVI

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [IN ANSWER TO LETTERS XXVIII.—XXXIV. INCLUSIVE.] TUESDAY, APRIL 18.

You have a most implacable family. Another visit from your uncle Antony has not only confirmed my mother an enemy to our correspondence, but has almost put her upon treading in their steps.—

But to other subjects:

You plead generously for Mr. Hickman. Perhaps, with regard to him, I may have done, as I have often done in singing—begun a note or key too high; and yet, rather than begin again, proceed, though I strain my voice, or spoil my tune. But this is evident, the man is the more observant for it; and you have taught me, that the spirit which is the humbler for ill usage, will be insolent upon better. So, good and grave Mr. Hickman, keep your distance a little longer, I beseech you. You have erected an altar to me; and I hope you will not refuse to bow to it.

But you ask me, if I would treat Mr. Lovelace, were he to be in Mr. Hickman's place, as I do Mr. Hickman? Why really, my dear, I believe I should not.—I have been very sagely considering this point of behaviour (in general) on both sides in courtship; and I will very candidly tell you the result. I have concluded, that politeness, even to excess, is necessary on the men's part, to bring us to listen to their first addresses, in order to induce us to bow our necks to a yoke so unequal. But, upon my conscience, I very much doubt whether a little intermingled insolence is not requisite from them, to keep up that interest, when once it has got footing. Men must not let us see, that we can make fools of them. And I think, that smooth love; that is to say, a passion without rubs; in other words, a passion without passion; is like a sleepy stream that is hardly seen to give motion to a straw. So that, sometimes to make us fear, and even, for a short space, to hate the wretch, is productive of the contrary extreme.

If this be so, Lovelace, than whom no man was ever more polite and obsequious at the beginning, has hit the very point. For his turbulence since, his readiness to offend, and his equal readiness to humble himself, (as must keep a woman's passion alive); and at last tire her into a non-resistance that shall make her as passive as a tyrant-husband would wish her to be.

I verily think, that the different behaviour of our two heroes to their heroines make out this doctrine to demonstration. I am so much accustomed, for my own part, to Hickman's whining, creeping, submissive courtship, that I now expect nothing but whine and cringe from him: and am so little moved with his nonsense, that I am frequently forced to go to my harpsichord, to keep me awake, and to silence his humdrum. Whereas Lovelace keeps up the ball with a witness, and all his address and conversation is one continual game at raquet.

Your frequent quarrels and reconciliations verify this observation: and I really believe, that, could Hickman have kept my attention alive after the Lovelace manner, only that he had preserved his morals, I should have married the man by this time. But then he must have set out accordingly. For now he can never, never recover himself, that's certain; but must be a dangler to the end of the courtship-chapter; and, what is still worse for him, a passive to the end of his life.

Poor Hickman! perhaps you'll say.

I have been called your echo—Poor Hickman! say I.

You wonder, my dear, that Mr. Lovelace took not notice to you over-night of the letters of Lady Betty and his cousin. I don't like his keeping such a material and relative circumstance, as I may call it, one moment from you. By his communicating the contents of them to you next day, when you was angry with him, it looks as if he withheld them for occasional pacifiers; and if so, must he not have had a forethought that he might give you cause for anger? Of all the circumstances that have happened since you have been with him, I think I like this the least: this alone, my dear, small as it might look to an indifferent eye, in mine warrants all your caution. Yet I think that Mrs. Greme's letter to her sister Sorlings: his repeated motions for Hannah's attendance; and for that of one of the widow Sorlings's daughters; and, above all, for that of Mrs. Norton; are agreeable counterbalances. Were it not for these circumstances, I should have said a great deal more of the other. Yet what a foolish fellow, to let you know over-night that he had such letters!—I can't tell what to make of him.

I am pleased with the contents of these ladies' letters. And the more, as I have caused the family to be again sounded, and find that they are all as desirous as ever of your alliance.

They really are (every one of them) your very great admirers. And as for Lord M., he is so much pleased with you, and with the confidence, as he calls it, which you have reposed in his nephew, that he vows he will disinherit him, if he reward it not as he ought. You must take care, that you lose not both families.

I hear Mrs. Norton is enjoined, as she values the favour of the other family, not to correspond either with you or with me—Poor creatures!—But they are your—yet they are not your relations, neither, I believe. Had you had any other nurse, I should have concluded you had been changed. I suffer by their low malice—excuse me, therefore.

You really hold this man to his good behaviour with more spirit than I thought you mistress of; especially when I judged of you by that meekness which you always contended for, as the proper distinction of the female character; and by the love, which (think as you please) you certainly have for him. You may rather be proud of than angry at the imputation; since you are the only woman I ever knew, read, or heard of, whose love was so much governed by her prudence. But when once the indifference of the husband takes place of the ardour of the lover, it will be your turn: and, if I am not mistaken, this man, who is the only self-admirer I ever knew who was not a coxcomb, will rather in his day expect homage than pay it.

Your handsome husbands, my dear, make a wife's heart ache very often: and though you are as fine a person of a woman, at the least, as he is of a man, he will take too much delight in himself to think himself more indebted to your favour, than you are to his distinction and preference of you. But no man, take your finer mind with your very fine person, can deserve you. So you must be contented, should your merit be underrated; since that must be so, marry whom you will. Perhaps you will think I indulge these sort of reflections against your Narcissus's of men, to keep my mother's choice for me of Hickman in countenance with myself—I don't know but there is something in it; at least, enough to have given birth to the reflection.

I think there can be no objection to your going to London. There, as in the centre, you will be in the way of hearing from every body, and sending to any body. And then you will put all his sincerity to the test, as to his promised absence, and such like.

But indeed, my dear, I think you have nothing for it but marriage. You may try (that you may say you have tried) what your relations can be brought to: but the moment they refuse your proposals, submit to the yoke, and make the best of it. He will be a savage, indeed, if he makes you speak out. Yet, it is my opinion, that you must bend a little; for he cannot bear to be thought slightly of.

This was one of his speeches once; I believe designed for me—'A woman who means one day to favour her lover with her hand, should show the world, for her own sake, that she distinguishes him from the common herd.'

Shall I give you another very fine sentence of his, and in the true libertine style, as he spoke it, throwing out his challenging hand?—'D—n him, if he would marry the first princess on earth, if he but thought she balanced a minute in her choice of him, or of an emperor.'

All the world, in short, expect you to have this man. They think, that you left your father's house for this very purpose. The longer the ceremony is delayed, the worse appearance it will have in the world's eye. And it will not be the fault of some of your relations, if a slur be not thrown upon your reputation, while you continue unmarried. Your uncle Antony, in particular, speaks rough and vile things, grounded upon the morals of his brother Orson. But hitherto your admirable character has antidoted the poison; the detractor is despised, and every one's indignation raised against him.

I have written through many interruptions: and you will see the first sheet creased and ruffled, occasioned by putting it into my bosom on my mother's sudden coming upon me. We have had one very pretty debate, I will assure you; but it is not worth while to trouble you with the particulars.—But upon my world—no matter though—

Your Hannah cannot attend you. The poor girl left her place about a fortnight ago, on account of the rheumatic disorder, which has confined her to her room ever since. She burst into tears, when Kitty carried to her your desire of having her with you; and called herself doubly unhappy, that she could not wait upon a mistress whom she so dearly loved.

Had my mother answered my wishes, I should have been sorry Mr. Lovelace had been the first proposer of my Kitty for your attendant, till Hannah should come. To be altogether among strangers, and a stranger to attend you every time you remove, is a very disagreeable thing. But your considerateness and bounty will make you faithful ones wherever you go.

You must take your own way: but, if you suffer any inconvenience, either as to clothes or money, that it is in my power to remedy, I will never forgive you. My mother, (if that is your objection) need not know any thing of the matter.

We have all our defects: we have often regretted the particular fault, which, though in venerable characters, we must have been blind not to see.

I remember what you once said to me; and the caution was good: Let us, my Nancy, were your words; let us, who have not the same failings as those we censure, guard against other and greater in ourselves. Nevertheless, I must needs tell you, that my mother has vexed me a little very lately, by some instances of her jealous narrowness. I will mention one of them, though I did not intend it. She wanted to borrow thirty guineas of me: only while she got a note changed. I said I could lend her but eight or ten. Eight or ten would not do: she thought I was much richer. I could have told her, I was much cunninger than to let her know my stock; which, on a review, I find ninety-five guineas; and all of them most heartily at your service.

I believe your uncle Tony put her upon this wise project; for she was out of cash in an hour after he left her.

If he did, you will judge that they intend to distress you. If it will provoke you to demand your own in a legal way, I wish they would; since their putting you upon that course will justify the necessity of your leaving them. And as it is not for your credit to own that you were tricked away contrary to your intention, this would afford a reason for your going off, that I should make very good use of. You'll see, that I approve of Lovelace's advice upon this subject. I am not willing to allow the weight of your answer to him on that head, which perhaps ought to be allowed it.*

** See Letter XXXI. of this volume.*

You must be the less surprised at the inventions of this man, because of his uncommon talents. Whatever he had turned his head to, he would have excelled in; or been (or done things) extraordinary. He is said to be revengeful: a very bad quality! I believe, indeed, he is a devil in every thing but his foot—this, therefore, is my repeated advice—provoke him not too much against yourself: but unchain him, and let him loose upon your sister' Betty, and your brother's Joseph Leman. This is resenting low: but I know to whom I write, or else I would go a good deal higher, [I'll assure you.]

Your next, I suppose, will be from London. Pray direct it, and your future letters, till further notice, to Mr. Hickman, at his own house. He is entirely devoted to you. Don't take so heavily my mother's partiality and prejudices. I hope I am past a baby.

Heaven preserve you, and make you as happy as I think you deserve to be, prays

Your ever affectionate ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XXXVII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE WEDN. MORNING, APRIL 19.

I am glad, my dear friend, that you approve of my removal to London.

The disagreement between your mother and you gives me inexpressible affliction. I hope I think you both more unhappy than you are. But I beseech you let me know the particulars of the debate you call a very pretty one. I am well acquainted with your dialect. When I am informed of the whole, let your mother have been ever so severe upon me, I shall be easier a great deal.—Faulty people should rather deplore the occasion they have given for anger than resent it.

If I am to be obliged to any body in England for money, it shall be to you. Your mother need not know of your kindness to me, you say—but she must know it, if it be done, and if she challenge my beloved friend upon it; for would you either falsify or prevaricate?—I wish your mother could be made easy on this head—forgive me, my dear,—but I know—Yet once she had a better opinion of me.—O my inconsiderate rashness!—Excuse me once more, I pray you.—Pride, when it is native, will shew itself sometimes in the midst of mortifications—but my stomach is down already.

I am unhappy that I cannot have my worthy Hannah. I am sorry for the poor creature's illness as for my own disappointment by it. Come, my dear Miss Howe, since you press me to be beholden to you: and would think me proud if I absolutely refused your favour; pray be so good as to send her two guineas in my name.

If I have nothing for it, as you say, but matrimony, it yields little comfort, that his relations do not despise the fugitive, as persons of their rank and quality-pride might be supposed to do, for having been a fugitive.

But O my cruel, thrice cruel uncle! to suppose—but my heart checks my pen, and will not let it proceed, on an intimation so extremely shocking as that which he supposes!—Yet, if thus they have been persuaded, no wonder if they are irreconcilable.

This is all my hard-hearted brother's doings!—His surmisings:—God forgive him—prays his injured sister!

LETTER XXXVIII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE THURSDAY, APRIL 20.

Mr. Lovelace's servant is already returned with an answer from his friend Mr. Doleman, who has taken pains in his inquiries, and is very particular. Mr. Lovelace brought me the letter as soon as he had read it: and as he now knows that I acquaint you with every thing that he offers, I desired him to let me send it to you for your perusal. Be pleased to return it by the first opportunity. You will see by it, that his friends in town have a notion that we are actually married.

TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. TUESDAY NIGHT, APRIL 18. DEAR SIR,

I am extremely rejoiced to hear, that we shall so soon have you in town after so long an absence. You will be the more welcome still, if what report says, be true; which is, that you are actually married to the fair lady upon whom we have heard you make such encomiums. Mrs. Doleman, and my sister, both wish you joy if you are; and joy upon your near prospect if you are not.

I have been in town for this week past, to get help if I could, from my paralytic complaints; and am in a course for them. Which, nevertheless, did not prevent me from making the desired inquiries. This is the result.

You may have a first floor, well furnished, at a mercer's in Belford-street, Covent-garden, with conveniencies for servants: and these either by the quarter or month. The terms according to the conveniencies required.

Mrs. Doleman has seen lodgings in Norfolk-street and others in Cecil-street; but though the prospects to the Thames

and Surrey-hills look inviting from both these streets, yet I suppose they are too near the city.

The owner of those in Norfolk-street would have half the house go together. It would be too much for your description therefore: and I suppose, that when you think fit to declare your marriage, you will hardly be in lodgings.

Those in Cecil-street are neat and convenient. The owner is a widow of a good character; and she insists, that you take them for a twelvemonth certain.

You may have good accommodations in Dover-street, at a widow's, the relict of an officer in the guards, who dying soon after he had purchased his commission (to which he had a good title by service, and which cost him most part of what he had) she was obliged to let lodgings.

This may possibly be an objection. But she is very careful, she says, that she takes no lodgers, but of figure and reputation. She rents two good houses, distant from each other, only joined by a large handsome passage. The inner-house is the genteelest, and very elegantly furnished; but you may have the use of a very handsome parlour in the outer-house, if you choose to look into the street.

A little garden belongs to the inner-house, in which the old gentlewoman has displayed a true female fancy; having crammed it with vases, flower-pots, and figures, without number.

As these lodgings seemed to me the most likely to please you, I was more particular in my inquiries about them. The apartments she has to let are in the inner-house: they are a dining-room, two neat parlours, a withdrawing-room, two or three handsome bedchambers, one with a pretty light closet in it, which looks into the little garden, all furnished in taste.

A dignified clergyman, his wife, and maiden daughter were the last who lived in them. They have but lately quitted them, on his being presented to a considerable church preferment in Ireland. The gentlewoman says that he took the lodgings but for three months certain; but liked them and her usage so well, that he continued in them two years; and left them with regret, though on so good an account. She bragged, that this was the way of all the lodgers she ever had, who staid with her four times as long as they at first intended.

I had some knowledge of the colonel, who was always looked upon as a man of honour. His relict I never saw before. I think she has a masculine air, and is a little forbidding at first: but when I saw her behaviour to two agreeable gentlewomen, her husband's nieces, whom, for that reason, she calls doubly hers, and heard their praises of her, I could impute her very bulk to good humour; since we seldom see your sour peevish people plump. She lives reputably, and is, as I find, aforehand in the world.

If these, or any other of the lodgings I have mentioned, be not altogether to your lady's mind, she may continue in them the less while, and choose others for herself.

The widow consents that you shall take them for a month only, and what of them you please. The terms, she says, she will not fall out upon, when she knows what your lady expects, and what her servants are to do, or yours will undertake; for she observed that servants are generally worse to deal with than their masters or mistresses.

The lady may board or not as she pleases.

As we suppose you were married, but that you have reason, from family-differences, to keep it private for the present, I thought it not amiss to hint as much to the widow (but as uncertainty, however); and asked her, if she could, in that case, accommodate you and your servants, as well as the lady and hers? She said, she could; and wished, by all means, it were to be so: since the circumstance of a person's being single, it not as well recommended as this lady, was one of the usual exceptions.

If none of these lodgings please, you need not doubt very handsome ones in or near Hanover-square, Soho-square, Golden-square, or in some of the new streets about Grosvenor-square. And Mrs. Doleman, her sister, and myself, most cordially join to offer to your good lady the best accommodations we can make for her at Uxbridge (and also for you, if you are the happy man we wish you to be), till she fits herself more to her mind.

Let me add, that the lodgings at the mercer's, those in Cecil-street, those at the widow's in Dover-street, any of them, may be entered upon at a day's warning.

I am, my dear Sir, Your sincere and affectionate friend and servant, THO. DOLEMAN.

You will easily guess, my dear, when you have read the letter, which lodgings I made choice of. But first to try him, (as in so material a point I thought I could not be too circumspect,) I seemed to prefer those in Norfolk-street, for the very reason the writer gives why he thought I would not; that is to say, for its neighbourhood to a city so well governed as London is said to be. Nor should I have disliked a lodging in the heart of it, having heard but indifferent accounts of the liberties sometimes taken at the other end of the town.—Then seeming to incline to the lodgings in Cecil-street—Then to the mercer's. But he made no visible preference; and when I asked his opinion of the widow gentlewoman's, he said he thought those the most to my taste and convenience: but as he hoped that I would think lodgings necessary but for a very little while, he knew not which to give his vote for.

I then fixed upon the widow's; and he has written accordingly to Mr. Doleman, making my compliments to his lady and sister, for their kind offer.

I am to have the dining-room, the bed-chamber with the light-closet, (of which, if I stay any time at the widow's, I shall make great use,) and a servant's room; and we propose to set out on Saturday morning. As for a maid servant, poor Hannah's illness is a great disappointment to me: but, as he observes, I can make the widow satisfaction for one of hers, till I can get a servant to my mind. And you know I want not much attendance.

Mr. Lovelace has just now, of his own accord, given me five guineas for poor Hannah. I send them inclosed. Be so good as to cause them to be conveyed to her, and to let her know from whom they came.

He has obliged me much by this little mark of his considerateness. Indeed I have the better opinion of him ever since he proposed her return to me.

I have just now another instance of his considerateness. He came to me, and said that, on second thoughts, he could not bear that I should go up to town without some attendant, were it but for the look of the thing to the London widow and her nieces, who, according to his friend's account, lived so genteelly; and especially as I required him to leave me so soon after I arrived there, and so would be left alone among strangers. He therefore sought that I might engage Mrs. Sorlings to lend me one of her two maids, or let one of her daughters go up with me, and stay till I were provided. And if the latter, the young gentlewoman, no doubt, would be glad of so good an opportunity to see the curiosities of the town, and would be a proper attendant on the same occasions.

I told him as I had done before, that the two young gentlewomen were so equally useful in their way, and servants in a busy farm were so little to be spared, that I should be loth to take them off their laudable employments. Nor should I think much of diversions for one while; and so the less want an attendant out of doors.

And now, my dear, lest any thing should happen, in so variable a situation as mine, to over-cloud my prospects, (which at present are more promising than ever yet they have been since I quitted Harlowe-place,) I will snatch the opportunity to subscribe myself

LETTER XXXIX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. THURSDAY, APRIL 20.

He begins with communicating to him the letter he wrote to Mr. Doleman, to procure suitable lodgings in town, and which he sent away by the Lady's approbation: and then gives him a copy of the answer to it (see p. 218): upon which he thus expresses himself:

Thou knowest the widow; thou knowest her nieces; thou knowest the lodgings: and didst thou ever read a letter more artfully couched than this of Tom Doleman? Every possible objection anticipated! Every accident provided against! Every tittle of plot-proof!

Who could forbear smiling, to see my charmer, like a farcical dean and chapter, choose what was before chosen for her; and sagaciously (as they go in form to prayers, that Heaven would direct their choice) pondering upon the different proposals, as if she would make me believe she had a mind for some other? The dear sly rogue looking upon me, too, with a view to discover some emotion in me. Emotions I had; but I can tell her that they lay deeper than her eye could reach, though it had been a sun-beam.

No confidence in me, fair one! None at all, 'tis plain. Thou wilt not, if I were inclined to change my views, encourage me by a generous reliance on my honour!—And shall it be said that I, a master of arts in love, shall be overmatched by so unpractised a novice?

But to see the charmer so far satisfied with my contrivance as to borrow my friend's letter, in order to satisfy Miss Howe likewise—!

Silly little rogues! to walk out into bye-paths on the strength of their own judgment!—When nothing but experience can enable them to disappoint us, and teach them grandmother-wisdom! When they have it indeed, then may they sit down, like so many Cassandras, and preach caution to others; who will as little mind them as they did their instructresses, whenever a fine handsome confidant young fellow, such a one as thou knowest who, comes across them.

But, Belford, didst thou not mind that sly rogue Doleman's naming Dover-street for the widow's place of abode?—What dost thou think could be meant by that?—'Tis impossible thou shouldst guess, so, not to puzzle thee about it, suppose the Widow Sinclair's in Dover-street should be inquired after by some officious person, in order to come at characters [Miss Howe is as sly as the devil, and as busy to the full,] and neither such a name, nor such a house, can be found in that street, nor a house to answer the description; then will not the keenest hunter in England be at a fault?

But how wilt thou do, methinks thou askest, to hinder the lady from resenting the fallacy, and mistrusting thee the more on that account, when she finds it out to be in another street?

Pho! never mind that: either I shall have a way for it, or we shall thoroughly understand one another by that time; or if we don't, she'll know enough of me, not to wonder at such a peccadilla.

