

T H E  
O F F S P R I N G  
O F  
F A N C Y,  
A N O V E L.  
By A L A D Y.  
I N T W O V O L U M E S.  
V O L. I.

L O N D O N:  
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T H E

O F F S P R I N G

O F

F A N C Y.

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LETTER I.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

THOUGH you have not kept your word with me, of writing the moment you arrived at Frogly Farm, I will only chide you by my eagerness to prove the largest share of sisterly affection.—I had a pious visit this morning from your excellent pastor, who is come up to this wicked town once more, to initiate his son Charles into the study of the mysteries of the law, and to fix him in chambers to his own liking; that is to say, with windows to let in the morning sun, and a ventilator to expel all noxious vapours, and circulate a sufficient quantity of fresh air to preserve the bloom which he carried from Frogly to Cambridge, and has ever since, by his temperance and sobriety, preserved, in spite of bad example, and the prevalence of custom upon youthful minds.—This is the good doctor's account of himself, his son, and his present journey to London.—He tells me that Sophia is as grave, Eliza as gay, and Henrietta as beautiful, as when I saw them with you last summer;—that you and your Corydon are, as usual, the delight of the village, the envy of your rich neighbours, and the parents, friends, and guardian-angels of the poor.—And, as an excuse for my present propensity to write to my dear Charlotte, he told me, that you had begged he would appologize to me for your laziness, by the disorder in which you found your dairy, store-room, &c. at your return, and the necessary fatigues of setting them to rights again.—Now, though I always give just as much credit (and no more) as I think proper to all excuses of this nature; yet, as we are always apt to believe what flatters ourselves, I give you this notice, that I shall at times be content with three lines, provided you are punctual in point of time;—do but begin with a *dear* sister, and conclude with an *affectionate* one;—give me leave to congratulate you upon an agreeable cause, or condole with you upon a sad one, such as the tooth-ach—the visit of an old-maid—or some misfortune of equal magnitude; in short, do but allow me to use *my* pen, and (as I know it suits your humour best) I will allow you to *spare* yours.

I am at present engaged in a very important service; Lady Frances Montford and I are going to the next masquerade.—She is a good little woman; but apt to be saucy enough—She fancies nobody can have taste without a title. Now (you know I love argument dearly) I am determined to convince her that she is mistaken:—not but it is a very clear case to me, that nature meant *me* for a dutchess, only fortune made a

trifling mistake, and in *her* calculation set me down for plain Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_. Now do I see a cloud gathering upon your brow; but I will avert the threatening storm, by confessing the superior happiness of my lot. We must not always be wife, my dear; for, however humiliating to human nature, it must be owned, that her greatest favourites now and then indulge in an hour of folly.—Yet, as I know the almost perfect goodness of your disposition, I am always afraid of trifling, unless I atone for a dozen lines of levity, by at least as many more of a contrary nature. For the present, however, you must excuse me; my mind is in an uncommon state of ease and pleasantry;—indeed, blessed in such a husband, who lives but in and for me—blessed with three such little cherubs as almost mock infirmity, and laugh disease to scorn—surrounded by all the sweets of plenty, and happy (if I do not flatter myself) in the esteem of all whom I converse with, what should make me serious—except the fear of losing these blessings? That is a thought I dare not indulge—and why indeed should I indulge it? The bounteous Giver meant them for blessings; as such I will enjoy them, nor impiously anticipate a misery, he may not intend to inflict; for according to our favourite Pope, “to enjoy, is to obey:” yet sometimes I think upon this subject, till thoughts grow terrible. Duelling is become a fashion as general as powder; and Mr. Clement has a sense of what the men call honor; which is to me a perpetual monitor that no man can be perfect: else, had my Charles, who is in every other respect a christian, been tainted with such impiety? My children too, are beautiful; he who formed them, best knows how exquisitely beautiful!—yet, may the small-pox come, and in an hour destroy that fountain of maternal delight.—Then, as to fortune, the last and least article of my happiness, *that*, in a situation like Mr. Clement’s, is always fluctuating; but that I think not of; for though your flowery lawns and purling streams may be the properest scences for romance, as a wife and a mother, I think, I can

match your extremest heroism: in short, I am thoroughly convinced, that were I destitute of all the superfluities, nay, almost of the comforts of life, possessing, as I do, such homefelt endearing blessings, in the undivided heart of my husband, and the seraphic smiles of my children, I could, with the firmness of a Roman matron, smile at misfortune, and defy pecuniary distress.—I was interrupted, my dear, by a note from my sweet friend in Dover-Street. She is not well; and begs that we will come and play an innocent pool with her this evening. She keeps her room, it says; and yet she asks Mr. Clement;—that’s odd! But she is above the little pruderies of narrow minds; her soul is not of the common size; but, like her form, speaks her of a species distinct and separate from the crowd. How beautiful she must look in an undress!—It is well I am sure of my husband:—but perhaps he may not go. I have sent the note down to the compting-house: he sends me word that he hates cards; and, Selby says, looks as if he was angry. Why should he be angry? Something in his business perhaps.—He is coming up. Charlotte, did you ever see your husband out of humour, and could not tell why?—There was nothing in Mrs. Belmour’s note to offend him; and yet he would neither go, nor tell me why he refused; so I ordered the coach, and am going by myself. Adieu!

*Friday morn.*

I never spent so uneasy an evening as yesterday, though it was with a friend, who, next to my dear Charlotte, I love and esteem beyond all the women in the world! About ten o’clock Mr. Clement called at the door; and, notwithstanding our joint entreaties to come up stairs, sullenly refused; and said, “He would wait Mrs. Clement’s

leisure." I hurried down; and, with all the pleasantry I could assume, endeavoured to introduce a conversation as foreign to the subject as possible; which seemed to me the best way of consigning the unpleasant occurrences of the day to oblivion:—it succeeded; and we have been ever since upon the happiest terms; nor should I, perhaps, have recollected the circumstance, but that I thought I owed the communication to you.—Give me your thoughts upon the whole matter, my dear; for still I recur to my first proposition, why should that gloom take possession of Mr. Clement, because a sweet woman, who loves us both, invited us to spend a social evening in her sick room? I must add, that I thought she seemed hurt at his refusal to come up when he called at night. Whether she thought it a display of his delicacy, and a *tacit* reproach of *hers*—or whether she thought it a symptom of his displeasure to me, I know not.—I am sure she loves me—tenderly loves me; nor could I bear society, if ever I should have cause to doubt it.      Mr. Clement reminds me that we dine at  
the other end of the town; and Selby, that I have but an hour to dress.

Adieu, my dear Charlotte! may your domestic happiness be as lasting as those virtues upon which it is founded are conspicuous!

Your affectionate sister,

MARIANNE.

LETTER II.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

*Frogly Farm.*

MY DEAR SISTER,

TO convince you how absolute your commands, and how dear all your interests are to your Charlotte, I lose not a moment in giving you my thoughts upon the contents of your last letter: you know me, slow to admire, and slow to censure. Would to heaven your open unsuspecting heart were as cool in *making* friendships, as susceptible of the miseries which ill-placed ones may produce!—In a word, I never liked your Mrs. Belmour.—Forgive me, my dear, nor start at my assertion—a female friend, a very attracting one too, is to a married woman, a dangerous possession.—Nay, I will go yet farther, and say, that a married woman who admits no friend but her husband, takes the most prudent and likely road to happiness—yet, bound as *we* are, by every natural tye, to share each other's happiness or misery, it would be making duties clash (which he who formed them never intended) to carry our reserve to the exclusion of a sister's participation.—You know, my dear, what cause I have to love and reverence your husband.—I know the goodness of his heart, for I have been in some degree an object of it; yet the warmth and sanguinity of his constitution is a sufficient reason why you should, as I often told you, be very much guarded in your choice of acquaintance; not that I would wish to insinuate an idea, to the injury of either your husband or your sweet friend as you call her: I believe her, in the *last* degree, virtuous; and I think her pride and her good understanding will be powerful incentives to her to remain so; but, my dear, she loves admiration, and does *not* love her husband.—I have seen you forget yourself in a large company, and see *only* her—what if your husband should discover as many charms in her as you do, can you blame him for following your example? Hitherto, I believe, you have no cause to suspect his fidelity—let me conjure you to make a timely retreat from the post of danger, where you so often place him and yourself: he is a good man, an amiable man—but remember he *is* a man—and when you reflect upon the licence, which education, custom and the example of those we live with, give to all the sex, you will be convinced that the best way to victory is to draw him off from an engagement.—Perhaps, by the time you read this, you will have forgotten the subject—your mind is capable of strong and quick impressions; but the superior generosity of your heart makes you ever the easy prey of artifice and dissimulation—and since I am upon the topick, I will just hint, that if you could easily replace Selby, I think your domestic tranquillity might be insured from the worst source of disquiet, that of a bosom snake who creeps close but to sting you.—I find my mind in a severer tone than usual; and as it will probably discourse nothing now but discordant musick, I will break off for the present.—Mr. Bellas joins his sincerest wishes for every earthly happiness to you and yours, with those of your truly affectionate sister,

CHARLOTTE.

### LETTER III.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

HA! ha! ha! my sweet, severe, sentimental, sister! why, Charlotte, you rail like an old maid at a wedding. How is it possible for so good a woman to be so uncharitable? I could hardly forbear reading your letter aloud:—I received it in the most critical situation imaginable—we were seated a *partie quarrée* in my little blue room—Mr. and Mrs. Belmour, Mr. Clement and I—the cards were but just dealt—Mrs. Belmour passed, whilst I broke the seal—Mr. Clement doubted a moment, whilst I cast my eye over the first line; then said, he would do the same—good-manners obliged me to look at my cards; when behold! A sansprendre vole!—Oh Charlotte, how flattering every symptom of good fortune attributed to those we love! During the next deal I read the remainder of your exhortation, I must call it.—I cast my eye insensibly on the sweet subject of your severity—she hoped Mrs. Bellas was well? I acquiesced—Mr. Bellas too?—I believed so—enquired whether you had done her the honor to mention her?—There, Charlotte—what return could I make to that? I believed I looked very silly, for I am a miserable *Bon Tonist*—I cannot lye with a good grace—I did lie however, and so pursued spadille.—We rang the changes upon the four aces till eleven o'clock, when the servant announced Mr. Belmour's carriage.—He rose; she was not well, and yet did not seem disposed to go—so the cold chicken was laid, and we enjoyed another hour's chat—I was disappointed of going to the last masquerade by lady Frances, being seized with an ulcerated sore-throat the evening before.—However, on Monday next, we go with an encreased party. Mr. and Mrs. Belmour—a Mr. Deacon, who visits them, and a Mrs. Colville, a sprightly elegant West Indian widow, who always puts me in mind of *Sterne's Brunette* in The Sentimental Journey—I have racked my invention to make dresses for the whole set—and have left myself no time to make up any thing, but shall go in a man's domino, as will the lovely Creole—indeed that is the *Ton* at present.—I have at last finished the rest of the groupe—Mr. Belmour goes as *Lusignan*, Mr. Deacon as *Osman*, and Mrs. Belmour as *Zara*. Now don't you be scandalous—Mr. Deacon and Mr. Belmour are intimate as brothers—the latter you know; his greatest merit is the just value he sets upon his wife—his greatest misfortune, having married her so young, that she was not sufficiently acquainted with her own heart to know she could not bestow it upon him.—And yet how amiably does she conduct herself! how sweetly, how meritoriously, make duty alone supply the place of every united tie that you and I have to bind us to our husbands! My dear good sister, “be not righteous over-much;” cease to think ill of a woman, who, in a situation so unfavourable, has deserved, through twelve or fourteen years of penance, the approbation of the world. As to Selby, I think you are right—and I will part with her as soon as I can do it prudently—indeed I have often been sorry I did not take your advice when I married, and avail myself of Mr. Clement's offer, to discharge all the servants that were prior to my time; yet my heart forbad me to deprive seven honest creatures of so good a master, for no other reason than that I had got so good a husband. However, I do not like Selby's manner of late; she seems disposed to make trifles of consequence, and sometimes speaks of her master with a freedom which I do not take myself.—True, it seems the result of her attachment to me; so far I should forgive her—yet he has deserved more of her than I have; therefore, if she had a grateful heart, he would be her first object.—I have, at her desire, and from a principle of economy, had her

taught to dress my hair; and, really, I may be mistaken, but I think she has never been the same creature since—besides, I have within these two days been greatly offended at the liberties I find she has taken in the nursery, I will not suffer my children to be injured by my partiality, but I will be the judge of their faults and their punishments.

MARIANNE.

LETTER IV.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAR SISTER,

THOUGH I foresaw the reception my admonitions would meet with, if they happened to obtrude themselves upon an hour of mirth; yet the pleasure I feel at your momentary enjoyments, every one of which I share, cannot entirely quiet my apprehensions for your future disappointment in those upon whom you have placed your hopes of lasting happiness. However, I will not visit you with the bodings of the raven, whose tidings, however true, are never welcome—my duty, as well as my affection, called upon me to warn you of your danger.—I have obeyed, and now shall wait *your* time of renewing the subject—my prayers are constantly offered up for your preservation—if they are heard, I have nothing left to desire—or should any misfortune befall, I shall always as sincerely sympathize in your painful feelings, as I now participate in your delights.—We were much concerned yesterday evening by a message from the parsonage-house; the worthy possessor was taken ill on Sunday after service; probably he caught cold, for it rained a good deal, and he would not suffer us to turn our horses east of the church to set him down, lest I should be frightened at turning in the lane, which you know is narrow and uneven—poor man! I am afraid his delicacy will be fatal to him.—Mr. Bellas ran down to his house with the messenger, and found him sitting in the porchway, eagerly imbibing the refreshment of the air; but, upon feeling his pulse, he found him so feverish, that he persuaded him to go to bed, and take some slop to promote perspiration.—This morning he went again, and, finding him much worse, prevailed upon him to take a few grains of James's Powders, which he had carried for that purpose.—Philip is just returned—and the poor doctor in the most alarming situation.—Lord have mercy upon the poor girls if they lose him!—Sophia has never been a-bed since he first complained, the good girl will certainly kill herself; youth cannot bear the fatigue which custom and repeated trials make easy to some persons more advanced in life.—I have been asking permission of Mr. Bellas to send Collins to sit up to-night—she has been used to a sick room, and has great veneration for the doctor.—I think if you were to send for Charles, and desire him to come down to Frogly, the sight of a son so beloved would smooth the good old man's pillow—he must be obliged, and perhaps restored by it; at least it can do no harm.—Adieu! my dear Marianne! Bless the sweet prattlers in their aunt's name, and believe me ever thine most truly,

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER V.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

THE moment I read your melancholy description of the parsonage-house, I sent to Charles Mason, and desired he would eat a bit of mutton with us at four o'clock, as I had something to say to him from you.—Mean time, Mr. Clement, who was apprehensive his finances might not be in the best condition, proposed taking that opportunity of carrying me to visit my dear sister, and transporting Charles without expence or delay to his father.—I am almost ashamed to give you the true reason, and yet I cannot impose upon you by pretending any other, for my rejecting an offer so kind. But this is the day for which our masquerade-party has been made for these three weeks;—and I have had so many ambassadors from the different personages who compose it, and answered all in the affirmative; that I cannot now change my plan, without the humiliating circumstance of giving a reason to each of them, and perhaps having the mortification of finding it refused credit; for so much does a town-life take off from the social feelings of hearts like my Charlotte's, that it would seem incomprehensible to ninety-nine out of every hundred of those with whom I am just going to mix for the night, that the death of an old man, however worthy, and the dissolution of an amiable family, however happy, should be of sufficient consequence to keep a being no way connected but by the general tie of humanity from the dear delights of "Do you know me?"—Give me leave, however, my dear Charlotte, to blunt the edge of your reproaches, by assuring you, that my heart is busy in the right place, notwithstanding the appearance of an insensibility which I abhor. Should it be the will of Providence to take the good old man, I know Mr. Bellas and you will have some plan for disposing of the girls.—Command me for a year's pocket-money;—it is but dressing my own hair, and avoiding a superfluous plume of feathers.—Dinner is on the table; and I think Charles has just knocked at the door: I will contrive some method of conveying him to Frogly.—We have a couple of horses, which you have promised to turn out with yours into the long meadow:—I will have them put to the travelling chaise, which we shall not want till it can by some other means be sent back again. Fill the little private packet with an account of yourself and your good man.—The dinner waits; adieu!

*Monday even.*

A circumstance has occurred, my dear, which I cannot conceal from you, though I know it will give you concern:—poor Charles Mason has fallen into some of those snares with which London abounds for youths, who, like him, have been deprived of the most useful of all studies, that of human nature. His father certainly meant well to all his children in the extreme retirement to which he accustomed them; and, with respect to his daughters, it may do very well; but boys should, in my opinion, have an education as different as their habits.—Poor Charles, unconscious of guile in himself, and untaught to expect it in others, made one in a party on Monday sevennight to Ranelagh.—A lady, of the Millwood kind, struck with the bloom which the poor old man was so proud of, watched his departure; and, having wrote with her

pencil an enraptured billet-doux, contrived to place her confidant in the lobby, who slipped it into his hand unseen by any of his companions, from whom he immediately contrived to separate, and hurried to the place of assignation, which was the upper end of the canal, under a kind of alcove, which was erected for a night of illumination;—the poor fellow has given Mr. Clement such an artless account of their meeting, and the consequent circumstances, as would, he says, disarm even *your* virtue in the relation;—but unluckily a jealous old gentleman, who had, it seems, a prior property in the lady, by an unexpected visit, has discovered the amour, and the turtles (Charles having sold all his moveables to raise money) are this very hour, perhaps, setting out for Dover.—When I know more, you shall; mean time, write to

Your affectionate

MARIANNE.

LETTER VI.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

OH, my dear Marianne, the worthy good old man is gone to everlasting rest! and poor Sophia, as I expected, has taken to her bed; where, oppressed with the heavy weight of filial sorrow, she sinks under the symptoms of an approaching fever.—Eliza and Henrietta are at my house, under the care of Collins; and, should poor Sophia recover, I intend that she shall join them till some method of placing them out happily can be adopted.—Eliza's lively turn seems to ward off misfortune; but the gentle, lovely, little, Henrietta is more affected than I could have supposed seven years old capable of.—If Charles be not set out, hurry him down; for though he can now administer no comfort to his father, I suppose he would wish to see him decently interred, for his own sake.—I have this moment received your letter. Good heavens! what an unfortunate occurrence!—Unhappy Charles, at such a time to be absent, and upon such an occasion; I suppose it will be in vain to defer the funeral now on his account, so we may as well give the orders immediately.—I will carry your letter to Mr. Bellas; though, for the poor girls sakes, I had rather not be the messenger of such news.—Yet there can be no apology for his not coming down but the true one. Make my acknowledgments to my brother for his kind intentions towards me; he knows how welcome such a visit would have been:—nor can I forgive you for declining it in favour of an amusement which I know your good sense must hold in contempt, unless you atone for it by giving me the comfort of your company at an approaching critical period. I am sometimes very silly in my *bodings* upon this occasion; but I dare not let them appear, they make my poor Frank so wretched.—Remember me kindly to my brother and the little ones; and be assured of the daily prayers of

Your

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER VII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I CAN now give you the whole history of Charles; prepare for a melancholy catastrophe, and soften the concern which it will give you, by recollecting that the good old man, whose heart-strings it must have torn, is happily released in time to escape the knowledge of it.—Whilst I was stolen up into my dressing-room, to finish my last letter to you, Mr. Clement, who saw the matter in a less serious light than I could have supposed, yet thought it of consequence enough to wish to reason the unthinking boy into a resolution to pursue it no farther:—with this design he went again to the Paper-buildings, where, as he guessed, he found Charles still in conference with the broker, to whom he had made a sale of not only his furniture, but even his books, globes, and a part of his linen, for about seventy pounds.—The broker, it seems, was not able immediately to muster the money; and Charles's situation did not admit of giving credit.—Mr. Clement offered the broker ten pounds for his bargain; which, for some time, he refused; till, upon remonstrating with him upon the advantage he must have taken of the young man's situation, and something like a hint of legal redress, he consented, and, pocketing the bank note, left the chambers *in statu quo*, and the gentlemen to their *tête à tête*.—Charles, who very properly considered Mr. Clement's behaviour as a severe though delicate reproof, was prevented by an ingenuous shame from interposing whilst the broker staid:—the moment he was gone, he burst into tears; and, taking Mr. Clement by the hand, he sobbed out, “Oh, Sir, you have meant to save me; but I am only rendered more miserable—more, by an unavoidable necessity, undone:—before, I should only have ruined myself; now I must add to my own misery that of an unfortunate woman, whose only crime has been an affection unworthily placed upon me.” Mr. Clement, who attributed all this eulogium upon the lady to Charles's simplicity and want of knowledge of the world, chose to let the effusion exhaust itself before he applied the styptick which he went on purpose to administer;—at last, when reason seemed to stand a little chance, passion having had ample scope, Mr. Clement observed, that the lady, from the best intelligence he could collect, was in no material degree worse than when they met;—that, if she had lost the friendship of one gentleman, she had still charms enough to attract another;—that the affection she had bestowed upon Charles, however flattering, was not of such a value as required his utter ruin for the payment;—that those epithets which he had so liberally applied to himself, were in fact applicable only to her *first seducer*. Here he could no longer contain himself—he fell into an agony of passion, and cried, “I am, I am that monster!” Mr. Clement, who really thought his brain turned, was at a loss what argument next to apply, when the lady (with her maid, both in mourning) broke into the room; and, upon seeing Mr. Clement, instantly fainted away!—Charles, who was now entirely off his guard, tearing his hair, and throwing himself at her feet, cried, “Look up, look up, my injured, lovely, lost Amelia; 'tis thy husband calls, the husband of thy soul!—we are met, for the last time—never to part again;—nor law, nor gospel, nor Merisford himself, that usurper of my rights, that tyrant, that lord of thy alienated hand, shall ever force thee from my arms.”—She opened her eyes, and, seeing Mr. Clement fixed

in astonishment at Charles's exclamations, screamed out, "My uncle!" and fainted again. Mr. Clement, who, never having seen her since she was quite an infant, did not know her person, the moment she spoke recognized the voice of a sister whom he loved with the tenderest affection; but who, having married when my Charles was a child, a very bad kind of man, who delighted in making his family miserable, was, by that means, for many years before her death, alienated from her family.—You can conceive the situation into which this discovery threw the whole party, particularly Mr. Clement; who, having gone, in the warmth of a disinterested friendship, to rescue a man from the snares of a wanton, found in that man the avowed seducer of his niece;—her beauty, her distress, and her apparent sensibility, however, disarmed his rage; besides, the hints that had dropped of her having an husband, and he being stiled a tyrant and an usurper, together with the proper sense which Charles had of his guilt towards the unhappy lady, even whilst Mr. Clement (mysterious Providence! her own uncle!) was endeavouring to throw her into a light the most contemptible—all these considerations induced him to think, there might be some circumstances of extenuation. He therefore resolved to be calm till he had heard the different stories of the unfortunate pair. Having said as many extravagant things as the situation will allow you to conceive; and the unhappy lady having a third time fainted, and as often recovered; the distracted young man turned to Mr. Clement, and, baring his bosom with one hand, and offering a sword which had hung against his library with the other, he cried, "Take, Sir, I beseech you, a life which my crimes have forfeited; and which the loss of my Amelia has made a burden to me;—I lived but in hopes to die *with* her; let me die *for* her, and death will be doubly welcome!"—Shame and distress kept her silent; but her looks spoke unutterable things:—she knelt, she clasped her hands, she wept, she did every thing but speak; but when her uncle took the sword, she threw her arms round Charles, and, turning her sweet expressive eyes over her shoulder, she murmured out, in broken accents, "Oh, Sir, be not just by halves!—I am most guilty; for pity's sake, let me in death find the only refuge that can hide me from a husband's reproaches;—brutal as he is, I owed him duty, though I promised him not love." Mr. Clement, who took the sword only to sheath it, bad her be composed, and follow him;—she obeyed—I am interrupted—the rest to-morrow.

MARIANNE.

LETTER VIII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS,

*in continuation.*

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

BUT that I am bound by promise, and that promise made to you—I do not know what consideration could enable me to go on with the dreadful task. I bad you prepare for a melancholy catastrophe: good heavens! I did not foresee how very melancholy. I left off, yesterday, with Amelia's consent to come home with her uncle: they arrived in a hackney-coach about seven o'clock; and found us, that is to say, Mr. and Mrs. Belmour, Mr. Deacon, Mrs. Colville, and I, at tea, and in expectation of lady Frances, who was to call about eight, to proceed towards Soho, but in our way to stop at three

or four houses which were open for the reception of masks. Mr. Clement came into the room, with a very expressive countenance; and, in answer to the reiteration of "What, not dressed yet!" said, coolly, "He hoped they would excuse him, as something of moment had happened in his family, which had untuned his mind for amusement."—I started at the word *family*, and, running out of the room, flew up to the nursery; finding all well there, I was coming down stairs with gratitude to heaven, and rather angry in my own mind with Mr. Clement for making an apology for what perhaps he had no mind to, at the expence of truth: he met me at the door of my dressing room; and as he laid one hand to the lock, he took mine with the other; and said, with much concern in his looks, "Don't be alarmed, Marianne; I must introduce an unfortunate relation to you;—she will find employment for that humanity which ever accompanies true and unaffected virtue."—With these words he opened the door, and the most beautiful creature I ever beheld threw herself at my feet; and, hiding her face in my domino, cried, "Dear Sir, what need of the comparison? my own crimes are black enough, without the contrast of my aunt's virtue!"—I raised her, and bad her be comforted; told her, "I hoped her distress aggravated errors into crimes; but that whatever she had been guilty of, as she had obtained her uncle's forgiveness, she had no reason to despair of mine." She looked up with a degree of astonishment mingled with thanks; and, upon my sitting down on the sopha where I had placed her, she leaned upon my shoulder with the familiarity of a long friendship, and said, "Oh that all women who enjoy the happy consciousness of unsullied chastity would add, as you do, the social virtue of generous charity!—could I have hoped for a refuge here but two years since, what guilt, what misery, had I avoided!—but my inhuman father"—here tears choaked her; and Mr. Clement, who had been obliged to fly from the scene as soon as he introduced me, returned to tell me that lady Frances was come, and all the party waiting:—I said at first that I would not go: but, as we could not find a proper apology for turning our friends out of our house without one of us to accompany them, and that we were not able to decide immediately how far, and under what restrictions, we should mention the unhappy circumstance, there was no alternative.—You will guess with how untoward a disposition for mirth I joined the masquing party: it was well I attempted no character, for it would have been miserably supported. About ten we arrived at Soho, having exhibited ourselves at lady Shelburn's and one or two more houses in our way: the rooms were very full, and there was a great number of well-dressed characters; but my heart was so full of the scene I had left Mr. Clement engaged in, that I could not even assume spirits. Mrs. Belmour was infected with my melancholy; and having droped a hint as if she apprehended some impending misfortune to Mr. Clement's affairs, I thought myself obliged to remove that idea, by an indirect promise to let her into the secret when we were next alone:—about four o'clock I begged permission to go home; indeed, the single circumstance of being in such a place, without my husband was a sufficient reason for my uneasiness. I was sorry to break up a party that seemed so happy; and yet so apt are we to judge for others from our own feelings, that I could not help wondering at Mrs. Belmour and Mrs. Colville, who are both women of sense, being so entertained with the flimsy stuff of every masquerader's brain.—Lady Bridget T—— and her two sisters were in the characters of nuns: they did not seem to have any ideas to support the appearance; but they looked handsome, and that was a sufficient reason for the choice.—About five I got home, and had undressed myself before I discovered that Mr. Clement was not in bed—I did not chuse to say much, because, as I have before observed, Selby seems well inclined to make me displeased

with my husband—yet I could not so far conquer the woman in my heart, as to suppress my enquiries—Selby, how long has your master been a-bed?—She smiled—Ma'am, he is not a-bed at all—Where is he then?—I believe, Ma'am, he is *now* in his study. The *now* was so emphatical, that I asked how long he had left the parlour?—Ma'am, he has never been lower than your dressing-room since you went abroad.—I hope he has not been too severe with his niece—is she a-bed, pray?—Oh yes, Ma'am, the young lady has been in her bed-chamber ever since the sheets were laid on. I asked her, whether I should undress her. She thanked me, but she had rather be alone.—She is really vastly pretty, Ma'am—I wonder who she is in mourning for. Lord help us! we have all cause to mourn for our sins, though to be sure some sins are greater than others.—I could bear no more—but told her to leave the room, and inform her master that I was in bed.—She returned in five minutes—her master's compliments, and, as he had neglected his letters in the evening, he had taken that opportunity of preparing them for the next day's post—that he would not disturb me, as I must be fatigued, but take an hour's rest on the sopha, and then ride out an hour or two before breakfast.—The malicious creature smiled as she delivered the message.—I was distracted with a thousand apprehensions—was it possible that he was displeased with me for going?—no, for he thought it eligible—did he expect me to seek him myself, before I went to-bed? I wished a thousand times I had.—Was it possible that he should have imposed an infamous creature upon me for his niece? and what intention could he have in such imposition? With these interrogatories I amused myself till about eight o'clock, without ever closing my eyes; when I heard a foot going softly towards my table. I pulled back the curtain, and seeing Mr. Clement, who had stolen-in to get my powder, to put a little in his hair, and would not trust any of the other servants, Selby being gone to-bed, lest they should disturb me—I started out of bed, and, seizing his hand, burst into tears—Is my dear Charles angry? was all I could say.—He seemed greatly affected, and took infinite pains to explain the reason why he did not come to-bed, which seemed to me to originate with Selby.—What a vile creature she must be! I see every hour fresh proofs of it.—He would fain have persuaded me to try to sleep; but I had banished sleep by my anxiety, and my eagerness to be instructed upon the subject of the unhappy discovery; so I got up and dressed myself, whilst he gave me the relation, which I have with pain transcribed for you, and yet the worst is to come.—As soon as I was dressed, I knocked at the door of Amelia's room, which she immediately opened.—I told her, that as I should be happy to make her situation as bearable as possible, I would breakfast in her room, if she preferred it to coming down stairs; and that, at my request, her uncle would avoid seeing her, till something could be thought of for her relief; yet that, as hitherto we had only hints and innuendoes to judge of, it would be necessary for her to instruct us candidly, and thoroughly, upon the subject of her misfortunes.—She blushed, and begged that I would add to the tenderness I had so recently exerted towards her, by giving her all the information I could of the unhappy partner of her misery—assured me, that her own sufferings she was resigned to—that she thought them just—and, were she enabled to hope that he had a sufficient power over himself to be reconciled to life without her, she should welcome death in whatever shape it came; and, mean time, if her uncle thought proper, she would return to her husband, whom, whatever appearances were against her, she had never wronged—but that, if we would spare her the pain of a personal recital, she would commit to paper her melancholy story, and then rest entirely at our disposal.

MARIANNE.

