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AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

In *FOUR VOLUMES*.

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By Mrs. Bennett,
AUTHOR OF THE
WELCH HEIRESS, and JUVENILE INDISCRETIONS.

I know thou wilt grumble, courteous Reader, for every
Reader in the World is a Grumbletonion more or less; and
for my Part, I can grumble as well as the best of ye, when
it is my turn to be a Reader. SCARRON.

VOL. I.

BATH:
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MDCCLXXXIX.

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

LETTER I.

General Moncrass to Major Melrose.

Belle Vue.

IN the present situation of my affairs, it is equally impossible for me to combat your arguments, or do away the doubts of my prudence; which, notwithstanding your agreeable raillery, I perceive you entertain; time, my dear Major, and time *only*, will unravel what you term the mystery of my conduct; in the mean while I acknowledge the justness of your position; you draw the parallel between the incertitude of common events, and the natural imbecility of the human mind, with great truth; your conclusions are perhaps severe, but they are not less just, for that severity.

In the morning of our days, however great the misfortunes of our family, however indigent our circumstances, and however friendless our situation; still there is an hilarity, a gay confidence which gild the opening hemisphere of our days, and lifts the aspiring mind out of the reach of those very ills, under which at a more advanced period of life it would infallibly sink; and as the objects which engage our early pursuits, either totally elude our eager grasp, or being obtained become no longer desirable, hope and fancy, the two grand supporters of the human system, create successively, phantom after phantom, to fill the vacuum left by disappointment or satiety, with a something or other as ensnaring, and perhaps, as visionary as the former; and in this pleasing delirium are we amused: thus, in the expectation of the joys of that to-morrow which never comes, do we trifle away our strength of mind and body, till experience and the decay of our faculties inform us,

“Every day is a satire on the last,” and well it is that this is so; the mind would else, in the evening of life, want fortitude to support its own dignity; when sated with some, and torn from others, of our early enjoyments; if we were not convinced of their futility, we should either sink into an apathy disgraceful to humanity; or waste our age, still more unprofitably than our youth, in unavailing regrets over the urn of our departed joys.

No, Major, I have not forgot the many years I sighed for Lady Mary,—the anguish I felt, when honor tore from my bleeding heart—the flattering hope her goodness inspired—and I yet feel the reluctant, but ardent transport, with which I resigned my fate to her fascinating generosity; still less can I wean my soul from a recollection of the five happy years of congenial bliss, which passed, too, too rapidly since our marriage. Oh Major! have I not loved her through all the vicissitudes of fortune? have I not seen her

where she was not? when ever joy entered my heart, was it not in her form? and when I was overwhelmed with sorrow, her image was my solace, *yet we are parted*, well, “not to deserve but to hear misfortunes is, the task which nature assigns to man; more, is out of the limits of his power.”

But although, next to my own self acquittal, I value the good opinion of my friend, let me not meanly seek justification at the expence of a woman, whose excess of affection for the most unhappy of men, is the real source of every unamiable trait in her character.

Lady Mary actually has, (or which is in effect exactly the same thing, thinks she has) cause for her jealousy. Her passions are strong, her attachments, as has been proved, are founded on principle: Every sentiment of her soul is sanctioned by the strictest honor; her disgusts are no less strong than her partialities; and from the same source; it is a want of her favourite virtues, it is mental deficiencies to which she never can be reconciled: her good or ill opinion is not the result of caprice, or sudden impression she is, perhaps, the strictest observer in the world—neither sex, age, or situation are of any import to her, in the selection of those she honors with her favour; it is the soul governed by reason, and guided by honor, with whom her's forms an alliance; and it is necessary to her peace, that her adopted favourites should approve themselves worthy the unreserved confidence she reposes in them: when a mind thus steady in its attachment, happens also, like Lady Mary's, to be fraught with sensibility, its sufferings, at seeing its idol defaced by the appearance of infidelity and ingratitude, must be extreme; she charges me with *cruelty*—*cruelty to her*, to my *wife* the first *love* of my youth. I persist, she says, in injuring *her*, and in dishonoring myself—what a task is mine?—I besought her to give some credit to my principles, to confide in my honor: but when does reason and passion form an union in the mind of woman? rage and anguish swelled her fine features.

Honor! cried she, what is the honor that obliges General Moncrass to destroy the peace of his wife?

Time, I told her, (and I told her true) would explain the motives which actuated my conduct.

Her features assumed an affected placidity, a smile of contempt took place of passion.

Till then sir, said she disdainfully, presenting her hand to her father, ‘we will not meet.’

Had not Lord Ruthven been present, had he not treated me in a way that forbad all humiliation on my side; I should, I believe, have fought to prevail on Lady Mary to hear reason; but I did not; I suffered them to leave the room, and retired, not a little out of humour to my own apartment, where I remained some hours, unable totally to subdue the resentment; I could not help feeling, at some parts of Lord Ruthven's behaviour; and distressed at the impossibility of convincing Lady Mary of the injury she did me: her uneasiness wrung my soul, and after a thousand different resolutions, I went to her apartment, meaning to try to sooth and pacify her; perhaps it was better for us both, that her jealousy had precipitated her into a measure, which rendered me miserable. I know not, Major, had she condescended to be more grieved than angry, how I could have withstood her tears; yet there *is* a *cause*, a *cause*, a *story*, that must be awhile concealed:

had I in a moment of weakness suffered it to escape me, how should I have sharpened the arrows of unmerited misfortune, already piercing with ruthless violence, the soft bosom of unoffending purity! and how have wounded my dear mistaken Mary, in a part where she is most vulnerable?

She was not in her dressing room, and not chusing to subject myself to a second insult, from a man, whose age, as well as consanguinity, prevented my adopting a gentleman's means of resentment: I returned to my own apartment, without seeing, or being seen by any part of the family; during the time I spent there, my swiss made several humble efforts to gain admittance, but the angry voice in which I bid him not disturb me, at length prevented his return.

At nine I rang; judge my surprise, he informed me the Earl and Lady Mary had ordered the travelling coach, and left the house soon after I retired to my library. Julia was absolutely forced from Reuben, who was sternly commanded not to presume to write, or approach their residence; I found him in the drawing room where they left him, stretched on the carpet without motion, and almost without sense; her woman, a discreet person who has lived with her from her infancy, was left in care of her Lady's wardrobe; and the Maitre d'Hotel presented me a letter from Lord Ruthven, signifying, very laconically, that his health would oblige him to return to Bath; that it would not be agreeable to him to occupy any part of the same house with *me*, or my *family*; that as the house in the Crescent was a ready furnished one, and as there were many others would suit him quite as well, he requested to know, whether I should continue in it, in order that he might give his servant directions accordingly. I immediately removed myself and suite to York house, from whence I wrote to my wife entreating her return, and professing, as I justly might, my sorrow for what had happened.

The terms of our re-union were, that I should immediately resign Agnes De-Courci to her protection; and pledge my honor never to enquire how she had disposed of her; but to rest confident in her generosity.

That I should make her acquainted with the *family*, *friends*, and *connections* of the said Agnes; and the manner, and place where I had first known her; and indeed every circumstance respecting the *girl*, as she contemptuously called her.

Those terms *I could* not comply with; Lady Mary *would* accept no other; and the Earl's pride keeping warm his daughter's jealousy, my letters were returned unopened; my messengers treated with personal insult; and finally, young Butler came to me, and very respectfully hoped I would pardon his obeying the commands of the Earl, and Lady Mary; who commissioned him to wait on me, with a draft of the articles of our separation; which, with infinite concern, he begged to leave for my perusal.

The Earl's spirit is a princely one, and his daughter, is in this respect indeed his daughter; but I believe, Major, I need not tell you, I rejected all offered advantage, and

declined every claim on her fortune—we are now parted, she says to meet no more—pass the blot, Major, perhaps it was not a tear.

But why you ask do I not explain the mystery that distresses her, if I can do it with honor to myself?

It is possible, Major, that a man may have indispensable reasons for concealing his actions, who has none to be *ashamed* of *them*; and to entrust you with a secret, I actually want courage, yes, Mary, my beloved wife, it is in thy noble, thy upright heart, the dagger must be planted. Great God! whose decrees are inscrutable, by what a combination of events, what improbable, and nearly impossible means; am I become the instrument of thy vengeance on the offspring of the guilty? yet dare I murmur, when perhaps the severe task, which honor and justice imposes on me; is the only thing that could mitigate the pain I am doomed to inflict?

Julia Neville, heiress to the house of Ruthven, and the immense wealth of her father, is a lovely girl, her mother lives in this her only child; the Earl reckons on quarterings; at least equal to his own, for her heiress's lozenge; and builds much on seeing her nobly espoused; when, as he plans it, his title may descend to her second son: Lord Morden, eldest son to the Marquis of L, and heir to a dukedom offers proposals, which are at this time under consideration; Lord M. is dissipated; Julia, thoughtless; this marriage may be honorable, but it cannot be happy: Lady Mary disapproved it from the first. The equal familiarity, and the terms brother, and sister, in which my Reuben, and Miss Neville have lived; would, I hoped, have prevented their imbibing a warmer sentiment for each other; the contrary however has happened, they are mutually attached: my wife, whose generous love for me, knew not the law of prudence; contrary to my wish, saw, and encouraged their growing passion; she had no idea, that a youth formed under *my* eye, and educated by *me*, could be an uneligible match for any woman; my daughter is charming; she would say, she will also be very rich, and that paltry advantage is the only one she has over Reuben Moncrass; these were the effusions of a fond heart, not the arguments of reason. I could not endure to know the worthy old Earl's laudable schemes, for the aggrandizement of his family, should always be obstructed by me; I expressed myself with great warmth on this subject, both to Lady Mary and Reuben: the latter, I am happy to say is a lad of honor; passion spoke one language, justice another, he preferred the last, and coincided with his father. I had formed a plan to send him to Portugal, where under the auspices of his mother's family, he might have acquired at once the advantages of travel, and military experience: the Earl forgot in *his* anger, the respect due to my character, as well as his own, and charged me with meanly plotting to gain his grand-daughter, and her wealth, for my son; after this, you will be surprised to hear that I actually, *now*, have it in view to hasten the match, which I before so earnestly opposed; I have accordingly relinquished my first intention, of sending my son abroad, and ceased to blame, tho' I would not, at present, be known to approve of his love for Julia. Lady Mary will soon be reconciled to an union she once encouraged, and receive the little rebel into grace.

But Oh! my gentle Agnes, where is the maternal bosom, that should sustain thy drooping loveliness, kiss thy falling tear, assert thy right, and avenge thy wrong! thou poor deserted victim, shall Moncrass forsake thee? shall he sacrifice to his own private peace, the right which justice and misfortune should render dearer than the life-blood which flows from his heart? under what plea should he seek a sanction for that innate baseness, which could reject the supplications of the saint who consigned thee to his protection?—What? abandon thee to defamation, give up thy spotless fame to the rude tongue of slander, to gratify the fond, the selfish longings of my own heart! Oh memory! dress not the past in such seducing forms; avaunt, ye selfish tempters, I turn from recollection, from the aspirations of unbounded love, to injured innocence; to the modest *sweetness* of Agnes De-Courci.—Thou unsuspecting purity, how unconscious art thou, of the pangs I suffer for thee?—Her amiable sensibility renders her anxious to sooth the disquiet of my mind, she has no conception it is possible, *she* can have given pain to the wife of her benefactor as she *will* style me, much less does she conceive, she is the sole cause of a separation, she constantly deplores; nor would I for worlds her delicacy should be wounded, by the shocking intelligence; to prevent this is now my chief care, I have forbid my servants speaking at all on the subject, and see so few people it is next to impossible it can happen.

I suppose I have aggravated my sins, and perhaps incurred your censure, Major, by a step which I acknowledge I have taken for my *own* gratification.

Deprived of every other comfort, I have brought Agnes to Belle Vue; I dare not consign her to oblivion, she is born to shine the ornament of society; her beauty, elegance, and above all the captivating graces of her conversation, the propensity of her sentiments, and the poignancy of her wit, were not bestowed on her for concealment.

And are these then, you ask, the claims to which the peace of Lady Mary is sacrificed? forbear, Major, to probe the heart which *would*, but cannot unfold itself to the eye of friendship. No, my friend her claims are those of birth, virtue, and misfortunes, and Moncrass is her protector, farewell,

MONCRASS.

Do not forget the young man, I recommended to your good offices, with the secretary of war; Lady Mary wishes much to tempt him from his hermitage; he is the most excentric being in the world; he knows not or believes not, that man was formed for society; he vegetates, and with very fine talents, believes, *that* is all the business he has in the world. Mrs. Butler, a charming little creature who calls him brother, was brought up with him by an odd old woman, whose own romantic turn, as well as her little fortune, she left divided between Mrs. B. and this Harley; young Butler, happily for the lady, took her out of the trammels of romance, very soon after her aunts death; and she is become so sensible of the wrong bias, her mind received, and so desirous Harley should share her advantages, that I believe, it is at her request, through the interest of her mother-in-law, that Lady Mary patronizes him; however, be that as it may, it will afford me great

pleasure, to shew my beloved wife, how much I respect her commands.

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LETTER II.

Mrs. Dowager Butler to Lady Mary Moncrass.

Soho-Square, London.

NEVER, my dear Lady Mary, have I met with any thing so distressing as the accident which prevents my attending you in *your* still greater misfortune; the dislocation of a limb, is at any time, and in any circumstance, a greivous calamity; and a restoration to its use, so great a blessing, that I feel myself, I hope, for the first time in my life, guilty of ingratitude to my maker, by giving way to a fretful impatience at my confinement. I have several times attempted to begin my journey to Bath, my ancle is set and every dangerous symptom conquered, but I cannot bear the motion of my carriage, altho' I have sent it to Hatchet's, to have it new hung, on purpose. My temper, which you have said was so easy, it was not in the power of common events to discompose it,—is no longer so;—I am miserable at my inability to come to you; I have lost the first of blessings, the will to be pleased: if content be the fountain of felicity, no wonder its reverse should produce so many evils: I am degenerating into one of the pests of society, an ill tempered old woman; my gentle daughter in law, with all her patience will, I fear, be weary of her office, she has been the sweetest nurse in the world; my son actually runs away from me; in a word madam, General Moncrass has not only robbed *you* of your peace, he has also destroyed *mine*, and he has injured me yet more, he has lessened my estimation of God's most noble work, or indeed filled me with doubts of there being such a thing, in existence; where shall we seek an honest man after such a falling off in him, it is not only himself, and you, he has actually dishonored mankind; I am all wonder, amazement and indignation.

Your billet is the herald of grief, and wrote in so incoherent a style, that had not the same messenger brought Lord Ruthven's instruction to my son, I could not have comprehended its import.

Your amiable, and undeviating attention to the health of your father, is at this period almost as great a hardship on me, as my own confinement; since I flatter myself, the same friendly heart, which has had the happiness to console you, under so many disagreeable events heretofore, would not *now* decrease in power, when its will, and wishes, are more lively than ever; withhold not, I implore you, my dear Lady Mary, the particulars of your heart wounding story, from your faithful Constance; gratify the most painful curiosity I ever felt; and again try the efficacy of the same remedy, which once was used to releive you; suffer me to participate in this, as I have done in all your former troubles.

Will the world, you ask, spare you? will it not rather consider the ingratitude and perfidy of the General, as a proper punishment due to the weakness that would pursue him in violation of female delicacy?

The world, my amiable friend, has seen with what exemplary fortitude, patience, and resignation, you bore your hard destiny with Neville; the laudability of the motives that influenced your first choice are well known; and the world bears loud testimony, to that generosity of sentiment, which induced you to bestow your invaluable self, and large fortune, on one whom it esteemed a model of worth and honor; and behold a miracle is wrought in your favour; public report speaks for once, the language of truth; it is unanimous in condemning the General, and acquitting my friend.

Major Melrose called this morning to inform my son, the commission for Mr. Harley lay at the war office; I did not see him, he lamented your domestic misfortune, my son says, very feelingly.

Mrs. Butler, and indeed every person who has the pleasure to know Mr. Harley, wishes to see him divested of his penchant for rural simplicity; he has really fine qualities, and a very good understanding; there is also, as your ladyship have observed, an interesting something in his manner, which never fails to speak to the heart; mine I confess is much attached to him, and I join very cordially in the general opinion, that he would be an amiable inhabitant of the great world.

Do you know Mr. Montford, Mrs. Butler's rich uncle? he promised, he says, to his sister, the late Mrs. Ann Montford, that he would leave his large fortune between her two pets; Caroline still stands high in his good opinion, but poor Harley, if he continues to live at the hermitage, will, I fear, be totally out of favor: the great regard he has for the young man is, perhaps, the best excuse for the petulance, which ever breaks out when his manner of life is the subject of conversation; he will give, he swears, one half of his fortune as he promised to Mrs. Butler, but if Harley persists in his indolence and inactivity, he will build an hospital with the other, for idiots, who, like himself, have toiled, and moiled, for other people's children. Caroline is generally in tears on those occasions; I never knew a stronger sisterly affection; and as to James, I only wish his eldest brother and himself had so great an affection for each other, as subsists between him and young Harley.

We are unanimous in our opinion, that if the young man could be prevailed on to accept the commission, it would be productive of every change in his sentiments, his friends can desire; but your ladyship must decide for us; it is not a desirable thing to receive favours from people whose conduct deprives them of our esteem: and we are by no means sure *you* would approve of his accepting the commission from the general, should his inclination coincide with the desire of his friends, which is not at all a settled point. It is very hard to eradicate the impressions made at an early period of life, on sensible minds; the more sensible the more likely will they be to retain their first prejudices, how absurd soever these may be; more especially if the appearance of reason can be possibly introduced to support the weak fabric on which they are founded. It required a very strong attachment to wean Mrs. Butler from her predelection for that pleasant, odd retirement, where she was brought up; she very innocently still avers, that tho' her husband's presence has power to render every place a paradise to her, yet the

moment she is alone her mind reverts to the dear hermitage, which she prefers to any of the fine seats she has seen; we were there last summer, it is merely a pleasant spot, in a fine country, turned and twisted into all sorts of shapes, except those which common sense would approve, yet it is pretty, you cannot help being pleased, at the same moment that you are convinced the walks, and embellishments, are the flights of a romantic imagination, too warm for reason, too abstruse for probability; *here*, you see nymphs designed for emblems of the coldest chastity, exalted on pedestals, round which are scrolls of passionate verses; *there* an Anchorite presents you with a translation from Ovid, and in the most retired part of the grove a winged cupid, and a death's head, occupy each a corner on an altar raised to Diana, with fifty other absurdities equally characteristic of the late owner's mind; where love for Mr. Neville, and religion, are said to have formed an unaccountable mixture to the hour of her death; nay, the scandalous chronicle has set young Harley down for her son, by that unhappy man: But tho' Mrs. Montford's character was an extraordinary one, all who knew her acquitted it of impurity.

It rests with you, Lady Mary, whether we shall call this young man to a part on the busy stage of life; or leave him to the impulse which, *he* says, impels him to conclude his existence, as he began it in the humble practice of private virtue, in the exercise of benevolence, and in the pursuit of mental knowledge.

But do you forgive me, Lady Mary, for writing so much on a subject, so little interesting to your present feelings? none of my family would take a single step, where General Moncrass was concerned, without your direction:—and after all, a subject that will carry a mind corroding with sorrow, out of itself, must be acceptable: if therefore, it has a moment diverted your attention from the pangs ingratitude ever leaves in a generous bosom, the relief will be mutual, as it has given a short cessation to the sympathetic concern ever felt for my dearest cousin, by her faithful

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

If the recital of your misfortune affect you too, much, let Julia be your amanuensis.—I shall be wretched till I hear from you.

LETTER III.

Lady Mary Moncrass to Mrs. Butler.

Bath.

NO, Constance, no;—painful as is the task, no pen can describe the dreadful anguish which preys on me, but my own. Alas! and can it be?—have I endured a worse than Turkish slavery, when the mind, regardless of any other hardship, felt only the disappointment of its first fond, its blasted hope?—And did Providence signalize itself in favor of my breaking heart; by freeing me from a tyrant I abhorred, by returning to my faithful bosom the man I adored, when even hope was no more for this?—Did I exult in the possession of wealth; did I seek him in the cave of obscurity; and was I willing to unite my splendid fortune with an indigent wanderer, to be insulted, injured, and dishonored?—Faithless man! he thinks not of the dotage that would have died for him: enjoying now the estates of his ancestors, by the repeal of the sentence which consigned his rebellious family to disgrace, and confiscated their inheritance: he forgets the distance from which my love reached him;—fatal meanness! he abandoned me in my youth; left me to the tyranny of custom, to be disposed of by my father, as pride or caprice directed;—yet, I meanly sought him, sought him among the wretched herd, whose crimes had rendered them aliens to their country:—*and now*; but this is not what my friend is impatient for;—this is invective, and not narrative. Oh Constance! where, or how shall I begin?—Julia!—can Julia paint the anguish she is a stranger to?—can she recount the injuries she has no conception of?—Oh no! let her still remain in ignorance of her mother's weakness: I should blush to let *her* know how much I deserve the fate I have met: you only ever shall witness the pangs I endure; to others I appear supported by a conscious dignity; and wounded pride; while the agony that tears my soul,—the floods of sorrow that now stain my paper;—explain to *you* that the real anguish which distracts me; flows from ill-requited love: so in the time of Mr. Neville, when his libertinism first;—and then his tyranny and avarice, deprived me of every joy of society.—My patience, my placidity, held me up as an example of conjugal obedience and forbearance:—alas! the shallow world knew not that imagination had raised an altar, to a wandering, a first unfortunate lover, in my mind; where every passion retired to pay adoration; and left me, totally, and equally impenetrable to the sensations of either joy or grief, from common events; except where my child was concerned;—there, indeed, I felt, that strong as my passion for Moncrass was, the ties of maternal fondness; would dispute with him, the empire of my heart:—but, let me not dwell on the past,—the delightful past;—when, tho' torn forever, as I *then* believed, from all my hopes; I thought of him with undescribable pleasure;—saw him, tho' poor, and a fugitive, robed in honor, and wrapt in integrity; believed it was excess of love induced him to leave me, and fondly persued his destiny with my unceasing prayers.—Oh! what a change!—Cruel Moncrass!—Why hast thou torn the illusion from my senses?—Why must the angel of my adoration be changed to a demon of darkness?—Yet, yet I wander from my purpose, and you are yet in suspense.

M.M.

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LETTER IV.

Lady Mary Moncrass in continuation.

Bath.

YOU know, that last winter, one of the happiest among the happy; I attended my father to Bath: the paralytic stroke, by which he was attack'd, rendered *his* going necessary, and I could not bear he should take the journey alone. I had then, been five years the wife of General Moncrass; whose unremitting tenderness, and apparent increase of love, left me no wish ungratified: he watched every turn of my countenance; could penetrate into my most secret thoughts; and his judgment, on every occasion, appeared to be the result of mine: our sentiments, manners, and inclinations, were the same; one soul seemed to animate our bodies; and so entirely were we paired, that notwithstanding the difference in our religion, I exulted in the certainty of being finally judg'd by the same God, and receiving, with him, the same immortal Fiat.

In this happy security I remained, till the week before we left Bath; where, one morning, the swiss delivered my husband a note, which I should not have observed, but from the consternation visible in his countenance; he started up; enquired eagerly for the person who had brought it; and on being told it was a chair-man, call'd for his hat, and abruptly left the house.

Surprise, astonishment, and a kind of instinctive terror; a dread of something, I knew not what, took possession of my mind: my father started; he feared, he said, it was a challenge; my apprehension coinciding with his opinions, I fainted instantly away.

I recovered to uncertain terror: he did not return till time to dress;—and then, so altered; his countenance so pale, so woe-begone, my heart sunk at the sight.—

I flew to his arms; implored him to make me the partner of his sorrow, as I had long been of his joys:—conceive my astonishment! he did indeed press me to his heart, but retired to his chamber without speaking. Julia followed, I *could not*; the poor child hung about him, threw herself at his feet, called him father; implored him to reveal the cause of his distress,—but all in vain; tears burst from his eyes; he begged to be alone.

Distracted, and alarmed, I questioned the swiss; he only knew, a chair-man had left the note: I have poor talents for intrigue,—nevertheless, there was something so mysterious in all this, that I asked Gallini if he should know the chair-man? he answered, he believed he should: I gave him orders to find him out, and bring him to me.

The servant had not left the room a moment, before I repented of what I had done:—my Reuben, thought I, is in affliction; his heart is free from guile; he is incapable of vice; *shall I*, by prying into the cause of his grief encrease it? or, by tampering meanly

with his servant, let them see I can suspect the best of human hearts?—No, Reuben, I will not so injure thee!

I rang, to countermand the orders I had given the swiss.

It was too late, he was gone to execute my commands; and in a few moments brought the chair-man.

I was now exceedingly embarrassed, to send the man away, after I had taken so much pains to find him, before I had asked a single question, would, I thought look odd; and to ask of him any leading one, was an insult to my husband: at length, I bade Gallini bring him in, and wait.

Friend, said I, you brought a note here this morning, from which, I apprehend, some danger to the General, as I have reason to think it is a challenge.—

A challenge, my Lady, answered the fellow;—no, no; you need not fear that; the gentlewoman did not look as if she would hurt his honor:—why she fell into fits for joy, at sight of him; I was fain to fetch the doctor.—

That moment was the tomb of my peace; all the joy of confidential love instantly deserted me: the smiling train of unsuspecting faith, of undeviating sincerity, forsook my sad heart;—and oh! with what fell guests were the miserable vacancies supplied; I trembled:—“a woman in *fits for joy!*”—who?—what could she be?—yet, even then, in that horrid moment, I was not totally off my guard. I dismissed the fellow, and immediately sent Curtis to the White-Hart: she return’d in an hour, and her intelligence distracted me.

Two ladies had come there in a post-chaise; they eagerly enquired where General Moncrass might be found, and dispatched a billet to him:—the General immediately followed the messenger. One of the ladies was extremely ill, and fainted in his arms; the other retired, and left Moncrass with the invalid: they were shut up together four hours before he left the inn. The lady was then very much indisposed,—but had, notwithstanding, ordered horses early in the morning.

Dinner was served; my faithless husband excused himself from coming down; he had letters to write of the last importance, and begged we would dispense with his company:—my father, poor man! enjoys his meals; and Julia, having her favorite Reuben with her, was too happy to perceive her mother’s misery:—*but for me*; yet I need not describe to you, how the time passed with *me*.

At six, he ordered his chair; and returned at seven. I was really indisposed, and my looks indicated the disorder of my mind.—Deceitful to the last, he even affected concern, and dropt a tear upon my hand; I disguised my indignation; and he retired, at my request, to a separte apartment, glad, no doubt, of an excuse so conformable to his own wishes.

At five in the morning, he was again out: I saw his hasty, perturbed, his guilty step, passing quick under my window. I had, let me confess my weakness, been up the whole night; and *now* only threw myself, in agony, on the bed.

He returned home before ten, (our breakfast hour.) A more placid look, now concealed the dark thoughts that occupied his mind; Curtis told *him*, I had rested ill, and was *now* sleeping; he excused himself from joining my father, and Julia at breakfast, and shut himself in the library.

Curtis took the opportunity to renew her enquires at the inn: the women were gone; one of them was so ill, that Doctor Cary had been sent for, who administered a cordial medicine, which had, in some measure, composed her: he strenuously opposed her undertaking a journey, and told the landlady, he should not be surprised if she expired on the road; but she was not to be deterred.

In the morning, the General was in her chamber very early: he carried her in his arms to the chaise; embraced them both several times, and so extremely did this separation affect him: after he had left the carriage,—twice did he return, and as often were the tender adieus repeated: this is the sum of what could be learned at the inn.—

It was now, my dear Constance, I resolved, for the first time, in my turn, to play the hypocrite: I still affected to be unable to leave my chamber. Three days elapsed; then, he said, he had business of importance in London, which required his immediate presence: tho' his manner of announcing our separation was as novel as criminal; I took no notice, but engaged a relation of Curtis to follow him; and observe all his actions.

Imagine, my friend, what I suffered in this painful interval: many were the hours in which I was lost to a sense of my sorrow!—many, in which I gave myself up to rage, and madness;—and many, in which I besought the Almighty to strengthen me with patience. At length; reason, and reflection, came to my aid;—pride also, female pride, contributed to fix my resolution; which once formed, I determined invariably to adhere to.

At the end of a week, my agent returned, having watched Moncrass in all his manoeuvres, till he left London; and had come as far on his way back as Lord B—'s, where he meant to stay a day, or two; and my agent having no means of getting access to the family; he had there left him, and returned with his intelligence to me.

On leaving Bath,—my God!—How have I patience to give you this detail?—What, but my unalterable friendship, my respect to your opinion, my confidence in your affection, could give me spirits, or power to retrace events, which has left me the most miserable of beings?

On leaving Bath, General Moncrass rode across the country to Dover; where he again met the two women; one of whom he put on board the packet, under the care of a

female attendant, who had been waiting there for her: the other he conveyed to London; and placed her as the daughter of a deceased officer, in the house of Madame De-Vallmont, the widow of a french merchant; a woman, as it appeared, of respectable character. The young creature is beautiful, and well-educated; Moncrass visited her constantly; domestics were immediately engaged, and every thing attended to, that could add to her pleasure, or convenience; every appendage to rank was supplied with that eager avidity which mark the favors of men at a certain period of life, to beautiful young women: his time, while in London, was wholly devoted to this new bauble;—silks, muslins, jewels, and laces, were the morning oblations, paid to this, his idol: his established, regular hours, were sacrificed at her shrine, and scarce could he prevail on himself to leave her at midnight.

This account almost petrified me; nevertheless, I had formed my resolution, and determined to be influenced by facts *only*, free from the prejudice of passion: I therefore waited his return, with a kind of determined impatience, I cannot describe.

On the eve of the second day after my agent left him, he arrived; when in the presence of my father, and Julia, I taxed him with the circumstances I have related, and demanded an explanation of his conduct.

Perhaps, my dear friend, you may think of this step, as I do myself, with some degree of censure; I own, my heart has frequently reproached me with a want of delicacy, a want of respect, for the pride of his spirit: my father has too much in his power, to be considered as an impartial judge; and perhaps, the confession I expected, was too great an humiliation to an independent spirit; at this period of the affair, I stand self-condemned; I feel my conduct was unworthy a daughter of the house of Ruthven, it was indeed disgraceful to philanthropy:—nor, I blush to say it, did I stop here; *my* whole part in the scene was degrading to my principles; and must have left an impression, that will help, for some time, to quiet the remorse, which General Moncrass will one day feel, on a retrospect of our love, and our parting: my father's resentment, if possible, exceeded mine; his tenderness, and always partial opinion of his only child, placed her in a rank of beings above the common order of women; he had always resented Neville's tyranny, and his particularities; but Neville actually adored his daughter; that unhappy man's unbounded fondness for me, contrasted with his own unamiable disposition, were perpetual sources of disquiet to himself, as well as misery to all about him; few men knew the world better: my unconquerable coldness filled him with distrust, not of my principles, but of my affection; but still, he considered me in the same partial light, as my father did.

What a scene then, was here opening for the Earl: he waited, with trembling impatience, for the General's answer; who hesitated, changed colour, and turn'd to the window.

His conduct was equal, in my father's opinion, to a confession of the most blameable nature:—no longer able to conquer his rage, he gave it vent in reproaches;

upbraided Moncrass with the indigence from which my fondness raised him, with the rebellious spirit of his family; the pains all mine had taken, to get him restored to his paternal inheritance; and the honor done him by our alliance: you will hardly believe it of me, Constance, but so much had the narrow passion of jealousy lowered me, I joined in my father's invectives, and proudly ask'd if his sick foreigner would, *or* could do as much for him as I had done.

Ah! Mary, replied he, after a long pause; why will you thus urge a temper, too like your own, to suffer indignity with forbearance:—My Lord, turning to my father, did I not venerate your age, and respect you as the father of Lady Mary; I should tell you, how infinitely a grateful spirit overpays all obligations;—it is a spirit never possessed by the mean remembrancer of past favors: and I am convinced, I feel for your lordship, what you could not for me, were we to change characters;—I could not upbraid my lowest dependant, as you have done me.—As to you, Lady Mary, you will one day be convinced of my *gratitude*, since you demand it.—

I despise your gratitude, Sir; I will not accept it:—if you would convince me, my peace is of the least importance to you, tell me the claims those women have on you:—her, at Mrs. De-Vallmont's in particular,—her, on whom you are squandering your fortune.—

How, Mary, interrupted he, have I then been watched? Have you descended so much from your own character, as to set spies on your husband's conduct?

The event justified the act, Sir:—

So it has, join'd my father.

Dear Madam, cried Julia, throwing herself at my feet, have patience; moderate your anger; the General will, I am sure, clear his own honor.

He raised the weeping girl to his breast.

My father sternly commanded her to retire: and then, addressing him in a solemn tone of voice:

General Moncrass, said he, you are called upon, by *my* daughter, once Lady Mary Ruthven, *now your wife*, for an explanation of your conduct:—It will not, in my opinion, admit of any; nevertheless, she has asked it; and I, her father, and protector, demand it.

I now saw the impropriety of my conduct in making the Earl a party to the business; he trembled with rage, and with a furious aspect, waited the General's answer.

After a solemn, and affecting silence, my husband turned to me; and taking my hand, intreated me to confide in his honor: do not, said he, seek to know what will strike at your dearest interest—believe me incapable of wronging you—Time will convince you.

So Constance, I was to forbear enquiries, because there confessedly, was *that* to know, that would wound my dearest interest; I was to sit tamely down, knowing my husband had a mistress, nor dare to ask what I should *grieve to know*; who, Constance, could bear this? was I not right at last, in telling him coolly, I would wait *that time*, before we met again? yes, there I feel I was myself, I acted consistent with my own character.

I hastily quitted the room with my father; the General retired to his apartment: the Earl's carriage was ordered, and we left Bath immediately.

Curtis remained to pack up our wardrobe; Julia's Alice only attended us:—you will conclude, I had a stronger reason for leaving my woman, than merely the care of our cloaths: Curtis is an observant and sensible woman; her constant attendance on my person, and having once been the only conversable female I was suffered to have about me, created a kind of friendship in me, which is repaid by her, with a faithful, and respectful attachment; my will is the rule of her actions, and I know her incapable of abusing my confidence.—She, of all our domestics, was the only person, who was acquainted with the occasion of our separation:—knew she would observe on the General's conduct, without any exaggeration.

Nothing, she says, could equal his surprize, when he found we were gone: Gallini rapp'd at his door, when dinner was served, and was answered without its being opened, that he was indisposed, and should not go down.

The faithful Swiss, has been as old, and respected a servant to him, as Curtis has to me: he ventured to ask if his master would have any thing served up in his apartment; he was bid not to be trouble-some; and the faithful domestic joined Curtis, both, with tears deploring our unhappiness. At nine he rang for coffee, and was then told we had left the house eight hours. Curtis was ordered up; he could not at first credit her, but was at length satisfied the fact was as they represented it: he immediately sat down to write a letter, and sent an express after us with it. The letter contained general professions of love and honor,—but not a syllable about his bauble at Madame De-Vallmont's: he has since sent others, but as they did not lead to a vindication, and as he declined entering on the subject of most consequence to me; I have now made up my mind, and do not open any letters from him.—

Made up my mind, Constance, did I say?—Oh no!—The barbed arrow lies there, rankling with the utmost malignity!—My person is, it is true, divided from him, but he still occupies all my thoughts, still masters every sense, and embitters every moment of my existence;—Oh that I could forget!

“The form so pleasing, and the heart so kind;
 “All pass before me in remembrance dear,—
 “Thought follows thought, and tear succeeds
 “to tear.”

Let me bury these mean follies deep in your bosom, and my own;—for, has he not, Constance, in defiance of all sense of honor, justice, and compassion?—Has he not thrown off the mask, and taken her home to his own house; given her my place at his villa?—He has carried her among his tenants, and lives a hermit, where he reign'd a prince. But vainly do the vicious fancy, they can hide themselves from the shame of a bad

act: "Fame, with its feet on earth, and head in the skies," will find out their secret recess, and drag them to public view. And, could he expect my wrongs would be openly known, and not as openly talked of, and resented?—But there he has his *favorite* all to himself; no visitors disturb his solitude; a few of the dissipated men, only, dine with him; and sensual observers speak highly of the beauty, and accomplishments, of the creature who presides at his table; Madame De-Vallmont serves as a convenient companion:—astonishing! that a woman, who through a series of unmerited calamities, maintained an irreproachable character, should accept of so humiliating a situation, as duenna to a kept woman;—but interest, the idol of mankind, was, no doubt, the bait.

As to our young hermit, I am as earnest to have him enter a world, where, I think, he will shine; as Mr. Montford or any of you can be:—and, altho' I have reason to resent General Moncrass's private treatment of me, no other person has; if therefore, Major Melrose has had the goodness to get him a commission; by all means, prevail on him to accept it: and, if you would get the counsellor to hint, how proper it would be for Harley to wait on the General, and return him thanks for his favour; he would, perhaps, give you an account of the manner they live in, nearer truth than any I have yet heard:—at the same time, my dear Constance, you must be careful not to mention this, as *my* wish, to him, or Mr. Butler; but if Mrs. Butler was to engage him in a particular correspondence, you would be able to tell me all he communicates to them, on the subject next my heart:—If you are shock'd at the meanness to which I stoop about this ungrateful man, you must love as I do, and be as wretched, before you can properly decide on the inconsistency, in the character of, dear Constance, your's ever,

M. MONCRASS.

LETTER V.

James Butler, Esq. to Edward Harley, Esq.

London.

I AM, this instant, setting out on the circuit; have therefore only time to say, a commission lies ready signed for you, at the war office, and it is the hope of all your friends you will accept it; general Moncrass, who is now in your neighbourhood, is the founder of your good fortune; you may perhaps think it necessary to wait on him, and I am authorized by Lady Mary Moncrass to tell you: she will be particularly pleased, at every mark of respect you shew the General: she is very much gratified, by his remembrance of her recommendation; and advises you to cultivate his friendship, by every means in your power.

Adieu, dear Edward, Caroline bids you prepare a very smart uniform, in which she will introduce you to her circle, many of whose enquiries, after our hermit, are very flattering.

JAMES BUTLER.

LETTER VI.

Edward Harley, Esq. to James Butler, Esq.

Hermitage.

Dear James,

I AM much concerned, General Moncrass should have condescended to interest himself, in the fortunes of such an insensible being as myself: take the trouble to signify my concern to Caroline, for not giving her a beau brother, but the thing is out of nature;—If she would see me in my best attire, it must be at my hermitage, when I am decked out to receive her; seriously dear Butler, here I must vegetate, and I have fixed on the green sod, under which I mean to be laid. Adieu,

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER VII.

James Butler, Esq. to Edward Harley, Esq.

Soho-Square, London.

YOUR last letter greatly distresses me, and Caroline is inconsolable; it is needless to say, how dear you are to us both; the uncommon sweetness of your sister's disposition, the softness of her manners, and the infant attachment between you, may give the semblance of greater tenderness to her profession; but believe me Harley, her feelings for you, her solicitude for your welfare, cannot be stronger than mine—We were early united in the bonds of friendship; bonds, which death only I trust will break; from the time of our first acquaintance, when Lady Mary prevailed on Mrs. Montford, to suffer your tutor, to receive me under his care; to the period, when it was in some degree necessary, to change happy for wife; our studies, our pleasures, our sentiments, and pursuits, were the same; how comes it therefore Edward, we differ so much on a point the most essential to our future welfare?

A respectable ancient, compared life to the olympic games; where some ventured for glory, others for gain; *while* a third party, and those by no means the most contemptible, chose to be spectators; but it did not enter the head of the sage observer, that any would be added to those, who in full possession of mental, as well as bodily strength, could be content to exit, without action, or observation.

I have dedicated time, I can ill spare, from the business of my profession; to argue the matter coolly with you, Edward; and to draw from you, the real state of your situation, and inclination.

General Moncrass has obtained for you a commission in the army, which you refuse to accept:

Admiral Mizen offers you, his interest in the navy.

The Chancellor, in memory of family obligations, and the great respect he bore Mrs. Montford; wishes you to enter the temple, and go through the necessary gradations to qualify yourself, for *his* particular protection.

Mr. Montford, has purchased the next presentation to one of the best livings in England, where the incumbent is very old; on the idea, that your serious turn may induce you to embrace a sacerdotal profession; he has also kept his name, in the firm of the business, by which his own large fortune, has been accumulated; in hopes, that if you decline every other proposition; *that*, may at last tempt you, to shake off the lassitude of your disposition, and adopt a mode of life, the most pleasing to him.

Thus Edward, the army, navy, law, church, and trade; have been successively offered to your adoption.

We all lament your—what shall I call it, instability, or inflexibility: one, or other of those unamiable extremes, it certainly is; it is a reflection on your own understanding, and a source of perpetual disquiet to your friends; the tears of your adopted sister are ever flowing; oh Harley! how ardent is her friendship; she repines at the preference you give your inanimate favorites, to her society.

Mr. Montford, less delicate, and more severe; charges you with indolence of habit, and stupidity of ideas; he is grieved, and angry with himself for being so; but neither Caroline's tenderness, nor Mr. Montford's displeasure, comprehend half the misfortunes I foresee, from the inactivity of such a mind as yours.

As necessity is the mother of invention, so is idleness, the foundress of evil.

If you were a sportsman; your little fortune, would not only afford you the full enjoyment of your favorite amusement, but your extreme sensibility, would, like a large head of water, by being diverted into different channels, loose the power to overwhelm you with its force: and the exercise of the chace, would also contribute to the health of your body.

If the convivial circle, could allure you from your sequestered haunts; it would be a pleasure to reflect, that you enjoyed the society you liked, with more gout from your occasional retreats.

Were you a libertine, an epicure, or even a miser; still your mind having an object in pursuit, would be in less danger, than now: a young man filled with the purest milk of human kindness: the absolute son of sensibility: living in a state of apathy: retiring to solitude: shunning society: preferring the blushing sweets of a new blown rose, to the human face divine; and paying greater attention to the cultivation of his garden, than to the soul of man: oh Harley! it cannot last, you know not the precipice on which you stand.

Your bosom glows with benevolence, you diffuse happiness, and distribute charity; the children of poverty hail you as their patron: and the victims of sorrow, raise their feeble voice in prayers for their benefactor: you are bounteous to your labourers, and studious to reward the industrious; you are in short, a young uncle Toby; "for every man's misfortune, you have a tear, for every man's need, a shilling;" you look inward, where imagination is ever pleased; and backward, where conscience is ever still; and this you fancy, is the sum of earthly good: you dream not of the ties, which are actually necessary to your existence: No; you are the Adam, for whom the Creator never designed an Eve: you are out of the reach of passion; a stoic, a philosopher, a Diogenes at twenty two; what a reverse awaits you.

Your soul, Edward, is formed for tender connections; you have yet only *seen*, not *felt* beauty; the charming rustics of your village, can only attract the eyes, and yours, are in subjection to your mind; you are therefore invulnerable to them, but there are a sort of women, who are not so easily repulsed; whose looks, voice, and manners, steal into the soul, with such a welcome, such imperceptible craft, and so firmly fix themselves there, that nothing but annihilation can effect their removal.

The first female of this description you meet; who either is, or has art to persuade *you* she is, as sensible and as extravagant as yourself; will be your fate: and if so you are undone.

Your little fortune is insufficient, (without some exertions of your own) to support a family with comfort to yourself:—observe, I have not supposed the female whose chains you are to wear; will be a girl of fortune; that I conceive to be morally impossible; because such a one, will be taught higher maxims, than those, that will be congenial to your humble ones; and our women of fortune, from the ten pounds, to ten thousand; are early taught, the only just equivalent, is metal for metal; they have too high a sense of their own importance to pay any regard to the particular disposition of their husbands; *they* will not therefore, *really think* like you; and will not be at the trouble, of affecting to do so.

You are, if you marry a portionless wife; however amiable she may be, sure of encountering distress.

If you have resolution, to give up the woman of your heart; rather than involve her in your difficulties, you certainly save yourself a world of one sort of trouble; but how will you contrive, to free your mind, from the thousand fond regrets, which will fill it with the image of her you love? how bitter will be the recollection, that in rejecting the offers of your friends, you have also rejected, the woman you adore; that in condemning *yourself* to a life of joyless celibacy, you deprive *her* of every hope of happiness; and either be the cause of her giving her hand to a man, who has no share in her heart; or perhaps, consign her, the victim of secret sorrow, to an early grave.—

Well, is the matter settled? you will be a batchelor: look forward to the period of human misery; when the natural infirmities of age, are painful to the most happy, and most contented: when the sad hours creep on, flow, yet rapid: when every passing moment, is followed by a groan of anguish, and a sigh of regret; when your life will be burthensome to yourself, uninteresting to the world, and useless to society.

While the warm animated circulation of youthful blood, keeps its wonted current in your veins, and glows on your cheek; while you have health to take brown exercise, and create appetite; while the hilarity of your spirits, gives strength to your limbs; while you dare risk the mid-day heat, when the dog star reigns; the disappointment of your hopes, will be attended with a kind of melting, and not unpleasing woe; *that* have I borne, and *this* do I suffer, you will say, rather than make her wretched: you will feel the

impossibility of happiness without her, you will resign yourself to sorrow, you will find a luxury in sighing, and there are certain sensations of pleasure even in the tears of genuine passion.

But time, pain, weakness, imbecility, and your own solitary fire side; will remind you of many absentees, necessary to gild the going down of life.

The frigid how-dy'e of acquaintances, the lukewarm concern of friends, the important visits of distant relations, cousins of your last will and testament, the neglect of servants, the hard hand of a mercenary nurse, which opens with a thousand times more alacrity to grasp your gold, then gentleness, to wrap the flannels round your gouty legs; who sees with extreme fortitude, the near approach of your dissolution: but whose apprehensions are really serious, least any of the perquisites of her office should escape her, at the moment she anticipates your last groan: these will all speak to your feelings, in a language, pain, and petulance, will teach you to understand.

Do you like this portrait? or shall we reverse it? You marry the woman you love, you have a family—worse, infinitely worse.