But how wilt thou hinder the lady from apprizing her friend of the real name?

She must first know it herself, monkey, must she not?

Well, but how wilt thou do to hinder her from knowing the street, and her friend from directing letters thither, which will be the same thing as if the name were known?

Let me alone for that too.

If thou further objectest, that Tom Doleman, is too great a dunce to write such a letter in answer to mine:—Canst thou not imagine that, in order to save honest Tom all this trouble, I who know the town so well, could send him a copy of what he should write, and leave him nothing to do but transcribe?

What now sayest thou to me, Belford?

And suppose I had designed this task of inquiry for thee; and suppose the lady excepted against thee for no other reason in the world, but because of my value for thee? What sayest thou to the lady, Jack?

This it is to have leisure upon my hands!—What a matchless plotter thy friend!—Stand by, and let me swell!—I am already as big as an elephant, and ten times wiser!—Mightier too by far! Have I not reason to snuff the moon with my proboscis?—Lord help thee for a poor, for a very poor creature!—Wonder not that I despise thee heartily; since the man who is disposed immoderately to exalt himself, cannot do it but by despising every body else in proportion.

I shall make good use of the Dolemanic hint of being married. But I will not tell thee all at once. Nor, indeed, have I thoroughly digested that part of my plot. When a general must regulate himself by the motions of a watchful adversary, how can he say beforehand what he will, or what he will not, do?

Widow SINCLAIR, didst thou not say, Lovelace?—

Ay, SINCLAIR, Jack!—Remember the name! SINCLAIR, I repeat. She has no other. And her features being broad and full-blown, I will suppose her to be of Highland extraction; as her husband the colonel [mind that too] was a Scot, as brave, as honest.

I never forget the minutiae in my contrivances. In all matters that admit of doubt, the minutiae, closely attended to and provided for, are of more service than a thousand oaths, vows, and protestations made to supply the neglect of them, especially when jealousy has made its way in the working mind.

Thou wouldst wonder if thou knewest one half of my providences. To give thee but one—I have already been so good as to send up a list of books to be procured for the lady's closet, mostly at second hand. And thou knowest that the women there are all well read. But I will not anticipate—Besides, it looks as if I were afraid of leaving any thing to my old friend CHANCE; which has many a time been an excellent second to me, and ought not be affronted or despised; especially by one who has the art of making unpromising incidents turn out in his favour.

**MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE WEDNESDAY,
APRIL 19.**

I have a piece of intelligence to give you, which concerns you much to know.

Your brother having been assured that you are not married, has taken a resolution to find you out, waylay you, and carry you off. A friend of his, a captain of a ship, undertakes to get you on ship-board, and to sail away with you, either to Hull or Leith, in the way to one of your brother's houses.

They are very wicked: for in spite of your virtue they conclude you to be ruined. But if they can be assured when they have you that you are not, they will secure you till they can bring you out Mrs. Solmes. Mean time, in order to give Mr. Lovelace full employment, they talk of a prosecution which will be set up against him, for some crime they have got a notion of, which they think, if it do not cost him his life, will make him fly his country.

This is very early news. Miss Bell told it in confidence, and with mighty triumph over Lovelace, to Miss Lloyd, who is at present her favourite, though as much you admirer as ever. Miss Lloyd, being very apprehensive of the mischief which might follow such an attempt, told it to me, with leave to apprise you privately of it—and yet neither she nor I would be sorry, perhaps, if Lovelace were to be fairly hanged—that is to say, if you, my dear, had no objection to it. But we cannot bear that such an admirable creature should be made the tennis-ball of two violent spirits—much less that you should be seized, and exposed to the brutal treatment of wretches who have no bowels.

If you can engage Mr. Lovelace to keep his temper upon it, I think you should acquaint him with it, but not to mention Miss Lloyd. Perhaps his wicked agent may come at the intelligence, and reveal it to him. But leave it to your own discretions to do as you think fit in it. All my concern is, that this daring and foolish project, if carried on, will be a mean of throwing you more into his power than ever. But as it will convince you that there can be no hope of a reconciliation, I wish you were actually married, let the cause for prosecution hinted at be what it will, short of murder or a rape.

Your Hannah was very thankful for your kind present. She heaped a thousand blessings upon you for it. She has Mr. Lovelace's too by this time.

I am pleased with Mr. Hickman, I can tell you:—for he has sent her two guineas by the person who carries Mr. Lovelace's five, as from an unknown hand: nor am I, or you, to know it. But he does a great many things of this sort, and is as silent as the night in his charities; for nobody knows of them till the gratitude of the benefited will not let them be concealed. He is now and then my almoner, and, I believe, always adds to my little benefactions.

But his time is not come to be praised to his face for these things; nor does he seem to want that encouragement.

The man certainly has a good mind. Nor can we expect in one man every good quality. But he is really a silly fellow, my dear, to trouble his head about me, when he sees how much I despise his whole sex; and must of course make a common man look like a fool, were he not to make himself look like one, by wishing to pitch his tent so oddly. Our likings and dislikings, as I have often thought, are seldom governed by prudence, or with a view to happiness. The eye, my dear, the wicked eye, has such a strict alliance with the heart—and both have such enmity to the judgment!—What an unequal union, the mind and body! All the senses, like the family at Harlowe-place, in a confederacy against that which would animate, and give honour to the whole, were it allowed its proper precedence.

Permit me, I beseech you, before you go to London to send you forty-eight guineas. I mention that sum to oblige you, because, by accepting back the two to Hannah, I will hold you indebted to me fifty.—Surely this will induce you! You know that I cannot want the money. I told you that I had near double that sum, and that the half of it is more than my mother knows I am mistress of. You are afraid that my mother will question me on this subject; and then you think I must own the truth. But little as I love equivocation, and little as you would allow of it in your Anna Howe, it is hard if I cannot (were I to be put to it ever so closely) find something to say that would bring me off, as you have, what can you do at such a place as London?—You don't know what occasion you may have for messengers, intelligence, and suchlike. If you don't oblige me, I shall not think your stomach so much down as you say it is, and as, in this one particular, I think it ought to be.

As to the state of things between my mother and me, you know enough of her temper, not to need to be told that she never espouses or resents with indifference. Yet will she not remember that I am her daughter. No, truly, I am all my papa's girl.

She was very sensible, surely, of the violence of my poor father's temper, that she can so long remember that, when acts of tenderness and affection seem quite forgotten. Some daughters would be tempted to think that controul sat very heavy upon a mother, who can endeavour to exert the power she has over a child, and regret, for years after death, that she had not the same over a husband.

If this manner of expression becomes not me of my mother, the fault will be somewhat extenuated by the love I always bore to my father, and by the reverence I shall ever pay to his memory: for he was a fond father, and perhaps would have been as tender a husband, had not my mother and he been too much of a temper to agree.

The misfortune was, in short, that when one was out of humour, the other would be so too: yet neither of their tempers comparatively bad. Notwithstanding all which, I did not imagine, girl as I was in my father's life-time, that my mother's part of the yoke sat so heavy upon her neck as she gives me room to think it did, whenever she is pleased to disclaim her part of me.

Both parents, as I have often thought, should be very careful, if they would secure to themselves the undivided love of their children, that, of all things, they should avoid such durable contentions with each other, as should distress their children in choosing their party, when they would be glad to reverence both as they ought.

But here is the thing: there is not a better manager of affairs in the sex than my mother; and I believe a notable wife is more impatient of controul than an indolent one. An indolent one, perhaps, thinks she has some thing to compound for; while women of the other character, I suppose, know too well their own significance to think highly of that of any body else. All must be their own way. In one word, because they are useful, they will be more than useful.

I do assure you, my dear, were I man, and a man who loved my quiet, I would not have one of these managing wives on any consideration. I would make it a matter of serious inquiry beforehand, whether my mistress's qualifications, if I heard she was notable, were masculine or feminine ones. If indeed I were an indolent supine mortal, who might be in danger of perhaps choosing to marry for the qualifications of a steward.

But, setting my mother out of the question, because she is my mother, have I not seen how Lady Hartley pranks up herself above all her sex, because she knows how to manage affairs that do not belong to her sex to manage?—Affairs that do no credit to her as a woman to understand; practically, I mean; for the theory of them may not be amiss to be known.

Indeed, my dear, I do not think a man-woman a pretty character at all: and, as I said, were I a man, I would sooner choose a dove, though it were fit for nothing but, as the play says, to go tame about house, and breed, than a wife that is setting at work (my insignificant self present perhaps) every busy our my never-resting servants, those of the stud not excepted; and who, with a besom in her hand, as I may say, would be continually filling my with apprehensions that she wanted to sweep me out of my own house as useless lumber.

Were indeed the mistress of a family (like the wonderful young lady I so much and so justly admire) to know how to confine herself within her own respectable rounds of the needle, the pen, the housekeeper's bills, the dairy for her amusement; to see the poor fed from superfluities that would otherwise be wasted, and exert herself in all the really-useful branches of domestic management; then would she move in her proper sphere; then would she render herself amiably useful, and respectably necessary; then would she become the mistress-wheel of the family, [whatever you think of your Anna Howe, I would not have her be the master-wheel,] and every body would love her; as every body did you, before your insolent brother came back, flushed with his unmerited acquirements, and turned all things topsy-turvy.

If you will be informed of the particulars of our contention, after you have known in general that your unhappy affair was the subject, why then, I think I must tell you.

Yet how shall I?—I feel my cheek glow with mingled shame and indignation.—Know then, my dear,—that I have been—as I may say—that I have been beaten—indeed 'tis true. My mother thought fit to slap my hands to get from me a sheet of a letter she caught me writing to you; which I tore, because she should not read it, and burnt it before her face.

I know this will trouble you: so spare yourself the pains to tell me it does.

Mr. Hickman came in presently after. I would not see him. I am either too much a woman to be beat, or too much a child to have an humble servant—so I told my mother. What can one oppose but sullen, when it would be unpardonable so much as to think of lifting up a finger?

In the Harlowe style, She will be obeyed, she says: and even Mr. Hickman shall be forbid the house, if he contributes to the carrying on of a correspondence which she will not suffer to be continued.

Poor man! He stands a whimsical chance between us. But he knows he is sure of my mother; but not of me. 'Tis easy then for him to choose his party, were it not his inclination to serve you, as it surely is. And this makes him a merit with me, which otherwise he would not have had; notwithstanding the good qualities which I have just now acknowledged in his favour. For, my dear, let my faults in other respects be what they may, I will pretend to say, that I have in my own mind those qualities which I praised him for. And if we are to come together, I could for that reason better dispense with them in him.—So if a husband, who has a bountiful-tempered wife, is not a niggard, nor seeks to restrain her, but has an opinion of all she does, that is enough for him: as, on the contrary, if a bountiful-tempered husband has a frugal wife, it is best for both. For one to give, and the other to give, except they have prudence, and are at so good an understanding with each other as to compare notes, they may perhaps put it out of their power to be just. Good frugal doctrine, my dear! But this way of putting it is middling the matter between what I have learnt of my mother's over-prudent and your enlarged notions.—But from doctrine to fact—

I shut myself up all that day; and what little I did eat, eat alone. But at night she sent up Kitty with a command, upon my obedience, to attend her at supper.

I went down; but most gloriously in the sullen. YES, and NO, were great words with me, to every thing she asked, for a good while.

That behaviour, she told me, should not do for her.

Beating should not do for me, I said.

My bold resistance, she told me, had provoked her to slap my hand; and she was sorry to have been so provoked. But again insisted that I would either give up my correspondence absolutely, or let her see all that passed in it.

I must not do either, I told her. It was unsuitable both to my inclination and to my honour, at the instigation of base minds to give up a friend in distress.

She rung all the maternal changes upon the words duty, obedience, filial obligation, and so forth.

I told her that a duty too rigorously and unreasonably exacted had been your ruin, if you were ruined.

If I were of age to be married, I hope she would think me capable of making, or at least of keeping, my own friendships; such a one especially as this, with a woman too, and one whose friendship she herself, till this distressful point of time, had thought the most useful and edifying that I had ever contracted.

The greater the merit, the worse the action: the finer the talents, the more dangerous the example.

There were other duties, I said, besides the filial one; and I hoped I need not give up a suffering friend, especially at the instigation of those by whom she suffered. I told her, that it was very hard to annex such a condition as that to my duty; when I was persuaded, that both duties might be performed, without derogating from either: that an unreasonable command (she must excuse me, I must say it, though I were slapped again) was a degree of tyranny: and I could not have expected, that at these years I should be allowed now will, no choice of my own! where a woman only was concerned, and the devilish sex not in the question.

What turned most in favour of her argument was, that I desired to be excused from letting her read all that passes between us. She insisted much upon this: and since, she said, you were in the hands of the most intriguing man in the world, and a man who had made a jest of her favourite Hickman, as she had been told, she knows not what consequences, unthought of by your or me, may flow from such a correspondence.

So you see, my dear, that I fare the worse on Mr. Hickman's account! My mother might see all that passes between us, did I not know, that it would cramp your spirit, and restrain the freedom of your pen, as it would also the freedom of mine: and were she not moreover so firmly attached to the contrary side, that inferences, consequences, strained deductions, censures, and constructions the most partial, would for ever to be haled in to tease me, and would perpetually subject us to the necessity of debating and canvassing.

Besides, I don't choose that she should know how much this artful wretch has outwitted, as I may call it, a person so much his superior in all the nobler qualities of the human mind.

The generosity of your heart, and the greatness of your soul, full well I know; but do offer to dissuade me from this correspondence.

Mr. Hickman, immediately on the contention above, offered his service; and I accepted of it, as you will see by my last. He thinks, though he has all honour for my mother, that she is unkind to us both. He was pleased to tell me (with an air, as I thought) that he not only approved of our correspondence, but admired the steadiness of my friendship; and having no opinion of your man, but a great one of me, thinks that my advice or intelligence from time to time may be of use to you; and on this presumption said, that it would be a thousand pities that you should suffer for want of either.

Mr. Hickman pleased me in the main of his speech; and it is well the general tenor of it was agreeable; otherwise I can tell him, I should have reckoned with him for his word approve; for it is a style I have not yet permitted him to talk to me in. And you see, my dear, what these men are—no sooner do they find that you have favoured them with the power of doing you an agreeable service, but they take upon them to approve, forsooth, of your actions! By which is implied a right to disapprove, if they think fit.

I have told my mother how much you wish to be reconciled to your relations, and how independent you are upon Lovelace.

Mark the end of the latter assertion, she says. And as to reconciliation, she knows that nothing will do, (and will have it, that nothing ought to do,) but your returning back, without presuming to condition with them. And this if you do, she

says, will best show your independence on Lovelace.

You see, my dear, what your duty is, in my mother's opinion.

I suppose your next, directed to Mr. Hickman, at his own house, will be from London.

Heaven preserve you in honour and safety, is my prayer.

What you do for change of clothes, I cannot imagine.

It is amazing to me what your relations can mean by distressing you, as they seem resolved to do. I see they will throw you into his arms, whether you will or not.

I send this by Robert, for dispatch-sake: and can only repeat the hitherto-rejected offer of my best services. Adieu, my dearest friend. Believe me ever

Your affectionate and faithful ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XLI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE TUESDAY, APRIL 20.

I should think myself utterly unworthy of your friendship did not my own concerns, heavy as they are, so engross me, that I could not find leisure for a few lines to declare to my beloved friend my sincere disapprobation of her conduct, in an instance where she is so generously faulty, that the consciousness of that very generosity may hide from her the fault, which I, more than any other, have reason to deplore, as being the unhappy occasion of it.

You know, you say, that your account of the contentions between your mother and you will trouble me; and so you bid me spare myself the pains to tell you that they do.

You did not use, my dear, to forbid me thus beforehand. You were wont to say, you loved me the better for my expostulations with you on that acknowledged warmth and quickness of your temper which your own good sense taught you to be apprehensive of. What though I have so miserably fallen, and am unhappy, if ever I had any judgment worth regarding, it is now as much worth as ever, because I can give it as freely against myself as against any body else. And shall I not, when there seems to be an infection in my fault, and that it leads you likewise to resolve to carry on a correspondence against prohibition, expostulate with you upon it; when whatever consequences flow from your disobedience, they but widen my error, which is as the evil root, from which such sad branches spring?

The mind that can glory in being capable of so noble, so firm, so unshaken friendship, as that of my dear Miss Howe; a friendship which no casualty or distress can lessen, but which increases with the misfortunes of its friend—such a mind must be above taking amiss the well-meant admonitions of that distinguished friend. I will not therefore apologize for my freedom on this subject: and the less need I, when that freedom is the result of an affection, in the very instance, so absolutely disinterested, that it tends to deprive myself of the only comfort left me.

Your acknowledged sullenness; your tearing from your mother's hands the letter she thought she had a right to see, and burning it, as you own, before her face; your refusal to see the man, who is so willing to obey you for the sake of your unhappy friend, and this purely to vex your mother; can you think, my dear, upon this brief recapitulation of hardly one half of the faulty particulars you give, that these faults are excusable in one who so well knows her duty?

Your mother had a good opinion of me once: is not that a reason why she should be more regarded now, when I have, as she believes, so deservedly forfeited it? A prejudice in favour is as hard to be totally overcome as a prejudice in disfavour. In what a strong light, then, must that error appear to her, that should so totally turn her heart against me, herself not a principal in the case?

There are other duties, you say, besides the filial duty: but that, my dear, must be a duty prior to all other duties; a duty anterior, as I may say, to your very birth: and what duty ought not to give way to that, when they come in competition?

You are persuaded, that the duty to your friend, and the filial duty, may be performed without derogating from either. Your mother thinks otherwise. What is the conclusion to be drawn from these premises?

When your mother sees, how much I suffer in my reputation from the step I have taken, from whom she and all the world expected better things, how much reason has she to be watchful over you! One evil draws on another after it; and how knows she, or any body, where it may stop?

Does not the person who will vindicate, or seek to extenuate, a faulty step in another [in this light must your mother look upon the matter in question between her and you] give an indication either of a culpable will, or a weak judgment; and may not she apprehend, that the censorious will think, that such a one might probably have equally failed under the same inducements and provocations, to use your own words, as applied to me in a former letter?

Can there be a stronger instance in human life than mine has so early furnished, within a few months past, (not to mention the uncommon provocations to it, which I have met with,) of the necessity of the continuance of a watchful parent's care over a daughter: let that daughter have obtained ever so great a reputation for her prudence?

Is not the space from sixteen to twenty-one that which requires this care, more than at any time of a young woman's life? For in that period do we not generally attract the eyes of the other sex, and become the subject of their addresses, and not seldom of their attempts? And is not that the period in which our conduct or misconduct gives us a reputation or disreputation, that almost inseparably accompanies us throughout our whole future lives?

Are we not likewise then most in danger from ourselves, because of the distinction with which we are apt to behold particulars of that sex.

And when our dangers multiply, both from within and without, do not our parents know, that their vigilance ought to be doubled? And shall that necessary increase of care sit uneasy upon us, because we are grown up to stature and womanhood?

Will you tell me, if so, what is the precise stature and age at which a good child shall conclude herself absolved from the duty she owes to a parent?—And at which a parent, after the example of the dams of the brute creation, is to lay aside all care and tenderness for her offspring?

Is it so hard for you, my dear, to be treated like a child? And can you not think it is hard for a good parent to imagine herself under the unhappy necessity of so treating her woman-grown daughter?

Do you think, if your mother had been you, and you your mother, and your daughter had struggled with you, as you did with her, that you would not have been as apt as your mother was to have slapped your daughter's hands, to have made her quit her hold, and give up the prohibited letter?

Your mother told you, with great truth, that you provoked her to this harshness; and it was a great condescension in her (and not taken notice of by you as it deserved) to say that she was sorry for it.

At every age on this side matrimony (for then we come under another sort of protection, though that is far from abrogating the filial duty) it will be found, that the wings of our parents are our most necessary and most effectual safeguard from the vultures, the hawks, the kites, and other villainous birds of prey, that hover over us with a view to seize and destroy us the first time we are caught wandering out of the eye or care of our watchful and natural guardians and protectors.

Hard as you may suppose it, to be denied to continuance of a correspondence once so much approved, even by the venerable denier; yet, if your mother think my fault to be of such a nature, as that a correspondence with me will cast a shade upon your reputation, all my own friends having given me up—that hardship is to be submitted to. And must it not make her the more strenuous to support her own opinion, when she sees the first fruits of this tenaciousness on your side is to be gloriously in the sullens, as you call it, and in a disobedient opposition?

I know that you have a humorous meaning in that expression, and that this turn, in most cases, gives a delightful poignancy both to your conversation and correspondence; but indeed, my dear, this case will not bear humour.

Will you give me leave to add to this tedious expostulation, that I by no means approve of some of the things you write, in relation to the manner in which your father and mother lived—at times lived—only at times, I dare say, though perhaps too often.