LETTER IX.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

DEAR SISTER,

I HAVE waited with the greatest impatience for the close of your melancholy narrative—what is become of your unfortunate visitor? what is become of Charles? Sophia, who after a fever of ten days continuance is but just able to sit up whilst her bed is made, is always talking, and, as she says, always dreaming of her brother: she cannot suppose that he is in a state of existence, and capable of absenting himself from his sisters in their present situation.—The new rector has been several times to visit his future residence, and seems to desire the possession of it with a degree of eagerness that ill suits the character he should support, whether as a christian or a gentleman. “So man from man may differ, whose clay is all alike.”—Had Dr. Mason found it under such circumstances, his delicacy would have wanted invitation even to see it; but Dr. Freeman, for that is our present pastor’s name, has never omitted a day since the late incumbent was interred, and seldom fails to temper his enquiries after the poor afflicted girl with sad lamentations upon the inconvenience he feels at being obliged to reside at his present house, though it has answered all his purposes for thirteen years that he has held the living; and has reared upon its produce seven sons and a daughter, all of whom are living; and Miss Freeman, as he calls her, as impatient as her father to come into our parish.—He has made a proposal of purchasing, at a fair appraisement, the furniture, plate, and house-linen, just as it stands—and I believe the girls would be glad to accept his offer, but Sophia wants to see Charles first.—The Doctor has left a will in his own hand-writing, by which he bequeaths his books, manuscript sermons, &c. to his son; and whatever ready-money he should die possessed of, together with his household furniture, garden tools, plate, china, linen, and pictures, to be made into three equal lots, and appropriated to his girls; or, if they agree upon selling the whole, the produce to be added to the ready-money, and the whole equally divided amongst them.—His mode of appointing executors is whimsical, and speaks his character; he says, that he has always been so fortunate in the esteem and friendship of his parishioners, that he will leave it to Providence to appoint any one of them to the sacred trust of his dear orphans—and begs, that whoever happens to assist his girls in opening his will, may consider himself as their guardian by divine appointment.—To this trust Mr. Bellas has succeeded, and seems greatly delighted with the employment. Eliza has amused herself with making my baby-things, but Henrietta does not seem to relish any thing but reading.—If I had any mode of conveyance for Sophia, that did not endanger her life, I would have her removed directly, and give Mr. Freeman possession of the house; but I will wait till I hear from you again. If Charles could collect himself sufficiently to come down, I think it might be of great service to them all—the girls would be the better satisfied with whatever they do, if it had his approbation; and he might, by busying himself in their concerns, forget, at least in some degree, his own—so true it is, that self-love and social are the same.—If his person be so engrossed by this most unhappy adventure as to be lost to them; at least desire him to write to his sisters, and give his opinion and advice; which, circumstanced as they are, should

certainly, in any situation, claim his attention and regard.—We found in the Doctor's bureau a memorandum-book, which gave us a very clear account of what he left behind him; in an adjoining drawer we found seven hundred pounds in bank-notes; and in another about fifty-six pounds in cash, which, as we managed, defrayed the expences of the funeral, a few little bills to different trades-people, and purchased mourning for the three girls; and I believe Mr. Bellas may have seven or eight pounds in balance, which he concludes will pay the apothecary's bills, when it shall please heaven to restore Sophia. I am greatly alarmed at not having heard from you for more than a week—because I know it must be very bad indeed with you, when you relinquish your pen.—Write, my dear sister, and relieve your

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER X.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

THE most alarming apprehensions you can have conceived, unless they related to my personal welfare, must fall short of what I have suffered since I last wrote to you.—Why it has pleased Providence to spare my life and my senses, under such distressful circumstances, he best knows: I dare not murmur; nor can I, as I ought, be grateful.—According to my notes—the last circumstance respecting Amelia, that I related to you, was her request to be permitted to *write*, instead of giving a personal information to her uncle and me, of the rise and progress of this fatal attachment between her and Charles; which she promised to set about as soon as we would compose the agitation of her mind, by giving her some account of him, from the time she tore herself from him, to follow her uncle, on Monday evening.—I went down stairs to make this proposal to Mr. Clement; who accepted the conditions, ordered some pens, ink, and paper, to be carried up to her room along with the breakfast-things; and said, that as I promised her my company, he would go and call upon the unhappy young man, and hear *his* story, that, by comparing both, he might be enabled to judge what degree of credit and protection was due to either—but that, mean time, he had held himself bound, by every feeling of an husband, to inform Mr. Merisford that his wife was in his care.—I could not condemn the step, yet my heart foreboded something fatal in its consequences.—He left me, and kindly thanked me for my conduct towards his unhappy niece, with words so sweet, as made my merit small.—I had returned to Amelia's room, and was making the tea, when I heard a voice in the hall very loud and angry.—I just opened the door near which I sat, and heard the same voice pronounce—“Well, I will find him, so tell him from me.”—Francis, who is very fond of his master, jealous of his honor, and perhaps angry at being supposed to assert a falsehood, replied, pertly, “Sir, my master is a gentle-man, and owes nothing to nobody, so he has no call to deny himself if he *was* at home.” The boisterous voice again repeated, “Well, I will find him, and let him know that he owes me—justice.”—Amelia, who had turned pale and red, and red and pale, several times in the course of this war of words, at the last sound dropped off her chair—and, as she fell, exclaimed, “Angry Providence, must the charity of my benefactors involve them!”—She could say no more—I rang the bell. Selby came into the room, and, as she entered, said,

“Sir, this is the young lady’s bed-chamber—perhaps”—“Trouble yourself with no farther conjectures, young woman,” said the ill-looking wretch, “I have been in the young lady’s bedchamber before now, and mayhap may again.” These discordant sounds were more powerful than my sal-volatile:—She opened her eyes, screamed, “My husband!” and ran and threw herself, her face downward, on the bed.—I was so frightened, I neither knew what to say, nor whom to speak to;—my usual presence of mind entirely forsook me.—Yet, as Amelia had assured me she had not *wronged* his bed, I confess, my mind, at the first glimpse I had of the man, applauded her *forsaking* it. For sure, my dear, though marriage, where the *minds* are joined as well as the bodies, is a most honourable state, as it is a happy one; where that sweet union is not made, marriage of the bodies *only* cannot, to the eye of reason or of sentiment, be deemed other than licensed prostitution: and if the woman willingly approaches the altar, and leaves her heart behind; to the indelicate vice of prostitution, she adds the impious one of perjury. This, however, is a charge from which my poor Amelia has thoroughly exculpated herself;—but of that hereafter; you shall see her defence in her own words. I will keep this till I can add something more.

MARIANNE.

## LETTER XI.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS,

*in continuation.*

YOU cannot well suppose a situation so disagreeable as mine: the wife—the eloped wife, on one side; and the deserted husband on the other:—she weeping and trembling, he railing and threatening.—At last, I summoned courage enough to speak; and, addressing myself to the monster, I assured him, “however displeasing to an husband the step which my niece had taken, yet that she had solemnly cleared her innocence to her uncle and me, so far as respected the honor of his bed—that, though the disturbed state of her mind had not permitted much conversation; yet we understood, that she had always dealt honestly with him, in declaring a prepossession in favour of another—that, where a man married a woman so circumstanced, he must either have a very partial passion for the lady’s *person*, or a very romantic confidence in her *mind*—that, so far as I could learn, she had not abused his confidence, but wished to decline it—that, having gained, by the death of her father, a small independence, it was her design to have escaped to Germany, where there are several Protestant nunneries, and there to have fixed for the remainder of her life; but that an accident had discovered her to her uncle; and, when he had brought her home, he thought it his duty to acquaint him with it—that, as a husband, who knew the nicety of an husband’s honor, he even thought it expedient that Mr. Merisford should be certain to an *hour*, when she came into our house; since when, no creature but ourselves, and my own maid, had had access to her.”—I was at the length of my argument, to which point I had arrived without the least interruption—the poor victim not daring to lift up her eyes—and the golden calf to which she had been sacrificed having employed himself in the contemplation of an amazing fine brilliant, which he wore upon a hand that nature designed for other decorations, but which seemed so devoted to the religion of its master, which is the idolatry of every thing dirty and every thing expensive, that it scorned an alliance with any thing so common and vulgar as soap, and to all appearance has kept clear of such company these seven years.—When he found I paused, he put his hand in his coat-pocket, and, pulling out a filthy pocket-handkerchief, which he displayed as an assistant to his oration, he began, “Why, look ye, madam, as to the honor, and the nicety, and all that, I be’nt so particular—I married, because I was rich, and thought as how I ought to have an heir, d’ye see, to leave behind me, to keep up my name.—To be sure, miss told me as how she had a great regard for a young man, and he for she:—but her father know’d better, and giv’d her to me.—In Turkey, where I made eighty thousand pounds, I might have had as many wives, d’ye see; but I did not fancy they:—now, as I happened to see miss when I went down into Yorkshire, to see a main-fine estate that I had bought, and thought as I cou’d fancy her; I ax’d her father; and told’n what I had a gotten to make a jointure for her; and when I had his good-will, I didn’t stand shilly-shally, but come up straight to London, and got the writings finished out of hand. When I went back, miss knows I was not stingy in my mind towards her: I carried her a fine set of diamonds; and told her, when she could bring herself to fancy me, that she shou’d eat gold, and drink gold; and that, as for that there young man, d’y’see, the rarities and diversions of London wou’d soon put’n out of her head.”—In the course of this

elegant harangue, she sat up, and appealed to me with her eyes, the language of which I very well understood, for a full and free pardon; which, I scruple not to confess, my eyes returned; my heart confessed, that for such a woman to be joined to such a man, was the worst of crimes; and that an escape, unattended with any circumstance of guilt, must be, not only an excusable, but a laudable, elopement. He looked to her, as if for an answer. She attempted to speak, but tears stopped her utterance. He began again—"As soon as we come to town, I took a house in Berkley-square, and desired her to choose, whether she wou'd have a new coach, or a chariot, or both:—and when I found that she and I sometimes used to be at a loss for conversation—I told her, that if she chose to find any young gentle-woman as was poor, and mayhap might be glad to live with us, that I shou'd have no dislike on't:—so at last she did find one, that was the daughter of a captain, who, having lost an eye in the service, liv'd to see a

wife and four children starving on his half-pay; this minx, when she had gotten herself in a warm house, began to be pert; and because I sometimes thought it right to remind her of her obligations, to make her a little grateful, for contradiction sake she took it in quite a different light, and was more pert than she was before; and so one night, as they two were at Ranelagh, my madam there found an opportunity to contrive, by means of this dependant, to run away with some young fellow that she never saw before."—By this time the poor creature had a little composed herself; and having courage to speak, she addressed herself to me: "Permit me, my dear aunt, under the shelter of your presence and protection, to answer all that Mr. Merisford has advanced, in as few words as possible."—"Don't you provoke me, madam, says he, or—" "Oh, Sir, says she, I fear your blows less than my own reflections, and those of the world, who know not me, nor my provocations." At the word *blows*, I started, and reiterated, "*Blows ! Amelia !*"—"Yes, ma'am." "Go on, madam," says he, "tell your fine story, to melt the gentlewoman's heart, and get her excuse for making a brute of your husband." She burst into tears—"that Power who has seen your brutality to me, knows that I am innocent of the foul charge;—yet be not flattered; it was what I owed to myself, not you, that saved me." She then recapitulated many past transactions, in their nature almost too horrid to repeat;—at all events I will omit them now, as probably they will be contained in her own narrative; and a repetition of even agreeable circumstances becomes tedious; when the matter is of a contrary nature, it is unpardonable. He listened with a degree of insensibility that shocked me, if possible, more than the accusation. And when she had gone as far as her own delicacy would permit, he again surveyed his brilliant, took out his handkerchief, and, brandishing it with one hand, he held out the other, "Come, Milly, says he, as long as I be'nt a cuckold, I'll forgive thee;—not but you might have done your worst, if you had managed with prudence, and not made me the laughing-stock of my

acquaintance: howsoever, if you have a mind to be friends, say the word, and I'll never upbraid you no more; only, if you can bring yourself to fancy me, why it may add a hundred a-year to your pin-money, as you fine ladies call it; if not, a man must have a wife; and as long as I have one—mayhap you may be as good as another."—"Mr. Merisford, says she, I never deceived you—I never will—it is out of nature for you and I to be happy—I cannot love you—I cannot obey you—the woman who can long continue a good wife to one man, whilst her wishes are all another's, must have the possession of a virtue for which I know no name—it is not patience—it is not fortitude—it is not self-denial—it is not chastity: but it is a combination of all those virtues in one. I do not possess it.—My duty is yours, if an involuntary vow can bind the free-born soul:—but my heart, my soul, my virgin-vows, were all bestowed before

I saw you. I told you this, and yet you married me."—Here we were interrupted, by the arrival of Mr. Clement: I hear his bell.

MARIANNE.

## LETTER XII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS,

*in continuation.*

MY dear Charlotte must be impatient to get to the end of my narrative, and therefore, whilst Mr. Clement is in a fine sleep, I will give myself up to her. I have hitherto communicated only those feelings which sympathy produces; but, ere long, the character of the lamenting friend will be changed to that of the distracted wife! Heaven has been gracious, however, to my hopes; and my Charles can once more look up, and bid me be comforted. I mentioned, at the close of the last page, the arrival of Mr. Clement; but did not tell you that he was brought in a chair, fainting with pain and loss of blood! the monster with whom I had been sitting had, without knowing it, been the cause. Well did my heart inform me when first I saw him; and side with heaven and my Amelia.—Selby, just at the period at which I closed, came into the room, with more composure than I could have expected on such an occasion; and told me that her master was returned. This, as it was usual, did not alarm me; and my dislike to leaving the ill-matched pair alone made me pause;—by which time I heard Francis roar, “My master! my dear master!” That exclamation made me deaf to every other sound; my fears lent me wings, and in an instant I was down in the parlour, where they had rested, by his desire, till I came. It is impossible for me to describe the scene; nor, indeed, to you, who know us both, can it be necessary.—When Mr. Forbes came, he examined the wound; and, by the faintness of his manner, in *hoping* all would be well, deprived me of all hope.—You know the sanguinity of my disposition—I cannot bear doubt in the cause of those I love;—however, the wounds were dressed; and Mr. Clement, in pity to my distraction, lay so quiet, that, by a kind deception practised upon me, he brought his own safety to a reality. An occurrence in favour of your maxim, Charlotte—by sacrificing to oblige others, we always, eventually, oblige ourselves.—My mind, however, was too much interested to be quick of belief; every favourable symptom engaged my gratitude; but the fear of an unfavourable one succeeding, lessened my present enjoyment.—For several hours after I first saw his deathly countenance, every other impression was erased from my memory.—I even lost the anxiety of distressing you—no wonder then if I did not enquire for poor Amelia, till she was gone, past recovery—the brute having taken advantage of the confusion of our house, to force her away; and, as the grocer at the corner of our street told Francis, hurried her into a coach amidst the curses of the passers-by, who no sooner saw, but they were interested for her.—Several days passed, in which I could not gain the least intelligence of either her or Charles—nor could I venture upon the subject nearest my heart, though I had reason to guess, from the first hints Mr. Clement dropped, that Merisford had been the cause.—Even now, he chuses to be silent on the subject; and though he cannot exculpate Charles, he pities him.—For oh, my sister, however shocking! it was Charles’s sword which pierced my husband’s side; and, had the wound been a sixteenth of an inch more central, it must have passed through his heart.—As far as I can collect from the different disjointed conversations we have had, which, however my curiosity prompts, I never press—that letter which Mr. Clement sat up the Monday night to write to Merisford, respecting the safety of his wife, and which his own delicacy pointed out

to him as an essential duty—by some means or other he conveyed, or at least its contents, to Charles. The unhappy young man considered it as a breach of confidence, and, in the agonies of his despair, wrote to Mr. Clement, instantly demanding satisfaction—and *that* it was that made him so glad to engage me with Amelia, that he might, without surprizing me, go out directly.—How wonderful are the dispensations of Almighty Providence!—how anxiously did I press his going to see the unfortunate youth! how little foresee the consequence!—He declares that he took every gentle method of composing his mind; but, when he found there was no alternative but drawing his sword, or delivering Amelia to him, (which, knowing her to be the wife of another, was impossible)—he was obliged to comply with the former,—the consequence you have heard, so far as it respects Mr. Clement—but—the truth must be told.—Poor unhappy, ill-fated, Charles is now no more!—Shocked at spilling the blood of his friend, who had gone such lengths to serve him, he fell upon his own sword, and expired immediately. I would fain have softened the catastrophe—but death admits of no medium—it is—a journey's end.—Upon his table the following letter was found, directed,

(LETTER XIII.)

TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MADAM,

RECEIVE a dying man's contrition for the complicated miseries he has brought upon your family.—The dishonour of your niece hangs heavy on my soul—the blood of your husband overwhelms it.—But your surviving misery, added to what my Amelia feels, restored to the tyranny of an unfeeling, a licensed monster, tears my heart separate ways, and claims the expiation of its dearest drops.—The sword is drawn—despair is ripe for execution—accept the atonement, and pity the untimely fate of the lost

CHARLES MASON.

Paper Buildings,  
Tuesday afternoon.

*P.S.* There were likewise letters to his sister and Amelia, which I suppose the servant will forward. My mind is sore with the painful recapitulation. Adieu!

MARIANNE.

LETTER XIV.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I Received your dismal packet just before I sat down to dinner, and have never since recovered the shock of the catastrophe, notwithstanding the kind road through which you led me to it.—Mr. Bellas is as much concerned, and sets out at five o'clock to visit Mr. Clement. I am afraid to accompany him, though I long eagerly to embrace my dear sister, and congratulate the return of health to a brother, who has been almost a father to me.—Sophia is pretty well recovered, and I have got her home—but how to break the dreadful news to her, without giving her immediate death, I know not.—The furniture, &c. of the Parsonage-house is to be sold tomorrow: Mr. Bellas has engaged an appraiser and auctioneer, of very fair character, to come down for the purpose.—He thinks it best to dispose of them publickly, that if any of the parishioners, who esteemed the father, have a disposition to make a handsome present to the girls (as he has been informed), they may have an opportunity of doing it, without offering violence to their delicacy—and if Doctor Freeman chuses to buy the whole, he will still have it in his power.—He and his daughter came to the house yesterday; and as they ordered their horses to be taken out, Mr. Bellas thought he owed his character the compliment of asking him to dine with us.—The doctor thanked him with a ceremonious civility; said, “That they did purpose returning to a late dinner; but that they could not be insensible to the temptation, and would accept the invitation.”—The girl blushed her acquiescence; and to accommodate them (for they had nine miles across the country to go in a heavy chariot), we dined at two o'clock.—I was very much pleased with them both, notwithstanding the prejudice I had conceived against them for an unfeeling haste to step into the seat of my worthy deceased friend; but the most candid mind will sometimes, under certain circumstances, deviate from itself.—It is the property of narrow minds *only*, to persist in prejudice against conviction.—Mr. Bellas will give you this; and, as he knows my heart best, he shall speak its sentiments towards my dear sister.

CHARLOTTE.

## LETTER XV

MR. BELLAS TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAREST LIFE,

ABOUT eleven last night I arrived at your sister's house, a poor melancholy single wretch, feeling—like an Adam without an Eve.—There is a vacuity in the human breast, which only one object can fill; and which, in the absence of that object, must, in spite of the propensities which reason and philosophy would *argue* into our minds, become an aching void. This was my six hours contemplation, from the moment I left you at Frogly Farm, till I arrived at Mr. Clement's in ——Street.—He was gone to-bed, having set up four hours in charming spirits. Your sister, having poured out the effusion of her capacious heart, in thanks for his recovery—for my kindness in this visit—on the beauty of her children, every one of which she insisted upon my viewing as they lay asleep—and in her eager and honest prayers for your safe and speedy recovery, and my living to see myself and you possessed of three such little angels as hers—gave me a neat little supper, and ordered my bed to be warmed.—Whilst I sat with *her*, I did not think myself quite deprived of *you*—but when I went to bed—that very bed, which on my wedding-night received me to the arms of—oh, Charlotte!—if I cannot sleep a night without you—I tremble to think—what an absolute power such a bewitching little woman must have, if she were disposed to abuse it.—Adieu! my soul! your brother is much better than he was yesterday.—Your sister is very well, if she would be content to remain so; but that busy, social, sympathetick soul of hers will impose so many of other people's loads upon the little body that contains it, that she always runs the race of life with the odds at least twenty to one against her. Once more adieu! Write to me directly. I propose returning on Friday—mean time, take care of my boy, and remember that upon thy safety depends that of thy

F. BELLAS.

LETTER XVI.

MRS. BELLAS TO MR. BELLAS.

MY DEAR LOVE!

I Should not have wanted the influence of a command, to enforce a duty so pleasant as that of writing to you—so pleasant as all the duties are which love and you are entitled to—and yet it is with difficulty I can *now* write at all.—Do not be alarmed, my love—but excuse my writing a *few* lines, as I am obliged to do it in bed—a little accident, I trust of no ill consequence, obliged me to come to-bed about seven yesterday evening; and Mr. Powell advises me to lie still for a day or two, as the best means to avoid at a certainty—a misfortune to the little existence about which you are so anxious.—Adieu! my love! For all the kind, the flattering things you say, accept these tears of gratitude—accept emotions, which, though no language can do them justice, your heart can judge of by its own.

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XVII.

*Enclosing the former.*

MISS MASON TO MR. BELLAS.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING received Mrs. Bellas's commands to fold and forward the inclosed, which, with great pain and difficulty, she wrote, supported by Mrs. Collins and myself, I take the liberty to write a few lines in the cover, to request that your stay in London may be as short as possible.—This liberty I will not apologize for, as I consider it as an act of duty.—Bound as my family are by every tie of gratitude, respect, and affection to yours, I think sincerity indispensable.—Mr. Powell is afraid that Mrs. Bellas cannot go out the time of her reckoning—he has not told her so—but if he had, her tenderness for you would perhaps induce her to conceal it.—I send this by Philip's brother, who is going to London, and promises to deliver it in six hours at farthest.—I beg leave to present my respects to Mrs. Clement, and remain, Sir, your most grateful, and most obedient humble servant,

SOPHIA MASON.

LETTER XVIII.

MR. BELLAS TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY HEART'S TREASURE,

WHILST the horses are putting to, I write, without knowing what I write, or for what purpose.—I have your letter enclosed by Miss Mason.—Tell the good girl how she has obliged me by her attention. Marianne is distracted between the wife and the sister—she wants to go with me—she wants to see her sister, but cannot leave her husband.—He mends but very slowly—what he gains one day, he loses the next.—I have been here three days; and though he has varied much, and often, in that time, he is now rather worse than when I came.—I have sent for Doctor B—, who attends your sister; she will endeavour to prevail with him to accompany me; if it be possible, she is sure he will—for he is a man of the greatest humanity as well as experience.—She is so miserable, that nothing else can appease her.—She has no patience with your being attended by a country apothecary and an old woman—(you know her way) and almost hates me, for acquiescing with your lying-in in the country.—My dear Charlotte knows it was her own choice—but she says I am the master of my family, and should do as I please.—What a little tyrant!—Never be it known between us, who is first in command!—Doctor B—— is come, and, at your sister's request, will set out with me in an hour. Mean time may every guardian power make my dear Charlotte its care; and leave the rest of mankind to chance! I send this but just before me; but every minute is an age in love.—If I arrive by the time you have broke the seal, I will tell you all its contents, and spare you the trouble of reading:—if not, let it serve as an irregular reflection of my heart's inmost feelings, and avow its truth and devotion to my Charlotte.

F. BELLAS.

LETTER XX.

MR. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

DEAR SISTER,

I TAKE advantage of your worthy doctor's return to town, to set your heart quite at ease about Charlotte—though perhaps his own account of the matter will better effect that purpose. In little more than five hours we arrived at the Farm. I fancy my heart was in my face; for Sophia's first salute was, "Dear Sir, I am shocked to think how my busy impertinence must have troubled you;—for heaven's sake, compose yourself before you go up stairs—Mrs. Bellas is better—I hope Mr. Powell will be mistaken—she is more alarmed at your letter, than she was at her own illness—I am an unfortunate wretch, born to repay the goodness of my benefactors, by making them unhappy!" The poor girl wept bitterly; and whilst I endeavoured to reconcile her to having proceeded upon the properest principle, I insensibly recovered a degree of serenity, to meet my Charlotte, and introduce Dr. B——. As soon as I had satisfied the eagerness of my impatience by seeing her, I left the Doctor to his enquiries; and, having prepared a *douceur*, waited in the fore-parlour to receive him. He came down with a countenance beaming benevolent satisfaction; assured me, the alarm was a false one; and hinted, that he should not like to trust the care of a lady, in her *first* lying-in particularly, to the care of a person so much disposed to make mountains of molehills, as he expressed himself.—I told him, that I could not conquer Mrs. Bellas's invincible dislike to London; but that, if any young man of skill and ability in the physical way chose to set up at Frogly, I could ensure him success, from the general opinion being much against Powell both as an apothecary and a man.—By the way, I do not know how Sophia will relish this; for I am afraid her peace of mind would vanish with Powell, whenever he left us.

Accept, for yourself and Mr. Clement, the sincerest affection of

CHARLOTTE and F. BELLAS.

LETTER XX.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MR. BELLAS.

DEAR BROTHER,

I THANK you most sincerely for the packet of consolation you sent me by the doctor; he is quite delighted with the farm, and every thing that belongs thereunto—he assures me that he does not apprehend any danger to my sister; but seems to wish, as you hinted, that she would come to town to lye in—why will she be so obstinate? here is her own room, which I never suffer to be prophaned by common inhabitants; try if you can prevail upon her to use it, at least for *this* time; perhaps, by the next, you may have some person of skill in your neighbourhood;—mean time, dwell upon the consequence of improper treatment to the little one; and she will hear *that*, however deaf she may be to any arguments that respect only herself.—I have at last a letter from my poor Amelia—she is escaped once more, and in safe shelter in a convent in Germany.—She requests me to keep up a correspondence with her; and desires to be permitted to give an earnest of her esteem, by assuring me, that though her conduct has perfectly satisfied her own mind, yet its tranquillity cannot be compleat without my testimony in her favour. I have written to her, and accepted her offer with pleasure. It is astonishing to me, unless our souls were acquainted in a pre-existent state, how a few hours, which was all I knew her *here*, should have twined that unhappy creature round my heart—I really love her, like a sister—and know not why, except for being unfortunate.—That cannot be all—that might create pity; but I feel esteem—and that must be the produce of merit, at least imagined merit, in the object.—I promise myself and Charlotte great delight in perusing her history; and, as she has promised to divest herself as much as possible of the partiality of human nature, which her situation, I think, favors, it may mingle instruction with delight; for, grave faces may frown if they please, the human heart, *honestly unveiled*, is the best school of morality.

Mr. Clement is a good deal better; every fine day seems to bring him a large stride forward; yet the physicians think it will be necessary for him to go to some of our watering-places for a month or six weeks, as soon as there seems a probability of the weather being settled in a disposition of mildness. We did talk of inoculating Charles and Charlotte this spring; but, if we are obliged to leave town, I do not see how it will be possible.—I was lamenting this circumstance to Mrs. Belmour yesterday; and she said, she thought it would be a good opportunity of having it done whilst we were away—either at home under the care of Selby, or at Sutton's; which latter, indeed, she should prefer.—I love her vastly, or I believe I never should have spoke to her again. Mercy upon me! how can anybody be so indifferent about their children! Yet she seems to be composed of the milk of human kindness, and to feel for every body's illness or distresses.—There is a Mr. Deacon, who is an occasional visitor at Dover-Street; he has chambers in The Temple, and of course cannot be well accommodated in case of illness, having no servant but a valet, who is a Swiss, and whose only perfection is, dressing his hair; the master was confined for a few weeks last season, in the time of the influenza—and she was perpetually sending to know how he did; and, as he recovered, sending him jellies, blananches, almond emulsions,

and all sorts of kitchen-comforts, to the continual trouble and employment of the house-keeper who made, and the footman who carried them.

My kindest wishes to my dear Charlotte, and believe me equally thy

MARIANNE.

LETTER XXI.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAR MARIANNE,

BEING, I thank heaven, restored to the use of my pen, its first-fruits shall be yours.—Mr. Bellas did not like to resign the employment: but I insisted upon my right; and he has yielded, upon condition that I give up another point, in which I cannot withstand two advocates so powerful as you and he combined.—I accept then of my dear sister's invitation; and shall, with your permission, take possession of my old lodgings-room on this day sevennight—as I suppose another week will introduce the little stranger to our acquaintance. I own, I shall leave Frogly with regret, even though it be to come to you.—The spring is now in its morning-dress; in which, like a woman, whose chief beauty consists in a native elegance and a modest reserve, it yields, in my opinion, the greatest delight to the beholders, by shewing a *part* of its charms, and telling you, that there are others concealed, which the irresistible power of future suns will force to light, to bloom, to wither, and to die.—I have been somewhat distressed in the disposition of my family, in which I include the little mourners—at last I have resolved to gratify Sophia's wishes, by taking her with me, and leaving the two youngest under the care of Collins, upon whom I can absolutely rely:—she is rather hurt at not going with me; but she sees the necessity of staying with the little girls; and Sophia will supply her place, by sitting with me, packing and unpacking, &c.—The good girl has a most amiable disposition, which makes her carry her gratitude so much beyond any little services I have done her, as to leave me on the debtor side of the account; in discharge of which, how happy should I be to save her from a connection which can never make her happy; and yet, I fear, it will be impossible—in the course of my accidental illness, I have discovered that her innocent heart is the property of a Mr. Powell, an apothecary who attended her father in his late illness; and, since that, herself.—He has been some years settled in the village; and since I have made this observation upon her conduct, I have taken some pains to enquire into his character, which I find to be a very opposite one to hers—in short, a bad one.—She is all gentleness, benevolence, humanity—but has a mind above her circumstances; even in the effusions of her gratitude, there is a dignity that commands as much respect as if she were in the act of conferring favors beyond those which she acknowledges.—He is, by the general voice of the village, a timeserving, unfeeling, selfish man; cringing, and mean to his superiors; insolent and fawning, by turns, to his equals; and at all times oppressive and overbearing to his inferiors. Collins has taken great pains—it is in her power to converse freely with all the middling and lower people of the village; and it is there that nature speaks without disguise.—Even in the part of his conduct which fell under my own observation, I found so many objectionable circumstances, that I was shocked when I found he had made an

impression on Sophia.—The extreme retirement of her life has deprived her of any opportunities of judging of a man but by his own professions, and Mr. Powell is not sparing of those.—One anecdote I must tell you:—You used to say that a combination of small circumstances were better instructions how to judge of a character, than even as many great ones; for in the latter case, every man is on his guard, and acts as he thinks his interests demand; but in the former, the dispositions which nature have given him operate, as it were, without his interference.—For the present, I must rest.—I am so unwieldy, that I am fit for nothing.—Good night!

Ever yours,

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XXII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I AM very happy at having obtained your acquiescence to my request; nor am I mortified at being obliged to an auxiliary whom I love so well as your husband;—mine is, I thank heaven, almost as well as ever; and does not like the thoughts of leaving his little ones, to mix in the impertinent scenes which every watering-place must involve him in; for, however one despises others for their acquiescence with the reigning follies of the time and place they live in, one must do it one's-self, and be mutually despised by the few sensible people, whose esteem in any other situation would be, perhaps, one's due.—You do not know how sorry I am for poor Sophia—bring her to town by all means; and, as that wretch Merisford said of poor Amelia, “Mayhap the rarities of London may put'n out of her head.”—You have never told me whether the poor girls know any thing of their unfortunate brother—if not, I should imagine they ought, before Sophia comes to town; as perhaps, without lessening her merit towards you, the expectation of seeing him may be, partly, her inducement to come here.—Our Francis, who is a little apt to over-rate his own sagacity, has several times assured Selby, that he saw Charles, after we were informed by his servant of his death, by his own hand—yet the letter which he left for me, seemed dictated by an honest despair; and the act itself, however unpardonable if we consider suicide as defended by reason, yet under his circumstances, and the feelings natural in his then situation, called loudly for our pity, though it could not challenge our approbation.—Yet I may be mistaken, but I remember it struck me at the time of receiving the letter, that the hand was materially different from any of his notes that I ever saw—but my mind was in such a state of apprehension for my husband's safety, that I did not pursue the thought any farther; perhaps there may be some mystery which I have not yet discovered. I should rejoice at any circumstance, however improbable the chance, that should restore so amiable a young man as he seemed to me to be, to the guardianship of his sisters, and the friendship of those who esteem him.—You will be able to tell me when we meet, whether the sale turned out advantageously for the poor girls, and whether you had so much christianity in your parish as you seemed to expect.—Mean time, if there be any thing that you would have done in the way of preparation for a certain great event, let me know it, and I shall be happy.—You know that we are to have Amelia's history.—I have desired her to write as fast as she can, but not to send it in divided parts, as the effect of the whole would, in my opinion, be injured, by reading it in such small parcels as a letter would contain; besides, about August, Mr. Clement proposes sending a young gentleman, whom he has in the compting-house, to a part of Germany very near where she resides, upon a matter of business in which he is concerned with a house which has lately stopped payment.—He shall be deputed my ambassador on the occasion, by which means we shall run no hazard of losing so pleasing a source of entertainment as I expect this sweet girl's narrative to prove.—She seems possessed of a just and proper way of thinking—a head full of reflection, and a heart full of sensibility—add to these requisites, a happy choice of words, and the produce must be delightful.—Adieu, my dear! I must go and dress; we are this evening to exhibit our wax-candles in the rout-way—seven

card-tables, and a party, for *trou madam*: If I can help it, I will not play myself.—Do you know that I begin to wish I had never consented to oblige Mr. Clement in this one article?—I spent so many years of my life very pleasantly, without knowing spadille from basto, that I can the less reconcile it to myself to throw away my time and money upon such unnecessary amusements; but what most mortifies me is, that I should put it in the power of chance to ruffle my temper; and that I should very often lament more pathetically the absence of a black ace than that of a friend; or give a welcome to the ill-looking duce of clubs, as hearty as that I meditate for my Charlotte.

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LETTER XXII.

MARIANNE.