Behold the wife of your choice, her, whose eye could glance you into rapture; see, it is humid, sunk, and all its lustre lost in care; her silent sufferings, call on every faculty of your soul, for tenderness, for relief, for indulgence; your purse is too light to afford either; you are wounded by her fatigue, you feel her groans, and your agonies increase, with the impossibility of alleviating her anguish, or of concealing your own.

Your girls, are all that beauty, and good sense, aided by the faultless example of their mother, can make them; but see, they retire to weep, their white bosoms heave with sorrow, and indignation: their homely, ill-bred neighbours, despise, and insult them; you fire at the affront, alas! your resentment is derided—your rage is impotent; *they are richer than you, their daughters have wealth, yours have only merit.*

Your sons are learned, sensible, and well-bred; but, they are nevertheless, doomed to encounter the proud man's scorn; they have to roll their stone up the steep hill, if they fail it is not them, it is their father.

I have wrote so much, and my mind is so engrossed, by the subject of my letter; that I, at this moment, actually fancy, I see you, surrounded, by a group of amiable children, circumstanced as I have described them; and am too much affected to proceed: dearest Edward, we join our prayers, our entreaties, be persuaded, come to us, make us happy.

JAMES,
CAROLINE BUTLER.

LETTER VIII.

Edward Harley, Esq. to James Butler, Esq.

Hermitage.

I Received your letter, my dear brother, with gratitude, and affection; and allow me to say, if not convinced by your argument, I am at least charmed with your eloquence.

I did not immediately answer it. I have been trying to new mould my disposition, and persuade myself to consent with grace, to the requisitions of my friends.

I have looked round my little boundary, and repeated your arguments to its harmless inmates; I have told the venerable oaks, the spreading palm, and the tall poplar; which have so long afforded me a most acceptable shelter from the mid-day sun: that tho' I am still sensible of their refreshing bounty, I am on the point of accounting them, totally useless, and invaluable.

I am writing now, on the verdant bank of the clear stream, where Caroline went through Tasso with me; undisturbed by ought but the murmurs, of a passing current, which supplies my table with fish, and from whence I quaff draughts of real nectar; I have considered, and reconsidered, how to be wise, and forsake the calm seat of sober contemplation.

I have put by my brown crust in great scorn, at the idea of feasting, most voluptuously, on your adulterated white; but it will not do, my soul involuntarily shrinks from the offered kindness of my prudent friends, while I feel their solicitude for my welfare, with gratitude unutterable.

But simply to say, I cannot be a man of the world, is not enough; the generous pains you have taken to convince me, I suffer in the opinion of judicious people, who accuse me of an obstinate adherence to error, or an unpardonable mutability, which prevents my fixing on any plan, merely from the variety your indulgence offers to my choice; calls for an explanation, and defence, of the motives which induce me to reject the advantages which appear to you, of so much importance.

General Moncrass, unsolicited by me, has procured a commission in the army, for a mortal, who treads with caution the winding paths of his little wood, least by an unwary step, he should put to death, any of the unoffending part of the creation; he selects for the destruction of the human race, a man who shudders at the necessity of destroying the most insignificant reptile, because his heart bids him reflect on the importance of that act, which tears the first gift of God, from its most humble possessor.

The General, thus appoints the son of peace; to the avocation of war; he puts the sword into a hand, that trembles at sight of human blood.

War is, according to the general system of politics laudable, and it may be sometimes, necessary; it is justified by examples innumerable, both in divine, and moral history, its sacred fire has animated heroes, whose fame, deluges of human blood, have rendered immortal; it has confessedly punished tyranny, and torn the usurper from the throne of the Lord's anointed; but, it has also widowed the sorrowing matron, and forever divided the distracted mother, from her bleeding infant; it has left the daughters of chastity, unprotected—in the hands of brutal violence; it has alienated right, it has sanctified wrong; but it has not power to make a soldier of Edward Harley:—yet I will thank the General for his well-meant kindness; I say well-meant, because it strikes me, he intended a compliment to Lady Mary; I know of no other inducement he has to serve *me*; he has been two months at Belle-Vue, and I have not even bowed to his Agnes, an omission I am astonished he can pardon.

Admiral Mizen, is Mr. Montford's friend on the old score of election interest, and he offers that to a man who has a borough, to sell, or give away, as shall best suit the interest of both parties; which he would refuse to a wounded veteran.

There was a time, when the honor of bearing a commission in the British navy, might excuse the young mind, for thirsting after the bloody banner of war: our Admirals were really brave, and they were consequently humane; they received their commissions, as the highest distinction, in the gift of an English prince; considering themselves, as entrusted with the bulwark of their country,—they were emulous to approve themselves, equal to the confidence reposed in them: the national glory, and the people's safety, were deposits equally sacred, and important. From the moment they entered their wooden worlds, they felt no animosity incompatible with their duty; whatever were the politics of the ministers, *they* remembered it was *their* unequivocal duty, to honor their king, and humble his enemies; to defend the dear bought rights of a free people, to preserve untarnished the glory of the British flag, and suffer no stain to rest on their own honor.

When our Admirals are of this description victory, follows our fleets; and an English seaman is a respectable being, where-ever he sets his foot; but were I inclined to enter the honorable corp, of naval heroes; I am too far advanced in life, to think of troubling Admiral Mizen.

The law is a respectable profession; many of the first geniuses of the age, give to, and receive honor from it; but none of the evils you so pathetically describe, would be prevented by my attainments in the law; you, my dear Butler, are one of its ornaments; your heart is as uncorrupted, as your head is clear; such a man as you, in the practice of the law is a general good; but it is nevertheless, the bane, as well as blessing of society; far from the humble roof, and humbler heart, of Edward Harley, be the advantages, and tumults resulting from law.

Forgive my sweet friend, dear Caroline forgive him, who would sacrifice his existence in your service; neither can he prevail on himself, to mount the sacred eminence, to stand between the Almighty, and his people, to preach virtues, he has not resolution to practice, to pocket the tenths of the poor, for the glory of God, to fence his own posterity from inconvenience, by the legal rapacity of power; can your adopted brother, him whose young idea was taught to shoot with yours, can he do this?

Have I talents, capacity, or inclination for trade? my more than brother, friend of my youth; suffer me here to breathe the sweets of content, peace, and benevolence; if I know so little, and you so much of my heart; if it is really destined to be the prey of passion; this much at least I may say, I will suffer alone; no hapless female shall be involved in my misfortunes; but why should I encounter real dangers, from ideal fears; life now glides on like a smooth unruffled current; winds may arise, black tempest darken the horizon, thunder may appal, and lightnings blast me: but, shall I, because such things may be, quit the soft bosom of serenity, *now*, while the bright sun is in its meridian, and I am lifted out of the ken of mortal fear, by the refulgence of his splendor: you must be here, you must not only see, you must feel like me, to know all my pleasures, to allow full weight to my arguments.

Do not fancy I am such an enthusiast, as to imagine, I am either in my own practice, or that of my rural neighbours, infallible; no, I know that among all mankind, there is a general mixture of good, and evil; the difference is this; in the great world, they are so unpropitiously blended, the lustre of the former, is nearly lost, in the more extensive influence, of the latter; so that the evil appears by far the most predominate.

But the case is reversed with us in the little world, we are ashamed of an immoral act, it is not as with you, lost in the monstrous mass of common events, we hear of it, from sun rise, to the setting of that glorious orb, it pursues us to our inmost recesses, and it is carefully remembered, for the purpose of calling a blush into the cheeks of our posterity; a matter so vexatious in the consequence, becomes disgusting in the act; illiterate people have more cunning (a quality which serves them instead of wisdom) than those of cultivated talents would imagine; except like me, they studied simple nature; they have too much saving knowledge, to barter an age of disgrace, for a moment's pleasure; but no state is free from error, all that short-sighted mortals can do, is to chuse that, which appears, least likely to destroy the seeds of honest rectitude, which God has implanted in all his creatures: I am convinced my tower of strength is at the hermitage, let it my dear Caroline be soon honored by your presence, it will then be elysium to your

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER IX.

Major Melrose to General Moncrass.

London.

POH, poh, my dear General, what signifies mincing the matter; it is as plain to me, as the nose in my face: and that you will allow needs no elucidation, that a pair of sparkling eyes, shining over two cherry cheeks, aquiline nose, ruby lips, and small white teeth; have taken the fortress of your heart, drove out the lawful commander, and put near twenty years constancy to actual rout.—I hate mysteries, if there are any mischiefs concealed under them, why the sooner 'tis out the better; if there are not, let me tell you General, they are very foolish; what the duce is this girl with her foreign name to you? I am sat down to write in a very ill humour, I forewarn you of that—just come from Bath, where you have left impressions which will certainly send your honor to the d—l, if those same mysteries turn out as I expect they will: by the bye, I do not at all comprehend a system of benevolence that demands so great a sacrifice; I would with pleasure give a few hundreds myself, nay I would not flinch if it were a thousand or two, to relieve an innocent, beautiful, object of distress; mind I stipulate on beauty, the face of an ugly woman is I own with me a terrible damper of charity; a broad pock-marked countenance now for instance, with a copper coloured neck, and a pair of red fists, if your Agnes answered that description, confess, would her interest have been half so strong;—but if she were an angel, I have no sort of conception why my own peace, and that of those deservedly dear to me should be totally disregarded, for the sake of mitigating the misfortunes of others; nor can I penetrate the depth of that mystery, which portends greater distress to Lady Mary, than the alienation of her husband's affections; I say alienation, for if the interest and fortune of your protégée, be of more importance to you, than the peace of your wife, that is the case gloss it over how you will;—to be sure, Lady Mary is some seven or eight and thirty. The beautiful Agnes has not numbered much above half those years—ergo—a chrystial tear, squeezed out of the corner of her black eye, speaks closer to the heart, than all the matronly wailings of her ladyship.

As I was at Bath, and the officious public, had announced me, I thought I could not consistent with common civility, and good manners, avoid making my bow in the Crescent; altho' upon my soul I was, so much, I was going to say, ashamed, of you, General, that I did not wish to be let in; contrary however to my expectation, the porter told me, my name was excepted in the general order to admit none but the physical tribe: so you see they had heard I was at Bath, and expected me to call.—Well—up I marched: as slow, and cautious, as if a mine had been ready to spring under my feet; 'till the drawing room door was thrown open.—

And now for the Dramatics Personæ:

On one side of the fire (the room was as hot as an oven;) sat Lord Ruthven, the leg, and arm which had been affected with the paralytic stroke, supported on cushions; his thick black brows drawn into a parallel line with his prominent nose, his mouth so entirely lost, between that leading feature, and his chin, that had it not been for a hollow grumbling sound, which dinn'd the ear with your name, and late exploits, it would have puzzled an anatomist to have discovered he had one: Lady Mary, whose nervous headaches (as she afterwards informed me) affected her eyes; (they were indeed *visibly affected*) was seated opposite her father; the curtains of the windows, except one where pretty Julia sat drawing, all let down; her ladyship amusing herself with that delightful exercise, vulgarly yclep'd "beating the devils tattoo."

Julia laid down her pencil, as soon as I entered, and took her station at the back of her mother's chair: Hem—hem—hem—how long I had been at Bath, the weather, the no company, and politics, were all attempted by way of introducing conversation, but after a monosyllable or two, the effort was given up.

At last—I made a bold push, and enquired for you; do you mean to insult us, Major Melrose? bellowed the old peer—kicking with his well leg, the cushion from his lame one, which Miss Neville flew to replace; insult you my Lord returned I with an affected surprise, which I meant should appear very natural, but believe I failed in the attempt; I really do not comprehend—uprose your divine rib, and with a majestic toss of her head, would have commanded Julia to follow her out of the room.

You know my weak-side General, I hate to be left by the women, there is certainly something very enlivening, in the pretty shrill sound of their voices; dear Lady Mary said I, taking her hand with unfeigned respect; what direful offence have I committed; there *was* a time when the name of Moncrass was a passport to your favor;—what can have happened in so short a period to occasion such a change?

Bating her pride, Lady Mary is, and bating her *age too*; the finest woman in England; her features glowed with indignation, she grew an inch taller—

Major Melrose this treatment is unworthy your character and sentiments.

In what respect Madam?

Let go my hand sir—if you really are ignorant of our situation, permit me to leave you; my father will explain to you, what it is death to me to think of; but, if, as I suspect, you are not, let me tell you sir, this triumph over domestic misery, is a very poor one; and she burst into tears.—

There was no standing this, I was blown to the devil General, I am always wrong, when I attempt any thing in the round about way; my forte is plain, unvarnished truth; so having faltered, and equivocated, 'till I was ashamed of myself; I fairly owned I *was* in the secret, and offered to confess all, on condition her ladyship would be re-seated; she very majestically performed her part of the treaty, and I as punctually fulfilled mine; so that if your worship had been tempted, as most of us young old fellows are, when a girl is

in the case, to gloss over any of your manoeuvres you would have been blown; but to do you justice their account exactly tallied with yours.

An aggravation of your sins—yes! faith we have heard of the arrival of your damoselle, and her gouvernante, at Belle-Vue, with all the editions, and additions, impertinent curiosity, and double tongued slander could invent.

The Earl was quite vociferous, Lady Mary struggled hard to conceal her tears, she was entirely endishabille, a white wrapper carelessly thrown round her—her hair undressed, and such a total abstractedness in her whole figure, from any concern in this wicked world; that I could not help considering her, as a fine *ruin*, on the point of falling into nothing; I felt myself strangely affected, and ventured to ask whether matters had not been carried on with too great violence?

Oh Major, answered she! (then giving way to her tears) if we grant they have, has it not been the violence of fond affection? I now appear to the world, and I doubt not to yourself, as an enraged jealous woman—I cannot deny the justice of the censure, those who remember me in the days of Mr. Neville, are astonished at such a reverse of character: had I regarded General Moncrass, as I did Neville—he too might have had his pleasures, without being troubled with my enquiries; it is the misfortune of my nature, that I cannot easily overcome prejudices I once imbibe—my fond imagination had decked Moncrass, in all the virtues, that could adorn a faultless being—and then the consciousness of my own unbounded love—

Talk of him no more daughter (interrupted the Earl) ungrateful—worthless—unprincipled—

Stay, my lord, cried I interrupting him in my turn—remember—the man you are branding with those dishonorable epithets *is my friend*.

That is not to your credit Major, answered he; with quickness.

I arose,

The Major my lord, said Lady Mary, is a friend to us all—he is a man of the world,—a man of gallantry—he cannot feel as we do on this occasion—allowance must be made for the privilege of custom and the prejudices of education.

Dear mamma, said Julia, (I shall adore that girl) and why is General Moncrass to be deprived of the indulgences, you are so willing to grant Major Melrose, how often have you said, there is no such thing as a perfect character?

Forbear, Julia, said Lady Mary with a severe look, you feel much for the General, and more for Reuben—how is it that your mother shares so little in your solicitude?

Because, said Julia, my mother will, “right or wrong,” be in a passion, and punish the innocent with the guilty;—now only think, Major, what cruelty; here is poor Reuben Moncrass, for no earthly reason in the world, that I know of, involved in his father’s disgrace; when, you know, if the General is guilty, which perhaps he may be, and perhaps not; Reuben would, in the end, be the sufferer, since to be sure, it must be a very uncommon attachment, that could have such influence over his father’s conduct.

How often, Miss Julia Neville, have my Mother, and myself, both forbid your naming that young fellow?

True, my Lord, and I have bit my tongue an hundred times in trying to obey you; but I assure you, when I am forbid to *talk* of him, I pay it off with thinking, so it's pretty much the same.—

Julia Neville, said Lady Mary, knitting her brows.

I cannot help it, Madam, if I were to be killed.

You will have more prudence, Julia, when you are Lady Morden.—

Lady Morden! exclaim'd I in surprise.

Yes Sir, said the saucy prattler, you know his Lordship I presume—but perhaps you do not know he condescends to drop his own ancient title, and is willing to take *our's*, with all incumbrances, not excepting *myself*;—Major, resuming her pencil, do you like my grandfather's choice of a husband for me?

Do you, Miss Neville?—

Oh no! I am determined not to accept it.—

And pray why so, Madam? said the Earl, almost choak'd with passion—

Because—because, glancing an earnest look at her mother, I do not think it is fortunate.

Julia, said Lady Mary, you know how much you displease me by talking in this manner to your venerable grand-father: *you* ought to be the last person to throw out a reflection that alludes to your own father.

Not when I am the principal sufferer.—

You a sufferer,—why pray Miss, what do you suffer? said the Earl.

A great deal my Lord, I am deprived of the only society I desire on earth, and bored to death with the love, and adoration of a man, who regards me, as much as I do him, which is little enough;—and in short, my Lord, if you teize me about Lord Morden, I will actually run away to Reuben, if he will receive me.

Oh—no doubt of that I dare say Miss, he is too well instructed to refuse you, while he thinks your father's fortune, and my estate, will follow your ridiculous choice,—but you are a ward of chancery, and if he dares receive you—there are laws:—

And, said Lady Mary gravely, if Reuben Moncrass is your choice—a mother's blessing shall be ever withheld from you; but I wonder how you have the confidence to talk in this manner before Major Melrose; except indeed, you mean it as an indirect message, to the son of *him* who has *injured me*.

I am extremely concerned, Lady Mary, (said I very seriously) that I am so unfortunate as to stand so very low in your ladyship's opinion:—

Forgive me, Major, a wounded spirit is very hard to bear; and to have my own and *only* child; one from whom I have every right to expect consolation, league with my enemies is enough to turn my brain.

Julia arose, and with more gravity than I thought she could assume—Major said she, I am grieved to have drawn by my volubility, such a censure on you; and believe me my dear mamma (kissing her hand) and *you* my honored grandfather, if I did not feel I was right, I could not be so pert; General Moncrass is not my mamma's enemy, I am sure he adores her; and I have a presentiment *all* will be right yet; but in the mean time, here you drive on, and in *revenge* to him, I must be made the sacrifice; don't you talk of Lord Morden, and I will not say any thing of Reuben; I know I want four years of being of age,

and to tell you the truth 'tis well I do—for the forbidding me to see Reuben, makes me so weary of every thing else, that, I sometimes think a bold stroke in some of us, would set *all* right.

I was much hurt at Lady Mary's hint; and could not immediately reconcile myself to the mean suspicion it implied; however on recollecting, that anger has some privileges, and grief more: I suffered it to pass—and resumed the conversation, from the part of Miss Neville's speech, that alluded to you.

I begged to be considered, as Lady Mary had truly represented me, the general friend of the family; and added, I was sure matters must have been aggravated, or misrepresented; I would venture to stake my honor, and every thing dear to me, as a man, and a soldier, on the affection of my friend for his amiable, and accomplished wife; and faith General, I found myself in a vein to be very eloquent, had my cleverness been encouraged; but the Earl cut me short, by asking me, whether you had requested, or knew of my interference?

I answered him you did not:

Let me ask you Major said your Lady—do you not know—he has a woman—the *very woman* in keeping at his house?—

I was silent,

You *do* not answer me—you cannot.

Pardon me madam, I have heard from the General himself, he has a young lady under his protection, but he assures me she is a woman of honor—

Ah Major, what then are the ties which bind him to her? or why are those kept secret from *me*? if my *peace* is concerned, if his reserve, (no matter how laudable his motives) destroys my quiet, can any thing excuse it? I will suppose this girl to be his natural daughter, or some near relation; have I evinced so contracted a mind? is my heart so narrow, that it will allow no room for a person justifiably dear to my husband? Oh Major, the very supposition is an injury; then so circumstanced; I appeal to the generosity of your own heart, whether my demands are not reasonable; I only ask to have the woman given up, to be provided for by *me*—and to be made acquainted with the nature of his connection with her.

We men madam, do not perhaps in all points, judge exactly like the ladies; there may be something in giving up, and telling tales, not perhaps consistent with our *notions* of *honor*.

Nothing less by G-d interrupted the Earl, shall be accepted—

What, not if he resigns the lady to her own connections, and engages to give her entirely up, never to see her more?—

Oh you divine man, cried Julia, running up to me, and I verily believe the little witch would have kissed me had I encouraged the motion, but I am too modest General, I only took her hand, and with a countenance that did not speak my feelings if it was not full of earnest anxiety; repeated the proposition.

And what security will General Moncrass give, said the Earl ironically, that he will not again part with his wife for this pretty bauble?

I was again hurt—I arose and took my hat—

Lady Moncrass also arose—you are not Major you say authorized, to make any proposal, on the part of General Moncrass?

No madam, but my regard for my friend, and my respect for your ladyship, would carry me great lengths; I am not even sure I could prevail on the General to—

Enough sir, enough—interrupted she with resentment, her face in a glow, and curtsying as she retreated to her chair.

Miss Neville gave me her hand, God bless you Major said she, I suppose we see *you* no more, every thing worth living for is banished this house; the Earl began to rebuke the open-hearted girl, and I heard them at high words as I descended the stairs.

Now as I said before, the retrospect of this visit, leaves me in a very ill humour; the old Earl is an oddity, but he is a man of strict honor; has lived to a good old age, wrapped up in this his darling daughter; and therefore must feel her distress, and faith 'tis a pity, the old grecian one half gone as he is by disease, should not carry the other heart, whole to his grave: then Lady Mary actually is, one of the *best* as well as one of the finest women in England of her years; few women in any age, or country, ever gave such proofs of affection, as she has done for you; and 'tis plaguy hard to dismount her off a hobby-horse, which has cost her so dear; at a period of life too, when civility to a fine woman, is the more acceptable; as she knows, if she has any sense at all, she is daily decreasing in the attractions, that with our wicked sex, tell to more account, than either goodness, or virtue: as to Julia, her mother's authority is so weakened, by this division in the family, there is not the remotest hope, she will ever return to that implicit, and respectful obedience, which was once so amiable in her: so here is the peace, and perhaps future weal of one of the first families in the kingdom, destroyed; for God knows who, from God knows where, and nobody knows for what; do my dear General act a little like other men; marry the girl to your Chaplain, and go back to your wife.

I called in Soho yesterday morning, expecting to meet your philosopher at Butler's; but found to my surprize, the commission lay dormant; Mrs. J. Butler, (I did not see the old dowager) blushed and stammered an excuse for her brother, as she called him, the meaning of which I take it is, the fellow is a milksop and won't fight; so I think the wisest step you can now take, is to get him into orders, and make a match, between *him* and your Agnes.

The reviews will continue all the summer, so that, except you come to London; I shall not see you 'till I make war on the partridges, in the neighbourhood of Belle-Vue.

Adieu dear General, I would give half my fortune, you were quietly settled with old sour crout, and Lady Mary in the Crescent.

MELROSE.

LETTER X.

Edward Harley, Esq. to James Butler, Esq.

Hermitage.

WHY do you not let me hear from you my dear friend? have I been so unhappy as to offend you mortally? you sensibly afflict me, by depriving me of your correspondence; is the desire of living to myself, and to you only, an unpardonable offence; I know, and feel the goodness of your intention; you would have me happy, your way, I am obstinate, and chuse to be so my own; the end in view is precisely the same, we only differ in the means to attain it; you think yours are the most infallible, but if I am content, *that* is happiness to *me*; can I be better than well?

Were you to witness the serenity in which my moments pass,—the exultation I feel, when from my little store, I supply the necessaries of life, to the honest labourers, who by affliction, or sickness are rendered incapable of earning them; when I confer a favor, which dispels the starting tear, and, when at the close of the day, I reflect, tho' my power is limited, I have not suffered one call on benevolence, and humanity to pass unregarded; you might smile at my simplicity, but could not condemn it; let me describe to you, my situation at this moment.

I am seated in my wind chair, betwixt the two large elms on the brow of the hill; a glance only of the Hermitage is visible, through the foliage of the avenue; our grove, Caroline, is in such beautiful perfection, that the luxuriant arrangement of the trees, although they are the spontaneous growth of all bountiful nature, appears to be the work of a skilful artist; the river which is hid by the woods, 'till it has passed by them, seems to break out under the hill; and gradually expands into grandeur, and beauty, as it majestically advances; enriching the neighbouring meadows, 'till one part of its divided current, makes a welcome way through the valley below, while the other, laves the delicious banks of Belle-Vue park and gardens, which hang directly over it; and onward continue to diversify the charming picture before me, 'till lost between the two high hills, which bound the enchanting prospect: the sides of the rich vale are covered with cattle, grain, and forage; the trees seem to assign a proud boundary, to the different farms; the quickest hedges are in their gayest livery, and their feathered inhabitants, are straining their little throats, in the most harmonious concerts:

Nearer home, on my own demesne, this view delightful as it is, is eclipsed, both in beauty and utility; four honest men, three women and about a dozen children: who are all fed from my little stock, are sitting on the grass; happy by my means, and content with my bounty; the men are my constant labourers, and it often happens as in the present instance; I am told, what a main deal of good help, the women are at a pinch!

My rich neighbour, Mr. Thrift, complains much of my simple disposition, and thus he argues; you give way to those wretches, they prey on your easy temper, you keep up the price of labour, and are continually imposed on; if I had your land I would make double the money of it.

Double the money, what should I do with it? as we walk to the field, the story goes on, the song is concluded; they are however not so easy at sight of my companion, they rise with an awkward, stiff kind of respect, of which he takes no sort of notice, the children creep off, and their mothers follow; but Mr. Thrift is no sooner removed, than all is well again; they know my heart is among them; they apply to me on their disputes, my important decision is made, from which they have no wish to appeal; the children hang round me, a poor palsy-headed old dame assures me, when she is gone, my affairs will not be half so well managed, because if my honor remembers, she always forewarned me of change of weather, whereby, thos 'squire Thrift would skin a flint stone, his harvest was never half so well got in as mine; another old soul tells me marvellous things of her darlings darling; as how she always prayed for me, without bidding, after grandame, and as how, if I would but ask her, what H stood for, she would answer of her own accord Harley.

Ay, ay, cries Mr. Thrift, but will all this palaver go to market; and so in other words say my friend and his Caroline—but yonder comes a love-lorn maiden, whose slow, unequal pace, and averted looks speak inward woe; her straw hat is drawn over her eyes, and the coloured handkerchief on her neck is wet with her tears; poor girl! she advances, slow and timid, and now her wistful eyes are raised through her tears to mine—I cannot suffer her to feel her inferiority, grief levels all distinction; poor damsel! I have been imperfectly told thy story, but I will hear it again from thyself,

* * * * *

A victim to the tender passion—I am going, Caroline, to give you a love-tale.

Patty Lucas, of the mill, the lass; Hodge, of the green-lane, the swain.

Hodge kept company with Patty, two years last lammas, and promised to marry none but she, and broke six-pence besides swearing on the bible; but lammas-eve was fatal more ways than one to poor Patty, for Hodge being at a neighbouring wake, was ticed, unbeknown to Patty, to take the under-groom's place at Belle-View; for Hodge wanted to see the world.

* * * * *

Well, so rapid were Hodge's improvements in the world, that the second visit he paid at the mill, he had acquired knowledge enough to take advantage of the innocent creature's fondness; and Patty's apron-strings are now an infinite deal too short.

Well child, said I, and what can I do for you? I suppose you hate the fellow who has ruined you.

Oh dear me, no sir!—what, hate Hodge!—no, I only hate that huge white house, and every soul a’thinside on’t; an its had’nt been for the Lunnun sarvants there, Hodge would ne’r a broke his promise;—Oh dear sir, that Lunnun is a pest’lent place! and sitch words as poor Hodge has larnt among ’um!—dear heart, why a makes nothing of swearing, and telling of lies!—Oh, if your honor would but be so good as to speak to Madam Agnes, she would bag the Ganeral to bid Hodge to make me an honest woman, afore father and mother noed on it.

I promised to try my influence at Belle-Vue, and I mean to keep my word;—not indeed by speaking to Madam Agnes; but I have not yet waited on the General, to thank him for the honor he conferred on me, in procuring the commission; the trouble he was pleased to take, well deserves that compliment, and perhaps, an apology too, for declining to accept it: I shall take the opportunity to mention poor Patty, and her broken six-pence; I may then also, probably, see this Agnes—not that I have the least curiosity about her; she is well spoken of by the few who visit at Belle-Vue, but they are few indeed; that delightful villa, which last year was the resort of all the fashionable people in the county, is now almost as great a solitude as my hermitage;—something in that, Caroline, resembling primitive virtue; when the habitations of those, who live in open defiance of her precepts, are thus deserted; the General is said to be in ill health, and the Lady is very prudent, or very politic; she neither *has not* or *affects not* to have any wish out of the vicinity of Belle-Vue;—but the merits of women of her cast, are of too levelling a quality, one is rather mortified than pleased, to hear of any particular propriety in their conduct; it too much conciliates the extremes of good and evil.

I remember being much hurt once at Belle-Vue, when I accompanied Mrs. Montford thither: among other topics of conversation, the Duke of B—’s mistress was spoken of as a domestic woman, a fond mother, a warm friend, a placable enemy, and the lady-bountiful of his village.

A very ordinary woman, Lady C—, was present, who seldom saw her own children, lost all her ready-money at play, and contracted debts with the neighbouring tradesmen for necessaries; whose whole heart was so lost in the vortex of fashion and dissipation, she had neither time or inclination to be a friend to any human being; yet, on the single merit of her chastity, which perhaps, might not in her, be a *merit*; how did she toss her well-dress’d head in scorn, as all the other different virtues, that could adorn the female character, were ascribed to the Duke’s companion: on such occasions one feels too much for the mistress, too little for the matron, and it was a supreme pleasure to me that Lady Moncrass was present; that I could turn my eye from the severe Lady C—, to her; were it not that there are *some* women, who are literally the jewel of their husbands; who in these days of tolleration would have courage to marry? and will Caroline pardon me, if I venture to give it as my opinion, that the free manners of some women, and the unamiable ones of others, have a baneful influence on the principles of the men; for “As

men govern Rome, so the women govern the Romans” and a modern author tells us, that, “If every lady were attentive to the morals of her lover, a libertine would be an uncommon character,” this is what I call, one of Colman’s best things; and should be inscribed, were I of consequence to enforce a law for the ladies, over the toilet of every pretty woman in the kingdom, Adieu,

EDWARD HARLEY.

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LETTER XI.

Mrs. Butler to Mr. Harley.

Soho-Square, London.

AND must I indeed Edward, give up the sanguine hopes my fond heart had formed, of seeing my beloved brother, as valuable, and respected in public life, as he is in private; as much honored for the amiable disposition of his mind by the world, as by his Caroline; will nothing prevail on you to relinquish your rural attachments? shall I never live nearer my Edward? will two hundred miles always separate us? if I must submit to this hard fate; if I must give up my wishes, if you can indeed be no where happy but at your Hermitage; then my dear brother let it be on one condition.

Your last letter charmed us, I am impatient to hear the sequel of Hodge and Patty's amour, your reception at the Castle, your opinion of the celebrated Agnes; but above all, to read from your own ingenuous account, how you employ yourself; and this will (my James says) not only bring us mentally oftener together, but agreeably fill your time—the little hurry of finishing by the hour of post, the expectation of letters, and punctual correspondence; are he says the most pleasing avocations of a country life: will you promise brother, to keep a journal of your actions; and faithfully remit it to your friend and sister? we will be indulgent to your faults, should we perceive any; and do full honor to the virtues we know you possess: you will have the advantage of remarks, and advice, from cooler heads, if not wiser ones than your own; as the person immediately under the impression of passing events, or the dominion of passion, cannot so well judge of the *proper*, as those who see them only on paper: my heart is set on this matter, you will not have the cruelty to disappoint your friends in every request they make; we will consider your two last letters as a beginning, and arrange them accordingly; and who knows but some time hence, we may publish your letters, under the title of the “Young Hermit” or, if all the dismal prognostics, from your falling in love come to pass: perhaps the “English Werter,” tho' heaven forbid! you should resemble the German in fate; I know not how I came to fix on that Novel, it is my aversion—it is like Rousseau's Eloisa, a very bad story—divinely told—so far indeed, if my brother is the relator his history will be sure to resemble the German Novel.

Adieu my dear brother, I am out of patience, no travelling one while for

CAROLINE BUTLER.

LETTER XII.

Edward Harley, Esq. to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

WHAT can I refuse to the request of my sweet sister? is there a thought in my heart, I would conceal from her, or a wish her pure mind may not inspect? yes Caroline you shall know more than my actions, their motives shall also be laid before you; yet when that is done, what amusement will the events of a life, you style tame and insipid, afford you?

You will expect adventure.

I shall have none to relate,

For when I have told you I am up with the lark, watch the rising of the glorious sun, saunter by my quickest hedges, give and receive the good-morrow of the cottagers, chat with old Rawlinson about things which happened sixty years ago, who never fails to marvel the Rector will not leave his bed earlier, because that exercise, is better than physic; hear Benson's dreams while she makes tea, which are ever full of wonderful omens concerning her dear young lady, out when the morning repast is ended, round my farm, hear the news of the day, from the labourers, with their comments thereon, it is true the plough, or the spade stand still the while, but they are chearfully resumed, as soon as I leave them, with a, God bless our master; perhaps I invite company home to diner, you Caroline, would not chuse should spoil your carpet; then read, or take my violoncello 'till the cool of the evening, when I walk to the green, and join the rural amusements there; I say Caroline when I have told you this, with the very trifling variations, occasioned, by alteration of weather, or paying an important visit at the parsonage; I have given you a diary of my life; and these, with a few rustic anecdotes, will form the whole substance of the correspondence you so warmly desire: but, as

"Friendship gilds every object on which she shines," and as you in the centre of gaiety, and entertainment; condescend to accept my humble tribute of affection, I chearfully obey your commands;

The amour of Hodge, and Patty, are exactly in the same situation as when I wrote last; except that Patty has been so unfortunate as to attract the notice of Mrs. Swamp, whose natural aversion to handsome hussies, is greatly increased, by some propensities to gallantry, which it is whispered she discovered in the Rector, during his late excursion to Bath.

Mrs. Swamp no sooner cast her malignant eyes on the damsel's waist, than she recollected the Miller's wife was lame, and that it would be a charitable act in her, to look in on the poor woman; now 'though dame Lucas had really been an invalid almost a year, Mrs. Swamp's charity had lain dormant, 'till her resolution to direct the mother's tearful eye, to the same improving object, which had attracted her own, carried her to the mill.

The poor dame communicated the matter to her husband—Patty was immediately called to trial—pleaded guilty—and suffered the torture of Mrs. Swamp's invectives, her father's anger, and her mother's tears—

The outcry raised in the village by the virtuous Mrs. Swamp, and the enquiries thereon, from the overseers, have so much affected both the miller's wife, and daughter, that they are as unable from indisposition, as from shame to be seen abroad; and I am not in credit with myself, for postponing my application at Belle-Vue, in the girl's favor; I am therefore going there immediately, and will write the success of my journey, before I close this letter.

* * * * *

It was late last night when I left Belle-Vue, and I confess notwithstanding my prejudice, I returned with very different sentiments of General Moncrass: than what I carried with me there.

Mrs. Montford's lingering illness, which confined her the two last years of her life, prevented her visiting at Belle-Vue, as frequent, as she had always before done; Lady Mary often came to the Hermitage, by which means I had the honor to be very well acquainted with her ladyship; although I was hardly personally known to the General; It is true, Caroline, and I, both sometimes attended Mrs. Montford, prior to her illness, on the public days to Belle-Vue; yet as there were generally, a large mixed company on those occasions, it was no wonder, such a mere youth as myself, should be nearly overlooked; or that my own attention, should be engrossed more by the multitude, than an individual, to whom I had only been formally introduced.

General Moncrass is however a very agreeable man, so much so, that I thought several times in the course of the day, next to being Edward Harley of the Hermitage, I could like to be General Moncrass; to have just such a heart, so noble, so expanded, so alive to the feelings of humanity; so attentive to the claims of justice, and mercy, so generous, so charitable, so abundantly possessed of the means to be so; and in short, so every thing he is, except the faithless husband of Lady Mary, and the lover of Agnes; if there were many such men in the world, it would certainly mend—

I apologised for not waiting on him earlier, with my grateful acknowledgements, for the honor he had done me:

I had rather young man, replied he, you had accepted it without any acknowledgement, but perhaps, he added, with a benevolent smile, you have thought better, and are come to inform me, you will yet be a soldier—

I bowed, with a negative air, he perfectly comprehended; and entered on the story of the Miller's daughter.

Good God! said he the tear starting in his eye, how easy are the progressions to vice, and how callous does it render the heart of man.

Hodge was ordered to attend.

The fellow, sister, who was a few months ago one of the most sheepish, shamefaced boobies in the parish; is now a compleat, audacious livery servant; he cast a look of incorrigible impudence at me, and heard the charge against him, with a smothered grin on his countenance—

The General condescended to recapitulate the injuries he had done the girl, and her family; he painted with equal truth, and justice, the ruined peace, lost character, and deplorable situation of the unhappy female, whom, artless love for him, had deprived of every other comfort and insisted on his making all the reparation, now in his power; you shall marry the young woman added he—

The fellow had been in *the world*, it was not for him to be concerned, at ruining an innocent girl, nor at any of the consequences, so pathetically described by his master—

Marry her, I hope your honor won't insist on that,

Why so sirrah, did you not promise to marry her? promise, oh, please your honor, if I did, that won't argusy; to be sure when I knoed no better, I mought say a few civil things—*civil things sister!! there's improvement!* but that was when I worked at the mill; but now please you, its quite another guess matter, because as why, if every gentlemen's sarvant, was obliged to marry girls, becace they promised, why lord love your honor it could not be, for a man mought be hanged; for whereof he'd ha more wives than hairs to his head, and that I dare say, his honor Mr. Harley knoes is against the gospel, and your honor knoes 'tis against the law—

The General was enraged, and gave orders if he did not agree to marry the girl, he should be instantly discharged; he chose the latter, and set off the moment he was paid his wages, (fearing I suppose the parish officers) for London; where, if his further improvements are as rapid as those at Belle-Vue, it may be presumed, it will not be long, before he reaches the summit of preferment—

My heart sunk within me, when I reflected on the consequences of the wretches barbarity; the poor girl, her situation, her honest father, and sick mother, with all their sorrows about them, rushed on my mind; the shame, and consequent misery of an hitherto admired, and virtuous maiden; struck me the more forcibly, as I knew her fondness for her destroyer.—

The General lamented his inability to enforce, either justice, or relief, to the injured sufferer, observing with truth, that marriage would not from such a fellow, have ensured her tolerable treatment; as it was too probable, her deviation from virtue, would be punished by the reproach, and abuse of her seducer; that her present situation, wretched as it was, would submit to time, but a bad husband was an incurable evil.

He pressed me to dine with him; he would introduce me he said, to a very elegant female, whose beauty was her least perfection; and whose mind, was as ingenuous as my own.—

I accepted the invitation, but eager as Caroline is for a description of his Agnes, I must first be permitted to give you the observations I have made on a nobler subject; the General himself.

He is then, as you know, a very fine figure, and has the perfect deportment of a gentleman; the brilliancy of his eyes when you saw him, had perhaps suffered from time, but they are now also fraught with a melancholy, which gives a most interesting turn to his countenance; yet he has a lively affability, the result of that politeness, which Bruyere describes as “a certain care by our manner, and words, to make others pleased with *us* and with *themselves*;” he is the only person in whom I ever saw, the gaiety of youth, so happily blended with the experience, and wisdom, of age, as to preserve entire the respect due to the latter, while the senses are captivated with the fascinating vivacity of the

former; his conversation thus tempered, cannot but be rational, and entertaining; his wit is good sense enlivened, and his heart, which a child might read, is the seat of generosity and sensibility—the tear dropped from his manly eyes while I recited the history of Patty Lucas, and the tribute to sensibility, he neither attempted to conceal, or display; but suffered it to take its course, regardless of what comments might be made, on an exhibition so unusual.

It was a just observation of Mrs. Montford, (but when indeed did that dear woman make an unjust one) that gentlemen, who have been used to military command, always preserve a kind of despotic authority over their servants, and the male branches of their family, while they are in the same proportion, more gentle, and indulgent, even to the frailties of their females, than is generally met with among the civil departments of society; General Moncrass has all this, but tho' absolute, he is no tyrant, his commands must instantly, and unequivocally be obeyed; but then they are dictated by reason, and are necessary to good order—you know it is the master who speaks, more from the alacrity with which he is obeyed, than the stern manner of giving his orders; he has one faithful domestic, who is grown old in his service; whatever subordinate offences are committed in the family, are tried in the form of a court martial, where this grey-headed veteran presides; whose sentence is always definitive—

I am, said the General, so satisfied with Gallini's principles, as well as acquainted with his good sense, and have had withal, such abundant proofs of the gentleness, and compassion of his nature; that I dare trust him with the last thing, a wise master will part with to a servant—*which is power.*

We were at this period of a very agreeable conversation, when dinner was announced; and the General led the way, through the elegant suite of appartments, into the eating parlour; where as the table was already covered, I was introduced with very little form to miss, or as he chuses to call her, Mademoiselle De Courci; there was a delicacy in the arrangement of the seats, which in respect to the absent *real* lady of the house, pleased me: the dining table is round, and the covers were so judiciously placed round the epergne, it is impossible to say, which was the head of the table; except indeed, that were to be determined by the place where the lady was seated; there was also at table a middle aged well-bred lady, Madame De Vallmont; a very sensible, respectable woman, who lives on terms of friendship with Miss De Courci; of the latter, I could not but observe, she conducted herself with such a marked propriety, such a collected, invariable delicacy; that had I not been acquainted with her character, I should have thought her, the quintessence of elegant simplicity.

“Blushing, said Diogones, is the completion of virtue,” and Pythya decided, that to be the most beautiful color, which modesty raises in virtuous persons; what the sensations are which causes the sparkling blood, to mantle in the cheeks of Miss De Courci, is perhaps not so easy to determine; certain it is the effect is enchanting; she is really a woman, whose charms, would justify any excess of virtuous fondness; and it is no wonder the General having once reconciled himself to the enormity of his first error, should be gratified in such an apology for his perseverance in it, as is seen in the sweet countenance of Miss De Courci.

He is certainly excessive fond of her, but again I say, did I not know the contrary; I should conclude from the manner of both, that it was the fondness of a tender father, repaid by the filial love, and gratitude, of a sensible amiable daughter: several times my dear Caroline during the day, pleasing as it passed in other respects, did I secretly, and painfully regret, the partial pleasure which beamed on the General's countenance, when ever he addressed, or was addressed by Agnes—had not Lady Mary for its object; I am grieved to say it, but all hopes of weaning her husband from his present attachment, is vain; I have given you the outlines of Agnes De Courci, but there remains undescribed, a myriad of charms, and those not merely personal; you would be ready Caroline to weep over such a wreck of virtue, and lament with me, she is not *all* perfection—

And thus, having so far performed the task you gave me, I have a return to ask from you.

I am but very superficially acquainted with the former events of the history of General and Lady Moncrass; they are, I have heard extraordinary; the last are no less so, and my visit to Belle-Vue yesterday, has raised a curiosity I am desirous to have gratified: the inconstancy of a man of fashion, and his separation from his wife; are things so common in the great world, that excepting the interest I took in Lady Mary's distress, I heard of it without a sensation of wonder, or desire to be acquainted with any more of the story, than what common fame conveyed to my Hermitage; but now that I have seen the General, and find him so near my standard of what man *should be*; one instance only excepted, I wish also to hear, all that *can be known* concerning him; suffer me to owe this pleasure to your elegant pen my dear sister, let me travel with you through those progressive scenes, which at present terminate so much to the discredit of human nature;—Alas poor human nature!

I was the messenger of liberality from Belle-Vue to the mill, dame Lucas's lameness is thought to be incurable; Patty, who is the eldest child, supplies to the rest, the place of the sick mother, and is also the notable mistress of the dairy; she was bathing her mother's lame leg when I entered; in as gentle terms as possible, I told her the success of my embassy, she heard me with tolerable fortitude, 'till I concluded; when finding that Hodge was gone, never perhaps to return, she gave a piercing groan, and repeating his name, sunk lifeless at her mother's feet; whose shrieks soon brought her husband from the mill; and assisted by two or three female neighbours placed the poor girl on a bed, where she lay 'till the appearance of death was removed, by violent and convulsive hysterics.

I endeavoured to comfort the parents, and pacify the children, with whom I had hitherto been a great favorite, but who now eyed me with no small malignity, as the herald of misfortune to their mammy sister as they called her, but did not succeed; I left the house unable to alleviate their sufferings, or repress my own feelings.

Caroline what shall we say to these things, the thunder of the Omnipotent, is not heard, the lightnings flash not seen, nor the unerring vengeance of the Almighty dreaded; while the guiltless, and unsuspecting, become the victim of deceit and barbarity; the betrayer triumphs in the success of his cruelty, and the poor unoffending innocent, sinks under woes, inflicted by the hand it loves, even in death; whose fell stab it met with unapprehensive joy.

When man was first created, all the other faculties, mental, and external, were crowned with heavens best last gift, reason.

Love, gratitude, truth, compassion, and fidelity; might well, and naturally be expected to associate with reason,—

But whence came deceit, falshood, cruelty, and foul ingratitude? how were they admitted into the seat of reason?—Oh Caroline with such impressions on the mind, there would be no end to reflection; nor any comfort to be derived from it, except that “the brink of the grave is the bulwark, where the remaining evils of life are accumulated, but beyond it is an eternal calm.”

EDWARD HARLEY.

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LETTER XIII.

Mrs. Dowager Butler to Lady M. Moncrass.

Soho-Square.

STILL unable to attend my dear cousin personally, I flatter myself she will believe, the greatest consolation I can receive, under my misfortune, is to have it in my power to serve, or oblige her.

Yes! Lady Mary, I too well know your fondness for the ingrate, to doubt the distraction of your mind; and however ready you may be to take blame to yourself, I well know when ever passion has been predominate, from what source its excess has arisen.