Your mother is answerable to any body, rather than to her child, for whatever was wrong in her conduct, if any thing was wrong, towards Mr. Howe: a gentleman, of whose memory I will only say, that it ought to be revered by you—But yet, should you not examine yourself, whether your displeasure at your mother had no part in your revived reverence for your father at the time you wrote?

No one is perfect: and although your mother may not be right to remember disagreeableness against the departed, yet should you not want to be reminded on whose account, and on what occasion, she remembered them. You cannot judge, nor ought you to attempt to judge, of what might have passed between both, to embitter and keep awake disagreeable remembrances in the survivor.

LETTER XLII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [IN CONTINUATION.]

But this subject must not be pursued. Another might, with more pleasure, (though not with more approbation,) upon one of your lively excursions. It is upon the high airs you give yourself upon the word approve.

How comes it about, I wonder, that a young lady so noted for predominating generosity, should not be uniformly generous? That your generosity should fail in an instance where policy, prudence, gratitude, would not permit it to fail? Mr. Hickman (as you confess) had indeed a worthy mind. If I had not long ago known that, he would never have found an advocate in me for my Anna Howe's favour to him. Often and often have I been concerned, when I was your happy guest, to see him, after a conversation, in which he had well supported his part in your absence, sink at once into silence the moment you came into company.

I have told you of this before: and I believe I hinted to you once, that the superciliousness you put on only to him, was capable of a construction, which at the time would have very little gratified your pride to have had made; since it would have been as much in his favour, as in your disfavour.

Mr. Hickman, my dear, is a modest man. I never see a modest man, but I am sure (if he has not wanted opportunities) that he has a treasure in his mind, which requires nothing but the key of encouragement to unlock it, to make him shine—while a confident man, who, to be confident, must think as meanly of his company as highly of himself, enters with magisterial airs upon any subject; and, depending upon his assurance to bring himself off when found out, talks of more than he is master of.

But a modest man!—O my dear, shall not a modest woman distinguish and wish to consort with a modest man?—A man, before whom, and to whom she may open her lips secure of his good opinion of all she says, and of his just and polite regard for her judgment? and who must therefore inspire her with an agreeable self-confidence.

What a lot have I drawn!—We are all indeed apt to turn teachers—but, surely, I am better enabled to talk, to write, upon these subjects, than ever I was. But I will banish myself, if possible, from an address which, when I began to write, I was determined to confine wholly to your own particular.

My dearest, dearest friend, how ready are you to tell us what others should do, and even what a mother should have done! But indeed you once, I remember, advanced, that, as different attainments required different talents to master them, so, in the writing way, a person might not be a bad critic upon the works of others, although he might himself be unable to write with excellence. But will you permit me to account for all this readiness of finding fault, by placing it to human nature, which, being sensible of the defects of human nature, (that is to say, of its own defects,) loves to be correcting? But in exercising that talent, chooses rather to turn its eye outward than inward? In other words, to employ itself rather in the out-door search, than in the in-door examination.

And here give me leave to add, (and yet it is with tender reluctance,) that although you say very pretty things of notable wives; and although I join with you in opinion, that husbands may have as many inconveniencies to encounter with, as conveniencies to boast of, from women, of that character; yet Lady Hartley perhaps would have had milder treatment from your pen, had it not been dipped in gall with a mother in your eye.

As to the money, you so generously and repeatedly offer, don't be angry with me, if I again say, that I am very desirous that you should be able to aver, without the least qualifying or reserve, that nothing of that sort has passed between us. I know your mother's strong way of putting the question she is intent upon having answered. But yet I promise that I will be obliged to nobody but you, when I have occasion.

LETTER XLIII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [IN CONTINUATION.]

And now, my dear, a few words, as to the prohibition laid upon you; a subject that I have frequently touched upon, but cursorily, because I was afraid to trust myself with it, knowing that my judgment, if I did, would condemn my practice.

You command me not to attempt to dissuade you from this correspondence; and you tell me how kindly Mr. Hickman approves of it; and how obliging he is to me, to permit it to be carried on under cover to him—but this does not quite satisfy me.

I am a very bad casuist; and the pleasure I take in writing to you, who are the only one to whom I can disburden my mind, may make me, as I have hinted, very partial to my own wishes: else, if it were not an artful evasion beneath an open and frank heart to wish to be complied with, I would be glad methinks to be permitted still to write to you; and only to have such occasional returns by Mr. Hickman's pen, as well as cover, as might set me right when I am wrong; confirm me, when right, and guide me where I doubt. This would enable me to proceed in the difficult path before me with more assuredness. For whatever I suffer from the censure of others, if I can preserve your good opinion, I shall not be altogether unhappy, let what will befall me.

And indeed, my dear, I know not how to forbear writing. I have now no other employment or diversion. And I must write on, although I were not to send it to any body. You have often heard me own the advantages I have found from writing down every thing of moment that befalls me; and of all I think, and of all I do, that may be of future use to me; for, besides that this helps to form one to a style, and opens and expands the ductile mind, every one will find that many a good thought evaporates in thinking; many a good resolution goes off, driven out of memory perhaps by some other not so good. But when I set down what I will do, or what I have done, on this or that occasion; the resolution or action is before me either to be adhered to, withdrawn, or amended; and I have entered into compact with myself, as I may say; having given it under my own hand to improve, rather than to go backward, as I live longer.

I would willingly, therefore, write to you, if I might; the rather as it would be the more inspiriting to have some end in view in what I write; some friend to please; besides merely seeking to gratify my passion for scribbling.

But why, if your mother will permit our correspondence on communicating to her all that passes in it, and if she would condescend to one only condition, may it not be complied with?

Would she not, do you think, my dear, be prevailed upon to have the communication made to her, in confidence?

If there were any prospect of a reconciliation with my friends, I should not have so much regard for my pride, as to be afraid of any body's knowing how much I have been outwitted as you call it. I would in that case (when I had left Mr. Lovelace) acquaint your mother, and all my own friends, with the whole of my story. It would behove me so to do, for my own reputation, and for their satisfaction.

But, if I have no such prospect, what will the communication of my reluctance to go away with Mr. Lovelace, and of his arts to frighten me away, avail me? Your mother has hinted, that my friends would insist upon my returning home to them (as a proof of the truth of my plea) to be disposed of, without condition, at their pleasure. If I scrupled this, my brother would rather triumph over me, than keep my secret. Mr. Lovelace, whose pride already so ill brooks my regrets for meeting him, (when he thinks, if I had not, I must have been Mr. Solmes's wife,) would perhaps treat me with indignity: and thus, deprived of all refuge and protection, I should become the scoff of men of intrigue; a disgrace to my sex—while that avowed love, however indiscreetly shown, which is followed by marriage, will find more excuses made for it, than generally it ought to find.

But, if your mother will receive the communication in confidence, pray shew her all that I have written, or shall write. If my past conduct in that case shall not be found to deserve heavy blame, I shall then perhaps have the benefit of her advice, as well as yours. And if, after a re-establishment in her favour, I shall wilfully deserve blame for the time to come, I will be content to be denied yours as well as hers for ever.

As to cramping my spirit, as you call it, (were I to sit down to write what I know your mother must see,) that, my dear, is already cramped. And do not think so unhandsomely of your mother, as to fear that she would make partial constructions against me. Neither you nor I can doubt, but that, had she been left unprepossessedly to herself, she would have shown favour to me. And so, I dare say, would my uncle Antony. Nay, my dear, I can extend my charity still farther: for I am sometimes of opinion, that were my brother and sister absolutely certain that they had so far ruined me in the opinion of both my uncles, as that they need not be apprehensive of my clashing with their interests, they would not oppose a pardon, although they might not wish a reconciliation; especially if I would make a few sacrifices to them: which, I assure you, I should be inclined to make were I wholly free, and independent on this man. You know I never valued myself upon worldly acquisitions, but as they enlarged my power to do things I loved to do. And if I were denied the power, I must, as I now do, curb my inclination.

Do not however think me guilty of an affectation in what I have said of my brother and sister. Severe enough I am sure it is, in the most favourable sense. And an indifferent person will be of opinion, that they are much better warranted than ever, for the sake of the family honour, to seek to ruin me in the favour of all my friends.

But to the former topic—try, my dear, if your mother will, upon the condition above given, permit our correspondence, on seeing all we write. But if she will not, what a selfishness would there be in my love to you, were I to wish you to forego your duty for my sake?

And now, one word, as to the freedom I have treated you with in this tedious expostulatory address. I presume upon your forgiveness of it, because few friendships are founded on such a basis as ours: which is, 'freely to give reproof, and thankfully to receive it as occasions arise; that so either may have opportunity to clear up mistakes, to acknowledge and amend errors, as well in behaviour as in words and deeds; and to rectify and confirm each other in the judgment each shall form upon persons, things, and circumstances.' And all this upon the following consideration; 'that it is much more eligible, as well as honourable, to be corrected with the gentleness that may be expected from an undoubted friend, than, by continuing either blind or wilful, to expose ourselves to the censures of an envious and perhaps malignant world.'

But it is as needless, I dare say, to remind you of this, as it is to repeat my request, so often repeated, that you will not, in your turn, spare the follies and the faults of

Your ever affectionate CL. HARLOWE.

SUBJOINED TO THE ABOVE.

I said, that I would avoid writing any thing of my own particular affairs in the above address, if I could.

I will write one letter more, to inform you how I stand with this man. But, my dear, you must permit that one, and your answer to it (for I want your advice upon the contents of mine) and the copy of one I have written to my aunt, to be the last that shall pass between us, while the prohibition continues.

I fear, I very much fear, that my unhappy situation will draw me in to being guilty of evasion, of little affectations, and of curvings from the plain simple truth which I was wont to delight in, and prefer to every other consideration. But allow me to say, and this for your sake, and in order to lessen your mother's fears of any ill consequences that she might apprehend from our correspondence, that if I am at any time guilty of a failure in these respects, I will not go on in it, but endeavour to recover my lost ground, that I may not bring error into habit.

I have deferred going to town, at Mrs. Surlings's earnest request. But have fixed my removal to Monday, as I shall acquaint you in my next.

I have already made a progress in that next; but, having an unexpected opportunity, will send this by itself.

LETTER XLIV

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE FRIDAY MORNING, APRIL 21.

My mother will not comply with your condition, my dear. I hinted it to her, as from myself. But the Harlowes (excuse me) have got her entirely in with them. It is a scheme of mine, she told me, formed to draw her into your party against your parents. Which, for your own sake, she is very careful about.

Don't be so much concerned about my mother and me, once more, I beg of you. We shall do well enough together—now a falling out, now a falling in.

It used to be so, when you were not in the question.

Yet do I give you my sincere thanks for every line of your reprehensive letters; which I intend to read as often as I find my temper rises.

I will freely own, however, that I winced a little at first reading them. But I see that, on every re-perusal, I shall love and honour you still more, if possible, than before.

Yet, I think I have one advantage over you; and which I will hold through this letter, and through all my future letters; that is, that I will treat you as freely as you treat me; and yet will never think an apology necessary to you for my freedom.

But that you so think with respect to me is the effect of your gentleness of temper, with a little sketch of implied reflection on the warmth of mine. Gentleness in a woman you hold to be no fault: nor do I a little due or provoked warmth—But what is this, but praising on both sides what what neither of us can help, nor perhaps wish to help? You can no more go out of your road, than I can go out of mine. It would be a pain to either to do so: What then is it in either's approving of her own natural bias, but making a virtue of necessity?

But one observation I will add, that were your character, and my character, to be truly drawn, mine would be allowed to be the most natural. Shades and lights are equally necessary in a fine picture. Yours would be surrounded with such a flood of brightness, with such a glory, that it would indeed dazzle; but leave one heartless to imitate it.

O may you not suffer from a base world for your gentleness; while my temper, by its warmth, keeping all imposition at a distance, though less amiable in general, affords me not reason, as I have mentioned heretofore, to wish to make an exchange with you!

I should indeed be inexcusable to open my lips by way of contradiction to my mother, had I such a fine spirit as yours to deal with. Truth is truth, my dear! Why should narrowness run away with the praises due to a noble expansion of heart? If every body would speak out, as I do, (that is to say, give praise where only praise is due; dispraise where due likewise,) shame, if not principle, would mend the world—nay, shame would introduce principle in a generation or two. Very true, my dear. Do you apply. I dare not.—For I fear you, almost as much as I love you.

I will give you an instance, nevertheless, which will a-new demonstrate, that none but very generous and noble-minded people ought to be implicitly obeyed. You know what I said above, that truth is truth.

Inconveniencies will sometimes arise from having to do with persons of modest and scrupulousness. Mr. Hickman, you say, is a modest man. He put your corrective packet into my hand with a very fine bow, and a self-satisfied air [we'll consider what you say of this honest man by-and-by, my dear]: his strut was no gone off, when in came my mother, as I was reading it.

When some folks find their anger has made them considerable, they will be always angry, or seeking occasions for anger.

Why, now, Mr. Hickman—why, now, Nancy, [as I was huddling in the packet between my gown and my stays, at her entrance.] You have a letter brought you this instant.—While the modest man, with his pausing brayings, Mad-da—Mad-dam, looked as if he knew not whether to fight it out, or to stand his ground, and see fair play.

It would have been poor to tell a lie for it. She flung away. I went out at the opposite door, to read the contents; leaving Mr. Hickman to exercise his white teeth upon his thumb-nails.

When I had read your letters, I went to find out my mother. I told her the generous contents, and that you desired that the prohibition might be adhered to. I proposed your condition, as for myself; and was rejected, as above.

She supposed, she was finely painted between two 'young creatures, who had more wit than prudence:' and instead of being prevailed upon by the generosity of your sentiments, made use of your opinion only to confirm her own, and renewed her prohibitions, charging me to return no other answer, but that she did renew them: adding, that they should stand, till your relations were reconciled to you; hinting as if she had engaged for as much: and expected my compliance.

I thought of your reprehensions, and was meek, though not pleased. And let me tell you, my dear, that as long as I can satisfy my own mind, that good is intended, and that it is hardly possible that evil should ensue from our correspondence—as long as I know that this prohibition proceeds originally from the same spiteful minds which have been the occasion of all these mischiefs—as long as I know that it is not your fault if your relations are not reconciled to you, and that upon conditions which no reasonable people would refuse—you must give me leave, with all deference to your judgment, and to your excellent lessons, (which would reach almost every case of this kind but the present,) to insist upon your writing to me, and that minutely, as if this prohibition had not been laid.

It is not from humour, from perverseness, that I insist upon this. I cannot express how much my heart is in your concerns. And you must, in short, allow me to think, that if I can do you service by writing, I shall be better justified in continuing to write, than my mother is in her prohibition.

But yet, to satisfy you all I can, I will as seldom return answers, while the interdict lasts, as may be consistent with my notions of friendship, and with the service I owe you, and can do you.

As to your expedient of writing by Hickman [and now, my dear, your modest man comes in: and as you love modesty in that sex, I will do my endeavour, by holding him at a proper distance, to keep him in your favour] I know what you mean by it, my sweet friend. It is to make that man significant with me. As to the correspondence, THAT shall go on, I do assure you, be as scrupulous as you please—so that that will not suffer if I do not close with your proposal as to him.

I must tell you, that I think it will be honour enough for him to have his name made use of so frequently betwixt us. This, of itself, is placing a confidence in him, that will make him walk bolt upright, and display his white hand, and his fine diamond ring; and most mightily lay down his services, and his pride to oblige, and his diligence, and his fidelity, and his contrivances to keep our secret, and his excuses, and his evasions to my mother, when challenged by her; with fifty ana's

beside: and will it not moreover give him pretence and excuse oftener than ever to pad-nag it hither to good Mrs. Howe's fair daughter?

But to admit him into my company tete-a-tete, and into my closet, as often as I would wish to write to you, I only dictate to his pen—my mother all the time supposing that I was going to be heartily in love with him—to make him master of my sentiments, and of my heart, as I may say, when I write to you—indeed, my dear, I won't. Nor, were I married to the best HE in England, would I honour him with the communication of my correspondences.

No, my dear, it is sufficient, surely, for him to parade in the character of our letter-conveyor, and to be honoured in a cover, and never fear but, modest as you think him, he will make enough of that.

You are always blaming me for want of generosity to this man, and for abuse of power. But I profess, my dear, I cannot tell how to help it. Do, dear, now, let me spread my plumes a little, and now-and-then make myself feared. This is my time, you know, since it would be no more to my credit than to his, to give myself those airs when I am married. He has a joy when I am pleased with him that he would not know, but for the pain my displeasure gives him.

Men, no more than women, know how to make a moderate use of power. Is not that seen every day, from the prince to the peasant? If I do not make Hickman quake now-and-then, he will endeavour to make me fear. All the animals in the creation are more or less in a state of hostility with each other. The wolf, that runs away from a lion, will devour a lamb the next moment. I remember, that I was once so enraged at a game chicken that was continually pecking at another (a poor humble one, as I thought him) that I had the offender caught, and without more ado, in a pet of humanity, wrung his neck off. What followed this execution? Why that other grew insolent, as soon as his insulter was gone, and was continually pecking at one or two under him. Peck and be hanged, said I,—I might as well have preserved the first, for I see it is the nature of the beast.

Excuse my flippancies. I wish I were with you. I would make you smile in the midst of your gravest airs, as I used to do. O that you had accepted of my offer to attend you! but nothing that I offer will you accept—Take care!—You will make me very angry with you: and when I am, you know I value nobody: for, dearly as I love you, I must be, and cannot always help it,

Your saucy ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XLV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE FRIDAY, APRIL 22.

Mr. Lovelace communicated to me this morning early, from his intelligencer, the news of my brother's scheme. I like him the better for making very light of it, and for his treating it with contempt. And indeed, had I not had the hint of it from you, I should have suspected it to be some contrivance of his, in order to hasten me to town, where he has long wished to be himself.

He read me the passage in that Leman's letter, which is pretty much to the effect of what you wrote to me from Miss Lloyd; with this addition, that one Singleton, a master of a Scots vessel, is the man who is to be the principal in this act of violence.

I have seen him. He had been twice entertained at Harlowe-place, as my brother's friend. He has the air of a very bold and fearless man, and I fancy it must be his project; as my brother, I suppose, talks to every body of the rash step I have taken, for he did not spare me before he had this seeming reason to censure me.

This Singleton lives at Leith; so, perhaps, I am to be carried to my brother's house not far from that port.

Putting these passages together, I am not a little apprehensive that the design, lightly as Mr. Lovelace, from his fearless temper, treats it, may be attempted to be carried into execution; and of the consequences that may attend it, if it be.

I asked Mr. Lovelace, seeing him so frank and cool, what he would advise me to do.

Shall I ask you, Madam, what are your own thoughts?—Why I return the question, said he, is, because you have been so very earnest that I should leave you as soon as you are in London, that I know not what to propose without offending you.

My opinion is, said I, that I should studiously conceal myself from the knowledge of every body but Miss Howe; and that you should leave me out of hand; since they will certainly conclude, that where one is, the other is not far off: and it is easier to trace you than me.

You would not surely wish, said he, to fall into your brother's hands by such a violent measure as this? I propose not to throw myself officiously in their way; but should they have reason to think I avoided them, would not that whet their diligence to find you, and their courage to attempt to carry you off, and subject me to insults that no man of spirit can bear?

Lord bless me! said I, to what had this one fatal step that I have been betrayed into—

Dearest Madam, let me beseech you to forbear this harsh language, when you see, by this new scheme, how determined they were upon carrying their old ones, had you not been betrayed, as you call it. Have I offered to defy the laws of society, as this brother of yours must do, if any thing be intended by this project? I hope you will be pleased to observe that there are as violent and as wicked enterprisers as myself. But this is so very wild a project, that I think there can be no room for apprehensions from it. I know your brother well. When at college, he had always a romantic turn: but never had a head for any thing but to puzzle and confound himself. A half-invention, and a whole conceit; but not master of talents to do himself good, or others harm, but as those others gave him the power by their own folly.

This is very volubly run off, Sir!—But violent spirits are but too much alike; at least in their methods of resenting. You will not presume to make yourself a less innocent man, surely, who had determined to brave my whole family in person, if my folly had not saved you the rashness, and them the insult—

Dear Madam!—Still must it be folly, rashness!—It is as impossible for you to think tolerably of any body out of your own family, as it is for any one in your family to deserve your love! Forgive me, dearest creature! If I did not love you as never man loved a woman, I might appear more indifferent to preferences so undeservedly made. But let me ask you, Madam, What have you borne from me? What cause have I given you to treat me with so much severity and so little confidence? And what have you not borne from them? Malice and ill-will, sitting in judgment upon my character, may not give sentence in my favour: But what of your own knowledge have you against me?

Spirited questions, were they not, my dear?—And they were asked with as spirited an air. I was startled. But I was resolved not to desert myself.