LETTER XXIV.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAR SISTER,

MR. Bellas having an inclination to finish a plantation he is engaged in before we leave Frogly, I deferred my journey three days beyond the time mentioned in my last, which shall, I hope, complete it. Mean time, I will cut out some work for the little girls, to employ them till I return.—Miss Freeman is really an amiable girl; and, notwithstanding she is entitled in right of her mother to ten thousand pounds, which will in about another year render her independent, she has been so happy in being endowed with a natural sweetness of temper, and those endowments so happily cultivated by her mother, who was an excellent woman, that she is as perfectly obedient to her father as if she looked up to him for bread; and her humility and gentleness of deportment towards her brothers, the servants, and every body indeed that falls in her way, have gained her the universal love of all.—I am vastly pleased in knowing so much of this young lady before I go to town, on account of Eliza and Henrietta, to whom she has shewn an affection almost sisterly; but, for what reason I cannot conceive, she don't like Sophia.—Her virtues, to say truth, are not of the shining kind; you must *know* her, to value her: whereas Eliza's liveliness, and Henrietta's beauty, strike the moment you see them, and have the singular good-fortune to improve upon you ever after.—There is but one objection arises in my mind to their being intimate, and that regards only *Eliza*. Doctor Freeman has six sons at home, all of whom he educates himself—the eldest of the seven is in the road to ordination; and as soon as he is inducted to the living which his father has just quitted, the eldest of the six takes his place at Cambridge.—Henry, Thomas, William, George, Francis, and John, are the prettiest little party you can imagine, to escort their sister and our girls to the rector's pew every Sunday, where they all sit together according to their respective ages.—Henry and his sister, Thomas and Sophia, William and Eliza, and George and Henrietta, are within a year (each as I have paired them) of each other's ages.—But though Henry is obliged, to please his father, who marshals the groupe, to couple with his sister, he takes every opportunity of coupling himself with Eliza, and she seems to have no objection to *his* mode of conducting the matter; but confesses, in the honest simplicity of fifteen, that she shall be very sorry when Henry goes to Cambridge, and wishes that Thomas had been the eldest.—As to Henrietta, she has more reserve, though seven years younger; but if she has a golden-pippin given her in the course of the week, she is sure to keep it till Sunday, unless she has an opportunity in the interval of making master George a present of it—he is, to be sure, the sweetest little boy I ever beheld—the finest form and face you can conceive—the most expressive countenance, not a line but speaks—eyes that pierce you to the heart, without giving pain, and the finest auburn hair in the world.—His disposition is, if possible, more amiable than his person.—He has the principles of natural benevolence so strongly implanted in him, that it extends even to things inanimate; and if he happens to fall in any of his playful expeditions, he is more anxious for the consequences to any body, or any thing he falls against, than even to himself—this you know, is a description that will answer for Henrietta too (he it seems is most like his mother); so that I do not wonder their little hearts palpitate by

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the genuine force of sympathy.—The Doctor seems to see the several little parties with pleasure; and, as George is happily provided for by a relation of rank, who was his godfather, I should be glad their present propensities should grow up with them.— Our neighbours behaved in a manner which reflects honor upon their deceased pastor, the village, and themselves. Four of them bought single pictures at the auction, and sent the girls a hundred pound note each. Dr. Freeman did the same—and the plate, linen, furniture, &c. brought five hundred and thirty pounds.—Mr. Bellas means to make it even hundreds, and place the whole in the most advantageous of the publick funds. Till we meet, adieu! Collins tells me that Sophia has just received her brother's letter. Good heaven support her! Mr. Bellas's love accompanies that of your

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XXIV.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAREST SISTER,

I NEVER was so thoroughly surprized and shocked, as about an hour after I sent off my last letter to you. I told you that Sophia had received a letter from her brother; and as I did not doubt but it was a duplicate to yours, I equally dreaded and wished to see how she deported herself under the shocking news, which I never yet could summon courage to tell her.—When I first heard from you of his being engaged in an imprudent amour, I mentioned it to her, just in the light in which we saw it; she has often renewed the subject; but though my natural hate of equivocation made it painful to me to be silent on such an occasion, yet, in order to undeceive her, such horrid truths, as we thought them, must have been told, that I found the talk beyond my execution, and waited till you and I might have an opportunity of breaking it to her together;—and even brought the books, sermons, &c. which by his father's will became his, home to our own house, though I thought it likely that they might be the subject of a future sale; as to them, they were (of a kind to be) quite useless.—I had occasion to go into the house-keeper's room to speak to Collins about some matters, which were to be altered in my absence; and as that is a part of the house which I am very seldom in, it did not occur to Sophia, who had been every where else to seek me—upon going up to the room I commonly sit in, I found her with the two younger girls, in contemplation of Charles's letter; nor could I, from their countenances, guess at the contents—Sophia was in a kind of stupor—Eliza seemed as if she had been crying, without well knowing why—and the dear little sympathetic Henrietta was sobbing till her little heart-strings seemed ready to crack; upon my entrance, she ran up to me, and, laying hold of my apron, she cried, “Oh, madam, what will become of us now, when we leave you? we have no brother, no father, no friend that will love us, because Charles has been so naughty.”—I took the sweet girl in my arms, and kissed away her tears—told her, that, whilst Mr. Bellas or I lived, she had no chance of being without a friend—that I had known, for some time, that Charles was dead; but did not wish to add to their distresses, till their spirits were sufficiently recovered to be able to bear it. Upon this, Sophia, who had not spoke before, threw herself at my feet, and, with great calmness, begged that I would give credit to the sincerity with which she had desired to attend me in my approaching illness; and pity her for the regret she should feel at being deprived of it—but that, in her circumstances, it would be a hardiness she was not capable of, to look you in the face:—that her brother was not dead; but that he lived only to remorse and repentance—that, in the very moment of desperation, when he had sealed the letter which conveyed his real intention to Mr. Clement, and had raised the point on which he meant to fall, his father's sacred shade appeared in view; and, by an awful frown, prevented the perpetration of an act so horrid.—But that his offences to Mr. Clement and his family were of such a nature, that though he did not dare, after so solemn an admonition, to expiate them with his blood—yet he would atone them with a severer penance, an everlasting exile from all that he held dear.—I raised the dear girl, and bad her be comforted; told her, that I knew the full extent of the unhappy young man's offences—and could pronounce, for you and my brother, his pardon:—that I was sure she would not be the less

welcome;—and that you should tell her so yourself.—I am confident that the intelligence of his being alive will give as much pleasure to you and Mr. Clement as it does to

Your ever affectionate

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XXV.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE!

YOU have transported me out of my little wits!—Good heaven be praised! I shall always think highly of Francis's truth and sagacity in future.—It is not in language to give you an idea of Mr. Clement's joy at the discovery of Charles's being alive; he considered him as a victim to honor and sensibility; and so far he esteemed him, and loved his memory; but when he reflected that it was in expiation of *his* blood that he spilled his own, there was an effusion of horror attendant upon the reflection, which I really believe retarded his recovery.—Within these last two days he has had some severe spasms, which the great-wigs call rheumatick; and press him to go to Bath.—I like Bath better than any other water-drinking place; but at this season of the year it begins to grow disagreeable: however, if they think the hot-baths essentially necessary, we must not think of what is, or is not, agreeable.—However, I hope we shall keep it off till my dear Charlotte has taken possession of the house which I hope she will use and consider as her own. I will write to Sophia, and beg you will enforce what I shall say by the persuasion which friendship lends to the rhetoric of the heart.—I love the girl for her nicety of sentiment; but narrow indeed must that soul be who could reflect upon her the crimes of her brother.—Very different from such a mind, I thank the Forming Hand! is that of Mr. Clement;—thoroughly studied in the most useful of all sciences, that of human nature, he is ever ready to make allowances for its defects: by the acquisition of this knowledge, he is prevented from over-rating his friends, or under-rating his common acquaintances; for enemies he has none:—by this he is rendered a steady friend, a valuable companion, a good husband, father, master, and subject;—for in judging of those who are in any of those views related to him, he expects not perfection; but, weighing the good against the bad, in their characters, if the former preponderates, he is satisfied—so much the better for thy

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MARIANNE.

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LETTER XXVI.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MISS MASON.

MY dear Miss Mason comes so strongly recommended by my sister's affection for her, that I cannot put her upon the footing of a new correspondent.—It is however necessary, from a recent circumstance, that I should formally request the favour of her company at my house on Friday next, when Mr. and Mrs. Bellas make me happy with theirs.—A room next to theirs is fitted up for her; and every welcome that her merits and her severe affliction demands, shall, so far as my ability extends, attend her.—Mr. Clement desires me to present his compliments, and assures you, Madam, that the joy he feels at your brother's escape from an offence against the Almighty, so far surpassing any he can have committed against him, can only be exceeded by welcoming his return to London, when and where every effort within his power shall be made to comfort and to serve him.—And now, my dear girl, (for already I consider you as sitting by me) endeavour to recover your spirits; your duty has been amply paid to the dead, the living now claim your assistance.—My sister seems to consider your company as necessary to her safety; do not then let melancholy reflections disqualify you for an employment of so much trust.—Society is one vast chain, composed of links of different size and value, of which Providence intended you for a link of more than ordinary consequence, or the Great Machinist would not have formed you of materials so good, nor given those materials so high a polish.—I intend to set you to work, I can tell you.—My little beautiful wench has a mind as busy her eyes, which are the finest you ever saw, except her godmother's; and as you read better than any woman I ever met, I intend you shall pay for your journey to London, by teaching her.—It is but two years since she visited this sublunary world; but her soul speaks through her understanding; and says, that it existed from all eternity. Adieu! till we meet in London.

LETTER XXVIII.

MISS MASON TO MISS ELIZA MASON.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

LATE on Friday evening we arrived at Mr. Clement's house in London; and found such welcome as hearts like those of the owners delight to give.—Mrs. Bellas bore the journey surprisingly well, and has rested much better after it than she has done for many months.—I have just left the breakfasting-room, where the whole family are assembled, and seem all so happy as to alarm me with the apprehension that it cannot last. There never were, perhaps, two sisters so different in all their sentiments, passions, and pleasures; and yet so perfectly agreeing upon one point, which in general depends upon a coincidence of those—a most unbounded affection for each other.—Mrs. Bellas is, as you must have observed, benevolent and humane; but such an implacable serenity governs her temper and actions, that a stranger would be tempted to pronounce her an insensible spectator of human misery; we—are the best arguments to the contrary.—Mrs. Clement is lively, to a degree of giddiness, that, to a superficial observer, would imply a total unconcern for the whole human race, nay, even for herself, and her estimation in the world; yet is her large heart, and bestowing hand, the fountain of happiness to all who fall within her knowledge; capable of quick and strong impressions, she always makes her judgement wait upon her feelings—or, in other words, her heart dictates, and her head must acquiesce, or labour in vain.—The consequence of this disposition, so tremblingly alive to the distresses of others, is almost perpetual anxiety to herself.—Mrs. Bellas feels for all that are in affliction; Mrs. Clement adopts those afflictions, and makes them her own:—Mrs. Bellas is an excellent wife upon the principles of duty, to a worthy man indeed, who merits all her attention; but she would be as good a wife to a man less deserving, from sentiment alone;—Mrs. Clement is a good wife to the man of her choice; but had she married a man to whom she did not look up with a consciousness of his superior sense and continued desert, her feelings are so incapable of disguise, that the sense of duty would often sleep, whilst her quick apprehension of injury, and her conscious merit of better treatment, would shew itself in spite of all the Schools for Wives that poets fancy and hypocrites admire.—As a mother, her enthusiasm delights me—she never speaks of any of her children without the epithet of *beautiful*—yet never suffers a fault worth notice to pass unpunished.—As a mistress, she is absolutely adored; but, astonishing as it may seem, I do not think I ever saw worse servants;—our Rachel had more work than three maids in her house; and it was always better done:—perhaps we may have put the house a little into confusion—but at present I see no specimens of London servants abilities.—There is a Mrs. Selby, who attends upon Mrs. Clement, and keeps the keys, whom I do not like at all; she is too finely dressed for a servant—but it may be the London-fashion.—Mrs. Clement sends for me to take the air with her and Mrs. Bellas, in a place they call Hyde-Park.—When I come back, I will finish my letter. Adieu!

LETTER XXVIII.

*Tuesday morn.*

It was so late when I returned yesterday, that I could not keep my word with my dear Eliza;—and, indeed, Mrs. Bellas was so poorly all the evening, that I was in expectation of having some news to tell you that we should all have been glad of.—Mr. and Mrs. Clement are going to Bath as soon as Mrs. Bellas and the little stranger are out of danger. Mr. Clement does not look near so well as when we saw him last at Frogly; and it is on his account they are going there, for the benefit of hot-bathing. Mrs. Bellas has got a very-well-looking nurse from one of the lying-in hospitals, who will either suckle the child if she cannot, or take the charge of attending it if she can. Mrs. Clement's children are grown very fond of me;—Charles is just three years old—Charlotte something more than two—and there is a little baby about six months, whom his mama suckles; the most beautiful little creature you can conceive—he is really so unlike any other child I ever saw, that I can hardly consider him as mortal.—The father and mother seem to have placed all their happiness in him;—I hope they will not lose him;—but he does not seem to me to be calculated for this world—he has all his mother's sensibility about him—sweet fellow! it is a troublesome companion to travel through life with.

Give my love to Henrietta, and my service to Mrs. Collins; and believe me my dear Eliza's

Affectionate sister,

SOPHIA MASON.

LETTER XXVIII.

MISS ELIZA MASON TO MISS MASON.

MY DEAR SISTER,

IF I didn't love you very much I declare I wouldn't write to you.—I have given your letter to Mrs. Collins; for I'm sure it is fitter for her than for me.—I can't imagine how you can be so stupid—you have been in London almost a week, and have never sent me a line about plays, balls, masquerades, nor any of the fine things that London is full of;—not even told me what sort of caps girls of my age wear—though you know that if you cut out one in paper, I could make it directly:—if I was there, I should make better use of my time, I assure you.—We are to have a ball at the parsonage-house, on miss Freeman's birth-day, which is next Tuesday;—young Mr. Barton is to dance with her—and Henry with miss Barton; though I am sure he is very sorry for it; and Thomas is to dance with me, which I am sorry for;—in short, I think we are all very badly matched with partners, except Henrietta, who has master George—and proud enough she is of her partner;—to be sure he is a very pretty boy, but he is not so well-made as Henry;—but because miss Barton will have a great fortune, I suppose the doctor chose to compliment her with his eldest son;—however, it is some pleasure to know he does not like her, as he told me yesterday in the Green-house; and said, “he had rather dance with somebody else round a May-pole, than with Miss Barton at the Lord Mayor's ball in London.”—Now, my dear, sweet Sophia, buy me a pretty cap, and send it down by the stage.—I am sure it must be the fault of my dress, if I cannot look better than Miss Barton, for all she has such a fortune—for, I am sure brown hair is prettier than her carrots, though she puts pepper in her powder to make it look dark.—Henrietta says, “she will not ask for a new cap, if you'll send me one”—a conceited thing!—because she is sure of her partner—and so shall I perhaps, if you will oblige your very affectionate

ELIZA MASON.

LETTER XXIX.

MISS MASON TO ELIZA MASON.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

YOU do not know what concern your levity of temper gives me: it is unnecessary for me to say upon what occasion, how much I love you, and that it is not the expence of a new cap that deprives you of one—but, my dear girl, I dare not encourage in you a passion, the gratification of which is not within our circumstances.—You do not see the consequences, which a fondness for dress brings along with it, to women whose fortunes are circumscribed like ours.—Already has this passion (or some other which you should equally guard against) sown in your breast the seeds of envy, jealousy, slander, and even hatred. Even the honest and affectionate concession of your sister, who waiv'd her claim to a new cap, to promote your request, without encroaching on the impartiality which she knew I would practise in all my actions towards you both—even this act of kindness you stigmatize as the offspring of conceit. Oh fie for shame, Eliza!—if she had been capable of conceit, she could not have been capable of such a disinterested action. Would you have made a similar offer, if *she* had wished for a new cap?—not you indeed.—You are now, my dear Eliza, at a dangerous age—the morning of life shews every prospect in the most flattering point of view: beware of viewing your neighbour's fields, his flocks, his house, his garden.—Now, while the sun of youth shines before your eyes, and blinds them in the article of property, they may be beautiful; but they are not *yours*—take care then that you do not gaze till you become enamoured, for, ten thousand to one, they never *can* be yours.—I dare not be more particular; *your* happiness is principally concerned—but I am sufficiently interested in the event, to tremble whilst I write upon the subject. If you would oblige me, you would be as seldom as possible at the parsonage-house—nor can I think it decent to dance in those rooms where we so lately wept over such a father. Henrietta is a child; but at fifteen reason may operate, if passion will give it leave. However, I am still your sister,

SOPHIA MASON.

LETTER XXX.

MISS MASON TO ELIZA.

MY DEAR GIRL,

WHAT effect my last letter, which was dictated by the truest sisterly affection, will have upon your mind, I know not; but as Mrs. Collins, in a letter to her lady, mentions the ball, and does not mention you as one of the party, I own I am flattered with the hope that your own understanding took my side of the question, and determined you to stay at home in a decent retirement, rather than mix in those delights which only happier situations can render truly pleasing.—Mrs. Bellas is brought to-bed, and (thank Heaven) as well as can be expected—but the dear little boy is dead.—She saw

him alive, and apparently well, about an hour after he was born—but he did not live quite twelve hours. They are all in great distress; but her happy equanimity of mind is of great service to her, in supporting her under what I think must be a heavy affliction, though I cannot judge accurately of the feelings of a mother.—Mr. Bellas is exceedingly affected, though in her presence he endeavours to conceal it under a mask of philosophy.—She begins already to talk of returning, and tacitly condemns herself for coming to town at all: however, though they do not tell her so, they all think that she must have stood a bad chance herself in the country. I own, I cannot see why.—Mr. Powell attends several ladies in the parish, who do very well; and I am sure he gave a proof of his knowledge, in his judgement upon Mrs. Bellas, when she had that fall; for he said, “that, if she went out her reckoning, the child would not live.”—I am sure, I am very sorry he happened to be so right in his conjecture on this occasion; but it certainly is a proof of his skill and ability in his profession. I hope, my dear, your silence does not proceed from your being angry with me—believe me, my remonstrances are the dictates of my affection for you.—I know how hard it is to recover the right road, if once we suffer our hearts to go astray. Adieu, my dear! My love to Henrietta; and be assured of the affection of

SOPHIA MASON.

LETTER XXXI.

MISS ELIZA MASON TO MISS MASON.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I Was not angry, but (I cannot tell a story) I certainly was not pleased with your first letter.—Collins knows best why she omitted my being at the ball, for I was there; and, Miss Barton being confined with a swelled face, which I was very glad of—you may be angry if you will—I danced with Henry, who was the best dancer in the set.—Miss Greenway was vastly mortified at not being preferred, as we were told that seniority was to have the precedence; but luckily, you know, she is such a little runt, that nobody could imagine she was older than me; so the prize fell to my lot—not but she had got on high-heel'd shoes, and a new cushion to dress her hair upon, that must have added at least two inches to her height; and then at top of this cushion there was a plume of feathers, that looked as if her grandfather had stolen them off one of the hearses when he had buried the corpse, and bequeathed it to her in lieu of a neck.— She came up to me after we had danced the first country-dance, and, with a sneer, she condoled with me upon the loss of my father; said, “that affliction was a vast enemy to beauty and youth; and that she was at a loss, without that consideration, to account for Doctor Freeman's mistake, in supposing me older than her;”—and then, turning to Henrietta, she tapped her on the neck, and told her, “that her beauty was beyond the reach of accident.” To be sure, I was not much behind-hand with her; for, perceiving that the petticoat of her robe was so long as to be very troublesome, I condoled with her upon the necessity some people lay under, of hiding their legs at the expence of their convenience.—You know, her father is very absurd about long petticoats and covered necks—so she may either give him, or the *bows* of her legs, the merit of the observation. You grow quite musty, indeed, sister!

ELIZA MASON.

LETTER XXXIII.

MISS MASON TO ELIZA.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

WHAT unaccountable whim has taken possession of your brain, to the utter exclusion of all those sentiments of benevolence and social affection, which it was the business of our dear parents to inculcate upon us all?—Rancour and malevolence seem the reigning passions of your heart; and that liveliness, which used to appear so amiable when exerted upon subjects in themselves innocent and inoffensive, is now challenging the enmity of those who used to admire and love you, by putting on the likeness of detraction and malignity. Pray, what proofs have you that Miss Greenway's legs are crooked? or, if you had, by what rule of humanity do you reproach her with what you should pity? Then, why that unwarrantable supposition about her feathers? If I had sent you a new cap, it must have had feathers too.—Does the conscious want of any advantage in ourselves warrant our abuse of those who possess it?—if so, my dear, you may rail at all the young ladies you associate with; for which of them is an orphan so destitute as you! So far I will conceal your folly—though the obligations, we are all under to our present guardians and benefactors, will hardly allow me to consider myself entitled to a thought which shuns their participation. Mrs. Bellas is recovering apace, and proposes, at the close of three weeks, to go to church; and in a day or two after return to Frogly. Mr. and Mrs. Clement set out for Bath next week; and the two eldest children go with us to Frogly: the youngest is not so well as it has been—it had yesterday a convulsion-fit; and Mr. Clement, having taken it into his head that Mrs. Clement's anxiety for some time past has injured her milk, has insisted upon her weaning it.—Pretty creature! I hope it will do well—but the old women in the country would give it up, if they saw the anxiety of the parents about it.—They will set out, I find, on Sunday morning, Mr. and Mrs. Clement, nurse, and the little beauty—they are very fond of all their children; yet they part with the other two with a seeming unconcern, compared with what they feel for the infant.—Desire Mrs. Collins to write to her mistress, and give her an account of the house-linen; particularly those articles which want any addition or alteration; as Mrs. Bellas has lost the memorandum she brought with her. I do not believe I shall write to you any more before I see you; but as we are more apt to remember what we read, than what we hear, allow me, my dear Eliza, to give you an elder sister's caution. Guard well the avenues of that little heart, upon the disposing of which your future happiness or misery depends—here, at a certainty—possibly hereafter. I have perceived, and your letters confirm it, that already you feel a preference; *that* is a step towards making a choice—but, should a person chuse what is not in their power to obtain, and fix their happiness upon that choice—what alternative remains but misery?—Henry Freeman (I must speak plain) is a fine youth; but I think, without prejudice, the best part of him is visible—he seems vain, haughty, and positive in his own opinion.—But grant him all you think him—he is not now his own master; nor does he weigh the value of those words, which to you are confirmations strong as proofs of Holy Writ. He speaks as he thinks at the moment, perhaps; and the next he thinks of something else—you imbibe with a thirsty kind of pleasure the professions of his mouth, and, when he is absent, treasure them up in your heart. Oh, Eliza! I

speak from sad experience!—be cautious, and be happy.—Mrs. Bellas desires me to come and read to her. We have got two volumes of a pretty work just published, under the title of “Liberal Opinions.”—there is an elegy on a nightingale, equal to any poem I ever read. Adieu, my dear, ill-judging sister! be wise in time, for your own sake, and that of your affectionate

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LETTER XXXIII.

SOPHIA MASON.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

*Bath.*

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

WE arrived here last night, after an easy two-days journey; and, bating the teasing circumstance of being hurried away from you, a very pleasant one. Mr. Clement bathed this morning, and has been in very good spirits, and free from pain ever since. I wish he may be able to reconcile himself to staying here as long as will be necessary to compleat his cure; but of that I almost despair, as you know his dislike to every thing that is public, in which he would never mix, but to please me. Bath is now very full; but the rooms, they tell me, are quite out of fashion; and, except on the ball and concert nights, quite deserted for private card-parties at the houses of the inhabitants. The circus and crescent are most beautiful buildings; the latter I think too much exposed, for a place of constant residence—the heat and cold are violent in their turns; yet there are not above five houses uninhabited. I hope to hear that you gather strength—the fine weather is greatly in your favor; yet I must entreat you, not to let your eagerness to return to Frogly make you too venturesome—pray do not leave town till the full expiration of your month—my house, my servants—my every thing is yours; why will you not consider and use them as such, and then you will be at home? Mr. Bellas cannot have finished his business yet; so I hope *that* will detain you a few days; for I know you would even mortify yourself to serve those amiable orphans. Sophia is really a most deserving young woman: I wish it was possible to divert her from that attachment you so much disapprove of; but persons of her grave turn are much more out of the reach of amusement, than others of a more vivacious cast, whose minds, being more apt to catch at variety, suffer a succession of ideas, in themselves ever so different, to take possession, each in their turn, and in their turn disappear, and return no more. If the summer passes without any farther progress being made in the matter, I will ask her to spend the next winter with me in town; and perhaps that may give her mind a different turn: but, of all things, avoid *reasoning* her out of it; for it has been proved, by many an instance of fatal experience, that the ablest head is by no means a match for an infected heart. The pump-room is all in a bustle; every body here knows every body's affairs; and, from the antiquated virgin, who endeavours to make chastity atone for the want of every other virtue—to the pert coxcomb, with pink-satin heels to his shoes, who does not pretend to any virtue at all—every individual is a self-erected judge of every other person's conduct. It seems, the person who leads the band in the Pump-room has a family of seven or eight children, who are all possessed of very uncommon talents in the musical way—his eldest boy plays solo's, though he can scarce hold the violin; and his eldest girl sings like the music of the spheres; but the old gentleman himself, not choosing to be a mere *non-entity* whilst his family are in the road of contention for fame—has lately distinguished himself by a passion for a pretty plump West Indian—a married lady, who is here for the benefit of the waters—and the delight of admiration; the poor creature is actually (or he counterfeits well) gone mad upon the occasion; and the invalids are obliged to drink their waters without the inspiring sounds of his

fiddlestrings. There is a story of melancholy import in the family, it seems; respecting which an old lady threw out some inuendoes this morning, in the ladies coffee-room (to which I have subscribed, or I should have been nobody): she wanted me sadly to ask her some questions; but I mortified my own curiosity, to punish her propensity to scandal; which, to do this individual justice, is more prevalent here than even in London.

My love to Mr. Bellas and Sophia; and the profusion of a full heart be poured out in blessings on my darling children! Write, my dear Charlotte, and tell me how they look—what they say—whether they grieve for, or have forgotten, thy

MARIANNE.

LETTER XXXIV.

MRS. BELLAS TO [MRS. CLEMENT.](#)

[MY](#) DEAR SISTER,

I THANK you for your kind remembrance of me. I am much better; and propose returning to Frogly on Monday next, with your two little ones in my train;—would it had pleased heaven to have added mine! but Providence best knows how to dispose of its creatures! Yet, with every degree of submission the human mind is capable of to that great over-ruling power, I am sometimes tempted to enquire, in my own mind, why an existence should be given only to be taken away again?—If man be created, as we are sometimes told, for the purposes of society, why is he not suffered to answer those purposes? what purpose has my little infant answered? he has been born—and—he is dead! Mysterious power! oh, teach me resignation to thy will! nor suffer that reason, which is a possession derived from thee—from thy free gift—to be employed in a rebellious opposition to thy dispensations! Mr. Bellas is very kind in his intention; he conceals the concern which I know he must feel; and thinks, by amusing me, to lessen mine: but, though the reserve of which my nature partakes on all occasions may have operated on my conduct in the present case, my heart is not less susceptible of the feelings of a mother—and the relief I feel, from this partial effusion of my grief, convinces me that the tears of nature should freely flow. I am sorry to be ungrateful; but I think I should have loved Mr. Bellas better, if he had mixed his tears with mine; the loss was mutual—mutual should have been the lamentation:—perhaps I wrong him—I hope I do; but I think there is an unusual coldness in his manner to me of late. You know I am not of a jealous turn—my mind is of a species between that and the confidence which indifference only can inspire; but I do not like his manner towards Sophia, nor the suffusion which spreads on her cheek, when, in common conversation, he makes those appeals to her judgement, and those remarks upon her conduct, which used to be mine alone. I think I was wrong in taking her under my roof;—if my suspicions are just, never let any woman, after me, whose husband is worth losing, take to her bosom a snake that may, even innocently, sting her. I have the highest opinion of Sophia's morals;—I believe she would fall a sacrifice to an improper passion, rather than *resolve* to gratify it; but human nature is, in all its works, imperfect—else, what need of a world after this? here is every thing but—perfection; and, in things inanimate, almost that—it is we, who flatter ourselves with being the noblest, that are the most imperfect work of nature. You may remember the anxiety he expressed about her supposed attachment to Powell—it was more than natural for a man uninterested—men do not, even the best of them, animadvert so severely upon each other's conduct, unless their *feelings* aid their judgement.—However, upon mentioning to him yesterday the paragraph in your letter respecting her, he replied warmly, “Oh dear! there is no occasion for Sophia's being torn from Frogly—she does not feel a propensity to Powell that is worth opposing—it is impossible a girl of her sense should make a choice so unworthy.” My heart filled—I did not venture to say anything, for fear I should say too much. But I will have done with this subject; which perhaps the weakness of my body, and consequently my mind, may represent in a more serious light than it deserves. Your dear little ones are very well—Charles cryed for two hours when he missed you; but,

as soon as we got him in a disposition for amusement, we devised little sports, till he was quite as happy as ever, and so has remained; but the dear little Charlotte pays your absence the tribute of a silent tear every time she sits down to table and finds that your place at it is vacant. You have not mentioned Frank; tell me how he is in your next.

Give my love to my brother; and rest assured of the prayers of your

LETTER XXXIV.

CHARLOTTE.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I AM exceedingly shocked at the idea you have conceived respecting your husband; because I know you are not apt to entertain new opinions upon slight recommendation to your judgement:—now, if you were as giddy as myself, I should only rattle upon the subject, and so hope to laugh you out of it; but the seriousness of your nature demands more respect, and I must be serious in return. I must however set out with declaring, that I differ totally from you in every point, except the opinion you express of Sophia. I cannot help thinking her truly amiable;—what then have you to fear? Human nature, you say, is imperfect:—true, my dear; but there are many, very many, instances of even imperfect beings, who would shudder at encouraging the passion of a man, the husband of her dearest friend;—Sophia cannot be so base:—it is impossible. You very sensibly account for the present state of your mind; weakened by illness and affliction, we are, the wisest of us, the easy dupe of every plausible appearance. You are hurt at Mr. Bellas's little attentions to Sophia;—but may not that be the consequence of his generous wish to lessen the idea of her dependence, and place her on a footing more comfortable in his family? certainly, my dear sister, it may, and I hope you will see it in that light, and that alone. Let me hear from you again immediately: I would not omit a post, when a subject so important was agitated; so have desired my hair-dresser to wait whilst I scribbled these incorrect lines.—I thank you, my dear; my little cherub is much better; the air seems to work miracles upon him—and Mr. Clement mends every day.

Bless my little darlings in my name; and accept for yourself and Mr. Bellas the truest affection of your

MARIANNE.

LETTER XXXV.  
LETTER XXXVI.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY dear Marianne's kind endeavours to lessen my anxiety, however new circumstances of conviction prevent the operation of her wishes, has all the thanks I have to bestow. I received your letter just as the carriage came to your door to convey us to Frogly. I was ready.—Sophia, who had been packing up all the childrens playthings in the seat of the coach, was not quite dressed, otherwise we probably should have been set out; however, when the post-man presented a letter, which I knew to be yours, I could not resist the pleasure of reading it—we all stood in the fore-parlour; and Mr. Bellas, upon seeing my cheek flush, I believe, as I read, asked me how you all did.—I said, Pretty well; and put the letter in my pocket, without offering it to him, as I commonly do all the letters I receive:—He only smiled, and said, "Some female secrets, I suppose?"—I replied, "Not very secret;" or some such thing;—and, by my faltering and stammering, made him and Sophia look at one another, I thought, very significantly, and then at me.—However, his delicacy prevented his asking to see the letter; and I thought myself well out of the scrape.—Having taken leave of all your family, I stepped into the coach; and, after Mr. Bellas had put in Charles and Charlotte, he gave his hand to Sophia, who, springing towards the step with, I thought, a guilty sort of sprightliness—turned upon her heel, and wrenched her ankle so violently, that she screamed and fainted.—Mrs. Selby, who stood at the door to make her courtesy, laid hold of her, and led her back to the parlour by Mr. Bellas's assistance; whilst I sat in the coach, almost stunned with my own reflections. About three minutes passed before I recollect that humanity required my taking some notice of the accident; so, desiring Philip to attend to the children, I got out of the coach, and went into the parlour, where I found Selby chafing her foot with vinegar, and Mr. Bellas familiarly supporting her on the sopha where she sat.—I stifled my feeling, and asked her how she did.—She could not look me in the face whilst she answered me.—Mr. Forbes, whom Selby had called in, by this time arrived; and, having declared that it would be injurious to her to take a journey in her present situation, ordered her to bed, and said he would send her something to embrocate the part affected.—Mr. Bellas then called to Philip, and desired him to unload the baggage, and send the coach away.—Now, it is probable I should have done the same, had he left it to me—yet, knowing my anxiety to return to the country, I thought he might have paid me the compliment of consulting me. However, I did not

think myself authorized to speak my opinion.—I stayed till she was put into bed; then, taking an opportunity to go up stairs as if to take off my calash, I threw myself on the bed, and gave vent to my tears, and stayed there, without seeing Mr. Bellas, till Selby came and announced dinner. I came down with a heart still heavy enough, unloaded as it had been by three hours draining; and as soon as I saw him, it broke out again.—He asked me, with a dissembled concern, why I wept? and affected to understand it as the effect of my apprehension for her. He assured me, that Forbes had no doubt of her being able to set out in a day or two.—I said, that I should be very well pleased to return to Frogly as soon as possible: and though I am sure he saw my embarrassment, and was not less embarrassed himself, he took no notice of either; and, Philip taking

his place, prudence forbade any further appearance of it on my side. We passed the evening without ten words on either side—tea was brought, we drank it, and were still

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silent:—supper was served, and we still remained so, each of us amusing ourselves with a volume of Melmoth's "Liberal Opinions." I had the first volume; and, upon reading a passage in the epistle of the unfortunate lady to her parents, I could not help exclaiming, "Good Heaven! who can read thy description of vice, and not start at its first approaches!"—He seemed affected—and pretended, when he found I saw it, to be reading the elegy on the Nightingale, at which you know we have all wept in our turns.—Before I went to bed, I called upon Sophia, and stayed with her till I thought he was asleep.—She seemed once more to be the amiable good girl I thought her.—I really began to chide my own folly, in a thought prejudicial to either her or my husband.—I left her at about one o'clock, and stole softly into bed, where I lay several hours without being able to close my eyes: at last sleep came; and, just as I was going to give it welcome, by hoping that all my fears were vain, Mr. Bellas started, and cried, "I have lost my boy; let me not be deprived of every thing that is dear to me;"—and then, at some distance of time, whilst I was tormenting myself by applying his fears to Sophia's illness (for she had a good deal of fever), he cried, "My wife! my wife!" A new consideration then took place.—Sometimes I thought he uttered those last words with an accent of tenderness—then, the foregoing exclamation might relate to *me*.—I had very lately been in greater danger than she could be.—Then again, my fancy, recurring to some of the circumstances so recent in my memory, gave the sound of lamentation, or satiety, to WIFE, and rent my very heart-strings.—I could not sleep—I rose and dressed myself; and, about eight o'clock, went again into Sophia's room.—Her fever was much increased, and her mind seemed to me to be the fountain of her disorder.—At night she became delirious, and has raved incessantly of Mr. Bellas and me ever since.—Mr. Bellas sees my suspicion, which this has strengthened; and, whether from the resentment of affronted virtue, as he would call it, or whether from a conviction that he has nothing to say, we have not spoke these two days.—I shall wait an interval of returning sense, and question Sophia—till then, sleep and rest must be a stranger to your

CHARLOTTE.