Good God!—when I look back—when I compare the past with the present, I could credit no other pen but your's; the narrative you have favoured me with, is so utterly unaccountable, so out of all possible comprehension, that I can hardly believe it real.—

Ungrateful man! And is it indeed thus our weak sex are rewarded for inviolate faith, and fondness unspeakable?—

Yes madam! it is indeed too true, all is confirmed by young Harley: I inclose the copy of his letter to Mrs. Butler, you see—but I have not patience—a man at his time of life, his character—but it is a privilege the lords of the creation will monopolize; they contend that the right to render themselves conspicuously ridiculous, without fear, or shame, is the character of their sex—would that were all—that *they* were the only sufferers—And oh! my dear friend, would to God, that the conviction of your husband's baseness could restore your tranquility.—

Oh! no doubt, we shall hear much more of the paragon of Belle-Vue; set a young fellow once going, in praise of a chit with a round face, if the nose be not preposterously misplaced, if she can see, and has a tongue, he will find a pleasure in his own description, and not easily give it up—God forgive me!—I wish a most precious punishment to the General; but I dare say the creature knows better; else, an elopement with our philosopher, would, in my opinion, expiate all the rest of her sins; and I suppose they are a decent catalogue.

Surely, Lady Mary, Julia cannot, after the treatment *you* have received, think of Reuben with her usual partiality; you are certainly right in giving her to Lord Morden; he is not, I grant, so well spoken of in point of morality, as one would chuse, but *your* sufferings are inflicted by a *moral man*; a libertine may dissipate his fortune, and injure his family—but I defy him to stab a woman to the heart, as our *moral man* has done: I do not however; mean to imply, that Lord Morden is a libertine; he has, it is said, indulged

himself in some tonish freedoms—What young man of fashion has not? he may not make the worse husband for that; Julia is handsome, lively, and sensible; *her* fortune, as *you* will take care to settle, it will be a bond for kind treatment;—at any rate, she must not be a Moncrass.

You observe the request Harley makes to my daughter; I think he must be obliged; we shall further engage, not only his interest, but his curiosity: as he becomes more acquainted with your Ladyship, he will feel for your distress, and wish to discover the secret motives which could influence the General to act as he has done; these he will naturally communicate; so that, if not forbid by you, I shall furnish Mrs. Butler with materials for your history, which she is impatient to begin.

I cannot help smiling in the midst of my anger, to think how little these young people suspect this fine corresponding scheme, which they fancy is to pourtray every action, is a contrivance of two old tabbies, as my saucy son would call us; and who, if he knew our plan, would pay very little respect to our desire of prying, by his friend's mean's, into the secrets of Belle-Vue; what most justifies the duplicity, (if it may be so called) in us is, that if Harley knew the use made of his letters; or, if Caroline had the remotest suspicion they were communicated to your Ladyship; one would not write, nor the other communicate *all* we wish to see.

Mrs. Butler now grows so important in her size, and so urgent in her entreaties for me to continue with her, 'till her apprehended hour is past; that after having been long a tender nurse to me, she would complain, and I think with reason, if I refuse her: I shall by that time I trust, have regained strength, to enable me to undertake my journey to you.

Heaven be your comforter, my dear friend; summon, I beseech you, your excellent understanding to your aid; let not the perfidy of *man* triumph over the friend of

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER.

Lady Mary Moncrass to Mrs. Dowager Butler.

Bath.

CERTAINLY my dear Constance, nothing can be more fair; if the young man will be so good as to entertain, let him be also entertained in his turn; I inclose papers which may possibly assist your memory.

Harley is a very good creature, I am particularly attached to him; he has some claims of which he will always remain ignorant, on my friendship; and could he be persuaded to enter the great world, my father would exert all his interest, in his favor; but the strange manner, in which Mrs. Montford educated him, and the odd fancies, she was so fond of instilling, into his young mind, has I fear given him a vast deal of wisdom, with a very small portion of common sense: and it may be an instance of the former, that he chuses to keep out of the connections, where the latter only, can be of use to him.

I know not how it is Constance, but I feel a kind of self reproach, about practising on the ingenuity of such a guiltless creature: and it is a Hudibrastic salvo, only, that can reconcile me to my own principles; he, you know, fixes the ignomy of perjury, on the framer of oaths, not the swearer, as

“‘Tis he that makes the oath that breaks it,
“Not he that for convenience takes it.”

So I wish to lay our cunning (I must give it that opprobrious epithet) among the rest of his sins—at the General’s door: but it rebounds, and crimsones the cheek of your

M. MONCRASS.

LETTER XIV.

Mrs. Butler, to Edward Harley, Esq.

Soho-Square.

PROFIT by my example, see how ready I am to oblige *you*.

General Moncrass my dear Edward, is the only surviving son of the Earl of Moncrass; whose name you find, among the ill destined chiefs who followed the fortunes of the late Pretender, and whose all were sacrificed to mistaken loyalty, in the rebellion of forty-five.

The family of Moncrass is said to be lineally descended from a female branch of the house of Stuart; and the chiefs, have in different wars, been equally signalized for their bravery in battle, and their mercy in conquest:—Mrs. Butler, who is well-read in history, declares, Scotland does not boast a more noble race:—the men, she says, were to a proverb valiant, and the women virtuous; and in all the anecdotes, which the annals of the Scottish nation have handed down to posterity, the name of Moncrass has stood among the highest on the list of fame.—Ever steady in their faith, invincible in their courage, and unshaken in loyalty, and attachment to their natural princes—it is the less wonder, that the late Laird should be among the first who offered themselves voluntary champions in the cause of that unfortunate adventurer “Charles Stuart.”

Lord Moncrass had been liberally educated, and his fortune was large; but having married young, the daughter of a neighbouring Peer, who had little more to boast than her beauty, and family honors; and who added to the strength of his house by presenting him yearly with an addition to it. He prudently resolved to reside entirely at the family-castle, and there personally superintend the education of his children, who, except one daughter, were all males.

Lord Moncrass was a rigid catholic; and his lady being also a strict bigot to the same faith, their children were unfortunately brought up members of the church of Rome, so that they were thereby precluded from the usual resources of provision for the younger branches of their family, by procuring for them commissions in the military or naval service of their country.

The establishment of five sons, who were either to be settled in independence at home, or sent into foreign service, may be supposed to be a great weight on the mind of so haughty a peer, and so affectionate a father as Lord Moncrass. The present General, who was the youngest but one, and twin-brother to the only daughter of the family, very early evinced his inclination to a military life; and at the age of fifteen, requested his father to give him credentials to an uncle then in the Portuguese army, through whose

interest *he* might also procure a commission and begin his career in the profession of arms, which his heart panted after.

The troubles in Scotland, were at this time, on the point of breaking out; and Lord Moncrass, as well as his brother, the Colonel, then at Lisbon, were deeply engaged in all the cabals forming in behalf of the young Pretender. Three of his sons, fine promising young men, were embarked in the same fatal cause, and were all appointed to very high offices in the mock-ministry; the fourth, filled with the ardor of juvenile heroism, was constantly beseeching his father and mother to send him to Portugal: the fifth was yet too young to have his destination fixed.

Notwithstanding Lord Moncrass's ardent attachment to the house of Stuart, there were moments, when the possibility of their not being successful, would intrude on the warm hopes his zeal inspired; even when he most exulted in the courtly honors promised his family, and the glory of being one of the principal means of restoring a prince of his own race, to the throne of Scotland; the dire consequences to himself and children of a failure in their enterprizes, arose in terrible array to his imagination. Lady Moncrass was a perfect heroine; regard not me she would say; should misadventure attend our cause, I shall die with pleasure for my prince.

Each of their sons, whose age entitled him to be confided in, expressed the same enthusiastic ardor; and Lord Moncrass gloried in the loyalty of his family. But what, said he sighing, if we fall, will become of our lovely daughter? For her, indeed, the mother also trembled; at sight of her opening beauties, and the thousand nameless graces that shot from her clear blue eyes, maternal tenderness momentarily triumphed over mistaken loyalty.

After many consultations on the subject, they determined on sending her, under the care of a faithful domestic, with her twin-brother, to Colonel Moncrass,—And, said the ill-fated nobleman; that my fears for the future fate of this darling of my soul, may not unnerve me in the hour of danger; I will remit her pension to my brother, with strict orders to have her immediately professed, should she become fatherless.

The minds of women, my dear Edward, are generally thought to acquire strength, or at least, to reach maturity earlier than those of men; but it should seem, it was not so Lord and Lady Moncrass judged of their children; for, while they wept over their daughter, who was a beautiful girl just entering her fifteenth year, they closeted young Reuben; and, as if influenced by a presage of the sad catastrophe that awaited their family, solemnly recommended his sister to his love and protection; entreated him to supply to her, by his attentive tenderness, those absent relatives, those fond friends, from whom her destiny might, perhaps, forever separate her; and they conjured him, never to deviate from the principles of honor and rectitude, which had been instilled into his young mind, by his noble parents.

Take this sword, Reuben, said Lord Moncrass, vainly striving to conceal his anguish, his voice faltering, and his eyes up-lifted to heaven; and with it, thy father's blessing;—let it not rest in the scabbard when the honor of thy country, or the glory of the prince thou servest, demands a soldier's aid—but never dishonor thy own nature, or thy father's house, by drawing it in the defence of folly, or in the heat of passion; a tavern broil, or vindictive spirit is equally disgraceful to a man of honor.—Go, my son, thou canst not travel out of the reach of Providence; thou canst not command success, but thou may'st deserve it:—remember, at the moment when thou receivest thy father's fond—perhaps, his last adieu; when he put the sword, he had long worn himself, into the hand of his beloved son, *his* principles were untarnished by *one* unjust thought; and his honor, bright as the blade of the weapon he wore for its defence;—Go thou, my son, “and do likewise.”

Penetrated with the solemnity and tenderness of this scene, and overwhelmed with dutiful fondness and regret; the youth, on his knees, promised a strict adherence to the will of his parents, and a firm attachment to their principles both of loyalty and faith. Lord and Lady Moncrass, fervently praying for a blessing on them, then tore themselves from their parting children.

They arrived safe at Lisbon. Miss Moncrass was immediately entered as boarder in a convent, where many noble families placed their daughters; and the young hero was received with every mark of honor due to his birth, and aspiring spirit, into the Portuguese army: his Majesty, the then king of Portugal, presented him his brevet himself.

Whether it was, that matters were not yet ripe, or from what other cause, the rebellion did not break out this year; and Lord Moncrass had the pleasure to hear from his brother, the highest encomiums on both his children; but the following year Europe was in flames, Charles landed in Scotland, and was instantly joined, among other noblemen, by Lord Moncrass and his three eldest sons.

The end of this rebellion proved fatal to the house of Moncrass; the two eldest sons were kill'd in different rencontres in England, whither they followed the Pretender; the third received a deadly wound, while fighting by his father's side at Preston: and, at the last decisive battle, Lord Moncrass himself, covering the Pretender's retreat, received a blow from a Highland loyalist, which deprived him of sense, and he was taken prisoner by a party of horse, whose irritation against him was the stronger, as he certainly prevented Charles from falling into their hands, and thereby deprived them of the great reward set on his head;—instead, therefore, of treating him with the respect and attention due to his rank, he was suffered to linger under the anguish of a great number of wounds, 'till the troops reached their headquarters; when the royal Duke who commanded the army, being informed of his situation, and probably sated with the vengeance he had taken on the foes of his father, ordered the wounded chief to be properly attended; and it is possible he might have recovered, had not the untimely fate of his wife, and young son, been incautiously told him.

That unhappy Lady, as soon as the certain news of the defeat, where all was lost, reached her, fled from the castle in the night, with her young son; and in attempting to cross a river, in a place where it was not fordable, an end was at once put to their misfortunes and their lives. Their bodies were afterwards taken up, and buried with family honors, in the ancient receptacle of the house of Moncrass.

These cruel tidings, brought to the wounded Lord, almost as soon as he recovered his senses, threw him into a fever, which putting a period to his life, saved him from those further misfortunes which awaited the other noblemen, who had shared his fate, in being made the prisoners of an offended king.—

And thus, my dear Edward, I have, you see, began to evince my readiness to oblige *you*,—let my good-nature operate in kind;—be sure you write all that passes at Belle-Vue. My James says he will put every thing you wish our good mother not to see between hooks—but as she is so kind as to furnish me with most of the particulars I have, and shall send you, respecting the Moncrass family, *her* curiosity must also be indulged by the sight of your Arcadian anecdotes.

This is an enormous letter, but I could not prevail on myself to conclude it 'till I had finished the history of Lord and Lady Moncrass, and the part of their family who perished in the rebellion. I shall begin my next with the young soldier we left in Lisbon.

C. BUTLER.

LETTER XV.

Edward Harley, Esq. to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

WHAT a treasure, my Caroline, is your correspondence!—What an obligation does it confer on your grateful Edward.—It was in vain, after reading your affecting history of the unhappy family of Moncrass, that I courted rest. Sleep, the sweet nurse of exhausted nature, affrighted at the calamitous consequence of civil discord, wing'd her airy flight to pillows, unstained with sympathetic sorrow;—yes, Caroline! my eyes paid a sad tribute to the woes of the misguided Scottish hero; and I am filled with more than female curiosity to know the remainder of the interesting story;—let me, I beseech you, thank my sister, my friend, for a very large packet next post: and in return, the best I can make, I will beguile you also of your tears, for the fate of my poor village maid.

Patty is still ill—very ill; I visit her daily: the heretofore bright dressers, and large oak tables, mourn her inability to perform her accustomed task; the polish'd hearth, and shining pot-lids, no longer grace the miller's kitchen; the birds and flower-pots are totally neglected; and the children are of all colours, but that the water leaves on the skin; they sit on the green bank before the door, and announce to all that pass, that mammy's leg is worse, and dear sister Patty's heart is breaking.

Poor Lucas is unable to work; the neighbours are therefore, obliged to carry their corn two miles off, to be ground; the most insensible will feel for themselves; and this inconvenience being general, the cause is as generally imprecated; Hodge has been piously, and heartily sent to perdition by the whole parish; but Hodge is, most probably at the same instant, a mighty clever fellow,—too clever to reflect on the desolation his vices have wrought in an honest family.—Well, Caroline, we may moralize, but we can do no more.

I have sent a woman to assist in taking care of the younger children, but the officiousness of fond affection, will not resign the object of its care, however unable to perform the sad office, of watching the last look, and sustaining the dying form on which our sorrows hang.—There sits the unhappy girl, supported by her father, her head reclining on the bosom of her lame mother, the rose forever faded on her cheek, the mild lustre of her eye, no longer drowned with tears, but bent on the earth in joyless solemnity: Adown the honest miller's rugged cheek, the tears chace each other, the mother—but *her* looks, *her* anguish, are too poignant for expression, too sad for description.

Alas poor maid! I did not think that love had so strongly seized thy young heart; she *will* die Caroline, she *should not*, and, I am ready to swear with benevolent Toby, she *shall not*, die, but her disorder is past the reach of medicine.

No subject to write on but Patty, I can think of nothing, but her present woes, and those which are past of the noble family of Moncrass; ah Caroline; at the throne of mercy, who will arraign the souls of the victims of public policy? who condemn those of credulous fondness?

Did I tell you the General, whom I shall now behold with veneration, promised to drop in on my solitude, as he was pleased to call the Hermitage? I am honored with a general invitation to dine; and am now preparing to accept the last; he devotes he says, this day to elegant friendship; polite, dangerous General Moncrass; what would become of my resolutions, if indeed there were many like you?

One word more—

So Caroline made a merit to Mr. Montford of my visiting at Belle-Vue; and he is pleased at that prodigious effort; I am happy to gratify him in any point, that leaves me master of my own actions; but his threats are terrible, he will adopt *your* child, oh! what havoc, will this resolution make in my sedentary scheme; you may tell him, but whisper it as a profound secret, that I also, mean to appoint the same little personage, heir to the vast estates, of dear Caroline, your affectionate,

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER XVI.

Mrs. Butler to Edward Harley.

Norfolk-Street.

I am, my dear Edward, as much interested in the history I am sending you of the noble, but unfortunate family of Moncrass, as if I had never before heard it—nor indeed have I, but in a summary way: Mrs. Butler says, that Lady Mary and herself, were so affected when the General related it to them, that they made minutes of most of the interesting events, and from those she gives me the heads of what I now send you.

When the fatal tidings reached Lisbon, of the loss of his father, and the destruction of his family, the situation of the young orphan may be more easily imagined than described. Colonel Moncrass had held secret correspondence, both with his brother and Charles.—Had the latter succeeded in his claims on the crown of Great Britain, it is not to be doubted but the whole house of Bourbon would have claim'd their degrees of merit, in an event so important to the Stuarts, and so interesting to all Europe.—

But now, that the enemies of the reigning king, were totally vanquished, and the voluntary ardor, with which he had been supported by his people, proved their zeal and attachment to him, and his family; every power, not already actually engaged in the war, sedulously avoided giving offence to a prince, who, by reigning in the *hearts* of his people, they found was invincible.

The court of Lisbon, according to the policy of the times, withdrew the rays of its favor, both from Colonel Moncrass and his young nephew; and, in a very short time after this afflicting news had reached him, the Colonel was given to understand, he must either accept of a commission to the Brazils, or, together with his nephew, quit the service; his Majesty having no farther commands for him; at the same time, a private hint was given, that a proper regard would be paid to their rank and merits.

The Colonel, enraged at this treatment, would have quitted the kingdom, but young Moncrass, now the exiled heir of a family, whose estates were all confiscated, and whose honors were no more, threw himself at the feet of his only relation, and besought him to accept the offers made them, of going to the Brazils.—

Whither, my dear uncle, said the noble youth, weeping—whither can we go? Will not the same cruel time-serving policy meet us in every court where we shew ourselves?—France, now solicits peace—Rome, has no sanctuary but in the bosom of her church—a general armistice will soon take place,—and even, if we were sure of more tolerable treatment elsewhere, what has a soldier to do in times when the sword rests in the scabbard?—Let us go—what clime can be more barbarous to us than this?—Can any air be more pestilential than that where we have been deprived of all the dear ties, which God has given equally to the infidel and the christian?—They send us to war with the

Ethiop—but what of that?—We carry our souls with us—the noble blood of Moncrass *will mount*, go where we will!—While we support our own dignity, what are countries, or climates to us?

Colonel Moncrass, charmed with the spirit of his nephew, strained him to his breast.

For me Reuben answered he, it is of little import where I breathe the wretched remains of my life: I have now no country—no inheritance—no kindred but thee, dear native Scotland! thou art, forever, lost to me—no more shall I greet my uncorrupted vassals—no more hear the voice of welcome as I enter; the now desolate habitation of my forefathers—sacred spot! where heroes, and where kings first saw the light!—No more retrace the scenes where Ossian filled the echoing valley with the woes of Fingal.

Those involuntary exclamations of sorrow, and regret; so overcame the Colonel; that his struggling heart, seemed bursting from his manly breast, and, he continued in an undescribable agony, 'till he was relieved by a flood of tears.

Colonel Moncrass was one of the bravest of men; his undaunted soul had led him, a stranger to terror, thro' the embattled phalanx in the height of war, and carnage; he knew no fear but that of offending his *God*; and misguided as was his zeal for the fallen family of the Stuarts, yet even that error was *virtue* in *him*—because he acted up to the dictates of his conscience; which in souls like his, is but another word for honor; when he heard of the destruction of his family, considering them rather as martyrs to loyalty, than victims to rebellion, altho' he felt, he felt like a man, and a soldier:

The two orphans then under his sole protection he looked on, as being snatched from general destruction by the peculiar providence of heaven; and he resolved to be to them the father they had lost—but he had now no means to assist them; except his pay from the court of Lisbon,—he was a batchelor of free principles, and would not have been rich, had his purse not been continually drained as it was, in assisting the pretender.—

The rent roll of his estate in Scotland, was not more than eight hundred pounds per Annum: that was now confiscated, and himself under sentence of outlawry—when therefore he beheld the amiable youth before him, and heard his animated expressions, when he considered him as literally all that was left of their noble, and ancient family; his titles, estates, and hereditary honors, all expunged; he gave vent as I have described to his agony—he wept—but *his* tears, were not the common expressions of sorrow, they were such as Achilles shed for Briscies.

The young Reuben, saw this conflict in his noble minded uncle, with some degree of terror, but more compassion; his susceptible heart mounted to his eyes, he fell on the bosom of his uncle, and mingled tears with his:

A few moments thus passed in the luxury of grief; composed the Colonel, and reanimated his nephew.—Let us go, sir, said he, since our Eden is forever lost to us; let us, at least, seek the asylum we are denied by christians, among infidels; let us shew those

time-servers, *we* are superior to the selfish arts that influence the policy of courts—when we fight their battles, and extend their conquests, they may recollect this treatment with shame!—

Yes, Reuben! I will go with thee, answered the Colonel, broken-spirited, and overwhelmed by misfortune—little honor, and less fame, can I now hope for in the profession of a soldier; but I will watch thy steps, I will instruct thee how to temper the impetuosity of youthful bravery, with discretion; thou art a soldier, and thy soul pants for conquest—Oh! thou hast much yet to learn: the fierce tyger, who seizes on his trembling prey, is a superior brute to the fearless mortal who braves death,—a hero must do more, he must wish to preserve life.—Oh! thou precious wreck of the lost-treasure of our house—thou hast a soul worth an old man's care.—But thy sister—

Alas sweet girl! answered Reuben striving to repress a fresh gush of tears, what shall we do with her?

Dispose of her as her father commanded, devote her to God; what else *can* be done for the last female of the house of Moncrass, without dowry, family, or friends?

Reuben wept, but as it was now plain his father's intention, was thus to dispose of his daughter, in case of the worst;—and that he had, when he made this disposition, a presentiment of *that worst*—he could not offer an objection to a plan, which had so sacred a sanction; they therefore went immediately to the convent.

Miss Moncrass was now in her seventeenth year: the misfortunes of her family, tho' told in the gentlest manner, so affected her health, she would have certainly fallen a victim to grief, had it not been for the most refined friendship which subsisted between her and a young novice, daughter to the Marquis St. Lawrens, which induced that amiable creature to attend on every stage of her disorder, and with the most tender sympathy, so to blend piety, and resignation, with comfort; that the poor orphan recovered; to transfer the fondness of her innocent heart from the grave of her parents, to the bosom of her friend; in whose arms she was weeping, when her uncle, and brother appeared at the grate.

Very few arguments were necessary to persuade Miss Moncrass, to abandon a *world* which had been so fatal to those she held most dear; without a single tie in it, except her uncle, and brother, both of whom she was now on the point of losing,—what temptation had it for her?

Sister Victoire, the dear friend whose care had saved her life, was also destined to take the veil; her father was the french minister at Lisbon, and according to the etiquette of the french noblesse, it was necessary to preserve the dignity of his family, by cutting off the younger branches from society.

This amiable creature's heart accorded with her destiny; she was a being formed of the most harmonious materials; content irradiated her countenance, peace dwelt in her heart, and the fervency of her devotions regulated every sensation of her mind.

Under the influence of such an example, and in possession of such a friend, so far from having any objection to the veil—Miss Moncrass took her vows with a pious cheerfulness, that inspired respect, and rendered her brother perfectly happy.

The ceremony was performed the week before the Colonel and his nephew set sail on their honorable exile.

The young devotee felt far more grief in parting from those dear, and only relatives, than she was sensible of in abandoning the rest of the world:—and now, having settled her quietly in her convent, and sent my Heroes in quest of adventures; I shall conclude this letter with a quotation from your favoured author, that might have suited Miss Moncrass, and which is not inapplicable to my Edward.

“With the sort of people, who have either seen nothing of the world, or too much; where is the merits of resigning, what one is unacquainted with, or weary of? The praise-worthy recluse, are those who enter the world with innocence, and retire from it in good-humour.”

Adieu,

C. BUTLER.

LETTER XVII.

Edward Harley, Esq. to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

ANOTHER day passed at Belle-Vue, retrospectively delightful; if refined sense, elegant hospitality, and a welcome, where friendship, and politeness, were blended could render it so.

Who can reconcile the contradictions in this man's character? He is publicly said to be of libertine principles, a violater of the marriage-vow; one, who tramples on the laws of society; who lives in open, and criminal intercourse with one amiable female, while another, *his wife*, a woman possessed of every female virtue, to whom he is under uncommon obligations, feels the sharp tooth of ingratitude, pines in secret, and is lost to rank, society, and all the comforts of life.—

Yet, this man can shed the tear of sensibility, compassion is the leading trait in his disposition; he is blessed with a brilliant understanding; all his sentiments are noble, his decisions just, and his actions, as far as the eye of man can reach, mark'd by the strictest propriety:—but sister, can we wonder a man *thus* accomplished, *thus* adorned with wisdom, and experience, should have it in his power to attach to himself the voluntary affections of any woman, of a common share of taste, and understanding? Or, that having once reconciled the matter to his own conscience, he should not want arguments to convince one of the weaker sex—pardon me, Caroline, the offence against honor, is sanctified by passion.

My opinion of Agnes rises, as I become more acquainted with the General:—the woman for whom *such a man* would go *such lengths*; for whom he would *forego such happiness*; to whom he would make *such a sacrifice*, must be mistress, not only of uncommon allurements, she must, however it may be perverted, have a mind—A thousand thanks dear Caroline, your packet is just arrived—I kiss your seal, and am so eager to proceed in the history, I have hardly patience to sign myself your affectionate

EDWARD HARLEY.

* * * * *

Oh Caroline! my curiosity is painfully arrested; I had opened your letter, and the evening being fine, walked out with it: without any previous intention, my steps were involuntarily turned to the mill;

I had been so used of late, to make morning and evening visits there, that with your letter in my hand, I was at their door before I knew I was on the way thither; are my lines crooked? Do you perceive the agitation of my nerves?—Patty Lucas is no more!

Oh sir! cried the youngest boy, Patty is better, indeed she is; and mammy gave us all an apple, for joy; pray go in, and you will have an apple too. I was so interested in your narrative, that altho' glad to hear the girl was better, I was not disposed to be interrupted; and was turning away, when the woman I had placed there to assist in the family, came hastily out, and told me, Patty heard the children name me, and begged I would let her speak to me.

Old Lucas was kneeling by the side of his dame, in thankful rapture; he wept even to sobbing, whilst she audibly returned her thanks to Heaven for the gleams of hope, the present composure of their child afforded; and fervently prayed, she might be restored to her sorrowing parents.

The girl herself, had a crimson flush in her cheeks, her lips were even more red, and her eyes shone brighter than when she was in rude health; yet, Patty Lucas, within six short months, was the pride of the village.

She extended both her hands towards mine, and with a modest confidence, I can never forget, drew it towards her, and pressing it to her breast—

I have been, sir, said she, very bad since I saw you this morning; and I was so sorry, and so grieved;—

Why, my girl, were you sorry?

Because, sir, I had not, methought, thanked you half enough, nor prayed half enough, that God would bless you here, and hereafter; and preserve you from the snares of the false-hearted—Oh sir! it is very hard to die—to die of love: some people may make a scoff of it—but believe me—believe poor Patty Lucas, it may be—as to Hodge, I forgive him, he had a hard heart, but that, you know, he could not help;—and so I hope God will forgive him too;—but who will comfort my poor father and mother? Will you, sir?—Will you comfort my poor mother, and help my honest father?—People will tell them of their daughter—they will want some good-body to take their parts.

Respiration became almost as difficult to me, as it was to the poor dying creature before me, who gasped at every sentence; I felt a rising in my throat, which a lady would have called hysterics, and could not answer.

She repeated her earnest question, Will you sir?—Will you comfort my poor father and mother? 'till a sudden paleness over-spread her face, which became covered with large drops of cold sweat; her eyes, now deprived of the transient luster which but a moment before dazzled my sight, still fix'd their anxious looks on mine; while she added, in a low hollow voice, If you say you will, I know I may believe you.

Shocked at an alteration so sudden, and awful, I could not help thinking myself in the immediate presence of the Deity; I solemnly promised to protect her parents.

One parting beam now shot from her closing eyes.—

Enough, enough—I am satisfied; and leaning her head back, on her distracted mother—without one sigh, one groan, expired—poor Patty Lucas!

I cannot reflect; I fear I should be wicked were I to attempt it. Dame Lucas will not long survive her daughter—time may console the father; it is now the house of misery; with such an object in her coffin the voice of comfort cannot be heard; all that can be at present done for them, is to take care that want may not be added to their afflictions.

For the honor of your sex, Caroline, I must tell you an anecdote you will not meet with often in the great world.

Twenty maidens, some of whom are servants, whose wages do not exceed forty shillings a year, have subscribed their half-crowns for white gloves, and favours, to accompany my poor girl's remains to the grave; as many young men follow their example, and they have begged my *honor* to lead the procession; I will take care their purses are not lighter, for this mark of sensibility; but shall not comply with their request.—

No! not even in the grave, will the malevolent, and envious, suffer their victims to rest; Mrs. Swamp is grievously offended at all the maidens, as to the fellows, no wonder they are sorry, the creature was of their sort; but for a virtuous damsel for to be seed in such company, dead or alive—Oh for shame! if Mr. Swamp was of her mind, (which he seldom is) he'd excommunicate every soul on 'um, and as to Mister Harley, she wonders the dead can rest in the grave, to think that, poor, dear Mrs. Montford's substance should be spent after that fashion, is a burning shame, so it is; but howsoever, birds of a feather, some folks may be fond of such sort of trumpery, as husseys and bastards, truth was not to be told at all times, because why, she believed some folks might, if truth was known, be bastards themselves.

Do you know Caroline, I am weak enough to be disturbed at this foolish woman's impertinence; not on my own account you may be sure; but poor dame Lucas. After the woman who attends her, had told me of Mrs. Swamp's malice, looked emphatically in my face;—Ah sir, said the weeping mother; *she* has no children, she never gave suck, was not afflicted with sickness, had no dear dutiful girl to nurse her, nor, oh great God! she cannot know a mother's pangs at such a fight as that; pointing to the still lovely corps of her dead child.

Adieu my beloved Caroline, I do not trouble you with any thing to James, as I write to him at G——, but beg you will render my best respects acceptable to the dowager Mrs. Butler, and when she writes to the continent, hope my name is not omitted among the enquiring friends of Mr. Henry Butler,

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER XVIII.

Mrs. J. Butler to Edward Harley, Esq.

THE Colonel and his young charge reached the Brazils without any material incident, where the former after signalizing himself in many actions, and adding fresh lustre to a character which required none, his own private sorrows, added to what he always felt for the family to whom his fortune had been sacrificed, co-operating with the bad air of the climate, he died within four years after his arrival at the Brazils.

Young Moncrass succeeded him both in rank and character; but the loss of his only friend was too sincerely felt, and too bitterly regretted, to be easily forgotten; and he had besides this another cause for anxiety, it was now a twelve-month since he had heard from his sister; her correspondence had hitherto been very regular, not a ship from Portugal had touched at any part of the Brazils, but her fond wishes for his welfare were conveyed to him; the pleasure he took in this correspondence, was augmented by the perceptible improvement of her mind; her letters were at once affectionate, entertaining, and pious: but he had not received any of those momentos of a sister's love (altho' he had continued to write constantly to her) some months before the Colonel's death, and now a twelve-month more had elapsed, without affording him the consolation to know his sister existed.

A billious complaint, which gained strength from the anxiety of his mind, was increasing so fast on his constitution, that by the advice of his physician, he wrote to the minister, praying leave to return to Lisbon for change of air: the feuds of the times which occasioned the honorable exile, into which he was sent, being now no more; he easily procured an order from court, and returned to Portugal, after having been six years absent, in the twenty-third year of his age: his first visit was to the Convent where his sister was professed.

Poor Moncrass! born to experience all the bitterness of fortune, could hardly credit his senses; when told that his sister, the modest, amiable creature he left so satisfied, and so happy in her situation; her whose expanding understanding had given him such innate pleasure, had violated her vows to Heaven, and eloped from the Convent: and so it actually proved.

To those who know with what rigour this crime is punished, and in what abhorrence it is held by rigid catholics, it will not appear strange, that the young criminal had taken every precaution, human sagacity could suggest, to prevent her route, and connections from being discovered; nothing had transpired that could throw the least light on the transaction: Victoire had been privately interrogated, and had publicly stood the examination of the Inquisitory Court—her grief and consternation at this step of her bosom friend, was natural and sincere; she utterly denied any knowledge of her elopement; and declared that so far from aiding, or abetting her; had she entertained the

slightest suspicion of her design—she should have held it a duty to that God, to whom they were both bound, to prevent such a disgrace being thrown on their holy religion, and the pious sisterhood.—

The rank, and family of this young nun, independent of her own virtuous character; precluded all suspicion of her veracity.

The sentence of excommunication, with all the terrible train of curses, usual on the commission of such extraordinary crimes, were publickly denounced against the young apostate, her abettors, and accessaries; but the resentment of the church proved in this case impotent, and all its endeavours to recover the lost fugitive, abortive.

Young Moncrass was a bon catholic, but by no means a bigot: it is true he considered his sister as an unhappy sinful woman, whose eternal salvation was forfeited by her breach of vow, but still, she was his sister; a sister who was consigned with a *solemnity and tenderness* that ever dwelt on his mind, to his fraternal care, by his dead parents—

The same affections, sentiments, and passions; had filled their young hearts, they had grown up together with encreasing love, and all the warmth of youthful fondness: and so early divided from the rest of his family, all his affections had naturally centered in her.

The young soldier's domestic sorrow did not facilitate his recovery; he waited on Victoire, who burst into an agony of grief when she saw him; they wept together, but the nun could not, or would not, give him any information respecting his sister's affairs; and as to her last step, she declared she had not the least suspicion of it, 'till, to her eternal sorrow, it was irretrievable.

Poor sinful creature! added she, I pray that her penitence may be sincere—I hourly implore the Virgin Mary to protect, and inspire her with true repentance; greatly as I abhor the crime, I yet pray, the criminal may now, and ever, escape the temporal punishment, that would be the sure reward of her guilt, was she to be taken—Alas! such is my dread of that event, this convent, once an earthly paradise, is now become horrible to me; I tremble at every summons to the Abbess; no stranger comes to the parlour without alarming my fears, and filling me with terror; I have solicited the Marquis to send me to Paris, where I may be immediately professed; my parents wish indeed to defer my return to France, 'till they can accompany me—but alas! I have lost the sister of my soul, eternally lost her; and in this place am in agonies, at the fear of her being brought back.

The Marquis, after ten years residence at this court, is now recall'd; it is my mother's wish I should be in France, where all their interest lies; and I have hopes I shall soon leave a place where every thing reminds me of my lost friend; where I am hourly offending Heaven by my inability to divide the sin from the sinner.

A flood of tears accompanied every word that fell from Victoire's lips, and the young soldier gave himself up to a grief and dejection that preyed on his constitution, and

reduced his fine figure to a mere spectre; he did not, however, forget to pay his court to the prince, in whose service his brows had often been crowned with laurels.

His Majesty remembered the fine youth who accompanied Colonel Moncrass to the Brazils; and knew he was the last branch of the family of Moncrass: the fame of his bravery, and the report of his good sense and humanity had also reached the court; but the wan appearance of the young Hero, was ill-calculated to revive the *memory* of his former pleasing form; or dress it in the glowing tints, which ever accompanies valiant actions, when added to a captivating figure.

It served however, to convince the King, that the leave he had solicited to return to Europe, was really necessary to his existence.

The heart must have been impenetrable, that beheld his interesting figure, and knew his misfortunes; without being prejudiced in his favor.

His Portuguese Majesty received him very graciously, and he was honor'd with the particular notice of the royal family: and notwithstanding the disaffection of his ancestors, he was invited by the English ambassador, to his table and assemblies.

And here, my dear Edward, I wish to proceed to the commencement of his acquaintance with Lady Mary,—but I am much indisposed, and must postpone the history till I am better—Adieu, I know I have your prayers.

CAROLINE BUTLER.

LETTER XIX.

James Butler, Esq. to Edward Harley, Esq.

Soho-Square.

GIVE me joy, dear Edward, my Caroline is safe: she has presented me with a cherub, lovely as herself; and both the dear angels are, thank God, well: I was not return'd from the circuit when the happy news was brought me, but you may be sure I flew home on the wings of anxiety and love.

Caroline begs you will continue to write, and in order to encourage you so to do, my mother will give you the remaining part of General Moncras's history.

Lord Ruthven's family are returned to Bath; his Lordship, by order of his physicians: Lady Mary too, is, we are grieved to find, very much indisposed.—One only shade is there in that woman's excellent character; the pride of her heart, has destroyed her peace: had she given a little way, had she assailed the General with tears instead of reproaches, he would,—he must have soon seen his error; his heart is noble, and a man of stricter honor does not breathe—but he has also a competent share of pride; Lord Ruthven's reproaches must have sunk deep in such a mind as his—and Lady Mary is the sufferer; she adores her husband, and all her attempts to regain her tranquility, serves only to prey on her own health, and render herself and family miserable.

Miss Neville suffers too; they see no Company, and the poor girl is forbid holding any correspondence with, or even speaking of young Moncrass; this restraint Julia very ill brooks; tho' perhaps, it may be well for her, the estrangement took place when it did; for, if I know any thing of the female heart, *her's* would infallibly have chosen young Reuben for its keeper:—Pray is he now with his father, or where?

So, this Agnes is handsome, is she?—And accomplished?—And plays finely?—I know a young Barrister, who was with us on the circuit, (an acquaintance of Mrs. de Vallmont's, the lady whom the General has made her duenna) he speaks highly indeed, of both Vallmont and Agnes; says, the former is a woman of honor and character, the latter an angel; and I assure you, was so offended when I laughingly answered, *a fallen one*, that I expected a challenge—so, if you hear of a certain special pleader having committed murder, don't be surprized—I fancy my young blustering Barrister is her lover.

Lady Mary stands sponser to our young stranger, and we mean to accept Major Melrose's polite offer on the same occasion.

I cannot but wish that the interview between her Ladyship and the General's friend may be productive, tho' I have really given the matter up—Articles on both sides are signed.—

Ned, you don't mind politics, and if you did, I hate to write on the subject—but old Montford is minority mad: we send him every pamphlet, and news-paper, that comes out; and he has now taken it into his head, that it is extremely shameful either you, or I, are not in parliament: Caroline told him, she believed it would be a difficult matter to prevail on either of us to accept a seat in that august assembly, even was it to be offered without any expence.

He was downright angry—Very well, madam, said he, knitting his brows, and resting on his cane,—then I'll tell ye what I'll do myself, I'll *marry*; and since you are all too proud to pay any court to the old fellow, you will know the value of my partiality, *when it is lost*. Poor Caroline was much hurt at this threat, as it seem'd to imply a design to hold us in the meanest of all subjections, that of a dependance on his will; but he has great good-nature, notwithstanding his oddities, the tear no sooner glisten'd in Caroline's eye, than his own caught the infection; he bid her not mind him.

The old man will be doing, if he undoes the next moment. They parted good friends, tho' not without some oblique hints, about the *sacred character* of a *British senator*, and his intention that his Borough should, next sessions, be represented by independent men—but take notice, Mr. Edward Harley, I have no time to be a patriot.

Caroline desires a thousand kind remembrances may be added to those of, dear Edward, your affectionate

JAMES BUTLER.

LETTER XX.

Edward Harley, Esq. to James Butler, Esq.

Hermitage.

I partake your joy, my dear James; and send you the warm congratulation of friendship and brotherly love, on an event of such importance to your family, and the happiness of us all; our good Benson found her youth renew'd at the news, and begg'd, if so be as I could any way do without her, she might go to London to attend on her dear young lady; she had, she said laid all my things ready, a great while in expectation of going, I consented, and she accordingly set out this morning; good creature, I hope she will not find her heart stronger than her body; I need not, I know, desire you will send to fetch her from the inn.

I dined yesterday at Belle-Vue, and was not a little gratified, by the unbounded professions of friendship, and esteem, with which I was honored, by the noble owner of that charming mansion:—my sister desires I will give her a particularly description of Miss De Courci's person; but this is a more difficult task than she imagines; when I was last at Belle-Vue, Agnes, was indisposed, and she has yet some remains of langour, which gives an excess of delicacy, to her looks; there is an insinuating grace in her manner, that goes directly to the senses: were I a poet, and meant to describe the sort of beauty, which steals on the soul by sure, and imperceptible degrees, I think I should be understood, after contemplating *her face*, and *figure*; or, were I a painter, who had already drawn a perfect Venus, yet felt as painters I fancy often do; a something wanting, a finish, a life glow, *do you comprehend me?* I am sure Agnes De Courci's countenance, would guide my pencil; her smiles are irresistible, and her voice has music in its most common expressions—she is I believe, of what is called the tall middle size; there is a haughty turn in her carriage, which added to her elegant form, conveys an idea of pride; but you feel the error the instant she opens the prettiest mouth in the world: since I have seen this lady, I have thought that *any* woman with *such a mouth*, even if added to a very harsh and disagreeable set of other features, would be enchanting—as to her eyes, I protest I cannot tell of what colour they are, only that they are extremely brilliant, and that the whole of her face was I believe never equalled.

I don't know how it is, but I think there is a restraint in the General's behaviour to her; his eyes indeed dwell with pleasure on her countenance, and he pays an enthusiastic respect to her opinion; his delight is in calling to observation the many fine accomplishments she certainly possesses; but yet, there is a something that often clouds his countenance in the midst of her fascinations; I would hope it was the image of his noble wife, yet to confess truth, *I fear*, had I an Agnes,—I—but what stuff am I writing.

Old Lucas holds his lease under Mr. Thrift, which never being expired, he has received notice to quit; the honest soul on the point of being turned out of a dwelling, in

which he was born; and which has so long sheltered, and supported his family, now recollects he has other children, besides her so much lamented, and his grief for her death, becomes less violent, as his cares for the survivors increase.

I have taken a fresh lease in my own name, of Mr. Thrift, who had no objection to his tenant, but his poverty, and trouble; and supposing he would not, with a sick wife, and large family, be able to pay the rent.—The mill now works again.

Can it be the absence of old Benson? Surely no! I am actually tired, without having been employed; *you* will call it apathy; Mademoiselle de Courci would say it is ennui—No matter, God bless you, and your better self, my Caroline.

EDWARD HARLEY.

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LETTER XXI.

Mrs. Dowager Butler to E. Harley, Esq.

Soho-Square,

Dear Sir.

MY beloved daughter imposes on me a task, which however agreeable to myself, may not, perhaps be entirely so to you; as the cold inanimate prolixity of an old woman, will form a great contrast between her descriptions, and that of so sprightly and elegant a penwoman as Mrs. Butler: you must however, accept of my wish to indulge *her*, and gratify *you*; and take *matter* for *manner*.

When Colonel Moncrass, (he had, you are informed, succeeded to his uncle's rank) was first introduced to the assemblies of the English ambassador, who was a man of the first quality, and lived in great splendor and magnificence: he was thought to be very near his dissolution; and his invalid state, added to the misfortunes of his family, interested all the English, who were then resident at Lisbon, in his favor; the Earl of Ruthven, with his Countess, and young daughter, were of this number; Lady Ruthven laboured under a complication of disorders, and was come to Lisbon in hopes to receive benefit from change of air; her daughter, Lady Mary, then in her eighteenth year, was universally admired: the value of gold, is, I believe, pretty equal in all countries; and the great fortune to which she was undoubted heiress, would have stamped perfection on a form less attractive than her's; but the truth is, she was really a most elegant young woman.

I had the honor to be of Lord Ruthven's party, as Mr. Butler was secretary to the Embassy; Lady Ruthven begged I would be her guest during her stay at Lisbon; her extreme ill health required, and would have commanded my attendance, had I not been, (which however I own I was) impelled by a stronger motive to accept her invitation.

My parents dying when I was very young, I became an orphan-ward to Lord Ruthven; and his Lady, who was my nearest female relation, had intirely superintended my education: Ruthven-house was my home. Lady Mary, is, it is true, five years younger than myself, but notwithstanding this disparity in our ages, we had, even at that early period of our lives, a mutual affection for each other, which ripened into the constant and warm friendship, that now, when youth, and all its appendages are fleeting, is the honor and comfort of my existence.

My heart was ever open to my young cousin, nor had her's a thought concealed from me. My marriage to Mr. Butler, not being, in point of rank, quite so eligible a one as my guardian thought my fortune entitled me to, was a secret to all but my cousin, a year after it had taken place; when my husband's appointment to Lisbon, and my situation,

rendered the discovery unavoidable; and it was matter of infinite joy, both to Lady Mary and myself, that we were not yet to be separated. I left my son in England with my mother-in-law, and followed Mr. Butler to Lisbon, with the Ruthven family.

I perfectly remember, the first time we saw Colonel Moncrass——That poor young man, said Lady Ruthven, carries death in his countenance; and by a sort of sympathy, invalids are apt to feel for each other, she contracted a regard for him, which was the foundation of the intimacy that afterwards took place in the family.

The Ambassador introduced Mr. Moncrass to Lord Ruthven, as a young officer in the Portuguese service; prudently passing over his forfeited rank, and title: but they were both, notwithstanding, very well known; and the respectful attention every where paid him, was as creditable to the feelings of his countrymen, as flattering to himself.

He very soon became one of our family; and, contrary to hope, his health began slowly to mend. Lady Mary, whose amiable and tender attention to her sick mother, endeared her to every feeling heart, was also, on many occasions, the blooming handmaid of Esculapius to young Moncrass; the Countess, who, like most people affected with ill-health, fancied she could cure the diseases of other people, tho' her own had baffled the art of medicine, was perpetually prescribing for the Colonel; and Lady Mary was the fair administress of all the quackery her mother so lavishly bestowed on him; but it sometimes happened, that the medicines were forgot, in the pleasing tête-à-têtes they authorized; Mr. Moncrass was often called upon to recount the misfortunes of his family, and the misadventures of his youth; his heart, ever softened at the recital, found itself attracted by the sympathy he excited; our tears were blended with his; and the innocent Lady Mary, might have been truly said to

“Love him for the dangers he had past.”

In a few months, health began to reanimate his countenance, strength, and manly grace succeeded to the debilitated state he was in, when introduced to us, and I do not remember to have seen a handsomer man; the young gentleman I am now addressing, is certainly a very fine person, but General Moncrass, at the period I am writing of, was the most captivating figure I ever saw.

The Countess still continued declining, and the Earl just then being seized with a violent fit of the gout, was thereby rendered incapable of attending us, in some little sea excursion, which our physicians ordered the Countess to take; we were therefore consigned to the protection of Moncrass.