Is this a time, Mr. Lovelace, is this a proper occasion taken, to give yourself these high airs to me, a young creature destitute of protection? It is a surprising question you ask me—Had I aught against you of my own knowledge—I can tell

you, Sir—And away I would have flung.

He snatched my hand, and besought me not to leave him in displeasure. He pleaded his passion for me, and my severity to him, and partiality for those from whom I had suffered so much; and whose intended violence, he said, was now the subject of our deliberation.

I was forced to hear him.

You condescended, dearest creature, said he, to ask my advice. It was very easy, give me leave to say, to advise you what to do. I hope I may, on this new occasion, speak without offence, notwithstanding your former injunctions—You see that there can be no hope of reconciliation with your relations. Can you, Madam, consent to honour with your hand a wretch whom you have never yet obliged with one voluntary favour!

What a recriminating, what a reproachful way, my dear, was this, of putting a question of this nature!

I expected not from him, at the time, and just as I was very angry with him, either the question or the manner. I am ashamed to recollect the confusion I was thrown into; all your advice in my head at the moment: yet his words so prohibitory. He confidently seemed to enjoy my confusion [indeed, my dear, he knows not what respectful love is!] and gazed upon me, as if he would have looked me through.

He was still more declarative afterwards, as I shall mention by-and-by: but it was half extorted from him.

My heart struggled violently between resentment and shame, to be thus teased by one who seemed to have all his passions at command, at a time when I had very little over mine! till at last I burst into tears, and was going from him in high disgust: when, throwing his arms about me, with an air, however, the most tenderly respectful, he gave a stupid turn to the subject.

It was far from his heart, he said, to take so much advantage of the streight, which the discovery of my brother's foolish project had brought me into, as to renew, without my permission, a proposal which I had hitherto discountenanced, and which for that reason—

And then he came with his half-sentences, apologizing for what he had not so much as half-proposed.

Surely he had not the insolence to intend to tease me, to see if I could be brought to speak what became me not to speak. But whether he had or not, it did tease me; insomuch that my very heart was fretted, and I broke out, at last, into fresh tears, and a declaration that I was very unhappy. And just then recollecting how like a tame fool I stood with his arms about me, I flung from him with indignation. But he seized my hand, as I was going out of the room, and upon his knees besought my stay for one moment: and then, in words the most clear and explicit, tendered himself to my acceptance, as the most effectual means to disappoint my brother's scheme, and set all right.

But what could I say to this?—Extorted from him, as it seemed to me, rather as the effect of his compassion than his love? What could I say? I paused, I looked silly—I am sure I looked very silly. He suffered me to pause, and look silly; waiting for me to say something: and at last (ashamed of my confusion, and aiming to make an excuse for it) I told him that I desired he would avoid such measures as might add to the uneasiness which it must be visible to him I had, when he reflected upon the irreconcilableness of my friends, and upon what might follow from this unaccountable project of my brother.

He promised to be governed by me in every thing. And again the wretch, instead of pressing his former question, asked me, if I forgave him for the humble suit he had made to me? What had I to do but to try for a palliation of my confusion, since it served me not?

I told him I had hopes it would not be long before Mr. Morden arrived; and doubted not that that gentleman would be the readier to engage in my favour, when he found that I made no other use of his (Mr. Lovelace's) assistance, than to free myself from the addresses of a man so disagreeable to me as Mr. Solmes: I must therefore wish that every thing might remain as it was till I could hear from my cousin.

This, although teased by him as I was, was not, you see, my dear, a denial. But he must throw himself into a heat, rather than try to persuade; which any other man in his situation, I should think, would have done; and this warmth obliged me to adhere to my seeming negative.

This was what he said, with a vehemence that must harden any woman's mind, who had a spirit above being frightened into passiveness—

Good God! and will you, Madam, still resolve to show me that I am to hope for no share in your favour, while any the remotest prospect remains that you will be received by my bitterest enemies, at the price of my utter rejection?

This was what I returned, with warmth, and with a salving art too—You should have seen, Mr. Lovelace, how much my brother's violence can affect me: but you will be mistaken if you let loose yours upon me, with a thought of terrifying me into measures the contrary of which you have acquiesced with.

He only besought me to suffer his future actions to speak for him; and if I saw him worthy of any favour, that I would not let him be the only person within my knowledge who was not entitled to my consideration.

You refer to a future time, Mr. Lovelace, so do I, for the future proof of a merit you seem to think for the past time wanting: and justly you think so. And I was again going from him.

One word more he begged me to hear—He was determined studiously to avoid all mischief, and every step that might lead to mischief, let my brother's proceedings, short of a violence upon my person, be what they would: but if any attempt that should extend to that were to be made, would I have had him to be a quiet spectator of my being seized, or carried back, or on board, by this Singleton; or, in case of extremity, was he not permitted to stand up in my defence?

Stand up in my defence, Mr. Lovelace!—I should be very miserable were there to be a call for that. But do you think I might not be safe and private in London? By your friend's description of the widow's house, I should think I might be safe there.

The widow's house, he replied, as described by his friend, being a back house within a front one, and looking to a garden, rather than to a street, had the appearance of privacy: but if, when there, it was not approved, it would be easy to find another more to my liking—though, as to his part, the method he would advise should be, to write to my uncle Harlowe, as one of my trustees, and wait the issue of it here at Mrs. Sorlings's, fearlessly directing it to be answered hither. To be afraid of little spirits was but to encourage insults, he said. The substance of the letter should be, 'To demand as a right, what they would refuse if requested as a courtesy: to acknowledge that I had put myself [too well, he said, did their treatment justify me] into the protection of the ladies of his family [by whose orders, and Lord M.'s, he himself would appear to act]: but that upon my own terms, which were such, that I was under no obligation to those ladies for the favour; it being no more than they would have granted to any one of my sex, equally distressed.' If I approved not of his method, happy should he think himself, he said, if I would honour him with the opportunity of making such a claim in his own name—but this was a point [with his but's again in the same breath!] that he durst but just touch upon. He hoped, however, that I would think their violence a sufficient inducement for me to take such a wished-for resolution.

Inwardly vexed, I told him that he himself had proposed to leave me when I was in town; that I expected he would: and that, when I was known to be absolutely independent, I should consider what to write, and what to do: but that while he

was with me, I neither would nor could.

He would be very sincere with me, he said: this project of my brother's had changed the face of things. He must, before he left me, see whether I should or should not approve of the London widow and her family, if I chose to go thither. They might be people whom my brother might buy. But if he saw they were persons of integrity, he then might go for a day or two, or so. But he must needs say, he could not leave me longer at a time.

Do you propose, Sir, said I, to take up your lodgings in the house where I shall lodge?

He did not, he said, as he knew the use I intended to make of his absence, and my punctilio—and yet the house where he had lodgings was new-fronting, and not in condition to receive him: but he could go to his friend Belford's, in Soho; or perhaps he might reach to the same gentleman's house at Edgware, over night, and return on the mornings, till he had reason to think this wild project of my brother's laid aside. But to no greater distance till then should he care to venture.

The result of all was, to set out on Monday next for town. I hope it will be in a happy hour.

CL. HARLOWE.

LETTER XLVI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY, APRIL 21.

[As it was not probable that the Lady could give so particular an account of her own confusion, in the affecting scene she mentions on Mr. Lovelace's offering himself to her acceptance, the following extracts are made from his letter of the above date.]

And now, Belford, what wilt thou say, if, like the fly buzzing about the bright taper, I had like to have singed the silken wings of my liberty? Never was man in greater danger of being caught in his own snares: all my views anticipated; all my schemes untried; the admirable creature no brought to town; nor one effort made to know if she be really angel or woman.

I offered myself to her acceptance, with a suddenness, 'tis true, that gave her no time to wrap herself in reserves; and in terms less tender than fervent, tending to upbraid her for her past indifference, and to remind her of her injunctions: for it was the fear of her brother, not her love of me, that had inclined her to dispense with those injunctions.

I never beheld so sweet a confusion. What a glory to the pencil, could it do justice to it, and to the mingled impatience which visibly informed every feature of the most meaning and most beautiful face in the world! She hemmed twice or thrice: her look, now so charmingly silly, then so sweetly significant; till at last the lovely teaser, teased by my hesitating expectation of her answer, out of all power of articulate speech, burst into tears, and was turning from me with precipitation, when, presuming to fold her in my happy arms—O think not, best beloved of my heart, said I, think not, that this motion, which you may believe to be so contrary to your former injunctions, proceeds from a design to avail myself of the cruelty of your relations: if I have disoblged you by it, (and you know with what respectful tenderness I have presumed to hint it,) it shall be my utmost care for the future—There I stopped—

Then she spoke, but with vexation—I am—I am—very unhappy—Tears trickling down her crimson cheeks, and her sweet face, as my arms still encircled the finest waist in the world, sinking upon my shoulder; the dear creature so absent, that she knew not the honour she permitted me.

But why, but why unhappy, my dearest life? said I:—all the gratitude that ever overflowed the heart of the most obliged of men—

Justice to myself there stopped my mouth: for what gratitude did I owe her for obligations so involuntary?

Then recovering herself, and her usual reserves, and struggling to free herself from my clasping arms, How now, Sir! said she, with a cheek more indignantly glowing, and eyes of fiercer lustre.

I gave way to her angry struggle; but, absolutely overcome by so charming a display of innocent confusion, I caught hold of her hand as she was flying from me, and kneeling at her feet, O my angel, said I, (quite destitute of reserve, and hardly knowing the tenor of my own speech; and had a parson been there, I had certainly been a gone man,) receive the vows of your faithful Lovelace. Make him yours, and only yours, for ever. This will answer every end. Who will dare to form plots and stratagems against my wife? That you are not so is the ground of all their foolish attempts, and of their insolent hopes in Solmes's favour.—O be mine!—I beseech you (thus on my knee I beseech you) to be mine. We shall then have all the world with us. And every body will applaud an event that every body expects.

Was the devil in me! I no more intended all this ecstatic nonsense, than I thought the same moment of flying in the air! All power is with this charming creature. It is I, not she, at this rate, that must fail in the arduous trial.

Didst thou ever before hear of a man uttering solemn things by an involuntary impulse, in defiance of premeditation, and of all his proud schemes? But this sweet creature is able to make a man forego every purpose of his heart that is not favourable to her. And I verily think I should be inclined to spare her all further trial (and yet what trial has she had?) were it not for the contention that her vigilance has set on foot, which shall overcome the other. Thou knowest my generosity to my uncontenting Rosebud—and sometimes do I qualify my ardent aspirations after even this very fine creature, by this reflection:—That the most charming woman on earth, were she an empress, can excel the meanest in the customary visibles only. Such is the equality of the dispensation, to the prince and the peasant, in this prime gift WOMAN.

Well, but what was the result of this involuntary impulse on my part?—Wouldst thou not think; I was taken at my offer?—An offer so solemnly made, and on one knee too?

No such thing! The pretty trifler let me off as easily as I could have wished.

Her brother's project; and to find that there were no hopes of a reconciliation for her; and the apprehension she had of the mischiefs that might ensue; these, not my offer, nor love of me, were the causes to which she ascribed all her sweet confusion—an ascription that is high treason against my sovereign pride,—to make marriage with me but a second-place refuge; and as good as to tell me that her confusion was owing to her concern that there were no hopes that my enemies would accept of her intended offer to renounce a man who had ventured his life for her, and was still ready to run the same risque in her behalf!

I re-urged her to make me happy, but I was to be postponed to her cousin Morden's arrival. On him are now placed all her hopes.

I raved; but to no purpose.

Another letter was to be sent, or had been sent, to her aunt Hervey, to which she hoped an answer.

Yet sometimes I think that fainter and fainter would have been her procrastinations, had I been a man of courage—but

so fearful was I of offending!

A confounded thing! The man to be so bashful; the woman to want so much courting!—How shall two such come together—no kind mediatrix in the way?

But I must be contented. 'Tis seldom, however, that a love so ardent as mine, meets with a spirit so resigned in the same person. But true love, I am now convinced, only wishes: nor has it any active will but that of the adored object.

But, O the charming creature, again of herself to mention London! Had Singleton's plot been of my own contriving, a more happy expedient could not have been thought of to induce her to resume her purpose of going thither; nor can I divine what could be her reason for postponing it.

I enclose the letter from Joseph Leman, which I mentioned to thee in mine of Monday last,* with my answer to it. I cannot resist the vanity that urges me to the communication. Otherwise, it were better, perhaps, that I suffer thee to imagine that this lady's stars fight against her, and dispense the opportunities in my favour, which are only the consequences of my own invention.

LETTER XLVII

TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. HIS HONNER SAT. APRIL 15.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONNER,

This is to let you Honner kno', as how I have been employ'd in a bisness I would have been excused from, if so be I could, for it is to gitt evidense from a young man, who has of late com'd out to be my cuzzen by my grandmother's side; and but lately come to live in these partes, about a very vile thing, as younge master calls it, relating to your Honner. God forbid I should call it so without your leave. It is not for so plane a man as I be, to tacks my betters. It is consarning one Miss Batirton, of Notingham; a very pretty crature, belike.

Your Honner got her away, it seems, by a false letter to her, macking believe as how her she-cuzzen, that she derely loved, was coming to see her; and was tacken ill upon the rode: and so Miss Batirton set out in a shase, and one sarvant, to fet her cuzzen from the inne where she laid sick, as she thote: and the sarvant was tricked, and braute back the shase; but Miss Batirton was not harde of for a month, or so. And when it came to passe, that her frends founde her out and would have prosekutid your Honner, your Honner was gone abroad: and so she was broute to bed, as one may say, before your Honner's return: and she got colde in her lyin-inn, and lanquitch'd, and soon died: and the child is living; but your Honner never troubles your Honner's hedd about it in the least. And this, and some other matters, of verry bad reporte, 'Squier Solmes was to tell my young lady of, if so be she would have harde him speke, before we lost her sweet company, as I may say, from heere.*

** See Vol. II. Letters XV. and XVI.*

Your Honner helped me to many ugly stories to tell against you Honner to my younge master, and younge mistriss; but did not tell me about this.

I most humbely beseche your Honner to be good and kinde and fethful to my deerest younge lady, now you have her; or I shall brake my harte for having done some dedes that have helped to bringe things to this passe. Pray youre dere, good Honner, be just! Prayey do!—As God shall love ye! prayey do!—I cannot write no more for this present, for verry fear and grief—

But now I am cumm'd to my writing agen, will your Honner be pleased to tell me, if as how there be any danger to your Honner's life from this bisness; for my cuzzen is actile hier'd to go down to Miss Batirton's frendes to see if they will stir in it: for you must kno' your Honner, as how he lived in the Batirton family at the time, and could be a good evidense, and all that.

I hope it was not so verry bad as Titus says it was; for he ses as how there was a rape in the case betwixt you at furste, and plese your Honner; and my cuzzen Titus is a very honist younge man as ever brocke bred. This is his carackter; and this made me willinger to owne him for my relation, when we came to talck.

If there should be danger of your Honner's life, I hope your Honner will not be hanged like as one of us common men; only have your hedd cut off, or so: and yet it is pit such a hedd should be loss'd: but if as how it should be prosekutid to that furr, which God forbid, be plesed nathless to thinck of youre fethful Joseph Leman, before your hedd be condemn'd; for after condemnation, as I have been told, all will be the king's or the shreeve's.

I thote as how it was best to acquent you Honner of this; and for you to let me kno' if I could do any think to sarve your Honner, and prevent mischief with my cuzzen Titus, on his coming back from Notingham, before he mackes his reporte.

I have gin him a hint already: for what, as I sed to him, cuzzen Titus, signifies stirring up the coles and macking of strife, to make rich gentilfolkes live at varience, and to be cutting of throtes, and such-like?

Very trewe, sed little Titus. And this, and plese your Honner, gis me hopes of him, if so be your Honner gis me direction; sen', as God kno'es, I have a poor, a verry poor invenshon; only a willing mind to prevent mischief, that is the chief of my aim, and always was, I bless my God!—Els I could have made much mischief in my time; as indeed any sarvant may. Your Honner nathless praises my invenshon every now-and-then: Alas! and plese your Honner, what invenshon should such a plane man as I have?—But when your Honner sets me agoing by your fine invenshon, I can do well enuff. And I am sure I have a hearty good will to deserve your Honner's faver, if I mought.

Two days, as I may say, off and on, have I been writing this long letter. And yet I have not sed all I would say. For, be it knone unto your Honner, as how I do not like that Captain Singleton, which I told you of in my last two letters. He is always laying his hedd and my young master's hedd together; and I suspect much if so be some mischief is not going on between them: and still the more, as because my eldest younge lady seemes to be joined to them sometimes.

Last week my younge master sed before my fase, My harte's blood boils over, Capten Singleton, for revenge upon this—and he called your Honner by a name it is not for such a won as me to say what.—Capten Singleton whispred my younge master, being I was by. So young master sed, You may say any thing before Joseph; for, althoff he looks so seelie, he has as good a harte, and as good a hedd, as any sarvante in the world need to have. My conscience touched me just then. But why shoulde it? when all I do is to prevent mischeff; and seeing your Honner has so much patience, which younge master has not; so am not affeard of telling your Honner any thing whatsoever.

And furthermore, I have such a desire to desarve your Honner's bounty to me, as mackes me let nothing pass I can tell you of, to prevent harm: and too, besides, your Honner's goodness about the Blew Bore; which I have so good an accounte of!—I am sure I shall be bounden to bless your Honner the longest day I have to live.

And then the Blew Bore is not all neither: sen', and please your Honner, the pretty Sowe (God forgive me for gesting in

so serus a matter) runs in my hedd likewise. I believe I shall love her mayhap more than your Honner would have me; for she begins to be kind and good-humered, and listens, and plesse your Honour, licke as if she was among beans, when I talke about the Blew Bore, and all that.

Prayey, your Honner, forgive the gesting of a poor plane man. We common fokes have our joys, and plesse your Honner, lick as our betters have; and if we be sometimes snubbed, we can find our underlings to snub them agen; and if not, we can get a wife mayhap, and snub her: so are masters some how or other oursells.

But how I try your Honner's patience!—Sarvants will shew their joyful hartes, tho' off but in partinens, when encourag'd.

Be plesed from the prems's to let me kno' if as how I can be put upon any sarvice to sarve your Honner, and to sarve my deerest younge lady; which God grant! for I begin to be affearde for her, hearing what peple talck—to be sure your Honner will not do her no harme, as a man may say. But I kno' your Honner must be good to so wonderous a younge lady. How can you help it?—But here my conscience smites me, that, but for some of my stories, which your Honner taute me, my old master, and my old lady, and the two old 'squires, would not have been able to be half so hardhearted as they be, for all my younge master and younge mistress sayes.

And here is the sad thing; they cannot come to clere up matters with my deerest young lady, because, as your Honner has ordered it, they have these stories as if bribed by me out of your Honner's sarvant; which must not be known for fere you should kill'n and me too, and blacken the briber!—Ah! your Honner! I doubte as tha I am a very vild fellow, (Lord bless my soil, I pray God!) and did not intend it.

But if my deerest younge lady should come to harm, and plesse your Honner, the horsepond at the Blew Bore—but Lord preserve us all from all bad mischeff, and all bad endes, I pray the Lord!—For tho'ff you Honner is kinde to me in worldly pelf, yet what shall a man get to loos his soul, as holy Skrittuer says, and plesse your Honner?

But natheless I am in hope of reppentence hereafter, being but a younge man, if I do wrong thro' ignorens: your Honner being a grate man, and a grave wit; and I a poor crature, not worthy notice; and your Honner able to answer for all. But, howsomever, I am

Your Honner's fetheful sarvant in all dewtie, JOSEPH LEMAN.

APRIL 15 AND 16.

LETTER XLVIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOSEPH LEMAN MONDAY, APRIL 17.

HONEST JOSEPH,

You have a worse opinion of your invention than you ought to have. I must praise it again. Of a plain man's head, I have not known many better than yours. How often have your forecast and discretion answered my wishes in cases which I could not foresee, not knowing how my general directions would succeed, or what might happen in the execution of them! You are too doubtful of your own abilities, honest Joseph; that's your fault.—But it being a fault that is owing to natural modesty, you ought rather to be pitied for it than blamed.

The affair of Miss Betterton was a youthful frolic. I love dearly to exercise my invention. I do assure you, Joseph, that I have ever had more pleasure in my contrivances, than in the end of them. I am no sensual man: but a man of spirit—one woman is like another—you understand me, Joseph.—In coursing, all the sport is made by the winding hare—a barn-door chick is better eating—now you take me, Joseph.

Miss Betterton was but a tradesman's daughter. The family, indeed, was grown rich, and aimed at a new line of gentry; and were unreasonable enough to expect a man of my family would marry her. I was honest. I gave the young lady no hope of that; for she put it to me. She resented—kept up, and was kept up. A little innocent contrivance was necessary to get her out. But no rape in the case, I assure you, Joseph. She loved me—I loved her. Indeed, when I got her to the inn, I asked her no question. It is cruel to ask a modest woman for her consent. It is creating difficulties to both. Had not her friends been officious, I had been constant and faithful to her to this day, as far as I know—for then I had not known my angel.