## LETTER XXXVII.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

OH, my dearest sister! why should a wretch like me be all the care of Heaven; and suffering virtue, like Sophia's, be punished with a life of misery? Let no woman, who has not known *her* trials, say her virtue is victorious, nor triumph in a conscious superiority, which accident alone, perhaps, has given them.—I told you in my last, that I would watch an interval of sense, to question her upon the subject which tormented me, and, as I imagined, was the cause of her distraction. Having resolved to be silent for ever to Mr. Bellas till this dreadful uncertainty should be removed, I was glad of an opportunity of sitting up in Sophia's room, without making unnecessary discoveries to the servants.—About ten o'clock on Thursday evening she fell into a fine sleep, from which, Mr. Forbes said, "every thing might be hoped."—Upon this opinion, I sent Selby to bed; and anxious for the moment that should remove suspense, with the fullest confidence in her veracity, I waited her awaking from

slumber.—From ten to four she slept—Mr. Bellas all the while walking about his room, which I sometimes construed into anxiety for Sophia, and sometimes attributed to his tenderness for me, and pity for the state of mind in which he saw me; though his temper (which, if it has any fault, is that of sullenness) would not permit him to speak first towards a reconciliation.—About four she awoke, and seemed greatly agitated; when I almost intuitively brought her a drink, and asked her, with an accent of tenderness, how she felt after her sleep.—She looked up in my face, with an expression in hers which I shall never forget, and answered—“Much refreshed, I thank you, Ma’am.”—I made several efforts to speak to her upon the subject of my misery; but there was a conscious virtue in her countenance, that made me tremble when I attempted it, and told me, that her own ingenuousness, would anticipate my enquiries.—She lay, and seemed to read my countenance for a few minutes; then, raising herself upon her elbow, she looked all round her, and asked me if we were alone.—I answered eagerly, I believe, in the affirmative; and she replied, “Well then, I will discharge my duty.” I took her hand, and began to comfort her, by assuring her how highly I thought of her virtue and her understanding; and that, as I found she had discovered the source of my anxiety, I did not doubt but she would be candid and direct in her answers to my questions, as my future peace depended upon her.—She struggled for some time between her delicacy and her integrity; and then, laying her head down firmly on the pillow, and riveting her eyes upon my face, she replied, “As truth and penitence dwell in my heart, I will.”—I then asked her, “whether Mr. Bellas had ever made any professions of affection to her?”—She sighed, and answered—“I cannot deceive you, Madam—he did.”—Seeing my countenance light up, as I dare say from my own feeling it did—she went on, “but, Madam, Mr. Bellas is guiltless towards you—I am the only wretch!”—Here tears for some minutes kept us both silent.—I spoke first—“My dear unhappy girl, said I, how can a man be guiltless?”—“An *unmarried* man, says she, may surely speak of love—and when superior merit”—My heart was overwhelmed—I was relieved, and yet I doubted.—“I see, continued the poor sufferer, that we shall be interrupted, I will conquer, if I can, my weakness, and whatever the painful task may cost me, give to Virtue—Virtue’s due.—When Mr. Bellas’s father died, I was nine years old, and he fourteen:—our near neighbourhood had made us frequent visitors—and, though a certain haughtiness of temper governed all his other actions—I remember he had often taken me upon his knee, and, with a kiss adopted me his daughter.”—Here she wept a flood, and then went on.—“When he died, he left a wife, a daughter, and a son.—Miss Bellas was nearer to my age than her brother, and had always loved me with a sister’s love; upon this occasion, I was invited to spend a month at the farm, and that month was the foundation for years of misery.—As play-mates, we conversed with the utmost freedom, nor looked to any other joys than those which every hour produced—we walked, we rode, we lived together; and, my memory bids me add—we loved.—At last the period came, when Frank was to be sent to Cambridge.—Our parting was a scene of tears and kisses, innocent as angels give to welcome a new inhabitant of the skies. At stepping into the coach, he took my hand, and pressing it between his—“Sophia, says he, this is *my* property, be careful of it; and as a return take you my heart and this”—putting on my forefinger this ring of mocoa, which I have never quitted since.—I, young as I was, told him, I would be sure—and I have kept my word.—At the next vacation-time, he came to Frogly; and the next made no apparent alteration in his heart.—In short, six summers and six winters passed, and still he said he loved me.—Just as he came of age, his sister, who had been the comfort of my

intermediate hours by talking of him to me, took the small-pox, and died—and, about four weeks after, her excellent mother followed her to the grave. Frank was now his own director; and my confidence in his constancy, which could only be equalled by my love, represented him to my fancy every hour, as coming to call upon me for that hand and heart which never could be another's: But—fatal to my hopes!—he came to London to administer, saw you, and forgot the lost Sophia!"—My blood was chilled; I had not power to speak; she wiped her eyes, and then proceeded.—"Just at this time my brother Charles came home, and, in answer to my enquiries after Frank, said, with some affected pleasantry—"He is gone to town, Sophia, and London is the bane of constancy."—I answered with an asperity of which nothing else could have made me capable—"Yes, brother, such constancy as your's—but my Frank is above the reach of accident; nor time, nor place, have power over souls like his."—My brother was silent till I left the room; and then told my father that he had a letter from Frank, in which he confessed a recent passion for a lady of uncommon merit, and that he hoped to marry her.—My father, whose heart was a repository of every virtue, could yet excuse almost every thing in others; he was neither surprized nor angry; but, knowing how firmly my heart was set upon Frank, he thought it his duty to speak with me before I saw him, that I might be prepared to treat him properly.—I never had disguised my feeling to my father; I begged therefore that he would not impose upon me a talk so impracticable, as feigning an indifference I could not feel—that, if he insisted upon my not seeing him, I would obey him; but that we might still hope that my brother was mistaken. My poor father only exclaimed, "Woman! woman!"—and changed the subject. Soon after this, my dear mother, affected I really believe by my sufferings, fell ill, and died.—Mr. Powell was just come into the parish, and had attended her; and, in the course of her illness, took particular pains to recommend himself to me. My father would not speak; but he wished he might succeed; and I, to gratify his wishes, tried to transfer my affection from him who slighted, to him who sought it; but, in the conflict, my peace, my self-approbation, was lost, and nothing gained. I had loved—had not, at a certainty, lost the object, and could not love again.—At last, after an absence of eighteen months, Mr. Bellas came down.—I saw him pass—but it was to prepare for your reception.—I heard the business of his errand, and had sufficient power over myself to avoid him—but still I loved.—He married you, brought you home—I visited you, admired you, applauded his choice—but still I found I loved him.—But now a new scene opened to my tortured fancy—hitherto my love was folly—now it was guilt!—My father's continual exhortations—Mr. Powell's attentions—my own conviction—all concurred to banish from my heart its tyrant; when my father's death, and his consequent goodness to me, which I verily believe had no source but benevolence, replaced him there again, and brought me to the gates of death.—When I recovered—your kindness relieved me from one source of anxiety, by shewing me that you did not suspect me.—But when your charity towards three helpless orphans induced you to ask us to your house, what perplexity can equal mine!—To comply, was ruin to my peace—to refuse, was to involve my innocent sisters in the punishment of my crimes; and, till our little inheritance was ascertained, we had no alternative. Ever since, I have lived in the horrors of despair—conscious guilt has weighed me down; and, unless absolved by you, I can neither dare to live nor die."—Here Selby gave us a seasonable interruption. Adieu!

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XXXVIII,

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I WISH you had not sent me a partial account of your affecting scene with Sophia. I have cried myself into a nervous fever about the dear unhappy girl—yet I know not what portion of pity or of blame to bestow upon your husband.—Hang Selby! her impertinent intrusion has left me in a state of suspence the most painful I ever felt.—What shall we do with the amiable unfortunate? for, at all events, she must not live with you.—You should consider it as a duty to her, as well as your husband's virtue and your own peace, to resolve upon that: and yet, she must not be distressed.—Mrs. Colville, the sprightly Creole I once mentioned to you, is here; and was telling me the other day, that she intends in August to leave England for about three years; in which time she means to make the tour of Europe. A Gentleman and his sister accompany her; and she said that she should be very happy in finding a fourth, of amiable disposition, and an improveable mind, to go at her expence.—Now, if Sophia could be sufficiently known to her, I am sure she would like her exceedingly. Suppose you send her down to me with Charlotte? I think the journey would do them both good; and I will immediately introduce her to Mrs. Colville, who is really a benevolent good woman, in spite of the unexpected possession of a fortune enough to turn another body's brain; for it seems she was a woman of no original, but carried over to the West Indies as a governess or companion to a young lady, where she married one of the richest planters on the Island; and, in about four months, became a widow, with the consolation of fifty thousand pounds—which she has used to the effecting of many valuable purposes; and the young lady whom she accompanied having married very unhappily, she every New-year's day sends her a present of a bank-note of a very considerable value. Mr. Clement has had a severe attack of a bilious complaint, to which he has been subject many years; and will therefore be obliged to lengthen his stay here a week or two;—if therefore you can send Sophia down directly, I shall have time to effect her introduction to Mrs. Colville. We have a great number of people of fashion here at present, and a proportionate quantity of scandal. Matches in abundance are in agitation, that the parties themselves know nothing about—and work cutting out for Doctors Commons by some others who this very time last year eloped to Scotland. Dress rages like an influenza—and it is more than probable that the *feathers* of our common poultry will in a year or two sell for more than the flesh; for it is impossible that foreign birds can supply the increasing demand. The company seem in a continual state of fluctuation; new faces appear every morning, and old ones vanish. The first ball-night the new comer is distinguishable by the *moderation* of her head-dress; but in the course of her stay, though it be but a fortnight, she seldom fails to strike a bold stroke to be foremost; particularly if she happens to be old or ugly; for then it absolutely depends upon the number and size of her feathers, whether or not she has a chair at the card-tables, or a chance of being known by a single creature in the ball-room.—There is a story somewhat similar to that you have sent me, which engrosses the attention of the better part of the company here—only that the lady has not the comfort of recollecting that her attachment took place when her villainous lover was single. His name is M——; he has, it seems, for many years, took every method of conciliating her affection, without once alarming her virtue; and even made

his wife, who is a very pretty silly woman, subservient to his purposes;—very lately, however, being weary of his *platonic* system, he threw off the disguise, so far as to open her eyes to his villainy and her own danger.—Her mind, naturally amiable and virtuous, sunk beneath the discovery; and, despairing of a victory perhaps over herself by the force of reason and self-conviction, she contrived, the other night, in the absence of her family, to swallow laudanum.—An adventurous knight, who, being in M——'s confidence, had an opportunity of betraying his designs, has contrived to disappoint her intention, by applying instantly an antidote to the poison; and has fulfilled his own, in carrying the unhappy lady to Calais.

MARIANNE.

## LETTER XXXIX.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY dear sister need not chide me for pausing at the period—beyond which I was not able to go;—for consider, my dear Marianne, if you are so much affected at reading, how I must feel at writing on the subject!—The poor girl was so exhausted by the time Selby came, that I thought she would have fainted away. I desired her to give her some barley-water, and to go and prepare breakfast.—She understood me, I believe, and immediately went out of the room. As soon as I thought her able to answer me, I told her—that, with respect to those feelings of hers which formerly were innocent, and were *now* rendered otherwise *only* by situation, I did not doubt but she stood acquitted by heaven, if she endeavoured to labour against them—that it was a very clear case to me she did so, and that those conflicts occasioned her illness.—She shook her head in acquiescence, sighed piteously, and was going to speak; but I chose to spare her, and went on—I assured her, that she had lost nothing in my opinion—that I held her entirely clear of offence against me; but that, if she thought otherwise, she had my free pardon.—She blessed me for the comfort I had given her; and begged, that if I had any remaining doubts respecting Mr. Bellas, which could affect my future happiness with him, I would ask any questions I chose, and rely upon her, as she hoped for mercy in another world, for the veracity with which she would give me an answer. I then recapitulated the observations I have made to you—begged of her to account for the coolness which she must have observed latterly in his conduct towards me—and asked her whether they had had any private conversation, and upon what subjects?—She confessed, that she had perceived an alteration in his manner; but believed it was at first the gloominess which was occasioned by the loss of our little infant; and, since that, a resentment of a supposed sulkiness in me—that she had known his temper, and studied it many years, and found that he always resented coolly—that she believed he very sincerely loved me; but that, if I was not quite so retired in my disposition, perhaps it would be better;—that his mind was rather apt to stagnate, and that my dislike to variety of company rather increased than remedied that disease—hoped I would pardon her dictation—but that it was very possible to be *too good*.—I then repeated my question, whether they had conversed in private since we had been married? she answered, “Yes, ma’am, once; and upon this very subject; but I then found my mind so weak, and so fatally inclining to hopes that were improper, that I resolved never to hazard a second conversation.”—“But did he speak of his former affection for you; and lament his change in my favor?” “No, madam; it would be a baseness I am not capable of, to say he did:—he is an excellent man, and all your own; long may the happy union last! and never more may even its momentary intercourse be soured by the remembrance of a wretch like me!—but, after what I have told you, do not suffer me to be exposed to daily sin—do not ask me to your house—nor think me ungrateful if I beg to be forgotten as I would forget!—my peace of mind requires the sacrifice—I esteem, I reverence, I value you—but I love your husband.—Time may enable me to preserve and cherish the one feeling, and conquer the other; at present they are inseparable—absence may aid time—permit me to make the trial.”—I took out your letter; and, modelling your request so as to prevent its appearing like an act of necessity, I told her, that, as soon as she was well, I would entrust Charlotte to her care, to convey to you. She rejoiced exceedingly, and seemed

half restored to health by the prospect. By this time it was nine o'clock; and Mr. Bellas, who had done hard duty about the room till six, rang his bell—I ran into his room, and found him in a great chair dressed as I parted from him the night before. After Sophia's declaration, I thought I owed him a concession, which I lost not a moment in making;—he was greatly softened; and only said, “Let us both forget *it*, Charlotte, and endeavour to spend our future time more pleasantly.”

Sophia's thanks accompany our love; she will bear that, and your sweet girl, I hope, in safety to you.

I am (once more)  
Your happy sister,  
CHARLOTTE.

## LETTER XL.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

ACCEPT, my dear sister, the congratulations of a heart that palpitates to every emotion of thine! Convinced of your husband's innocence, your friend's virtue, and, what would flatter some women much more, the triumph of your own victory; never let me hear that you are grave again.—And now, my dear, since Sophia has begun, let me strengthen the opinion she has advanced.—You really are too good.—Mr. Bellas certainly loves you, and you merit his tenderest regard; but I have often trembled for the consequences of your dislike to all those little fooleries, you chuse to call them so, which, by interrupting your *tête-a-tête* now and then, would give you both a double relish to it when you were of necessity alone.—Mr. Clement would have been just such a *good domestick man* as you are a woman; but do you think I should have loved him half so well if he had persisted in it, as I do now for his having relaxed a little to indulge me, till by degrees he got a something like an inclination to it himself? Lord! my dear, your billing and cooing days are, nay they must be, over.—Do not be frightened, Charlotte; I love my husband, and he loves me, as well as you and your swain can do, for your lives—but does that imply that we should love nothing else?—believe me, that is the language of romance, this of reason;—and I will maintain it, that two of the best people in the world may sit at home, till they grow tired of themselves and of each other.—We were born for society; why should we impertinently set up a nature, and a set of laws, of our own? You cannot imagine how much it is in our own power to alter what we call our natural dispositions.—We imbibe habits early in life, and that we call nature—but we are deceived:—it is at the option of almost every one we converse with, particularly if we love or admire them, to give a bent to our inclinations;—for instance—I used to detest cards—and comment with great *wisdom* upon the absurdity of rational creatures finding amusement in ranging a certain number of pieces of painted paper in their hands, and, having first stamp'd upon them a pecuniary value, giving them the additional power of torturing them almost to madness;—yet, to oblige Mr. Clement, I condescended to study *this* very art of being ridiculous; and, for aught that I can see, with all my former wisdom about me, am not less conspicuous in the science than those who learnt to distinguish the mattadores with their alphabet.—Then, Mr. Clement used to love the same set of Mr. and Mrs. C—, and Mr. and Mrs. D—, and never desired to see a soul he could not value and esteem, and all that.—Lord! at that rate, one might as well wear one sacque all the winter, because it was not worn *out*—*and* wear it till one ceased to value it, for its very service.—Now, I own that in my heart I love your honest simple pairs mightily—but then I like now and then to see people of less merit, if it were only to enable me to give—as poor Sophia said—to give to Virtue, Virtue's due.—Oh, Charlotte, here is a packet from the compting-house, enclosing a letter from Amelia.—She tells me that she has gotten pretty far in her history—but that she is almost ashamed to send it, on account of its extreme length.—She says, that, when she set about it, she was in hopes a few pages would contain all the incidents of her insignificant life—but that she found very often so many *little* circumstances aiding one action—which yet, in justice to that action, must necessarily be set down, that she feared it would extend infinitely beyond my patience to peruse it, considering how uninteresting it must be to any second person;—that she had a

great inclination to ask my permission to decline the prosecution of it—but that my commands to proceed should be obeyed, however painful the recollection of many necessary parts of the contents.—I shall write to her tomorrow.—I am now going to the concert, which however is not much worth going to, now the sweet warbler is torn from the nest; and all the rest of the brood cannot compensate for her loss.—The old maids are very prophetick on this occasion; they say, nothing but marrying her *guardian* on this journey can save her honor.—It may be mighty good for her honor—but it will be very bad for her happiness, if she has half the sensibility she is allowed by all who knew her.—The man who could first be the *confident* of another in his villainous designs upon an innocent, an amiable girl—then, at a proper season, betray that confidence, just as the poor girl had recovered a large sum of disappointment-money from an old fool, to whom she was on sale by her relations—who could let her be in the last moment of danger before he made the discovery, that she might have no alternative but flying with him—and take advantage of that situation to marry her, knowing that her whole soul was another's, even the very man's whose confidence he had infamously accepted, and as infamously betrayed;—such a man, though he wrote sentiment like an Addison, or spoke it like a Cato, must be void of every *real* feeling of honor or honesty, and therefore incapable of being a good husband.—Mr. Clement is just returned from taking an airing, with nurse and our little angel, over Land's-down—they are both much better; and I hope we shall all meet in August, the happier for those little storms that have for some past months obscured our domestick joys.—Of all things, my dearest Charlotte, avoid unwarrantable—aye, or even warrantable suspicions of your husband;—no man will bear it; and he, perhaps, less than almost any other.—You grave and good people are the most dangerous to offend—it is the imperfection of *human* goodness, to make its conscious worth an argument of want of mercy to those who are deficient.—Not so the perfection of divine goodness—there mercy and forgiveness meet together, and righteousness and compassion are inseparable companions.—I suppose Sophia and Charlotte will be here by Sunday. Mrs. Colville goes to Bristol (for a week) on Monday; and I should wish her to see Sophia before she goes—I like her every day more and more; and should be very glad to hear of her altering her place on every account but Sophia's; but I think travelling will be the best medicine for her disorder. Mr. Clement's brother is expected from the East Indies every day.—I hear so many amiable things of him, that I long to see him almost as much as you do your

MARIANNE.

LETTER XLII.

MISS MASON TO MRS. BELLAS.

DEAR MADAM,

IN obedience to your obliging commands, I should have wrote the moment I arrived; but really I was very ill for a few hours previous, and several hours after.—Mrs. Clement had it not in her power to give me a bed in the same house; so I am obliged to lodge at a millener's in the church-yard, and to come here early in the morning. Miss Clement, who got to her journey's end without fatigue, is very well; and her mama is so good as to let her sleep with me; which makes the disagreeable circumstance of a divided habitation less irksome.—Mr. Clement seems a very gay man, I think, to what he used to be—perhaps the return of health gives him unusual spirits—we seldom, any of us, indeed, know how to prize a blessing, till we are in danger of losing it. He looks vastly well, and I think behaves much better to Mrs. Clement than ever he did in town. This is a very busy, and, at the same time, a very idle place;—the people are in such a bustle under the window where I write (on the south parade), that it would appear to me as a place of business—but the moment I look in the faces of the company, I can see, without much penetration, that a pursuit of pleasure is the utmost of their views.—I have gone thus far, without saying a word upon the melancholy subject next my heart—it is still in the same place; and I believe the best remedy I can apply will be forgetfulness: I have tried reason and argument to the utmost of my ability—that has failed—time and absence may, nothing else can relieve me from an attachment fatal to my peace, as it was once the innocent comfort of my life. Henceforth, then, I will be silent on the subject, cost what it will. I will write to my sisters next post; and, if I go abroad, take leave of them for ever—if not, I must endeavour to find some honest method of adding to my little the requisite means of support; and, in all situations, remain, dear madam, your most grateful

SOPHIA MASON.

LETTER XLII.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

DEAR SISTER,

WE arrived at the Farm about the same time that Sophia reached Bath, being prevented by an untoward accident, which happened to one of the horses, from setting out till next day: as soon as it was known in the village that we were come home without Sophia, various conjectures were formed on the occasion—however, Mr. Powell thinking himself warranted to enquire into particulars, he first sent to know how we did; and then called himself, and begged to see me. After the usual civilities, he asked, when Miss Mason would be at Frogly?—I told him, that was uncertain—that at present she was with you at Bath. He seemed greatly hurt, did not endeavour to conceal it—and, having requested your address, took his leave, intending, I suppose, to write to her.—Soon after he was gone, I had Sophia's letter; and am sorry to find she has not seen your friend, as I should be happy to know she was out of Powell's reach.—I don't know why, but I dislike that man vastly; so does Mr. Bellas; and yet there is something very pleasing in both his person and his manner—but I feel a prejudice, that even the distinguished passion he declares for an amiable woman (which is certainly a strong recommendation of him) cannot remove.—He took Henrietta on his knee, gave her sweet-meats, and told her, “that, if she was as good as her eldest sister, every body would love her as he did.” There is another apothecary set up here; who has, it seems, got most of the parish out of Powell's care—he is a younger man still; but he has a manner towards the servants and labouring people, that has endeared him to every body. Now, whether Powell thinks an alliance with Sophia would strengthen his interest, or whether he really loves her, I cannot decide—but it runs in my head he will have her, though I wish, and shall labour, against it.—She told me, “that she had endeavoured to transfer her affection from him who slighted, to him who sought it;” so that by her own account he stood *second* in her opinion; and, having set in earnest about forgetting the first, perhaps he may stand a better chance than he deserves.—You may think me obstinate, if you please—but I cannot agree with you in respect to the choice of one's company—when I can ascertain a pleasant evening with Mrs. Greenway, or a useful one by myself; why should I, for variety, sacrifice three hours to Mrs. Barton's ostentatious display of fine cloaths and expensive laces; or Mrs. Paget's still more ridiculous passion for talking of herself, her husband, her servants, and her cats?—Mr. Bellas is of the same disposition; and *that*, I should think, a reason for my perseverance, rather than for changing my system.—Similarity of tempers has ever been said to be an omen of happiness; but you love to take the side of the question difficult to support; and, indeed, my dear Marianne, with your happy flow of language, I do not wonder at the singularity of your design.—You certainly have wrought wonders upon Mr. Clement; but then you brought him only to be more like yourself—as nature has done all that business for me, I think I must endeavour to be content.—So far, however, you have converted us *both*, that we resolve to spend four months of every future winter in London. Now I hope you will be quiet; and when we are there, let us see you and Mr. Clement as often as you can; a few other friends (still select ones) may be admitted; and once or twice a week, when good plays are acted, we may devote our evening to

Drury-lane or Covent-garden.—As to your masquerades, your insipid Pantheon, and the absurd kind of mixture called a route—there you must dispense with my attendance; and allow me to think a review of the illustrious dead a more rational source of delight than the company of the light, the superficial, and the idea-less living.

Mr. Bellas's love accompanies that of,

Your ever affectionate,

LETTER XLIII.

CHARLOTTE.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

ALL our schemes for poor Sophia are at an end.—I told you that Mrs. Colville meant to spend a week at Bristol: but the little gypsy has cheated us all; and, under that pretence, has made a transfer of herself and her fifty thousand to a young clergyman, to whom, it seems, she was attached previous to her leaving England.—If he be as deserving as a gentleman who told me of the circumstance describes him to be—or if she thinks him so—I shall love her always for her disinterested preference of him to several *mighty pretty gentlemen*, and some with good estates, who are left here in a state of the most ridiculous disappointment.—His name is Baker; he is of a Devonshire family.—Mrs. Colville, whose maiden name was Chandler, was the daughter of a reputable tradesman, and brought up at a boarding-school at Exeter as a half-boarder, where she was taught all those ridiculous accomplishments which serve but to *dis-qualify* a woman for the very end of her creation—that of being a good wife and a good mother; for what business has an English tradesman's wife with the knowledge of French? and how is it to be expected that a girl, who has spent the first sixteen years of her life in learning music, dancing, drawing, &c. should descend to the domestic duties of her kitchen and her nursery?—Hence the many bankruptcies amongst the husbands of those who do marry men of business, the only people who are likely to marry them!—and hence the number of unhappy girls who pay for an improper education with the expence of their happiness, their innocence, and their fame!—Miss Chandler, however, was more fortunate.—At this school there happened to be a miss Benson, who had been sent over from Barbadoes for an English education, and committed to the care of some relations at Exeter. It happened that she was in the number of those ladies whom miss Chandler was, by the duties of her situation, to dress and undress;—this brought on an intimacy; and, she being a very pretty, humble, and yet gentlewoman-like kind of girl, miss Benson and her relations became so fond of her, that, when Mr. Benson sent for his daughter home, in order to marry her to a young planter of great property, miss Chandler was requested to accompany her, under the conduct of a black female slave, who was sent over on the embassy.—Mr. Baker, who was the son of another tradesman in the same city, was, at this time, an admirer of miss Chandler; but his mother, who, it seems, had been educated as a *whole* boarder at this very school, and had adopted a sufficient stock of folly and idleness to ruin her husband, was so shocked at the meanness of his ideas, in thinking of a girl who was a kind of a domestic by being obliged to dress and undress four of her school-fellows, that she forbad him to pursue the matter, on pain of her displeasure—nay, her curse.—Miss Chandler had too generous a passion for her lover, to suffer him to hazard a parent's disapprobation; she therefore accepted very cheerfully her young friend's invitation.—At taking leave, her lover pressed her much to promise him that she would never marry any other person; and bound himself, by the most solemn ties, to observe a similar fidelity.—She very prudently declined taking any vow; and released him from his; which, however, he never violated;—but soon after being presented with a living of about seventy pounds a year in Cornwall, resided there, without ever quitting his parish, till she with a generosity which even

### LETTER XLIII.

her disappointed lovers admire, wrote to him an account of her situation, and a frank offer of herself and fortune, reserving only a charge of five hundred pounds a year to be paid during life to her friend; who, having disliked the husband which her father had provided for her, chose one for herself, who ran through his own fortune upon the strength of his expectations from her father; and, being disappointed in his hopes, had left her with one child, and ready to lie-in of another, destitute of the comforts, nay, almost of the necessities of life.—Since she parted from her, she had sent her frequent presents; but, upon her marriage, she chose to put it out of the power of accident to interfere with her kindness to her. I wanted you to love her—now I am sure you will.

Every body here sends love, with that of your

MARIANNE.

### LETTER XLIV.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

SO, here is a letter from Mr. Powell. Do you know that I believe you wrong the poor man amongst you? You may talk of the wickedness of London as much as you will; but I say a little country village, with but two old maids in its whole vicinity, will produce and circulate more scandal than is to be found in the whole metropolis.—I assure you, I like his letter vastly; and I believe so does somebody else. Mr. Clement says, it will do;—for my part, I am giddy enough; but I never give advice unasked—that, I think, is the extreme of folly and impertinence; but, if Sophia asks my opinion, I shall be in danger, my good, grave sister, of getting into the opposition; though, perhaps, like Sir Francis Wronghead, I may say “Yes,” when I should say “No.”—Mr. and Mrs. Baker return here, it seems, as soon as their lodgings in the Circus are ready:—whilst she was single, she lodged in the Abbey Green, dressed very plain and neat—kept but one man-servant, and no carriage, nor even chair; in short, took every decent and proper method of avoiding particular notice—an evident proof of the goodness of both head and heart. But now she means to enjoy her fortune: I find she has bespoke a carriage; but ordered the field to be left vacant till she returns.—I believe I shall grow very fond of her.—Now, don’t you be jealous—nature, and your own worth, will always maintain your superiority—but there certainly is a vast pleasure in admiring acts of generosity.—I do not know how to express myself;—but I think that it is a selfish feeling too—whilst we give great applause to others for any of their actions, we at least hope to have it believed that we should have done the same in a similar situation.—Whom do you think I met this morning, as I came from the pump-room?—that wretch Merrisford. He was be-laced and be-ruffled to the most hideous degree, and had a woman with him in the shape of a wife—she seemed indeed much better calculated for him than poor Amelia; for her very morning-apron was trimmed with Brussels lace—and her hat and cloak were so bedizened, so many tassels, and flowers, and feathers—and, after all, so unlike a gentlewoman, that I could not help thinking *she* had been to Turkey too, to make eighty thousand pounds of her merchandize:—they lodge on the South-parade, I believe, for I saw them go

into a house there at noon; and I am sure they cannot visit any body—but their landlady!—Sophia is gone with nurse and the two children to take an airing;—for my

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part, I never can find time to go any where, but to walk the **same** round—of the King's Bath—the Cross Bath—the Pump-room—the Parades, in the morning; and to the concert, ball, or card party, in the evening. Charlotte, this would be the best place in the world to spoil you a little—you cannot think what good it would do you.—Yet, I assure you, we are vastly pious here too—it would be as ungenteel as wicked to miss the Abbey of a Sunday. Sophia, who is a little confined in her notions, thinks it very inconsistent, I find, to go to church in the morning, and play at cards in the evening—and yet the little prude will sit behind my chair, and look so wise when I am going to play alone without the possibility of a trick beyond the five mattadores, as to save me nine times out of ten by the wrinkle she makes between her eyebrows.—I am absolutely ruined, since I have been here, in my personalities—a whole year's pin-money gone in two months!—and I cannot bear to call upon Mr. Clement for any thing, so must make a retreat as decent as I can; for we set out the latter end of next week at farthest.—Sophia is gone up into my little closet, to answer Mr. Powell's letter, and to write to her sisters. I dare say she will be very sentimental on the occasion; but, if I have any spirit of prophecy about me, she will be Mrs. Powell at last. Mean time, she shall stay with

Your ever affectionate,

MARIANNE.

LETTER XLV.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

DEAR SISTER,

I WAS prevented from writing to you all last week by a very painful swelling in one of my fingers; which an old woman at last has cured, to the disgrace of both our apothecaries, who played *their* tricks till they almost drove me out of my senses.—It is still weak, so you must excuse my being laconic; though you really are so liberal a correspondent, that I am ashamed to send you a bit of blank paper in return for your entertaining letters.—Mr. Bellas wanted sadly to be employed on the occasion; but I thought you would fancy something more serious than the fact.—Charles is a most enterprising young genius—he delights Mr. Bellas so much, that I do not know how you will contrive to get him away;—should we never have one of our own, it would be kind in you to let us graft him upon our hearts thus early; so might a sister's bounty compensate the severe decrees of fate.—Sophia has never wrote to her sisters since she has been at Bath, though she proposed it when she wrote to me. Eliza is grown so great a favourite at Dr. Freeman's, that I seldom have her at home;—I tremble for the consequences—she certainly grows very fond of Henry;—his family must see it as well as I.—Mr. Bellas has several times talked of placing her with a relation of his in London, who is a chamber-milliner in vast estimation, of an amiable disposition, and mother of a large family. She expresses no dislike to the proposal;—but I think she does not like to leave Frogly, at least till Henry Freeman goes to Cambridge, which will be, I suppose, after the next vacation. I am amazed at the Doctor, who is a very ambitious man, for encouraging an intimacy between two young people so circumstanced:—What can it end in? Miss Freeman too is a very sensible girl; she sees the many contrivances of Henry and George to get Eliza and Henrietta to be of all their little parties; and yet does not seem to foresee any thing consequent there-upon.—When you come to town, be sure you write to your

CHARLOTTE.

## LETTER XLVI.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY dear Charlotte shall keep my Charles till she has one of her own; but make haste, for I cannot spare him long, sweet fellow! I am glad you have him for a pattern.— Sophia is in the greatest tribulation at her sister's not having received her letter, which she says she wrote according to her declaration made previously to you. If I divine aright, she would be much more concerned for her last packet to Frogly, should that miscarry; but our Francis was employed on this occasion, and he is accustomed to think letters of so much consequence, that the love-sick Mr. Powell may expect his fate at a certainty before you receive this.—I am going this evening to make Mrs. Baker's bridal-visit.—All the respectable people at Bath (inhabitants and all) do the same. We do not set out till Monday, so that I probably shall write to you once more from hence;—if so, I will give you my opinion of the fortunate Parson.—I have this moment a letter from Mrs. Belmour, which is only the second I have had since I have been here;—it is amazing to me, that a woman, who has such an easy flow of very elegant language in conversation, should have such a dislike to writing;—she writes a beautiful hand, is perfectly grammatical, provokingly correct—and—that's all.—We hear of men who were great orators and very indifferent writers;—and of others, who excelled in writing, and could scarcely speak English in a mixed company;—but women of a lively imagination, a refined taste, and a good education, particularly if that has been aided by keeping good company, seldom fail to speak and write, at least moderately well.—For my own part—(one cannot forget *self* in any thing) I always premise to my correspondents a happy ignorance of grammatical rules; nor do I know (exactly) the difference between a comma and semicolon.—I have a redundancy of ideas, and a tolerable ear; a wish to be entertained myself, and to entertain my friends:—add to these, a love of the goose-quill; and my whole stock of literary accomplishments pass in review before you. If any good sort of body should condemn my performance for this reason, I hope they will do me the justice, never to eat a pudding that is not made according to the rules laid down in “The Art of Cookery.”— My hair-dresser waits. Adieu!