Two months were taken up in those little voyages, which tho' not attended with the hoped for benefit to the health of Lady Ruthven, passed as delightfully, as rapid——nothing could exceed the polite and respectful attention of the young soldier, he seemed to exist but for us, and Lady Mary's heart was his involuntary reward; nor was he less attached to her; I was an interested observer, I perceived their mutual affection, and

knowing the immense wealth my cousin would possess, and the affectionate friendship the Earl, and Countess both bore the Colonel; saw no impropriety in their indulging the bias of their hearts; I thought them indeed, born for each other, and looked forward to an union that promised so much certain felicity with pleasure; but my anticipations were in every respect founded in error; their union was far, very far distant; and when it did take place you see sir, how short lived the happiness, I, foolishly thought, would last for life.

Lady Ruthven tired out with the unavailing efforts of her physicians, and finding no benefit from change of climate, took a sudden resolution to return to England: the Earl had a yacht fitted up for the accommodation of his lady, and always in readiness to sail; a few hours notice only, therefore, were necessary, before all was ready for their embarkation.

To describe the anguish of my young friend, or paint the despair visible in the countenance of Colonel Moncrass, would be alike impossible; Lady Mary threw herself on my neck—oh Constance! cried she what will become of me? I leave the only man my heart will ever acknowledge, I part, perhaps for ever from him who is my fate—pity me dear Constance, oh! were not my mother's life in danger, I would lose *mine*, rather than to be torn from him—Yes Moncrass I would die a thousand deaths rather than leave thee.—

We were in this situation when he entered—my poor cousin just raised her head and then hid her face in my bosom; my arms were thrown round her, and we were all incapable of utterance; the Colonel bent his knee before us; and equally unable to conceal, or to repress his emotion, took the hand of Lady Mary, pressed it to his lips and precipitately retired.

What is he gone cried she? starting—has he then left me? Moncrass! Moncrass! wringing her hands, return once more; let me once more behold thee—her voice raised, and repeating his name, reached him as he was traversing an adjoining apartment—he hastily returned.

The confusion his re-appearance threw her into, crimsoned over her face, and neck, she trembled and turned from him.

What, said he (approaching and respectfully taking her hand) what would my lovely young friend, with her Moncrass?

She turned half round—*my* Moncrass said she deeply sighing, as she repeated his words—

Yes Lady Mary answered he, if the truest adoration, the fondest affection, the most heart-felt attachment, can make Moncrass, yours—

She interrupted him—dear Moncrass do not deceive me, the world, if it knew my weakness; how would it be despised? and my parents—ah my God! how would they condemn it? nay, perhaps on reflection, I may despise, I may condemn myself; but in this dreadful moment, the only one my fate may ever offer, what are forms, or public censure,

to the distracting anguish of my soul? say then again you are mine, and confirm it on your honor; and I swear (falling on her knees) by all the powers, who protect innocence, I will be your faithful Mary, as long as I exist.

Surprise, rapture, and love; were by turns predominant in the countenance of young Moncrass; he dropped on his knees, and folding his arms round her, was going to speak, when the Earl appeared at the opposite door.

Language is too faint, and it must be the pencil of an excellent artist, who could do justice to the features of us all; the Earl looked as if the attachment of two amiable young people, who had been indulged with each other's unreserved society near a twelve-month, was a thing that never before happen'd; and felt, I dare say, the utmost scorn and indignation against his daughter, for levelling her mind to the fugitive fortunes of poor Moncrass; however, he thought proper to conceal his resentment for the time, and taking his daughter's hand:

Mary, said he, your mother is extremely ill; she has just fainted: that posture would have well become you, had it been assumed in prayer for your dying parent.

Never was there a more dutiful child than Lady Mary; never one, who more strictly performed every obligation of duty and affection: the danger of Lady Ruthven banish'd Moncrass from her thoughts for a moment—Oh my mother! cried she, why was I not summon'd to her assistance?

The summons, Mary, would have found you engaged, said the Earl, as he led her out, coldly, and haughtily bowing to Moncrass, who stood the image of despondency.

Mr. Butler objected to my leaving him, and I had not the happiness to see Lady Ruthven after we parted: the Earl did not quit his daughter a moment, 'till his vessel was under weigh: my being present at the scene he had so malapropos interrupted, was certainly ground for suspicion against me: he could not, to be sure, suppose me to be very inimical to an affair of which I was so tame a spectator.

Moncrass took leave of Lady Ruthven, who prayed for a blessing on him, and to the instant of their separation, expressed the warmest solicitude for his happiness.

As soon as our dear friends were out of sight, Moncrass returned to his lodgings, and I to my chamber—You are, by this time, I presume, as tired of reading, as I am of writing: I beg to present, with my daughter's affectionate remembrance, those of, dear sir, &c.

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER XXII.

Mr. Harley to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

HOW shall I thank you my good Caroline, for the kind method you have taken to oblige me? or how express my sense of the honor Mrs. Butler condescends to confer on me?

You charge me to continue writing, but dear Caroline you must also direct me to a subject—Patty Lucas rests under the green turf—and her woes are no more remembered; I am not in the highest spirits in the world, nor I believe quite well—my visits are not so frequent at Belle-Vue as they have been—nor—in short I am indisposed—but you must have a letter you say.

Well then know that I have lately employed myself in directing the gothick library to be finished, which our ever regretted Mrs. Montford began. You remember the point of the rock which overlooks the waterfall; my new building is an octagon, so near its summit, that when the folding doors are open, the dashing of the water from the natural cascade, into the reservoir under, has a solemn and pleasing effect—I have contrived to cut a flight of steps from the summit of the rock, which carries you sometimes through the hanging wood, when you may fancy it is a subterraneous passage; at others, so close under the rock, that the dashing of the waters expose you to an artificial shower of rain: those steps bring you to an opening, where at once, you are surprised with a most beautiful view of the whole vale under the village; just where the water makes its way in divided streams from the natural reservoir; my point of view from hence, and which indeed was my principal object, is Belle-Vue; as the smooth current glides along the flowery bank, I have a secret pleasure in reflecting, the very same water which roars under my cell, gives that charming verdure which refreshes the senses, and delights the eye in Belle-Vue park, and garden; when I retreat from this beautiful scene, I reascend the steps to my new building; which if you please you may call the cell of contemplation; for there a dead silence reigns (save the waterfall) which inspires a solemnity, I would not exchange for all the nothings of the great world.

Well Caroline, how do you like my new building? it is at present so much in my favour, that I may be almost said to live there; my books, globes, musical instruments, laymen figures, and all my drawing apparatus are removed into it, and I am at this instant writing to you from thence—heavens!

A little boy, was in the midst of a bitter complaint against his daddy, for getting tipsey, and beating his mammy, for which he was earnestly praying I would have him put into the stocks; when behold Caroline! through the thick foliage of the grove, which leads from the house to my cell; I saw, and my sight ached at her brilliancy; a radiant, an

angelic figure! it was robed in white, it smil'd, and beckon'd; it was Agnes led by the General.

This Mr. Harley, is the first airing Mademoiselle has taken since her indisposition—she was desirous of seeing the habitation of so young a philosopher; Do you admit female visitors?—

Certainly sir—and I offered to take her disengaged hand.

To give you a proper idea of my cell, I believe I should have told you the effect it had on the lady, before I described it.—

Heavens! cried she shuddering, and starting back, what dreadful place is this?

I told her it was a new whim, and a very favorite one of mine; that if she would condescend to enter, the romantic gloom, which disgusted at first appearance, would grow familiar, and I hop'd she would like it—

Never, answered she, with vivacity—there is a horror—a something repugnant to my feelings in this place, to which I can never be reconciled: let us go sir, (to the General) if this be the abode of philosophy, we will be content to enter the habitations of poor human frailty.

This was affronting my hobby-horse; I said no more in its defence, but led to your drawing-room.—

Ay, said the General, this is something,—and pray where is the divinity for whom this pretty apartment is fitted up?

I told him it was your's.

While the chocolate was getting ready, Agnes ran over the keys of the organ; I look'd a request I could not utter, which the General perceiving begg'd a song?—

What charms are there in music! and what additional power does the first compositions receive from the voice of a beautiful female! Did you ever observe what a surprizing echo the room has?—Her voice—but there is no describing it;—I could not only hear, but I could see—Have I yet told you the colour of her eyes?—I believe not—they are clear, animated, brilliant hazel; her eye-brows, and eye-lashes are quite black;—her hair—but take her description from your favorite Italian:

“In waving ringlets, falls her beauteous hair,

“That catch new graces from the sportive air;

“Declin'd on earth, her modest look denies

“To shew the starry lustre of her eyes;

“O're her fair face, a rosy bloom is spread,

“And stains her ivory skin with lovely red:

“Soft breathing sweets, her opening lips disclose

“The native odours of the blushing rose;

* * * * *

“And Heaven ne'er gave, to one of Adam's race

“So large a portion of celestial grace.”

Caroline, I wish you knew this woman, or rather, I wish she was worthy of being known to you—she is, that is she *would be*, were she any other than *what she is*—an angel.

The General, whom I had before acquainted with the fate of Patty Lucas, would walk to the mill, and, for reasons I very well knew, chose to go alone. General Moncrass, sister, is “The chearful giver whom the Lord loveth;” and in cases of benevolence, “lets not his left hand know what is done by his right”—he begg’d I would amuse Miss De Courci.

I was never more at a loss; there were many subjects on which I might have entertained her, but my tongue faltered, I actually could not speak; and my embarrassment encreased, as I saw she was attentively observing me; I could not stand the scrutiny of her mild eyes—for mild, and even tender at that moment they were. I abjure philosophy, and cannot now reason much of causes and effects, yet, why I should tremble at her gaze I know not; I have often said, I could be content to have my heart, and all its wanderings exposed to public view—Am I altered? lurks there, that within me, hidden, perhaps from myself, but open to her penetrating eye, at which I ought to blush? how else could her look, which is modesty itself, so confuse me?

After a silence I had not power to break.

You are a young philosopher sir, said she, and you are determined, the General informs me, in opposition to the wishes of all your friends, to waste your youth and fine talents in this retirement.

I bowed assent.

But do you really conceive sir (continued she) enchanting as this place certainly is, it will always be a boundary to your wishes?

Again, I could only bow—

Have you no latent desire to mix with society?—No ambition to gratify? will those shades forever conceal you from the unerring shafts of the blind Deity?—

Come Mr. Harley, your friends have been unsuccessful, the General has also failed; conduct me through the walks of your fancied elysium; let us see whether I cannot find arguments to prevail on you to quit it, and join the social world.

I retreated from her offered hand.

Ah coward! (said she) you will not trust yourself with me.

I could now speak.

Happiness, and I, madam, have often roved together through those unconscious shades; sweet peace was our handmaid, and contentment followed our steps:—

Heavens! cried Agnes, would you insinuate that I should interrupt such society? is it impossible for you to keep happiness, and me company together.

Are not your designs madam, hostile to *my* ideas of what constitutes happiness? and shall I be so ungrateful, as to expose my favorite nymphs to such a dangerous enemy?

No Miss De Courci! but if you are disposed to endear to my memory the shades I love, walk with me thro' them, unprejudiced by the fallacious reasonings of a world I dislike; suffer me to be eloquent in their praise, let me point to you each sweet recess, where the voice of passion was never heard, where ambition never entered, and where a right turned mind can never feel a painful solitude; if you suffer me to do this, I am ready to attend you; but I will not venture to hear *your* lips condemn my retirement; for how then can I ever hope again to enjoy the wonted companions of my tranquil hours?

Well sir—she hesitated—well Mr. Harley, then I think we had better not, we will stay where we are—

Again she observed I was a young philosopher, a very young philosopher.

A silence ensued, which *she* broke.

Well Mr. Harley, if you won't let me talk to you, shall I sing?

Would you believe it, I could not answer this simple question, I could only place a seat to the organ which she accepted and sung from Handel's Music—

“Love sweet poison”

It was involuntary Caroline, I could not help it, I leaned over her chair, and repeated

“Sweet Harmonist, and beautiful as sweet”

“And young as beautiful, and gay as young”

And oh sister! the pity of it, the pity of it, that I could not add

“And *Innocent* as gay.”

The return of General Moncrass put an end to a visit, the most painful, and pleasing I ever experienced; he pressed me to return with them to Belle-Vue, I declined his invitation, but have regreted it ever since; I cannot bear the retrospect of my own conduct; it was so very stupid, Agnes was perhaps offended, I can still less bear she should think I could be wanting in respect to *her*, she is very amiable, how could I be so unaccountably foolish? the mortification I feel on this occasion drives every thing else out of my head, what could she think of me, a philosopher she call'd me, with an emphasis,—I will certainly go to Belle-Vue, to-morrow—

* * * * *

The boy teased me to have his daddy put in the stocks, his mother now teases me to forgive him; I begin to be weary of interfering in the foolish affairs of the village—would to-morrow were come—

* * * * *

I am this instant favored with three large packets from the dowager Mrs. Butler, it is arrived at a most happy period, my mind is in such a state, I can neither look into myself, nor my Hermitage with pleasure; but I retire with the General and Lady Mary: adieu Caroline, adieu Butler,

EDWARD HARLEY.

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LETTER XXIII.

Mrs. Dowager Butler to Edward Harley Esq.

Soho-Square.

TWO days, after the departure of our friends, past, and I only received enquiries after my health, from Moncrass; on the third he was announced.

The alteration in his countenance, during this short period, was incredible.

He was pale, dejected, and his words were scarcely articulate; he was, he said, returning to his regiment; an opportunity had luckily offered, a ship was under sailing orders for the Brazils; he should commission his agent to send after him what necessaries he might have occasion for; he had met Mr. Butler at court, and was now come to wish me the health and peace—he stopped—

His manner was so solemn, the sound of his voice so sad, and his figure so interesting: I could not immediately answer him.

He took my hand, and dropping on one knee, pressed it to his lips, and casting his fine eyes upwards; whispered an ejaculation, in which I could only distinguish the name of my cousin, then rising—forgive madam the trouble I give you, this packet will explain to you what I cannot; once more adieu, and he left me with such precipitant solemnity, it was some moments before I could acquire courage to open the papers, which I found, beside a short note to me, contained a letter from Lord Ruthven to him, with his answer, and one from him to Lady Mary, which I inclose; and as they will, together, make a tolerable long epistle, conclude this from your's

C. BUTLER.

LETTER XXIV.

Colonel Moncrass to Mrs. Butler.

Madam,

THE inclosed copies will inform you of the hard fate of Moncrass; amiable friend of the most lovely of women, I bid you perhaps, and indeed most likely, an eternal adieu; I tear myself from a place, that will constantly remind me of the treasure I have lost; I am not only separated from those dear connections with whom only, my soul sought alliance; but hope, the last resort of the wretched is no more. Your cousin madam, but I dare not trust my pen, one only favor can I ask of you, and your worthy husband; when in possession of the dear blessings I can never know; when your heart recognizes your native country, when you again behold the welcome scenes of youthful hope, when you are restored to the valued society of her, *I must no more behold*, oh speak for poor undone Moncrass, tell that angel, how grateful, how devoted, yet do not, only say, I am the miserable

MONCRASS.

INCLOSURE I.

Earl of Ruthven to Colonel Moncrass.

My dear Colonel,

IT is with infinite reluctance I address you on a subject, no less interesting to me, as a man of rank in the world, than dear to me as a father.

Your amiable qualities, Colonel, rendered you a most acceptable guest in my family; relying on the unquestionable probity of your character, I imprudently introduced you to my only child; was pleased at your intimacy with her, and weakly flattered myself the congenial sympathy of two young minds so delicately formed, could not possibly be productive of any ill consequence: I left her young heart open to those dangerous impressions, which youth, are too prone to imbibe, in a constant intercourse with an amiable object of the different sex: I confided in the integrity of your principles, and forgot the necessary guard over the peace of my daughter: The natural consequence of this blameable conduct in me, is an attachment beginning, which if not timely check'd, will ruin the fortune of my child, without bettering your own.

Suffer me sir, to hint, with every regard to delicacy, that your present unfortunate situation, is, with respect to your country, unchangeable: and that I never could acknowledge a daughter, wedded to the proscribed enemy of my prince; you would therefore by attaching yourself to Lady Mary, involve her in the disgrace of your situation, render her an alien to her family, and natural inheritance; rob me of my only comfort, and end in sorrow the existence of the Countess; who would not survive such an act of ingratitude in you, and disobedience in her child: sanguine hope, youthful passion, and the power of beauty, I know attaches you to my daughter; I give full credit to the disinterestedness of your principles, and have so great a respect for your character, that I declare on my honor; young, and unprotected as you are, were you any other in respect to your native misfortune, I should be proud to raise you from obscurity, and rejoice in such an acquisition to my family: after having said this, and offered you any thing in my gift, my child only excepted, who, if your's, must be totally ruined; need I add any farther entreaties to you, to spare me the grief of feeling, all my hopes blasted; or would Colonel Moncrass gratify his own passion, at the expence of the interest, the honor, and duty; of a young creature who loves him? no! I know him better; he will rather, however hard the struggle, conquer his passion; he will write a farewell letter to the innocent, I this morning surprized in his arms; he will represent to her, how incompatible with her honor, and interest, it would be to persevere in her folly; he will give her to understand that he relinquishes all claims to her heart; because *her* happiness, is dearer to him than *his own*.

Forgive me Colonel for thus dictating to a man, whose soul is the residence of innate honor; should you ever experience a father's fondness, you will then know to what excess it will carry the mind of man. I am leaving the part of the world where you *are*,

and going where you *cannot follow*; I know you are wounded by this separation, and I know your other troubles, are doubled by it, yet you see, solely occupied by my anxiety for my daughter; I presume to impose a task on your feelings, which will add to your distress; but my confidence is in your sense of justice, your regard to propriety, and your unimpeached rectitude; those will long out-live passion, why therefore should not their influence far exceed it?—Yes my amiable young friend, I know they will; and wherever your future destiny may bear you, remember, you have in me a warm and zealous friend, who will ever rejoice in your happiness, and gladly contribute to your prosperity.

Adieu, dear Colonel, Lady Ruthven begs you will accept the inclosed, as a slight token of the maternal affection she will always bear you: and we join in every possible wish for your welfare.

RUTHVEN.

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INCLOSURE II.

Colonel Moncrass to the Earl of Ruthven.

Lisbon.

My Lord,

WITH a proper sense of the honors you have conferred on me, I inclose the requested letter to Lady Mary Ruthven—yes my lord! you are perfectly right; the broken fortunes of such a wretch as Moncrass, are beneath her acceptance: nevertheless, were I not too well convinced of the certain injury to *her*, of an union with *me*, no power should induce me to forego the first, and only desire of my soul; but I resign it my lord, not to you, not to the *world*; but to *her*.

Lady Ruthven honors me by her friendship, she will however pardon my returning her favors unopened, I have no doubt of the magnificence of her spirit, she has only mistaken the object; I can owe nothing to the Countess, or your lordship, but the respect with which I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient servant,

MONCRASS.

INCLOSURE III.

Colonel Moncrass to Lady Mary Ruthven.

Lisbon.

IF the trembling agitation of my whole frame, should render this address illegible; if the hard lesson taught by honor, and enforced by prudence, should take from me the power to delineate my feelings, the lovely, and ever beloved Lady Mary, will have the goodness to believe, innumerable as may be my other deficiencies, I am sensible of none, in my respect, my ardent esteem for her.

Lord Ruthven madam, permits me to address you, to bid you a final adieu; but believe, most adorable woman, were I not self convinced, *your honor, your happiness*, as well as that of your noble parents was at stake; did I not know, that the uniting your fate with an alien to his country, a man, branded with the name of rebel to your prince, whose scanty, and precarious pittance, you would be miserable to share; no power on earth should prevail on me to resign the dear hope, which lifted to more than mortal joy, the soul of Moncrass, this happy morning: but oh madam! it is too sure, that your certain ruin would be the result of your noble preference, of such a wretch as myself.

I have figured to my imagination, all the probable, as well as possible consequences of an union, which thrills my soul to rapture, while in spite of myself, it will float on deceitful fancy; alas, Lady Mary! there needs not the exaggeration of family interest, pride, or parental authority; nor any of the numerous prudential objections, the opinion of the world will justify; I *know I feel* I am wretched, but I will not involve you in my misery: I see you at this moment, *mentally*, and imagination shrinks appalled from the trial, deprived of the delicacies, the splendour, and even the necessities, you cannot without injury to your tender constitution, and lovely figure, give up; and should I bear that graceful form, to a country where my own adoration, would teach the unlettered savage, the power of beauty; how could I hope, in a climate so unfavorable to health, with accommodations so inadequate to your birth, and rank; you would not fall an early sacrifice to bodily and mental fatigue? you have no conception of the hardships which are the companions of my obscurity; I see you droop under the intemperate heat of the sun, I hear you regret your absent parents, I feel your tears, even *now* in scalding drops on my heart; I confess my cowardice; I dare not reduce you to the miserable level of the wretched,

MONCRASS.

END of the FIRST VOLUME.

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

In *FOUR VOLUMES*.

Inscrib'd with Permission to Col. HUNTER.

By Mrs. Bennett,
AUTHOR OF THE
WELCH HEIRESS, and JUVENILE INDISCRETIONS.

I know thou wilt grumble, courteous Reader, for every
Reader in the World is a Grumbletonion more or less; and
for my Part, I can grumble as well as the best of ye, when
it is my turn to be a Reader. SCARRON.

VOL. II.

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MDCCLXXXIX.

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

LETTER XXIV.

Mrs. Butler in continuation.

Soho-Square.

MY correspondence with Lady Mary after our separation was far from being as frequent and unreserved as it had ever before been. It was Lord Ruthven's pleasure we should write on mere family affairs—but in this interval I was not unmindful of our absent friend—Mr. Butler often heard of him—and in two years after his return to the Brazils we were told from court that he had espoused a young lady, daughter of Don Sebastian Lorenzo, governor of the Brazils, by the king's particular desire, who, as a mark of his approbation, had raised the colonel to the rank of general and commander in chief of all his forces in that part of the world.

Lady Ruthven contrary to the prognostics of the medical people lingered three years after her return to England; what arguments, or whether any were used, to efface the tender impressions, love and Moncrass had left in the heart of the daughter, I know not—but think it is probable that the vortex of dissipation in which the Ruthven's were always plunged, the admiration her beauty excited, and the court paid her by all the beau-monde, added to a latent pique the consequence of the colonel's giving up his hopes in the moment her young heart had resigned itself with all its faculties to him, might by degrees wean her from her first attachment without any violent efforts on the part of her parents—and this no doubt the wary Earl foresaw, when he required so hard a sacrifice from Mr. Moncrass.

Numerous were the offers of marriage for his lovely daughter, received and rejected by Lord Ruthven; one was not rich enough—another a peer of yesterday—a third untitled—and the spirit of coquetry increasing with the adulation paid her beauty—Lady Mary became still more difficult to please than her father, and when I met her by appointment at Montpellier, on my return from Lisbon, where I was so unfortunate as to lose my worthy and beloved husband, I found her a spinster, with increased spirits, beauty and health, in her twenty-first year—and here to make you acquainted with the motives which induced her, who had rejected a ducal coronet, to accept the hand of a private gentleman, and one who proved himself totally unworthy a preference that astonished the world, I must introduce some of my own family anecdotes.

Lady Ruthven was the only child of Mr. Neville, of Gloucestershire, one of the wealthiest commoners in England—this gentleman was the elder of three brothers, I am the daughter of the second; Mr. John Neville, the third, was so fortunate as to be blest

with two sons, which, as the real Neville estates were entailed on the male issue of the family, rendered the future prospects of his children superior to those of his elder brothers.

I had the misfortune to lose both my parents before I was sensible of so great a calamity—so that as I before observed, I became an orphan ward to Lord Ruthven. Miss Neville's fortune (although her father was but a life tenant on the estate) was very large, which added to her personal graces rendered her an object of general admiration: Lord Ruthven's heart acknowledged her power, and she accepted his offer'd hand, before she had attained her eighteenth year, perfectly satisfied with the disposition their ancestors had made of the family estate; neither Mr. Neville or his daughter regretted its going to my youngest uncle and his sons—Mr. John Neville was as contracted in his mind as his elder brother was liberal. He watched with eager avidity every turn of his health, and when my uncle Edward died, seized the estates with such rudeness and rapacity, that the agents of Lord Ruthven were barely suffered to remove the personals from the different seats before he took possession; a conduct so opposite to humanity and good breeding, could not fail to confirm the dislike his narrow mind had long inspired in Lord Ruthven—and on his part (who was one of the strict abettors of the sect, then but just beginning to establish themselves, called methodists, and who held all who were not of his religious opinion in contempt) he considered Lord and Lady Ruthven, who lived in great splendour and magnificence, as beings devoted to perdition, and estranged himself and family from their connection and society. His elder son adopted his conduct and principles—but the younger, who was handsome, wild and expensive, was not to be restrained by the examples or commands of his father from visiting Ruthven-house, where he became a great favourite with the earl, but more particularly with the countess: many were the truant excursions for which he was severely punished at home—and which owed their origin to the fondness of his cousin, who supplied his purse with a liberality bordering on profusion. And thus by rendering him independant of his father (who continually reprimanded his son and reproach'd his neice) she became the ostensible cause of an irreconcilable rupture which happened between them about two years before we went to Lisbon.

The small-pox has been so greatly my enemy, you will perhaps smile when I tell you the Neville's were reckoned a remarkable handsome family—Lady Mary you know—Lady Ruthven was I think still handsomer, and James Neville resembled *her*, both in person and manner, after this, if you had known Lady Ruthven, you would allow it is unnecessary to add, he was a favourite wherever he appeared, particularly with the ladies.

Too volatile to fix, yet too susceptible of passion for every *new* beauty to escape the shafts of the blind deity—and too clever and sensible not to succeed in his attempts to render himself pleasing, many were the reputations that were sacrificed to his inclinations, to his art, and to his vanity. His first ambition on entering into life was to acquire the character of a *man of gallantry*, and few who are fond of being so *distinguished* choose their noble achievements in female ruin should remain untold. In a very short time, so easy and natural are the progressions of vicious habits, the modern man of gallantry became a confirmed *libertine*, and the more dangerous as he had a head

to contrive, and a heart to carry into practice, the most cruel machinations against *female honour*. Beauty was his pursuit, and innocence his prey.

A gentleman who lived in the neighbourhood of Neville-abbey, of the name of Woodburne, confiding in the integrity and religious principles of my uncle Neville, at his death left him guardian to his two children, a son and a daughter.

Miss Woodburne was young—innocent—and beautiful—attractions, which in the opinion of young Neville, entirely did away the sacred bond of protection due to an orphan ward of his father's, and of the sanctuary his roof should have afforded her.

The seduction of this young woman, it was not in his power, or indeed in his wish, to conceal. But it was necessary nevertheless he should absent himself awhile from the presence of an enraged parent.

Young Woodburne was at college when the disgraceful news reached him, he immediately followed Neville to London, sent him a challenge, and received his death wound from the same hand that had dishonoured his sister; before I lay down my pen, to drop a tear over the memory of those victims to libertinism, I must inform you that on the news of her brother's death, Miss Woodburne fled from the abbey, and was not again heard of till her corpse was brought by Mrs. Anne Mountford, your late worthy patroness, from Bristol hot-wells, to be interred in the family vault near her father, at her own last request.

Adieu sir, this simple story will let you completely into the character of Mr. James Neville, and with it I must conclude this letter, as I really am at present unable to proceed.

C.B.

LETTER XXV.

Mrs. Butler in continuation.

Soho-Square.

EVEN this exploit did not lose Mr. Neville Lady Ruthven's friendship and protection. She still partially extolled the few tolerable qualities he possessed, and excused, with more than maternal blindness, actions which were condemned by all the rest of the world.

The whole body of methodists, who were by this time become both numerous and powerful, took up the cause of young Woodburne, whose father, as well as Mr. Neville, was one of the heads of their society; they wrote pamphlets, employed council, and entered into associations, which rendered the prosecution against him a matter of too serious a nature to be either evaded, or trifled with. He was soon apprehended. The violence of party was so strong against him, and the clamour on account of his barbarity to the ruined female so universal, it was with great difficulty that he was admitted to bail, when the enormous sum of ten thousand pounds was the security demanded for his liberty.

As the time of his trial approached, totally deserted by his father, who was among the most inveterate of his prosecutors, both Lady Ruthven and himself began to dread the event, and their fears encreasing with the danger, he at length quitted the kingdom by consent of Lord Ruthven, who generously paid the whole sum of ten thousand pounds in forfeiture of his recognizance—fond to distraction of his lady, every person who was dear to her was also of importance to him. Money was a thing he never set in competition with her happiness, and still further to indulge her fondness for the unworthy fugitive, he agreed to honour his drafts to the amount of two hundred guineas a year, and continued to allow it to him, till some events took place which very much reversed the fortune of Mr. Neville.

My uncle had the mortification to lose his eldest son within two years after the earl's return from Lisbon, so that the object of his hatred became the indisputable heir to his whole estate, and fortunate it was for young Neville this event did not happen while the earl was abroad, for his father's wrath became more irreconcilable, as his power to punish him diminished. He consulted the first lawyers in the kingdom, and, miser as he was in every other respect, laid his treasures before them; the rewards he offered were profuse, you cannot therefore doubt that the gentlemen of the long robe exerted their utmost endeavours to deprive the wanderer of his right; but the rank, the power, and the friendship of the earl of Ruthven exerted in the cause of justice, proved of the most essential service to Mr. Neville: his lordship was entirely ignorant on what part of the continent this strange man resided—his residence and manner of conducting himself were envelop'd in a mystery lord Ruthven felt the less inclined to penetrate, as the specimens he had hitherto given of his disposition were so very unfavourable, that any new discoveries were rather to be avoided than sought; the only means by which it was

possible to convey to him an account of the state of his affairs in England, were through a banker at Paris, to whom an express was immediately forwarded, which brought Mr. Neville to England.

Public prejudice is almost as unstable as public favour; time had entirely done away all the aggravating circumstances attending the seduction of Miss Woodburn, and the consequent death of her brother, before Neville's return, and the earl's fortune and interest were both so successfully made use of on the trial, that he was honourably acquitted of the murder, and at liberty, if he had chose it, to continue in his native country.

He was invited by Lord Ruthven to reside with him till his father should be no more, but he declined making his stay then in England, as he had some affairs (he said) to settle on the continent which would demand his personal attendance. Yet gratitude, and politeness, in which last at least he was by no means deficient, would not permit him to leave his country, without paying his devoirs to the countess, who was then very ill at Ruthven-house.

He accordingly accompanied the earl home, after the trial, and was met some miles from Ruthven, by a cavalcade of the earl's tenants, who paid him this mark of respect in compliment to their noble landlord.

At Ruthven, the house and garden (both of which are magnificent) were illuminated in the most superb style, and the gates thrown open, for the entertainment of the populace, whose acclamations on the road, the elegant groups who were assembled, by invitation, on purpose to congratulate him on the happy event of the trial, the visible transport of the dying relation, who had been so indulgent to the criminal excesses of his youth, and lastly, the modest unaffected welcome of the young and blooming Lady Mary, assailing at once a heart ever open to the impressions of vanity, and yielding to beauty, who will be surprised his was conquered by such favour, from such objects: his return to the continent was no longer insisted on, and all the mighty concerns which prevented his accepting Lord Ruthven's invitation to reside with the family, settled by a single glance from Lady Mary's fine eyes.

Mr. Neville had at various times been captivated with every sort of beauty, his fickle heart had by turns wore the chains of all that might be esteemed lovely in woman, but far different were now the sensations that filled his ideas to any he had before experienced; he saw his cousin, and seeing adored her—her beauty inspired him with a passion, as new as unconquerable; all that he had hitherto admired in other women, appeared to be united in her; he had seen the Venus de Medecis, and admired the brown beauty of that of Colona, but what were these in comparison with the charming Lady Mary; her wit at once poignant and pleasing, and the sensibility beaming from her sparkling eyes, captivated his understanding, as much as her personal attractions fired his imagination; then the honours and wealth she was heir to, gratified his utmost ambition; here then, at last, the wanderer was fixed, here was the magnet, which only had power to draw to one point, that heart—which had varied to all parts of the compass.

The evening ball was opened by the two cousins, Lady Ruthven would have it so, and saw with tears of pleasure, as she sat supported by pillows in her easy chair, the admiration they excited; the day which began in festivity, ended in the most joyful exhilaration of spirits, and the company separated to their respective apartments to court that rest, which was only denied to Mr. Neville.

He had, during his absence from England, greatly improved his manners and understanding, without, I fear, bettering his heart; he threw himself on his bed, ill enough disposed for sleep, and abandoned himself to reflection; it is true he saw the golden fleece within his grasp, but yet difficulties innumerable started in his way, and vain as he was, the improbables in his present pursuit, struck most forcibly on his mind, for however willing the earl had been to adopt the partiality of his lady, he could not help allowing, that it was not to be hoped either of them would be so prejudiced in his favour, as to disregard a single point essential to the happiness of their only child, and he had not only to court the affections of a young woman of fashion, whose natural good sense, as well as her familiar intercourse with the great world, would render her no very easy conquest, but he had also to combat with the fixed, and perhaps unfavourable, opinion of her parents, who he feared, too probably would consider the patronizing a wild relation, and the giving him their darling daughter, in two very different lights; but Mr. Neville, although he had in respect to Lady Mary, certainly a heart to love, had also, as I before observed, a head fertile in contrivance, and nil desperando was his favourite motto; every interview during his stay at Ruthven, added to, and confirmed his passion for his fair cousin, and had it not been for the consolation, and hope his remarks on the manners and disposition of the family gave him, he has since often declared he would have ended his life at her feet.

Lady Ruthven's unabated fondness for him, however, prevented him from having the dreadful sin of suicide added to the long catalogue of his vices, and he, who well knew when to seize the yielding moment, threw himself at her feet, confessed at once his love and demerits, yet pleaded the fond violence of his passions, and implored her sanction to his addressing her daughter, in the same breath that he vowed not to outlive her rejection.

The surprise into which this declaration threw her ladyship, was no sooner subsided, than the fondness she had always felt for her young cousin, returned in full force; his passion for her beloved child, was by no means an unpardonable offence, and she immediately recollected, that as all the great Neville estates must centre in him, he would by that means be, in point of affluence, the greatest offer that her daughter had hitherto received, nor can it be supposed, that among the agreeables which opened to Lady Ruthven's view on this occasion, the uniting the wealth of her own family, to the splendor of her lord's, were forgotten. Mr. Neville was untitled, but would not that circumstance render his alliance the more acceptable to Lord Ruthven, who was excessively attached to his family honours? could their future son-in-law possibly object to taking the name and title of the earl, when such noble fortunes would be blended in support of his dignity? Neville had to be sure been wild, very wild, but his good heart, of which Lady Ruthven entertained no doubt, and his fine understanding, which all the

world allowed, were unquestionable sureties that his professions of reformation were sincere.

Those arguments in favour of Mr. Neville's pretensions, having the solid advantage of family interest to back them, were no sooner acceded to by Lady Ruthven, then they were approved of by her lord, whose desires, wishes, and opinions were entirely the result of hers.

The declining health and very precarious existence of Lady Ruthven, added to her earnest desire to see the marriage, between the two persons so dear to her, take place, furnished pleas for bringing the treaty to a speedy conclusion, which Mr. Neville did not fail to turn to his advantage.

You will observe, that in no stage of this business, were Moncrass, his pretensions, or Lady Mary's former attachment to him, mentioned; the match with her cousin was proposed to her under the avowed sanction of a dying mother, the approbation of a respected and beloved father, the wishes of the families on both sides, excepting only Mr. Neville's father, who ever continued obdurate, and the most ardent and respectful protestations of the inviolable affections of a young man, who had always a sufficient degree of art to bring his fine person and accomplishments very forward on the canvas, while he had cunning to hide the deformity of his soul in the back ground.

Cloaths, equipage, jewels, splendour, in possession, and titles in reversion, were the brilliant appendages to this alliance, and having obtained a kind of indolent consent, extorted rather than given, to her mother's earnest wish from Lady Mary, the lover departed to the continent, to settle his affairs—possibly to get rid of a mistress, and lady Ruthven, now fonder of life than ever, engaged that herself and family should meet him at Montpelier, but death, the long expected finale to that lady's excursions, put a period to her existence within a few days after Mr. Neville left England.

And now, having taken up the pen to oblige my daughter; I would wish her, as thank heaven, she is recovered, to resume it; and pursue the history of lady Mary Neville; but the encroacher begs me to bring it down to the present time; and as she possesses in a very full degree the power of carrying every point with me; I shall, in a post or two proceed in my narrative; and desire you will, in the mean time, rank in the number of your warmest friends, yours,

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER XXVI.

Mrs. Butler in continuation.

Soho-Square.

LADY Ruthven's death plunged the Earl, who tenderly loved her, into such an excess of grief; that it was feared he would not long survive her; Lady Mary was also extremely affected; but young minds have so much to hope in the future, and those of the Earl's experience and time of life so little, that there was all the difference in the world in their manner of feeling the death of the Countess: The Earl's grief grew stronger as Lady Mary's gave way; time, by degrees, weaned her memory from a mother who was always either an invalid, or immersed in dissipation; while it perpetually represented to his, the sweet companion of his youth, the woman he esteemed, the wife he adored; and his nervous system suffered so much, that it was now necessary, on account of *his* health, the Montpellier journey should be taken.

Mr. Neville heard with extreme regret, of the loss he had sustained; he hastened with a mixture of anxiety and fear, to Montpellier; where he waited, as you may imagine, with great impatience the commands of Lord Ruthven.

Lady Mary felt little inclination towards the completion of her engagements; but what was a father's advice *only*, while her mother lived; was now she was no more, an absolute command: He flew into transports of grief, and passion, at the remotest hint of her wish to evade, or delay the injunctions of his beloved wife; and perhaps a suspicion that she intended to protract, if not wholly avoid the marriage, hurried their journey to the continent; where, as I before said, I, by their desire met them; and in eight days after our arrival, the marriage was celebrated with the utmost privacy, on account of our recent loss: Our mourning was laid aside one day in compliment to the living, and it was resumed the next in respect to the dead.

The evening preceding her marriage, I received a summons, to attend the bride in her private apartment.

My own heart was so opprest with sorrow, and I was at that time so ill qualified to comfort others; that I was satisfied it was in kindness to me, Lady Mary had dispensed with my company, in her hours of retirement. It was, however, so natural for a young person on such an interesting occasion, to wish for a companion of her own sex, that I was not surprised at her message.

I found her, pensively looking at a miniature, which she held in her hand; she motioned to a chair without speaking, and when I was seated, turned the face of the picture towards me, when I discovered, with astonishment, it was Moncrass.

It is (said she, deeply sighing) three years since I saw this obdurate face: I am now on the point of avowing love and obedience to another. I sent for you, dear Constance, to indulge myself in the sad pleasure of speaking, for the last time, of that unfortunate man—does he yet exist?—have you ever heard any tidings of him?—does he? but do not tell me if he does; it is now too late, were I convinced I yet held a place in his heart, for me to think of him with innocence—you are surprised—you thought the various scenes of dissipation, and pleasure, in which I have been engaged; the number of men who have affected to sigh for me, and his cruel adherence to rectitude, had erased him from my memory; you are mistaken; all sense of delight must be dead in my bosom, when it ceases to throb at the sight of this picture; all power to distinguish between right, and wrong, lost, when I forget his honour, his misfortunes, and his self-denial; it was not a common attachment, could give me courage to offer myself to his acceptance: No! Constance—nor was it a common object who inspired that attachment. I saw the young hero superior to misfortune, he had lost his family honours, and inheritance—but his firm soul was all itself, and the chief of the first house in Scotland, dignified the paltry promotion which he had more than earned: when I felt my heart involuntarily spring to his melting eyes, it was not merely to the object of my choice; it was to the brave man struggling with adversity—to the hero, whose fame should have reached the heavens; his rejection of me, which this letter contains, would have drawn me after him, to the verge of the earth, had I been in possession of an independant fortune; but certain my father would never receive a proscribed rebel for his son—that my mother's heart would have broken, and that I should not only incur his narrow circumstances, but perhaps, by uniting my fate to his, draw the further vengeance of providence on his guiltless head, for taking a parricide to his heart; what could I do but give him up? and now, my dear Constance, answer my first question: does he exist?

My husband, I told her, had made constant enquiries after him, and we had the pleasure to hear he was in health, but I added, he had not wrote to us.

Well, said she, concealing a falling tear with the picture; I rejoice he is well, but—she hesitated and blushed—and after a pause proceeded:

‘Has there not been a report, a kind of whisper’—and her agitation was so great, her voice, imperceptibly to herself, drop'd so low, I could but just hear her articulate—‘that he is married.’

As she had not before mentioned the name of Moncrass, I had not thought it proper, on my part, to revive a subject, I had every reason to suppose she had ceased to remember. But now, that the manner in which she had made her enquiry convinced me, she had still an interest in the fortunes of Mr. Moncrass; I was about to inform her of every particular, that had reached us, concerning his marriage; but as soon as I had confirmed the report she had heard—Enough—enough, (cried she) with quickness, if he is but happy, and content—she stopped, and gave vent to a gush of tears, and with an affecting dignity in her manner—this picture, cousin, (said she) no matter how I came by it—it cost me some pains, and expence; and this letter, you remember it.—It was that the colonel sent her at parting.—They are very dear to Mary Ruthven; but, Mary Neville should be a stranger to the emotions they occasion; take therefore the dear, dangerous

reliques; do not destroy them, but if you outlive me, and can do it with propriety, lay them on my bosom;—let them be buried with me; and then pressing them to her lips, and to her heart, she gave them into my possession, and after affectionately embracing me, retired to her closet. I saw her no more till she was attired for the altar next morning, when she gave her hand to Mr. Neville.

Never have I seen in any man, such an unbounded, such a frantic joy, as that which appeared to agitate the bridegroom, both during the ceremony, and after it was concluded. The whole of his behaviour indeed, from the instant the indissoluble knot was tied, to the moment when it pleased God to call him to himself, favoured of insanity.

It was the intention of the Earl, and his daughter, to winter at Montpellier; but the spirit of Neville might be truly said to be a perturbed one: ever restless and dissatisfied; a superstitious person would certainly say the injured ghosts of young Woodburne and his sister, haunted him; many of the dismal relations, every country village abounds in, had not, I dare to say, half such apparent grounds for their origin.

Neville hated, he said, Montpellier; he longed to retire into Rutlandshire; where the Earl had presented him with the fine old seat, where you was first introduced to Lady Mary; nor would he suffer them to rest, till he had carried his point, in separating his wife from her father.

I have great reason to believe, the Earl very early saw the wretched choice the Countess, and himself had made for their child; yet, when I consider his haughty temper, I cannot sufficiently admire the patience, and forbearance of his conduct to Neville; he endeavoured by gentle, and persuasive means, to soothe the savage ferocity of a temper, which ought, in common policy, to have been subservient to him; and when he found *that* impossible, always took care to let his giving up his own wish, appear like the consequence of a conviction *that* he was wrong; in order to avoid any thing, that might lead to future altercations; but every day's experience of Neville's unhappy disposition, added to the anxiety of his mind; would, I really believe, have put an end to his life; had he not suffered himself to be persuaded to submit to the separation so ardently desired by Neville.

As to Lady Mary—when her husband broke out into passions that transformed him to a fury; which, after he had once dropt the mask, happened on the most trivial occasions—I have seen her stand aghast; cold shivering fits would seize her whole frame, the blood forsook her cheeks; and, till relieved by a shower of tears, she would look the picture of despair.

Then, his transports would be as violent another way; he fell at her feet, addressed her by the most endearing epithets; wept himself; laid the blame on the climate, the place, and the people; all of whom he detested. In England all would be well—

To England then go, sir, said the Earl, after one of those extraordinary scenes: but beware how you continue to give way to the wicked violence of your temper; Lady Mary's life shall *not* be sacrificed to a lunatic. Alarmed at this threat, he affected a perfect

resignation to the will of Lord Ruthven; in a moment, the harmony of his features returned; he entreated pardon, promised to subdue his passions, and for fourteen days after, (we were no longer together) he was the humble, the insinuating, Neville, we had seen him before his marriage.

Lady Mary wish'd me to stay with her father, at Montpellier; his Lordship, as earnestly pressed me to accompany his daughter; and my own inclinations bent towards England, where my eldest son, (whom I had not seen, almost from his birth) was under the care of his grandmother; but Lord Ruthven's ill state of health, so affected his amiable, (and as she scrupled not to call herself to me) his miserable daughter; that I relinquished my own desire to return home, in compassion to her: I saw how her affectionate heart hung on her father, how severe the conflict between duty to her husband, and filial fondness for a beloved parent: what! said she, clasping my neck, is it not enough, his child—her whose whole life would have been too happy, spent in the delightful offices of soothing his painful hours, and attending his sick couch, should be torn from his dear parental arms, but must every body desert him? Oh! my good cousin, if ever I was dear to you, stay with my father; it will be a comfort to me, when, perhaps, I may have no other.

Ah! my poor cousin, thought I; thy comforts are reduced to a very narrow compass. I complied with her entreaties, and it is now a great satisfaction to me that I did so. The poor Earl was very near sinking under the sorrows of his heart, and the disorders of his body; we staid two years on the continent, rambling from air, to air, at the discretion of our physicians, and then returned to England; the Earl much mended in health, but distracted at the accounts we heard from others, for Lady Mary never complained of her wretchedness, and Neville's villany.

To trace this bad man, through all the extravagancies of his conduct; would be to revive the most distressful periods of my life; without entertaining you.

That Neville loved his wife, to a degree of adoration, I will not deny; but it was the love of Herod for his Marianne; it was rage, fury, and suspicion; a glance of common civility, marked the person on whom it was bestowed for hatred and revenge; he insisted on her confining herself to her apartments, first at Belle-Vue; and after his father's death, at Neville-abbey; he allowed her no society, and even her books, were often in his mad fits taken away. She loves not me he would say; I know I am the object of her hatred; she delights not in my society, I am a basilisk to her eyes; and shall I, who doat on her, suffer her to know pleasure when I am on the rack? no, I am miserable, let her be also wretched. Wicked wretch! how impotent was thy malice? my friend found that resource in her own bosom, conscience denied thee; "She received his injuries with all the calm fortitude of heroic patience; she firmly relied that providence would either put an end to her misfortunes, or support her under them; and with that animating hope, she seemed to feel less for herself, then for the author of her sufferings."