I went not abroad upon her account. She loved me too well to have appeared against me; she refused to sign a paper they had drawn up for her, to found a prosecution upon; and the brutal creatures would not permit the mid-wife's assistance, till her life was in danger; and, I believe, to this her death was owing.

I went into mourning for her, though abroad at the time. A distinction I have ever paid to those worthy creatures who dies in childbed by me.

I was ever nice in my loves.—These were the rules I laid down to myself on my entrance into active life:—To set the mother above want, if her friends were cruel, and if I could not get her a husband worthy of her: to shun common women—a piece of justice I owed to innocent ladies, as well as to myself: to marry off a former mistress, if possible, before I took to a new one: to maintain a lady handsomely in her lying-in: to provide for the little-one, if it lived, according to the degree of its mother: to go into mourning for the mother, if she died. And the promise of this was a great comfort to the pretty dears, as they grew near their times.

All my errors, all my expenses, have been with and upon women. So I could acquit my conscience (acting thus honourably by them) as well as my discretion as to point of fortune.

All men love women—and find me a man of more honour, in these points, if you can, Joseph.

No wonder the sex love me as they do!

But now I am strictly virtuous. I am reformed. So I have been for a long time, resolving to marry as soon as I can prevail upon the most admirable of women to have me. I think of nobody else—it is impossible I should. I have spared very pretty girls for her sake. Very true, Joseph! So set your honest heart at rest—You see the pains I take to satisfy your qualms.

But, as to Miss Betterton—no rape in the case, I repeat: rapes are unnatural things, and more are than are imagined, Joseph. I should be loth to be put to such a streight; I never was. Miss Betterton was taken from me against her own will. In that case her friends, not I, committed the rape.

I have contrived to see the boy twice, unknown to the aunt who takes care of him; loves him; and would not now part with him on any consideration. The boy is a fine boy I thank God. No father need be ashamed of him. He will be well provided for. If not, I would take care of him. He will have his mother's fortune. They curse the father, ungrateful wretches! but bless the boy—Upon the whole, there is nothing vile in this matter on my side—a great deal on the Bettertons.

Wherefore, Joseph, be not thou in pain, either for my head, or for thy own neck; nor for the Blue Boar; nor for the pretty Sow.

I love your jesting. Jestings better becomes a poor man than qualms. I love to have you jest. All we say, all we do, all we wish for, is a jest. He that makes life itself not so is a sad fellow, and has the worst of it.

I doubt not, Joseph, but you have had your joys, as you say, as well as your betters. May you have more and more, honest Joseph!—He that grudges a poor man joy, ought to have none himself. Jest on, therefore.—Jesting, I repeat, better becomes thee than qualms.

I had no need to tell you of Miss Betterton. Did I not furnish you with stories enough, without hers, against myself, to augment your credit with your cunning masters? Besides, I was loth to mention Miss Betterton, her friends being all living, and in credit. I loved her too—for she was taken from me by her cruel friends, while our joys were young.

But enough of dear Miss Betterton.—Dear, I say; for death endears.—Rest to her worthy soul!—There, Joseph, off went a deep sigh to the memory of Miss Betterton!

As to the journey of little Titus, (I now recollect the fellow by his name) let that take its course: a lady dying in childbed eighteen months ago; no process begun in her life-time; refusing herself to give evidence against me while she lived—pretty circumstances to found an indictment for a rape upon!

As to your young lady, the ever-admirable Miss Clarissa Harlowe, I always courted her for a wife. Others rather expected marriage from the vanity of their own hearts, than from my promises; for I was always careful of what I promised. You know, Joseph, that I have gone beyond my promises to you. I do to every body; and why? because it is the best way of showing that I have no grudging or narrow spirit. A promise is an obligation. A just man will keep his promise, a generous man will go beyond it.—This is my rule.

If you doubt my honour to your young lady, it is more than she does. She would not stay with me an hour if she did. Mine is the steadiest heart in the world. Hast thou not reason to think it so? Why this squeamishness then, honest Joseph?

But it is because thou art honest—so I forgive thee. Whoever loves my divine Clarissa, loves me.

Let James Harlowe call me what names he will, for his sister's sake I will bear them. Do not be concerned for me; her favour will make me rich amends; his own vilely malicious heart will make his blood boil over at any time; and when it does, thinkest thou that I will let it touch thine? Ah! Joseph, Joseph! what a foolish teaser is thy conscience! Such a conscience as gives a plain man trouble, when he intends to do for the best, is weakness, not conscience.

But say what thou wilt, write all thou knowest or hearest of to me, I'll have patience with every body. Why should I not, when it is as much the desire of my heart, as it is of thine, to prevent mischief?

So now, Joseph, having taken all this pains to satisfy thy conscience, and answer all thy doubts, and to banish all thy fears, let me come to a new point.

Your endeavours and mine, which were designed, by round-about ways, to reconcile all, even against the wills of the most obstinate, have not, we see answered the end we hoped they would answer; but, on the contrary, have widened the differences between our families. But this has not been either your fault or mine: it is owing to the black, pitch-like blood of your venomous-hearted young master, boiling over, as he owns, that our honest wishes have hitherto been frustrated.

Yet we must proceed in the same course. We shall tire them out in time, and they will propose terms; and when they do, they shall find out how reasonable mine shall be, little as they deserve from me.

Persevere, therefore, Joseph, honest Joseph, persevere; and unlikely as you may imagine the means, our desires will at last be obtained.

We have nothing for it now, but to go through with our work in the way we have begun. For since (as I told you in my last) my beloved mistrusts you, she will blow you up, if she be not mine; if she be, I can, and will, protect you; and as, if there will be any fault, in her opinion, it will be rather mine than yours, she must forgive you, and keep her husband's secrets, for the sake of his reputation; else she will be guilty of a great failure in her duty. So now you have set your hand to the plough, Joseph, there is no looking back.

And what is the consequence of all this: one labour more, and that will be all that will fall to your lot; at least, of consequence.

My beloved is resolved not to think of marriage till she has tried to move her friends to a reconciliation with her. You know they are determined not to be reconciled. She has it in her head, I doubt not, to make me submit to the people I hate; and if I did, they would rather insult me, than receive my condescension as they ought. She even owns, that she will renounce me, if they insist upon it, provided they will give up Solmes: so, to all appearance, I am still as far as ever from the happiness of calling her mine; indeed I am more likely than ever to lose her, (if I cannot contrive some way to avail myself of the present critical situation;) and then, Joseph, all I have been studying, and all you have been doing, will signify nothing.

At the place where we are, we cannot long be private. The lodgings are inconvenient for us, while both together, and while she refuses to marry. She wants to get me at a distance from her; there are extraordinary convenient lodgings, in my eye, in London, where we could be private, and all mischief avoided. When there, (if I get her thither,) she will insist that I leave her. Miss Howe is for ever putting her upon contrivances. That, you know, is the reason I have been obliged, by your means, to play the family off at Harlowe-place upon Mrs. Howe, and Mrs. Howe upon her daughter—Ah, Joseph! Little need for your fears for my angel! I only am in danger: but were I the free-liver I am reported to be, all this could I get over with a wet finger, as the saying is.

But, by the help of one of your hints, I have thought of an expedient which will do ever thing, and raise your reputation, though already so high, higher still. This Singleton, I hear, is a fellow who loves enterprising: the view he has to get James Harlowe to be his principal owner in a large vessel which he wants to be put into the command of, may be the subject of their present close conversation. But since he is taught to have so good an opinion of you, Joseph, cannot you (still pretending an abhorrence of me, and of my contrivances) propose to Singleton to propose to James Harlowe (who so much thirsts for revenge upon me) to assist him, with his whole ship's crew, upon occasion, to carry off his sister to Leith, where both have houses, or elsewhere?

You may tell them, that if this can be effected, it will make me raving mad; and bring your young lady into all their measures.

You can inform them, as from my servant, of the distance she keeps me at, in hopes of procuring her father's forgiveness, by cruelly giving me up, if insisted upon.

You can tell them, that as the only secret my servant has kept from you is the place we are in, you make no doubt, that a two-guinea bribe will bring that out, and also an information when I shall be at a distance from her, that the enterprise may be conducted with safety.

You may tell them, (still as from my servant,) that we are about to remove from inconvenient lodgings to others more convenient, (which is true,) and that I must be often absent from her.

If they listen to your proposal, you will promote your interest with Betty, by telling it to her as a secret. Betty will tell Arabella of it; Arabella will be overjoyed at any thing that will help forward her revenge upon me; and will reveal it (if her

brother do not) to her uncle Antony; he probably will whisper it to Mrs. Howe; she can keep nothing from her daughter, though they are always jangling. Her daughter will acquaint my beloved with it. And if it will not, or if it will, come to my ears from some of those, you can write it to me, as in confidence, by way of preventing mischief; which is the study of us both.

I can then show it to my beloved; then will she be for placing a greater confidence in me—that will convince me of her love, which I am now sometimes ready to doubt. She will be for hastening to the safer lodgings. I shall have a pretence to stay about her person, as a guard. She will be convinced that there is no expectation to be had of a reconciliation. You can give James Harlowe and Singleton continual false scents, as I shall direct you; so that no mischief can possibly happen.

And what will be the happy, happy, thrice happy consequence?—The lady will be mine in an honourable way, we shall all be friends in good time. The two guineas will be an agreeable addition to the many gratuities I have helped you to, by the like contrivances, from this stingy family. Your reputation, both for head and heart, as I hinted before, will be heightened. The Blue Boar also will be yours; nor shall you have the least difficulty about raising money to buy the stock, if it be worth your while to have it.

Betty will likewise then be yours. You have both saved money, it seems. The whole Harlowe family, whom you have so faithfully served, [’tis serving them, surely, to prevent the mischief which their violent son would have brought upon them,] will throw you in somewhat towards housekeeping. I will still add to your store—so nothing but happiness before you!

Crow, Joseph, crow!—a dunghill of thy own in view; servants to snub at thy pleasure; a wife to quarrel with, or to love, as thy humour leads thee; Landlord and Landlady at every word; to be paid, instead of paying, for thy eating and drinking. But not thus happy only in thyself: happy in promoting peace and reconciliation between two good families, in the long run, without hurting any christian soul. O Joseph, honest Joseph! what envy wilt thou raise, and who would be squeamish with such prospects before him.

This one labour, I repeat, crowns the work. If you can get but such a design entertained by them, whether they prosecute it or not, it will be equally to the purpose of

Your loving friend, R. LOVELACE.

LETTER XLIX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MRS. HERVEY [ENCLOSED IN HER LAST TO MISS HOWE.] THURSDAY, APRIL 20.
HONOURED MADAM,

Having not had the favour of an answer to a letter I took the liberty to write to you on the 14th, I am in some hopes that it may have miscarried: for I had much rather it should, than to have the mortification to think that my aunt Hervey deemed me unworthy of the honour of her notice.

In this hope, having kept a copy of it, and not become able to express myself in terms better suited to the unhappy circumstances of things, I transcribe and enclose what I then wrote.* And I humbly beseech you to favour the contents of it with your interest.

** The contents of the Letter referred to are given in Letter XXIV. of this volume.*

Hitherto it is in my power to perform what I undertake for in this letter; and it would be very grievous to me to be precipitated upon measures, which may render the desirable reconciliation more difficult.

If, Madam, I were permitted to write to you with the hopes of being answered, I could clear my intention with regard to the step I have taken, although I could not perhaps acquit myself to some of my severest judges, of an imprudence previous to it. You, I am sure, would pity me, if you knew all I could say, and how miserable I am in the forfeiture of the good opinion of all my friends.

I flatter myself, that their favour is yet retrievable: but, whatever be the determination at Harlowe-place, do not you, my dearest Aunt, deny me the favour of a few lines to inform me if there can be any hope of a reconciliation upon terms less shocking than those heretofore endeavoured to be imposed upon me; or if (which God forbid!) I am to be for ever reprobated.

At least, my dear Aunt, procure for me the justice of my wearing apparel, and the little money and other things which I wrote to my sister for, and mention in the enclosed to you; that I may not be destitute of common conveniencies, or be under a necessity to owe an obligation for such, where, at present, however, I would least of all owe it.

Allow me to say, that had I designed what happened, I might (as to the money and jewels at least) have saved myself some of the mortification which I have suffered, and which I still further apprehend, if my request be not complied with.

If you are permitted to encourage an eclairsissement of what I hint, I will open my whole heart to you, and inform you of every thing.

If it be any pleasure to have me mortified, be pleased to let it be known, that I am extremely mortified. And yet it is entirely from my own reflections that I am so, having nothing to find fault with in the behaviour of the person from whom every evil was to be apprehended.

The bearer, having business your way, will bring me your answer on Saturday morning, if you favour me according to my hopes. I knew not that I should have this opportunity till I had written the above.

I am, my dearest Aunt, Your ever dutiful, CL. HARLOWE.

Be pleased to direct for me, if I am to be favoured with a few lines, to be left at Mr. Osgood's, near Soho-square; and nobody shall ever know of your goodness to me, if you desire it to be kept a secret.

LETTER L

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE SATURDAY, APRIL
22.

I cannot for my life account for your wretch's teasing ways; but he certainly doubts your love of him. In this he is a modest man, as well as somebody else; and tacitly confesses that he does not deserve it.

Your Israelitish hankerings after the Egyptian onion, (testified still more in your letter to your aunt,) your often repeated regrets for meeting him, for being betrayed by him—these he cannot bear.

I have been looking back on the whole of his conduct, and comparing it with his general character; and find that he is more consistently, more uniformly, mean, revengeful, and proud, than either of us once imagined.

From his cradle, as I may say, as an only child, and a boy, humoursome, spoiled, mischievous; the governor of his governors.

A libertine in his riper years, hardly regardful of appearances; and despising the sex in general, for the faults of particulars of it, who made themselves too cheap to him.

What has been his behaviour in your family?—a CLARISSA in view, (from the time your foolish brother was obliged to take a life from him,) but defiance for defiances. Getting you into his power by terror, by artifice. What politeness can be expected from such a man?

Well, but what in such a situation is to be done? Why, you must despise him: you must hate him, if you can, and run away from him—But whither?—Whither indeed, now that your brother is laying foolish plots to put you in a still worse condition, as it may happen.

But if you cannot despise and hate him—if you care not to break with him, you must part with some punctilio's. And if the so doing bring not on the solemnity, you must put yourself into the protection of the ladies of his family.

Their respect for you is of itself a security for his honour to you, if there could be any room for doubt. And at least, you should remind him of his offer to bring one of the Miss Montagues to attend you at your new lodgings in town, and accompany you till all is happily over.

This, you'll say, will be as good as declaring yourself to be his. And so let it. You ought not now to think of any thing else but to be his. Does not your brother's project convince you more and more of this?

Give over then, my dearest friend, any thoughts of this hopeless reconciliation, which has kept you balancing thus long. You own, in the letter before me, that he made very explicit offers, though you give me not the very words. And he gave his reasons, I perceive, with his wishes that you should accept them; which very few of the sorry fellows do, whose plea is generally but a compliment to our self-love—That we must love them, however presumptuous and unworthy, because they love us.

Were I in your place, and had your charming delicacies, I should, perhaps, do as you do. No doubt but I should expect that the man should urge me with respectful warmth; that he should supplicate with constancy, and that all his words and actions should tend to the one principal point; nevertheless, if I suspected art or delay, founded upon his doubts of my love, I would either condescend to clear up his doubts or renounce him for ever.

And in my last case, I, your Anna Howe, would exert myself, and either find you a private refuge, or resolve to share fortunes with you.

What a wretch! to be so easily answered by your reference to the arrival of your cousin Morden! But I am afraid that you was too scrupulous: for did he not resent that reference?

Could we have his account of the matter, I fancy, my dear, I should think you over nice, over delicate.* Had you laid hold of his acknowledged explicitness, he would have been as much in your power, as now you seem to be in his: you wanted not to be told, that the person who had been tricked into such a step as you had taken, must of necessity submit to many mortifications.

** The reader who has seen his account, which Miss Howe could not have seen, when she wrote thus, will observe that it was not possible for a person of her true delicacy of mind to act otherwise than she did, to a man so cruelly and so insolently artful.*

But were it to me, a girl of spirit as I am thought to be, I do assure you, I would, in a quarter of an hour (all the time I would allow to punctilio in such a case as yours) know what he drives at: since either he must mean well or ill; if ill, the sooner you know it, the better. If well, whose modesty is it he distresses, but that of his own wife?

And methinks you should endeavour to avoid all exasperating recriminations, as to what you have heard of his failure in morals; especially while you are so happy as not to have occasion to speak of them by experience.

I grant that it gives a worthy mind some satisfaction in having borne its testimony against the immoralities of a bad one. But that correction which is unseasonably given, is more likely either to harden or make an hypocrite, than to reclaim.

I am pleased, however, as well as you, with his making light of your brother's wise project.—Poor creature! and must Master Jemmy Harlowe, with his half-wit, pretend to plot, and contrive mischief, yet rail at Lovelace for the same things?—A witty villain deserves hanging at once (and without ceremony, if you please): but a half-witted one deserves broken bones first, and hanging afterwards. I think Lovelace has given his character in a few words.*

** See Letter XLV. of this volume.*

Be angry at me, if you please; but as sure as you are alive, now that this poor creature, whom some call your brother, finds he has succeeded in making you fly your father's house, and that he has nothing to fear but your getting into your own, and into an independence of him, he thinks himself equal to any thing, and so he has a mind to fight Lovelace with his own weapons.

Don't you remember his pragmatistical triumph, as told you by your aunt, and prided in by that saucy Betty Barnes, from his own foolish mouth?*

** See Vol. II. Letter XLVII.*

I expect nothing from your letter to your aunt. I hope Lovelace will never know the contents of it. In every one of yours, I see that he as warmly resents as he dares the little confidence you have in him. I should resent it too, were I he; and knew that I deserved better.

Don't be scrupulous about clothes, if you think of putting yourself into the protection of the ladies of his family. They know how matters stand between you and your relations, and love you never the worse for the silly people's cruelty.

I know you won't demand possession of your estate. But give him a right to demand it for you; and that will be still better.

Adieu, my dear! May heaven guide and direct you in all your steps, is the daily prayer of

Your ever affectionate and faithful ANNA HOWE.

LETTER LI

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. FRIDAY, APRIL 21.

Thou, Lovelace, hast been long the entertainer; I the entertained. Nor have I been solicitous to animadvert, as thou wenteest along, upon thy inventions, and their tendency. For I believed, that with all thy airs, the unequalled perfections and fine qualities of this lady would always be her protection and security. But now that I find thou hast so far succeeded, as to induce her to come to town, and to choose her lodgings in a house, the people of which will too probably damp and suppress any honourable motions which may arise in thy mind in her favour, I cannot help writing, and that professedly in her behalf.

My inducements to this are not owing to virtue: But if they were, what hope could I have of affecting thee by pleas arising from it?

Nor would such a man as thou art be deterred, were I to remind thee of the vengeance which thou mayest one day expect, if thou insultest a woman of her character, family, and fortune.

Neither are gratitude and honour motives to be mentioned in a woman's favour, to men such as we are, who consider all those of the sex as fair prize, over honour, in the general acceptance of the word, are two things.

What then is my motive?—What, but the true friendship that I bear thee, Lovelace; which makes me plead thy own sake, and thy family's sake, in the justice thou owest to this incomparable creature; who, however, so well deserves to have her sake to be mentioned as the principal consideration.

Last time I was at M. Hall, thy noble uncle so earnestly pressed me to use my interest to persuade thee to enter the pale, and gave me so many family reasons for it, that I could not help engaging myself heartily on his side of the question; and the rather, as I knew that thy own intentions with regard to this fine woman were then worthy of her. And of this I assured his Lordship; who was half afraid of thee, because of the ill usage thou receivedst from her family. But now, that the case is altered, let me press the matter home to thee from other considerations.

By what I have heard of this lady's perfections from every mouth, as well as from thine, and from every letter thou hast written, where wilt thou find such another woman? And why shouldst thou tempt her virtue?—Why shouldst thou wish to try where there is no reason to doubt?

Were I in thy case, and designed to marry, and if I preferred a woman as I know thou dost this to all the women in the world, I should read to make further trial, knowing what we know of the sex, for fear of succeeding; and especially if I doubted not, that if there were a woman in the world virtuous at heart, it is she.