MARIANNE.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

THE  
OFFSPRING  
OF  
FANCY,  
A NOVEL.  
By ALADY.  
INTWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:  
Printed for J. BEW, Pater-noster-Row.  
MDCCLXXVIII.

T H E  
O F F S P R I N G  
O F  
F A N C Y.  
\*\*\*\*\*  
L E T T E R X L V I I .  
M R S . C L E M E N T T O M R S . B E L L A S .

I NOW present my dear Charlotte with my farewell epistle from Bath.—To-morrow morning at six o'clock we set forward—we go in the post-coach on account of Sophia, and leave our chaise to convey Mr. and Mrs. Baker, who are to spend a month with us, and then proceed to visit their Devonshire cousins.—Mrs. Baker (the elder) is still alive; but I believe the young man is under no great apprehension of her displeasure at present, though he has married the very woman for whom three years ago she threatened him with her curse.—Such is the transforming power of money! I often think, that we must appear a very absurd and contemptible set of beings in the eyes of that species of purity, whom we consider as the medium between us and perfection; and whom we may suppose to be strangers to the use of money.—Does a man break his word—ten to one it is money;—a woman her vows to a deserving lover—rely upon it, it is money;—in short, we not only direct our own actions, but judge of those of others through this sole medium—it is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end:—take away that consideration; and the pursuits, the anxieties, and almost all those actions which we dignify by the title of prudence—would be set in a light so ludicrous, that manhood must blush for itself.—Yet, on the other hand, many useful and laudable undertakings would be damped—genius often lie buried—and industry go unrewarded—and generosity, that most glorious of all human virtues, would lose one mode of exertion.—Upon the whole then, it is not money, but the fools who set an improper value on it, that should be held up to ridicule and contempt—for, without money, Mrs. Baker had not been able to shew distinction to merit in obscurity; nor Mr. Baker's virtues, however bright in themselves, been either so useful or so conspicuous, fixed amongst the tin-mines in Cornwall, as they will now—set in gold.—I think I never met with a more agreeable man—destitute of the advantages of having mixed in the world, he comes from amongst peasants with the polish of a courtier; an indisputable proof, that politeness is as natural as any other grace of mind or person—true, easy, elegant, unaffected politeness, I mean; for that buckramized stiffness, which the generality of boarding-schools mistake for politeness, is no more like it, than the terrifying grimace of methodism is like true religion, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths peace. Sophia says, she has given Mr. Powell no hopes; on

the contrary, that, sensible as she was of the generosity of his proposals, she thought herself bound to be ingenuous in declaring her intentions, which, it seems, at present are, never to marry.—I am not apt to ask questions, you know: however, you had given me such a shocking character of the poor man, that I sadly wanted to find a counterpoise in “the generosity of his proposals,” as Sophia called them. She saw I was curious—so she gave me his letter, of which she had read a part to me before;—he is very pathetick on the subject of her cruelty, in coming down to Bath, instead of returning to his impatient wishes—hopes she will pardon his reminding her of the good fortune he had to stand well with her worthy father; and that, though he would wish to have been able to recommend himself, yet he would for the present rest upon that, and leave it to his future conduct to merit her approbation; that, if there was any mode of disposing of the two younger ladies, that could be furthered and promoted by her third of the little provision that was left, he should be happy in relinquishing his pretensions to it, whenever she blessed him with her hand;—or, if she preferred having her sisters brought up under her own care, his house was open for their reception. Now, Charlotte, don’t you think this man must have a heart? and that Sophia should rejoice at having made a conquest of it?—Not a bit—she resolves never to marry—sly baggage! I don’t believe a word of it—I told her so—she blushed, and said, “O ma’am, it is my duty to resolve so.”—I understood her; but sacred are all the communications of my Charlotte to her

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R XLIX.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

I HAVE such a packet of news for my dear Charlotte, that I quite long to set about the conveyance of it.—In the first place, we are all come home safe and well, for which I am sure you join with me in gratitude to heaven: next, Mr. James Clement is arrived—a sweet young man; my heart instantly gave him a brother's place:—and, last of all—(though perhaps that is no news to you)—Mr. Powell is in town, and has sent to ask permission to wait upon Miss Mason.—We were at breakfast when the message was brought; it was upon a card, uncovered, so Francis had all the enjoyment of a verbal message.—He gave it to Sophia; she blushed, and gave it to me—and sent her eyes after it, to enquire my sentiments.—However, I always think it right to make a final appeal to Mr. Clement; so I gave it into his hand, and asked what answer Sophia should send?—He smiled, and bad her consult her nearest neighbour—at the same time laying his hand significantly on his heart.—Francis asked, “is there any answer, ma'am?”—“Yes says she, I think I will write one.”—So she went out of the room, and returned with a card, on which she had written the following words: “Miss Mason's compliments; were she in her own house, should be happy to see any of her friends from Frogly; but at present hopes to be excused, as she is on a visit.”—Mr. Clement called her a little hypocrite—and said to Francis, “My compliments, and beg the gentleman will do me the favour to dine here at four o'clock.”—She seemed greatly embarrassed, but not displeased;—and, as a corroboration of my opinion, she is just come down in a new silver gray lutestring, which she made up at Bath, and in which, I assure you, she made more conquests than another country simpleton would have known how to manage; but either she has less passion, or more prudence, than any girl of two-and-twenty I ever knew.—Mr. Powell is come, and dinner just ready; in the evening I will give you an account of their interview; mean time, digestion wait on appetite, and health on both!

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R XLIX.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MR. Powell staid till seven o'clock; and, just as he went away, Mrs. Belmour came, and brought a Miss Dean, who is on a visit at her house; so I could not snatch a moment of yesterday evening to give you the scene I promised you.—All this morning, I have had how'd'ye's, in such abundance, that I was obliged to leave the gentlemen to their walnuts and port, and steal this hour between dinner and tea.—After the usual civilities from stranger to stranger, Mr. Clement and I having taken our places, Miss Mason on my right, and Mr. Powell on my left; we sat down to dinner—the lovers eat but little, and spoke less.—As soon as the servants were gone, and the wine and fruit laid down, Mr. Clement began a conversation about you and my brother—expatiated on the charms of Frogly;—the weather, the politicks, and the scandal of the day, all took their turns;—still silent on the subject of their hearts, they faintly mixed in every other.—At last, I mentioned Mr. Bellas's intention towards Eliza—then Mr. Powell began;—said, “he was sure Mr. Bellas meant for the best; but that Eliza was so lively in her manner, that he should be very apprehensive of disagreeable consequences, if she were sent amongst strangers; but most of all in London, where youth, particularly females, were exposed to every temptation; that he should think no place so proper for the young ladies, as that which should include their sister's care; that, having been accustomed to look up to her as a parent, her influence might be strengthened, by being continued; and that, though he thought highly of the natural disposition of all the family, he was of opinion, that the precepts of their excellent parents could no way be inculcated so happily, as by the example of their sister; that he should be happy in giving his assistance; and that his house was open to them, as his heart was to Miss Mason herself;—that he was ill qualified to speak upon a subject on which he felt so much—but that, as she knew his happiness was in her gift—he hoped she would be generous in the use of her power.”—She burst into tears, and left the room. Mr. Clement is quite his advocate.—I am interrupted.

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R L.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAR SISTER,

SEND Sophia down instantly—Eliza is lost—I never suffered so much as within the last two hours. Collins is distracted, for she loved her like a mother. That wicked young man—what can he expect? The Doctor is very angry; but he should have foreseen and prevented it.—Yesterday evening we were all invited to the Parsonage-house: Henry Freeman being this morning to set off for Cambridge, we drank tea, and spent the evening there.—About eleven o'clock our carriage came, for it had rained all the evening; and, as Eliza stepped in, she turned about to Henry, who handed her from the drawing-room out, and said, "Well, remember."—I took no notice of it, because I thought it only the natural consequence of their intimacy, and that she was reminding him of some boyish promise to write to her, or some such thing.—This morning Henrietta came down to breakfast alone, her frock only slipped on her arms, and not pinned.—She went up to Collins, who had just stepped into the room before her, and said, "Pray, Mrs. Collins, be so good as to pin my frock; my sister Eliza got up so soon that I had nobody to help me."—"Where is Eliza, my love?" says Collins; and, without waiting for an answer, ran out of the room;—we all followed, one by one—and having spent an hour in a fruitless search all over the house, garden, and meadow—Collins ran to the Parsonage-house, to see if Henry was gone—immediately guessing at the unfortunate truth.—Doctor Freeman raved—and the other boys laughed.—Miss Freeman shed some tears of modesty and sweetness, and then said, "If my brother has injured the confidence of Eliza, half my fortune shall be hers, and I will never see his face."—Collins came back, invoking blessings on the sweet girl; and, as she returned, met a gardener in the lane, who had seen Eliza and Henry go off together in a single-horse-chaise, about four o'clock in the morning. We sent to the only house in the village where it could have been obtained; and find, that Henry bespoke it yesterday evening about eight o'clock.—I recollect we missed him and Eliza about that time; so that probably it was then they agreed upon her flight. We have sent Philip in pursuit of them; if they be gone on to Cambridge, we shall hear something of them, though perhaps not what we shall like to hear;—but, if they should have taken any other road, heaven knows what may be the consequence! I do not think him a young man of principle; but, indeed, in his situation, how few youths could shew their principle! Unfortunate girl! Charles's misfortunes had been enough for the family; lost to his relations; and probably all his hopes of future success in life blasted—a self-exiled wanderer, out of the knowledge of any who could serve him;—yet it is *possible* that he may recover himself:—but poor Eliza! excluded by the severe dispensations of an unforgiving world from the advantages of future prudence! an hour—a moment's folly to her must probably be fatal!—We have just had intelligence that

the wretched fugitive is gone towards London.—Gracious heaven! what will become of her!—to search in such a place for an unknown individual, is almost ridiculous, and must be fruitless.—What shall we do?—Doctor Freeman has sent his coachman and footman different roads—sure we shall hear something to-day.—Good heaven! here is a

discovery!—Well, it is better than we expected—if it is true.—She has scarcely taken a second change of any thing in the world. Collins went up to search her drawers; and in the uppermost found the inclosed letter to me.

I am my dear sister's affectionate

CHARLOTTE.

L E T T E R L I.

TO MRS. BELLAS.

MADAM,

I SHOULD never forgive myself, if I quitted your house without leaving behind me the warmest and most grateful acknowledgments of your's and Mr. Bellas's goodness to me and my sisters. I hope they will not suffer in your opinion by the step I am now about to take;—but, as Mr. Freeman was obliged to go to Cambridge, and as my happiness depended on his not having it in his power to forget me, I have consented to go to Scotland with him directly, that he may be mine beyond the power of fate. I hope the doctor will forgive him when we return. Mean time, I remain

Your most grateful

ELIZA.

L E T T E R LII.  
MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

WELL, Charlotte, we are to have a wedding at last.—Sophia has blush'd consent; Mr. Clement has invited the company; and we are to have a jolly day at Shuter's-hill, where the bride and bridegroom spend a few days, and then proceed to Frogly.

I never saw a man so delighted as poor Powell seems to be—it is wonderful to me how you could dislike him.—Mercy on me! I have just received your letter:—poor little madcap!—If young Freeman should deceive her, I think he must be the greatest villain existing;—but I hope in heaven he will not:—if he marries her, I shall only lament the precipitancy of the step; and trust in the old man's benevolence, and the kindness of that good girl the sister, to put them in some way to make the best of it.—Let me hear every article of intelligence you obtain. I wish they may return at least by the time Sophia goes home; or I think it will break her heart. I do not see why I should make her unhappy about it now; she cannot possibly mend the matter; and at such a time to make her mind uneasy, would be acting the part of the bird of night, rather than that of a participating friend. However, if you insist upon it, I will tell her; but I will wait to hear from you again. I am going out, as soon as the coach comes, to buy a few presents for Sophia: Mr. Clement desired me to provide him with a wedding-sacque for her. Men think women are as easily dressed with a gown, as they are with a suit of clothes.—I shall add a suit of Bath Brussels; which, with a cap which I shall bespeak at Wilkinson's, will furnish her for her wedding-visits, without any expence of her own little fund—if you commission me to add a pair of pearl ear-rings, I will do that on Friday or Saturday. This day sevennight is fixed for the wedding—heaven grant it be a happy one!—it is the first match I ever had a hand in; if it should turn out ill, I never should forgive myself.

Bless my dear little Charles in my name; and believe me ever my dear Charlotte's affectionate

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R LIII.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

IT would be almost impious to arraign the goodness of that heart which proves, by its benevolence, its divine extraction;—but, my dear Marianne, you are still mortal, and liable to a mortal's imperfections:—you see but the outside. Powell has a speciousness of external deportment, which has caught your approbation; whilst, if I am not much misinformed, he has a heart void of every one of those feelings which overflow in such abundance in yours:—he has suffered a mother, who was never deficient in her duty to him, to know all the miseries of want; whilst he was expending, in the superfluous trifles which his vanity suggested, more than would have procured her an easy passage to the grave—he has seduced more than one innocent creature in the village from their duty and their peace; and, when his licentious intimacy has produced the natural effects, he has left the guiltless infants and their unhappy mothers to feel the punishment of his crimes. One of them he married to a servant of his, and took into his house; and, when the inhuman wretch has been upbraiding the victim with her former shame, the unfeeling master has made it a cause of triumph, and an argument to forward his success with the young woman who then lived with him as a kind of housekeeper; from her this intelligence came—she soon quitted his service, and now lives with a gentleman of some property about three quarters of a mile from hence.—If they are not married—shew this to Sophia; if they are—burn, and endeavour to forget it. You have acted a friendly part towards her; her situation, considered in every point of view, makes her marriage with an honest man a most desirable circumstance; but I am afraid it is not possible for a man, who has been an unfeeling and undutiful son, to be a good husband. There are, in the occurrences of a married life, so many trials of a man's humanity, that he, whose want of sensibility might pass unnoticed had he continued single, must often appear a very monster when considered as a husband.—Should such a woman as we know Sophia to be, unfortunately fall to the lot of such a man as I have had Powell described to me, inevitable misery must be the consequence. I shall be impatient till I hear from you again.—May that Power, whose charge the weak and unprotected are, take the poor girl to its peculiar care!—No news of Eliza.

Ever thy

CHARLOTTE.

L E T T E R L I V.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I DO not know that I ever was so thoroughly shocked as at reading your character of the man to whom I had but an hour before seen Sophia give her hand. From the performance of the ceremony we returned to our house, where Mr. and Mrs. Belmour, and Mr. and Mrs. Baker, waited to join our party, and proceed to Shuter's-hill. The miss Dean, whose name I believe I had mentioned to you, acted as bride-maid, and Mr. James Clement as bride-man—my Mr. Clement gave her away; and I went because she desired it. Mr. Clement, miss Dean, Sophia, and I, went in the coach; and Mr. J. Clement and the bridegroom followed in the chariot; but, as we returned, Mr. Clement and I took their vehicle, and the four young people came home together.—By the time we had drank a dish of chocolate round, and the horses had been fed, to please Mr. Clement, your letter was brought to me. I opened it with some apprehension, on account of Eliza. But, when I saw the real contents, I thought I should have fainted—my looks told so much, that I was obliged to shew Mr. Clement the cause. He was rather angry, than hurt; and, observing that the whole accusation rested upon the evidence of a servant, he said he wondered that you, who had so much caution in matters of less consequence, should be so easily convinced in one of so much importance; and that your Collins, or our Selby, would say as much of any of us, the moment they were out of our houses. I own, I was very willing to take his side of the argument; and why, my dear Charlotte, should we not suppose he may be in the right? at least, upon your own injunction to burn the letter, and forget the circumstance, I was justified in hoping the best—for caution was then too late.—About two o'clock we set out, a party of ten, to Shuter's-hill, where we dined, drank tea, played at cards, and supped; and about eleven o'clock, the moon in its full glory, and four servants well-armed to protect us, we took leave of the new-married pair, without any other ceremony than we should have observed towards each other. Thus, under the conduct of Mr. Clement, we passed a day which, in general, wears a face of awkwardness and restraint, with the utmost ease, chearfulness, and good order. We all got safe to our several destinations; and dine together to-day at Mr. Belmour's, in Dover-Street. I cannot however dismiss the apprehensions with which your letter has filled me. Do you know, that I think you owe it to Mr. Powell to search the matter to the bottom? He seems much devoted to the sex, I confess; but I cannot think him capable of harbouring a thought injurious to an individual of it, much less of the horrid unmanly acts of which he is accused; his whole behaviour yesterday, not only to Sophia, whom he seems to venerate, but to the company at large, gave the lie to his accuser. Is she not some artful woman, who may have formed some designs which his marriage with Sophia must interfere with? At all events, the die is cast; and consideration, which is invaluable when antecedent to an act, by being out of season is become useless, and almost impertinent.

I made Sophia, at parting, promise to write to me. She begged to be excused; and modestly said, that I should trade upon very unequal terms if I were to give her my letters for her's; and yet that she should perhaps be unreasonable enough to expect it. I did not

chuse to let her off, however, but insisted upon her promise; and, speaking aloud before her husband, told her, that, as I had made myself accountable to her for happiness in pleading his cause, I should expect as an act of gratitude to have that happiness avowed, or as an act of justice to be called upon for any thing in my power to promote it whenever there was a deficiency—as the bail was always responsible, when the principal failed.” He very chearfully acquiesced; and said, “that he should endeavour to exculpate his surety, by performing covenants to the utmost of his power, though his obligation to Mrs. Clement would be one of the last things he should forget.” Those words chilled me, when I thought of your letter; for goodness sake, Charlotte, send for that woman, and hear what she has to say!—and yet, what service can it do us now!—I need not beg that you will send me word the moment Eliza returns. I long to know what reception she will meet with at the Vicarage. My little ones greet their brother Charles, to whom my blessings and his father’s.—Our love to Mr. Bellas; and believe me my dear sister’s

Ever affectionate

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R LV.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

POOR Sophia! the die indeed is cast—may her virtues make such an impression, as to produce their likeness! Kind Providence, whose dispensations to thy creatures are full of mercy, thanks for the alleviating circumstances of poor Eliza's safety!—Yesterday evening we were sitting at tea, and seeing a carriage drive up the yard, I put out my head, and saw Eliza.—I ran to the door, where, throwing herself at my feet, she cried, “Indeed, indeed, madam, as well as I love Mr. Freeman, I would not have gone without seeing you, had I known that you loved me so well—but every night, since I have been gone, I have dreamt of you, and seen you in such distress as to make me miserable;—can you, my dear madam, can you forgive me?”—I took her up, and begged her to satisfy my impatient enquiries, and relieve me from that distress her fancy pictured. Henry (who was at this time discharging the chaise) came up to the hall-door, where we still stood, with all the confidence of conscious virtue; and seeing me holding Eliza’s hand with a countenance of kindness—he said, “I see, madam, your heart is what I thought it, open to all the feelings that do honour to humanity.” My looks expressed something; to which he replied, “She is my wife, and now I am resigned to my father’s pleasure in every thing, since what God has joined together he will not put asunder.”—By this time the news of their arrival reached the Vicarage; and Miss Freeman, with her brother Thomas, came running down.—She threw her arms about Eliza, and cried, “Welcome, welcome, my dear Eliza—may I add my sister?”—Henry stood forward, and answered; for her confusion and her tenderness overwhelmed her. He gave a very minute account of their expedition, and all the attendant circumstances—and then asked, “whether he might venture to approach his father?”—Miss Freeman behaved like an angel—told them, “that, as soon as she was of age, half her fortune should be at their service; and that, if her father should have the same feeling towards Eliza that she had, and should take her home, as she hoped he would, it would be the greatest blessing of her life to comfort and console her, whilst Henry went to Cambridge, to qualify himself for the better support of her and himself.”—Eliza was all gratitude, and we all rapture; when your confirmation of Sophia’s wedding came, and wrung the heart of your

CHARLOTTE.

L E T T E R LVI.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

I Participate most sincerely my dear sister's enjoyment of Eliza's happy return;—there is something singular in a circumstance which I have just discovered.—I have a letter from Sophia, who is got to her house, as you know no doubt, and has seen her sister Freeman: they have been comparing notes, I find; and Eliza was married at Edinburgh on the very same day and hour that Sophia was married in London.—She tells me, that Doctor Freeman has behaved to Eliza with a degree of tenderness, that nothing but his daughter's affection for her can exceed.—What an unexpected occurrence!—Few girls left in their situations have ever, perhaps, been so fortunate—let us hope it will not end here; but that poor Sophia may have had her full portion of suffering!—She says little respecting herself.—Mr. Powell, she fears, has injured his business by the time he threw away in London—but that he is too delicate to attribute it to that cause; and rather accounts for the people of the village deserting him in favour of his contemporary, to some scandalous stories that have been propagated, in order, as he supposes, to injure him with her; however, hopes that a little time will get the better of it, and restore his business to its wonted state of credit.—I cannot say I like it much.—Sophia don't seem alarmed, or rather don't seem to know that she is.—Mr. Clement has a large quantity of rhubarb consigned to him from Turkey; he talks of sending Powell a parcel of it as a present; but, after this hint of Sophia's, there's no knowing how he may receive it.—Mr. Osborn writes me word, that he has seen Amelia; and that, by the time his negotiation is finished, she will have compiled her history—if so, I shall have it in time to carry to Frogly; 'twill amuse us all, as the evenings grow long.—My hairdresser is come.—My love to all who love me; and do you be assured of the unalterable affection of thy

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R L V I I .

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAR MARIANNE,

WE all dined yesterday at the Vicarage—the invitation was, by the Doctor's desire, from Mr. and Mrs. *Henry* Freeman. Eliza was placed at the head of the table; the Doctor next her on one hand, and I at the other, Henry occupying the married man's place at the lower end of the table.—George and Henrietta dined at a side-table by themselves, and seemed to partake largely of the general joy;—next to the Doctor sat Sophia, and on my left hand Mr. Powell.—I own myself a convert; if he be a villain, he is the best counterfeit of an amiable character I ever saw; he behaved extremely well to Sophia; but I thought she did not seem so happy as I could have wished.—I am afraid her head is not at peace on a certain subject. I never saw a woman conduct herself better than Eliza—nor could I have supposed that it was possible for sixteen to assume such a dignified propriety.—It is not easy to decide whether the Doctor or Henry love her most; nor could a father, whose son had brought a hundred thousand pounds into his family, shew more respect to his daughter-in-law—in short, they are all happy in each other, and seem to have but one object of contention, and that is, who shall oblige most. The Doctor told us, after dinner, that his little house-keeper, pointing to Eliza, had given him the trouble of forming a new plan for the disposal of Henry—for that he should be ashamed to send a married man to school—that he was therefore somewhat at a loss, and should be glad of our advice.—Mr. Bellas told him, that he should think it very eligible for Mr. Freeman to speak his own sentiments—that, if he liked a country gentleman's life, he had a farm which he should rent on his own terms, or purchase at a fair appraisement: and that, if he did the latter, all the live-stock should be his gift to Eliza, by way of dower.—The Doctor smiled at the word purchase, and said, “Why Mr. Bellas—I have been a good subject, and Henry seems inclined to follow my example. I married at twenty myself, and have seen myself the father of seven sons, all of whom, except the eldest, you see—and nine daughters, eight of whom are with their excellent mother.—Fanny was all the hopes I had of comfort in my old age; but now I have got another chance for it in Eliza.”—She blushed, and shed a tear of satisfaction; which he enjoyed, and then went on—“the consequence of so large a family is obvious—I had but a small patrimony of my own, and that must descend to Arthur my eldest son. Mrs. Freeman had not a shilling when I married her; but, in the course of our living together, she had ten thousand pounds left her, with remainder to Fanny.—I have never touched a shilling of it; though she is so good a girl, that I, or any of her brothers, would, I am sure, be welcome to share it.” Here her answer was necessary.—“Indeed, Sir, says she, I should be very undeserving of your good opinion, if I lost so happy an opportunity of approving it—suffer me now to declare thus publickly, as I have done to my brother and sister alone, that half my fortune will give me more happiness in settling them advantageously, than the whole could, laid out for myself—and, if they approve of Mr. Bellas's proposal, we will have the estate valued; and, the moment I am of age, if five thousand pounds will pay the purchase, it is theirs.”—Every tongue was for a moment mute, in token of applause; and all at once

broke out in praises of her benevolence of heart: only Henry and Eliza added a refusal. Mr. Bellas, however, reminding the Doctor, that seven hundred towards the purchase was ready in Eliza's right—it was agreed, that the appraiser, who sold the furniture, &c. for the girls, should be sent for immediately; that the young people should stay with the Doctor till the house was fitted up and furnished; and that Henrietta should divide her time amongst her sisters, Miss Freeman, and me, till she should be settled in her own house.—The Doctor observed, that matches made by parents for infants seldom succeeded; but that George was a pretty boy, and had five hundred pounds a-year settled upon him by his Godfather the late Lord —. Henrietta blushed, and looked her acquiescence; and George took the first opportunity of our attention being withdrawn, to seal his approbation with a kiss.—We spent the evening very happily—only Sophia's brow was now and then overspread with a gloom that chilled my blood.—I believe nobody else observed it.—Powell was as agreeable as ever I saw a man of so moderate an understanding; and we all promised to dine with them next Tuesday—the Saturday following the whole party spend with us.—Thomas Freeman goes to Cambridge, instead of Henry.—I suppose, when Mrs. Belmour goes to Bath, you will devote a week to your

CHARLOTTE

L E T T E R LVIII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

DO you know, Charlotte, that I am quite miserable at the apprehension you entertain of poor Sophia's unhappiness; yet, if she disliked the man, she certainly would not have married him.—I wish I had never interposed—I am afraid I was actuated by motives I did not perceive, to urge the poor girl to marry, that she might no longer be an argument of anxiety to you.—Yet certainly, as you yourself say, her marriage was, on her own account, a most desirable circumstance.—I don't know what to make of her letters—she seems to have an inclination to tell me something, and checks herself, perhaps upon the principle of duty. I am vexed too at your insinuation about my coming to Frogly when Mrs. Belmour goes to Bath; it is the only circumstance in which I can accuse you of a narrowness of mind: my esteeming a friend is no argument that I do not love a sister—banish such conclusions—rely upon it, my heart has room enough for all its inhabitants—nature has an inexhaustible supply of affection to bestow, of which a part is dispensed on every acquisition we make, whether of husband, children, or friends—else how comes it that feelings, which are all natural, are every day exerted to those different relatives, and in a breast of generous extent no clashing ever felt? Did I love you less after I married Mr. Clement? did I love you less when bounteous nature blessed me with my children?—If not—why should my indulging the feelings of a sister depend upon the accidental occurrences which happen to a friend? Excuse me, Charlotte; I am not apt to be serious—upon trifling subjects I never am;—but you have roused my sensibility more in the last line of your letter, than Mrs. Belmour, though I confess I love her, could have done in a volume. However, though she is gone to Bath, I cannot come to Frogly.—Charlotte is not well; and Mr. Forbes thinks she is breeding the small-pox; if so, I know not when I shall be able to leave town: I dread the thoughts of poor Frank's catching it now he is about his teeth. I think, if there were no other subjects of anxiety but our children, this world would be far enough removed from a state of happiness to make a future one necessary; at least I am sure it would be to thy

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R LIX.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY dear Charlotte must believe me, when I declare that my last letter was dictated in a moment of distress;—my dear little girl was very ill; her fine eyes had lost their brightness, and her cheeks their bloom; my heart was breaking with apprehension for my little darling, whose safety is of moment to my existence;—so that, if my unusual gravity should offend or hurt you, consider the cause, and pity the effects.—Heaven be praised! my girl is quite recovered; and my little cherub grown as strong almost as Charles; so that my mind is now tuned to happiness again. Mr. Clement, who loves them you know as well as I do when they are well, feels, if possible, more when they are in danger; two nights last week he was so miserable about Charlotte, that he even neglected his letters; and a very unlucky mistake has happened in consequence; however, I hope it will easily be rectified; though it is amazing how much nicety and exactness the business and correspondence of a merchant requires: it is unfortunate that Mr. Osborne, who alone can corroborate Mr. Clement in rectifying the error, is still absent; we expect him in a few days, when I hope to hear how poor Amelia relishes her recluse situation. Mr. and Mrs. Baker leave us to-morrow, for a month; and spend the remainder of the winter with us, after their Devonshire visits are paid; they are really a most amiable couple, and certainly formed for each other. How capricious it was in Fortune, to send the sweet woman such a pilgrimage in her way to paradise!—Her unhappy friend, of whose marriage I have told you, is released from her sorrows. The villain, who had deserted her in those distresses which he alone brought upon her, is stung with remorse almost to madness;—she just lived to hear of Mrs. Baker's intention towards her; and on her death-bed charged the black slave, who attended her, to convey her little girl over to England, to be educated under Mrs. Baker. She accepts the charge with great pleasure, and means to settle upon the child the sum she would have sunk for the mother's annuity; and, should she not have any children herself, will probably make her a great fortune. Mr. Clement has contracted a greater intimacy with Mr. Baker than any man he knows, except Frank and his brother James.—Write soon, to convince me you are not angry with

Your

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R L X.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I WONDER I have not heard from you.—I had adjusted all my matters, with intention to have set out as this day for Frogly—but I suppose I am not to be so happy. Something has occurred, to discompose Mr. Clement so much, that I cannot think it right to leave him; he would not desire me to give it up, because he knew how much I wished to see you; but I know he will be the better pleased with my stay, for that reason. Charlotte has had a little return of her feverish complaint: I have sent for Dr. B——; he thinks she has worms, and is now treating her accordingly.—Charles's parole is lengthened—you are like to keep him now till spring, unless he grows troublesome; if so, I will send Selby for him whenever you please.—I wish Mr. Osborne was come home. I am afraid the stagnation which the mistake I hinted at has occasioned will embarrass Mr. Clement greatly; and, in aid of that misfortune, a house at Boulogne, in which we are deeply concerned, has stopped payment. You know trifles do not affect him; but he is really so depressed at present, that I am apprehensive for his health, as well as his credit. May that Power, who knows his worth, preserve both to him! and him to his children and me!—I am greatly shocked at looking back to the many superfluous guineas which in the course of seven years of uninterrupted prosperity we have lavished away. Yet Mr. Clement is not extravagant in any of his propensities; nor has indulged himself in any expence that did not seem greatly within his income; but, when I find of how much consequence a few thousands would now be, and then carry on a train of reasoning from thousands to hundreds, from hundreds to twentys, and from twentys to pounds, and so down to the minutest article of what we call trifling expences, I am really culpable in my own opinion. I do not know whether the Boulogne business has got abroad; but there have been more calls for money since Monday last than in any four days since we have been married; and, should it continue four days more, it would be very inconvenient.—About the seventh of last month, we ventured a ship richly freighted to Ireland, without insurance; and, should any accident happen there, as misfortunes are apt to accumulate, Mr. Clement must lose two thousand pounds at one stroke; the advice of her safe arrival is hourly expected: I hope this day's post will put an end to suspence upon that subject. One of Mr. Clement's favourite horses has lost an eye, and almost killed Francis, who happened to be riding him out, when the accidental clashing of two carriages turned him against the ballustrade of a house near Chelsea, and one of the spikes ran into his eye;—the poor creature was very ill for several days; he is now quite recovered, and Mr. Clement thinks of sending the set to Tattersal's, to be sold to the best bidder; for every trifling sum is now of consequence; and the sale of horses is a double advantage, both on account of what it brings, and what it saves. Indeed the keeping of horses is the only subject on which we ever disagreed; but he loved the idea; and he had an undoubted right to indulge himself.—Selby is another useless expence; and I intend to take the first opportunity of getting rid of her: but the artful creature has wound herself about my convenience, by never chusing to take any wages—my cloaths have always supplied her,

except in very trifles; and in them she has been so great an oeconomist, that I believe we do not owe her less than fifty pounds; at present it would not be prudent to part with such a sum; and my pride and my understanding forbid me to discharge her till we can pay her. I never will owe another servant above a year's wages at a time; for, notwithstanding it was her own choice, I think she has grown saucy and idle in proportion as her money accumulated,—in fact, at present she is a mere boarder in the family. I asked her the other day to wash some frocks, and make up a few caps for Charlotte, whilst the nurse was entirely devoted to Frank, who was not well; and told her, by way of apology, that the nursery-maid did not please me in her getting-up linen. She told me, that "she was not miss Clement's maid; and that, if Sally could not wash, there were nursery-maids enough to be had that could." I was stunned at her impudence; and told her, that she should never refuse me twice.—I confess, that, had I not heard Mr. Clement complain of a scarcity of cash, I should have discharged her instantly. How much must people, whose circumstances are always streightned, be in the power of their servants! no wonder there are so many bad ones. Adieu! Write soon, and comfort

Your

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R L X I.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAREST SISTER,

THE complexion of your last letter has pierced me to the heart;—for heaven's sake, discharge that ungrateful wretch instantly. Enclosed is a draught for seventy pounds, which Mr. Bellas took in part of a year's rent, to oblige farmer Colman: he will consider it as a favour if you will get it accepted; and you will make me happy if you will pay and get rid of that impertinent woman;—whenever matters take their accustomed turn with my brother, I will call upon you for the payment;—mean time, if you would have me think you love me, never mention the matter. Charles is in charming spirits, has had the small-pox, and is as handsome as ever;—let this, my dear Marianne, be an omen of returning happiness!—Mr. Bellas would not suffer me to alarm your sensibility, by mentioning his illness, till it was over.—I knew he meant you kindly, and could not disobey him: but I could not reconcile it to myself to omit so material a piece of intelligence, if I wrote at all; therefore I thought I should do best to let the pen alone till I could use it to give you pleasure. May heaven avert the ills you dread! and preserve your husband in health, happiness, and prosperity! At all events, let Charles be mine: if I should have a son, he shall share with him in every feeling of my heart; if not, Mr. Bellas will take care to secure to him the possession of Frogly-farm. My state of health is such as to make the latter most probable.—However, for the present I have your promise, and shall avail myself of it—till I think him troublesome, you know I am to keep him. Mr. Bellas desires me to say, that, if Mr. Clement will accept of any assistance in his power, he will prove himself most his friend, by calling upon him. He would write himself, but does not know how far you would chuse my brother should be acquainted with our knowledge of it; we leave it all to your management. Remember, my dear sister, that these are the moments when alone true friendship can prove its superiority over its shadow—worldly civility.—Allow that happiness to your

F. and C. BELLAS.

L E T T E R LXIII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

TEN thousand thanks to my dear brother and sister, for the opportunity they have given me of loving them still better, if it be possible, than I did before! Mr. Clement desires me to say every thing he feels; but that is impossible—hearts like his are not easily translated into language, even by the owners; let him try, if he chuses; for my part, I don't love to set about any thing convinced beforehand that I must fail in the execution of it. Our affairs, thank Heaven, are happily re-established on their former basis. The Irish mail brought us returns for the ship I mentioned, and Mr. Osborne is come back from Germany, with a full satisfaction for the bills which he carried over.—He has brought Amelia's history—which (as soon as I have read it) I will convey to you; mean time you must finish whatever you are about, and be ready for a whole week's employment, which I am sure you will enjoy, though you did not know Amelia sufficiently to relish it as I do.—It is wonderful that any father should be so lost to the natural feelings of a parent, as to force a child to be miserable, without the possibility of reaping any advantage himself.—Nature points out to us, the moment a child is born, the duty of nurturing and protecting it; as it grows up, of educating and informing it;—and I should imagine, that, when those duties were over, that of placing it in the situation where happiness was most probable would naturally succeed; for love is, or should be, uniform in all our exertions towards them—whether in the nursery, the study, or the world at large.—Amelia's father, however, as you will find, proceeded upon a different principle: I think her mode of expressing herself will please you greatly—free from the levity which you dislike, or the stiffness which must tire.—Poor girl! it is a melancholy circumstance, that she should be cut off from all the joys of society, and shut up in a cloistered inutility, because a father was a tyrant, and a husband a brute!—Charlotte is better. Accept our thanks for your intentions towards Charles. I sincerely hope, however, that Providence will supersede his claim, by blessing you with a boy of your own.—If I was not sure of your belief, I would not say so much; but you know your

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R L X I I I .