Lord Ruthven, less patient than his unhappy daughter; often vainly implored her to leave the barbarian, and put herself under his protection; and after bearing some years with Neville's atrocious behaviour, merely to enjoy the sad privilege of weeping over

his lovely child, two or three times in the year; worn out at length with vexation, and unable to prevail on her to separate herself from her unworthy husband; he gave up that poor consolation, and retired to Ruthven-house. I must not omit informing you, Miss Julia Neville was born in the first year of those inauspicious nuptials.

I defy any one to account for it, for Neville never gave a reason for any of his freaks; but I, who detested him, was, some how in tolerable estimation with him; but the utmost advantage I could make of his favour, was to prevail on him to suffer me to spend one month with my cousin every year; during that whole period, the man was in agonies; he could not bear we should be a moment alone together; fearing, as he confessed, I should inform her of some nonsense, the world might report concerning him.

The world was, indeed, pretty well informed; but I was too much interested in the peace of Lord Ruthven, and my friend; to repeat to either, what I could not help hearing. There was nothing vile in man, which common fame did not impute to him; innumerable were the stories circulated of his conduct, both towards his wife, and many others; some true, and (as is generally the case,) some false; nay, it was once confidently said, a young foreigner followed him to England, and claimed him as her lawful husband; but the matter after making a great noise, was suddenly hushed up, no body knew how.

For my own part, I believed him capable of any thing, where he was sure of his own safety: For when any danger immediately threatened himself, there did not breathe a more abject spirit; and yet he was, at his outset in life, said not to want courage; but vice, my dear sir, is a great enervator of the soul.

Lady Mary continued her exemplary conduct to the last; never did a fonder mother exist; her obedience to the will of her husband was implicit; but it was the obedience of principle, not affection; and was accompanied with a cold and feigned solemnity; which enraged Neville more than opposition, or perverseness could have done; I have often heard him swear, if she would take the trouble to contradict him, he should be happy—she never did.

At length, after spending the bloom of his life, in rendering himself terrible to his family, hateful to society, and contemptible to the world; he took cold by plunging into a river, as he was endeavouring to escape from his own game-keeper, who had caught him in the act of seducing his wife; the man either did not, or *pretended* he did not know who the delinquent was; but pursued him to the brink of the river, with an oaken trowel, which in the chase he had freely used: The water was both deep and rapid, and his career of wickedness had been then ended, had he not called aloud on his servant to, save his master, in the hearing of several passers by; who ran to his assistance, and preserved him from immediate death: But the effect of this accident, if it might be so called, was, though slow, equally sure; the cold fixed on his lungs, and inflammation followed, which terminated in what is called a galloping consumption.

The horrors of his conscience, and the death-bed retrospect of an ill-spent life, were in Mr. Neville so truly terrible, so shocking to humanity, that I hasten from the recollection of a scene, from which affrighted nature recoils. My cousin, at his desire, sent

for me to *comfort him*; poor wretch! had I not a stronger motive, so much did I abhor him, I really believe I should have rejected his summons.

The next extraordinary act of the unaccountable Neville, was to send for his wife, to his bed side; and there solemnly entreat she would comply with a request, on which his present and eternal peace, he said, depended; which he conjured her for the sake of his Julia, who stood weeping by her, not to refuse.

The end of this man was so unlike every other person, I had seen in that awful situation; one felt so *much* terror, and so *little* regret, that all the softening, and forgiving powers of a death-bed influence were annihilated: lost in the horror of the scene; the sweetness of Lady Mary's disposition, and his adjurations for the sake of her child, would certainly have prevailed on her to obey him, had I not been present; I bid him name his wish, before he extorted her promise to fulfil it:—He gave me a look—and finding she declined answering, informed us, his modest request was, that she would promise never to marry—she was silent.—Ah! said he, groaning, too well I know you will; Moncrass, your beloved Moncrass, will be your husband; you ever hated Neville!—Oh! Mary, promise me that the cursed Moncrass shall not be your choice; I leave you the whole world beside—Oh! promise, promise!—

The name of Moncrass, was an electrical shock to us both; we looked at each other, for information; it was long since I had even thought of him; he had not once, since her marriage, been the subject of our enquiry, or conversation; nor had we an idea Neville knew, or had ever heard of him.

Moncrass! cried Lady Mary, ah! where is he, does he yet exist?

Barbarous! answered Neville, is it thus you obey your husband?—thus you comply with my dying injunctions?—between consternation and terror, Lady Mary sunk into my arms.

Ah! cried he, as the intervals of pain, and weakness suffered him to speak; revive, my dearest Mary, my poor, injured,—he could then say no more, the hiccup and convulsions came on; pray for me—pity me—Oh! had I not loved as never mortal loved; the horrors of this moment had been spared me!—and then, but why should I shock my nature, or your's with the frightful description—he died the same evening. Oh! may none of our latter ends be like his.

C. BUTLER.

LETTER XXVII.

Mrs. Butler in continuation.

Soho-Square.

WHEN I left Grovesnor-street, my daughter desired I would take the first convenient opportunity, to finish the history of General, and Lady Mary Moncrass; I was sorry to understand from her, you were indisposed; but hope this letter, if it does not find you perfectly recovered, will, as you say you are so much interested in the story, be a means of dispelling for awhile, the ennui of your very solitary life.

What I have further to say, will not take up such an enormous packet as the last—you may believe it is no small grief to me to reflect, that some other biographer, may have to conclude the remarkable occurrences of my friend's life, when I am perhaps no more. It is, indeed, very distressing to me, who have known, and felt with my friend, all her hopes, and fears; when providence has removed every obstacle to her happiness; to see that any should arise from the wickedness of man—more wounding to her peace, than all that has past; could my history have left her, in the quiet enjoyment of the felicity, she so eminently deserves, I should conclude it with pleasure: yet, if “whatever is, is right” why should we murmur?

Lord Ruthven, you will conclude, was not long before he embraced his daughter; his youth appeared to be renewed, and he bore the fatigue of travelling post, two hundred miles, without once getting out of his carriage, with the spirit of five and twenty—Lady Mary flew to him—I am restored to my father, cried she, and fainted in his arms.

My daughter, said the Earl, as she recovered, what hast thou not suffered—how dear has thy obedience cost thee, but never more will I attempt to bias the inclination of my child—never oppose the wish of her heart—that heart where patience, fortitude, and honour, have their residence, cannot feel an improper impulse; thy will, my daughter, shall in future be thy father's—need I say that in this hour of heartfelt gratulation, I also had my share of the good Earl's kindness.

We left Lord Ruthven at the abbey; who undertook to appoint proper people to settle Mr. Neville's affairs, and set off in his carriage to Ruthven; where we continued till the Earl joined us.

The strange man could not be persuaded to make a will; he had lived in such a contracted way, that he had not spent the tenth of his income; and what was very odd, and will serve to shew you the extreme absurdity of his character; although his domestic affairs were conducted with great parsimony, there were many thousand pounds, in each of his stewards hands, which had been suffered to accumulate from year, to year, without interest, from the time he came into the Neville estates, till his death; his personals were therefore very large, but the estates passed to a distant branch of the family in right of male inheritance; these matters were soon adjusted, and in a few months, we considered

the past troubles, merely as foils to our present happiness; we divided our time between Ruthven, and Belle-Vue, and I knew not of a wish my cousin had ungratified.

It was during one of our excursions to the latter place, when my eldest son, who was then on a visit to you, and his brother, came to pay his respects to Lady Mary.

Constance, said she, smiling, it is time Edward should go abroad; it would certainly raise a laugh were we to travel in his suite; but (again smiling) we might give him the meeting—Edward was in raptures at the idea.

Young men, I believe, seldom take Portugal in their tour, continued Lady Mary—Why not, madam, (said Edward) if to form a proper judgment of men, and manners, be the object of the grand tour, why should Portugal be passed by?—Nay, I know not, replied Lady Mary, and turning to me, I should think, cousin, some useful discoveries, or at least observations, might be made, even in the Brazils.

Agreeable one's, Lady Mary, I allow, answered I, but as to their use, you will pardon me.—Don't be a prude in your old-age, cousin, said she; I am resolved to be a traveller in mine.

I suspect as much *now*, but as Edward says, Portugal may lay in the way of the grand tour; and, as in that case, we may as well begin, as end there—why not send him to reconnoitre; a good general, cousin, will always know the state of the country through which he is to make his way.—And a smart aid-du-camp, interrupted Lady Mary, is no bad acquisition to the most experienced commander; but a thought has just struck me, will do better, than sending this poor lad in quest of adventures for me; when in all probability, he fancies himself perfectly qualified, to fight windmills, and relieve distressed damsels, on his own account.

Lady Mary was not quite so ingenuous in this matter, as I had always found her—for the truth is, the thought had *not just* struck her, it had been long planned, and digested; and only waited a proper period to be put in execution; you, Mr. Harley, must remember an absence of your worthy tutor for some months;—he was, I need not tell you, a man of strict morals, and solid understanding.

Mrs. Montford, was one among the many who paid their respects to Lady Mary on her return to Belle-Vue; she had been honoured in her younger days, with the friendship of the Ruthven family, when they occasionally visited that part of the world; and she was now, particularly anxious, to obtain the patronage of her ladyship for you: my daughter Butler, her niece, was also at that time under her protection; I perfectly remember her bringing you both with her, attended by Mr. Allen, to the old house, where now Belle-Vue stands.

Mrs. Montford was one of those ladies, who kept up the credit of a single life, by her urbanity, and good temper; she became suddenly, a prodigious favourite with Lady Mary; and at last it came out—that the result of all their closetings, was the commission my cousin gave Mr. Allen, to go to Lisbon in pursuit of Moncrass; he was now in waiting

for his final instructions; and as soon as she had concluded her last (and as it proved introductory speech) she directed a servant to inform Mr. Allen, she wished to see him.

He immediately appeared, and being furnished with proper credentials, began his journey to Lisbon the next morning;—his commission was to make every possible enquiry respecting Colonel Moncrass—his circumstances—situation in life—but above all, his domestic engagements. We returned as soon as he had departed to Ruthven; and there waited, with no small impatience, on the part of Lady Mary; the result of his enquiries.

Our first letter from Allen informed us, that the General was returned to Lisbon, older, and perhaps wiser, but not richer, than when in his youth he had left it; with the addition of a young son to educate, and provide for, out of his pay.

Moncrass had lost his wife, in bringing her son into the world, within the first year of their marriage; Don Sebastian, her father, a hale widower of fifty-six, after his daughter's death, took it into his head to supply her place, by taking a young bride—when an old man once adopts a whim of this kind, he is seldom over-nice in his choice—a buxom lass, daughter to one of his subalterns, happening to strike his fancy, he honoured her with his hand—and she in return, brought him heirs in plenty to his large fortune; whom she took care should not only inherit the governor's riches, but also engross his affections—and thus was poor Moncrass, and his son, cut off from all expectations from Don Sebastian.

The General, disgusted at this treatment from the governor, his health impaired by the climate, and tired of a situation, where his honour would not suffer him to grow rich, applied for a recall; and our enquirer found him at a small village, within a few leagues of Lisbon; where some other fugitive families, his countrymen, who had also been in the Portuguese service were settled; living with great frugality, and supplying to his son, the place of a tutor, he had not ability to pay.

Lady Mary instantly dispatched the inclosed letter: which with its answer, will render this a tolerable large packet—I shall therefore take the opportunity of closing it, and am yours affectionately

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER XXVIII.

*Lady Mary Neville, to General Moncrass,
inclosed in the preceding.*

Ruthven-house.

My dear General,

THIRTEEN years are now elapsed, since the most generous of men, rejected the affectionate heart of Mary Ruthven; I have the letter he then wrote, now before me; *my honour, my happiness*, and that of my parents, were pleas that were offered—in opposition to the feelings of his own heart—to the fondness of mine—those pleas he told me, were founded on the everlasting rule of right, from which *I* well knew *he* would not deviate.—Oh! thou mistaken casuist—could the fate, which thy unrelenting obstinacy exposed me to, have been known to thee—the days—years of sorrow I have endured—the insults and indignity I have suffered—lost to the blessings of mutual affection, to the joys of society; and to the endearments of my honored parent—a captive in the land of freedom—wedded to a man my heart abhorred—while every tender sentiment of my soul floated (tho' hopeless) on fancy's airy pinions in pursuit of thee—cou'dst thou have known this, at a time when thy sympathy *would* not condole, and *could* not relieve me; if I know thee, Moncrass—and I think I do, thy anguish would have been insupportable—but it is past—and my heart, my unalienable heart, which abandoned by thee, has, by turns swelled with grief, and sunk in despair; now seeks repose with thine.

Wealth, I know General Moncrass will despise, he is indeed *above* it; but he once feared to reduce his Mary to his fortunes—she exults it is now in her power, with consent of her father, to raise him to hers. He is an alien to his country. What is country but a name? a sound, a nothing. Are not the bounteous fruits of the ever-teeming earth, every where dispensed?—do not the dews of heaven fall, and one just God reign over the whole creation?—the country of a virtuous man is that where he can live, with least offence to his maker, and most benefit to his fellow creatures; and as to me, what are climes, country, kindred, to the possession of the man I love? say then, Moncrass, will you, *now at last*, all storms subsided, and peace within our reach, accept your Mary's once more offered hand? invite her to your retirement—say but she will be welcome—and believe her already on the wing to him who has ever been the *first* and *last* hope of

MARY NEVILLE.

LETTER XIX.

General Moncrass to Lady Mary, in answer.

Lisbon.

WHAT shall I say to you, most lovely, and most beloved of women? how reconcile you to yourself, for having made the noble and generous offer your letter contains? or to the wretched Moncrass for rejecting it? Ah! my adored Mary, were then thy beauty, thy innocence, and thy virtue, sacrificed to one, whose barbarous heart was not congenial to thy own? who knew not, felt not, the power of thy fascinating graces? and did thy wounded, thy dejected soul, turn in tenderness to the unfortunate Moncrass?—sweet flatterer! ever charming friend! I am unequal to the task, which honor imposes—how dare I tell the woman I have ever adored, she must forget I exist? how much less, dare I rob her family, and her country, of their brightest ornament? bring a woman of rank—and *such* a woman! to associate with a set of ruined fugitives; live on her bounty—and accept from her, a fortune, which my cruel destiny, disables me from returning; and what is of the last importance, entail disgrace on her posterity. It must not be—yet believe him, who has yet to learn the art of deceit, I love—I adore you, even more than ever—were I a prince, with what pride would I invite my Mary to my arms; poor, undone, and fugitive as I am, I yet want resolution to bid you forget me.—No—madam—let me yet live in your memory, though fate forever separates you from

MONCRASS.

LETTER XXX.

Mrs. Butler in continuation.

Soho-Square.

I Will suppose you have read General Moncrass's heroic billet, for it could scarce be called a letter, which we had no sooner done, then it was tossed into the fire, and as quickly rescued from the flames.

Did ever any body know any thing so vexatious? cried Lady Mary, bursting into tears—but I am determined to conquer his proud spirit; and after half an hour's conversation with the Earl, during which both our abigails and myself, were in a violent bustle—we set off under the escort of my son to Falmouth, where we fretted away a fortnight waiting for wind; at last that served, and we had a fine passage to Lisbon.

We went immediately to the hotel, where Mr. Allen waited to hear from us; and the next morning, proceeded to the residence of Moncrass.

We found the General, sitting under the shelter of some vines, with his son; to whom he was reading Fitzosborne's letters, and was in the moment we approached him, at the part of that tender one to Cleora:

"It is impossible, I perceive, to turn off the mind at once from an object which it has long dwelt upon with pleasure; my heart, like a poor bird hunted from her nest, is still returning to the place of its affections; and after some vain efforts to fly off, settles again, where all its cares, and all its tenderness are centred."

At the conclusion of the letter, he laid down the book, and appeared to be lost in reflection.

I thought him much altered, he was sun-burnt; his hair, which was undressed and out of powder, was in many places changed, from a fine glossy black, to grey; the extreme brilliancy of his eyes, were changed, though not less pleasing, to a swimming melancholy, his figure retained its former grandeur, but there was also an interesting pensiveness, in his whole appearance.

Vanity, will certainly keep its reign in the heart of a woman, as long as it is sensible of the tender passion; Lady Mary had taken uncommon pains in the decoration of her person; she was then in her thirty-first year, a little inclined to the embonpoint, and allowing (as Hewson says) for alterations, as lovely as ever. She trembled and changed colour, as we observed him,—insomuch, that I was alarmed for her; and my emotion disturbed him—he started—and perceiving a group of strangers, was approaching us with a polite respect; but recollecting me, he again started with surprise, and again came forward, but though his eyes darted a joyful welcome, he passed me without speaking.

Lady Mary, as she told me afterwards, felt in that moment for the dignity of her sex; her conduct, in thus pursuing the General, was a kind of retrograde motion, that then displeased herself; and she had sat down, overcome with shame, at the foot of a tree, half fainting, hardly able to wipe the falling tear from her eye.

The General did not see her at first, but the moment he knew me, his heart informed him who was near, and guided him to her feet.

This interview beggar'd description, his kneeling posture was soon changed to a more endearing one; he supported her into his plain, but elegant house; and in fine, before sun-set, the heroism of self-denial was no more; romance kicked out of doors, and Lady Mary Neville, metamorphosed into Lady Mary Moncrass.

The Earl soon joined us, with Julia; who was two years younger than Reuben, the General's son; and I then left the happy groupe, to return to my own affairs in England; where in two years, I had the supreme felicity of meeting them again; his majesty having been graciously pleased to take off the attainder, against those unfortunate gentlemen, the wandering descendants of those, who had been in actual rebellion, and also restored to them their confiscated estates: the General therefore, now in possession of his natural inheritance, the weight of obligation removed from his mind, and no longer depending on the fortune of his lady, whose pride it was, nevertheless to invest him with it; had begun to taste the sweets of real felicity, or acted it extremely well; when the event happened, which has entirely destroyed the peace, and will I fear, ultimately, prey on the *life* of my friend. And we perceive, sir, in her fate, the vanity of all human foresight; two people whom kingdoms, and seas could not divide; now agree on a voluntary separation; but I must do the General justice, however changed he may be in other respects, his noble independant spirit, is still the same. He has declined retaining any part of Lady Mary's fortune, and even refused to reside in the house he rebuilt in your neighbourhood, though he is very partial to the situation, on any other terms but that of paying an equivalent, for the ground on which it stands.

I believe, sir, I have now satisfied your curiosity, and fulfilled my daughter's desire, in respect to General Moncrass and my cousin:—should any thing have escaped me, which you wish to be further informed of; I shall be very ready to resume the subject, and am, sir, &c.

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER XXI.

Edward Harley, Esq; to Mrs. J. Butler.

Hermitage.

YESTERDAY, oh! my dear friends, the enchanting yesterday, I set off for Belle-Vue, after a very restless night, during which I had framed many apologies for my conduct to Agnes, but rejected them, as inadequate to what my folly required, I was, however at last, so fortunate, as to please myself in what I intended to say; nay so earnest was I in my desire, to offer such an excuse to a woman of sense, as she might accept, and so fearful of omitting any palliative circumstance, that I committed my ideas to paper; and set off to Belle-Vue early, in order to have time, should an opportunity offer, of entertaining Mademoiselle before dinner.

Within half a mile of the castle, as I crossed the common, I saw Agnes enter a little cottage in the green lane, at the back of the park paling; I knew it was impossible I could be mistaken, for though it was at a considerable distance that I saw her, there is something so peculiarly elegant, in her form, her manner, her—in short there is none like her; my heart bounded at the sight, she was alone, and unattended. I shall want courage thought I, to address her before the General, or should he be absent, there is Madame de Vallmont.

I immediately alighted, and tied my horse to the gate: I was soon at the door of the cottage, which was shut, and it was not till I had rapt with my whip, that I recollected, how extremely absurd I was acting; what excuse could I possibly make, for intruding on the privacy of a lady, to whose connections and conduct, I was so great a stranger?

I was interrupted in a train of unpleasing ideas, which were crowding on my imagination, and prevented from returning to my horse, by the appearance of a youth about seventeen, in a ragged black coat, who approached the door, with a basket in his hand, and, as he with great caution opened the latch, in a very low voice demanded my business; it was no easy matter you will allow, for me to tell the lad, what I did not know myself; after waiting a moment for an answer, I was not prepared to give him.—

Oh! I know, said he, appearing to recollect, be pleased to walk in; which I did, into a miserable apartment through which he went on beckoning me to follow, to the foot of a little pair of stairs, where he took off his shoes, and ascended. My curiosity was now greatly excited—where could Agnes be?—and what her business in such a place as that? at all events I was determined to know; yet I stopt involuntary at the chamber door—where I heard whispering from different voices, and a decent elderly woman, prayed I would walk in, there, Oh! Butler—

There I beheld the lovely Agnes, sitting at the side of sickness, and heart-rending sorrow—Oh! how divinely animated was her countenance, what beams of celestial fire darted from her lovely eyes, what a glow of sensibility irradiated her countenance.

A young girl was kneeling at her feet—the lad who had opened the basket, stood behind the chair, while she smelled, as if to try their efficacy, some sal volatile drops; on the bed lay the emaciated form of an elderly woman, at that moment offering up thanksgiving, and prayers, for the heavenly creature, who had supplied her wants, and who had given peace to her departing spirit, by a firm promise to protect her children.

The surprise of Agnes, at sight of me, was visible; her face was crimsoned over. Mr. Harley, said she, is it you?—for heavens sake what brings you here? did not you say, (turning to the boy) it was the doctor?
He verily thought so, he answered.

Whoever you are, sir, said the sick woman, bear witness to the goodness of that angel—hear my grateful prayers, for my gentle benefactress; and let not her sweet example be lost to the world. Behold the widow's heart, rendered joyful, even in the pangs of death; hear her speak comfort to my poor orphans, and oh! may angels waft her goodness; to the throne of the prince of peace.

There was something in this address much superior to what I expected in such a place; which added to the solemnity of the scene, and the placid look of the angel, who illumined it; so affected me, I cannot describe it, I could scarce refrain from prostration at her feet; and should certainly have done it, had not the doctor, for whom the lad had mistaken me, just then entered.

Agnes, the adorable Agnes! then arose, and retired with him to the further end of the room; after some little conversation, the doctor approached the sick bed—and Agnes with inimitable grace, presented me her hand; *here* sir, said she, looking round her—you will perhaps trust yourself with *me*—I led her down the stairs, she took her umberella, and again presenting her hand—in this place, Mr. Harley, continued she; the inmates of your favourite grove are strangers; it is long since happiness, peace, or contentment, have entered this dwelling.

And yet—madam, I found *you* there.

Yes, returned she, and you are surprised at it.

That poor woman, is the widow of a clergyman, the curate of a neighbouring parish, whose life was a sacrifice to the duty of his profession; being called to perform the last holy office, to one of his flock, in a putrid fever; he caught the infection and died—leaving his widow, and those two children, totally destitute; grief and want has reduced the widow to the situation you have seen—shame, and a false shame I think it was; (since every body knows the liberal heart of General Moncrass) prevented her owning her poverty, 'till *she* was dying—and the children almost starved. I am the General's almoner on these occasions; but how came you to drop in?—yet why do I ask?—your philanthropy, my philosopher, is much better known than your person.

What could be the reason, having followed her into the cottage, for the express purpose of apologising for my behaviour to her yesterday; that I could neither avow it, or avail myself of the opportunity which chance had afforded me, of delivering the

harrangue, I had taken such pains to compose? studied speeches, like after wit, are generally out of time; and the truth is, I forgot every syllable of mine.

Agnes ascribed my visit at the cottage to a motive, I knew I did not merit—but it was in vain, that I called to my recollection, the meanness of attributing, or suffering her to attribute it to charity; my heart told me it was wrong, that in this instance the suffering her to continue in her mistake, was an act of deceit; all this I felt; yet could I not, had my existence depended on it, have assigned this interview to its real cause; but, as we proceeded in our walk towards Belle-Vue, I felt myself less constrained; she was in remarkable high spirits, and so blended her fine understanding, with good humour, that I was in raptures; and could very justly say of her, what the friend of Euphrates said of that wise man: “her conversation so captivates your attention, that you hang as it were upon her lips, and even after the heart is convinced; the ear still wishes to hang on the harmonious reasoner.”

Before we reached the house, I had got the better of my irresolution, timidity, or what you please to call it—I could do justice to the benevolence of her soul, the elegance of her manners, and the sweetness of her disposition; her eyes became less brilliant, but more beautiful, (yet how could that be) than when I met her at the cottage; she hung on my arm, flattered me with her esteem, said, she believed there was a likeness in our dispositions, a parity of sentiments, that might, she believed, conciliate a virtuous friendship; if I was one of those, who allowed such a thing might exist; between two young people of a different sex. She is ingenuity itself, and the primitive simplicity of the graces is in all she utters. Was it strange, so charmed, so engaged, and so favor’d; I entirely forgot where I had left my horse, ’till on entering the house, still arm in arm; the divine woman took hold of the general, with her other arm; and walking between us, round the saloon, repeated to him, every circumstance of our accidental meeting; on which he asked me, smiling, if I had walk’d so far, for my health this morning? I then recollected the situation in which I left my horse, and confess’d, that I had found Miss de Courci’s conversation so fascinating, it had entirely shut out all the rest of the world; he was so good as to direct a groom to take my orders; but the creature had no sympathy, the degenerate houghnms had got loose, and taken himself quietly home, unmindful of the poor yahoo his master; a circumstance not altogether pleasing to Benson, who was perfectly sure when she saw him return, I had met with some accident; in consequence of which, all my own people, with half the rabble of the village at their heels, came posting down to Belle-Vue, enquiring all the way, whether any of his honor’s stray limbs had been seen.

Good heavens! cried Madame de Vallmont, as we sat at dinner, opposite the bow window, which commands the road; where are all those people driving? what can possibly be the matter? it was a sight perfectly new at Belle-Vue, though the good creatures often favour *me*, with their company in scores; a servant was dispatched to make enquiries, and returned with a dismal account of “as how ’squire Harley had rode out in the morning, and sure, and sarten broke his neck, because as how the horse was come home with all his tackle loose.” This was ridiculous enough, you’ll say, but I have forgiven William, who was out of the way without leave, or would have behaved more reasonably; and I have given Benson a new gown, because, in the first place, the General

was pleased to express himself delighted at such proofs of affection from my servants, and poor neighbours; and because it called the tear into the eye of Agnes, who gave her own orders the honest creatures should be regaled with cold meat and strong beer; and because, Butler, she again presented me her soft hand, and would walk between me and the General to the servant's-hall, to convince them 'squire Harley was alive and well.

What more passed, before—afterwards, or at the time; I protest I know not: the General, Agnes, and Madame de Vallmont; were so obliging as to set me down at the foot of our hill; from whence I watched the return of the carriage, 'till "Darkness hover'd o'er the ground." When I returned to communicate to you, the happiness of your

EDWARD HARLEY.

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LETTER XXXII.

Edward Harley, Esq; to S. Butler, Esq;

Hermitage.

I Dined yesterday, by invitation, at Belle-Vue; it was the birth-day anniversary of the prince, in whose service, the General passed the early part of his life; and is always observed with splendour, and magnificence, at whatever place he happens to be; the General was seated at the head of his own table, Miss de Courci on his right hand, and Madame de Vallmont on his left; the guests were seventeen in number besides myself, and all gentlemen: our host, was all that wit, wine, and good humour could make him; it is his custom, he informed us on this anniversary, to do all possible honour to the king of Portugal; bon mots, and repartees, flew about; a band of music played during the time of our dining, the ladies, in compliment to the General, were also very chearful, wine, and music, were blended with the sallies of lively imaginations, and thought was—

No, it was *not* banish'd; my soul sunk within me, when I beheld the charming Agnes, her whose feeling heart, whose benevolent tenderness, and whose modest ingenuity; had so charmed me in our walk from the cottage; when I beheld, and considered her, all lovely as she is, the property of libertism: ah! Butler, how was it possible I could enter into the festivity of the day; she withdrew after dinner, rather earlier than usual, what would I not have given to have attended her? but custom, tyrant custom forbad it; yet the aching void she left in my heart, rendered me almost insensible; amidst the roar of mirth, I was inanimate; and wine, instead of having the usual effect of exhilarating my spirits, served only to depress them the more.

At last the welcome summons to the tea-table, changed the scene; which was no sooner removed, then the General led the devoted Agnes to the organ; where she played and sung, for the amusement of men, whose soberest faculties could not have done justice to her taste and execution; and who now, heated with wine; dishonoured her by their vociferous applause: Ah! Butler! how I felt for her—for her sex—for my *own*.

A magnificent supper, concluded the festivity of the day; the General insisted on my taking a bed at Belle-Vue, as it was very late, or rather early before the guests separated: Agnes did not appear at supper, I indeed could well spare *her* from such a party; her absence now was pleasing to me, I rejoiced at it—and it was the first time I could do so.

I arose this morning rather before my usual hour, and walked into the air, in hopes to get rid of a violent pain in my head; and had the pleasure of meeting Miss de Courci on the terrace; my head-ach vanished at her sight, but ah! Butler, where is the prescription, which will remove, the still more acute pain of my heart.—Three hours we loitered in this delightful walk, occasionally resting on one, or other of the garden seats; three hours, I had the felicity to entertain, and be entertained by her; what transporting sensations are created by friendship for such a woman; could the sensualist, whose insatiate appetite

roves without true pleasure, because without sensibility, in quest of variety; could the libertine, who triumphs in the fall of innocence, without daring to say *he* has tasted unalloyed happiness; could they experience the feelings of a heart, so fraught with friendship, as mine for Agnes; they would acknowledge the futility, the vanity of their own pursuits; and devote themselves to a platonic regard, for such a woman, if such there be, as Agnes de Courci.

With her I am not in danger, I may indulge the thrilling partiality of my soul for her, without injury to *her* peace, or risk to my own; I cannot involve *her* in the inconveniences of my small fortune; I cannot marry *her*, and how can I regret, that I have not that in my power; yet Butler, it is a solemn truth, that in her society, I could forget the world.

EDWARD HARLEY.

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LETTER XXXIII.

J. Butler, Esq; to Edward Harley, Esq;

My dear Edward,

CAROLINE being yet forbid writing, I take at her request, one half hour, before I leave town, to say to you, a great deal from her, and a few words from myself. In the first place then, she says, that although she certainly did express great curiosity respecting the favorite of General Moncrass; it was very far from her *wish*, or expectation, that a woman of *her* character, should so entirely engross the attention of her dear Harley; she is alarmed at the extreme pleasure, you take in her society; which she thinks is an impeachment of your understanding; and wishes you to remember, the old axiom, of evil communications, &c. she bargained to be told, as in the case of Patty Lucas; all the rural transactions of your village, which you seem entirely now to neglect; and to substitute in their room, observations, and events, which are so full of Agnes, that they are like the feast of Boileau, every dish savours of nutmeg; and would, were she not certain of the innate rectitude, and honest pride of your heart, make her tremble for your peace, for with such a right turned mind as yours, utter ruin, she thinks, would be the consequence, of your imbibing a passion, incompatible with honor, and reason; she therefore implores you to guard your heart, against the Circe of Belle-Vue.

So much for Caroline, and now Edward, a word, or two, from myself.

This Agnes, all the world allows is a very fine girl, she is, you say, pleasing in her manner, sensible, engaging, and accomplished; she has even the art, for art depend upon it, it is; to affect that certain delicacy, that truly feminine something, to which the hearts of men of understanding, oftener pay homage, than to beauty; *there is none like her*; upon my word, Mr. Edward Harley, you go great lengths in this fair ones commendation; and were there not a few insurmountable buts in the way, I should, as Caroline says, tremble for you myself—you are a little touched I believe, but 'tis not from the aforesaid buts, I dare say any thing more than a mere scratch; it is impossible, a toy, a woman kept for the purpose of vice, by an old married man, can have made a serious impression on Edward Harley; I do not suffer myself to suppose it; while therefore, you find you can play with your partiality for her, I shall be glad to hear you indulge it; because if you once become attached to the society of sprightly females, the next step will be to leave a place where they *are not*, and remove to where they *are* to be found; so far, so good; but Edward, if on the contrary, you feel this woman grows of importance to your happiness; order your chaise and fly immediately; there is no alternative—you esteem the General, but you would not marry his mistress; nor would you rival him, in the affection of a woman he has given such proofs of loving, even if it were in your power, or if you did, success in this case, would be destruction; remember therefore, there is as much honor, in a well conducted retreat, as in conquest; but one word more of Caroline, she insists on your continuing an unreserved correspondence, as she cannot else flatter herself, you take in good part, the friendly solicitude for your welfare, ever felt by,

Dear Ned, your truly affectionate

JAMES
CAROLINE BUTLER.

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LETTER XXXIV.

Edward Harley, Esq; to J. Butler, Esq;

Hermitage.

WHAT shall I say to you, my brother, my sister, your cautions are well meant, but if your surmises are just, they come too late to be of any service to me; certain it is, this woman fills my soul, the woman whose conduct *you* say, and I cannot deny, is an offence to virtue, occupies the whole heart of him who would not swerve from her strictest rule.

*Rival the General:—marry his mistress:—*how my principles reject the one supposition, and my honor the other; to fly then is your alternative. Ah! Butler! leave her—see her no more—where—in what distant clime—among what race of beings could I forget her? where is it her image would not pursue me? where would the soft sound of her voice, be lost on my ears? what amusements? what avocations would exclude her from my ideas? would the hardest labour, take from my hand, the trembling sensibility, a touch from hers occasions? my mind is against her, but my heart is subjugated: If I appeal to reason, what will that avail me?—I have already made the experiment—reason only points out to me her thousand excellencies—it applauds her judgment—echoes her sentiments, and repeats her very words; I oppose the precepts of morality—which have been the guide of my own actions—against the imputed enormity of hers—but in vain—her charity, her benevolence, and sweet disposition; are a standard of morality, more lovely, and more attractive, than all philosophy ever taught; I have no happiness but in her society—and have not resolution to tear myself from her. I am now a constant visitor at Belle-Vue, or rather, I am perfectly at home there.

We walk out—we ride—we converse—and form the most happy parties together; the General and Madame de Vallmont are an addition, but no interruption to our society, because we are not conscious of a meaning, it is improper for them to develope; I have the honor, frequently, to give them tea at my Hermitage; and sometimes she drops in alone; she paints with exquisite taste, my library is adorned with many of her pieces—and I have some of her poetry, which would convince my Caroline, if she is lost to virtue, it is not by choice.

But she is here, my soul bounds at her approach, oh! how my senses ach at her.

My hand, which ever trembles when I write of her, had spots of ink on it.

You are writing, Mr. Harley, said she.

I own'd I was.

I would venture a trifling wager now, by that guilty look I was your subject, come, let me see how I look on your paper; and she was actually proceeding to the library—

I trembling seized her hand.

She saw my confusion, which I believe raised her curiosity—she struggled—fear of offending rendered me resolute—she said I hurt her hand, and burst into tears.

Wretch! that I was—I excited those tears—I gave pain to the *heart* of Agnes, for sure I am I did not hurt her hand.

I threw myself at her feet—dearest Agnes—do not kill me with the sight of those precious drops.

Her tears continued to flow.

I was half distracted—I attempted in vain to soothe her—she turn'd from me with displeasure—it was the first frown I had ever seen on her brow, it almost took from me the power to breathe—I flew to my library, and fetch'd the unfinished letter—

Here thou irresistible woman, cried I, in anguish; this is the letter I was writing—*you are* the subject—read it—and then compleat my fate—banish me from your friendship, and presence forever—

Pleasure again resumed her natural throne—the eyes of Agnes sparkled—every trace of vexation vanished, and the dreadful frown was no more; No, Mr. Harley, said she, I will not accept of an extorted confidence; nor believe, though attested by yourself, *you could* write, what were I to read, would lose you my friendship; put up your letter my philosopher—and extending her hand—let us be friends.

On my knees I took the dear pledge of peace and pressed it ardently to my lips.

Oh! Agnes, Agnes, never—never more venture at such an act of reconciliation; in that moment—

Butler let not my sister know my weakness.

In that moment, all my boasted fortitude had near forsaken me; I tremble at my own ideas—yes—in that moment, I forgot what was due to myself—and to *her*—the obstacles to an *honorable* union; the infamy of a *vicious* one; passion, wild and ungovernable, took possession of my whole soul; the dear Agnes melted at the emotions she had occasioned—looked—but let me forever forget her looks—for while I knelt before her, I remembered only that *she* was lovely, and that *I* adored her.

Happily however, before an act, a word had escaped me, to confirm the wild disorder of my looks; recollection flashed like fire on my brain—the strong sensations of my mind, the inward conviction of latent guilt, and ingratitude, actually existing in my soul, under the plausible form of platonic friendship, overcame me—a darkness, which I can only liken to what I conceive of Milton's meaning, when he speaks of

“Darkness visible”
came before my eyes; I fell back.

Agnes shrieked and called for help—she flew to support me, but her weak efforts could not prevent my sinking on the ground—my servants, who now entered, helped to raise me, I soon recovered; and they left the room.

How you have frightened me, Mr. Harley, said she, taking my hand—

To her astonishment, I snatched it from her,

Tears again gushed from her eyes—and I was again frantic; I besought her to leave me—bid her, who had the world at her command, not to associate with misery—

She wept without answering—

Oh! Agnes, cried I, I conjure you to leave me—on my knees I conjure you—you are not safe with me—I am not to be trusted—return to your protector—I am miserable—but I would not make you so—leave me to my fate.

If you wish me gone, Mr. Harley (said she) in a tender accent, I will certainly oblige you—but something has disturbed and perhaps afflicted you—compose yourself—then if you say you are weary of my friendship, and desire my absence, I will instantly leave you; she turned from me to the window—I followed her—tears were in her eyes—

Do you really wish me gone, Mr. Harley? said she, in a voice scarce articulate. What could I say?

She continued with me so late, that we did not reach Belle-Vue 'till dinner was served—I returned in the evening, and found this once dear paradise a desert.

The poor widow is dead—I took her weeping son from the grave of his mother, as Agnes did the daughter; how eloquent is he in her praise—shunning ostentation in all her charities, she attributes to the General's command, the relief her own heart communicates.

You may truly say, Caroline, that I neglect the rural occurrences of my own village—I am even so abstracted, from every concern, in which Agnes has not a share; that I am become a stranger in my own house; the old gardener with tiresome assiduity, talks of this improvement, and that plantation; if I hear him, it is with a distasteful apathy, if by accident he meets me in the grove, and points out to my observation, any of the mighty things on which he is so intent, I see them indeed, but it is with a vacant eye; yet, do not chide, my beloved sister, the heart, which with all its frailties, will ever be warmly, and affectionately devoted to you.

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER XXXII.

Edward Harley, Esq; to J. Butler, Esq;

Hermitage

I Have again deliberately, and would I could say dispassionately, perused your letter; you are perfectly right, my safety is only in flight; I have lost all taste for every earthly enjoyment but her society; the whole world, is divided in my ideas, only by where *she* is, and where she is not; the little spot which contains her, would, were I the greatest potentate on earth, be a boundary to my ambition.

How has this fatal passion grown on me—in how short a period have I experienced the veracity of your predictions.

But will absence restore my serenity? Oh! that it would! in respect to your advice, and in regard to my own peace, I ought to make the trial.

I will not visit Belle-Vue, I will endeavour to recal my wandering thoughts, to those sweet haunts, where once, they were bounded by content; my poor neighbours, and guileless friends, I have neglected your wants, and forsaken your interests; thou venerable shade, impervious to the rays of the scorching sun; canst thou not screen me from the devouring flame that consumes me? will not the gentle murmur of the clear stream, whose enamelled banks I have so carefully decorated, assuage the anguish of my tortured soul?

At least I will try.

* * * * *

This is the second day I have adhered to my resolution; what a frightful chasm has it made in my existence; I would write to you every hour, but have no subject, but her, I will not name.

* * * * *

Eight days are now elapsed, since I have been at Belle-Vue; I have answered to the repeated enquiries of the General, that the business of my farm, deprives me of the honor of attending him; an apology which were I capable of applying to my affairs would not only be natural, but true. Eight days!—I have not heard the sound of Agnes's name, except from the friendly echo of my own grove, eight days!—I have not seen the face I adore—I have not contemplated the master-piece of nature—I have not even enquired after her!

When the servants appeared from Belle-Vue, I retired out of sight, not daring as I eagerly used to do, to take a message myself, lest my officious tongue should enquire after *her*. *Her*—whom? the mistress of General Moncrass. Ah! she is here!

EDWARD HARLEY.

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LETTER XXXIV.

Edward Harley, Esq; to J. Butler, Esq;

THE instant you receive this, take the proper steps to purchase a commission for me in a marching regiment; one going to the East, or West-Indies—to the Antipodes—any where.

I inclose power to sell out of the stocks, what money may be necessary for the purpose—I will accept no favour from General Moncrass.

EDWARD HARLEY.

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LETTER XXXV.

In answer to a letter that does not appear.

Mr. Harley to Mr. Butler.

WHY, my dear brother, do you so deeply probe the wounds of your unhappy Harley? you know not the pain you inflict; it is on the condition only, of your forbearing your cruel kindness I can resume my pen.

General Moncrass has no right to be offended with me, for refusing his favor—what—because I am conscious I cannot be grateful? would you infer *that* is a reason I should accept obligations? has he, or any man, a right to impose a debt on me, it is not in my nature to pay? I accept no favor from General Moncrass, let him take it as he will, my resolution is unchangeable.

E. HARLEY.

What are Caroline's dislikes to the German story of Werter? what reason will her gentle nature give, for refusing her compassion to the involuntary sorrows of the heart? "it is a bad story, she says, divinely told," the story may be fictitious, but the writer must have felt—poor Patty Lucas said it was hard to die of love—but yet, she aver'd it might be—I am sure it may—but a pistol ball is quicker, more certain, and less pain.

LETTER XXXVI.

Mr. Harley to Mr. Butler.

Hermitage.

WEAKER than infancy, and more variable than the elements, is your Edward; two days ago I rejected all favour from General Moncrass: to-day, my Agnes, ah! would to God she was indeed *mine*; brought the commission; I spurned at the idea of accepting it.

For *my* sake, Mr. Harley, for the sake of Agnes de Courci; oh! *her* power over my senses, her empire over my reason is enchantment—

I go to-morrow to insult my own principles, by returning thanks for a favor, my heart revolts at accepting; my bursting heart!

E. HARLEY.

LETTER XXXVII.

Mr. Harley to Mr. Butler in continuation.

THE General's reception of me, was at once friendly and solemn; he did not, he said, wish to know more of my affairs, than I chose to confide to his friendship, he would not therefore enquire into the reasons of my depriving him of the pleasure of seeing me at Belle-Vue: nor of the motives, that had so suddenly induced me to give up a plan (alas it was torn from my soul) too romantic, he had always foreseen, to be lasting: it was enough for him, that I meant to become a useful member of society, without troubling himself about the methods, by which an event so acceptable to him, and all my friends, had been brought about: he cautioned me to avoid an error, many young people he knew had fallen into; who having began in retirement, and fancied themselves wonderfully happy; no sooner get a glance at the great world, than they fall into the most blameable excesses; he warned me against deep play—and added, that as the first approaches to evil, were easiest avoided, and as I had at present, too many resources within my own mind, to be fond of cards; he recommended it to me, never to enter into parties, to which my inclinations, as well as the respect, and politeness, due to the company, I might happen to meet with, did not lead me.

As to your general conduct, Harley, said he, putting a volume of Shakespere into my hand; if you engrave the advice given by old Polonious to his son on your memory, and adhere to the excellent maxim, he lays down for the conduct of Laertes; you will need no other monitor through life.

Noble General Moncrass! why cannot I be the very man you first honoured with your notice? his son, Mr. Reuben Moncrass, a very fine young man, whom I had not before seen, was present; he introduced me to him, with so many encomiums on the goodness of my heart, and such manifest proofs of the tenderness of his own; that I was on the point of throwing myself at his feet, and laying all the secret depravity of my soul, open to him.

But I was deterred by the fear of injuring Agnes, and returned home exceedingly indisposed, as soon as dinner was removed.

Home did I say—what home have the miserable? once, it was the mansion of peace—it is now dark, dismal, and hateful; the officious kindness of poor Benson, throws me into transports of passion—I, who was once respected for the mildness of my temper, am become furious and vindictive; I no longer regard my farm—the clamours of my discarded poor, cease to affect me—my senses fleet from me—all sense of joy I mean, for that of *sorrow* is sunk deep in my heart—

Peggy, the widow's daughter, has just brought me a note—it is from Agnes—

The NOTE.

Agnes de Courci to Mr. Harley.

I am grieved at the distracted state of your mind; unhappy man! whence arises your despair; rouse from this unavailing sorrow; you place happiness out of the reach of time; you are *now* a soldier, your country is at peace, but you have a task more difficult than conquering the foe, you must subdue yourself; in the mean time you will come to bid us adieu: Let me ask a proof of your friendship for Agnes de Courci, you will receive many of hers to you; let us see you chearful, *deserve* to be fortunate, and you will be so.

AGNES DE COURCI.

I am now going (having informed my own people of my intention, and given the necessary orders for my departure) to pay my respects at Belle-Vue; I shall see you very soon. Adieu!

E. HARLEY.

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LETTER XXXVIII.

—*Harley, Esq; to J. Butler.*

Hermitage.

YES, Butler, yes, Caroline, rigid moralists, I have obeyed you; I have left my Hermitage; heavens! can it be? I am now thirty miles from Belle-Vue, from Agnes; and does my heart yet beat? flows the blood, which rose to all the perturbation of frenzy, but last night at her touch, in even currents through my veins? oh! thou ever enchanting arbitress of my fate! it is in vain I measure space to fly from thee; thy loved idea will pursue me to the confines of mortality; and to forget thee, every thing must vanish from my mental view; I had resolved to leave her, and went to Belle-Vue to take a final adieu; my coward tongue would not, could not speak the dreadful farewell; and I was returning without hinting my intention, when Peggy overtook me, and put a billet into my hand; I could not credit my senses, it was an assignation; how I trembled, my emotion stopped respiration; yet Butler, and were it otherwise, I should not approach the chaste wife of my friend, with this detail, I almost instantly recovered to a sense only of disgust; against report, against appearances, and almost against reason; my heart had hitherto refused belief, of the infamous connection, in which she was said to live with the General; but *here* was confirmation strong of all; the captivating modesty, which had enslaved my reason, as much as her beauty, had excited my passion, was now no more; the appointed hour was midnight, the place of rendezvous the temple, a small building almost hid in a thick wood at the bottom of the flower garden.