And let me tell thee, Lovelace, that in this lady's situation, the trial is not a fair trial. Considering the depth of thy plots and contrivances: considering the opportunities which I see thou must have with her, in spite of her own heart; all her relations' follies acting in concert, though unknown to themselves, with thy wicked, scheming head: considering how destitute of protection she is: considering the house she is to be in, where she will be surrounded with thy implements; specious, well-bred and genteel creatures, not easily to be detected when they are disposed to preserve appearances, especially by the young inexperienced lady wholly unacquainted with the town: considering all these things, I say, what glory, what cause of triumph wilt thou have, if she should be overcome?—Thou, too, a man born for intrigue, full of invention, intrepid, remorseless, able patiently to watch for thy opportunity, not hurried, as most men, by gusts of violent passion, which often nip a project in the bud, and make the snail, that was just putting out his horns to meet the inviter, withdraw into its shell—a man who has no regard to his word or oath to the sex; the lady scrupulously strict to her word, incapable of art or design; apt therefore to believe well of others—it would be a miracle if she stood such an attempter, such attempts, and such snares, as I see will be laid for her. And, after all, I see not when men are so frail without importunity, that so much should be expected from women, daughters of the same fathers and mothers, and made up of the same brittle compounds, (education all the difference,) nor where the triumph is in subduing them.

May there not be other Lovelaces, thou askest, who, attracted by her beauty, may endeavour to prevail with her?*

** See Letter XVIII. of this volume.*

No; there cannot, I answer, be such another man, person, mind, fortune, and thy character, as above given, taken in. If thou imaginest there could, such is thy pride, that thou wouldst think the worse of thyself.

But let me touch upon thy predominant passion, revenge; for love is but second to that, as I have often told thee, though it has set thee into raving at me: what poor pretences for revenge are the difficulties thou hadst in getting her off; allowing that she had run a risque of being Solmes's wife, had she staid? If these are other than pretences, why thankest thou not those who, by their persecutions of her, answered thy hopes, and threw her into thy power?—Besides, are not the pretences thou makest for further trial, most ungratefully, as well as contradictorily founded upon the supposition of error in her, occasioned by her favour to thee?

And let me, for the utter confusion of thy poor pleas of this nature, ask thee—Would she, in thy opinion, had she willingly gone off with thee, have been entitled to better quarter?—For a mistress indeed she might: but how wouldst thou for a wife have had cause to like her half so well as now?

Has she not demonstrated, that even the highest provocations were not sufficient to warp her from her duty to her parents, though a native, and, as I may say, an originally involuntary duty, because native? And is not this a charming earnest that she will sacredly observe a still higher duty into which she proposes to enter, when she does enter, by plighted vows, and entirely as a volunteer?

That she loves thee, wicked as thou art, and cruel as a panther, there is no reason to doubt. Yet, what a command has she over herself, that such a penetrating self-flatterer as thyself is sometimes ready to doubt it! Though persecuted on the one hand, as she was, by her own family, and attracted, on the other, by the splendour of thine; every one of whom courts her to rank herself among them!

Thou wilt perhaps think that I have departed from my proposition, and pleaded the lady's sake more than thine, in the above—but no such thing. All that I have written is more in thy behalf than in her's; since she may make thee happy; but it is next to impossible, I should think, if she preserve her delicacy, that thou canst make her so. What is the love of a rakish heart? There cannot be peculiarity in it. But I need not give my further reasons. Thou wilt have ingenuousness enough, I dare say, were there occasion for it, to subscribe to my opinion.

I plead not for the state from any great liking to it myself. Nor have I, at present, thoughts of entering into it. But, as thou art the last of thy name; as thy family is of note and figure in thy country; and as thou thyself thinkest that thou shalt one day marry: Is it possible, let me ask thee, that thou canst have such another opportunity as thou now hast, if thou lettest this slip? A woman in her family and fortune not unworthy of thine own (though thou art so apt, from pride of ancestry, and pride of heart, to speak slightly of the families thou dislikest); so celebrated for beauty; and so noted at the same time for prudence, for soul, (I will say, instead of sense,) and for virtue?

If thou art not so narrow-minded an elf, as to prefer thine own single satisfaction to posterity, thou, who shouldst wish to beget children for duration, wilt not postpone till the rake's usual time; that is to say, till diseases or years, or both, lay

hold of thee; since in that case thou wouldst entitle thyself to the curses of thy legitimate progeny for giving them a being altogether miserable: a being which they will be obliged to hold upon a worse tenure than that tenant-courtesy, which thou callest the worst;* to wit, upon the Doctor's courtesy; thy descendants also propagating (if they shall live, and be able to propagate) a wretched race, that shall entail the curse, or the reason for it, upon remote generations.

Wicked as the sober world accounts you and me, we have not yet, it is to be hoped, got over all compunction. Although we find religion against us, we have not yet presumed those who do. And we know better than to be even doubters. In short, we believe a future state of rewards and punishments. But as we have so much youth and health in hand, we hope to have time for repentance. That is to say, in plain English, [nor think thou me too grave, Lovelace: thou art grave sometimes, though not often,] we hope to live to sense, as long as sense can relish, and purpose to reform when we can sin no longer.

And shall this admirable woman suffer for her generous endeavours to set on foot thy reformation; and for insisting upon proofs of the sincerity of thy professions before she will be thine?

Upon the whole matter, let me wish thee to consider well what thou art about, before thou goest a step farther in the path which thou hast chalked out for thyself to tread, and art just going to enter upon. Hitherto all is so far right, that if the lady mistrusts thy honour, she has no proofs. Be honest to her, then, in her sense of the word. None of thy companions, thou knowest, will offer to laugh at what thou dost. And if they should (of thy entering into a state which has been so much ridiculed by thee, and by all of us) thou hast one advantage—it is this, that thou canst not be ashamed.

Deferring to the post-day to close my letter, I find one left at my cousin Osgood's, with directions to be forwarded to the lady. It was brought within these two hours by a particular hand, and has a Harlowe-seal upon it. As it may therefore be of importance, I dispatch it with my own, by my servant, post-haste.*

** This letter was from Miss Arabella Harlowe. See Let. LV.*

I suppose you will soon be in town. Without the lady, I hope. Farewell.

Be honest, and be happy, J. BELFORD.

SAT. APRIL 22.

LETTER LII

MRS. HERVEY, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [IN ANSWER TO LETTER XVIII.]

DEAR NIECE,

It would be hard not to write a few lines, so much pressed to write, to one I ever loved. Your former letter I received; yet was not at liberty to answer it. I break my word to answer you now.

Strange informations are every day received about you. The wretch you are with, we are told, is every hour triumphing and defying—Must not these informations aggravate? You know the uncontrollableness of the man. He loves his own humour better than he loves you—though so fine a creature as you are! I warned you over and over: no young lady was ever more warned!—Miss Clarissa Harlowe to do such a thing!

You might have given your friends the meeting. If you had held your aversion, it would have been complied with. As soon as I was intrusted myself with their intention to give up the point, I gave you a hint—a dark one perhaps*—but who would have thought—O Miss!—Such an artful flight!—Such cunning preparations!

But you want to clear up things—what can you clear up? Are you not gone off?—With a Lovelace too? What, my dear, would you clear up?

You did not design to go, you say. Why did you meet him then, chariot and six, horsemen, all prepared by him? O my dear, how art produces art!—Will it be believed?—If it would, what power will he be thought to have had over you!—He—Who?—Lovelace!—The vilest of libertines!—Over whom? A Clarissa!—Was your love for such a man above your reason? Above your resolution? What credit would a belief of this, if believed, bring you?—How mend the matter?—Oh! that you had stood the next morning!

I'll tell you all that was intended if you had.

It was, indeed, imagined that you would not have been able to resist your father's entreaties and commands. He was resolved to be all condescension, if anew you had not provoked him. I love my Clary Harlowe, said he, but an hour before the killing tidings were brought him; I love her as my life: I will kneel to her, if nothing else will do, to prevail upon her to oblige me.

Your father and mother (the reverse of what should have been!) would have humbled themselves to you: and if you could have denied them, and refused to sign the settlements previous to the meeting, they would have yielded, although with regret.

But it was presumed, so naturally sweet your temper, so self-denying as they thought you, that you could not have withstood them, notwithstanding all your dislike of the one man, without a greater degree of headstrong passion for the other, than you had given any of us reason to expect from you.

If you had, the meeting on Wednesday would have been a lighter trial to you. You would have been presented to all your assembled friends, with a short speech only, 'That this was the young creature, till very lately faultless, condescending, and obliging; now having cause to glory in a triumph over the wills of father, mother, uncles, the most indulgent; over family-interests, family-views; and preferring her own will to every body's! and this for a transitory preference to person only; there being no comparison between the men in their morals.'

Thus complied with, and perhaps blessed, by your father and mother, and the consequences of your disobedience deprecated in the solemnest manner by your inimitable mother, your generosity would have been appealed to, since your duty would have been found too weak an inducement, and you would have been bid to withdraw for one half hour's consideration. Then would the settlements have been again tendered for your signing, by the person least disobliging to you; by your good Norton perhaps; she perhaps seconded by your father again; and, if again refused, you would have again have been led in to declare such your refusal. Some restrictions which you yourself had proposed, would have been insisted upon. You would have been permitted to go home with me, or with your uncle Antony, (with which of us was not agreed upon, because they hoped you might be persuaded,) there to stay till the arrival of your cousin Morden; or till your father could have borne to see you; or till assured that the views of Lovelace were at an end.

This the intention, your father so set upon your compliance, so much in hopes that you would have yielded, that you

would have been prevailed upon by methods so condescending and so gentle; no wonder that he, in particular, was like a distracted man, when he heard of your flight—of your flight so premeditated;—with your ivy summer-house dinings, your arts to blind me, and all of us!—Naughty, naughty, young creature!

I, for my part, would not believe it, when told of it. Your uncle Hervey would not believe it. We rather expected, we rather feared, a still more desperate adventure. There could be but one more desperate; and I was readier to have the cascade resorted to, than the garden back-door.—Your mother fainted away, while her heart was torn between the two apprehensions.—Your father, poor man! your father was beside himself for near an hour—What imprecations!—What dreadful imprecations!—To this day he can hardly bear your name: yet can think of nobody else. Your merits, my dear, but aggravate your fault.—Something of fresh aggravation every hour.—How can any favour be expected?

I am sorry for it; but am afraid nothing you ask will be complied with.

Why mention you, my dear, the saving you from mortifications, who have gone off with a man? What a poor pride is it to stand upon any thing else!

I dare not open my lips in your favour. Nobody dare. Your letter must stand by itself. This has caused me to send it to Harlowe-place. Expect therefore great severity. May you be enabled to support the lot you have drawn! O my dear! how unhappy have you made every body! Can you expect to be happy? Your father wishes you had never been born. Your poor mother—but why should I afflict you? There is now no help!—You must be changed, indeed, if you are not very unhappy yourself in the reflections your thoughtful mind must suggest to you.

You must now make the best of your lot. Yet not married, it seems!

It is in your power, you say, to perform whatever you shall undertake to do. You may deceive yourself: you hope that your reputation and the favour of your friends may be retrieved. Never, never, both, I doubt, if either. Every offended person (and that is all who loved you, and are related to you) must join to restore you: when can these be of one mind in a case so notoriously wrong?

It would be very grievous, you say, to be precipitated upon measures that may make the desirable reconciliation more difficult. Is it now, my dear, a time for you to be afraid of being precipitated? At present, if ever, there can be no thought of reconciliation. The upshot of your precipitation must first be seen. There may be murder yet, as far as we know. Will the man you are with part willingly with you? If not, what may be the consequence? If he will—Lord bless me! what shall we think of his reasons for it?—I will fly this thought. I know your purity—But, my dear, are you not out of all protection?—Are you not unmarried?—Have you not (making your daily prayers useless) thrown yourself into temptation? And is not the man the most wicked of plotters?

You have hitherto, you say, (and I think, my dear, with an air unbecoming to your declared penitence,) no fault to find with the behaviour of a man from whom every evil was apprehended: like Caesar to the Roman augur, which I heard you tell of, who had bid him beware the Ides of March: the Ides of March, said Caesar, seeing the augur among the crowd, as he marched in state to the senate-house, from which he was never to return alive, the Ides of March are come. But they are not past, the augur replied. Make the application, my dear: may you be able to make this reflection upon his good behaviour to the last of your knowledge of him! May he behave himself better to you, than he ever did to any body else over whom he had power! Amen!

No answer, I beseech you. I hope your messenger will not tell any body that I have written to you. And I dare say you will not show what I have written to Mr. Lovelace—for I have written with the less reserve, depending upon your prudence.

You have my prayers.

My Dolly knows not that I write: nobody does*; not even Mr. Hervey.

** Notwithstanding what Mrs. Hervey here says, it will be hereafter seen that this severe letter was written in private concert with the implacable Arabella.*

Dolly would have several times written: but having defended your fault with heat, and with a partiality that alarmed us, (such a fall as your's, my dear, must be alarming to all parents,) she has been forbidden, on pain of losing our favour for ever: and this at your family's request, as well as by her father's commands.

You have the poor girl's hourly prayers, I will, however, tell you, though she knows not what I do, as well as those of

Your truly afflicted aunt, D. HERVEY.

FRIDAY, APRIL 21.

LETTER LIII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE [WITH THE PRECEDING.] SAT. MORN. APRIL 22.

I have just now received the enclosed from my aunt Hervey. Be pleased, my dear, to keep her secret of having written to the unhappy wretch her niece.

I may go to London, I see, or where I will. No matter what becomes of me.

I was the willinger to suspend my journey thither till I heard from Harlowe-place. I thought, if I could be encouraged to hope for a reconciliation, I would let this man see, that he should not have me in his power, but upon my own terms, if at all.

But I find I must be his, whether I will or not; and perhaps through still greater mortifications than those great ones which I have already met with—And must I be so absolutely thrown upon a man, with whom I am not at all satisfied!

My letter is sent, you see, to Harlowe-place. My heart aches for the reception it may meet with there.

One comfort only arises to me from its being sent; that my aunt will clear herself, by the communication, from the supposition of having corresponded with the poor creature whom they have all determine to reprobate. It is no small part of my misfortune that I have weakened the confidence one dear friend has in another, and made one look cool upon another. My poor cousin Dolly, you see, has reason to regret on this account, as well as my aunt. Miss Howe, my dear Miss Howe, is but too sensible of the effects of my fault, having had more words with her mother on my account, than ever she had on any other. Yet the man who has drawn me into all this evil I must be thrown upon!—Much did I consider, much did I apprehend, before my fault, supposing I were to be guilty of it: but I saw it not in all its shocking lights.

And now, to know that my father, an hour before he received the tidings of my supposed flight, owned that he loved me as his life: that he would have been all condescension: that he would—Oh! my dear, how tender, how mortifyingly tender now in him! My aunt need not have been afraid, that it should be known that she has sent me such a letter as this!—A father to kneel to his child!—There would not indeed have been any bearing of that!—What I should have done in such a

case, I know not. Death would have been much more welcome to me than such a sight, on such an occasion, in behalf of a man so very, very disgusting to me!—But I had deserve annihilation, had I suffered my father to kneel in vain.

Yet, had but the sacrifice of inclination and personal preference been all, less than KNEELING should have been done. My duty should have been the conqueror of my inclination. But an aversion—an aversion so very sincere!—The triumph of a cruel and ambitious brother, ever so uncontrollable, joined with the insults of an envious sister, bringing wills to theirs, which otherwise would have been favourable to me: the marriage-duties, so absolutely indispensable, so solemnly to be engaged for: the marriage-intimacies (permit me to say to you, my friend, what the purest, although with apprehension, must think of) so very intimate: myself one who has never looked upon any duty, much less a voluntary-vowed one, with indifference; could it have been honest in me to have given my hand to an odious hand, and to have consented to such a more than reluctant, such an immiscible union, if I may so call it?—For life too!—Did not I think more and deeper than most young creatures think; did I not weigh, did I not reflect, I might perhaps have been less obstinate.—Delicacy, (may I presume to call it?) thinking, weighing, reflection, are not blessings (I he not found them such) in the degree I have them. I wish I had been able, in some very nice cases, to have known what indifference was; yet not to have my ignorance imputable to me as a fault. Oh! my dear! the finer sensibilities, if I may suppose mine to be such, make not happy.

What a method had my friends intended to take with me! This, I dare say, was a method chalked out by my brother. He, I suppose, was to have presented me to all my assembled friends, as the daughter capable of preferring her own will to the wills of them all. It would have been a sore trial, no doubt. Would to Heaven, however, I had stood it—let the issue have been what it would, would to Heaven I had stood it!

There may be murder, my aunt says. This looks as if she knew of Singleton's rash plot. Such an upshot, as she calls it, of this unhappy affair, Heaven avert!

She flies a thought, that I can less dwell upon—a cruel thought—but she has a poor opinion of the purity she compliments me with, if she thinks that I am not, by God's grace, above temptation from this sex. Although I never saw a man, whose person I could like, before this man; yet his faulty character allowed me but little merit from the indifference I pretended to on his account. But, now I see him in nearer lights, I like him less than ever. Unpolite, cruel, insolent!—Unwise! A trifler with his own happiness; the destroyer of mine!—His last treatment—my fate too visibly in his power—master of his own wishes, [shame to say it,] if he knew what to wish for.—Indeed I never liked him so little as now. Upon my word, I think I could hate him, (if I do not already hate him) sooner than any man I ever thought tolerably of—a good reason why: because I have been more disappointed in my expectations of him; although they never were so high, as to have made him my choice in preference to the single life, had that been permitted me. Still, if the giving him up for ever will make my path to reconciliation easy, and if they will signify as much to me, they shall see that I never will be his: for I have the vanity to think my soul his soul's superior.

You will say I rave: forbidden to write to my aunt, and taught to despair of reconciliation, you, my dear, must be troubled with my passionate resentments. What a wretch was I to give him a meeting, since by that I put it out of my power to meet my assembled friends!—All would now, if I had met them, been over; and who can tell when my present distresses will?—Rid of both men, I had been now perhaps at my aunt Hervey's or at my uncle Antony's; wishing for my cousin Morden's arrival, who might have accommodated all.

I intended, indeed, to have stood it: And, if I had, how know I by whose name I might now have been called? For how should I have resisted a condescending, a kneeling father, had he been able to have kept his temper with me?

Yet my aunt say he would have relented, if I had not. Perhaps he would have been moved by my humility, before he could have shown such undue condescension. Such temper as he would have received me with might have been improved upon in my favour. And that he had designed ultimately to relent, how it clears my friends (at least to themselves) and condemns me! O why were my aunt's hints (I remember them now) so very dark?—Yet I intended to have returned after the interview; and then perhaps she would have explained herself.—O this artful, this designing Lovelace—yet I must repeat, that most ought I to blame myself for meeting him.

But far, far, be banished from me fruitless recrimination! Far banished, because fruitless! Let me wrap myself about in the mantle of my own integrity, and take comfort in my unfaultry intention! Since it is now too late to look back, let me collect all my fortitude, and endeavour to stand those shafts of angry Providence, which it will not permit me to shun! That, whatever the trials may be which I am destined to undergo, I may not behave unworthily in them, and may come out amended by them.

Join with me in this prayer, my beloved friend; for your own honour's sake, as well as for love's sake, join with me in it; lest a deviation on my side should, with the censorious, cast a shade upon a friendship which has no levity in it; and the basis of which is improvement, as well in the greater as lesser duties.

CL. HARLOWE.

LETTER LIV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE SATURDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 22.

O my best, my only friend! Now indeed is my heart broken! It has received a blow it never will recover. Think not of corresponding with a wretch who now seems absolutely devoted. How can it be otherwise, if a parent's curses have the weight I always attributed to them, and have heard so many instances in confirmation of that weight!—Yes, my dear Miss Howe, superadded to all my afflictions, I have the consequences of a father's curse to struggle with! How shall I support this reflection!—My past and my present situation so much authorizing my apprehensions!

I have, at last, a letter from my unrelenting sister. Would to Heaven I had not provoked it by my second letter to my aunt Hervey! It lay ready for me, it seems. The thunder slept, till I awakened it. I enclose the letter itself. Transcribe it I cannot. There is no bearing the thoughts of it: for [shocking reflection!] the curse extends to the life beyond this.

I am in the depth of vapourish despondency. I can only repeat—shun, fly, correspond not with a wretch so devoted as
CL. HARLOWE.

LETTER LV

TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE TO BE LEFT AT MR. OSGOOD'S, NEAR SOHO-SQUARE FRIDAY, APRIL 21.

It was expected you would send again to me, or to my aunt Hervey. The enclosed has lain ready for you, therefore, by direction. You will have no answer from any body, write to whom you will, and as often as you will, and what you will.

It was designed to bring you back by proper authority, or to send you whither the disgraces you have brought upon us all should be in the likeliest way, after a while, to be forgotten. But I believe that design is over: so you may range securely—nobody will think it worth while to give themselves any trouble about you. Yet my mother has obtained leave to send you your clothes of all sorts: but your clothes only. This is a favour you'll see by the within letter not designed you: and now not granted for your sake, but because my poor mother cannot bear in her sight any thing you used to wear. Read the enclosed, and tremble.