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

CHARLOTTE, I have changed my mind—you shall have Amelia's history, letter by letter;—if you don't like the first, you shall have no more—so read the inclosed, and give me your opinion.—All here are well—and send their love with mine.

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R LXIV.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT.

DEAR MADAM,

SINCE I have been honoured with your last commands, which were final, with respect to the task you have enjoined me, I have several times set about the execution of them.—I was in hopes to have made a much smaller compass inclose my insignificant story; but, I know not how, I have been led on from one little circumstance to another, till I am afraid I have set you a task more painful than that you assigned to me.—I will not take up any more of your time in apologies, than just what serves to assure you, that, if I have dwelt upon little circumstances of extenuation longer than may seem necessary, it proceeded not from an egotism natural to me, but that ardent desire which I feel, even at this distance, to stand as well as possible in the opinion of a person whose approbation is of more value to me than the rest of the world.—Had you treated me with that conscious superiority which unblemished virtue entitled you to, and which will always appear where the virtues of generosity and social sympathy are not as powerful as that of chastity; I should, perhaps, have revered you for the possession of the latter, but the want of the former would have made reverence alone all the tribute I should pay.—But in the course of the few, the very few, hours I was under your roof, I discovered, in your conduct and conversation, an heart so enlarged, an head so accomplished, so ample a capacity for judging, and so benevolent a disposition to forgive—even those faults, of which happy reflection pronounced you clear—that my esteem, my affection, my duty, pointed you out as the most deserving object of all their attention.—Upon this principle it is, that I have laid before you not only the actions of my life, but, so far as I could discover, every secret spring that moved them.—If the recital affords entertainment to you, or instruction to one young mind which feels as I did, the task will be amply rewarded to your most grateful

AMELIA.

L E T T E R L X V .

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

I HAVE two letters from my dear Marianne—the first brings me the happiest tidings I could hear at present—and the latter has filled me with more than my natural share of curiosity. I applaud the resolution of Amelia; and sincerely hope, that self-love, that universal deceiver, will not thwart her in a design so laudable.—It is very certain that many actions, which, to a superficial observer, may appear in the extreme of good or bad, were the motives honestly laid before the same person, might so far alter their nature, as to deserve a very different degree of approbation or censure—nay, sometimes, take the opposite complexion;—but then the motives must be laid open by the possessor;—and it seldom happens that a mind capable of doing justice to those minute particles of human action in description—or (to use your own phrase, which is better) to translate the feelings—hath ingenuousness enough to make that sacrifice to society.—In every thing self predominates—and very often patriotism, piety, and even well-acted passion (if you could make a window in the human breast) would be translated—self, self, self.—She seems, however, possessed of so much humility, and so well reconciled to her situation, excluding that commerce with the world which often deters writers from saying all, for fear of cold civility and averted looks—that every degree of impartiality may be expected from her.—But why send me her letters one by one?—Remember you desired not to see them so yourself. I need not use any further argument to extort the whole packet from you at once—do as you would be done by.—Charles is to throw off his petticoats on Sunday.—You cannot conceive how manly and handsome he looks in his masculine habit.—We meditate an excursion into Yorkshire; and we thought his trowsers would be the properest equipment for travelling. I fancy the acres will be all his own;—and 'tis but right that he should have his fancy consulted in the allotment of them.—Mr. Bellas is dividing one large farm into four, to atone, as far as one individual can, for the inhuman passion, now so prevalent, of putting six into one, to the discouragement of industry, and the starving of five honest men and their families.—Dinner waits. Send me the history in your next, and you will oblige your

CHARLOTTE.

L E T T E R L X V I .

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

HOW I love my dear Charlotte for her impatience!—It is so like myself, that, upon her own principle, she will readily believe me.—The true reason that I mean to send you but one letter at a time is this—I have reflected that your vile cross-post sometimes plays us tricks; and I should never forgive myself, if I lost the packet, or even a part of it.—I mean therefore to copy the letters, and send you a compleat history for your own, as my little Charlotte says.—Selby is gone:—we had a disagreeable parting; but I know you will be pleased to hear it is over.—I believe I must resolve not to say a word to you, but enclose the letters as I copy them, for I never can leave off when once I begin.—Goodbye!—Till the history is compleat, expect no more news from your

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R L X V I I .

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT.

DEAR MADAM,

IN order to introduce some early anecdotes of myself, it is necessary that I go back to the remotest period of which I have any knowledge, either from my own memory, or the relation of my mother, whose veracity was ever unquestionable;—as to her unhappy choice of a husband was owing my misfortune of not being allowed to chuse at all.—My mother was about twelve years old when my uncle Charles was born, who, being the first son, though the seventh child, was, from the moment of his birth, the principal object of his father's attention. His mother, however, who was by all accounts a very amiable woman, but not possessed of any great understanding, was perhaps blameably partial to all her daughters, but particularly to the eldest, who was my mother.—This difference in sentiment produced many misunderstandings between the parents, who, from the birth of my uncle James (a year after his brother), never lived in the same apartment. My mother and three of her sisters were sent to a boarding-school in Yorkshire, to save expence—and the two younger girls with their brothers still remained in the nursery—till the small-pox made a fatal visit to the family, and carried off both the girls—my uncle James hardly escaping the same fate. My grandmother was inconsolable; and, to reconcile her in some degree, her husband, who had not lost the feelings of humanity, though he had quarrelled with her, sent for my mother from school.—She was then about sixteen—and had been four years at that seminary of folly, specious idleness, and viciating romance.—She was taught to read, but not to think—to dance, to sing, to do every thing but what was useful.—My father, who was, when she was sent there, drawing-master to the school, had contrived to render himself agreeable to her—and in the course of her stay, by the death of a distant relation, became possessed of a considerable estate in the same county, which I suppose did not injure him in her heart, particularly as, from her father's partiality, she had little to expect in her favour.—Just at the period when she was sent for, my father had brought matters to such a crisis, that she had consented to marry him privately.—However, she had too much filial piety to refuse to obey the summons—she came, and found her mother very ill, and in a few days after followed her to the grave.—She was then in a situation truly pitiable;—having lost her mother, neglected by her father, and her head brim-full of the recent solicitations of a lover, whose suit her heart had granted, though her understanding pointed out many objections. Just as she was about to return to school, her father called her one day into his study—and, having prepared her for the proposal with more tenderness than she had reason to expect, told her, that a gentleman of about fifty (three years older than himself) had made overtures respecting a marriage with her; and, as a friend, advised her to accept it; for that he was willing to make her a very good jointure; which, as he was not in circumstances to give her a shilling, was not likely to be met with every day. She remonstrated upon the inequality of fifty and sixteen: but he was very laconic upon the subject; and told her, that she might either marry his friend, or prepare for her journey as soon as she pleased; and that Rachael, her next sister, must come home and keep his house. Mortified at this

unkind distinction, and shocked at the horror of his proposed match, she returned to Yorkshire; resolved to conquer all her former scruples, and marry my father. It is painful to be obliged to lay open the errors of those one is bound to honour, but; as mine are in some measure consequent upon theirs, it is unavoidable.

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXVIII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

*in continuation.*

AS soon as my mother returned to school, my father made her a visit of condolence.—Having once taught there, he had always access as a general visitor; but now, upon hearing my mother's account of her reception at home, and her father's proposal of a match to her; Mr. Thompson, who either loved her extravagantly, or fancied he did, avowed himself her lover, and declared his intention to her governess; who thinking him a very good match for her, and considering her as an orphan from the recent circumstances that had happened, encouraged his addresses, but insisted upon my mother's writing for a formal consent, previous to her actually being married.—To this they both consented, but from the native sense of filial duty (which I well know requires more acts of cruelty than one to destroy it); but—her lover (for, on this occasion, I would fain forget he was my father), finding her so cheap in a parent's estimation, began to think her love might be had upon easier terms than matrimony:—he therefore, with well-acted reluctance, consented to her postponing the day of marriage till her father's answer should arrive; hoping, in the mean time, to find a cause to make it unnecessary.—My mother wrote to her father by her sister Rachael, in the most submissive and filial style her understanding and her feelings could suggest—told him, that, as he had expressed a wish to see her married, and had been kind enough not to constrain her to marry a man she could not love, she was now encouraged to ask his permission, to marry a gentleman more suitable to her years, who had it in his power and inclination to make a provision for her perhaps fully equal to the other; that she however could not reconcile it to herself, to accept of him, or any other person, without his approbation; and that the gentleman was ready, whenever he could obtain leave, to wait upon him, to make known his own sentiments.—Her father was much affected by her letter, and, being a man of quick and transitory feelings, became as fond of her as he had been neglectful:—he sent down immediately an invitation to the lover; and desired his daughter to prepare for her return to town in the course of a month at farthest; expressing, at the same time, the kindest wishes for her future happiness; and confessing that his behaviour towards her, for the last three or four years, had not merited such dutiful returns on her part.—Her heart overflowed with those feelings which it must ever be in vain to describe;—those minds, whose peculiar happiness it is to possess them, will conceive from the situation what they were;—and those, who possess the negative happiness to be without them, would not understand the description, though given by a Shakespeare or a Sterne.—As soon as the letter arrived, she communicated the contents to her lover, who, disappointed as he was of gaining the consent which he expected her despair would dictate on her father's refusal, was not without a resource in his own idea;—besides his natural propensity to acts of cruelty, in which he has so signalized himself since that time, he had then another fancy, or (as he would call it) an attachment, to the daughter of an attorney of some eminence, whom he had met with at York races;—between his engagements to my mother, and his latent passion for this lady, he was exceedingly embarrassed, and

proposed to settle both by his expedition to London.—He told my mother, that he would immediately prepare for his journey; but that in his way he would spend a day or two at his lawyer's, in order that he might carry the writings with him, ready for signing;—and then, as if it was a new thought, asked my mother to give him leave to conduct her in his carriage, either with one of her sisters, or any other companion she might chuse.—She

had not an idea, but of guileless innocence herself; nor once suspected him. The governess, who knew the world, objected;—but he soon got the better of her scruples; and, on the Sunday morning following, the party, consisting of my father, mother, and a sister of the governess, who came to visit a son she had an apprentice to a linen-draper in London, set out from Yorkshire; and, one of the horses having met with an accident, were obliged to spend the evening and night at a very indifferent house about thirty miles onward of their journey.—Accommodations being scarce, the ladies were obliged to accept of one bed; but my mother, who happened to be very ill, and did not sleep, soon heard a foot steal softly towards the bed; and, upon stirring her companion, and speaking very loud, perceived the person, who she conceived to be a man, turn about and go out of the room.—As soon as the door was shut, she got up and rang the bell; and the people of the house, alarmed at a noise they were not much accustomed to, carried the idea to the utmost; and, as they rose ran to different parts of the house, crying “Fire!” My mother, little imagining her bell to be the cause of this outcry, redoubled her efforts—and the people theirs; till every individual in the house were assembled in the tap-room—some dressed, but more just as they had been asleep. They then began to compare notes; and found that the ringing of the bell was the only cause of alarm; and, each retiring to their apartment, my mother’s rushlight was blown out, and instead of her female companion, her lover followed, and took her place.—The discovery of the mistake was followed by the most specious arguments on his part, to prove, that, the ceremony being so near, the ridiculous prudery of making a new arrangement in the house would be productive of infinitely worse consequences than letting the matter pass;—that she must be sensible he could not be the contriver of the mistake, since it was very clear that Mrs. Edwards had likewise got into a bed she did not intend;—that another week would have made it a disposition he hoped, not disagreeable to her; and that, if it was her choice, as Providence had kindly anticipated their intentions, he would ride over to York in the morning, obtain a license, and marry her before she went to town;—and that, with respect to her father, as he meant to give her nothing, she need not be so tenacious of his approbation. She remarked upon the want of sentiment in the last argument; which he refined away; and, taking the advantage of her situation, convinced her, that fate was only kinder to them than they to themselves; and that whether they happened to be married on a Sunday or a Monday could not affect their future happiness.—In short, she was so circumstanced, that complaint was fruitless. She had now no chance but by retaining his affection, for she hoped but little from his honour or his principle; she therefore resolved to appear as cheerful as possible, and avoid to upbraid him with what it was her best policy, on every account, to attribute, first to chance, and then to the infirmity of human nature, which the men never spare to enlarge upon in their own excuse, though they will seldom allow it as an argument for our unhappy sex, whose very strength is weakness, compared to theirs.—Her principal distress was, how to meet Mrs. Edwards;—she mentioned her embarrassment to him; but was presently set easy upon that subject. He said, that Mrs. Edwards was a woman in years; that she must know how natural it was for a man to seize

an opportunity so happily thrown in his way by fortune; and that, if she chose it, she might say that they were privately married before she left school. To this however she gave an absolute negative;—she might be unhappy, she said, but she would not be base—a lie was in itself so contemptible, that she wondered even infidels, who thought not of the sin, could be insensible of the meanness of a deviation from the truth—that she would avoid it ever. He smiled at her simplicity; and told her, that he would not attempt to influence her sentiments—that her actions were all he had a right to command; and that, if she wished to oblige him before marriage, as a proof that she would obey him after, the best earnest she could give him of future happiness would be, to desist from visiting her father, to return with him to his own house, and to take immediate possession of him and it, by acting as mistress of it.—She was shocked at the proposal;—her father's recent kindness, her own situation, and his baseness, all passed in review before her; and filled her with such horror as the recollection still gives to your

AMELIA.

## L E T T E R LXIX.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

*in continuation.*

AS soon as breakfast was over, the subject was renewed; and Mrs. Edwards, who was less surprized than my mother expected, joined in all the arguments that were in favour of the point; said, that their marriage was a subject much talked of for several months all round the country; that, if she returned as Mrs. Thompson, nobody was authorized to ask any questions when or where the ceremony took place;—that she, for her part, would never be the person to throw a doubt upon the matter; but that, if they would agree between themselves what should be said upon the subject, she would always, in all companies, make her declarations coincide with theirs.—My mother, whose honest and ingenuous nature was shocked at the ready disposition to falsehood in a woman no way interested in the deception, interrupted her impatiently.—“Mrs. Edwards!” says she, “what need of so many lies, upon a subject where truth would cost less trouble? I am not married—why should any body say I am? why should Mr. Thompson allow me the happy consciousness of telling truth without blushing for it? He said last night, he would marry me this morning—why do you not, Sir, (applying herself to him) go to York, as you said you would, and procure the licence? why am I kept in suspence, in a strange place, without a friend, without a parent, without my innocence, which would have enabled me to seek and find both?—He told her that, however his passion for her might have hurried him beyond the bounds of prudence, he was not to be taught what he owed to her, and to himself;—that he did not love obligations to people he did not like; and that, as her father had shewed himself an unnatural kind of man to her, he had rather not owe him the civility of asking him to his house—and that therefore he would not go to his;—that, as to marriage, he thought it only made people quarrel, and live uneasily together, when they knew they could not separate; but that, for his part, he loved her so well, that he could not refuse her any thing she should ask for herself; and that therefore, if she made it a point, notwithstanding her dislike to the state, he would marry her; but the time must be left to him; and that, mean time, his heart, his house, his purse, were open to her; and that, as the world would judge and talk upon certain old-fashioned principles, he should think she had better avail herself of Mrs. Edwards’s kind and friendly advice, than, by a romantick attachment to what she called probity and integrity, and such stuff, proclaim her own shame, and make it inconsistent with his situation in the world ever to call her his wife.”—I am shocked at the picture I have drawn of a man from whom I derive my being;—but such I am afraid are the pictures of more than half mankind—fawning, and acquiescent, till they have nothing more to ask; then, insolent, and reproachful, and ungrateful!—upbraiding the unhappy victims of their artifice with those crimes which, in the eye of a just and impartial God, as they have originated with, must be chargeable upon themselves!—Such was his conduct from that first day, till the last day of my poor mother’s slavery; and that last day closed her eyes in peace.—But to return to the immediate point.—Mrs. Edwards again joined her employer, for such he appeared to be;—and my mother, whose innocent mind was as long as possible blind to

the scheme, now saw that her ruin was concerted.—She wept, she railed; but she was in their power, and she had no alternative but to go home a contented partner of her seducer's infamy, or seek a refuge either from her father or her governess;—the former, her own mind forbade—the latter it shewed as almost equally horrid.—To seek protection from a father whose kindness was but new-born,—under circumstances so disgraceful as to stagger even the tenderness of a good mother, seemed to give a negative even to itself; and to return to the school, from whence a confederate in his villainy came, seemed as improper as to stay with him.—At last, she resolved to advise with the woman of the house they were in—(Necessity suggests strange counsel!)—and, with a few guineas in her pocket, to seek some private retreat from shame, till she should by letters find the reception she was likely to meet with at either of her former homes.—How this scheme would have succeeded, it is impossible to ascertain; for, upon going out of the room, to search for the mistress of the house, she found them all in close conversation; and, upon seeing her the woman articulated aloud, “Very well, Sir, the horses are ready, and I dare to say the lady will know her own good, and not refuse your honor when you offers so handsomely,”—and, then turning to my mother,—“Miss,” says she, “I hope as how you won't stand in your own light, the gentleman's a proper likely gentleman, as one would wish to see in a summer's day.”—My mother, seeing that she was pre-engaged, stopped her harangue; and, despairing of any rescue there, she gave herself up without making an answer, and suffered my father to hand her into the coach, resolving in her own mind to make her escape at the inn where they should put up at night.—With this hope she preserved a degree of chearfulness through the day; and her companions began to think that she had made her last efforts, and would now rest contented.—they traveled near an hundred miles that day, but it was all across the country; and my uncle Charles being at that very period put under the tuition of a relation who was a clergyman, and kept an academy about ninety miles from London, arrived with his tutor at the same inn, and the same hour, as they did.—My mother, the moment she saw Charles, ran to him, and in the presence of the clergyman, who, though she had head of, she never saw, called him her guardian angel, and her deliverer from vice and infamy.—Mr. Randall was astonished, and desired her to explain herself,—which she did with so much artless sincerity, and undissembled innocence, that, confiding her and her brother to the care of a gentleman who accompanied him, he instantly rushed out in search of her betrayer.—As soon as they met; Mr. Randall declared himself, and his business—told him that, though a minister of the gospel whose characteristick was peace and forgiveness of injuries and whose precepts had ever been his rule of life, so far as respected himself; yet that, in defence of injured innocence, the sword of religion itself would wield with honour—that either Miss Clement's infamy must be sunk in Mrs. Thompson's recovered honour, or Mr. Thompson's life must be staked with his.—The firmness of his manner, and the reverence of his aspect, for he was between fifty and sixty, struck the guilty heart with momentary remorse.—A messenger was dispatched for a license; and the whole party stayed at the inn, till Mr. Randall himself performed the ceremony.—On the Tuesday morning they set out for my father's house; Mrs. Edwards, whose past conduct rendered her hateful to my mother, having proceeded (as she said) on her way to London. As soon as they arrived, the tenants and neighbours came to welcome my mother, whose heart, broken as it was by his severe injunctions, never to see nor think of one of her own

relations, was but ill-qualified to give them reception.—The recollection of her sufferings is too painful. Allow a pause to your

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXVII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

*in continuation.*

MY grandfather having waited a fortnight, with the utmost impatience, for a return to his letter, sent a servant express with another to the school, supposing the former to have miscarried.—Mrs. Monson (the governess), who had heard from her sister the whole transaction, wrote an answer, just to inform him that his daughter was married to a Mr. Thompson, a gentleman of considerable fortune in the county of York, and was gone home to her own house.—That, when she left school, it was her intention to have waited on him previous to her marriage; but that she understood that some accident had happened on the road, which prevented her from carrying that design into execution;—and, giving him her address, referred him to herself for particulars.—As soon as the servant returned, he wrote to my mother, chiding her, though gently, for not permitting him to have the satisfaction of disposing of her hand to the man of her choice; reminded her that she had no opposition to expect from the style of his letter, which he found she had received—and concluding with a very kind invitation to her and her husband, to be present at her sister Rachael's wedding, whom he was going to give, by her own desire, to the son of a worthy friend of his, who was just returned from the Indies, where he had gone when a child, and had brought over an ample fortune.—There is nothing so painful to a generous mind, as to be loaded with kindness which it cannot repay:—how heavy then must be the burden, if one dare not even acknowledge it!—Such was my mother's unhappy situation.—Her letters came opened to her hands; nor did she dare to write one, without the restriction of a similar exhibition.—As soon as she received this, she begged permission to thank her father, if it was not agreeable to accept of his invitation;—remonstrated upon the unkindness of such a prohibition, as excluded the reciprocity of Nature's duties; that her being his wife did not cancel the ties of daughter, nor of sister; and pointed out the large field which such restraint might prove for future uneasiness.—This, to a man of feeling or of understanding, might have had some weight; but my poor father was innocent of any such possessions;—his property was his only boast, and, speak of what you would, he was sure to answer you by a display of his independence.—This indeed is the prevalent error of all those, who, born to no hopes, and educated with no prospect, by any unfortunate chance come to the possession of a fortune disproportionate to their little souls—therefore, in that single point, exterior circumstances might be culpable;—but the superior cruelty of his heart could proceed only from itself.—In short, he took upon him to answer the letter himself, upon a principle of false delicacy, similar to that of a man who married a woman knowing her to be in love with another; and after they were married, though in circumstances where common honesty called for every exertion of their talents for the support of their family, refused to suffer her to obtain, by a laudable use of hers, a very considerable sum, lest other men should impertinently fall in love with her.—O sentiment! sentiment! how art thou perverted! Similar to this was my father's reason for answering my grandfather's letter himself—it was inconsistent, he said, with his feelings, that a wife of his should

correspond with any man but himself; and yet, with all that delicacy, he would in all companies, and even before his servants, upbraid her with a circumstance, which to a mind ill-inclined, would have given a sufficient license to take, or to allow, any liberties that could be devised.—He did write; and not only refused his father-in-law's invitation, but threw such a damp upon their future intercourse, that they seldom met above once a year for the remainder of their lives.—In the course of ten months from their ill-fated marriage, my mother had a son; and, about two years after, my wretched existence began.—The first sounds I could discover, were those of discord, reproach, quarrels, and upbraiding.—My poor mother's temper was soured by a succession of cruelties; and his was of such a kind, that every thing, which to another man would become a blessing, to him was the bitterest curse.—Avarice was his predominant passion; and all his other humours, good or bad, were tinctured with that.—When my brother was born, instead of rejoicing, as many, even bad men, would have done, on such an occasion, he began to calculate the difference an additional servant would make in house-keeping.—When he was ill, his anxiety was not whether his child should die or recover; but was always greater or less in proportion to the length of the apothecary's bill:—at last, after two years of grudging to my poor brother William, I came to add to my father's expence and his consequent misery.—My mother, whose tenderness still dwells upon my memory, and carries my gratitude even to her tomb, denied herself every ornament and superfluous expence, and, supplying herself scantily even with necessaries, laid out the remains of her small allowance upon the little decorations of our persons;—nor do I suppose that, whilst she lived, we ever cost my father a shilling, except our support and that of our nurses.—

'Twas lucky that they had no more children; for, sour as he was at our obtruding ourselves upon his domestic oeconomy, I don't know how he would have welcomed a third.—When I was about ten years old, my brother, who was just twelve, was sent to an academy at Lichfield, and at fourteen, being a lad of remarkable capacity, was forwarded to Cambridge, where the unfortunate cause of my introduction to you was just entered. The young men presently commenced acquaintance; and, as William and I had always loved each other with the utmost tenderness, I suppose he often talked of me to his friend, who was well, too well prepared, at our first meeting, to find my heart in its defenceless state of innocence, and to make it all his own.—Once in about three years we went to London—and the last visit I made it, within the circle of my own family, was the year that you and my uncle Charles were married.—Every where we went, we saw you both, and saw you always together.—There is something very conciliating to a young mind in a picture of domestick happiness: it views it with a double pleasure, as an object of admiration, and as an inspirer of hope.—When we see others happy, we naturally look to the time when we may partake the same felicity.—In every attention my uncle paid you, I saw Charles Mason; and fancy assisting the deception, placed myself in your situation, borrowed your merit, tried-on your graces and your accomplishments; and, like an inspired actor, who, when he personates a hero, looks on the external trappings of the character, and fancies himself the man;—so I, placed by the blind god whose votary I was, in your situation, saw myself, loving like you, deservedly beloved.—My father, whose prejudice against my uncle Charles for his accidental rescue of my mother when yet a child, was not in the least subsided, would never suffer us to know, or be known to him.—I remember to hear my mother say, that, when I was about two years old, she contrived to see my uncle by a stratagem, which was so near costing her life, that she

could never dare to repeat it.—So, in spite of our wishes, we were obliged to leave town without a single interview.—My brother grew so fine a boy, that his father could not avoid taking some notice of him;—by way of indulgence, he allowed him to bring home a friend at every vacation-time:—he did so;—but that friend was always Charles Mason. In short, we loved each other; and, conscious as we were of having no intentions but such as were prompted by nature, and warranted by innocence and virtue, we indulged them without restraint, to the unutterable misery of

Your poor

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXI.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

*in continuation.*

THE last visit but one, which we had from my brother and Charles during my dear mother's lifetime, she saw in my manner something that alarmed her; and, calling me into her closet, she began in words something like these: "My dear Amelia, says she, you are tottering on the brink of a precipice, from which no hand but that of a divine over-ruling Power can snatch you;—yet, as a mother, my duty calls upon me to warn you; as a child, you owe me a serious hearing, and a candid declaration of your real sentiments."—My mother had always taken the happiest method of securing my confidence; from my earliest infancy, she taught me to consider her as my friend, my companion, my instructor, and my partial judge.—There was not a thought of my heart that I would wish to conceal from her; therefore, requesting her to explain her meaning, I promised her to deal with every degree of candour and truth towards her that she had through my life practised towards me, and inculcated upon me for my general conduct.—She then told me, that she had observed an unusual gaiety and gloominess, by turns, to take possession of my mind at the times when Charles Mason was in our family—particularly this last vacation;—that she, for her own part, saw no objection to the young man; on the contrary, that she thought very highly of both his head and his heart; but you know, my dear, says she, that it is neither your opinion, nor mine, that can dispose of you—have a care, therefore, Amelia; for, should you place your whole hopes of happiness upon one object, and that object should happen not to please your father—misery must ensue;—you know how peremptory he is;—you know too how absolutely destitute I am of the power to serve you; precluded by my husband's tyranny from the converse of my father for many years before his death, I was not considered in the distribution of his fortune; and, scantily as I have been provided with the annual supply of my own and my children's expences, it has not been in my power to make the least provision for a case where his displeasure might affect you.—Should he see half so much as I have done, I tremble for the consequences;—check then, in time, my dear girl, the approaches of a passion which has so many chances against it.—She paused; and I replied,—and, with all the openness of an honest heart, unveiled the inmost feelings of mine. I told her, that I certainly had a very tender friendship for Charles; and that I had some reason to think my father saw, and did not disapprove it;—that he had even jested with me upon the subject, with more than his accustomed share of pleasantry; and that I could not suppose, that he, who inveighed so loudly against other parents, for forcing their children's inclinations in marriage, however unhappy his temper, would practise the same cruelty himself. My mother cast a look of anguish and approbation; and prayed ardently to heaven, that I might never have cause to change my opinion.—About this time a Mr. Wilson, a man of mean extraction, who had amassed a great deal of money in a very unamiable manner, had met us at some neighbouring visit; and made, next day, proposals to my father; which he, to my great joy, rejected; nor could I ever since conceive by what motives he was actuated—unless it was that he had been hurt, when we dined together, at Wilson's

reaching out his hand to intercept a plate of soup, which the lady of the house had intended for my father.—Whether such claim to precedence saved me from the disagreeable arms of Wilson, to be sacrificed to the still more horrid monster whom you saw, or that my miserable moment was not yet arrived, I never could guess—probably both causes might coincide;—however that be, I then considered his refusal as an omen of his future indulgence to my passion for Charles.—Of what folly is not a youthful mind, under the influence of passion, capable!—I soon after, however, was undeceived.—The next York races we were present; and a sportsman, who happened to be very successful, elate, perhaps, with that very circumstance, saw, or fancied he saw, me with eyes of love.—He enquired my name, sought out my father, and instantly made proposals for me; which, to my utter confusion and astonishment, he accepted, on condition that he settled eleven thousand pounds, which he had won at the races, irrevocably upon me. The monster consented; and a Mr. Perrin, an attorney at York, was employed to draw up the writings, and desired to keep the matter entirely secret, lest it should reach me; for it seems they did not intend that any questions should be asked till the very morning on which I was to be married.—Mean time, the horse-jockey spent almost every hour at our house, and gave us the pedigree of every horse upon the turf;—talked learnedly of spavins and splinters; the methods of cure; the best diet for runners, and the difference between them and draught or saddle horses; and was sure to enforce every argument with some similes, in which *my* person, and that of an hostler's wife, or our own dairy-maid, were sure to make capital figures.—A fortnight passed in this manner; and frequently, in the course of this time, my poor mother, who was in the secret, and did not dare either to communicate it to me, or to make an effort to oppose it, has been chid, and sent out of the room, when her heart has filled at the idea of a child whom she tenderly loved, being sacrificed to such a being, whose whole train of ideas were confined to a stable.—My father, perhaps, of all men that ever lived, was most obstinate in his conversation, and most flexible in his actions.—The person he most esteemed in the world was my mother; but I believe he was scarcely sensible of it himself;—certain it is, that she was one of the last persons in it who could influence him in any thing;—narrow in his own ideas, he always suspected others of being interested in all they said or did; and, in proportion as they were nearly connected with him, he suspected them of design in every word they spoke.—Upon this principle it was, that my mother was totally disregarded in the hints which she ventured to drop of Mr. Wallace's fortune being always precarious;—that a man, who could win eleven thousand in one day, might as probably lose it another;—that its being settled upon me, in a piece of parchment, was no security for his not hazarding it on the race-ground;—and that it would be poor compensation, in such a case, for a wife, or her trustees, to sue and imprison a husband.—All this he heard without regard; nay, sometimes laughed at her folly, and sometimes chid her impertinence; till, after ten or twelve days, she began to give up the point in despair, and even, at his absolute command, set about buying my cloaths; though she considered it as dressing out a lamb for sacrifice.—Mr. Perrin, however, who was a very honest man, and father of a large family, over whom he exercised a very different kind of parental authority, took the pains to enquire into the character of my elected lord; and found him, by the universal voice of all that knew him, a noted sharper; and, what perhaps served my cause more, that he had been detected in a fraud the night before at York, and was obliged to make free with three of the eleven thousand, which my father was in love with, to hush the matter into

peace.—My father was disappointed; and he shewed it: but my poor mother, whose heart was relieved from a load of misery, broke out into exclamations of gratitude to heaven, and Mr. Perrin, whom she considered as my deliverer. Mr. Perrin said little in return; but taking the writings out of his pocket, looked at my father, and saying, “With your permission, Sir!” threw them into the fire; and, for that time, saved