My mind was in tumults 'till the hour arrived, when I repaired to the temple, my whole heart fixed on one object, that of reforming the charming creature, of snatching her from destruction, from infamy; and so delighted was I with this scheme, I had brought it to a certainty in my mind, that I should succeed: the moon, as if conscious of the scene she was to witness, shone with extreme splendor; and my eyes, achingly fixed in eager expectation of *her* on whom they ever dwell with adoration and pleasure; were at last gratified by the sight of her, walking calmly down the avenue: Oh! Butler let me own to thee, I forgot in that extatic moment all the laudable purpose of my soul—I flew in ardour, in rapture to meet her, she shrunk from my warm embrace, I saw all the traces of affright, and terror in her countenance, she would have retreated and it was by force only I detained her—I have done wrong—I see I have done wrong, said the angel, pray Mr. Harley let me go; the modest terror, visible in her manner surprised me, I recollected myself, if thought I this agitation is real, how unpractised in vice must she be: I told her she must not yet go, I had a great deal I must, and would say to her; and attempting to lead her into the temple, she burst into tears: Oh! Butler, my soul is congenial to hers, no emotion of her mind is visible, when I am present, but what I am instantly by a sympathetic power, affected with; let naturalists, those who please themselves with a minute investigation of causes, and effects, 'till lost in the labyrinth of their own wisdom; let those account for it; my tears accompanied hers still in displeasure; though I had given her no indelicate cause, she would have left me; at length I became more collected; and

then with as much earnestness, as if my soul depended on the event; I endeavoured to make her sensible of her disgraceful situation.

Butler, she is either white as ministring angels, or she is deceitful as the damned; her first emotion was surprise; she questioned me with quickness, but as I proceeded, she seemed lost in attention; wept to agony, and at length burst suddenly from me.

I had no power to detain her, yet how many things of moment to my peace, to my existence, had I left unsaid, I did (I hope Caroline will not be offended) offer her my sister's protection, if she would leave the General; I was authorised, I thought to do that, both by virtue, and prudence; had I been so fortunate as to prevail on her, it would have been a great satisfaction to Lady Mary to know how she was disposed of, and to me, oh! what would it not have been to me.

How I reached the Hermitage; the God under whose eye I had acted only knows; her image, her tears, the sound of her voice, accompanied me; I threw myself on my bed, and continued ruminating on the scene I had passed with Agnes, 'till my servant informed me the chaise was at the door; and the trunks, which I had ordered to be ready, all chained on.

What I felt at that moment, Butler, is not to be conceived, or expressed; a thousand procrastinations, which shame forbid my uttering, rose to my lips; what would I not have given for one, only one interview more—the officious Benson brought my chocolate, it stood untouched; and now awakened from my reverie, I heard the bustle below among my servants.

I looked out of my window, oh! how delightful the verdure of the fields, and the rich drapery of the surrounding trees; the melody of the vocal throng, which was only to be exceeded in sweetness, by the songstress of my soul, formed a concert as if to invite my stay; I had been ungratefully insensible of the beauty of my own paradise, which now I was leaving it, seemed to reproach my neglect; but it was thee Agnes, who weaned my soul from all in which it had delighted, and it was thy dear form, that now lurked under the pleasing scene before me, and with thy magnetic power still drew me to one point: oh! for one moment's resolution I cried, and ran down to the chaise—the lad went off in a hand gallop, I passed the obelisk with such velocity, I had hardly time to give it a sigh; and my mind has been in a perfect chaos ever since.

I have thought on several things, I omitted to say to her, absolutely necessary to my peace, and *her* welfare: I should have told her, where the man, who offered himself as her guide to virtue, might be found; I should have assured her of my unchangeable devotion, and services; I might under the cover of the night have taken a lock of her lovely hair, and I should not perhaps, as I was going from her, possibly forever, have been refused her picture; many more things I should have thought on, which then I forgot, but now can think of nothing else; what a dismal road from the Hermitage here, I will go no farther this night.

* * * * *

It is in vain to disguise the truth, why indeed should I attempt it; I cannot leave the country without one more interview with Agnes; a dreadful foreboding hangs on my heart; how could I go, without knowing whether she got into the house in safety? whether her tender, and delicate constitution did not receive injury from the damp of the night, from the mortification she will feel, if she has the least sense of honor, on a retrospect of our conversation? I was too little master of myself, her soul mild as virtue, adorned by the graces, must have felt the rude shock, of my incautious address; I should have soothed, not terrified her; I yet see her terror, I feel her agitation, when pressed to my beating heart; and can I then leave her forever, without obtaining her pardon? Butler, forgive and pity me; I return, I cannot exist from her; yet to what purpose do I return? alas! perhaps to die at her feet; oh! that without a dreadful act of my own, I could indeed die, where I must not hope to live.

E. HARLEY.

LETTER XXXIX.

Mrs. J. Butler to Edward Harley.

London.

REflections my dearest Edward, are insult, where the mind enervated with sorrow, and self reproach, is sensible of its own debasement; I feel the pangs which rend your heart; yes, Edward, Caroline Butler's virtuous joys, her happiness is sacrificed at the shrine of a wanton—you start, you are angry: the eye that has penetrated *your* heart you fancy cannot beam with impurity; *you* only, will not allow your Agnes to be less than angelic, while the whole world knows she is an abandoned woman; I may in the bitterness of my grief, inveigh against a cause so fatal to whomsoever comes within the contagion of her influence; the ruin of the peace of the amiable Lady Moncrass, is not enough; Julia Neville her only daughter, distractedly fond of young Reuben, and impatient at the restraint laid on her, has left her mother, without a possibility of retracing her erring steps—sure this woman, this Agnes, was sent among us for general destruction; yours in particular, I firmly believe she will occasion: how are you changed, how fallen is that mind where honor, and all the dignity of placid virtue, were wont to dwell; oh! Edward with your peace is flown that of the sister of your youth, she suffers for you, and the gay hopes of a happy and prosperous life, are in their opening closed; by the miserable infatuation of her adopted brother.

What a letter is your last, it is wet with my tears; what more than magic spell has enchanted you?—

“You have left your Hermitage. You have parted with Agnes.” Oh! that the first event had preceded your visit at Belle-Vue; but you return to take a last look—I am shocked at your inconsistency; you talk of living like a madman, and dying like an infidel.

Among the myriads whom the omniscient father of the creation has sent into the world, the finished master pieces of his unerring hand; whose innate virtue, is seen to

beam on their countenance; were there none but this fatal woman, not one, who could touch the heart of Edward Harley? where, in what part of that sacred grove, where our late amiable monitress taught us the mild precepts of purity; could my Edward nourish a passion, which strikes at his mental existence?

How lip deep are the perfections you idolize, who but my infatuated Edward, would expose themselves to ridicule, by extolling the *virtue*, the *graces*, the *honor* of a woman, who is companion to a married man? Oh! Edward, blush—handsome no doubt she may be, and the charms with which nature has endowed her, are doubtless improved by art: her lillies, and roses, will I dare say stand the test of time—then she sings; and plays; heavens! that an angel should boast accomplishments—any of the Signora's in the Hay-market, may be seen displaying, for half-a-guinea; how futile, how inadequate to your own self justification, are the fullest extent of her attractions.

Leave the country, my dear Edward, risk not, for God's sake, another interview; she is your bane—you are not equal to the art of such a woman; what are plain moral virtue, and rectitude, when opposed to cunning deck'd in *her* seducing garb? Once more I entreat you—delay not a moment, I tremble with apprehension, 'till you are safe, with my James, and your

C.J.B.

LETTER XL.

Edward Harley, Esq; to J. Butler, Esq;

Hermitage.

DO I live? may I believe my senses? Agnes, *my* Agnes is awakened to a sense of virtue; she has left Belle-Vue, on the very night, within perhaps the very hour, when her Harley implored her so to do.

Blessed hour! when inspired by the soul of honor, I dared to speak unwelcome truths to the woman I adore.

But where, Butler? where is she now? alone, unprotected, a stranger in the kingdom; who knows into what perils she may fall; O thou almighty defender of the innocent, protect, preserve my Agnes.

Yes, Butler, my Agnes will yet be an honor to society, and oh! do not severely judge of that fond heart, which swells in rapture, at the hope of receiving the dear wanderer, to its inmost recess; nor you, my sister, my friend, turn in scorn from a penitent, over whom God himself will rejoice: Oh! my friend, now that I dare hope the time may come, when I shall call Agnes mine, when I shall see her fine eyes lifted up in confidence, among the virtuous of her sex; my full heart, cannot contain itself; did you but know her, were you to hear the sentiments she utters, and were you to melt like me at the sound of her melodious voice, like me, did I say, no, she is my kindred soul, who in every atom will be affected by her like me? I shall live, I shall once more tread the sweet maze of my woods with rapture, if heaven destines her to be my companion there; a message from Belle-Vue, the General is ill; he was here yesterday, enquired whether Agnes had been seen here; adieu, I am going to obey his summons.

E. HARLEY.

LETTER XLI.

*Edward Harley, Esq; to J. Butler, Esq;
In continuation.*

Hermitage.

I Told you in my last I was sent for to Belle-Vue, and that I was just going thither—I found the house in confusion—the General seized with the gout in his stomach, and the family in great apprehensions for his life; Gallina hesitated about admitting me, yet he knew his master wished much to see me.

Madame de Vallmont came to me, the moment she heard I was arrived—

Oh! Mr. Harley, said she, I have but one hope, and it rests on you; I know you had an interview with Miss de Courci, the night before the last; you were absent yesterday, tell me on your honor, do you know any thing of her, has she put herself under your protection? I declared on my honor, as I truly might, she had not; and I added to this asservation, my fervent wish that she had—Madame de Vallmont wept, poor thing, said she—she is then gone to France, Madame St. Lawrens is not there, she will follow her to Abbeville, she will disturb the last moments of her poor mother, and will infallibly break her own heart: all this was leading to the subject next mine; which was bent on pursuing Agnes; I was already on the road to France in my wishes, and it was with great difficulty, she prevailed on me to stay at Belle-Vue, 'till the physician could be consulted, on the safety of my being admitted to the General; to my great joy he forbid it, and I am just now setting out post, for the convent of which Madame St. Lawrens is abbess, and where Agnes is certainly gone; if I do not overtake her by the way, I shall be sure to meet her at the convent. Hope, my dear sister, is my fellow traveller; who knows but my angel is innocent; how the thought elates me, it is after all more than possible; would the abbess else patronize her? would she fly to the protection of a convent, from the arms of pollution? or grant the worst, she will yet reform, and oh! extatic thought, she will yet be mine; when you receive this I shall be far on my way to France; yes, beloved shades, where I have wandered in peaceful security; where I thought care could not enter, and where also I found, the futility of every precaution, to shut out the passion that now occupies my whole soul, I have bid you adieu, never more to return, never more to solace in your calm delights, except I bring my Agnes to share with me the joys of virtuous love; yet Caroline, though lost in the wild transports, which hope, so long a stranger to my breast inspires; I do not forget how delusive it may prove; and should it now deceive me, my lesson will be a very short one, I have only to learn how to die; I cannot exist without Agnes, she is all that can render life desirable, nay she is life itself; and should that fail, think, my beloved James, and still dearer Caroline, with pity on the fate of your lost

E. HARLEY.

You will find my will in the third drawer of my secretary.

LETTER XLII.

General Moncrass to Major Melrose.

Belle-Vue.

My dear Major,

I Am too much indisposed to move, or should have been with you, instead of this letter; Agnes, my beloved Agnes, has left me; she is gone from Belle-Vue: dear unfortunate fugitive! the pride of her soul took alarm; yet I thought I had used every precaution—

But I write to you in riddles, and am too ill to be more explicit; *that* I have said before, and you did spare your friend the more for the information; but yours is the warmth of a noble heart, and would be a severe reproof to mine, if all was not right, in the grand account between me, and my maker—I need not say I know nothing of Julia, yet I should not be sorry that Reuben did; but he was at Glasgow, and ignorant of her elopement.

I dare not think on Lady Mary's sufferings; but I believe she has a consolation very ill founded, she thinks Julia has put herself under my protection, dear imprudent child, I wish to heaven she was with me—

So many distressing events croud on me together, some you do, and some you do not know, rend my heart, and take from me all my boasted fortitude; a gouty attack is just repelled from my stomach, my nerves are no longer proof against grief, and indeed my whole frame is in a terrible shattered state: I write particularly to beg my dear Major, you will immediately, both by yourself, and what emissaries you think proper to employ; make every possible enquiry after Agnes, she will certainly endeavour to get a passage to France; whither I am just now, solicitous to prevent her going; but should you be so happy as to find her, lay her under no restraint, only say that I have a letter for her from St. Clare; recover her, dear Melrose, and guard her honor, and her person, as you would your wife, or sister; she is *not* my mistress. She is nearer to my heart than ever woman in that situation, was to man.

MONCRASS.

LETTER XLIII.

Major Melrose to General Moncrass.

London.

My dear General,

YOU are certain, notwithstanding the levity, I *should* perhaps be ashamed at *my* years to confess, that I share in all your distresses: I am indeed, not only surprised at the unaccountable elopement of your Agnes, but exceedingly alarmed at the effect it has had on your health: But General, never let it be said after all the storms you have weathered, that a woman has at last conquered you; don't be angry, I'll swear your Agnes is a vestal, and yourself an anchorite, rather than on a sick bed, you should tax me with unkindness.—By heaven between you, and your wife (who to be sure, as usual in all matrimonial squabbles, are both in the right) I am terribly out of sorts. Her ladyship is in town and her servant left a card for me, the moment of her arrival.

I have made all possible enquiries after your stray lamb, and as the whim is of such importance to you, wish I had succeeded better; I have likewise taken the surest method of gaining information, should any young person of her description, apply for a passage to the continent from hence; that is, I have made it the *interest* of those, who were most likely to know it, to give me early intelligence; my inclination would certainly carry me to Belle-Vue, were I not persuaded, I shall by persisting in my enquiries after Agnes, more oblige my friend.

And now to your lady; upon my soul, dear Moncrass, the wisest thing you can both do, is to return to your mutual vows; I foresee if you do not, I shall be obliged to be executor to you both.

I do not wonder at Julia's elopement—the house in St. James's-place has more the appearance of a mausoleum, than the gay, and elegant mansion of Lady Moncrass. I congratulated her ladyship, that it had taken place *before* marriage.

Oh! Major, said Lady Mary, mildly, is not that judging *too* hard of *my* daughter? I am judging, madam, of Mr. Neville's daughter (she coloured) and of human nature—

Poor human nature, sigh'd she, but for all that, Major, if I could recover my truant girl—

You would wed her to a puppy, interrupted I.

Lord Morden, answered she gravely, is far from a contemptible character, and I had rather see her the wife of a common labourer than—

Than who, Lady Mary? speak out.

You know who I mean.

Well, madam, I confess I do; and am sorry to my soul to hear you make such a declaration; and will Lady Mary forgive me, if I tell her in the softest whisper, she has suffered the baneful effects of one passion, to taint the lustre of her whole life—

How sir? cried she, colouring.

Indeed you have, all you see, and hear, every action, every word you utter, are all tintured with jealousy, cursed jealousy; how else could a woman of your understanding, ever suppose, Julia Neville, an over-indulged heiress in her own right, sensible, spirited, and volatile, would give up the first attachment of her young heart, an attachment originally countenanced by yourself, in compliment to your caprice (pardon me) and make herself the implement of resentment for an imaginary wrong; (she at least thinks it so) offered a mother, who was as ready to sacrifice all for love, as her daughter can be for the soul of her?—

Very well, Major—very well—my domestic misfortunes expose me to contempt, to ridicule—

They do indeed, madam—but not from me—

Heavens! Major, is it you, who address me, in this manner? how, sir, have I deserved? and her proud heart swelled to her eyes.

Faithful, Lady Mary, are the wounds of a friend.

A friend, sir, is this friendship? is it humane; to upbraid me with the fatal consequences, of that love for *your* friend, which has cost me so dear? if the imprudence of my only child is to be ascribed to that cause; do I not, think you, sir, suffer enough from my own feelings? and do you call it the office of a *friend*, to stab me to the heart with reproaches, that more properly belong to the barbarous man, who has so cruelly involved me in such complicated sorrow?

Ah! Lady Mary, how changed would your manner of speaking of General Moncrass be, if his present illness were to terminate fatally:

Illness, Major, what illness? who is ill? terminate fatally—and she actually panted for breath—dear Melrose, taking out her *sal volatile*, sure General Moncrass is not ill, you would not conceal it; O too sure (and then indeed the torrent burst forth, she wept even to agony) I am not equal to that trial—no—all my prayers are offered to heaven, that *I* may be the victim, that my life may fleet from me in the sad ejulation of my heart—I indeed wonder, that I yet live; but grief, though slow, is sure in its definitive effect on the human frame; God *only* knows, how contentedly I should resign a life, in which I find no comfort; every hope of happiness, every prospect of felicity, shut in forever from me, when I lost the affections, of my once adored Moncrass—

You have not, Lady Mary, lost his affections—he still—

Oh! forbear Major, forbear an attempt, that insults my reason; speaking of mere personal attractions, what hope have I, could I stoop to the trial, to wean his heart, from his present attachment: his Agnes is beautiful, young, and accomplished; if she has errors, the bloom of health, and youth are a covering, which fondness will not penetrate:—I alas! am past the season of beauty, “homely age hath the alluring beauty took from my poor cheek,” my spirit broke, my form wasting, and subject to many infirmities; some from constitution, and more from grief of heart; this face, Major, and this fading form might indeed claim compassion from General Moncrass; but my spirit is too near akin to *his*, to accept so inadequate a substitute for love; my passion for him still retains all the warmth of its first impression: in the enthusiasm of unbounded fondness, I forgot he was mortal; happy had I been, if he had suffered me to die in the pleasing delirium: but I pain you, Major, (indeed she did) and what do these repetitions, those fond regrets all tend to, but to convince you, although I know the world will ridicule me for it; the delicacy of my affection for General Moncrass is such, that even if he had, as I requested, acknowledged

his error, and resigned his favorite to me, I should, though not in a state of separation, have been equally miserable: never should I then any more than now, have forgot that “such things were;” perhaps I am wrong—perhaps I am myself convinced that I am so; but in me it is nature, and I cannot divest myself of prejudices, imbibed at a very early period of my life; when my heart received the guest which has been always dear to it—when I first loved Moncrass, my sentiments were exactly what they now are, and were rooted in my mind by his coincidence.

Dear Lady Mary, return’d I, permit me only to remind you, that never yet was a man created without some imperfection, some alloy; and however desirable that extreme purity, on which you are pleased to rest your notions of happiness; we live in an age, when it would be impossible to retain it, without being absolutely ridiculous.—

I do not contend that it is, Major, answered she, what I have said has been rather a confession of my own particularities, than a wish to set up *my* opinion, as a standard of what is right, and what is wrong: Custom reconciles you gentlemen to many things, which in the weaker sex would be atrocious; a modern husband will not blush to be told of actions, which would deprive his wife of every thing valuable; would render her an alien to her friends, an outcast to society, and leave her dependent on the man she had injured, for means of subsistence, how large soever her dower might be: All this, can custom upheld by social law effect, but Major, ask your heart, if it has ever been tenderly enslaved, what had custom *then* to do with your feelings? could it blunt the edge of one pang, inflicted by injured love?—Custom cannot reconcile us to a deprivation of our dearest treasure, nor relieve the aching woe of deserted tenderness; in these cases, it rather irritates, than alleviates; and in such minds as mine, only serves to wean it from every earthly hope, without divesting it of the agonizing remembrance of past days, which will *live even in death*: You know your *friend*, and you know *me*; why then defend in *him* a conduct, which has so weak a source, and reproach *me* for what preys on myself, without injuring any other person—

I beg your pardon, madam, I do not reproach, I venerate your many virtues, and I consider your grief as sacred; I would only awaken you to a sense of the dangerous predicament in which yourself, the General, and your daughter now stand: my friend is very ill—she started—*your* countenance, madam, is not of the most flattering; and where now is Julia?

With him, I suppose, answered she, colouring with resentment—

Upon my honor, no—madam—I wish she were!

She is then with Reuben, and he knows it—

Now, General, I want to know at this period, exactly what will be your thoughts on the next act of your friend; I am not perfectly pleased with myself, and have only the intention to comfort me, under a kind of latent reproach my mind gives me; and which should your blame be added to it, will be rather an uneasy sensation—

I had your letter in my pocket, and without recollecting the great solicitude it expressed for Agnes, thought it would at least convince Lady Mary of your innocence, with respect to Julia: It had that effect to be sure, but the many expressions of tenderness for Agnes, and the conviction, that her daughter was actually out of the protection of her friends, operated in a dreadful manner; I really thought two hours that I staid, her life in

the greatest danger; successive faintings, and hysterics, left her almost lifeless; physicians were called in, when I returned home to curse my officious folly, and write this letter—

Upon my soul, Moncrass, Lady Mary is actually in an ill state of health—I do not blame you—you are not perhaps deserving of it, but I wish to the Lord the time was come when your innocence might be made known, and these cursed riddle-me-ree's expounded.

I am returning to St. James's-place, one moment my heart bleeds for you, the next for your lady—then again I form to myself the mischievous consequences of that little vixen, Julia's elopement, a pretty figure hers, to be dancing into the world alone, and unprotected, in search of adventures; I am a little sorry for your Agnes, and in conclusion, wish you all fairly at the devil; but dear Moncrass, need I bid you not regard my nonsense, the warmth of my affection, and friendship for you, should excuse it; I am impatient to hear from you, and almost as impatient to give you a proof of my assiduity in your service, by sending you some news of your runaway, adieu,

MELROSE.

LETTER XLIV.

Agnes de Courci to Madame St. Lawrens.

London.

AH! madam, why did St. Clare? and why did you suffer your poor Agnes to enter a world *you* rejected? if the magnanimity of *your* souls, the strength of *your* understanding, and the severity of *your* virtues, were, as you have often declared; too weak to defend *you*, from the insinuations of passion, and the temptation, as well as injuries of the wicked; why did you consign your Agnes, to the sin, the sorrow and regret; in which only, she has found this boasted world to abound? ever dear, and ever honored lady Abbess, why did you not rather keep so weak a creature in the bosom of your love, unknowing, and unknown, to all but yourself, St. Clare, and the dear sisterhood of our convent; how will they, and how will you tremble? not your own innate goodness, not the holy fervor which fills your peaceful souls; will support you, when you are told, your Agnes, the child of your adoption, is a fugitive, among strangers, a wanderer in a country she knows not—without one friend or protector; that the house of General Moncrass is no longer her asylum: yes, madam, I have left Belle-Vue, I have abandoned the protector to whom St. Clare consigned me; him, in whose commendation, I have been so lavish; and I am become a voluntary exile, from the charming spot, where every thing conspired to lull me into a fancied security, and render me insensible, to the disgrace of my situation.

Is it then possible? can vice reside in a bosom, apparently consecrated to every social virtue? or if not, can there be so much refined malice among men? are there then spirits, who seek the haunts of innocence, and honor, for the fell purpose of columny? and are they suffered to dwell in safety, while their envenomed shafts, strike deep into the guiltless unoffending heart, and there wound even to death? Alas! alas! and am I alone, unknown, and unprotected; in such a world, and among such spirits—such was my affright at the horrid explanation; and such my eagerness to escape, that having once compassed what I so much desired; I had no idea of a good it would not ensure, nor dread of any evil, but prevention—

I had at the moment, no recollection of my situation; it did not occur to me, that I was in a foreign country, that out of the connection I was leaving, there was not in England a being to whom I could apply for protection; all *my* ideas were immersed, in the anticipation of my reception at your convent; I thought not of the space of land, and sea, which divided me from you; and still less did I think on the means, necessary to carry me so long a journey—

Money had never been of importance to me, nor influenced a single act of my life; the dear friends who taught me, that virtue was above price, that honour had no union with interest, and that true piety, and worldly wealth, were distinct things; forgot to *add*, we send you Agnes where you may possibly *hear* of the things *we* have taught you to prize; but, where, gold is of more importance than any of them—

I knew not the value of a louis at Paris, except to relieve the indigent; nor of an English guinea, but to raise the meek hearted, or chase poverty from the roof of industry.

But now, I am indigent myself, and I write this short, incoherent letter, to tell my dear lady Abbess, her Agnes is in distress; that she waits for a remittance to enable her to return to her convent:—Oh! that I never had left it; I am among people from whose familiarity my heart recoils, they may be respectable enough in their way; but oh! how different from those, whom under your sacred protection, and at Belle-Vue, I have been used to associate with.

I know I shall immediately receive a letter of credit from you, and then, with what alacrity shall I begin the last journey, I trust I shall ever take; once again in the peaceful shelter of our dear cloyster; never, never more, shall my heart, or feet become wanderers.

I pant with hope, and expectation; my dreams are full of you, I am continually with you, and dear St. Clare; I hear her voice, melting in tenderness, as she prays; yes, I know she joins your prayers for the poor fugitive; oh! may they avail, may they obtain the protection of the saints, for your

AGNES.

For reasons I shall explain you must address thus:
Louisa Fermer, at Madame du Mitand,
Great Suffolk-street, London.

LETTER XLV.

Agnes to M. St. Lawrens in continuation.

I Know the tenderness of your nature, the love you bear your Agnes, and your solicitude for her happiness, too well, to doubt the painful anxiety, my letter must have created in you, or to defer letting you know my present situation, 'till the return of the mail; more especially, as it will be some days, even after that, before I could personally unravel the hateful mystery, which obliged me to leave Belle-Vue; I feel, with equal certainty, and gratitude, that while you continue in this anxious suspense, you will be wretched; it is a long detail—but no matter—you will read it with indulgence; in the tedious interval, which the return of the post will occasion, I shall have but too much leisure, and my heart, dreadfully oppressed, seeks a motive to carry it out of itself.—

When I parted with my beloved St. Clare, her last words to me were (after recommending me to God) “Child of my heart—my Agnes—be not curious—suffer not thy peace to be disturbed, by any thing, which appears like mystery; time, a short time, will convince my child, how dear her welfare is to me—follow implicitly the directions of the worthy man under whose protection, I now solemnly place thee.”

Did I, madam, ever disobey that dear saint? a look from her, has always been the ultimate rule of my actions.—She tore herself from my embrace, and left me, fainting in the arms of General Moncrass, who was himself overwhelmed with sorrow; we proceeded (when the packet was out of sight), in the General's carriage to London; where he placed me under the care of Madame de Vallmont, and having furnished me with every appendage to rank and family, left me; but this I have told you before.

Madame de Vallmont, is the widow of the Chevalier de Vallmont, a gentleman of good expectations, but who from some family misfortunes, was obliged to leave France; grief, it is thought, on that account shortened his life; and his widow, having some valuable connections in England, chose to remain here; she is sensible, good-tempered, and perfectly well-bred; though she has lived many years in this country, she still retains all the obliging insinuation in her manners which distinguish the first ladies in Paris; at the time I had the honor of being introduced to her, her stile of living, was genteel but retired; her fortune, she made no scruple to own, was very small, but with it, she was content; nevertheless, the addition made to her income, by the General on my account, and that of my suite, was both pleasing and beneficial.

We were hardly settled on this agreeable plan, when Madame de Vallmont received a letter from General Moncrass, inviting her to accompany me to Belle-Vue; and acquainting her, with some disagreeable domestic occurrences, which had taken place in his family, after his departure from London.

Madame Vallmont was both grieved, and surprised, at the contents of this letter; which however, she did not wholly make *me* acquainted with; we made all possible haste to obey the General, and reached Belle-Vue in three days. Here madam, I found myself in

the most enchanting place in the world, in the arms of a man, who shed tears over me; who vow'd to protect, to love, to be my *father*—

It was a relative, my heart had never recognized, I had not, indeed, felt the want of parental protection; I had lived with my dear lady Abbess, in the regions of peace, in the mansions of piety; but *father, I will be thy father*, oh! madam, dear St. Clare, those were sounds, that struck the most tender chords of sensibility, which vibrated in my heart. I bathed his hand with my tears, I could not speak—but from that moment, the painful sense of obligation, his liberality had raised in my bosom, changed to unreserved confidence, and unbounded affection; not a day passed, but I received fresh proofs of the paternal love, with which I was so delighted; it was your pleasure, madam, to have me instructed in all the female accomplishments taught in our convent, my proficiency far surpassed his expectations, he admired my drawings—was pleased to see me employed in my fine works—in his serious hours I read to him, and when, which often happened, he was pensive; my voice, he said, had the power to dissipate sorrow, and soothe the jarring passions into peace; in short, every thing I did raised in him pleasure, and admiration; his house, fortune, servants, nay, himself, seemed to live to oblige me—and thus passed five of the months, since I parted with you; so smooth, so unruffled, and yet so amply filled, that I had no time or inclination to penetrate the mystery, which as St. Clare had foretold, appeared to hang over the actions of General Moncrass—

About this time, a young man came to Belle-Vue who was introduced to me, by the General, as a prodigy; he was young, sensible, and handsome; without ambition, and free from the influence of passion; he was in possession of a very moderate fortune, with which he was so perfectly content, that though he had been offered, nay, urged to accept of affluence, rank, and honor; he rejected them all; and came to Belle-Vue, respectfully to decline a commission in the army, which had been procured for him, by the General's interest.

I confess, madam, I saw no such prodigy in all this; the man regulated his desires, by his own power; his heart retreated from a sense of obligation; he formed his plan of conduct, consistent with the independence of his mind; he lived to *himself* not to the *world*, and perfectly satisfied, to be a reasonable being, was content, that greatness should pass his door; did it require any violent exertion of philosophy to act thus? I should think not, I have not it is true, met with any in the narrow sphere of my acquaintance with the world, of this particular turn, but it is right; and how many right minds, have you, my dear madam, made me mentally acquainted with? but Mr. Harley (that is his name) is least amiable at first sight, you only *see* that he is handsome, and when you are previously acquainted with his character, his youth, and self denial, form a contrast much to his advantage; but as you know him better, you perceive there is a grace, a manner, which adorns his fine person, and renders it perfectly pleasing; he is not forward in conversation, but when once drawn out, his knowledge is so universal, his judgment so correct, and his delivery so eloquent; you are disposed to regret *his* silence, and to respect no other speaker—and while he without vanity or ostentation, captivates the ear with sentiments, in which wisdom, and elegance are blended; his countenance, at once chearful, and animated, proves he is at peace with himself.

I had no reason to be vain of Mr. Harley's attention to me, and therefore perhaps was the more solicitous to obtain it; the English gentlemen are in general very polite, and not a little anxious to persuade us of the ascendancy our sex has over them; but this young man, for some time, chose to convince me, however well-bred he might be in other respects, politeness to my sex, was not his forte:—this, madam, was but for a time; it was not 'till after he had paid several visits at Belle-Vue, he appeared to have formed any opinion at all of *me*; not indeed, 'till the many instances which had come to my knowledge, of the urbanity of his nature, had rendered him in my idea, one of the first of men.

He soon became a constant, and welcome visitor at Belle-Vue; the General was never better pleased, than when in his company; and continually regretted that such a fine young fellow should seclude himself from the world; once, when after a slight indisposition, he took me to air in the chariot, we stopped at the Hermitage; and he commissioned me to endeavour to prevail on the philosopher, as we called Mr. Harley; to give up his favourite system, and adopt that, which his friends conceived would be so much more to his advantage; but it was an office for which my own sentiments, by no means qualified me; I did indeed make *one* effort, but it was too weak to be successful.

Why it is I cannot explain; but at this period of my narration, my heart fails me; you know me incapable of deceit, or varying from truth; but the *whole* truth now comes reluctantly from my pen; I feel an inward shame, (yet it is a false shame, and therefore I will conquer it) which would destroy the unreserved, the natural confidence, I have ever placed, in the most respectable, the most indulgent friends that ever poor orphan was blest with.

What woman is blind to the passion she inspires? I am going to lay open all the weakness of my heart to you, and will not therefore begin my confession with an act of disingenuity:—I saw, I felt—that Edward Harley loved your Agnes; and oh! madam, pity and forgive, the poor heart that *would* receive, and return his love; in spite of all the weak efforts of reason, and the dictates of duty; little apprehensive however of the errors, into which I was running; I persuaded myself the partiality I felt for Mr. Harley, arose from a source as innocent, as free from danger—and imputed those sensations to friendship, which I was too soon convinced, sprung from a passion, I wanted inclination to resist, and power to conquer; I early became sensible of this my inexcusable error, but the same motive that condemned my thus giving way to an attachment, I feared you would disapprove; tempted me also to conceal it from you; not having as you enjoined me, laid open every movement of my heart, to my beloved mistress, I became every day more and more miserable; time, which added to my guilt, increased my compunction; but after having proceeded thus far, I could not prevail on myself, to begin a confession so long delayed; many were the resolutions I made—but the offence was too sweet—the crime too dear to be abandoned; fear therefore on one hand, and shame on the other, ever took from my faithless pen, all power to trace the characters, which form the name of—Edward Harley.

Let me not however weary my friends, on a subject, too pleasing to myself: with Mr. Harley's passion, a melancholy visibly increased, on the cheerfulness, that was wont

to delight us; Madame de Vallmont discovered its source; Harley loves you Agnes, (she would say) poor youth! he is blind to his own danger, he knows not the obstacles he has to surmount: whether she communicated her observations to the General or not, I am yet to learn; mine I confess, were so totally engrossed by the alteration in the countenance, and manners of our new friend; I paid little regard to any thing else.

The unembarrassed air, the sprightly look, the florid countenance, and unapprehensive eye, were changed into restraint, dejection, pale cheeks, and fearful sadness; the Harley we first knew was no more; his senses appeared to be touched, frequent absences, during which, I found he abandoned himself to despair; sudden returns, ambiguous, yet tender expressions, involuntary bursts of tears and sighs; these were the only proofs of love, he gave your Agnes, but these were irresistible; and while they raised compassion, gave birth to tenderness; I dreaded the effect of those struggles of his mind, and used all my influence to prevail on him to accept the commission; which the General had before procured for him—he complied with my entreaties; oh! madam, he had no heart to oppose my desires; yet when he came to bid us adieu, his agonies and distress were undescribable. I saw the fatal farewell glistening on his eye, and quivering on his lip—I—oh! how shall I own it; how confess to those pure beings, whose lessons of female delicacy, and reserve, were so many years implanted in my mind—I—yes, madam, your Agnes, the child you have so often clasped to your modest bosom, sought an interview—made an appointment, and admitted a man to visit her, in a private part of the garden—at *midnight*—

You tremble, you start, you throw down my letter with abhorrence; you no longer consider me as the daughter of your adoption, the child of your heart: Ah! madam, resume my unhappy story; receive again the poor Agnes to your compassion, and to your love; she was in this instance, impelled by an irresistible impulse; she was imprudent, but not criminal: let my tears, my present anguish expiate my first, my only offence, against the purity of your instructions; heinous was my crime, deep and bitter is my punishment.

The unhappy Edward was at the temple before me;—but how can I make, even to you, the degrading confession; he appeared flushed, as if with wine; he was it is true, agitated, but not by that dejected sorrow, which excited my compassion; violence, not respect, marked his actions, he seized my hand.

Terrified at a change so astonishing, and unexpected; all the imprudence of my conduct, flashed at once, upon my recollection.

The moon shone very bright, and the radiant beams of that chaste planet, which glistened through the foliage of the surrounding trees, served at once to reproach, and animate me; fear it is true, filled my heart, but the blush of indignation glowed on my cheek.

How strong is the force of virtue; how easily resumed are the habits of propriety; Mr. Harley trembled at the silent agony of my looks; he fell at my feet, deplored my resentment, called heaven, and earth to witness the ardour of his love, vowed, wept,

and—yes, madam, he dared to solicit me to fly with him: Ah! what would I not have given, that I had not authorised *his* temerity, by *my own* imprudence.

To repeat all that passed at this painful interview is impossible; let me therefore hasten to the important, the dreadful explanation—

My meaning, but dear lady Abbess, but I feel the folly of the expression, what young creature who suffers passion to conquer reason, can develop her own meaning?

My intention then, as far as I am myself acquainted with it, in giving Harley this meeting; was to have reasoned him out of the dejection, that appeared to over-power his faculties; and by persuading him to enter into the world, on equal terms with other people, to meliorate that extreme sensibility, which, depending on my own foresight, I concluded would be the ruin of his peace; when therefore he had the confidence, to urge me to a flight with him, I felt my degradation, and was ashamed of my fancied wisdom; self-condemned, and shocked at my own deviation from delicacy; I lost all concern for him, in fear for myself; and wished immediately to retire.

My indignation at his proposal, and the scorn in my countenance, which however was levelled at myself; appeared to pique him.

His fortune, he said, small as it was, would support us.

I started, and again attempted to leave him; but, no, madam! no respect was due to me; the virgin pride that swelled in my bosom, the offended innocence that animated my countenance; appeared to him the effects of art, and affectation; how shall I tell you? how wound St. Clare with the horrid repetition? he considered me as the wanton favorite of General Moncrass, the companion of his loose hours, do you comprehend me, madam? his mistress.

The world, common fame, and even the domestics of Belle-Vue, all, he had the barbarity to tell me, looked on me in that light: Alas! do not the lucid drops of compassion flow from your eyes, do you not conceive that the agonies I felt, and still feel, have expiated the act of imprudence I was guilty of in meeting him.

What I suffered, or how I supported myself, the Being who witnessed the hateful calumny, only knows; I did not weep, nor speak, my heart was bursting:—With all the energy, all the dignity of innate honor; Mr. Harley, then abandoned his first pleas for favour to himself; and entreated me to fly from Belle-Vue, from Moncrass, from guilt: I did not yet weep—my heart was too full—he offered me an asylum with his sister, a woman of amiable and unblemished character, who would, he said, protect me: Lady Moncrass, the noblest, best of women; whose peace had been destroyed—

Oh! my venerable monitress! beloved St. Clare! by what fatality was I given to the protection of this man? was it necessary, my entrance into the world, should be marked by such a humiliating injury? is it your Agnes, the humble disciple of rectitude; her to whose utmost wish, the grate of your convent, was a welcome boundary? is it her, who

inverts the connubial blessing? who breaks the heart and domestic comfort of a lady, not more respected for her rank, than admired for her many virtues; one, who is confessedly the ornament of her country.

I had been told the General was a married man, and that some family disputes, had separated him from his wife: I imputed the many melancholy hours he passed to that cause; I heard him sigh, I saw the unbidden tear roll down his cheeks; how often have I prayed for rest to his mind, how often thought ill of a woman who could treat such a man with unkindness; but little indeed could I suspect *myself* to be the cause of their unhappy division.

But to return; tender regret for my supposed miserable fate, succeeded admonitions, which were dictated by unsullied honor.

Oh Agnes! (cried he) wringing his hands, how shall I wean my soul from its dotage on thy perfections? I leave thee, I go to explore a world I abhor—I seek to lose thy image in the multitude; but I know, I feel, how vain the attempt; were thou but innocent, to *toil*, to *die* for thee, would be luxury; but remember the warning I give thee, let not the bloom of thy life be devoted to guilt, let not the fascination of thy senses in the present moment, rob thee of all the blessings of a long futurity; let it not cheat thee of *comfort*, of innocence; leave thy seducer; what though he is noble, brave, benevolent—amiable—and rich? think of the pangs his infidelity inflicts on the heart of a virtuous woman, who adores him; think also that thou, the fairest master-piece of nature, art an accomplice in his guilt; that thy soul, which the creator has so divinely adorned, with every grace that is estimable in woman, instead of being a temple of virtue, is the seat of—he stopped, and throwing himself on a bench sobbed aloud.

Unable any longer to suppress the violence of my emotions, and unwilling to enter into explanations with one, who by his contemptible opinion of me, rendered himself unworthy my regard; I hastily left the temple, and returned to the house, with the utmost speed.—

And now, my dear honoured friends; you have before you the motives which induced me to leave Belle-Vue: but I did not take so important a step, without fully informing myself, of the truth of the horrid tale I heard from Harley.

The orphan girl who attended me is innocence itself; I was very much embarrassed how to enter on such a subject with her, but my delicacy was needless—it was a respect I might owe my own feelings, but was not in this case due to hers; since I found, that not only the domestics of the house, but the whole country, received it as an indisputable fact—that I was the General's mistress; and not only so, but that my guilt was aggravated by the dissention I had caused between him and Lady Mary.

I remarked to you in the first letter I wrote from Belle-Vue, that I thought very few families of distinction dwelt in that part of the country; as we had not many male, and no female visitors: See now, a reason why solitude which rendered it a thousand times more charming to me, reigned in the house and gardens of Belle-Vue.

Mortified at the reflection, tired of the hateful subject, sick of the world, and displeased with myself; permit me dear lady Abbess, here to conclude this long letter; I understand nothing of the mails—when they go out, or when they arrive; as I shall therefore only give vent to the sorrows that oppress me, before I again resume my pen, two packets may possibly reach you together, from your unhappy

AGNES.

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LETTER XLVI.

Agnes in continuation.

I Had ordered Peggy to sit up until my return from the garden; and I now threw myself on the bed, in the presence of the affrighted girl, and gave way to the agonies that distracted me; in my first transports of grief, I called on St. Clare, on you, reproached you for exposing me to such insults, then again implored you in the tenderest terms to relieve, to protect, and to justify me; at length after exhausting myself by the excess of my passion, and indignation—I began seriously to revolve in my mind, the whole tenor of General Moncrass's conduct to me, from the time of his taking me under his protection, to that hour.

I could have no doubt of the truth of what Harley had just told me; it was confirmed by my own servant, whose veracity I never had reason to suspect; and by a thousand concurrent circumstances, which now rushed on my memory; yet notwithstanding all this, I could not help doing justice to the delicacy of the General's behaviour at all times towards me: I could not recollect a single circumstance, which would have alarmed the strictest, or even the most suspicious purity—if I was ill he watched over me with the tenderest, and most paternal solicitude; my recovery ever afforded him the strongest satisfaction, and my wishes, whenever he could make himself acquainted with them, were anticipated: you, madam, by your example, made your Agnes a strict observer of countenances; and I had even flattered myself, that I had acquired some of your sagacity, in forming the judgment, which was the result of those observations—it was always a particular pleasure to me, to read the heart of General Moncrass in his face—it had all the simplicity of the character, you so much admire in the celebrated English writer, and all the fire, wit, and tenderness of Sterne himself: not once, no not once, did I perceive a trace of duplicity in it—when I compared his paternal conduct towards me, with what I had always conceived of true fatherly affection, a thought darted across my imagination, which for a few moments involved me in perplexity of another kind: St. Clare has often told me, and you, dear lady Abbess, as often confirmed it, that I was of honourable, and noble birth; although it was necessary for prudential reasons to conceal my origin, even from myself.

“Be not curious Agnes, seek not to penetrate the mystery which may appear to cloud the actions of the worthy man in whose protection I place you,” said my beloved St. Clare; ah! thought I, Moncrass is then my father, this surmise confirmed by *his* conduct, and by my own feelings, was, I for a moment fancied, founded on reason; but a second thought bade me give up that idea, as visionary, the General had been married twice; I could not be the daughter of Leonora Sebastian, his first wife; and my age was a sufficient proof, as well as Lady Mary's displeasure on my account, that I was not hers: if therefore I had any filial claims on the General, they must have been illegitimate, and could not then, be either *noble* or *honorable*; so that I was obliged to relinquish that surmise, as equally chimerical with many other preceding ones.

But what was to be done?

Should the sun rise on Agnes de Courci, under the roof of a man, who was deemed the seducer of her innocence; and who was accused of violating every moral, and social duty in his protection of her? should she meet the eyes of his domestics, fixed on her as an object of infamy? the meanest of whom might say—this woman is our mistress—we obey, but we also despise her—behold her gaudy trappings, they are the price of her honor; we are not so fine, but we are less guilty than her: Ah! St. Clare! this was not one of the mysteries you forbade me to develope; and thus fore-armed, should any latent design, hostile to virtue, really lie concealed under a mask of tender regard; would not you? would not my own heart condemn me, had I staid to tempt my fate, 'till it was too late to escape the danger? this last reflection determined me; I feigned to have recomposed my spirits, said I was sleepy, and bid Peggy retire.

I know not whether it is the general custom of the country, or whether it is only in the neighbourhood of Belle-Vue; that the master is beloved, not feared by his vassals; hard fare, and impregnable honesty, appear to me to be the hereditary rights of the English peasant; no locks, or bars are necessary to protect the property of the rich, or the persons of the poor; at least in the demesne of Belle-Vue, such was the mutual confidence, between the inmates and the neighbourhood, that the drawing a slight bolt, and sometimes not that, was deemed a sufficient night security; having therefore once formed my resolution, I had no difficulties in putting them in execution, but those which arose in my own mind.

Never, never, shall I know rest, 'till I find it in your arms; 'till I receive your pardon, and once more hear the saint-like voice of St. Clare melt in fondness over her

AGNES.

LETTER XLVII.

Agnes in continuation.

I Continue to write to my only friends, certain that I shall, as soon as the possible return of any conveyance will admit it, be furnished with means of returning, to your dear, and *now* dearer, than ever, convent; because I am sure you are solicitous to know the whole of a story, which though it may in some parts deserve your just reprehension, yet it is your Agnes who confesses her faults, who casts herself at your feet for pardon; and whose errors, however enormous, are at this moment punished more severely, than her partial friends would perhaps think adequate to her offence.

I quitted Belle-Vue with a certain undescribable heaviness of heart, which had I not felt the propriety of the act; would have deprived me of the resolution, and presence of mind, which only could support me in the step I was taking.