ARABELLA HARLOWE.

TO THE MOST UNGRATEFUL AND UNDUTIFUL OF DAUGHTERS HARLOWE-PLACE, APRIL 15.

SISTER THAT WAS!

For I know not what name you are permitted, or choose to go by.

You have filled us all with distraction. My father, in the first agitations of his mind, on discovering your wicked, your shameful elopement, imprecated on his knees a fearful curse upon you. Tremble at the recital of it!—No less, than 'that you may meet your punishment both here and hereafter, by means of the very wretch in whom you have chosen to place your wicked confidence.'

Your clothes will not be sent you. You seen, by leaving them behind you, to have been secure of them, whenever you demanded them, but perhaps you could think of nothing but meeting your fellow:—nothing but how to get off your forward self!—For every thing seems to have been forgotten but what was to contribute to your wicked flight.—Yet you judged right, perhaps, that you would have been detected had you endeavoured to get away with your clothes.—Cunning creature! not to make one step that we would guess at you by! Cunning to effect your own ruin, and the disgrace of all the family!

But does the wretch put you upon writing for your things, for fear you should be too expensive to him?—That's it, I suppose.

Was there ever a giddier creature?—Yet this is the celebrated, the blazing Clarissa—Clarissa what? Harlowe, no doubt!—And Harlowe it will be, to the disgrace of us all!

Your drawings and your pieces are all taken down; as is also your whole-length picture, in the Vandyke taste, from your late parlour: they are taken down, and thrown into your closet, which will be nailed up, as if it were not a part of the house, there to perish together: For who can bear to see them? Yet, how did they use to be shown to every body: the former, for the magnifying of your dainty finger-works; the latter, for the imputed dignity (dignity now in the dust!) of your boasted figure; and this by those fond parents from whom you have run away with so much, yet with so little contrivance!

My brother vows revenge upon your libertine—for the family's sake he vows it—not for yours!—for he will treat you, he declares, like a common creature, if ever he sees you: and doubts not that this will be your fate.

My uncle Harlowe renounces you for ever.

So does my uncle Antony.

So does my aunt Hervey.

So do I, base, unworthy creature! the disgrace of a good family, and the property of an infamous rake, as questionless you will soon find yourself, if you are not already.

Your books, since they have not taught you what belongs to your family, to your sex, and to your education, will not be sent to you. Your money neither. Nor yet the jewels so undeservedly made yours. For it is wished you may be seen a beggar along London-streets.

If all this is heavy, lay your hand to your heart, and ask yourself, why you have deserved it?

Every man whom your pride taught you to reject with scorn (Mr. Solmes excepted, who, however, has reason to rejoice that he missed you) triumphs in your shameful elopement, and now knows how to account for his being refused.

Your worthy Norton is ashamed of you, and mingles her tears with your mother's; both reproaching themselves for their shares in you, and in so fruitless an education.

Every body, in short, is ashamed of you: but none more than

ARABELLA HARLOWE.

LETTER LVI

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE TUESDAY, APRIL 25.

Be comforted; be not dejected; do not despond, my dearest and best-beloved friend. God Almighty is just and gracious, and gives not his assent to rash and inhuman curses. Can you think that Heaven will seal to the black passions of its depraved creatures? If it did, malice, envy, and revenge would triumph; and the best of the human race, blasted by the malignity of the worst, would be miserable in both worlds.

This outrageousness shows only what manner of spirit they are of, and how much their sordid views exceed their parental love. 'Tis all owing to rage and disappointment—disappointment in designs proper to be frustrated.

If you consider this malediction as it ought to be considered, a person of your piety must and will rather pity and pray for your rash father, than terrify yourself on the occasion. None but God can curse; parents or others, whoever they be, can only pray to Him to curse: and such prayers can have no weight with a just and all-perfect Being, the motives to which are unreasonable, and the end proposed by them cruel.

Has not God commanded us to bless and curse not? Pray for your father, then, I repeat, that he incur not the malediction he has announced on you; since he has broken, as you see, a command truly divine; while you, by obeying that other precept which enjoins us to pray for them that persecute and curse us, will turn the curse into a blessing.

My mother blames them for this wicked letter of your sister; and she pities you; and, of her own accord, wished me to write to comfort you, for this once: for she says, it is pity your heart, which was so noble, (and when the sense of your fault, and the weight of a parent's curse are so strong upon you,) should be quite broken.

Lord bless me, how your aunt writes!—Can there be two rights and two wrongs in palpable cases!—But, my dear, she

must be wrong: so they all have been, justify themselves now as they will. They can only justify themselves to themselves from selfish principles, resolving to acquit, not fairly to try themselves. Did your unkind aunt, in all the tedious progress of your contentions with them, give you the least hope of their relenting?—Her dark hints now I recollect as well as you. But why was any thing good or hopeful to be darkly hinted?—How easy was it for her, who pretended always to love you; for her, who can give such flowing license to her pen for your hurt; to have given you one word, one line (in confidence) of their pretended change of measures!

But do not mind their after-pretences, my dear—all of them serve but for tacit confessions of their vile usage of you. I will keep your aunt's secret, never fear. I would not, on any consideration, that my mother should see her letter.

You will now see that you have nothing left but to overcome all scrupulousness, and marry as soon as you have an opportunity. Determine to do so, my dear.

I will give you a motive for it, regarding myself. For this I have resolved, and this I have vowed, [O friend, the best beloved of my heart, be not angry with me for it!] 'That so long as your happiness is in suspense, I will never think of marrying.' In justice to the man I shall have, I have vowed this: for, my dear, must I not be miserable, if you are so? And what an unworthy wife must I be to any man who cannot have interest enough in my heart to make his obligingness a balance for an affliction he has not caused!

I would show Lovelace your sister's abominable letter, were it to me. I enclose it. It shall not have a place in this house. This will enter him of course into the subject which you now ought to have most in view. Let him see what you suffer for him. He cannot prove base to such an excellence. I should never enjoy my head or my senses should this man prove a villain to you!—With a merit so exalted, you may have punishment more than enough for your involuntary fault in that husband.

I would not have you be too sure that their project to seize you is over. The words intimating that it is over, in the letter of that abominable Arabella, seem calculated to give you security.—She only says she believes that design is over.—And I do not yet find from Miss Lloyd that it is disavowed. So it will be best, when you are in London, to be private, and, for fear of the worst, to let every direction to be a third place; for I would not, for the world, have you fall into the hands of such flaming and malevolent spirits by surprize.

I will myself be content to direct you at some third place; and I shall then be able to aver to my mother, or to any other, if occasion be, that I know not where you are.

Besides, this measure will make you less apprehensive of the consequences of their violence, should they resolve to attempt to carry you off in spite of Lovelace.

I would have you direct to Mr. Hickman, even your answer to this. I have a reason for it. Besides, my mother, notwithstanding this particular indulgence, is very positive. They have prevailed upon her, I know, to give her word to this purpose—Spiteful, poor wretches! How I hate in particular your foolish uncle Antony.

I would not have your thought dwell on the contents of your sister's shocking letter; but pursue other subjects—the subjects before you. And let me know your progress with Lovelace, and what he says to this diabolical curse. So far you may enter into this hateful subject. I expect that this will aptly introduce the grant topic between you, without needing a mediator.

Come, my dear, when things are at worst they will mend. Good often comes when evil is expected.—But if you despond, there can be no hopes of cure. Don't let them break your heart; for that is plain to me, is now what some people have in view for you to do.

How poor to withhold from you your books, your jewels, and your money! As money is all you can at present want, since they will vouchsafe to send your clothes, I send fifty guineas by the bearer, enclosed in single papers in my Norris's Miscellanies. I charge you, as you love me, return them not.

I have more at your service. So, if you like not your lodgings or his behaviour when you get to town, leave both them and him out of hand.

I would advise you to write to Mr. Morden without delay. If he intends for England, it may hasten him. And you will do very well till he can come. But, surely Lovelace will be infatuated, if he secure not his happiness by your consent, before that of Mr. Morden's is made needful on his arrival.

Once more, my dear, let me beg of you to be comforted. Manage with your usual prudence the stake before you, and all will still be happy. Suppose yourself to be me, and me to be you, [you may—for your distress is mine,] and then you will add full day to these but glimmering lights which are held out to you by

Your ever affectionate and faithful ANNA HOWE.

I hurry this away by Robert. I will inquire into the truth of your aunt's pretences about the change of measures which she says they intended in case you had not gone away.

LETTER LVII

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

Your letter, my beloved Miss Howe, gives me great comfort. How sweetly do I experience the truth of the wise man's observation, That a faithful friend is the medicine of life!

Your messenger finds me just setting out for London: the chaise at the door. Already I have taken leave of the good widow, who has obliged me with the company of her eldest daughter, at Mr. Lovelace's request, while he rides by us. The young gentlewoman is to return in two or three days with the chaise, in its way to my Lord M.'s Hertfordshire seat.

I received my sister's dreadful letter on Sunday, when Mr. Lovelace was out. He saw, on his return, my extreme anguish and dejection; and he was told how much worse I had been: for I had fainted away more than once.

I think the contents of it have touched my head as well as my heart.

He would fain have seen it. But I would not permit that, because of the threatenings he would have found in it against himself. As it was, the effect it had upon me made him break out into execrations and menaces. I was so ill that he himself advised me to delay going to town on Monday, as I proposed to do.

He is extremely regardful and tender of me. All that you supposed would follow the violent letter, from him, has followed it. He has offered himself to my acceptance in so unreserved a manner, that I am concerned I have written so freely and diffidently of him. Pray, my dearest friend, keep to yourself every thing that may appear disreputable of him from me.

I must acquaint you that his kind behaviour, and my low-spiritedness, co-operating with your former advice, and my unhappy situation, made me that very Sunday evening receive unreservedly his declarations: and now indeed I am more in his power than ever.

He presses me every hour (indeed as needlessly, as unkindly) for fresh tokens of my esteem for him, and confidence in him. And as I have been brought to some verbal concessions, if he should prove unworthy, I am sure I shall have great reason to blame this violent letter: for I have no resolution at all. Abandoned thus of all my natural friends, of whose returning favour I have now no hopes, and only you to pity me, and you restrained, as I may say, I have been forced to turn my desolate heart to such protection as I could find.

All my comfort is, that your advice repeatedly given me to the same purpose, in your kind letter before me, warrants me. I now set out the more cheerfully to London on that account: for, before, a heavy weight hung upon my heart; and although I thought it best and safest to go, yet my spirits sunk, I know not why, at every motion I made towards a preparation for it.

I hope no mischief will happen on the road.—I hope these violent spirits will not meet.

Every one is waiting for me.—Pardon me, my best, my kindest friend, that I return your Norris. In these more promising prospects, I cannot have occasion for your favour. Besides, I have some hope that with my clothes they will send me the money I wrote for, although it is denied me in the letter. If they do not, and if I should have occasion, I can but signify my wants to so ready a friend. And I have promised to be obliged only to you. But I had rather methinks you should have it still to say, if challenged, that nothing of this nature has been either requested or done. I say this with a view entirely to my future hopes of recovering your mother's favour, which, next to that of my own father and mother, I am most solicitous to recover.

I must acquaint you with one thing more, notwithstanding my hurry; and that is, that Mr. Lovelace offered either to attend me to Lord M.'s, or to send for his chaplain, yesterday. He pressed me to consent to this proposal most earnestly, and even seemed desirous rather to have the ceremony pass here than at London: for when there, I had told him, it was time enough to consider of so weighty and important a matter. Now, upon the receipt of your kind, your consolatory letter, methinks I could almost wish it had been in my power to comply with his earnest solicitations. But this dreadful letter has unhinged my whole frame. Then some little punctilio surely is necessary. No preparation made. No articles drawn. No license ready. Grief so extreme: no pleasure in prospect, nor so much as in wish—O my dear, who could think of entering into so solemn an engagement? Who, so unprepared, could seem to be so ready?

If I could flatter myself that my indifference to all the joys of this life proceeded from proper motives, not rather from the disappointments and mortifications my pride has met with, how much rather, I think, should I choose to be wedded to my shroud than to any man on earth!

Indeed I have at present no pleasure but in your friendship. Continue that to me, I beseech you. If my heart rises hereafter to a capacity of more, it must be built on that foundation.

My spirits sink again on setting out. Excuse this depth of vapourish dejection, which forbids me even hope, the cordial that keeps life from stagnating, and which never was denied me till within these eight-and-forty hours.

But 'tis time to relieve you.

Adieu, my best beloved and kindest friend! Pray for your CLARISSA.

LETTER LVIII

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE THURSDAY, APRIL

27.

I am sorry you sent back my Norris. But you must be allowed to do as you please. So must I, in my turn. We must neither of us, perhaps, expect absolutely of the other what is the rightest thing to be done: and yet few folks, so young as we are, better know what the rightest is. I cannot separate myself from you; although I give a double instance of my vanity in joining myself with you in this particular assertion.

I am most heartily rejoiced that your prospects are so much mended; and that, as I hoped, good has been produced out of evil. What must the man have been, what must have been his views, had he not taken such a turn, upon a letter so vile, and upon a treatment so unnatural, himself principally the occasion of it?

You know best your motives for suspending: but I wish you could have taken him at offers so earnest.* Why should you not have permitted him to send for Lord M.'s chaplain? If punctilio only was in the way, and want of a license, and of proper preparations, and such like, my service to you, my dear: and there is ceremony tantamount to your ceremony.

** Mr. Lovelace, in his next Letter, tells his friend how extremely ill the Lady was, recovering from fits to fall into stronger fits, and nobody expecting her life. She had not, he says, acquainted Miss Howe how very ill she was.—In the next Letter, she tells Miss Howe, that her motives for suspending were not merely ceremonious ones.*

Do not, do not, my dear friend, again be so very melancholy a decliner as to prefer a shroud, when the matter you wish for is in your power; and when, as you have justly said heretofore, persons cannot die when they will.

But it is a strange perverseness in human nature that we slight that when near us which at a distance we wish for.

You have now but one point to pursue: that is marriage: let that be solemnized. Leave the rest to Providence, and, to use your own words in a former letter, follow as that leads. You will have a handsome man, a genteel man; he would be a wise man, if he were not vain of his endowments, and wild and intriguing: but while the eyes of many of our sex, taken by so specious a form and so brilliant a spirit, encourage that vanity, you must be contented to stay till grey hairs and prudence enter upon the stage together. You would not have every thing in the same man.

I believe Mr. Hickman treads no crooked paths; but he hobbles most ungracefully in a straight one. Yet Mr. Hickman, though he pleases not my eye, nor diverts my ear, will not, as I believe, disgust the one, nor shock the other. Your man, as I have lately said, will always keep up attention; you will always be alive with him, though perhaps more from fears than hopes: while Mr. Hickman will neither say any thing to keep one awake, nor yet, by shocking adventures, make one's slumbers uneasy.

I believe I now know which of the two men so prudent a person as you would, at first, have chosen; nor doubt I that you can guess which I would have made choice of, if I might. But proud as we are, the proudest of us all can only refuse, and many of us accept the but half-worthy, for fear a still worse should offer.

If men had chosen their mistresses for spirits like their own, although Mr. Lovelace, at the long run, may have been too

many for me, I don't doubt but I should have given heart-ach for heart-ach, for one half-year at least; while you, with my dull-swift, would have glided on as serenely, as calmly, as unaccountably, as the succeeding seasons; and varying no otherwise than they, to bring on new beauties and conveniencies to all about you.

I was going on in this style—but my mother broke in upon me with a prohibitory aspect. 'She gave me leave for one letter only.'—She had just parted with your odious uncle, and they have been in close conference again.

She has vexed me. I must lay this by till I hear from you again, not knowing whither to send it.

Direct me to a third place, as I desired in my former.

I told my mother (on her challenging me) that I was writing indeed, and to you: but it was only to amuse myself; for I protested that I knew not where to send to you.

I hope that your next may inform me of your nuptials, although the next to that were to acquaint me that he was the most ungratefulest monster on earth; as he must be, if not the kindest husband in it.

My mother has vexed me. But so, on revising, I wrote before.—But she has unhinged me, as you call it: pretended to catechise Hickman, I assure you, for contributing to our supposed correspondence. Catechised him severely too, upon my word!—I believe I have a sneaking kindness for the sneaking fellow, for I cannot endure that any body should treat him like a fool but myself.

I believe, between you and me, the good lady forgot herself. I heard her loud. She possibly imagined that my father was come to life again. Yet the meekness of the man might have soon convinced her, I should have thought; for my father, it seems, would talk as loud as she, I suppose, (though within a few yards of each other,) as if both were out of their way, and were hallooming at half a mile's distance, to get in again.

I know you'll blame me for this sauciness—but I told you I was vexed; and if I had not a spirit, my parentage on both sides might be doubted.

You must not chide me too severely, however, because I have learned of you not to defend myself in an error: and I own I am wrong: and that's enough: you won't be so generous in this case as you are in every other, if you don't think it is.

Adieu, my dear! I must, I will love you, and love you for ever! So subscribes your

ANNA HOWE.

LETTER LIX

FROM MISS HOWE [ENCLOSED IN THE ABOVE.] THURSDAY,
APRIL 27.

I have been making inquiry, as I told you I would, whether your relations had really (before you left them) resolved upon that change of measures which your aunt mentions in her letter; and by laying together several pieces of intelligence, some drawn from my mother, through your uncle Antony's communications; some from Miss Lloyd, by your sister's; and some by a third way that I shall not tell you of; I have reason to think the following a true state of the case.

'That there was no intention of a change of measures till within two or three days of your going away. On the contrary, your brother and sister, though they had no hope of prevailing with you in Solmes's favour, were resolved never to give over their persecutions till they had pushed you upon taking some step, which, by help of their good offices, should be deemed inexcusable by the half-witted souls they had to play upon.

'But that, at last, your mother (tired with, and, perhaps, ashamed of the passive part she had acted) thought fit to declare to Miss Bell, that she was determined to try to put an end to the family feuds, and to get your uncle Harlowe to second her endeavours.

'This alarmed your brother and sister, and then a change of measures was resolved upon. Solmes's offers were, however, too advantageous to be given up; and your father's condescension was now to be their sole dependence, and (as they give it out) the trying of what that would do with you, their last effort.'

And indeed, my dear, this must have succeeded, I verily think, with such a daughter as they had to deal with, could that father, who never, I dare say, kneeled in his life but to his God, have so far condescended as your aunt writes he would.

But then, my dear, what would this have done?—Perhaps you would have given Lovelace this meeting, in hopes to pacify him, and prevent mischief; supposing that they had given you time, and not hurried you directly into the state. But if you had not met him, you see that he was resolved to visit them, and well attended too: and what must have been the consequence?

So that, upon the whole, we know not but matters may be best as they are, however disagreeable that best is.

I hope your considerate and thoughtful mind will make a good use of this hint. Who would not with patience sustain even a great evil, if she could persuade herself that it was kindly dispensed, in order to prevent a still greater?—Especially, if she could sit down, as you can, and acquit her own heart?

Permit me one further observation—Do we not see, from the above state of the matter, what might have been done before by the worthy person of your family, had she exerted the mother, in behalf of a child so meritorious, yet so much oppressed?

Adieu, my dear. I will be ever yours. ANNA HOWE.

[Clarissa, in her answer to the first of the two last letters, chides her friend for giving so little weight to her advice, in relation to her behaviour to her mother. It may be proper to insert here the following extracts from that answer, though a little before the time.]

You assume, my dear, says she, your usual and ever-agreeable style in what you write of the two gentlemen,* and how unaptly you think they have chosen; Mr. Hickman in addressing you, Mr. Lovelace me. But I am inclinable to believe that, with a view to happiness, however two mild tempers might agree, two high ones would make sad work of it, both at one time violent and unyielding. You two might, indeed, have raqueted the ball betwixt you, as you say.** But Mr. Hickman, by his gentle manners, seems formed for you, if you go not too far with him. If you do, it would be a tameness in him to bear it, which would make a man more contemptible than Mr. Hickman can ever deserve to be made. Nor is it a disgrace for even a brave man, who knows what a woman is to vow to him afterwards, to be very obsequious beforehand.

* See Letter XXXV. and Letter XXXVI. of this volume.

** See Letter XXXVI. of this volume.

Do you think it is to the credit of Mr. Lovelace's character that he can be offensive and violent?—Does he not, as all such spirits must, subject himself to the necessity of making submissions for his excesses far more mortifying to a proud heart than those condescensions which the high-spirited are so apt to impute as a weakness of mind in such a man as Mr. Hickman?

Let me tell you, my dear, that Mr. Hickman is such a one as would rather bear an affront from a lady, than offer one to her. He had rather, I dare say, that she should have occasion to ask his pardon than he her's. But my dear, you have outlived your first passion; and had the second man been an angel, he would not have been more than indifferent to you.