Your

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS CLEMENT,

*in continuation.*

SOON after this escape from one source of misery, another, more fatal to my peace and my mother's life, ensued.—My father, though he did not love his children with much tenderness, had an ambition to leave them in such situations as to make a figure in the world; especially my brother, who was now a very fine scholar, and had displayed understanding and abilities to give wings to a parent's fondest hopes. My father's principal ambition was to have him in parliament; with this idea, he thought it better to sell out of York, which he considered as supplied for many years to come; and buy into some other county.—This scheme he communicated to Mr. Perrin, who was very famous for buying and selling estates. About eight months of tolerable tranquillity succeeded the storm I have just recited; in which time my brother brought Charles home again, and saw us plight vows of eternal love; when Mr. Perrin, who had endeared himself to us all, came over one day, just as we had sat down to dinner, and told my father, that he had a chapman in his eye for his Yorkshire estate; and that, if he could strike that bargain before he could conveniently meet with an object in his own idea, there was a pretty little house, with a few acres, where he and his family might reside, till a purchase in one of the counties he wished for should offer; but that he must sell directly, if at all, as the Nabob was impatient to purchase, and would, he believed, be down in two or three days.—My father, who thought all happiness consisted in being rich, asked, with great eagerness, whether the Nabob was a single man? Mr. Perrin answered, "I believe so, Sir; but he is past fifty; so he will not do for miss Thompson."—"I don't know that, says my father; Amelia is not such a fool, I hope, as to think her age any rule for her husband's." My mother was going to speak; but he stopped her mouth with, "Come, Madam, don't you fill the girl's head with notions like your own;—I think you refused a man of fifty at her age, did not you? and what have you been the better for it? You refused him, I remember, to marry me—and now we are both growing old together—so that where is the difference whether a man first grows old, and then his wife? or whether one combs a grey head, and the other shaves a grey beard, at the same time?" There was a mixture of pleasantry in this ill-natured recapitulation, that did not always appear, to soften his rebukes; yet it was sufficiently well mixed to convey just what he intended—a jest to Mr. Perrin, but a dagger to my poor mother's heart;—and it was felt accordingly. She was effectually silenced; and I did not venture upon so dangerous a subject: besides, I don't know whether all young people feel as I did; but there is still an internal support, derived from hope, that aided me in every conflict.—My heart would fill, and often overflow, for my mother's sufferings, which were, for the last six years, principally on my account; but for myself, I seldom wept, or even apprehended any ill, though ever so probable, till it actually came upon me.—Then I had read of daughters who had been persecuted by fathers to the very eve of marriage, and had by prayers and tears disarmed the cruelty of such unnatural parents, and escaped the threatened evil.—Nor was I destitute of that confidence (at least I thought so) which is derived from religion, and which generally

preserves its votaries.—But whether I was too confident, and ascribed more merit to myself than I possessed;—or whether it pleased the Almighty to suffer me to be particularly wretched, as a warning to others who come after me;—or whether a balance of happiness be yet in store—(Oh flatterer! flatterer! not gone yet)—requires more sagacity than I am mistress of to find out. Certain it is, that I always acted to the best of my judgement, and, so far as I could be acquainted with my own heart, with the best intentions towards others as well as myself—and yet—have been most miserable—and, what pains my heart most in recollection, have made my dear Charles more wretched than myself, for I have made him guilty.—About three days after, Mr. Perrin returned, and brought Mr. Wolfe with him, for that was the intended purchaser's name. I was covering some grapes, that stood north, with a piece of matting; and, turning about for a nail, which the servant held, I saw them enter the court-yard, and dropped off the steps.—The recollection of what had passed, the fear of what might come, and the new cause of grief I was likely to prove to the best of mothers, mixed in my idea, and produced an absolute whirlwind, for so it seemed to my feeling.—The gentlemen ran up to me, and raised me; and, as I walked in, supported by both, I heard the Nabob exclaim to Perrin, “By G—d! She's the handsomest creature I ever saw! why did you not tell me this? and you might have asked what you pleased for the purchase.”—It is amazing of what inconsistent materials the human mind is formed! I have promised to lay open all the weaknesses of mine—and therefore am obliged to confess, that notwithstanding my unbounded affection for Charles—the fear of my father's authority being used to force me to marry any man who could bid well—my resolution never, whilst I had life, to consent to such a step;—I say, notwithstanding all this, I felt an unspeakable joy in being able at one glance to inspire a passion so ardent as his expression seemed to declare;—I wished that it might increase—and yet resolved not to return it.—Whence then could that arise? 'Twas surely vanity.—I have often entered into a conversation with other young ladies who had the same feelings, as indeed most pretty women at a certain age have; from them I could never extort a similar confession; but, when I have taken my own heart to task, I have always brought it to that declaration.—From fourteen to twenty are the most dangerous years of a woman's life;—'tis then a mother's eye is most absolutely necessary.—What a madness then, at such a period, to trust a daughter to the care of a person who has no tie but a pecuniary one! how many thousands feel the fatal effects of it! A mother, a *sensible* mother, who pretends not to be ignorant of Nature's imperfections, is the only governess for her own daughter;—yet, must her care be *delicately* applied—steering clear of low suspicion, which provokes; and of injudicious severity, which makes desperate.—Such was the conduct of my dear mother towards me; and, whilst *she* lived, my guardian angel never slept.—But, deprived of her, I lost my pilot, and soon my little bark, blown about by youthful vanity and youthful passion, shipwrecked on a father's cruelty!—Mr. Wolfe was as absolutely enamoured as my vanity would have desired; but he had a heart too good for his fate.—As soon as he entered the parlour, he told my father that he did not doubt but that he should like his house and his estate, which upon that opinion he was ready to purchase; but that his mind was so entirely engrossed by the beauty of his daughter, that though to talk of purchasing *that* would be to blaspheme its maker, he should be happy to know how he could merit the possession of it;—that Mr. Perrin knew his fortune; and that, when he had charged upon it five hundred pounds a-year for his mother's life, it would double its value in his

esteem by being settled upon Miss Thompson as his wife.—My father was greatly delighted, and, sending for my mother, repeated Mr. Wolfe's proposal, which he confirmed; and, my mother being greatly pleased with his appearance and manner, and despairing of any other way to get out of this affair without my father's eternal displeasure, she undertook to communicate the matter to

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXIII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

*in continuation.*

AFTER my fall, I had been put to bed, where notwithstanding my past agitation, or perhaps harassed by its violence, I soon fell asleep.—My mother came up to my room, and, taking a book, sat by my bed-side till I awoke;—then, after such enquiries as her tenderness prompted, she told me that she had a commission from my father, which she was obliged to execute, and hoped I would not be so averse to what he now proposed as on former occasions, as she had seen and conversed with Mr. Wolfe, and approved of him so much in that little time, that she could wish I would at least deliberate before I absolutely refused.—I burst into tears, and told her, that my heart was not my own; that, in my brother's presence, and with his approbation, I had exchanged vows of fidelity with Charles;—that, if I were to marry another man, I should not be able to make him a good wife;—that, notwithstanding all her sufferings with my father, she must have been supported by remembering that he was the man of her choice; but that, had she received similar treatment from another man, she could not, with all her native goodness of heart, have done with such persevering merit her duty.—She shook her head, and replied, “My dear Amelia—that is the mode of judging natural to nineteen; at your age, I should probably have reasoned in the same manner; but it is a delusive medium through which you look; it is the medium of passion. Or call it reason—I have as many arguments to apply on the other side of the question, and they shall be reason too.—All human attributes are imperfect, and none more so than reason;—for instance, in the very case in point—why may I not expect you to believe me, when I say, that, perhaps, the recollection of your father being the man of my choice has added a new sting to every mortification I have suffered from his caprice and his cruelty?—It is certainly true, and yet I grant your arguments found well too.—Had I married the man my father proposed to me, I had not had the painful remembrance of disobeying a parent.—He might have behaved better to me than Mr. Thompson—so far I had been happier;—had he behaved worse (though that is almost impossible), I should not have had the occasions for reproach and upbraiding, which, with all the patience I could muster, I have not always been able to forbear; nor had he an opportunity of putting me in mind of a weakness, which (though my will did not then consent to it), my virtue, had I not loved the object, and feared to have lost him, would have secured me against, though at the expence of my life.”—Here we were interrupted by a message from my father, who had finished his own bargain, and was so anxious to settle mine, that he had insisted upon the gentleman's staying all night, that, if I was not able to come down that evening, he might be sure to see me in the morning.—I resolved to take advantage of my illness for that evening. However, next day came; I got up and dressed myself; happy in my mother's assurances, that, though she wished me to acquiesce, she never would be instrumental in putting a constraint upon me, which she had ever condemned when practised by other parents towards their children.—I went down, and was introduced by my mother, who apologized for my not having come down the evening before, by reciting the accident I

had had, and the necessity there was for endeavouring to get me to sleep off the consequences.—Mr. Wolfe came up to me, and enquired into the nature of the accident, which I explained; and, tea being brought, my father called out across the room, with abundance of good-humour and apparent tenderness—“Come, you little tumbler, entertain us now with the feats of your hands; they will be pleasanter than that of your heels.”—then, opening my harpsichord, took me by the hand, and desired me to play one of Handel’s concerto’s, whilst my mother made tea.—After I had trembled over the keys some of the most horrid discord that can be imagined, for I had not the least use of my fingers—and the gentlemen said as many civil things as they could have done to Handel for his composition; I returned to the tea-table, and my father began upon his favourite theme of oeconomy—displayed his eloquence upon farming, gardening, and the cheap methods he had found out of educating his children, by making my mother teach us to read, himself to write, the parish-clerk to sing, and the organist to play on the harpsichord:—The fact is, he was very ingenious in that same science of frugality; and if it be a virtue—I am afraid it was the only virtue he possessed.—Mr. Perrin kept up the chat; but Mr. Wolfe seemed to be lost in thought; and, having asked and obtained my father’s permission to speak to me upon the subject next his heart, he came up to me, and, with a great deal of manly steadiness, and yet the whole of a lover’s tender apprehension, he said—“Miss Thompson, a business the most fortunate, I trust, of my whole life, brought me to your father yesterday, without knowing that he was happy in the possession of such a daughter.—The moment I saw you, which was after you had fallen from the vine, my heart received an impression it never had before.—After you retired to your apartment, in a conversation with your father and Mr. Perrin, I have discovered that my name had been mentioned in your presence, with the forbidding accompaniments of being a nabob, and fifty years of age.—Perhaps those mistakes may have prejudiced me in your opinion, and in the chance I might otherwise have had in your heart; it is therefore essential to my happiness, that I say a few words upon that subject.”—My father laughed out aloud,—“Lord! Sir,” says he, “how little you must know of women, to suppose that your being a nabob should hurt you in their esteem! Why they will have the better opportunity of being extravagant;—and, as to your age, that is a palpable mistake.—Why, he is young enough, miss! is not he? he is almost as young as your favourite Charles.” I suppose my looks told tales; for Mr. Wolfe exclaimed, “Good God! I am too late; her heart is given to another; and, with that defect, her face and form, beautiful as they are, would want the power to bless me!”—Then, turning to me, “I beg your pardon, madam, says he, for so bold a supposition—your own delicacy will be a sufficient security for their going together.”—My Father was mad with himself; he bit his lips, and rubbed his hands—and, at last, broke out, “Lord! lord!” he cried, “how absurd your men of vast sensibility always are! Why Charles is only a play-fellow of her brother’s—a poor parson’s son, that I used to invite home at vacation-times, to save his father the expence of an additional mouth.—Eh, Amelia! is not that the case?”—My blood boiled resentment;—if I had not struggled hard, I must have said something he would never have forgiven.—“Speak! girl,” says he. I answered, “Sir, it is impossible for me to dive into your motives for inviting my brother’s friend to your house; had it been only to gratify so deserving a son, I should have thought that reason sufficient;—if your motives were of that generous nature you have just mentioned, they were hitherto hid within your own breast; the properest situation, in my opinion, for them to have remained

in." Mr. Wolfe insensibly took my hand: "Oh, miss Thomson! says he, may I look to that face, dwell upon those accents, breathing unutterable sense and sweetness, and may I hope that the possessor may be mine?"—My heart was torn; had I never seen Charles, nay, had I not bound myself to be his, I should have given up the struggle.—I saw in my present lover every perfection I loved in Charles; and, with those perfections, my parents' wishes—a competent fortune, and the blessing of bestowing happiness upon a worthy man, but Charles, my brother, and my recent vows yet warm upon my lip, checked the yielding thought; and, bursting from the room, I left the men to their conclusion, and my mother to a new persecution for her

AMELIA.

LETTER LXXIV.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

*in continuation.*

I had run up to my room, and thrown myself in a great chair; and was revolving within my own mind the unfortunate situation into which a few words, spoken in the warmth of an undivided heart, had plunged, not only myself, but my father, my mother, and a deserving man (for such I persuade myself Mr. Wolfe must be), and even, in all probability, Charles himself.—I began to look back, with an eye of reason, over those rocks and quicksands which passion had borne me over on fancy's wings.—Charles had not a shilling—I, without my father's approbation of my marriage, must be equally destitute.—Was a marriage, on such terms, the road to happiness? Certainly, no. Was it likely, that, refusing a man to whom I could make no objection, my father, or even a better father, would ever consent to give me and a competence to a man whom he had thrown into such a light of contempt? Certainly, no.—Was it most my duty to persevere, in spite of conviction, to marry Charles, to the utter ruin of us both; and, perhaps to the miserable means of propagating beggars; of seeing those little innocent sufferers want the comforts of life, and hearing them, in the cries of nature, upbraid me as the cause;—or, by giving up a preference, make my parents smile, a worthy man happy, myself independent, my children, if I had any, ornaments to society, and blessings to mankind; and, at the same time, leave Charles free to make a happier choice, where his merit might render him equally acceptable, and where peace, plenty, and happiness, would be the substitutes for, perhaps, repentance, poverty, and woe?—This, I have often thought, was a flight beyond nineteen; but it was inspiration—it was the voice of heaven: happy had it been for us all, that I had persevered in the opinion!—but it was not to be. My mother, whom I had heard in her own room some time before, gently tapped at my door. I opened it; and, throwing my arms round her neck (for I saw she had been crying), I begged of her to forgive me the misery I had caused her; and told her, that I had run over the matter, and all its consequences, in my own mind; that I was convinced of my father's right and her's to dispose of me; and that henceforward I would be ruled by them.—She thanked me, and said, “that it might be of use on some other occasion; but that she believed Mr. Wolfe was gone for ever; and that my father was so enraged at the supposition, that she did not know that he would ever see me again;—that, at all events, he insisted upon my assigning some cause for the unpardonable rudeness I had been guilty of; otherwise she was commissioned to tell me, that my own apartment should be the extent of my liberty.”—I was shocked at being supposed capable of doing any thing from being threatened, that I should not more readily do from a principle of duty.—I told her so; and she replied, “My dear girl, you are not now to learn that your father don't think upon those refined principles; however, if you comply with his requisition, he will not trouble himself about the motives; let it be duty towards me—I love that compliance best.” Whilst we were in this conversation, a servant came to my door, and, speaking aloud at the outside, informed me, that there was a letter for me, to which my father expected I would send a proper answer. My mother opened the door; and, taking from his hand, she

put into mine, a letter from Mr. Wolfe; the seal of which, according to his usual delicacy, my father had broken, and no doubt perused its contents.—I read it through several times, my mother eagerly watching my looks; and, when I could no longer refrain from tears, she asked whether she might enquire the cause? I gave her the letter, and begged her to give me her sentiments upon it. She was as much at a loss as I was; nor could we either of us guess what my father meant by a proper answer. At last we resolved, that the likeliest mode of conciliating his mind, and the only one for coming at his opinion, was, for my mother to go down, tell him the circumstance of my girlish promise to Charles; and so, by discharging the first of his commands, obtain at least a little time, and perhaps a little indulgence respecting the latter. Happy in my assurance of perfect obedience, she left me; when I, to prevent improper thoughts returning, copied his letter, which I enclose.

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXV.

MR. WOLFE TO MISS THOMPSON.

MADAM,

THE singular occurrence of yesterday, and the effect it must produce upon your present and my future happiness, call upon me to explain my sentiments; and to leave it to your generosity, whether or not I may deserve a reciprocal attention from you. The moment I saw you leave the room in disorder, I thought it my duty to quit your house, because there seems a peremptory mode of proceeding in Mr. Thompson's manner, which, however his exertion of it might flatter me on this occasion, I am incapable of taking any advantage of. I love you, madam; very ardently and honestly love you;—but I love you as a man should—declining that happiness which must be dearly paid for at the expence of yours. I should again ask that pardon which you generously gave me yesterday, when an expression somewhat similar to this escaped me, on your father's mentioning some young gentleman's name, and attaching to it the happy epithet of your favourite;—but, madam, though I think as highly of your delicacy as I do of your beauty, I dread the influence of a father's authority, where it is used in a case so unavoidably productive of long years of happiness or misery.—Nor can I help censuring that parent, who attempts by violence, or, what would be more effectual towards a mind like that I conceive you to possess, soothing persuasion, to bias a child in the only action of their lives where only two peoples' consent should be considered as essentially requisite.—I have said thus much on the subject, however foreign, or rather opposite, it may seem to my purpose, only to convince you, how dear your happiness is in my estimation. If, after this, I should be happy enough to merit your distinction, I shall, with confidence equal to my love, take you to my arms, and put you in possession of an heart whose first beatings have been for you.

With respect to myself, my family and fortune, every particular shall be laid before you;—for the present, I will only say, that my ancestors have been, for many years back, men of fair characters and independent circumstances; but, their families enlarging within the last fifty years, my father, who was the youngest of nine children of a gentleman in the South of Ireland, was brought up to a reputable business; and, when I was about thirteen years of age, and the third of seven sons, at the earnest solicitation of a brother of my mother's, he suffered me to make a voyage to India—which has been so fortunate in its consequences, that in fourteen years I have made, by honest industry, unstained by human blood, a real fortune of sixty thousand pounds. Had I been less conscientious, I might have been more wealthy; but three or four thousand pounds a year, with a guiltless mind, is a richer possession to me, than as many millions, with the death or the curse of a fellow-creature annexed to it.—I mean to employ fifty thousand in purchasing estates;—ten thousand I have vested in the public funds, and settled its produce, for life, upon my mother; at her death, it is to be divided equally between three sisters and two brothers, who are all, out of twelve children of our parents, who survive to enjoy their brother's good fortune.—I thought this explanation my duty. If a heart untouched by any previous passion, in such a person as now offers it, can be found

worthy your acceptance, the future business of my life shall be to approve your election.—But if, unhappily for me! your heart is already bestowed—I may, I must, be miserable; but never will, by an unmanly persecution, make you so. For this reason I must beg that an answer to this candid declaration (if it is worthy of one) be written by yourself.—Be you candid in return; and, whether it brings happiness or misery, it will be a treasure to

Your most sincerely devoted

ANTHONY WOLFE.

L E T T E R LXXVI.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

*in continuation.*

MY mother staid a considerable time with my father; and then sent up for the letter.—As soon as it was gone, my thoughts again were free.—I began to think, that, were it possible for me to dissemble my feelings to Mr. Wolfe, and trust to time and his worth to give him that entire possession of my heart which his delicacy so well deserved; some untoward accident might discover my secret, and shew me to him in the light of an impostor—a horrid character!—How must such a man despise a woman capable of such a conduct!—and for me to behave ever so unexceptionally, after such a discovery, would only seem a well-acted hypocrisy:—besides, what kind of truce must I make mean time with myself? how appease those reproaches, which every little occurrence of life might furnish me with?—These reflections distracted me to a degree of irresolution what to say or do;—when my mother returned, with Mr. Wolfe's letter in one hand, and an answer dictated by my father for me to copy in the other.—Had the contents been unexceptionable—the mode was in itself a falsehood.—Mr. Wolfe desired, he said, that it might be written by myself; but he did not say any thing about who should dictate.—These kind of literal truths, and substantial falsehoods, I was no stranger to; but my soul started with indignation from the practice of any thing so base.—My mother thought as I did; but it was not her business to say so on that occasion.—However, to bring matters as nearly as possible to a crisis, she proposed a medium, and told me, that, if I would write an answer, meaning the same as my father's, she would endeavour to reconcile him to its being sent by the messenger, whom he had detained almost by force till it should be ready; and that the credit she had gained with him, from the message I had sent, and from a supposition that she had influenced my conduct, left her no apprehension of carrying that point.—As to my poor father's dictation, it would have been impossible for any woman, worth a man's having, to have avowed its language, or its sentiments; it was not consenting, it was asking—and that in terms not extremely delicate.—I took pen, ink, and paper; I began, and blotted; and at last I wrote the following:

“SIR,

THE delicacy of your sentiments, and the sincerity of that passion, of which, however unworthy I feel myself, I harbour not a doubt, demand every return of gratitude and esteem.—The subject is a delicate one, and, after the laudable conduct you have hitherto pursued, I am convinced you will excuse my enlarging upon it.—Happiness is your due—may you long enjoy it, as an encouragement to virtue; and a proof, that to be desirous of bestowing bliss is the surest road to attain it!—My father and mother present their compliments; and desire me to add, that they shall always think themselves honoured in your company.—I remain, Sir, with the sincerest prayers that heaven may send you every blessing you merit,

Your much obliged

AMELIA THOMPSON."

My mother carried this down; and though my father did not think it sufficiently explanatory, and swore it was the worst letter he ever knew the fool the write, he sealed it, and suffered it to go.—I passed three days in a state of the most painful suspense; at the end of which, I received another letter from him, complaining of the uncertainty in which I left him, and begging that I would authorize him, either to believe or contradict a report he had heard, of my being on the point of marriage with a gentleman of the county of Worcester nine months before; and, if it was true, how far my own inclinations were concerned in breaking-off the match;—in short, whether my heart was disengaged, and, if so, whether he might entertain a hope—on which condition, he should not lose a moment in availing himself of my father and mother's kind invitation; but that, if he was forbid to look forward to the possession of my affection, he hoped they would excuse him if he declined exposing himself to increase of love, and consequent despair.—This too, my father opened—and, embarrassed as he was at the recollection of the affair of Wallace, hinted at in his letter, he thought it a happy opportunity of convincing him, that my heart was free, and he was welcome to it (for that was the English of all his conversation on the subject); and desired me to refer him to his friend Mr. Perrin, who could answer that it was a matter rather concealed from, than promoted by me.—I wondered he was able to keep a steady countenance, whilst he talked to me on a point which so cruelly stigmatized his tyranny and unnatural behaviour.—But I suppose he had settled with his own conscience upon the account, and was not anxious what I thought of the matter.—I was, however, more distressed than before—for inevitable decision must be the purport of my reply.—I had three days to answer it; but the longer I thought, the more I was perplexed;—sometimes I resolved to give up Charles—my tongue could pronounce the resolution; but I was not sure of my heart;—besides, the before-mentioned considerations had convinced me, that even that would not be effectual; I had loved—perhaps did love still; and nothing but an heart untouched as his own could content, or be worthy of, Mr. Wolfe.—What then was to be done?—Why, I had been obliged to be honest, and declare my feelings and his absolute disappointment;—but death, that final close of human anxiety, released him from his suspense, and me from my embarrassment.—A nervous complaint, to which he had for years been subject upon any agitation of mind, returned with such violence, as to deprive him first of speech, and then three hours after of life.—As soon as he was seized, he expected it would end fatally;—and, sending for Mr. Perrin, he made a new disposition of his effects—dividing the fifty thousand amongst his mother, brothers, and sisters; and bequeathing the ten thousand pounds in the funds to me.—The day after I had received his last letter, I was sitting at my window, thinking how I should express myself so as to give him least pain—and how to dispose of myself, when my father should put his threat into execution;—for he had repeatedly declared, that, if I should be such an unfortunate slut as to lose Mr. Wolfe by my ridiculous prudery, I should find shelter any where else—for his roof was no longer a covering for me.—In this state of mind, I saw a clerk of Mr. Perrin's, who had been at our house before, enter the court-yard.—His first appearance struck me with a horror I cannot

express—though I little supposed why.—In three minutes after, my mother came up stairs—and throwing herself in a chair, and bursting into tears, cryed, “Oh, my ill-fated child! what will become of thee now?” “For heaven’s sake! madam, what is the matter?”—She could not speak for some minutes; at length, recovering herself, she told me, “That Mr. Wolfe was just expired, when Mr. Perrin, who had made a new will for him to the purport I have related, sent away the clerk with the instrument, which was indeed rather a deed of gift than a will, and which was best and safest in my possession;—and that my father, my inhuman father, snatching it from his hand, had torn it into pieces, and, throwing the remnants into the fire, swore (with the bitterest and most fearful imprecations on himself if he broke his oath) that I not only should not profit by the weakness of a man whom I had murdered; but that I should from that moment be an alien to his heart and his house;—and had desired her, on pain of equal punishment, to prepare me for quitting his house instantly, and for ever.—Her first thought was to send me to the miller’s wife who nursed me, and who gave ready welcome to

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXVII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

*in continuation.*

FROM the time of my quitting the house, for near a month, my dear mother came to see me, at some time or other of every day, according to the opportunities which his engagements gave her.—One evening, as she crossed three fields, between her house and ours, full of beans in blossom, the dews being extremely heavy, her shoes and stockings, and indeed most of her cloaths, were wet.—When she went home, he was returned from a visit which she expected would have engaged him longer; and she did not dare to go up to change her cloaths, lest he should ask any questions that might lead to a discovery of where she had been; besides, though he treated her so cruelly, he could not bear to be without her.—She therefore sat out the time of supper, and, having passed a restless night, got up the next morning with a sore throat.—She was scarce able to walk about the house; but she dreaded a confinement, which must prevent her from seeing me: she therefore resolved to make an effort towards one visit more, but was so ill that she was obliged to return before she had got half-way to the mill.—That day passed—another, and another, and I neither saw, nor heard from her.—My heart was breaking.—I ran over all the conversation that had passed between us, and could not recollect any the least cause of offence; besides, she was not that kind of parent. On the evening of the third day, I was sitting in the little garden behind the house, and a pretty little boy about three years old, belonging to the miller's son, upon my lap—when another child came running to us, crying, “The squire! the squire!” Convinced that this exclamation announced my father, I set down the child, and from my first impulse ran to throw myself at his feet—when, with a countenance more softened than I could have hoped, though with an averted face, he raised me, and said, “Your mother wants you, Amelia.”—“Where! where, Sir, is my dear mother?—I have not seen her these three days.”—“So then! he replied, she has been here! and her disobedience is like to cost her dear.”—“Oh, Sir, be not angry with my dear parent, nor call her maternal tenderness by so harsh a name;—’twas not you she disobeyed, for you yourself are come to see your unhappy child; ’twas only your passion, your resentment, that forbad her; but nature, powerful nature, brought her here!—Where! where is she now?”—He was much affected.—“She is at home in bed—not well—go to her.”—All this he spoke, or I fancied it; and, without the ceremony of hat or cloak, I flew to the house, and, hurrying up to the bed-chamber, found her in a violent fever—a blister on her back, and leeches on her temples;—and, at the instant I entered, perceived by her incoherent ravings that her brain was turned by the apprehensions she suffered for me.—She reiterated, “You are her father, why will you banish her? O my child! my child!” I tore open the curtains, and, throwing myself upon the bed by her, told her I was come to restore peace; that my father had relented, and himself had brought me home.—She did not immediately know me; but, in a few minutes after, my father coming in, she raised herself on her elbow, and, looking at us both by turns for a long time, she burst into a flood of tears, which recovered her senses; and, as soon as she could speak, she held out her hand to him, and said, “Oh, Mr. Thompson, take my Amelia to your heart, restore her

to a father's bosom, and shelter her from the world!—My miseries be forgotten!—and may those undeserved sufferings, which for two-and-twenty years I have endured, fall to the ground, and be buried in my grave!”—He did not say much, but looked as if he was affected, and, taking out his keys, which he generally kept himself, gave them to me.— My mother's agitation had increased her fever, and brought on the delirium again;—so he left the room; and I sat down by her bed-side till she got into a dose, from which—she never awoke.—About an hour after, she fell asleep; the nurse, who thought she lay too still, put her head between the curtains, then in great haste flew to the dressing-table, and, bringing the glass, soon discovered that she was breathless.—The state of my mind at her declaration, I will not attempt to describe;—nor need I, to you.—My father was called; and when he found that she was really dead, he shed tears of remorse, I believe, as well as grief; and, looking stedfastly in her face,—“And art thou gone, my faithful friend, my patient suffering wife!” he cried;—and, taking me by the hand, “Amelia! says he, follow thy mother's example in every thing but marriage—I did not deserve her!”—“Oh, Sir, I replied, why did you not awake to a sense of her merit, whilst you had it in your power to reward it?” Conscious as he was, he could not bear reproof, but left me, even then, in anger.—A messenger was dispatched express for my brother, who arrived in time to attend her funeral; and staid with us the remainder of the time between that and the vacation, when Charles, the fatal Charles! joined us.—My father behaved much better than usual, and even condescended in many instances to consult me upon undertakings he was engaged in. Charles, who saw the change as well as ourselves, took every occasion of remarking upon it; and, as he happened to be in great favour with my father, sometimes would tell us, in our moments of private, “that he had a mind to ask me of my father; that, in another year, he was to enter at the Temple, and could soon provide for a wife as well as any young man he knew.” This was talking like a young man in love. My brother saw the matter coolly, and opposed it with great zeal; as a certain loss of his acquaintance, which he greatly prized, must be the consequence. At length, the fatal time arrived, when they were to return to Cambridge for the last time.—The night before their departure, Charles, my brother, and I, were walking under a row of chestnut-trees before the door; and the subject of our future happiness was agitated.—I strengthened my brother's opinion, that it would be madness to mention it to my father; and that we had no chance but from time and persevering constancy.—Charles took this occasion to recapitulate all the circumstances of Mr. Wallace and Mr. Wolfe; both of whose stories he had heard, and pretty justly;—swore that he never would return to Cambridge in a state of doubt, whilst a chestnut-tree stood that could bear his weight; and, taking out his prayer-book, put it into my brother's hand, saying, “Now, William, by all the friendship you ever professed to me, by your sister's happiness and mine, which you know depends upon our union, and which union you say you have no objection to—I conjure you to read for us the ceremony, which will make us one, and set two breaking hearts at peace.—My brother objected, “that he was not in priests orders; and that his performance of the ceremony would not be binding.”—“Not legally so, says Charles; but can you suppose that in the sight of heaven one man is not as capable of giving due weight to the ceremony as another? or, rather, can you doubt the honest consent of two faithful hearts being in itself sufficient? Your performance of the ceremony will not entitle me to the possession of Amelia's fortune; but it will secure me the possession of all that is valuable, Amelia's self.”—In short, you will not wonder, that, having convinced my

brother, my consent was easily obtained; the moon shone bright, and thousands of stars illuminated heaven, and witnessed our espousals. Next morning the two beings nearest my heart on earth were divided from me—one to perish in a few hours; the other to live to greater misery, and die at last a martyr to my misfortunes. My dear brother, whose affection for me softened all the rigours of an austere parent, and supplied the loss of my tender mother, in the road to Cambridge, was thrown by his horse, and, pitching against a large piece of flint, which seemed almost laid there on purpose, expired on the spot—to the unspeakable distress of his friend and brother, and of his poor

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXVIII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