I have before acquainted you with the situation of this noble building; it has a south aspect, and commands a most delightful view of the fertile valley, to which from the house you see no end; it is defended from the north wind, by a range of uplands, and on each side it is adorned with beautiful plantations, which though raised by a skilful gardener, appear to be the spontaneous work of nature; at the extremity of those plantations, are gravel walks, bordered by the most delicious flowery banks, whose verdure are preserved by the constant lavings of two clear streams, whose natural windings beautify, as well as replenish the whole valley: the great road leads close by the park palings, at the back of the house; so far I knew the way I meant to go, and so far I proceeded with tolerable resolution.

Let me endeavour to describe to you, dearest madam, my sensations, when from the window of the General's apartment, where the curtains were not let down; I saw him, walk about in a disturbed manner, and by the lights which stood on the writing table, I could perceive him, often attempting either to read, or write, then suddenly rise, and continue traversing the room.

All his kindness at that instant recur'd to my memory, his voice, his look, his parental tenderness, rendered more interesting by the apparent anxiety of his mind; at this moment, filled me with the most painful regret.

Cruel Harley! cried I, bursting into tears, why hast thou torn the veil from my delighted eyes? what to me were the censures of the barbarous, ill-judging world? when in the security of my own innocence, and resting in full confidence on the honor, and integrity of my generous protector, my utmost ambition was to contribute to his happiness, and my fondest wish to give thee peace; what is now my pursuit? what the consequence of this rash elopement? I add to the sorrows which already deprive him of rest, and I tear myself from *thee* forever.—

Still were my flowing eyes fixed on the window; one instance of the General's tenderness, succeeded another on my memory; my heart sunk at the retrospect; I was on the point of returning, when the idea that his present uneasiness, might proceed from his disunion from his wife, and that the cause once removed, the effect would also cease; I turned my reluctant eyes away, and proceeded on my lonesome journey; then in the tumult of my mind, your figure and that of St. Clare appeared to my mental view.

What said my dear monitress, hast thou Agnes, seen the beloved St. Clare dying a living death, her bloom wasting, her beauteous form shrinking from the wounds of calamity; her eyes weeping night and day for offences *she* had not committed; resigning herself with patience to sickness and sorrow? thus depressed, broken hearted, and almost expiring; would *she* thinkest thou have hesitated, whether to leave a terrestrial paradise, or stay in it, to endanger her own honor; to acquiesce in the most injurious calumny, and wound the feelings of a virtuous wife?

Ah! no, cried I, St. Clare would in my situation have taken the very steps her Agnes has now done: she would hasten from the scene of such complicated ills, she would fly from a man whose tenderness was at best but equivocal, she would reject every advantage, that wore the guise of dishonor.

Thus, madam did I reconcile to my own heart, the pain I knew I should inflict on the General; and thus did I re-animate my sinking courage, till having past the summit of the hill, I had wholly, and perhaps forever, lost sight of Belle-Vue.

I now found the benefit of the exercise I am so fond of, having walked near ten miles before the sun rose; when feeling myself weary, and my spirits from their unusual exertions, nearly exhausted; I accosted a poor woman, who was placing her spinning-wheel at the door of a hut, that could hardly be distinguished by the name of house; I entreated she would suffer me to rest, and get me a dish of tea, for which I promised her ample payment.

She very courteously shewed me in, but in a barbarous and uncouth corruption of the English language, took great pains to convince me that though many of her neighbours, who were no better to pass than herself, had forsooth, got the custom of drinking that flip-flop stuff—*she* never had, nor ever would suffer it to enter her dwelling; but she readily put before me her brown loaf, a few eggs, some butter-milk, and a wooden dish filled with whey; I took a draught of the latter, and an egg, and laid down on the pallet from whence my hostess was but just risen, whose kindness abundantly compensated for the rudeness of her dialect, and the hardness of her fare.

It was in vain I endeavoured to compose myself to rest, my mind was too much agitated; but as my feet were exceedingly blistered, and I found myself unable to pursue my journey, I lay some hours a prey to reflections I cannot describe.

My hostess who appeared to be about sixty, and very far from that robust make, which characterises the peasants of this country; lamented she had no better bed for me, assured me I should be mainly welcome if she had, for that I was the tightest lass she had

seen many a day, and sure, and sure if she had a golden bed, she should not think it was too good for me.

Are you not charmed, madam, with this artless creature? her song as she sat spinning, which but for the benevolence of her nature, I should call a horrible scream, was interrupted by my sighs; and she attributed my restlessness to her hard pallet, happy mortal! she could conceive no other cause, which after walking all night, should prevent my sleeping.

This woman was a strange composition, wherein the extremes of humanity, and indifference were blended; she saw me weep, and her own tears were ready to start; she was very eager to do me any kind office, and even offered to go to a neighbour's, as she called a house two miles off, and borrow not only crockery, but tea, sugar she had, as she proved by shewing me a yellow porringer, full of some very coarse, and moist, which she told me she always kept for posset, in case she should be sick; yet though she was thus kind, and attentive to every thing she thought would contribute to my ease; she expressed not the least curiosity either by looks, or words, at the singular appearance I made; my dress, which was a plain muslin chemise, tied with green, must have been superior to any thing she had seen, yet I could not observe in her an atom of curiosity, or the least desire to be acquainted with any thing about me, but my looks; which she assured me, over and over, pleased her hugely.

She asked me if I was a maiden body, and on being answered in the affirmative, bid me keep so, and not mind the men, of whom in the whole world there were but two sorts, the false-hearted—and the good-for-nothing—and she thanked God, days, weeks, and sometimes months passed, without her seeing any of them.

This piece of intelligence rendered me perfectly easy in my situation, but I profited so little by her good example, that I really felt great curiosity to know her history.

She had, (she said) had her share of trouble—but it was all comprised in one, and one only remarkable incident, which brought a glow of resentment into her cheeks: she had been in her youthful days plighted to a neighbouring husbandman, who had forsaken her in all her bridal finery, the savings of three years servitude, at the church door; and enlisted for a soldier—

And what became of the wretch? said I.

Oh! he was either killed abroad, answered she very composedly—or hanged at London—no matter which—then walking very leisurely up to a large brown chest, she opened it, and taking the things it contained out, one by one, shewed me her bridal suit, which she said she had never worn since her first, and last disappointment, but kept it as a warning to all the young maidens that came to her house.

What will you say, madam, when you are told that while this good creature, was thus gratifying her pique to the men, and seeking to amuse me, I formed a scheme to rob her of those valuable reliques?

I had reason to expect, that as soon as my elopement was discovered at Belle-Vue, the General would at least wish to inform himself of the route I had taken; and perhaps too, for never more will I conceal a thought from my only friends; Harley might fancy himself interested in my fate.—Ingrate! *my* imagination had deified *him*, *his* had reduced *me* to the lowest contempt.

I was sure the cloaths would fit me, and that I should in them pass through the country towns in my way to N—— where I remembered to have seen the London stages stop, when I was going to Belle-Vue, without exciting curiosity, which it was of importance to me to avoid.

After passing that day, and the next night with the good old maiden; I pretended a head-ach, and accepted her offer to go to her neighbours, and borrow the tea, and crockery; which she chearfully undertook to do, at the same time, I charged her not to say any thing about me.

Why child, said she, what can I say of you? if you are as good as you look, I can say no harm; and if you be *worse*, it must be somebody wiser than Cicely to find you out; and so child make yourself easy, and away tripped the old dame.

The instant she was gone, I began my operations; and in ten minutes, set out from the cottage quite a country lass; in a fine flowered linen gown, pink petticoat, straw hat, and white cloth cloak; my satin shoes I changed for a pair of black leather pumps, and drew on a pair of pink stockings, with white clocks, over my own silk ones; my hair was fortunately out of powder, but I found the most difficult part in my whole dress, was that of tucking it all under the round-ear'd cap; I left my muslin dress, and all the rest of my cloaths in the chest, from whence I had taken those belonging to Cicely; with one guinea out of the three I had in my purse, and fully satisfied with myself, although I had put such a trick upon my hostess, made the best of my way toward the great road.

I had not walked half a mile, before I met two of the General's domestics on horseback; whom I afterwards heard had been describing my person and dress and making enquiries after me, in the next and neighbouring villages.

Imagine, madam, my anxiety when on looking back, I saw one of them strike out of the high road, and make directly towards the cottage I had just quitted; fortunately Cicely was not returned, and I had left no traces behind me, that could lead to a discovery of my having been there, except my cloaths which were not in sight; however I quickened my pace, and had the pleasure to see, on looking behind me sometime after, the man who I concluded had satisfied himself by searching the old woman's cottage, had rejoined his companion.

I entered the first village with fear and trembling, but to my infinite joy passed it unobserved; and presently met a kind of carrier of goods to the next town, who offered to place me between his panniers, and convey me there, for two shillings; I accordingly mounted, and though it was a most uneasy seat, found it a much more pleasant method of travelling, than the pedestrian one I had been obliged to set out with.

It was late in the evening when we got to the end of our days journey; my guide put up at a miserable house he called an inn, but which was not a bit superior to old Cicely's hut, in convenience, and accommodation, and very much inferior to it, in every degree of cleanliness.

From hence I procured a man and double horse to take me to N— five and thirty miles, which we travelled the next day, and my guide, by my directions took me to the inn, from whence the London carriages set out; I slept that night very comfortably, enjoying for the first time since I left Belle-Vue, the luxury of a good bed, and decent apartment: in the morning, while I was enquiring of the landlord, whether there were any nearer road to France, than through London, a footman in livery accosted me in French, and informed me, that although there were several sea-ports, from whence I might procure a passage to the continent, much nearer to N——, than the metropolis; yet that the vessels were so uncertain, I might be detained a month before any sailed—on the contrary, if I went through London, I might either go in a French trader from thence, or travel by land to Dover, from whence the passage was very short; I thanked him for his information, and immediately enquired when the stage set out to London, and what was the fare. Imagine, my dear lady Abbess, my consternation and embarrassment, when I found that the whole contents of my purse, were insufficient to defray the expences of the journey; the man perceived my confusion, and advised me to ride outside, which was seconded by the coachman, who added some coarse jokes on my pretty person.

I retired into the room, I had left in the utmost anxiety; I had not a single resource from the anguish of my own reflections, and now severely felt the ill consequences of my improvident thoughtlessness in leaving Belle-Vue, where my cabinet was never in a state of poverty, without a sufficient sum of money for travelling expences; I had, it is necessary for me to tell you, though I did not at *that* time recollect it myself, a pair of pearl bracelets, with diamond clasps, which the General had presented to me; and insisted on putting on my arms the very day I left Belle-Vue; these I had worn in compliment to him, 'till I retired after supper, and then only took them off, to put them in the case, which I had in my pocket, the moment before I left my apartment to meet Harley—but this circumstance had totally escaped my memory; and having left my buckles in my shoes at old Cicely's, I had nothing I could sell to assist me in my present exigence:—While I was ruminating on my unhappy situation, the same footman who had accosted me in the inn yard, came to desire I would go to his mistress, who wished to speak with me.

Not a little surprised at this message, I followed him into one of the best apartments in the inn, where I found a lady with a fine child on her lap, about three years old; who told me with great civility, and good-nature, in French—that hearing I could speak the language, and wanted a conveyance to France, she sent for me to offer to bear my expences to London, if I would undertake the care of her child; that she had brought his nurse with them into the country, who had unfortunately been taken ill; and their engagements requiring their return to town, they were obliged to leave her behind them; that the child was become so fretful at the loss of his nurse, and not being able to converse, or amuse himself in the English language, she was sinking under the fatigue of attending him.

Well madam, you will not doubt my acceptance of this offer, behold therefore, now your Agnes, entered on the humble office of nurse, Louisa her name, to master Mitard; the child was naturally good-tempered, he had been fretted by being consigned to the care of strangers—whose language he did not understand, and grew proportionably fonder of me, with whom he could hold his little parleys; and his mamma was so delighted at being relieved from the fatigue of attending to him, that she insisted on paying the charge I had already incur'd at the inn, and that I should immediately consider myself as one of her family; I purchased a change of linen at N——, and after a journey, which had it not been for the secret anxiety of my mind, would have been far from unpleasant, we arrived in Suffolk-street, on the third day after our leaving N——.

Monsieur and Madame Mitard were very averse to the thoughts of parting with me; the child would not be satisfied when I was out of his sight, and they entreated me to continue, at least till they heard the fate of their old nurse, or could procure a new one to answer their purpose.

I had not money to defray my expences to France, my poverty therefore as the English bard expresses it, but not my will consented, for my situation became much less agreeable here than on the journey; yet as I had no alternative but to wait till I heard from you, and was entirely unconnected and unknown in this city, which is larger and far more populous than Paris, where, considering the state of my finances could I have been more eligibly situated? I therefore consented to stay, not till the recovery of their nurse, but 'till I should receive a letter from my friends at Paris.

It was four days before I discovered the profession of Monsieur and Madame Mitard, they are Opera performers; Madame dances and Monsieur sings; they had been in the north of England at a rural fete, given on account of the marriage of a nobleman in that part of the world, and were on their return to London, when I, so fortunately met with them.

I have not given Mr. du Mitard the least reason to suspect, from my own conduct, that I am of rank superior to my appearance; he has nevertheless rallied me on my dress, which he says, he is sure is a disguise: you shall never persuade me, Louisa, he cries, those luxurious ringlets, have always been confined to so narrow a compass; then your hand, and arm, there are many a duchess who would be proud to exchange with you—come, come, confess, a lover is at the bottom of all this; how should a young person of your figure be dropped as it were out of the elements in such a part of the world?

Shocking, cries Madame, my nerves were totally deranged by the horrid bores, we met with there; certainly Louisa you have been engaged in some adventures; she then obligingly presses me to change my dress, and offers to supply me, either from her own wardrobe, or with money, to purchase cloaths, more suitable to the sphere, she is persuaded I have been used to move in.

Were I adept enough in dissimulation, to persuade them their conjectures are entirely devoid of foundation, I should thereby be deprived of an advantage of great

importance to me at present, which is that of eating at their table; as I must else take my meals with their footman and cook.

Madame is, I fancy, much admired—she is visited by many noblemen who pay her high compliments, which she receives with the ease of a woman, to whom the incense of flattery is not new; among the rest, is a young lord to whom she insisted on introducing me; what had passed between them I know not, but he looked surprised: whether at my dress, as to be sure Cicely's wedding suit is a little particular, or at the story they think proper to suppose for me, or perhaps a little of both.

This lord, who is really very conceited, saluted me by the appellation of beautiful nurse; said a thousand nothings in French, shewed his white teeth, played with the child a long while, and at parting, gave him a paper which he bade him present to his nurse to buy pins; it was an English bank note for twenty pounds; I could not conceal either my surprise, or anger.

Madame Mitard laughed—his lordship, she said, meant to present me with it, to purchase a more becoming dress.

My face was in a glow—I burst into tears—scorn and indignation flashed from my eyes—what, madam, at that moment were my sensations?

Madame Mitard stared—she is really very impenetrable; the wonder in her looks, reminded me of my situation—I had no right to deport myself so haughtily, was I not a dependant—a servant?

The sense of my fallen situation, the uncertainty when I might hear from you, the further mortifications I might be subject to in Madame Mitard's family, and the different scenes I might be exposed to if I left it; all struck so forcibly on my mind, that it took from me the power of utterance.

I sunk on the floor without motion.

Madame Mitard's nerves are very strong—mine the reverse; she therefore never carries eau-de-luce—but she knew I did, and searching my pocket for the bottle, drew out, by what accident she has not said, the shagreen case with my bracelets.

The respect of those little people, was wonderfully increased by the sight of the jewels; they insisted I should no longer consider myself as their dependant; they had *always* thought, and were *now* convinced, I was a person of rank; they besought I would honour them by partaking their humble means, 'till my affairs (however deranged) were accommodated.

Madame again intreated I would accept from her, money, to purchase cloaths more suitable to my rank, and which would prevent my being an object of curiosity—

The last consideration was of most weight with me; yet I could not bear to accept pecuniary obligations from those people, and so at length I plainly told them.

Ciel mademoiselle, replied Madame, why will you talk of incurring obligation, with such riches in your possession, glancing her eyes at the bracelets—in short, madam, the jewels were valuable, and Monsieur knew how to dispose of them; he carried them to a person who lives by this sort of traffic with the necessitous, and brought me twenty guineas, with right to redeem my jewels, whenever it is in my power.

I have purchased some white dresses, and a few necessities just to appear in.

Madame Mitard undertakes to return Lord Morden his note; and now, I wait with inconceivable impatience to hear from you; if you have wrote by the first return of the mail, I am told I shall receive your letter in two days—oh! how I desire, yet dread to know your sentiments on the step I have taken, on the whole of my conduct; if you acquit me, I know God will do the same; and then you and St. Clare will take to your beloved hearts your own

AGNES.

LETTER XLVIII.

Agnes in continuation.

Suffolk-Street.

THE day is past on which I was informed I might have heard from Paris: I have already learnt to distinguish the two loud knocks, which announce the post-man's approach; he passed our door, yet so strong was my confidence, that you had wrote, I prevailed on Mr. Mitard to go to the general office, and examine whether any mistake had deprived me of the consolation, to know I was yet dear to you; to-morrow they say, your letter may arrive; oh! that this country could afford me a little cell, where I might shut out the world, and pray for you 'till then: Oh! my prophetic fears! St. Clare!—but I cannot bear the supposition—however unhappy your Agnes may be in your displeasure, you will not reject her fond petitions, to be again taken to your bosom; nor abandon her to her fate; however she may deserve it—my St. Clare, I know, loves only her God, and you better than her adopted child.

It is now twenty-six days since I left Belle-Vue, it is yet longer since I have heard from you; what may not have happened in that space, to you, to St. Clare; you are, it is true, happily exempted from all the evils, which in the great world, are the source of temptation, and the offsprings of passion; your serene lives are undisturbed by the turbulence of vain wishes, and the fear of imaginary evils; secure of the rich reward, due to your piety and virtue; you tread with confidence, and fortitude, the path which leads to the "heaven of heavens," but though your souls are sanctified, even in this state of mortality, how many bodily complaints are you not subject to.

What a languid state was poor St. Clare in, when she tore herself from my embrace; how had her sweet countenance suffered within the last year, and how wounding to me were the groans which pain extorted from her.

Alas! when I think of this, and fancy it possible you have journeyed to Abberville to render the last kind office to her, I am lost in anguish.

Again, industrious to torment myself, I reflect, that notwithstanding *your* happy state of health, and your still more even mind; it is also possible that *you* may be attacked by some dangerous indisposition, which preys on you with the more violence, from your heretofore excellent constitution.

These are my fears for *you* my only friends, for *myself* they are innumerable.

I do not by any means like my present situation; Madame Mitard adds to the sprightly naïveté of our French ladies, a levity, and coquetry that disgusts me extremely; she is at times gross in her conversation, and rude in her repartees, particularly to gentlemen; but as these are diverted by her sallies, and are constantly making her little presents, she is contented to believe they admire her, without troubling herself to

distinguish whether they laugh *with* or *at* her; she is displeased when I look grave, and says I am a sly prude, a character *she* detests—but *her* opinion of *me* is of small importance to *my* peace, *mine* of *her* is a distinct affair.

As I have before told you, they are visited by many men of rank; the greatest inconvenience of my situation, since they have thought proper to consider me as their equal, is the obligation politeness lays on me to attend Madame Mitard in the room, where she receives her company; we have very few female friends, Madame Mitard dislikes her own sex in general—and English women in particular, she despises; that sentiment might perhaps be reciprocal, if she were much known to them.

Is it not very provoking, madam, to be obliged to hear all the impertinence, men who (as they fancy themselves our superiors) think they have an exclusive right to utter.

I have however absolutely refused to be seen abroad with Madame Mitard, and notwithstanding she is extremely angry, am determined to adhere to my resolution—no madam! Madame Mitard is not a chaperon for *your Agnes*—

* * * * *

Madame Mitard undertook to return Lord Morden's note, may I own without incurring the censure of your upright heart, for my want of candour; that I suspect she has not kept her word?

That young nobleman treats me with a freedom unusual in this country, he adopts he says, when I am displeased, the manners of mine; and following Madame Mitard's example, thinks vivacity and delicacy are not to be found blended in a French education; this is an error (and a very illiberal one you will allow) which I have found to be prevalent, among the few of the *common* order of beings, with whom I have been in any degree conversant, since I have been in England; but it is of too gross a nature to be adopted by any of those of a superior cast, I am therefore not easily reconciled to an apology so absurdly founded, nor is my opinion of this nobleman at all raised by his contracted ideas.

Lord Morden is no favorite with me, he is introduced to my knowledge, at a period very unfavorable for a man of the world; the contrast between him and those I have been used to converse with is too striking.

General Moncrass is the very essence of politeness, and good breeding; there is a manly, and graceful turn in his manner, which even when he condescends to trifle, takes from him all appearance of frivolity; in his most lively sallies *he* is a stranger to that—

“—————lawless joy,
“Which pains the sage ear, and hurts the sober eye.”

He is the only man I ever saw, who retained the lively, and undeviating attention to our sex, which we always meet with in France from well-bred men; and yet was so

particularly happy in his judgment, as to preserve the appearance of a feeling sincerity in his compliments, without sacrificing his good sense; in short the cap of Minerva rested on his temples, while

“Words sweet as honey from his lips distil’d.”

And then Edward Harley, what an humble elegance was there in that young man’s address, what eloquence and grace in his conversation, and what propriety marked his judgment; his face was the true index to his mind, and whether it was adorned with the glow of sensibility, the blush of modesty, or the emanation of joy; whether it was animated with hope, oppressed with grief, or clouded with despair; all his sensations were founded on rectitude; and had honour for their guide; such is Edward Harley:—I think of him as one I have known, and forgive me, dear madam, if I add, one whom I have *loved*, but am no more to behold—one who is forever lost to me, but whose image will live in my heart, ’till I follow your steps, and those of dear St. Clare, and offer my humble vow on the altar of him, who made Edward Harley what he is.

Lord Morden is tall, genteel, and they say generally reckoned handsome. Madame Mitard says he has fine eyes; but confident indeed must the woman be who could examine them; you never, madam, saw such a determined starrer—he appears to endeavour, and I dare say succeeds, to look down every female who is unfortunately near him—then his conversation—but—I was educated in the convent of D——, and since I have left that sacred haunt of all the virtues, I have most conversed with General Moncrass, and Edward Harley, I am therefore ill qualified to speak of Lord Morden: such however as he is, a Miss Julia Neville, one of the greatest heiresses in the kingdom, was by command of her relations his affianced bride; but to his great mortification, the young lady has actually eloped from her family, to avoid a marriage, to which she was averse.

I am more particular respecting this lord than any of Madame’s visitors, because he is here quite en famille—we are indeed more (properly speaking) of his family, than he of ours; as our dinners, and suppers are served at his expence, from a neighbouring hotel; from what I have said, you will certainly believe I shall be very joyful, when I leave England—nor be surprised if I am at your feet, even before you have read this long, uninteresting detail, from your grateful

AGNES.

LETTER XLIX.

Agnes in continuation.

MERCIFUL God! what will become of me—eight days are now elapsed since the return of the mail, and I have not received a line of consolation, or assistance, from my more than parents; some unforeseen accident, some fatal event, must have happened; never would you knowingly have abandoned your child in such distress—whatever be the cause of your silence, I know you have not deserted your Agnes.

Distracted at the suspense in which I am kept, I thought of an expedient to raise money for my journey to France, which I flattered myself could not fail.

When Mr. Mitard brought the money he borrowed on my jewels, he begged I would not make myself uneasy about hearing from my friends, as they were of great value, and I might command sums to a large amount on them; I therefore applied to him to take up fifty more guineas, and declared my intention of going to France immediately.

I met to my surprise no opposition in this arrangement; Monsieur very alertly accepted my commission, and went out to execute it; but no words can express my grief, and consternation at his return.

The person, he said, had been deceived in their value when he first saw them; and now, instead of advancing any further sums, would be glad if I could pay what I had already borrowed, and take back the jewels.

Heavens! cried I, they cost —

No matter, madam, interrupted Monsieur, what they cost—buying and selling in this country are very different things; they were presented to you I presume?

Indeed they were! answered I,

By a gentleman? said Monsieur.

I wept—

Ah! Mademoiselle, continued he, gentlemen will do these things; but with beauty, youth, and accomplishments like yours; what is the defection of one lover? you are very charming, and there are many who are sensible of your attractions, of whose generosity it will be prudent in you to avail yourself.

Judge my astonishment—my indignation—my disgust—at this (as it proved) preamble to the sentiment of Mr. and Madame Mitard; but the misery of my situation had not yet fully explained itself; I was so much interested to believe, the man's coarse expressions, were as unmeaning as the servility, he mistook for politeness, that I did not suffer myself to seek for explanations, but coldly said—I did not comprehend him, and was retiring—

Madame Mitard, however, had not the charity to suffer me to continue in ignorance—

Stop, Miss, said she, you are in great haste to leave people who have been your very good friends; and it is now necessary, you should be acquainted with what is expected from you—

I made a very precipitate retreat from the door, which I was opening, and seating myself by her, waited with no small impatience, the result of a conversation, not more extraordinary than unexpected; my extreme earnestness disconcerted Madame Mitard; the curious attention with which I looked on her face, actually embarrassed her; it is not often she blushes, or that her eyes are withdrawn, but it so happened now, that the mounting of the blood into her cheeks, notwithstanding the quantity of rouge she wears, was very visible; and that the carpet for some moments, received all the fire of her glances—but her native fortitude soon returned.

With respect to those jewels, Mademoiselle, said she, they are counterfeits—absolutely counterfeits—Monsieur's credit is pledged for the money you borrowed on them—you are besides considerably in our debt, yet you would leave us, without the smallest regret; we are therefore bound in prudence to take care of ourselves; we are indebted to our talents for subsistence, you are equally capable to provide for yourself by yours—we have certainly been your friends, and might have continued so longer, had you not dropt the mask, but there is no reason why we should be losers for our charity.

Here had she stopped her conclusions had not been unjust, although I am certain the jewels, whatever their value, were not counterfeits; General Moncrass would not stoop to so paltry a deception, and I am further confirmed in this opinion by what followed.

I acknowledge, madam, I answered, my obligations for your professions of kindness, but I must be pardoned saying, I do not conceive they ought to prevent my wish to return to my friends; I am extremely concerned Monsieur should involve himself in any difficulties for me, but I cannot easily believe those bracelets were counterfeits, the person from whom I received them was a man of such—

They both eagerly interrupted me—and protested they were mock pearl and rose diamonds.

Well, madam, said I coldly, and what is the amount of the other pecuniary debts you claim from me?

She had not made a regular account, but should expect to be paid for bringing me from the country, as well as for my board, from that time—we live, you see, Mademoiselle in a tolerable genteel way, your bill will by no means be a light one.

I smiled a little contemptuously, I believe, and Madame Mitard's stock of philosophy is rather small, she was exceedingly irritated.

Well, my little friend, continued she, in a rage, we shall see whether the payment of our debt will sit quite so easy on you, assure yourself you do not leave us 'till it is discharged.

Not leave you, madam, answered I—my staying with you, would by no means facilitate the payment of your debt—on the contrary, were I once to rejoin my friends, they would amply repay every civility shewn me.

Madame Mitard returned my contemptuous smile, and pray Miss, said she, who are those friends of yours in whom we are so implicitly to confide?

I was silent.

You deal in mysteries, Miss, but come, we are not disposed to be mortally offended at the ingratitude you have shewn us.

We will forgive you, said Monsieur, approaching me, provided you will take our advice in future.

Certainly, rejoined Madame, nothing can be more reasonable, than to know on whom, and for what purpose we confer obligations; and have assurance Mademoiselle will not leave our house, without giving us every requisite satisfaction.

I was extremely embarrassed, I was very averse to the giving them a promise, I certainly did not mean to keep, of staying with them; neither did I think it prudent to irritate them by an avowal of my real sentiments; while I was in this dilemma Lord Morden was announced; I was retiring with some haste, but Madame, with an air partly authoritative, and partly suppliant, intreated I would not affront her best friend, and most powerful protector, by a conduct so disobliging—I had not time to answer before his lordship entered.

Ah! said he, as soon as he saw me, my dear little shy friend, are *you* there? then turning to Madame Mitard, with a freedom I had often before observed in his address to her; this is very obliging, I had begun to despair of ever meeting your little skittish damsel again; why child, continued he, familiarly taking my hand, you run away from me as if you were afraid of being eaten.

Louisa (said Madame Mitard) my Lord is not used to company of your lordship's rank, it is therefore natural she should be embarrassed.

Oh! answered the rude man putting his arms round me, if that be all, trouble yourself Mitard to order tea, and we will in the mean time become better friends.

Imagine, madam, my situation.

The woman actually left the room, and was immediately followed by her husband.

Lord Morden again, for I had before disengaged myself from him, attempted to throw his arms round my waist, I flew to the window, which looked into the street, the sash was up.

But this young nobleman (who as himself boasts, is above paying any regard to decency) was not to be deterred by fear of *public* exposure, from following the bent of his own inclinations.

You mean, Miss, said he, with a most undaunted countenance, to give me all possible trouble; but believe me, child, that is not wisely done, you would make more of

me by half, by trusting to my generosity, as I think you might understand by the handsome earnest I gave you.

I have not, I haughtily answered, the honor to understand your lordship.

No, replied he, gad I think twenty guineas, or pounds is speaking pretty plain to a little adventuress like you—

If you mean, my lord, the bit of paper you gave Master Mitard—

The bit of paper pretty one, why it was a bank note, what, in a voice wherein curiosity, and apprehension were blended; what have you done with it, you know the value of it I hope, you have not destroyed it—you have not destroyed a twenty pound note?

Be composed, my lord, with as much nonchalance as I could assume, Madame Mitard was so obliging as to undertake to restore it to your lordship; you are yourself I hope, a competent judge of its value, and will not in future, throw away such good things on children, and ideots.

Let me die, returned he, but I believe you are a wit; though your giving the note to Mitard is a strong proof you have very little common sense; but as there is nothing new in that, and as she has most probably placed it in her own sinking fund, you shall not be the loser, let me know your terms, and I am so desperately in love with you, that if they are within the compass of my fortune, or credit, I will comply with them; you are not I see the simpleton I took you for; you have wit, and what is better, you have pride; it is a devilish stupid thing in a nobleman to take a mistress, who has not pride to support her own dignity; you have profited by Mitard's instructions, and I like you the better; do her justice, no woman is more qualified to render you the ton, and the ton you will certainly be, as soon as it is known you are mine; it is true, I have some thoughts of marrying, on which account, you must in common decency, keep a little in the back ground; but you will very soon have me all to yourself; I feel I shall be very foolish, only too fond of you, that's all; I shall give you a town house, and you shall reside at one of my own villas in summer; as to my bride, she has at present the impudence to pretend to dislike me, for which reason, were there no other, and were it to cost me half my fortune, I am determined to oblige her to marry me; Lady Mary Moncrass—

Good heavens! madam, how I started—the insipid haranguer minded me not, he went on:

Lady Mary Moncrass an outrageously foolish woman, took it into her head to be jealous of her husband, because he liked a younger piece than herself, and in revenge to *him*, resolves to give *me* her daughter, merely because young Moncrass shall not have her; 'tis a poor little insipid thing, but her fortune is immense, and you, my Louisa, shall share it with your Morden, nay, you shall be mistress of it; be not therefore so coy my little angel, attempting to take my hand, which I withdrew; ah! you cunning baggage, what I must sign and seal first—well, prithee dear girl then get it done, I am impatient to have you all my own.

Does Madame Mitard know of your lordship's honorable intention towards me? with as much composure as I could assume.

Not altogether, answered he, as little embarrassed as you would conceive, shall I confess the truth?—Why then, Louisa, to convince you, how open I in future mean to deal with you, I must tell you, you rival Mitard, she is handsome, lively, paints well, and is in

short tolerably amusing; she is not perhaps without her hopes, that she shall turn the tables, and rival you in her turn; she is mistaken—you are just the girl to my taste—there is, however no absolute necessity to make her acquainted with *every* thing, as she would naturally be mortified, I should give you more substantial proofs of my passion, than she has been able to draw from me, you will therefore act wisely, in concealing from *her*, my handsome designs in *your* favor.

Here madam, here St. Clare—if ever this letter should reach you, of which I have a thousand fears; here is a specimen of English morality; they talk in this country, with wonderful gravity, of the liberties men of gallantry allow themselves in France, and tell a thousand fabulous stories of the excesses in which, particularly after marriage, they indulge, but I think Lord Morden may dispute the palm with any of our French libertines; indeed, if ingenuity be a merit, I can form no idea to myself, of there being a possibility of excelling him in that; he certainly is neither ashamed of his vices, or afraid of their consequences; what he dares do, I really believe he will dare to justify; he is too haughty, and too brave, to fear offending his maker.

But under the roof of Madame Mitard, and in the power of such a man, do you not tremble for your Agnes? yet again my sad heart presages that you will not receive this, or any of my former letters; else, what can be the meaning of this cruel, this distressing silence? how many conjectures have I form'd, and given up as soon as form'd, of the cause; if you were displeased with me, you would surely take the trouble to reprimand me, you would not desert the wretched orphan, who has none to help her—no, it cannot be—I am sure it cannot, but said an author, you early taught me to distinguish.

“There is little difference betwixt fearing an evil and feeling it; except that the evil one feels has bounds, whereas ones apprehensions has none, for we can suffer no more than what actually *has* but we fear all that possibly *can* happen.”

And fear it too often, madam, against reason and probability; it has unhappily in my fate, followed the danger, instead of preceding it; my poor heart, shrinks under the consequences of the step I have taken; and now that I know the real evil to which I am exposed; the imaginary ones from which I fled, appear a mere shadow.

Yet madam, let me once more cast myself at your feet, let me raise my flowing eyes to him, whose throne is the fountain of mercy, and forgiveness; let me implore *his* protection, and hope for *yours*; should my letters reach you, no longer withhold your favor, yet it may be too late, again must the wretched Agnes become a wanderer, again cast herself on that providence, that will uphold the virtuous, and again seek some happy chance of reaching the serene house of religious chastity.

I have learnt, fatally learnt, since I have been with the Mitards, to condemn the folly that threw me from the protective roof of a man of honor:—I feel with self reproach, the rash ingratitude I was guilty of, in leaving General Moncrass, and my heart condemns me from a latent motive, hidden almost from myself, which my weakness had misnamed prudence—ah! madam, I have promised to lay my whole heart open to you, never more will I conceal a thought from the most indulgent of women, it was Harley's suspicion of

my honor, which stabbed me to the heart; it was *him* I thought to wound by my flight; in the same moment he is convinced of my innocence, he shall also know, said I, that I am lost to him forever; and while I flattered myself, I only sought to clear my fame, wounded—alas! by whom? by the man to whose protection, the parting St. Clare, and virtuous St. Lawrence committed the object in whom their fondest love was centered.

Ingrate! that I am, how could I forget the paternal tears he shed over me, when almost convulsed with agony he parted with St. Clare? why do I hesitate? why do I not return to his protection? why not implore his pardon and confess the weakness of my heart?

But what would Harley say? would he?—O forgive me, madam, what indeed is Harley to me; would to God I was with you, that I might vent the sorrows of my heart at your feet!

* * * * *

I had presence of mind, notwithstanding my indignation, and terror, to preserve an unruffled countenance during the whole of the conversation I have related; Lord Morden has I imagine, more vanity than even vice in his composition—he fancied his attractions ought to charm me, and concluded that they did so.

If pique, thought I, in that moment, urges this nobleman to take a wife for whom he has himself no predilection, and whose affections are pre-engaged, avowedly to punish her dislike of him, how far may it not urge him, to revenge himself on me, for a similar offence? and if Madame Mitard had the meanness, to convert the note I entrusted her to return, to her own use, will not a temptation of the same kind, carry her still greater lengths? these were the conclusions of a moment, and you will own they were not ill founded.

I requested a few hours to consider Lord Morden's proposals, and suffered him to believe, that I should give directions about drawing the settlements he offered; and in order to favor this scheme he insisted on the Mitards going in his party to Vauxhall.

Whether they suspected my design to leave them, or whether it was Monsieur's little gout for his wives company; which he always avoided, when he could do it decently, I cannot tell; but when the tea was brought up he followed the servant; I was much disconcerted when I saw him, as I am determined on leaving their house this evening; I have employed the time since Lord Morden and Mrs. Mitard have been gone, in packing up my few wearables, and writing to you—and am now at the secretary pursuing the same employment, while he is sauntering about the room and amusing himself with his flute; all my hopes are that some of the gay Signora's who lodge in this street, will pass by, and tempt him (for he is a man of prodigious gallantry) to walk out; in the mean time, I will just give you a sketch of my design; you will say I am a schemer, how little did I once foresee the necessity I should be under to adopt that character.

M. Mitard's mantua-maker is a French woman, who takes many journies in the year to Paris to learn the fashions, and generally imports a great quantity of goods, which are prohibited here; a friend of Monsieur's had sent over some fine lace for ruffles, which were seized by the revenue officers; Mrs. du Bois who was supposed to be conversant in such matters, was consulted on the possibility of regaining the lace, and in the course of conversation, acquainted them with the method she took to convey her goods from France.

A Mr. Arnold, who resides a little beyond a place called Greenwich, where that is, heaven knows! but I must find it; keeps a couple of sailing boats, large enough to accommodate two or three passengers; and such swift sailors, that superadded to his own extreme sobriety and caution, constantly eluded the vigilance of the revenue officers; this man, she said, who made it a point never to trade for himself, had accumulated a decent fortune by the integrity with which he transacted contraband business for other people, and, continued du Bois, I always go and return with him, and have never lost a thread.

This information made a deep impression on me, and I took care to enter every particular in my tablets; du Bois is now at Paris, and Mitard is too volatile to remember this circumstance; to Greenwich therefore I am resolved to go; I will explain my situation to the man, he is the father of a family of children, and however easy his circumstances, a man who continually risks his life to encrease his store, will not refuse a handsome present on such a simple occasion, as carrying a poor worthless young creature back to her dear country: I shall be very liberal in my promises, and hire him to take me to Boulogne, where the good father Dominick will, I am sure, enable me to perform all my engagements—if I am so happy as ever to see my honored lady Abbess, and beloved St. Clare, they will reimburse the venerable priest; if not, if that only happiness after which my heart pants, is denied me, I shall at least lay my bones in some of the cloysters of our holy church.

Ah! madam, I tremble, my eagerness will betray me—Monsieur is actually going out—his servant is brushing his chapeau—two Italians wait in the street, it is a warm evening, they talk of airing on the water.

He is gone—he is out of sight—adieu, adieu, most beloved, most honored of friends, oh! pray for your

AGNES.

END of the SECOND VOLUME.

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

In *FOUR VOLUMES*.

Inscribed with Permission to Col. HUNTER.

By Mrs. Bennett,
AUTHOR OF THE
WELCH HEIRESS, and JUVENILE INDISCRETIONS.

I know thou wilt grumble, courteous Reader, for every
Reader in the World is a Grumbletonion more or less; and
for my Part, I can grumble as well as the best of ye, when
it is my turn to be a Reader. SCARRON.

VOL. III.

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MDCCLXXXIX.

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

LETTER L.

Agnes to the Lady Abbess St. Lawrens.

Greenwich.

I Have hitherto, my beloved St. Clare, and lady Abbess, been successful in my plan, but am unfortunately prevented from immediately putting the most important part of it into execution; which is that of setting out on my long'd-for return to you.

When I concluded my last letter (which from what unhappy cause I am yet to learn I dare hardly hope has reached you) I told you, Monsieur Mitard was on the point of going out to attend on some female acquaintance, but recollecting, as I supposed) the commission he had received to watch my motions, he suddenly pleaded an engagement and returned.

I had put up, in as small a compass as would contain them, a couple of dimity dresses, and some linen; and descended softly with it, as far as the front parlour, which apartment is occupied by the woman of the house, where the Mitard's lodge, who luckily happened to be out of the way: I had hardly time, when I saw the man return, to lay down my bundle, before he approached me, and begged to have the honor of entertaining me one half hour; I understood this request as a pretence for keeping me in his sight, and with great affected indifference, walked up again into their drawing room.

I know not how to wound you with the humiliating recital; the man actually had the effrontery to make me a flaming declaration of love—offered immediately to place me out of the knowledge of Lord Morden, who was a very *bad man*, and of his wife, who also was a very *bad woman*, and in short, gave me additional proofs, had those been wanting, that it was quite time for me to get out of their hands.

I smothered my indignation as well as I could, but Monsieur was perfectly informed by my looks, that his passion was not likely to be successful, and he had in consequence of that information the assurance to threaten me with his important resentment.

I left him apparently much enraged at the sang froid of my behaviour, and traversing the room in great heat; to my inexpressible joy he threw the door after me in scorn, and I took that opportunity again to slip down stairs, stepped into the parlour for my bundle, and having gained the street, deliberately walked to a stand of coaches, and

ordered one to drive to Greenwich; where on enquiry I found Mr. Arnold was well known, and easily procured directions to his house.

He was at home; and I was conducted into a large parlour, where, though little more than nine o'clock, the family were at supper.

I had, during my ride, so far altered my first plan, that I did not open myself without reserve to Mr. Arnold, as I had intended; but told him simply that a Mrs. du Bois, had recommended his packet to me, as the quickest conveyance to France, whither I was desirous to return, and requested to know his terms for the voyage: Oh! he said, we should not fall out, he had always done Mrs. du Bois's business, and he believed she would not upbraid him with extortion.—I then asked him when he should go. It was not quite certain, he said, as he waited for the arrival of some India ships, he was engaged to meet, and could not sail before they arrived.

That, I acknowledged, was inconvenient to me, as I had come to Greenwich expecting, from Mrs. du Bois's account, to have an immediate passage, and was not provided with lodgings: Mrs. Arnold believed I might be accommodated next door with an apartment; and offered to send her servant to enquire.

I have not been able to account for it, for this woman is one of the most unamiable dispositions I have ever known; but during the absence of the servant, after having fixed a pair of most forbidding eyes on me for some time, she whisper'd her husband, a plain, honest, ignorant man; and at length (observing I believe my looks were not the most tranquil) said, she hoped I would not make myself uneasy, for that if Mrs. Fanning's rooms were engaged, I should be welcome to an apartment in her house, 'till Mr. Arnold sailed.

I was lucky enough to express my acknowledgments in a manner that seemed to gratify her; from a slight invitation, she proceeded to insist upon my being her guest; and immediately sent another servant to put an end to the treaty with her neighbour. A chair was then set at the table, and hearty invitations given me to join their meal, which I was too much agitated to accept, having a violent headach: I retired early not to rest, but to unburden all my cares to my beloved friends; who if ever I should see them again, will be convinced their Agnes truly repents the first, and only concealment, she ever made from them.

There sat at table, madam, Mr. and Mrs. Arnold; a young woman about two and twenty their only daughter, very much dressed, and rather handsome; three boys their sons, and a pretty young creature about seventeen, who very much excited my curiosity; they call her Betsy, and affect to treat her as an inferior, at the same moment, when she sits perfectly at ease, commanding the whole family—she has an air of great dignity, and at times pride—but in general there is an arch sweetness, and playful gaiety in her manner, which renders her very pleasing: I could not help fixing my attention so much on her, as to draw the observation of Mrs. Arnold, who followed me to my chamber, for the sole purpose of informing me—Betsy was the orphan daughter of a poor clergyman, who

was come up to London to be apprenticed by the fund, a charitable institution as she explained, for the benefit of the children of the inferior clergy.

Now, continued Mrs. Arnold, both Mr. Arnold and myself are very tender-hearted; and so we thought we mought as well keep the poor thing, and make her useful in the family; she has agreed indeed to pay for her board, 'till some friend comes to town, from whom she has expectations, but as I say, Lord! where is she to get money? and so I tell her, but she is so flighty, and whimsical, there is no such thing as making her think; she was recommended to us by Mr. Arnold's sister, who lives with a great lady in the country.

I thanked Mrs. Arnold for her communications; who hinted, that the reason she favored me with such an early mark of confidence, was, for fear I should, as many others had done, take Betsy for a young woman of fortune, and her Nancy's equal.

Surely, my dear madam, I have not in every article, forgot your moral instructions; whatever may be Mrs. Arnold's natural disposition, her behaviour to me, has been hitherto civil; nay, it has even been friendly; yet my heart retreats from the union of mind, such conduct *should* create; she is indeed extremely low bred, and, like her husband, ever barbarously abusing the English language, by misplacing the sound of letters, and mistaking, not only the pronunciation of words, but their meaning also; by which means their conversation, is a compound of vulgarism, and ignorance: but, as it is my fate, or rather the effect of my folly, that I should be cast among people so very different from the dear, the polite, and friendly society, where I received my first ideas, I must reconcile myself to what I cannot, now, avoid: whatever evils, or mortification I may in the world be subject to, I *know where* I shall be at peace.

I am going my dear friends, sweet, and ever respected guides of my youth, to implore the protection of the holy virgin, may be extended to my soul; and that I may live and die, in the pure practice of every virtue, you have taught me to revere: and oh! my dear lady Abbess! honored St. Clare! may I venture without injuring those virtues, to repeat to you a name, never out of my thoughts.

I am, it is true, displeased, and with reason; Edward Harley, that amiable! that accomplished! that modest young man! dared to accuse Agnes de Courci of immoral conduct; he presumed to wound my ears with tales of the blackest calumny, levelled against my better self; and had the barbarity to tell me, he was himself of the number of my calumniators; for this I certainly ought to hate, to despise him—ah! madam, dear St. Clare! I am a weak, a very weak creature; it is thus I reason with my wayward heart; but spight of all my efforts, his elegant form, his delicate manners, and the rectitude of his principles; form an agrément, that rushes between my reason and my imagination, wholly obscuring the one, while the other, brightens into rapture.

I wish he was known to you; I wish—ah how vainly! he had once presented himself at your grate; you would surely think favorably of him; his address is at once, simple and refined—and his voice—do you not remember how St. Clare once expatiated on the power of a melodious voice?—"It is pleasant even in common conversation, it

softens severity and it enhances kindness (said the dear saint) but when we hear the comfortable tenets of the scripture—the absolution of sin, pronounced in a voice of melody, it pierces with delightful extacy into the soul.”