My motives for suspending, proceeds she, were not merely ceremonious ones. I was really very ill. I could not hold up my head. The contents of my sister's letters had pierced my heart. Indeed, my dear, I was very ill. And was I, moreover, to be as ready to accept his offer as if I were afraid he never would repeat it?

I see with great regret that your mamma is still immovably bent against our correspondence. What shall I do about it?—It goes against me to continue it, or to wish you to favour me with returns.—Yet I have so managed my matters that I have no friend but you to advise with. It is enough to make one indeed wish to be married to this man, though a man of errors, as he has worthy relations of my own sex; and I should have some friends, I hope:—and having some, I might have more—for as money is said to increase money, so does the countenance of persons of character increase friends: while the destitute must be destitute.—It goes against my heart to beg of you to discontinue corresponding with me; and yet it is against my conscience to carry it on against parental prohibition. But I dare not use all the arguments against it that I could use—And why?—For fear I should convince you; and you should reject me as the rest of my friends have done. I leave therefore the determination of this point upon you.—I am not, I find, to be trusted with it. But be mine all the fault, and all the punishment, if it be punishable!—And certainly it must, when it can be the cause of the letter I have before me, and which I must no farther animadvert upon, because you forbid me to do so.

[To the second letter, among other things, she says,]

So, my dear, you seem to think that there was a fate in my error. The cordial, the considerate friendship is seen in the observation you make on this occasion. Yet since things have happened as they have, would to Heaven I could hear that all the world acquitted my father, or, at least, my mother! whose character, before these family feuds broke out, was the subject of everyone's admiration. Don't let any body say from you, so that it may come to her ear, that she might, from a timely exertion of her fine talents, have saved her unhappy child. You will observe, my dear, that in her own good time, when she saw there was not likely to be an end to my brother's persecutions, she resolved to exert herself. But the pragmatistical daughter, by the fatal meeting, precipitated all, and frustrated her indulgent designs. O my love, I am now convinced, by dear experience, that while children are so happy as to have parents or guardians whom they may consult, they should not presume (no, not with the best and purest intentions) to follow their own conceits in material cases.

A ray of hope of future reconciliation darts in upon my mind, from the intention you tell me my mother had to exert herself in my favour, had I not gone away. And my hope is the stronger, as this communication points out to me that my uncle Harlowe's interest is likely, in my mother's opinion, to be of weight, if it could be engaged. It will behave me, perhaps, to apply to that dear uncle, if a proper occasion offer.

LETTER LX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. MONDAY, APRIL 24.

Fate is weaving a whimsical web for thy friend; and I see not but I shall be inevitably manacled.

Here have I been at work, dig, dig, dig, like a cunning miner, at one time, and spreading my snares, like an artful fowler, at another, and exulting in my contrivances to get this inimitable creature, absolutely into my power. Every thing made for me. Her brother and uncles were but my pioneers: her father stormed as I directed him to storm: Mrs. Howe was acted by the springs I set at work; her daughter was moving for me, yet imagined herself plumb against me: and the dear creature herself had already run her stubborn neck into my gin, and knew not that she was caught, for I had not drawn my springs close about her—And just as all this was completed, wouldst thou believe, that I should be my own enemy, and her friend? That I should be so totally diverted from all my favourite purposes, as to propose to marry her before I went to town, in order to put it out of my own power to resume them.

When thou knowest this, wilt thou not think that my black angel plays me booty, and has taken it into his head to urge me on to the indissoluble tie, that he might be more sure of me (from the complex transgressions to which he will certainly stimulate me, when wedded) than perhaps he thought he could be from the simple sins, in which I have so long allowed myself, that they seem to have the plea of habit?

Thou wilt be still the more surprised, when I tell thee, that there seems to be a coalition going forward between the black angels and the white ones; for here has her's induced her, in one hour, and by one retrograde accident, to acknowledge what the charming creature never before acknowledged, a preferable favour for me. She even avows an intention to be mine.—Mine! without reformation-conditions!—She permits me to talk of love to her!—of the irrevocable ceremony!—Yet, another extraordinary! postpones that ceremony; chooses to set out for London; and even to go to the widow's in town.

Well, but how comes all this about? methinks thou askest.—Thou, Lovelace, dealest in wonders, yet aimest not at the marvellous!—How did all this come about?

I will tell thee—I was in danger of losing my charmer for ever! She was soaring upward to her native skies! She was got above earth, by means too, of the earth-born! And something extraordinary was to be done to keep her with us sublunaries. And what so effectually as the soothing voice of Love, and the attracting offer of matrimony from a man not hated, can fix the attention of the maiden heart, aching with uncertainty, and before impatient of the questionable question?

This, in short, was the case: while she was refusing all manner of obligation to me, keeping me at haughty distance, in hopes that her cousin Morden's arrival would soon fix her in a full and absolute independence of me—disgusted, likewise, at her adorer, for holding himself the reins of his own passions, instead of giving them up to her controul—she writes a letter, urging an answer to a letter before sent, for her apparel, her jewels, and some gold, which she had left behind her; all which was to save her pride from obligation, and to promote the independence her heart was set upon. And what followed but a shocking answer, made still more shocking by the communication of a father's curse, upon a daughter deserving only blessings?—A curse upon the curser's heart, and a double one upon the transmitter's, the spiteful the envious Arabella!

Absent when it came—on my return I found her recovering from fits, again to fall into stronger fits; and nobody expecting her life; half a dozen messengers dispatched to find me out. Nor wonder at her being so affected; she, whose

filial piety gave her dreadful faith in a father's curses; and the curse of this gloomy tyrant extending (to use her own words, when she could speak) to both worlds—O that it had turned, in the moment of its utterance, to a mortal quinsy, and, sticking in his gullet, had choked the old execrator, as a warning to all such unnatural fathers!

What a miscreant had I been, not to have endeavoured to bring her back, by all the endearments, by all the vows, by all the offers, that I could make her!

I did bring her back. More than a father to her: for I have given her a life her unnatural father had well-nigh taken away: Shall I not cherish the fruits of my own benefaction? I was earnest in my vows to marry, and my ardour to urge the present time was a real ardour. But extreme dejection, with a mingled delicacy, that in her dying moments I doubt not she will preserve, have caused her to refuse me the time, though not the solemnity; for she has told me, that now she must be wholly in my protection [being destitute of every other!] More indebted, still, thy friend, as thou seest, to her cruel relations, than to herself, for her favour!

She has written to Miss Howe an account of their barbarity! but has not acquainted her how very ill she was.

Low, very low, she remains; yet, dreading her stupid brother's enterprise, she wants to be in London, where, but for this accident, and (wouldst thou have believed it?) for my persuasions, seeing her so very ill, she would have been this night; and we shall actually set out on Wednesday morning, if she be not worse.

And now for a few words with thee, on the heavy preachment of Saturday last.

Thou art apprehensive, that the lady is now truly in danger; and it is a miracle, thou tellest me, if she withstand such an attempter!—'Knowing what we know of the sex, thou sayest, thou shouldst dread, wert thou me, to make further trial, lest thou shouldst succeed.' And, in another place, tellest me, 'That thou pleadest not for the state for any favour thou hast for it.'

What an advocate art thou for matrimony—!

Thou wert ever an unhappy fellow at argument. Does the trite stuff with which the rest of thy letter abounds, in favour of wedlock, strike with the force that this which I have transcribed does against it?

Thou takest great pains to convince me, and that from the distresses the lady is reduced to (chiefly by her friend's persecutions and implacableness, I hope thou wilt own, and not from me, as yet) that the proposed trial will not be a fair trial. But let me ask thee, Is not calamity the test of virtue? And wouldst thou not have me value this charming creature upon proof of her merits?—Do I not intend to reward her by marriage, if she stand that proof?

But why repeat I what I have said before?—Turn back, thou egregious arguer, turn back to my long letter of the 13th,* and thou wilt there find every syllable of what thou hast written either answered or invalidated.

** See Letter XVIII. of this volume.*

But I am not angry with thee, Jack. I love opposition. As gold is tried by fire, and virtue by temptation, so is sterling wit by opposition. Have I not, before thou settest out as an advocate for my fair-one, often brought thee in, as making objections to my proceedings, for no other reason than to exalt myself by proving thee a man of straw? As Homer raises up many of his champions, and gives them terrible names, only to have them knocked on the head by his heroes.

However, take to thee this one piece of advice—Evermore be sure of being in the right, when thou presumest to sit down to correct thy master.

And another, if thou wilt—Never offer to invalidate the force which a virtuous education ought to have in the sex, by endeavouring to find excuses for their frailty from the frailty of ours. For, are we not devils to each other?—They tempt us—we tempt them. Because we men cannot resist temptation, is that a reason that women ought not, when the whole of their education is caution and warning against our attempts? Do not their grandmothers give them one easy rule—Men are to ask—Women are to deny?

Well, but to return to my principal subject; let me observe, that, be my future resolutions what they will, as to this lady, the contents of the violent letter she has received have set me at least a month forward with her. I can now, as I hinted, talk of love and marriage, without controul or restriction; her injunctions no more my terror.

In this sweetly familiar way shall we set out together for London. Mrs. Sorlings's eldest daughter, at my motion, is to attend her in the chaise, while I ride by way of escort: for she is extremely apprehensive of the Singleton plot; and has engaged me to be all patience, if any thing should happen on the road. But nothing I am sure will happen: for, by a letter received just now from Joseph, I understand, that James Harlowe has already laid aside his stupid project: and this by the earnest desire of all those of his friends to whom he had communicated it; who were afraid of the consequences that might attend it. But it is not over with me, however; although I am not determined at present as to the uses I may make of it.

My beloved tells me, she shall have her clothes sent her. She hopes also her jewels, and some gold, which she left behind her: but Joseph says, clothes only will be sent. I will not, however, tell her that: on the contrary, I say, there is no doubt but they will send all she wrote for. The greater her disappointment from them, the greater must be her dependence on me.

But, after all, I hope I shall be enabled to be honest to a merit so transcendent. The devil take thee, though, for thy opinion, given so mal-a-propos, that she may be overcome.

If thou designest to be honest, methinkst thou sayest, Why should not Singleton's plot be over with thee, as it is with her brother?

Because (if I must answer thee) where people are so modestly doubtful of what they are able to do, it is good to leave a loop-hole. And, let me add, that when a man's heart is set upon a point, and any thing occurs to beat him off, he will find it very difficult, when the suspending reason ceases, to forbear resuming it.

LETTER LXI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY, APRIL 25.

All hands at work in preparation for London.—What makes my heart beat so strong? Why rises it to my throat in such half-choking flutters, when I think of what this removal may do for me? I am hitherto resolved to be honest, and that increases my wonder at these involuntary commotions. 'Tis a plotting villain of a heart: it ever was—and ever will be, I doubt. Such a joy when any roguery is going forward!—I so little its master!—A head, likewise, so well turned to answer the triangular varlet's impulses!—No matter—I will have one struggle with thee, old friend; and if I cannot overcome thee now, I never will again attempt to conquer thee.

The dear creature continues extremely low and dejected. Tender blossom! how unfit to contend with the rude and ruffling winds of passion, and haughty and insolent control!—Never till now from under the wing (it is not enough to say of indulging, but) of admiring parents; the mother's bosom only fit to receive this charming flower!

This was the reflection, that, with mingled compassion, and augmented love, arose to my mind, when I beheld the charmer reposing her lovely face upon the bosom of the widow Sorlings, from a recovered fit, as I entered soon after she had received her execrable sister's letter. How lovely in her tears!—And as I entered, her uplifted face significantly bespeaking my protection, as I thought. And can I be a villain to such an angel!—I hope not—But why, Belford, why, once more, putteth thou me in mind, that she may be overcome? And why is her own reliance on my honour so late and so reluctantly shown?

But, after all, so low, so dejected, continues she to be, that I am terribly afraid I shall have a vapourish wife, if I do marry. I should then be doubly undone. Not that I shall be much at home with her, perhaps, after the first fortnight, or so. But when a man has been ranging, like the painful bee, from flower to flower, perhaps for a month together, and the thoughts of home and a wife begin to have their charms with him, to be received by a Niobe, who, like a wounded vine, weeps her vitals away, while she but involuntary curls about him; how shall I be able to bear that?

May Heaven restore my charmer to health and spirits, I hourly pray—that a man may see whether she can love any body but her father and mother! In their power, I am confident, it will be, at any time, to make her husband joyless; and that, as I hate them so heartily, is a shocking thing to reflect upon.—Something more than woman, an angel, in some things; but a baby in others: so father-sick! so family-fond!—What a poor chance stands a husband with such a wife! unless, forsooth, they vouchsafe to be reconciled to her, and continue reconciled!

It is infinitely better for her and for me that we should not marry. What a delightful manner of life [O that I could persuade her to it!] would the life of honour be with such a woman! The fears, the inquietudes, the uneasy days, the restless nights; all arising from doubts of having disobliged me! Every absence dreaded to be an absence for ever! And then how amply rewarded, and rewarding, by the rapture-causing return! Such a passion as this keeps love in a continual fervour—makes it all alive. The happy pair, instead of sitting dozing and nodding at each other, in opposite chimney-corners, in a winter evening, and over a wintry love, always new to each other, and having always something to say.

Thou knowest, in my verses to my Stella, my mind on this occasion. I will lay those verses in her way, as if undesignedly, when we are together at the widow's; that is to say, if we do not soon go to church by consent. She will thence see what my notions are of wedlock. If she receives them with any sort of temper, that will be a foundation—and let me alone to build upon it.

Many a girl has been carried, who never would have been attempted, had she showed a proper resentment, when her ears, or her eyes were first invaded. I have tried a young creature by a bad book, a light quotation, or an indecent picture; and if she has borne that, or only blushed, and not been angry; and more especially if she has leered and smiled; that girl have I, and old Satan, put down for our own. O how I could warn these little rogues, if I would! Perhaps envy, more than virtue, will put me upon setting up beacons for them, when I grow old and joyless.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON.

If you are in London when I get thither, you will see me soon. My charmer is a little better than she was: her eyes show it; and her harmonious voice, hardly audible last time I saw her, now begins to cheer my heart once more. But yet she has no love—no sensibility! There is no addressing her with those meaning, yet innocent freedoms (innocent, at first setting out, they may be called) which soften others of her sex. The more strange this, as she now acknowledges preferable favour for me; and is highly susceptible of grief. Grief mollifies, and enervates. The grieved mind looks round it, silently implores consolation, and loves the soother. Grief is ever an inmate with joy. Though they won't show themselves at the same window at one time; yet they have the whole house in common between them.

LETTER LXII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. WEDN. APRIL 26.

At last my lucky star has directed us into the desired port, and we are safely landed.—Well says Rowe:—

*The wise and active conquer difficulties,
By daring to attempt them. Sloth and folly
Shiver and shrink at sight of toil and hazard,
And make th' impossibility they fear.*

But in the midst of my exultation, something, I know not what to call it, checks my joys, and glooms over my brighter prospects: if it be not conscience, it is wondrously like what I thought so, many, many years ago.

Surely, Lovelace, methinks thou sayest, thy good motions are not gone off already! Surely thou wilt not now at last be a villain to this lady!

I can't tell what to say to it. Why would not the dear creature accept of me, when I so sincerely offered myself to her acceptance? Things already appear with a very different face now I have got her here. Already have our mother and her daughters been about me:—'Charming lady! What a complexion! What eyes! What majesty in her person!—O Mr. Lovelace, you are a happy man! You owe us such a lady!'—Then they remind me of my revenge, and of my hatred to her whole family.

Sally was so struck with her, at first sight, that she broke out to me in these lines of Dryden:—

*—Fairer to be seen
Than the fair lily on the flow'ry green!
More fresh than May herself in blossoms new!*

I sent to thy lodgings within half an hour after our arrival, to receive thy congratulation upon it, but thou wert at Edgeware, it seems.

My beloved, who is charmingly amended, is retired to her constant employment, writing. I must content myself with the same amusement, till she shall be pleased to admit me to her presence: for already have I given to every one her cue.

And, among the rest, who dost thou think is to be her maid servant?—Deb. Butler.

Ah, Lovelace!

And Ah, Belford!—It can't be otherwise. But what dost think Deb's name is to be? Why, Dorcas, Dorcas Wykes. And won't it be admirable, if, either through fear, fright, or good liking, we can get my beloved to accept of Dorcas Wykes for a bed-fellow?

In so many ways will it be now in my power to have the dear creature, that I shall not know which of them to choose! But here comes the widow with Dorcas Wykes in her hand, and I am to introduce them both to my fair-one?

So, the honest girl is accepted—of good parentage—but, through a neglected education, plaguy illiterate: she can neither write, nor read writing. A kinswoman of Mrs. Sinclair—could not therefore well be refused, the widow in person recommending her; and the wench only taken till her Hannah can come. What an advantage has an imposing or forward nature over a courteous one! So here may something arise to lead into correspondencies, and so forth. To be sure a person need not be so wary, so cautious of what she writes, or what she leaves upon her table, or toilette, when her attendant cannot read.

It would be a miracle, as thou sayest, if this lady can save herself—And having gone so far, how can I recede? Then my revenge upon the Harlowes!—To have run away with a daughter of theirs, to make her a Lovelace—to make her one of a family so superior to her own—what a triumph, as I have heretofore observed,* to them! But to run away with her, and to bring her to my lure in the other light, what a mortification of their pride! What a gratification of my own!

Then these women are continually at me. These women, who, before my whole soul and faculties were absorbed in the love of this single charmer, used always to oblige me with the flower and first fruits of their garden! Indeed, indeed, my goddess should not have chosen this London widow's! But I dare say, if I had, she would not. People who will be dealing in contradiction ought to pay for it. And to be punished by the consequences of our own choice—what a moral lies there!—What a deal of good may I not be the occasion of from a little evil!

Dorcas is a neat creature, both in person and dress; her continuance not vulgar. And I am in hopes, as I hinted above, that her lady will accept of her for her bedfellow, in a strange house, for a week or so. But I saw she had a dislike to her at her very first appearance; yet I thought the girl behaved very modestly—over-did it a little perhaps. Her ladyship shrunk back, and looked shy upon her. The doctrine of sympathies and antipathies is a surprising doctrine. But Dorcas will be excessively obliging, and win her lady's favour soon, I doubt not. I am secure in one of the wench's qualities however—she is not to be corrupted. A great point that! since a lady and her maid, when heartily of one party, will be too hard for half a score devils.

The dear creature was no less shy when the widow first accosted her at her alighting. Yet I thought that honest Doleman's letter had prepared her for her masculine appearance.

And now I mention that letter, why dost thou not wish me joy, Jack?

Joy, of what?

Why, joy of my nuptials. Know then, that said, is done, with me, when I have a mind to have it so; and that we are actually man and wife! only that consummation has not passed: bound down to the contrary of that, by a solemn vow, till a reconciliation with her family take place. The women here are told so. They know it before my beloved knows it; and that, thou wilt say, is odd.

But how shall I do to make my fair-one keep her temper on the intimation? Why, is she not here? At Mrs. Sinclair's?—But if she will hear reason, I doubt not to convince her, that she ought to acquiesce.

She will insist, I suppose, upon my leaving her, and that I shall not take up my lodgings under the same roof. But circumstances are changed since I first made her that promise. I have taken all the vacant apartments; and must carry this point also.

I hope in a while to get her with me to the public entertainments. She knows nothing of the town, and has seen less of its diversions than ever woman of her taste, her fortune, her endowments, did see. She has, indeed, a natural politeness, which transcends all acquirement. The most capable of any one I ever knew of judging what an hundred things are, by seeing one of a like nature. Indeed she took so much pleasure in her own chosen amusements, till persecuted out of them, that she had neither leisure nor inclination for the town diversions.

These diversions will amuse, and the deuce is in it, if a little susceptibility will not put forth, now she receives my address; especially if I can manage it so as to be allowed to live under one roof with her. What though the sensibility be at first faint and reluctant, like the appearance of an early spring-flower in frosty winter, which seems afraid of being nipt by an easterly blast! That will be enough for me.

I hinted to thee in a former,* that I had provided books for the lady's in-door amusement. Sally and Polly are readers. My beloved's light closet was their library. And several pieces of devotion have been put in, bought on purpose at second-hand.

** See Letter XXXIX. of this volume.*

I was always for forming a judgment of the reading part of the sex by their books. The observations I have made on this occasion have been of great use to me, as well in England as out of it. The sagacious lady may possibly be as curious in this point as her Lovelace.

So much for the present. Thou seest that I have a great deal of business before me; yet I will write again soon.

[Mr. Lovelace sends another letter with this; in which he takes notice of young Miss Sorlings's setting out with them, and leaving them at Barnet: but as its contents are nearly the same with those in the Lady's next letter, it is omitted.]

END OF VOL.3

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CLARISSA HARLOWE; OR THE HISTORY OF A YOUNG LADY —
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