*in continuation.*

AS soon as the news of my brother's death arrived, my father's temper took a turn more unfortunate than it had before. Instead of being afflicted, he seemed angry—and raved, as if heaven had given him a bond for his son's immortality, and broke it.—I, for my part, was thrown into absolute despair; and my mind was so busied in itself, that I was for several weeks in a state of insensibility to every thing that passed in the world. The servants spoke to me, and I neither heard nor understood them, unless my father, whose presence I began to dread more than ever, was at my ear, to rouse me; and, indeed, his voice was the most powerful antidote to my lethargy.—Charles, whom I now considered as my husband, had no opportunity of writing to me; for I had charged him, as he valued my life, not to hazard a letter, which might discover our secret, to fall into my father's hands, who read all my letters before they came into mine. In this situation I passed four months after the death of my brother; when Mr. Perrin, who frequently passed a melancholy hour with us, called at our house. My father began to ask what purchases he had negotiated lately.—Mr. Perrin said, “he had bought an estate, about eighteen miles distant, belonging to a Mr. Wells, who was gone to reside in London, for the education of his children; and that he thought it an excellent bargain. The purchaser, he said, was a gentleman of the name of Merisford, who had made a very competent fortune in Turkey, where he had resided some years as a merchant, and was now returned to spend it in his native country. The house, he said, would require new painting and papering, before the new tenant took possession; but he believed that mean time he would lodge at the house of a brother of his (Mr. Perrin's); and that he expected him down in a fortnight.” My father asked no farther questions; and I wondered at it. I was not in a humour to be curious: so the conversation ended; and after tea he went away.—I could not tell why, if I had been asked; but I felt unusual horror at the mention of the name—if it was what the French call presentiment, it has since been amply justified.—About three weeks after that time, a person came to our house, with smuggled muslin, tea, taffaty, &c.; and my father, who would rather never buy any thing if he could help it, would yet be easier prevailed upon to buy a bargain of what he did not want at all, than pay a fair market-price for what he did. He happened then to be in one of his best humours; and, bringing the woman into the parlour, and the servant at the same time announcing some male visitor, he left me to make my purchases; and the woman slipped into my hand a letter from Charles;—it was the first respite to months of misery. My heart was laying up in store many repeated readings of his uninterrupted affection; my fancy rambled over years of happiness to come, and hoped for intermediate relief from stratagems like these:—but my ideal happiness was not of long continuance; for, just as I was going to give it a second reading, my father came in, and introduced my fate in the shape of Merisford.—The moment they came in, I foresaw the consequences, at least to a certain degree.—My father's countenance was lit up with expectation; he had discovered that Merisford was a single man, and did not doubt the influence of my charms.—He made me dismiss the

smuggler; and, with a clearfulness unnatural to him, paid seven or eight pounds for purchases which I never thought of making till after he came into the room. I considered it as postage of my dear Charles's letter; and, had it been as many thousands, should have thought the purchase well made.—My father presented his guest to me as a gentleman who was speedily to become our neighbour; and, having said as much as even his delicacy would permit to achieve the point he laboured—the conversation turned of necessity upon other subjects; for either the brute did not understand the hints that were so plentifully thrown in his way, or I did not happen that day to strike his fancy.—What an escape had I had, if he had always remained as insensible!—My father, however, was resolved not to lose him so easily; he gave him a general invitation to his house; and, after two or three visits, desired him to pay off his lodgings at Mr. Perrin's, and to take a bed with us. This invitation he readily accepted; but I should be guilty of a vanity which misery has long since conquered, if I were to attribute his acquiescence to any feeling he entertained towards me; it saved him a guinea a week; and, notwithstanding his turn for expence in any thing that contributed to make a shew, he would always take any step, however dirty, to save a guinea from the necessaries of life:—he sojourned with us in the family-way for near a fortnight, and never took any more notice of me than he did of the gooseberry-bushes in the garden; but my father and he, from a similarity of sentiment, became the greatest friends imaginable. One morning I came down to breakfast, and found my father alone, when habitually almost I asked, "Where is Mr. Merisford"?—My father put on one of his best looks; and replied, "I am glad to find, Amelia, that you are become sensible of your duty and your interest.—Mr. Merisford is so pleased with you, that he is gone to London, to have a lawyer's advice respecting the mode of settling his new purchase upon you; and to buy you a set of the finest jewels that can be made: so prepare to behave like a dutiful good girl; and when he comes back, you shall be married as soon as you please." "Merciful God! what do you say, Sir!—I marry Mr. Merrisford!—Why, Sir, he has never spoken to me upon the subject; and, if he had, it would be in vain;—I am not mistress of myself." All would have come out;—but, rising from his seat, and stamping with his foot, to the almost destruction of the whole building, "Zounds! madam, he cried, let me have no more of your airs; I will have you drawn upon a hurdle to the church, and he shall marry you in spite of your teeth! A perverse undutiful slut! you have killed your poor mother but you shall not make a fool of your father.—He never spoke to you!—no—I would not let him; because I thought how it would be; but I have engaged to make you marry him, at your peril; let me hear no more of your contradiction."—"But, Sir, hear me."—"No! madam, I will be d—d if I do! I know you are never at a loss for something to say;—but, I am not to be imposed upon: so, do you hear, make me my breakfast; and say no more about it."—I never had been truly unhappy till now—nor knew how doubly miserable my brother's death must make me.—I began to apprehend, that even my declaration of my marriage with Charles, which I considered as binding as a mitre could have made it, would have no effect.—He declared himself resolved not to hear any thing I had to say. I therefore saw no remedy but waiting till Merisford returned, and making the discovery to him: I entertained no great opinion of his delicacy; but I thought an alarm like this must rouze the small sparks of it which every man must possess to distinguish him from his horse. I was mistaken, however. Ten days passed, in which I might have escaped, and certainly should, though to certain beggary; but, relying upon my first thought, which could not have failed to operate upon

a human creature, I sat supinely down; and, I dare say, gave my father an idea that I should make no farther opposition. At last my persecutor came; but so filled was my head and heart with the hopes of finding a refuge in his pride, if not in his humanity, that I received him as my deliverer.—He smirked and smiled; and, taking out of his great-coat pocket a shagreen case, presented me with a very handsome set of jewels; which I put back into his hand, with a smile upon my face, requesting that we might first settle the conditions on which I should accept them. My father frowned, and was going to speak; but he, thinking himself very safe, desired him to let himself speak for once in his life;—and, assuring me that I should command any conditions in reason that was in his power to grant, we sat down to dinner; after which my father went out on pretended business, and left him with

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXIX.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

*in continuation.*

I WAS now in a situation perhaps the most distressing that human nature knows.—Had the man been of a generous and sympathetic nature, and had loved me, he must have partaken my distress; but, as the matter turned out, I had it all to myself.—He seemed as much at a loss as I was: At last, after much hesitation, and taking his diamond ring off one finger and putting it on another, he began, “Miss Amelia, says he, I didn’t stay an hour in London after your bobs were finish’d, and the parchments, d’ye see, for our wedding.”—“Sir, says I, I am extremely sorry you should have given yourself so much unnecessary trouble about a business which must end as it began.”—“O L—d! replied the beast, it will end I dare say, in a fine boy at the nine months end.”—“Sir, pray do me the favour of a moment’s attention.—Your merit and your fortune will doubtless entitle you to a more deserving wife—I hope it will;—for my part, before I had the pleasure to see you, an inevitable stroke of fate disqualifed me for that honour.”—“O, I suppose you’re in love—be you? As for that, why I have been in love myself, before now, d’ye see; but a night’s lodging always cured me.—So—” I was obliged to interrupt him; but did not care to quarrel with him, if I could avoid it; because I found he was my only road to escape by; and, rough and disgusting as it was, I chose rather to travel that road, than be prevented from going the journey at all; for still I did not suppose it possible for even him to be the brute I afterwards found him.—“But, Sir, says I, plain and open dealing is always best: you come recommended to me by my father; and I should be happy to have it in my power to obey him, and marry you; but the fact is—I am already married.”—He started; and I felt the same kind of joy which a tender nurse receives, when a patient shrugging from the blister’s salutary smart gives token of amendment.—The storm at last broke out. “Damn your father! madam, says he, how dare he send me to London on a fool’s errand?”—“Pray, Sir, be patient; my marriage was unknown to him; and, but for this accident, might have long remained so. Nor is there a person now living who was present, except my husband, to discover it.—Even now, I trust to your generosity to shelter me from his anger.”—“How can I shelter you, unless you marry me?”—“Dear Sir, by declining it yourself; you are your own master; and have a right to change your mind: I am sure, you may find reasons enough to support you in such a change. You may have discovered some defects in my conversation, my sentiments, or my temper, now we are left alone; which will amply justify you.”—“As for that there, Miss, says he, I b’ent used to break my word; I have bought and sold wholesale and retail these thirty years; and I never returned a bale of goods, d’ye see, that I had once bought, whatever flaws I might find when I looked them over: if, indeed, any friend told me of their being damaged, why I either made my own terms, or didn’t buy at all.—Now, if you had told me of this here before I went to London and laid out my money, why, mayhap, I might have thought better of it; but, as things are as they are, why I don’t see but I must have the worst end of the staff now, be as it will.—So, there is nobody, by your own account, to tell anything of the matter, except your husband, as you call him, why, I suppose, he

must be some of your father's tenants; and he won't dare to say anything for his own sake; and, for my part, I can't think of being fob'd, d'ye see, after telling every body what a good bargain I had made." I was annihilated: "For heaven's sake! Sir, says I, are you in jest or earnest?" "Look ye, miss, replied the monster, I never jokes about matters of business: so"—At this moment my father entered the room; and, seeing me crying, asked, rather roughly, "What! have you quarreled?"—"Not a bit," say he: "only miss would have persuaded me that I came too late; and that she had been married before to some of your tenants;—but, as I do not find there are any witnesses, d'ye see, I am still willing to take her for better for worse."—"Married! interrupted my father—O, if that is all your come-off, miss, we do not mind it—there is none of my tenants would dare to have married you without my leave, because they know very well that I would turn them and all their generation to starve if they did; besides, it must have been an odd sort of wedding, without any witnesses."—"Mayhap, rejoined Merisford, 'twas without a parson too—then it won't be much in your way."—My heart—but why should I attempt to express its feelings?—made the object of a father's scoff, and held up as the object of contempt and ridicule to a wretch who was willing to take me to his arms as he would a piece of damaged goods into his warehouse; or rather, indeed, a piece of stolen goods; because he flattered himself that the owner was so circumstanced that he dared not demand it!—Indignation kept me silent; and having made a trio of mutes for a quarter of an hour, my father proposed to his companion a game of back-gammon, to decide whether he should be married the next day or the day after. All-powerful Hand, which formedst the human heart, and stamped on all thy creatures the likeness of thyself!

pardon the presumption of thy astonished suppliant; and suffer her to ask, why such diversity of minds thou gavest, with bodies all alike! why men should walk, and talk, and move, in one direction, and think so widely different! Blush, pride of reason, pride of human wisdom!—Superior attributes are found in brutes; and the cock-sparrow, who nourishes and shields his little brood from harm, is nearer to divine perfection than my cruel father, who uses the bonds of nature to shackle the free-born mind, and bind his offspring to misery and guilt!—I sat, and this reflection crossed my mind; then, meditating an escape, rose and went to the door; but found he had locked it, and put the key in his pocket.—I was now supremely wretched.—I sat down again; and my father, having won the game, turned about to me, "There, miss, says he, I have got you a day's respite; in the mean time, if you can either point out the parson, or produce the witnesses of your former marriage, why you may extend your freedom as far as you please from Mr. Merisford, and me too."—He was going towards the door; I rose, and threw myself in his way; and, seizing one of his hands, "By all the ties of nature—by my mother's memory—my brother's too—and every feeling of a father's heart, I beg you, Sir, to hear me!—Mr. Merisford has misrepresented my conversation with him."—"Mayhap I lie, madam!"—"You were mistaken in your conjecture. I did not contradict you, because your language was so coarse, and your similes so humiliating, that I did not wish to prolong the conversation."—"What, then, says my father, you are not married, I suppose! Well, well, you shall."—"Sir, I *am* married—Charles Mason is my husband;—my brother was the only witness, and he is dead.—But, oh, thou sacred shade! If thou art conscious of thy sister's sufferings, look down and aid her;—or, if thy merciful Creator will give thee leave, return to save her! Suspend a while the song of grateful praise, and mix with mortals to preserve thy sister and thy friend!—thou know'st our innocence, our

constancy, our love; and seest a father meditate an act to plunge his child into the guilt of infidelity, and both into eternal misery!" Tears choaked my voice; and Merisford, whose soul was inaccessible to pity, asked my father what miss meant? To which he replied: "Oh, Sir, the strolling players have been lately at York;" and then went out, locking the door on

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXX.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

*in continuation.*

I REMAINED in a state of uninterrupted though painful quietness, for five days following; and, not being able to account for it any other way, or perhaps having the seeds of hope more thickly sown in my composition than any other virtue, I began to flatter myself that they had given up the point, and only confined me by way of punishment for what my father called my obstinacy.—On the Sunday following, my maid, who was the only person allowed to come near me, at her return from church, stunned me with the news of having heard Mr. Merisford's name and mine published, by way of banns; and that my father himself had gone, to be sure it was not neglected; and, perhaps, to see whether any person would object; for they still thought, or affected to think, that I had played the fool (as my father delicately expressed himself) with some young man on the farm.—At dinner, I asked my father if it was true? And whether, if Mr. Merisford could be so base as to marry a woman so circumstanced, he could be so regardless of his own credit as to call such a man his son?—My father said, it was very true; and desired me to keep a civil tongue in my head; for that, if Mr. Merisford had ever so much patience now, I could not suppose but he would remember my sauciness when he had me in his power.—I told him, “That, were that fatal moment ever to arrive, I was not insensible of what I might expect; but that, whilst Charles Mason had life, and I my senses, it was impossible for such an event to happen.” They both laughed; and my father said, “Why, miss, you have not told us who was your parson, nor your guests;—you certainly cannot forget their names:—will you give us an account of your wedding, in the same pretty language of your invocation?” I could not bear his insult; and, not being able to give them a *parson's* name as they desired, nor expecting consideration or belief should I tell the real truth, I only appealed to heaven for the reality of my marriage with Charles; and said, that, as the subject served only for sport, I begged it might be put an end to. Nothing material happened till the Sunday following, when the banns were published again.—I was now not only confined, but watched. I never had accustomed myself to make confidants of servants; and my father knew it; yet suspecting from whom the intelligence of the first publication came, my maid was discharged. Fired with resentment, she went to every neighbour's house, and exposed the treatment I received to the servants; from whom it soon reached the heads of the family. Amongst others, she went to the Parsonage-house; the parson was a very good man, but, fatally for me, a very pedant in his profession, and a slave to all its forms and ceremonies.—His wife too was a very worthy woman, but virtuous by rule, and held a deviation from her ideas as distant from the possibility of mercy, as the papists do all sects but their own.—To them, then, it was a desperate undertaking to unravel my secret, and yet 'twas my only chance.—After the second Sunday's service was over, she came up to my father, and asked him “why Miss Thompson was not at church?”—He told her, “that I was only a little prudish on account of my approaching marriage. She did not admit the excuse; and said, “she would

come and lecture me.”—The proposal struck my father:—“Do so, madam, says he, and try if you can teach her obedience.”—She saw there was something in the way; and curiosity was one of those little imperfections in which she allowed herself.—So in the evening her best embroidered sattin was aired; and she sallied forth to hear news, and reprove me for the disobedience of not chusing to have two husbands at once.—My father had prepared me for the visit in the most disagreeable words he could pick out of the dictionary; and about six o’clock she and her pious husband entered.—Merisford was smoking tobacco, an elegance in which my father always indulged him after dinner. The parson had weak lungs, and began to cough and fidget, and at last walked out of the room.—Mrs. Parfect was apprehensive for the bloom of her yellow sattin, and expatiated largely on the inconveniences of a smoky-house, and the injuries which the furniture, hangings, and cloaths of the inhabitants, must sustain in consequence.—Mr. Merisford had heard all this with the utmost composure, and marked his inattention by some insignificant shrugs and winks at my father;—but, in some of his violent gesticulations, a spark from his pipe fell upon his leg, when, thundering out a most horrid imprecation, he let fall the pipe, and relieved Mrs. Parfect, who could not help observing how one bad custom produced another.—By this time the parson returned; and, the sash being thrown up to clear the room, we retired into another to drink tea.—There was a visible restraint upon my father and Merisford, in their behaviour towards me.—My father was civil; and Merisford affected a clumsy sort of gallantry, which threw him into a light the most contemptible. At last the parson introduced the horrid subject, by asking “whether it would be agreeable to the parties to be married immediately after service next Sunday, or whether they would chuse to let the church be cleared first?—but that the proposition was rather exceeding his opinion of what was right;—for that all the ceremonies of the church should be duly observed;—and that it was ordained by the primitive fathers, that all marriages should be celebrated in the most public manner, the defect of which, now so prevalent among the great, had brought on many unrighteous consequences;—that, in proportion as the solemnity of the place was dispensed with, the ceremony itself became disregarded and contemned, and all its injunctions slighted.” His wife acquiesced, as indeed she always did, with his opinion; and added, “that she should not have thought herself lawfully married, had a single person departed from the congregation whilst the ceremony was reading.”—After this, I had very little hopes from a communication of my sentimental marriage with Charles—nor did I well know whereabouts to begin;—however, I had no remedy, nor a chance of another appeal.—I was meditating what to say, when my father, whose delicacy never caused conversation to stagnate, with a loud laugh, replied, “Very true, Mrs. Parfect, considered like a woman of sense: pray desire Miss Thompson to give her opinion.”—“Do, my dear, says the good woman, consider the seriousness of the occasion, and then decide whether it ought not to have a serious solemnization?”—I thought this a good opening.—“Madam, I replied, my father refers to a circumstance with which you are unacquainted (she held up her head). It is not to the future, but the past.”—“The past!” interrupted she—“Yes, ma’am, the past.—After the opinion you have expressed, respecting the validity of a marriage resting upon the *place* of its being performed—I have little to no hope from telling you that I was married under yon chestnut-tree—the whole congregation consisting of my husband, my brother, and myself.”—They all looked at each other—and, almost as methodically as soldiers shoulder their musquets, pointed each to their foreheads, and shook their heads.—“I am

not mad, says I, for that your motions signify: but if your presence, Sir, (addressing myself to the parson) can protect me from that insult which I have lately experienced from my own father (I was going to say family), I will explain the matter, however singular it may appear."—My father began to storm; but the parson claimed his prerogative of keeping peace and good order; and I began.—I recapitulated all the circumstances, as I have already mentioned them to you;—and then, addressing myself to the parson, asked him, "Whether, so circumstanced, I could in conscience think of marrying another man?" The parson paused—and, after some preface, in which ceremony was exalted beyond the very religion it exhibited—he said, "Why really, Miss Thomson, with respect to your conscience, you only can settle matters with that; but your marriage with Mr. Merisford will certainly be lawful, and according to the rules of the church."—"But, dear Sir, what will become of the terrible injunction, and the punishment, denounced against the party who shall fail to declare any cause or just impediment to a marriage?—Can I remember the occurrences I have just recited, and not declare them?—and what will be the consequences?"—My father was enraged, and turned me into the back-parlour, where he locked me in till supper, and then, in the presence of the minister of the gospel, bad me prepare for the next Sunday, which should join Mr. Merisford to your

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXXI.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

*in continuation.*

FROM that night till the Friday following I never saw my father or my tyrant elect, who, however, spent their time very happily; whilst I was locked in my bed-chamber, and never saw or spoke to a human creature, my father always attending the house-maid to my door, whilst she brought me regularly breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper;—and, seeing that reserve, I took care to keep it up for my own pride-sake, for the interval which was necessarily spent in making my bed, sweeping my room, &c.—On Friday morning, when she came up, I was still in bed, a thing very unusual with me.—She asked me how I did? I said, “Not very well”—and turned on the other side.—At dinner-time she came, and I was still in bed, which she immediately communicated to my father, who instantly entered, and, coming to my bed-side, told me, “that he hoped I was not ill in reality, and that ’twould answer no purpose to pretend it; for that he was so tired of the trouble of being obliged to keep me shut up from ruin, that, notwithstanding Mrs. Parfect’s nonsense about folks being married in churches, if I was not able to go there on Sunday, I should be married at home;—and that Mr. Merisford and he had joined for the expence of a special licence to be prepared, for all my arts!”—I looked up in his face, but made him no answer.—I fancy my countenance shocked him; for, holding out his hand, “Why will you be perverse, Amelia?” says he—“Oh, Sir, I have no argument left to use—dispose of me as you please: the guilt of such a step, as you are going to force me to, fall not on my soul! nor my misery upon yours!”—The servant reminded him that dinner waited, and he left me; but soon after sent me word, that Mr. and Mrs. Parfect, Mr. Merisford, and he, would drink tea with me in my bed-chamber, if I was not able to come down.—I got up, and dressed myself, though my head was so disordered with five days almost incessant tears, that I was frequently obliged to rest.—About six o’clock they came up; and having, as I thought, softened him a little in the morning, I resolved to make one effort more, to escape the horrors of legal prostitution.—Mrs. Parfect took notice that I did not look well; and expressed an opinion that I was too much confined, though she did not suspect it was by force.—I had no mind to enrage my father, and lose the little hold I seemed to have got of his feelings; so I did not let her into the secret, but said, “That I had little enjoyment of any of the innocent amusements of life, since I was so unhappy as not to have it in my power to obey my father in a command he had laid upon me, without sacrificing my future peace and self-approbation.”—He desired that I would say no more upon that subject; and Merisford assuring me that I should change my mind before Monday morning, I let my long-treasured indignation pour upon him at once.—“Mr. Merisford, says I, I have long wished for an opportunity of laying before you, in plain terms, those prospects, which a man, who had either a head or a heart, must have collected from my behaviour ever since your return from London.—Were my hand and heart totally disengaged, you are, of all the creation, perhaps the last man I should chuse to bestow them on.—I dislike your person (he looked in the glass)—but that’s a trifling objection, and might be surmounted.—I disapprove of every sentiment I have ever heard

you breathe.—Our souls would be as ill-matched as our bodies; horror, disgust, detestation, on my part, and consequent resentment and tyranny on your's, would make up the whole sum of our matrimonial treasures;—discord would begin, and discord close the day.—A woman who loved you (if any woman could!) would find it difficult to make a good wife to a man, whose heart knows no gratification in bestowing happiness, and yet vainly flatters himself with receiving it from another.—What sort of a wife then can you expect in me?—If this picture alarms not your insensible soul—add to the group that injured man, who, in the confidence of an heart unlike your own, enjoys the present bliss of knowing me to be his, and the future prospect of a time when I may avow it.”—Here my father interposed, “That's when I am dead, I suppose Miss, eh?”—“Long may that period be far off, Sir!—release me but from this horrid, impious marriage, and lay upon me what restrictions you please.” Ill as I had been in the morning, this exertion affected me so much, that I fell into violent hystericks, in which, with slight amendment and alternate intervals, I continued till Sunday at four o'clock, when my discarded maid, who was now allowed to see me, made clear to me a horrid truth, which I faintly guessed at. They had taken advantage of some of those moments when speech just anticipates sense, and joined me to Merisford and misery.—I raved and tore my hair, made several attempts, dictated by desperation, to take away my life;—but I was carefully watched, and cruelly preserved to misery.—On the Tuesday morning I was put into a carriage, and, almost senseless, left my father's house, and arrived the third day at lodgings, which were provided in New Bond Street for our reception —There we staid about three weeks, in the course of which time I had, by his direction, found out and fixed upon a house in Berkeley Square, which he ordered to be fitted up to my taste, without setting any limits to the expence of the plan I might adopt.—So many blackening circumstances, as I have been obliged to mention, in drawing his character, and exculpating myself; I should be as unjust as he was inhuman, if I did not give every favourable tint a place in the painting.—He carried me about to see the town, and doffed as much as possible the brutality of his nature.—We got into our house, hired servants, and began housekeeping, with as much tranquillity as the situation permitted;—but soon new matter of anxiety arose.—He considered servants as slaves, and treated them accordingly—the consequence was eternal changing.—Expences, and those of the most ungrateful kind, were hourly accumulating.—Changing of servants superinduced altering of liveries; discharging of coachmen was attended with neglect of the horses, illness followed, and then we lost them;—one horse dying, the other was perhaps necessarily sold, to buy a pair alike to draw in the carriage.—Frequently one of those would be disordered, or the carriage out of repair, and then a job was to be hired.—In short, his ill-judged mode of being an œconomist had consequences more disgraceful, and full as expensive, as his being extravagant.—This I could not help taking notice of. He was obstinate; I did not love him well enough to give up a point in which my judgement supported me.—We disputed, quarreled; and not seldom the most brutal manual resentment fell on me.—If we saw company, he was peevish at the expence; if not, he was miserable from being alone:—whole hours between tea and supper have past, and we never exchanged a word.—He had no taste for public amusements; and I had no female acquaintance whom I chose to accompany me.—At last, feeling the want of something, and thinking 'twas society, he proposed to me the expedient of taking some young person well brought up as a kind of companion.—In the house in Bond-street where we had temporary lodgings, a captain

upon half-pay, with a wife, three daughters, and a little boy, occupied the second floor.— With the eldest of these I commenced an intimacy, and frequently asked her to my house; and, when he so far relaxed from one of his fits of brutality as to make the above proposal, I wrote to her; and, asking her mother's permission, fixed upon her for the companion of my most tolerable hours. A whole winter passed in this manner, during which time I never saw nor heard of Charles; and, to the best of my power, avoided even bestowing a thought upon a subject so forbidden. Early in the spring I went with my young friend to Ranelagh, where the first object I beheld was he.—I had three days before taken possession of a small independence, by the death of my father; and resolved to avail myself of his assistance to escape from a life of sin and misery, to this happy retirement, which I long had meditated. The means I made use of, and the consequent occurrences, introduced to you—

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXXII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

*in conclusion.*

IF it be possible that your patience has been equal to the journey I have prepared for it through the preceding pages, I hope that, as I have not endeavoured to soften or to conceal an action of my unfortunate life, nor even a secret wish by which they were excited, due allowance will be made for the weakness of the human heart, unaided by experience, and deprived of its best support in the loss of my excellent mother.—If I am acquitted by you and my uncle Charles, the happiness of my future moments will be compleat. I have now no hopes, no fears, no prospects, no anxieties;—but, excluded from the converse of the interested and the artificial, I enjoy with decent comfort the present hour, nor dread the last; but look with cheerful hope to the day that closes my account, and lays me peaceful in the reconciling grave, where all persecutions cease.—I have not taken notice of any occurrence later than that of my first escape, and meeting my uncle at Charles's chambers: my being at your house, and the treatment I there received from Mr. Merisford, you probably remember; I will not therefore repeat it, as, though I think the most minute truths essential to a history (for small things have their influence as well as great), I have an abhorrence of repetitions, and can scarcely allow even veracity to be a full compensation for avoidable length.—You recollect, no doubt, that, whilst you were below with my uncle, I was forced from your house.—At the corner of the street he put me into a hackney-coach, and ordered the man to drive home.—When we arrived, the young lady who had escaped with me met me at the door, and, throwing herself on her knees, confessed, that, alarmed by the situation my uncle's presence had thrown me into, she had returned, and informed Mr. Merisford where she had left me.—He had, it seems, an appointment in the city, which he was obliged to attend; and, relying upon my return, he had no thought of going to seek me, till my uncle's letter arrived, which, enraged by a spirit of the most malignant revenge, he sent to the unhappy young man, who, mad with disappointment (though he had nothing in view but my rescue), and made desperate by the prospect of saving me being cut off by my uncle's interference, sent him a challenge, and, having wounded him (as he thought) fatally, was thrown by remorse on the point of his own sword, and died upon the spot.—The recollection is too painful.—Accept, dear youth, a tributary tear; and let my life of penance, for an involuntary desertion of thy love, entitle me to share in those regions of unmixed delights, where parents can't command, nor children suffer slavery!—The first moments of reproach and resentment being over, he asked what other scheme I had to propose,—told me that Miss Barnes was so shocked at my want of affection for a husband who deserved better at my hands, that she could not reconcile it to herself to assist me any farther; but was disposed, he believed, if matters could be accommodated, to make him some reparation for my cruelty; and, as I had often expressed a wish for a separate apartment, that I might now take her's, and leave my part of his bed for a more deserving woman to occupy.—I told him, “that if Miss Barnes could reconcile it to herself to take my place as partner of his bed and mistress of his house, she had my consent;—that, if there was any form of law,

by which I could yield up my pretension to him and them, I would most cheerfully embrace the opportunity;—that, miserable as he had made me, I should rejoice to bestow happiness in return, provided I could do it in the person of another woman;—and that, if he would permit me to follow the course which he had with so much exposition and bloodshed interrupted, that of sheltering myself and my sorrows in this convent, he had my approbation of any scheme he could pursue, which could be productive of equal happiness to him.”—He stared at my acquiescence; and she, being called into the parlour, with some hesitation said, “That as I had such an insuperable dislike to Mr. Merisford, and that our marriage, from the preceding one with Mason, was so doubtful, that she should think he was at liberty to marry again;—at least, that his marriage with her, must be as valid as mine with him.” The arguments were specious and plausible, but not quite convictive. However, my heart forbade me to oppose them; and, having only requested that matters might remain in their present state till I left the house, and then advised them to refer the disquisition of all their doubts to her parents, and some lawyer capable of assisting them; I entered with a lightened heart upon the subject of my transportation hither.—He offered to make any small addition to what my father’s bequest produced, to maintain me in the upper class of residents here; but, as obligation to a person I can’t esteem would be the greatest grievance that fate could inflict upon me, I civilly refused it; and, having received his assurance of a conveyance in the first ship that sailed for this port, we parted upon the best terms imaginable; and for the first time in my life I found and acknowledged myself obliged to him.—In about two days after a ship sailed, in which I took my passage; and, having previously agreed upon the conditions, by means of a lady, a near relation, who is of the sisterhood, I entered immediately, and have for seven months enjoyed that tranquillity and peace which my younger days were deprived of, by the sufferings of my dear mother, and my own consequent distresses, all arising from the same source, the native cruelty of my father.—I often dream of the dear unhappy partner of my heart, and almost hope that he is yet alive.—But morning comes, with reason and reflection in her train, and dissipates all these fairy prospects of felicity.—I have had a letter from a servant, whose attachment to me was so strong, that she begged I would suffer her to attend me here, to return at her own expence.—I could not refuse a request that flattered me, though it would have been inconsistent with my feelings to let her suffer by it. She tells me that Miss Barnes is now Mrs. Merisford, and that she hears they live very happily. Long may they do so!—But why should my subsequent ruin have been a necessary ingredient!—Unsearchable are the ways of Providence! and its decrees past finding out!—I dread to begin a conversation, whether actual or mental, upon this subject: it leads to such reflections, as almost stagger faith;—but, finite as we are in our capacities, ’tis not less weak than impious, to attempt to scan the works of Him, whose infinite and boundless attributes must be softened by an interposing veil, to be viewed by mortals—and even then they are glanced at, not seen.—We have indulgences here that I did not expect in a convent; but, actuated as we are by a religion, whose dictates are virtue, not austerity, and whose great master and founder has confirmed his precepts by his own example, we fear nothing but vice; we enjoy all the cheerfulness which innocence gives, and know that to be good, is to be happy.—If, in your next embassy to this part of the world, you will send me a few volumes of amusement, I shall be much obliged; I need not point out to you the kind.—Your own understanding and virtuous disposition will be sufficient guides in the choice;—what you

approve, we shall:—for pure unaffected virtue is of all countries, all climates, all sexes, all religions;—and what is virtue within these sacred walls, is virtue in you, whether in the closet, the church, or the world at large. Present my duty to my uncle, my blessing to your little ones; and accept with this artless picture of myself, drawn purely by Nature's rules, the esteem, the attention, and the ever-lasting gratitude of, dear madam, your sequestered niece,

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXXIII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I Enclose you to-day the conclusion of Amelia's hapless story. I don't know that ever I was more pleased with any thing I either read or heard;—for I own myself a disciple of the sober lady Grace in one point at least; and admire Nature, let her dress be never so homely.—Mr. Clement read some of the letters with as much avidity, as a love-sick girl of fifteen does a new novel, when she hopes to find a precedent for the first act of folly she commits, and even expects a pattern for the rope-ladder by which she meditates an escape.—For the last week he has been uncommonly busy in the compting-house; and, but for the cheerfulness he keeps up in his countenance and manner, I should be apprehensive that something went wrong; but, when I spoke to him this morning at breakfast, he chid me for my folly, and told me, "that if our shipwrights in the dock-yards were as industrious in preparing the fleet, as I was in manufacturing distress, we should be in good condition next spring to meet and decide the fate of the Americans."—You know he is a great politician; and he had, as I afterwards found, been reading some letters of private intelligence respecting our present unhappy war in America, which gave his countenance the gloom which had alarmed me.—I think politics sit mighty ill upon a woman; so I gave up the point directly, though I cannot say but I sometimes heave a melancholy sigh, for the dreadful and unnatural conflict of brother against brother armed, and parent against children!—However, if we consider the matter in a more enlarged view, all wars are liable to the same objections; for are we not all brothers—children of the same common Parent, and subjects of the same Prince—even the Prince of Peace?—Patriots and wise men may say what they please; but, as an individual of that sex whose valour is not in the list of their virtues, I often think it wonderful that a Sovereign like ours, whose virtues even his enemies confess, should have a single subject who can be base enough to lift his arm against him. I do not understand the question; nor will attempt to decide whether it was worth the Americans contending, at the expence of so much blood and treasure, what particular mode of taxation should be adopted. But this I think, that, had they reasoned with moderation, and a reference to the character of the Prince they oppose; they would have acted more consistently with wisdom and true policy, to have trusted, with the confidence of well-treated sons, in a parent's dispensations towards them.—Why should they suppose, that a man whose heart is kept alive to all the finest feelings of humanity, by the daily, the hourly exertions of it toward a numerous offspring of his own, (a mark, a singular one, of Heaven's protection!) should treat with rigour his adopted children; or pull up by the roots those growing shrubs which flourished happily and contentedly under his royal shade? It was not nature's voice, nor God's;—it was the voice of faction, the subtle schemes of a designing few, to ruin millions for their partial interests, and plunge two nations in blood and horror, that they might smile in dear-bought security;—that they might gratify ambition, avarice, or revenge, with the lives, the properties, and the fame of the deluded multitudes, who daily fall sacrifices to their artifice, and manure with their blood those fields from which they expect a bounteous

harvest.—Pardon this effusion, ye lords of the creation!—the effusion of an heart loyal to my King, GRATEFUL to my Queen, and which, had it inhabited a masculine bosom, would freely spend its dearest drops in their defence, and that of their royal offspring;—but, as it is, with woman's weapons, pious wishes and zealous prayers, will aid their cause; and, having lived to see their misguided children return to the obedience which they have deserted, and received to that pardon and affection which, properly sought, they will be sure to find, I shall die content.

Forgive me, Charlotte, this political excursion; it was inspiration to thy

MARIANNE.

T H E N D.