Let me beloved St. Lawrens, hide in your friendly, your maternal bosom; the burning blushes of your Agnes, when she confesses, this man—this Harley’s voice, has that very effect on her, which the bishop at Abbeville’s has on St. Clare—it continually vibrates on my ears, and even when I sleep, it is ever present to my ideas—observe madam, in extenuation of his offence, he was himself in despair at the situation in which the barbarous tongue of slander had placed me; he wished to reform me, to convince me of the errors he supposed me facinated with; he offered me, the protection of a virtuous woman, his sister; and he pleaded, heavens with what eloquence! the cause of an injured, deserted matron.

Alas! madam, was it for him, whose own open heart, might have been scrutinized by infant candour, to read mine? to develope, the labyrinths in which human cunning conceals its depravity? how often have I seen his fine eyes fill, as he contemplated my features; how frequently have the scalding messengers of pity drop’d on my hands; and oh! how many, many times, have the agonies of his swelling heart, obliged him to rush out of company; and when I have followed—have I not found him despairing, and frantic; the cold drops standing on his forehead; yet has the voice of your Agnes, instantly calmed the tempest of his soul; and by the mere simple efforts of common civility, held all his unruly passions, captives in the bonds of reason.

Suffer me, dear madam, to carry you in imagination with me to his own little demesne; delight your ears with the faltering blessings of the old, the fervent gratitude of the middle aged, the lisping, and familiar, but not less sincere good will of infancy, all following the steps of my Harley; while his own effulgent eyes, bright with the emanation of benevolence, and charity, dares turn from those grateful dependants, to that *being*, who judges the *motive* with the *act*, in equal confidence and security.

Let us wander through the delightful groves which surround his neat dwelling, where we shall be surprised into a pleasing wonder; religion, romance, and passion; seem to have blended their powers in the decorations, and ornaments of this sacred solitude: behold my Harley, with what manly sense he distinguishes, with what true taste he explains, with what sensibility he glows, and with what reverential ardor he preserves the reliques of fond affection, bequeathed him by an amiable and maternal friend.

Oh! madam, pity your

AGNES.

LETTER LI.

Agnes in continuation.

Greenwich.

THESE people, the Arnolds, do not grow in estimation on acquaintance, yet to *me* they are civility itself.

I am persuaded there is more in the character of the young person I described to you than they know; she treats me with a familiar kind of affection which is far from displeasing, but the family are so much the objects of her contempt, that I am obliged to look exceeding grave, to keep her in any kind of order when she speaks of them.

I was passing the door of her apartment this morning, when she called after me—Miss—Miss Thingimy, come here, I want to speak with you. I gravely asked, if it was *me* she addressed?

She answered in the affirmative, quite unembarrassed, and as soon as I entered, shut the door; then pointing to a table, where lay a piece of cloth, and a boy's shirt not very clean, do you know, asked she, very seriously, how to cut out a shirt?

I could not help smiling at the simplicity of the question, and yet upon consideration I really did not, she looked earnestly in my face—why child! you are as ignorant as myself then, but keep your own secret; for if you acknowledge so much to Madam Fussock, you will be set down as a mighty worthless body; come, do be seated, and let us try if we cannot contrive it between us—here continued she, (taking the shirt up between the handles of her scissars) this is the pattern.

I protested my inability—well now, that is so stupid.

I thought, said I, your mother who had so large a family (she burst into an immoderate fit of laughter) would have taught you those little matters.

To be sure, answered she, 'tis mighty odd she did not—if—if (smothering another laughing fit) she knew herself. All this time she was turning and twisting the cloth—no, 'twont do, I'll even go and return Madam Fussock her cloth, and give my young lady a lesson on her humstrum, do you understand music?—a little.

Well then, by way of conferring a favor on you, for which I expect you will be very grateful, I'll shew you a lesson, I have been composing for my pupil's improvement.

This was a sheet of music paper, filled with such a combination of flats, sharps, quavers, and semibreves; that I saw directly she was turning the science into ridicule, or rather playing on the folly of the Arnolds.

Come, said she, snatching the paper out of my hand, I see you know too much—

And if, said I, I were to acquaint Mrs. Arnold?

You dare not.

How madam?

I know you dare not, your heart will not let you.

Why should you fancy my heart will do more for you, than yours for Madam Fussock as you call her?

Oh! that is quite another thing—we are of a different order of beings.

Indeed! but methinks you should speak for yourself only, without venturing to pronounce for me, who am so great a stranger.

Really child, answered she, seriously, you mistake the thing very much—you are no stranger to me at all.

Recollect, madam, the consequence it is of to me to be concealed, and you will conceive the alarm I felt, when the volatile girl made so unexpected a declaration.

Not a stranger to you, Miss, replied I, very coldly, pray where have I had the honor of being known to you before?

Oh! no where, but there is, I have heard say, one infallible rule, by which spirits of a certain description, become familiar with each other; and that is by the sympathy of generous, and elevated sentiments; you, I perceived within the first hour of our acquaintance, are of that description; no matter what I am, you will know some time or other; but *such as I am*, you see I cannot level myself to the people I am with: yet, though I do not esteem, I do not hate the creatures; they amuse me, and while they fancy I am the object of their ostentatious charity, they are in reality slaves to my whim, and caprice; they like me in spite of the tricks I play them, and are so fearful of disoblighing me, that the authority, and influence, I insensibly gain over them, is a confirmation of my favorite thesis, “the power of sympathy,” which even these stupid people cannot resist; they think me the orphan daughter of a poor country parson, whose large family kept him in a state of too much poverty, to provide for his offspring: and to a young girl, so situated, the asylum their family affords would perhaps be very acceptable. They are of the order of *little* great folks, who would surely be proud to make a dependant *feel* their obligation; yet you see, they are actually afraid of disoblighing me, they are no less civil to you, and what can the involuntary humanization of such savages proceed from, *but sympathy*?

They *take* you for a poor parson’s daughter, then you are *not* so in reality, said I, looking earnestly at her.

She coloured excessively, and answered,

Miss Mary Farquar, for that I think is your travelling name—when you are disposed to exchange confidence with me, I will be ready to renew this conversation; ’till when, I wish (laughing) for your own sake, you could cut out a shirt; I suppose you can embroider, fillegree, draw, and all the useless et-cetara’s; but let me advise you to learn to work plain work; which the good lady of this mansion, avers is the ground of all female perfection; and so Miss Mary Farquar—bon jour.

You will confess, my dear madam, this young person is an extraordinary character; but I dare not trust her too far; she is not only young, and volatile, but giddy, and thoughtless to excess.

Mr. Arnold, and his wife, are doatingly fond of their daughter, who is rather a handsome girl; but unhappily, has heard from her ill-judging parents, so much of her beauty; and from her infancy, been taught to expect so much from its influence; she has rejected several young men in her own station of life, in expectation of attracting the regard of some person of fashion; which has been her invariable pursuit, from the age of seventeen, and which she still flatters herself will happen: Betsy as they call her owes, they fancy, her irresistible power of pleasing to her accomplishments; they are therefore exceedingly anxious, Miss Arnold shall equal her in those; as to person, there is, they think, no comparison.

The poor beauty, as Betsy calls her, is really in a pitiable situation; every day opens with fresh hopes, which the evening is sure to prove falacious; new dresses, and graces, are constantly exhibited at the windows, and in walks up and down the dusty road; the hill itself (where they live) is not more known, than the face of Miss Arnold; yet the man of fashion, who is to carry this prodigy off in his coach, does not appear; and thus kept on the edge of expectation, a continued series of disappointment, not seldom ruffles a temper, that would naturally be submissive, and unaspiring; if she had not the misfortune, to be in her own estimation, and that of her friends—a *beauty*.

You will my inestimable monitress, forgive me for beguiling my anxiety, by a description, which shews in a new light, the importance of those obligations, your care of the early progress of my education, lays on me: to your elegant accomplishments, your refined sense, and moral virtues, it is, that I owe the little all which is valuable in me; and it is to those I am indebted, for the fortitude which supports me, in my present disagreeable situation.

I have just four guineas in my purse; the longer Mr. Arnold defers his voyage, the larger will be my debt to him: he will land me in any port on the French coast; I wish to go to Bologne, because, if my ill stars do not shed their malignant influence over every act of my life; I shall find the good father Dominick there; that worthy friend of St. Clare, who was indeed her cashier, as well as friend, from my first remembrance; I have no doubt of his readiness to receive me into his protection, 'till I can throw myself at the feet of my dear lady Abbess—'tis however a tedious interval, 'till I set out on my long desired journey; and were the Mitards to discover me, I dread least the power of Lord Morden, united with their depravity and cunning should be successfully exerted, to detain me here, and perhaps even deprive me of the humble protection Mr. Arnold's roof now affords.—Oh! madam, were every young woman who voluntarily abandons the protection of her real friends, to encounter the difficulties, and anxiety, to which I have been exposed; and were those to be publicly known, would it not have the happy effect, of rendering the tranquil home, dear to the daughters of innocence? how should I now support myself, were I not conscious that I had a plea to offer in vindication of my conduct, the pure in heart will not totally reject? was the guilt of disobedience added to the present distresses of my mind, I know I should sink under them.

I long, yet dread to see you; how shall I approach St. Clare, if she is displeased with her Agnes? how shall I bear to see her languid countenance, clouded with vexation for me? how meet the benign eyes of Madame St. Lawrens, turned, for the first time, in

anger on her, for whom she has done, and felt so much? oh! spare the poor culprit! her whole life to come shall be devoted to penitent obedience: yes, Harley! even thy seducing image, shall be torn from the soul of Agnes, thou charming heretic! yet I will pray for thy conversion, I will venerate thy virtues, and never forget the emanations of goodness which graced thy every look; these are the oblations due to a soul like thine, and in these, my dear St. Lawrens, my beloved St. Clare will join their

AGNES.

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LETTER LII.

Agnes in continuation.

THE event I most dreaded is come to pass; that Lord Morden, indefatigable in wickedness, has discovered me, and I am breathless with terror, with astonishment! yes my dear respectable, venerable friends, your Agnes is actually in dread of being sent to a common prison, the vile Mitard! has sent me a demand from his attorney of fifty pounds—a mistake, occasioned by the vanity of the Arnolds, I have reason to think preserved me this day from an insult which is too complicated in horrors to be thought on; the night is now overcast, and I have to determine, only, whether I will tell Mr. Arnold my situation, or again by escaping from hence continue a migration to which I see no end: what will become of me? whose offences are thus visited on my devoted head? what have I done to deserve thus to be abandoned, to misery, and despair?

Mr. and Mrs. Arnold are out; I therefore will once more try to compose my agitated thoughts, by addressing them to you.

Betsy, the little inmate whom I mentioned in my last, generally sits in what they call Miss Arnold's apartment; it consists of a sitting room, and bed-chamber, and contains the books, music, and work belonging to her; and there is a large light closet shuts in at one end, where Betsy sleeps; the back of the house is by much the more pleasant, and there for obvious reasons, I mostly am; Miss Arnold as I before said, is always stationary at one, or other, of the front windows.

I remarked this morning, Miss was particularly fine; and that some significant looks, were exchanged between the father, and mother, with nods, winks, and allusions I did not understand, nor was I at all ambitious of being honored with their confidence: and therefore as soon as the breakfast equipage was removed, I left the room.

I was followed on tip-toe by Betsy, who beckoned me to her apartment, and there very seriously told me, *the Lord* was come at last—not to you, continued she (seeing me change colour) but to our beauty.

He has been loitering about, these three days, waiting an opportunity no doubt to throw himself at her feet—the soft soul rides by in his vis-a-vis, leaves it at the inn, and then comes to reconnoitre on foot; nay, perceiving perhaps some incredulity in my looks, it is an absolute fact—we cannot be mistaken—we have seen him ourselves—and the chandler shop woman where *we* deal having found out his quality from his own footman, came and told the whole affair to Madam Fussock: our fortunes are all made, and moreover when Miss Arnold is a countess, I shall be, an please you, her ladyship's humble companion.

This story, related with a humourous gravity, I know not why, affected me in a strange manner; I felt myself chilled, and burning alternately; I trembled, and turned so sick, I was obliged to open the window for air.

Heavens! cried the trifler, what are you about? do you know, that we are so tenacious of our conquest; so afraid another pretty face besides our own should be visible; that Madam Fussock has given positive orders, no window shall be opened, nor any one, save our beauty, be seen at the front of the house? not but, I am determined to have a peep to day let the lord take it as he will.

I still continued faint, and did not remove from the window.

Oh! very well, continued Betsy, I see you won't mind me, you want to rival Miss Arnold, and as I live, here comes the old lady.

As I had no idea, the orders so ludicrously repeated by the prating girl, had been really given; I continued at the window, but I was soon made sensible of my error.

Miss Farquar, said Mrs. Arnold, out of breath with passion, I think I am mistress of this here house; and for to let you, for to know; I mean to remain so.

Who disputes your authority madam, said I? with as much humility as I could assume.

You Miss, you do, how dare you presume for to open that there window, ven I ordered it to be kept shut? but I see what you would be at Miss, I see through your little hartifices, and sist on your immediately perviding yourself vith another login; I'll not keep folks in my house, for to take the bread out of my child's mouth, I promise you.

Bless me, madam! answered I—I do not comprehend you.

Get yourself a login, Miss, you comprehend that I suppose.

Understand, my dear lady Abbess, that this woman's passion, and her voice were both raised at every sentence she uttered; and the last was delivered with such an inflamed countenance, and loud tone of voice, that frightened at her violence, and dreading to what further lengths it might be carried, I burst into tears; and though my sickness, and faintness returned, was hastening out of the house, as fast as I could go.

Stay, Miss Farquar, cried the little generous Betsy, stay for me; and then tying on her straw bonnet, good bye, dame Arnold, when your house is again honored by the residence of a gentlewoman, learn to treat her better.

Why pray, Miss Pert, answered Mrs. Arnold, where are you going? nobody said nothing to you.

I advise you, Mrs. Arnold, answered she, in a haughty tone, not to insult *me*, you know I won't bear it—call me by my name if you please—I shall go with Miss Farquar—don't imagine I will be made a prisoner of, and be deprived of the fresh air, because your daughter has captivated a lord; God help you! I wish you knew them as well as I do, you would then know that one honest man is worth fifty lords, whose chief merit is their title; not but there are exceptions, and many too—this new idol of yours may be one for aught I know or care—but I assure you, neither a lord, nor all the titles in the world, shall give you authority to insult me.

Why child, did I affront you? replied Mrs. Arnold, in the usual mild key, to which the spirit of my little friend is sure to reduce her——

Yes you did—when you fly into your foolish, vulgar passions, with a young person, who I am sure is much your superior, and a gentlewoman, before my face, and in my apartment, it is an affront to me—and I won't stay in your house a moment after she quits it.

Nay Betsy, you know I always respects a *gentlewoman*, because I am *one myself*.

So you ought, what signifies your telling me of your father, and uncles, and the rest of the 'squires of your family; if you discredit your birth, by ill treating a young lady, who is under the protection of your roof.

Well, Miss Farquar, you *may* stay, cried the vulgar woman, half proud at the hint of her gentility, and half humbled at the concessions, the generous girl had extorted from her.

O fye, Mrs. Arnold! is that the way you apologise for the excess, to which your passion transported you? Miss Farquar does not wish to stay, and I am sure will not; except you make a proper acknowledgment for the errors of your indecent passion.

I stood, during this conversation in silent wonder, at the influence the little pleader had over our turbulent hostess; whom she actually prevailed on to ask my pardon, and then civilly turned her out of the room, on pretence, that we were going to be very busy, in contriving a new head-dress for Miss Arnold.

Poor stupid, vulgar wretch, said she, shutting the door, I wish we had gone; I am tired of them I assure you.

My tears would flow, although I did all I could to repress them; the sweet girl kissed my cheek, and begged me to be comforted, till she caught the infection from me; but her spirits which are very strong, could not bear like me to vent her tears in silence; she was seized with violent hysterics, and continued very ill the whole morning: Mrs. Arnold and her daughter were both so sincerely concerned for, and so assiduous about her, that I most cordially forgave her passionate behaviour to me: they are certainly very fond of her, and it is hardly possible to be otherwise, she is very amiable; but to proceed in my unhappy story.

The post arrives twice each day with the letters from London; and Mr. Arnold's back gate being the one next the town, the man rings at that; it so happened the gate was open, and I was crossing a court which separate the house, from the garden, at the moment the post-man came, and read aloud the direction of a letter, *To Miss Louisa Fermer*, said he, is there such a lady here? I don't know what I answered but in my fright took the letter, and ran with it to my chamber; it contained

Madam,

Mr. Mitard having directed me to demand from you the sum of fifty pounds, due from you, to him, for board and necessaries, I am to acquaint you, if the said sum is not immediately paid, I shall arrest you without further notice. I am, your humble servant,

Thaves-Inn.

J. Capus.

Again the same *sick* and faint sensation, which had seized me before returned; and I was so indisposed, I was obliged to go into the garden for air: I had not been out five minutes, before Betsy ran towards me, with every mark of terror in her countenance.

Oh dear Farquar! cried she, help me over this wall, let me make my escape any how, any where, I am undone! that wretch Lord Morden!

Lord Morden repeated I, sinking on the grass.

Oh lord! yes! he has found me out, for heavens sake, dear Farquar, how shall I get away?

Oh said I—I fear it is *me* he has found.

You—answered Betsy, why what business has he with you? does he want to marry you too?

Oh! no! no! would to God! I was an hundred leagues off.

Oh! so do I a thousand, but why are you so alarmed? if you are not in danger of being forced to marry Lord Morden, you are not half so unhappy as me! and the poor thing threw herself down by me on the grass-plot, and again we wept together.

We were in this situation, when Mrs. and Miss Arnold entered the garden.

Oh! cried Betsy, throwing her arms round me, they are coming to fetch me, but I won't go, I'll die first.

Rather, said I, their business is with me.

We were however both mistaken; they were in deep (and as it should seem by the mutual smiles, of mother and daughter) well-pleased discourse; so entirely indeed were they engaged by the subject of their conversation, that they passed on without seeing us, or suspecting any person was near, to a garden seat, which being shaded by jessamines, woodbines, and other creepers, hid them from our view: but interested as we were, you may believe we listened with great eagerness, and caution to their conversation.

For my part, said Mrs. Arnold, I think now, the sooner you sees him the better—delays are dangerous—many things happen between the cup and the lip—he has declared himself, and therefore I would have your papa come plump to the point.

Law! mamma, answered Miss, that would be vastly ridiculous; and besides I should like to be a little cruel at first, and pretend I didn't like to change my condition, and so you know he will be unhappy, and follow me to the assembly, and dear! how the Miss Keelys, and the Miss Tobyns, and the Miss Parkers will swell with envy, when Lord Morden's carriage is called.

I had here a violent pinch from Betsy.

Well my dear, far be it from me to want to get rid of my Nancy—she shall do as she pleases; only as I said before delays are dangerous.

But then you know, mamma, if he opens his purposals to papa, he can't you know go back; or now I think of it, suppose we pretend papa did not know of it, and so make it a runaway match.

Fiddle-de-dee of a runaway match, no, no! I'll have every thing fair and above board: my lord spoke like a lord—madam, said he, there is a young lady under your ospital roof, and you will confer the greatest favor on me, if you will suffer me to speak six words to her.

Betsy, and I, sighed responsively—she continued—

My lord, says I—I shall be very happy you vill honor my house so far as to walk in—was'nt that right? appealing to Miss.

Oh yes, certainly, vel—

Vel then, you see, he comed into the parlour, and I was so sorry the curtains and chairs were cased up, and the carpet kiver'd, but howsever my lord didn't mind that a bit—but says he, you bind me my dear ma'am, says he, ever to your service by this condescension; I love this inexorable beauty, would make her mistress of my fortune—but she flies my ardent love.

There! said Betsy, I motioned to her to keep silence, Mrs. Arnold went on—

Slights my passion, and will not suffer me to breathe my vows at her feet—pity amiable Mrs. Arnold, a despairing lover; and down my lord fell on his knees to me.

Law, said the delighted daughter, I vish I had been there. Vel—

Vel then, says I, my lord, says I, this here is a very serus business.

Only five minutes, let me have an opportunity to urge my passion five minutes and—

Indeed! interrupted Miss, he will be mistaken, I shall not consent in many five minutes, I assure him, five minutes!

Vel, continued the mother, so I told him as it was a thing of too serus a nature, to resolve on in a minute; but I vould consult my husband, and if he consented, his lordship mought call to-morrow morning, an ve vould talk to his lordship; and dear me, he was so thankful, and bowed so handsomly all the vay he vent out, and made so many apologies for troubling me, as I vaited on him to his viz, a viz, vel after all there is nothing like a downright parson of quality.

Not if he is a lord, mamma, and away the happy pair walked, still harping on the lord, 'till they were out of hearing.

Now said Betsy, as soon as they were gone, I would give my little finger to be sure Miss Arnold is really the object of Lord Morden's pursuit, what think you Farquar?

I shook my head.

Do you know him? said she.

A little.

Don't you think him a shocking creature.

You know him I perceive.

Not a little, I was once in danger of being married to him, and if he were to get me into his odious power again, I fear I must rival our beauty whether I would or not.

My curiosity was now so raised about my amiable little friend, that I told her, I was ready to exchange confidence with her, which she eagerly agreed to—but added she, with a charming naivete—I shall have such a vast deal to say, not that my story is long, but (sweetly blushing and casting down her eyes) it really requires so many apologies, and so much indulgence, that I dare not drop my mask, without a long prayer for mercy; and see those foolish things are returning, come to my room at bed time, and I will tell you all by moonlight, when you can't see me blush.

Mrs. and Miss Arnold then came up, so brisk, and debonair, that all my apprehensions for myself vanished for the present—but to-morrow, oh! what may not happen to-morrow: I hear the family who have been walking in the park return; Betsy's history may perhaps determine me, and fix the waverings of my mind, which are wholly

the result of cowardice; I tremble at the dangers I have past, and my heart recoils when I reflect, it is possible they may not be equal, to what may yet be fated for your

AGNES.

A man belonging to Mr. Arnold is going to London, I therefore send off this letter—God grant it may meet you at Paris.

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LETTER LIII.

Edward Harley, Esq; to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

THE mortal part of your Harley is returned to his native country; harrassed with grief, fatigue, and disappointment, the soul-less fugitive again addresses his partial, his ever dear Butler, and dearer Caroline: he asks consolation from their friendship, and indulgence from their affection.

Whither dear object of my adoration, art thou flown? return, return to thy distracted Harley.

Oh Caroline! will her benign, her undefiled soul, ever bend in pity, and pardon to the wretch who durst insult her purity, with the repetition of a calumny; founded on the ever obstinate error of jealousy, and supported by prejudice? alas! I dare not hope it.

The confusion of guilt I have told you was not on her—yet she fled—threw herself (that dear enchanting form, where the soul of beauty is seen, not in a particular feature, not in the tincture of the skin, the glance of the eye, or turn of countenance; but in an harmonized combination of all that is lovely in woman) alone, on a world where she is literally a stranger.

Oh! Caroline, you who possess the best of human hearts let the story of the injured Agnes warn you, never to give up the cause of your sex, the hope of virtue, and the reputation of innocence, 'till you are sure, 'till your own eyes, your ears, your senses, not the tongue of the malevolent, convince you they no longer exist: and even then, let the value of the gem *you* possess, teach you to commiserate, the irreparable misfortune, of a sister mortal who has *lost* it.

Oh! Agnes, where now is the power of that sympathy, which I fondly said, would lead me to thee wherever thou wert? lost, sunk in the chaos of despair, into which thy absence plunges me.

I am returned to my Hermitage, but my mind refuses to acknowledge its accustomed retreats; it recognizes no spot in my grove, but that where the form of Agnes, once seen is forever remembered. Disgusted with my loved home, my humble friends, and most of all with myself; I fly, with eager avidity, to the bosom of friendship; and while I record my sufferings, and blasted hopes, fancy I hear the rational voice of consolation from my friend, and feel the genial drops of pity which flow from the eyes of Caroline: yes, my sister! indulge the laudable weakness; you will not only weep for Harley, the gentle, the injured Agnes, will also share your pity.

Filled with hopes, which the extravagance of my enraptured fancy, had anticipated, and realized, I left home the moment I had sealed my letter to you.

I travelled post, changing horses oftener than it was either needful, or customary, stopping only to make enquiries at the different stages, for the angel I was pursuing. The first fifty miles towards Calais, I could hear no kind of tidings of her, and the ardor of my hopes consequently a little abated: at G—— it was my misfortune to hear, that a lady, young, handsome and alone, had taken the route to Calais; I followed and traced her from inn, to inn, till she embarked on board a packet, which had sailed from Dover twelve hours before I arrived; not doubting but this was my Agnes, I procured a boat, notwithstanding the wind was very tempestuous, which conveyed me across the channel; where, as I thought I should find myself awkward in the enquiries I had to make, I engaged a young fellow to attend me in quality of a linguist, who spoke English, and in every respect answered a good character, I received of him from the master of the hotel, where I stopped at Calais: from whence again I traced the lady I had followed from G——; she took her route through Lisle, and at last (happily as I then thought) I lodged her at the hotel de ——, where to my extreme joy she yet remained: I found her apartment, and without announcing myself rushed in, and throwing myself at her feet, found it was—— *not Agnes*.

The lady was surprised, but not offended.

Heavens! exclaimed I, am I deceived; is it you, madam, I have followed? and is not Miss de Courci here?

I have not the honor to know Miss de Courci, sir, answered she, in broken English.

Did you come from England, is it you I have traced from G——?

Certainly sir I have travelled that road.

Good God! said I, starting up, and motioning to leave the room—how I have been mistaken.

I, at least am not to blame, said the lady with great good-nature, and you will allow some apology due, for intruding so unexpectedly into a lady's apartment. I acknowledged the justice of her reproof, and accepted her invitation to supper.

I found her a lively agreeable little woman, whose husband, a French negociator, from Dijon, had left her in England, on a visit with some of his correspondents, and whom she expected to meet her at Paris, where he arrived while we were at supper; and the gay creature made him and herself very merry at my disappointment.

The next morning I presented myself at the convent D——, and enquired for Madame St. Lawrens; I was informed she was gone to Abbeville to visit a dying religeuse, for whom she had a particular friendship.

I then asked, if a lady, Miss de Courci, had not arrived at the convent from England?

Miss de Courci, replied the lay sister, who answered my enquiries, is she returning here? shall we again see that angelic creature?—oh! without doubt she comes to console our superior, who will greatly need it when her friend is called to the holy virgin; when sir, may we expect her?

I thought to have found her here, said I, (sighing).

Perhaps she is gone to Abbeville, answered the nun; she was as much beloved by St. Clare, as by Madame St. Lawrens, and now I recollect, there was a talk of sending for her to accompany the lady Abbess.

This was the intelligence I wanted, La Sortine procured the passports, and we began our journey to Abbeville, the next day, which we pursued with the same rapidity with which we reached Paris.

The order of the convent at Abbeville is very severe, it almost equals the famous one of La Trappe.

The sisterhood chiefly consisting of strict penitents, whose whole time, with the very little portion allowed for rest, is devoted to acts of severe penance.

The abbess St. Lawrens is a woman of high birth, and noble extraction; the order of which she is superior, is composed chiefly of women of family. Their rules are simple but not strict. The abbess's countenance is very impressing, the brilliancy of her fine black eyes, and brows, chastened by the humility of her deportment, are charmingly contrasted by her habit, which is white, with a long black veil; she has a custom of walking, and conversing, with her hands folded, which are white as her linen, and beautifully formed; this attitude you would think could not be graceful, but Madame St. Lawrens is grace itself in every sense.

My enquiries for Miss de Courci, soon gained me admittance to the parlour, where Madam St. Lawrens received me—she anxiously asked my reason for supposing Miss de Courci was there.

I mentioned Madame de Vallmont's conjecture.

How sir, said she, in very tolerable English, what is this you tell me? has my Agnes, my child left the house of General Moncrass? what can have happened? has he given her up? does he no longer protect her? has he so soon forgot the engagement of his word? is he regardless of the ties of blood? is the violated honor of his family no more dear to him?—happy St. Clare! you are out of the reach of this fresh misfortune, the few moments you have yet to breathe, shall not be rendered miserable by these fatal tidings:—no! (melting into tears) this is an event shall only be known to thy friend: where is my child? beloved creature, she knows how welcome to the bosom of St. Lawrens she will ever be—speak sir—why do you hesitate? have you more unpleasing news to tell me? know sir, you have little need of precaution—the friend, the sister of my heart, is now breathing her last—I have fortitude to bear a separation from her without repining (yet still she wept) and cannot want resolution to support me under any other event, except indeed—Agnes is no more—except her gentle spirit has been called to join the rejoicing angels, appointed to bear my beloved St. Clare to the bosom of her God.

This lady's manner and words, the tears, which notwithstanding her avowed fortitude gushed in torrents from her eyes, the stillness of the convent, where no voice but hers, nor footstep was heard; all contributed to inspire me with a solemn awe I never felt before: she continued to demand with the most anxious solicitude, an account of her dear

Agnes, while (conscious that my belief of the gross report, I now knew must be false, was the occasion of the rash step the dear angel had taken, which was so lamented by her respectable friend, who would not—who could not have been satisfied with her situation at Belle-Vue, had she not been certain it was consistent with virtue) I stood before Madame St. Lawrens, as much abashed as the original founder of the calumny could have been:—at length, however, my confusion gave way to the entreaties of the lady Abbess—I fell at her feet—and there—almost suffocated with grief and regret, made a full confession of all that had passed between Agnes and me; avowed my adoration of the dear wanderer, and in vindication of myself, acquainted her with the General's separation from his lady, and the universally credited report of his keeping Agnes as a mistress.

It is in vain my dear Butler, for me to attempt to describe to you, the astonishment and anger, depicted in Madame St. Lawrens's countenance.

What a country is yours, sir! said she, as soon as she could articulate, what people have you in it! what contracted, what narrow souls must those be, who cannot allow a virtuous attachment may subsist between the different sexes; how industrious to promote the horrid purpose of slander! how destitute of urbanity is the being who could look in the face of Agnes de Courci, and not read there the modest purity of her mind! but you say (added she, with quickness) she is returning to me—sweet child! how commendable is thy resolution! go, sir, teach your countrymen, and learn yourself, to judge charitably and live righteously! and with these words the inexorable woman left me.

It was to no purpose I implored her to grant me a second interview, I actually besieged her with letters, but could not obtain a single line in answer; yet I continued hovering about the convent, in hopes Agnes would, as Madame de Vallmont had predicted, follow Madame St. Lawrens to Abbeville.

At the end of eight days the convent bell announced the death of one of the nuns—it was St. Clare, the friend of the lady Abbess; I attended among others the funeral oration delivered by the bishop over the deceased nun, and heard an eulogy on her which drew tears from every eye.

The bishop had, he said, married when in the bloom of youth, *her* whom he was now about to bury; and except the one grand false step of her life, which he had not been made acquainted with 'till the last stage of her sickness, he believed he might say she lived without sin; her penitence (he continued) for the secret one she had committed before I first knew her, was to the last moment of her existence exemplary; in this holy sisterhood, said the venerable man, I will not particularize a sin, which was beyond all earthly atonement, they know the penitence, the piety the resignation of St. Clare; but they know not the enormity of that offence which torrents of tears could not expiate; they saw her with all the elegance of form, and grace of manners, which rendered her the object of admiration, wherever she appeared, resign the world, and all its temptations: they beheld the eagerness with which she sought a re-union with her God—they saw her tender frame, unable to encounter the strict rules of this pious society, drop into dust ere yet her days were nearly numbered; but her firm mind they also beheld, strong in faith, and in the midst of tears and repentance, sometimes illumined with *hope*; 'till at length,

the voice of mercy reach'd her departing spirit, and we all witnessed the peace of her last moments.

I made La Sortine translate thus much of this funeral discourse, to give you some idea of the prelate who uttered it, as well as the character of the *friend of Agnes*; the former is a man who honors religion; he lives in his diocese with the universal love and respect of his flock, charity, patience, and forbearance, are the leading traits in his disposition; he is an Italian by birth, and had in another country given the nuptial benediction to St. Clare, he has rose with an unimpeached character through the several gradations of ecclesiastical promotion, to the dignity he now enjoys, and has been ten years prelate at Abbeville.

St. Clare was also a foreigner, she came to Abbeville unknown, and unattended, paid her pension as a lay sister, and immediately discarding all worldly cares, cloathed herself in the strict habit of the order, and went through all the rigorous discipline of the house, with a strength of mind and resolution ill adapted to the delicacy of her form, which by degrees became a sacrifice, to her penitence, and devotion.

The good bishop, influenced by the piety of her character, often visited the declining nun, and administered the consolation he thought due to the sanctity of her character: but it was not till after the arrival of Madame St. Lawrens, when the extreme unction, which *she* partook with her friend, was about to be administered, that she added some particulars to her former confessions, which recalled to the good prelate's memory, the beautiful creature, he had given to an English gentleman at Ancona, twenty years before: from this period, 'till the moment of her dissolution, which contrary to expectation was many hours; he did not leave the bedside of the dying St. Clare, but with Madame St. Lawrens, passed the solemn interval in comforting and praying by the expiring saint. St. Clare, my Caroline, was *one of the women, who formed the mind of Agnes de Courci*.

I did not attempt to interrupt the sacred sorrow to which Madame St. Lawrens now abandoned herself; but followed her after the last mass had been said for her departed friend, to Paris, where I presented myself at the grate the next morning to enquire after her health.

I was, to my infinite joy, immediately admitted.

I found the lady Abbess seated at her secretary, with several large parcels of letters before her, her eyes still swollen with weeping.

Ah! child, said she, as soon as I entered, I am in the utmost distress; here are letters from my poor Agnes, which I ought to have received long since; and heaven knows to what perils she may be exposed by the want of my assistance: I am writing to General Moncrass, if the story you have told me is true, with respect to his illness; for I find all the rest confirmed by my dear child, you will do well to hasten to him; all mystery is now, on our parts at an end; he will probably immediately clear the fame of Agnes, and place her in a situation, suitable to her natural right.

I did not neglect so favourable an opportunity of endeavouring to interest this holy woman in my behalf; I know not what I said, but her answer almost annihilated me.

Miss de Courci will assuredly obey the General, and advise with *me*, before she disposes of her hand; we will hear *your* proposals, Agnes is one of the greatest heiress's your country can boast.

I cannot describe the effect this declaration had on me; all the moisture in my body seemed in an instant dried up; a burning heat and disagreeable taste filled my throat, my tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth, my eyes flashed fire, my legs trembled, and I sunk down in a torpid yet not insensible state; and continued immoveable, 'till some ounces of blood had been taken from me.

The lady Abbess looked at me, I thought, with compassion,—go, said she, yours is a poor nervous system, I pity you! If you are at all interested in the fate of Agnes, you must make haste to England—heaven knows in what hands she may be, had her own wish been gratified, she would have reached this house before my return from Abbeville.—Oh! my poor child! destitute of money, friends, and protectors, what may not at this moment be her fate?

That Caroline was exactly her situation, when she concluded her last letter to Madame St. Lawrens. I engaged to return to Belle-Vue with the utmost expedition, and deliver her letters; where I arrived yesterday.

The General is still confined, and the dispatches I brought, will not I fear, contribute to his recovery; he apologised for not seeing me last night, but wished I would oblige him with my company this morning; an express was sent off by his favorite, Gallini, while I was with Madame de Vallmont, in pursuit, I doubt not, of Miss de Courci.

Ah! Caroline—the greatest heiress in England!—well, and what is there in that—let her be happy—let her be found, and peace restored to her soft bosom, and then, of what import will be the fate of

EDWARD HARLEY.

Since I concluded my letter a thought has struck me, which could I put in execution, might at least give me an opportunity of imploring her pity—I dare not hope for more nor do I now desire it—she is an heiress, a *great heiress*, these were the Abbess's words, and I still poor Edward Harley, with nothing more to offer her than love and a bare sufficiency—but sister, do you not foresee, "*all mysteries at an end*," that General Moncrass may forbid Miss de Courci's hearing the sad complaint of the hapless Harley? he has sent to London express, she is certainly there—what therefore have I to do at the Hermitage?—what at Belle-Vue?—yes—I will follow his express. I shall perhaps be with you before this letter.

Oh my restless—my agonized heart!

LETTER LIV.

Major Melrose to General Moncrass.

London.

TWO odd things have happened to me, during my pursuit of your fugitive; I have in the first place been very near beating my last march, and I have recovered one of the truants of your family; Julia Neville is at this moment peeping over my shoulder: but to be methodical—sauntering home from St. James's place, my old acquaintance, Dighten the jeweller, accosted me, with his usual good-nature, and invited me to look at some fine diamonds, he was employed to reset for the duchess of ——

I hate that woman for her folly, said I, in spite of her pretty face; she has spent more money in altering her old jewels, than would have purchased a new set in addition to them; what say you, Dighten?

Not that I hate her grace for that, replied he, but to own the truth, I know nothing more fluctuating than the fashion of diamonds.

Except, interrupted I, their possessors.

True, Major, said honest Dighten, and as a proof in point, I will shew you the most beautiful pair of bracelets I ever made, which I sold to your friend, General Moncrass, not three months ago; they were presented by him to a young French favorite, who I find has left him; and yesterday she sold them to me.

How! cried I, eagerly, was it Agnes? did she sell you the jewels? are you certain?

I understand so, replied Dighten, she has been described to me, as very handsome, a French woman, and an intriguer of course; she had a young fellow with her with whom I understood, from what little I know of the French language, she was going to the continent; they spoke of a Dunkirk trader, in which they meant to take their passage, which they expected to sail this morning.

Dunkirk! and a young fellow! upon my soul, General, you have infinite obligations to me on the score of fellow-feeling; had a girl of my own served *me* so, I could not have been more enraged:—I just took a cursory view of the bracelets, enough however to satisfy me, they were the identical ones you presented your protégé, and then posted down to Wapping; where I met one of my emissaries, who had been to my house to inform me, that a Dunkirk trader had actually sailed, and that a female passenger had been taken on board off Rotherhithe.

The rage this intelligence threw me into, was observed by an old weather-beaten son of Neptune, who begged my honor to moderate my passion, for that he would engage to overtake the trader before midnight—Come along, then, old boy, said I, putting a guinea into his hand.

Ah General! what is there besides a woman's heart, which gold cannot buy? and I firmly believe the dear things will rather throw them away, than sell them; as to their *persons*—that is—un autre chose.

Old Charon was presently ready with a strong boat, and three other stout fellows, all in high glee, in hope of my further bounty.

Just as I was stepping into the boat, a fine genteel young fellow, pale, and out of breath; came running to the stairs on the very errand which had brought me there; the Dunkirk trader was his object, as well as mine, and he would give any money to overtake her.

My fellows looked wistfully at me, and at the seat of the boat, which would conveniently hold two; I very well knew if I gave the rascals twenty guineas, they would hanker after the one they missed; and moreover, in such a tedious passage as I should have, I considered a rational being to chat with would not impede my expedition, but perhaps encourage the fellows to get on the faster; so, after I had seated myself, I gave the old fellow leave to drive his own bargain with the stranger, who presently was seated also by my side.

As we proceeded, I began to entertain strong doubts of the sanity of my fellow traveller; I attempted to draw him into conversation on various subjects, but his answers, when he did answer, were sometimes so incoherent, and at others so dejected, that I gave the matter up, and buttoning my surtout, amused myself with singing a few jolly camp songs, which highly entertained the fellows: my companion had his amusements too; he was constantly either reproaching the men for their tardiness, or urging them to be expeditious—mountains he would give if they overtook the trader; was not that her? pointing to a vessel before us—no—nor that? no—nor that? stretching himself forward, so that it was with great difficulty, we prevented his falling over the side of the boat.

Come, pull away my lads, said I, the night grows cold, d—n the ship, I wish she was at the bottom of the sea with all my soul.

The madman as I actually thought him, shuddered, for heaven's sake, sir, said he, eyeing me with curiosity, what may be the object of your pursuit, in the ship your wishes devote to such a deplorable fate?

This was the first reasonable question he asked, and I immediately answered with little hesitation, and less good manners (you will say it, General, if I do not) in an elevated tone of voice—A woman.

He started so as again to endanger a fall over the boat side.

The lady is obliged to you, sir, said he, casting a look at me expressive of resentment; a silence ensued, I resumed my song, and he gave himself up to the contemplation of the stars and the music of his own sighs.

And pray, sir, resumed I, as I have satisfied you in respect to *my* motive for taking this agreeable voyage, with so pleasant a companion; may I presume to ask in my turn, what is the magnet which draws you with such violence after this same trader?

A woman! answered he, imitating my tone and manner, so unexpectedly, that I was as much startled as he had been, I was however not displeased at his spirit.

The devil you are, said I, why I am informed there is but one female on board the ship; if therefore we should both be on the same scent, I should like to know in what manner this adventure is to terminate?

Just in what manner you please sir, replied he, very calmly; we now got in a kind of cross purpose acquaintance which suited him much better than the sort of conversation I had endeavoured to draw him into, and accordingly we got on with some spirit, till one of the fellows called to the rest,

There—that is the Dunkirk trader, where? where?—aye, that's she, sure enough, said old Charon, we were now on the tip-toe of expectation, my companion unable from agitation to speak, and myself conning over a wonderful gallant speech which I intended should be my introductory one to Mademoiselle Agnes.

We were soon long side of the vessel, and my young spark was up in a moment, but, I, who you know have a certain alacrity to sinking, and cannot climb like a cat, was obliged to ascend more cautiously: I had, however, the satisfaction to find he had not proceeded a jot the faster for his nimble ascent, as he was yet in high parley with the captain, requiring the sight of a lady; which said lady, the captain manfully swore was not in his ship.

Come, noble captain, said I—I will bet you those ten guineas, the lady you will *shew me*, is not her, this gentleman is describing; and you shall hold stakes.

The man civilly received the money, took off his hat, and led the way to the cabin. The lady, gentlemen, said he aloud, as he entered, is retired to rest, and must not be disturbed.

My companion hung back, I haled him forward, why sure, man, cried I, thou art not afraid of a woman in her night dress; he still held back, so on I proceeded.

The captain pointed to the cabin, where he whispered, Monsieur and Madame were on bed.

Monsieur and Madame I repeated—

Ah! cried my young gentleman, *then advancing*, that cannot be the lady I expected to see; have you no other on board?

The captain swore he had not.

I cannot tell how to think, said I, that the lady I expected to see, would be exactly circumstanced as the captain has represented: but however, for demonstration; and I rapped with my knuckles against the slider.

Condescend fair creature, just to show us the tip of your aquiline nose, and who should pop out her pretty French face, but that little queen of capers, Mitard.

Sacré dieu! Major, I am charmed to see you, vat be you going to Dunkirk?

To Dunkirk, no, God forbid! but pray Madame where in the name of all that's beautiful, are you going?

Oh! I am going to mine own contre, your Englis contre do not agree wid me, I am all over indispose.

And where is Monsieur, is he all over indispose too?

Ah barbare! he use me very ill, I am sepearate from him, I am going to divorce.

You do very right, a woman of *your spirit*.

Ah oui Major, I learn de spirit from your charmante Englis ladies.

Bravo! but who have you with you?

Ah! monchere Major, said the bold thing, shewing her white teeth, and looking through her long black eye lashes; why ask question a lady cannot answer?

I instantly dropped the curtain, and was leaving Madame to her violent resentment against her barbarous spouse, when I recollected the bracelets; and turning to my companion, who had resumed his amusement of star-gazing, and sighing; told him I had a strange fancy, that little Mitard's gallant was of her own sex; I then desired the captain to acquaint her with my suspicions, and to let her know, I must have some more conversation with her—I cannot think added I, again addressing the young man, not immediately having in mind that he was a stranger to my affairs, how she could come by the bracelets, if Agnes is not with her.

He actually shrieked, Agnes sir, Agnes did you say? is it then Miss de Courci you seek? and are we indeed in search of the same object? and have I the honor to address Major Melrose?

All this, replied I, is very possible, nay it is more, it is true—but my recollection is not quite so ready as yours, I have no knowledge of *you*; in short, General, I found myself, I neither knew how, nor why, out of humour; you say the girl is nothing to you, at least as an object of the belle passion; yet for the soul of me I could not look with patience on such a fine young fellow, who pretended to be so much interested in the fate of your protégé.

My name, sir, said he, bowing respectfully enough, without an atom of servility, is Harley; I was, I have reason to fear, sir, the cause of Miss de Courci's leaving Belle-Vue: my anxiety on her account is unspeakable, I have been in France in hope of hearing of her, and was just returned from thence, when I heard by accident, that a young lady who answered her description, had given the captain of this vessel five guineas, to sail a tide sooner than he intended; I followed, you see the event; my heart is innured to disappointment, but this—this last is too keen.

I cannot help it General, it is natural to me to feel my spleen rise at these sort of young fellows, when a girl is in the case; there is a certain something about them, inimical to the interest of us middle aged gents, which always raises my ire.

And pray, young gentleman, said I, a little sarcastically, what may be your *very* urgent business with Miss de Courci, supposing you had *not* felt the keenness of this disappointment?

I am disposed, answered he, gravely, to pay every regard to Major Melrose, which is due to his rank, and character; but I will not abate any thing of what is also due to my

own; you sir, have no right to put that question to me; and much less, when it is accompanied with a look, and manner, as unbecoming in you to offer, as it would be mean in me not to notice; my business with Miss de Courci shall be told only to *herself*: and how displeasing soever to Major Melrose it may be, I will not rest 'till I have an opportunity of seeing her.

Now although I could not but approve of the young dog's spirit, and although I was conscious that my petulance, was on his part wholly unprovoked, yet you know, to feel you are wrong, and to admit it to a man, is out of the soldier's creed; I look on you young man, I replied, as my guest, the law therefore of hospitality, settles this altercation for the present; we shall elsewhere, converse more freely on the subject.

When and where you please, sir, was his answer. A message from Madame Mitard, now informed me, she was waiting my commands.

I found her seated in the cabin, with young Gabriel the dancer by her side.

Monsieur, with a good deal of humour in his manner, asked if I was satisfied as to his sex; and Madame trying to blush, begged to know my further business with her.

I told her I was sorry, and faith so I was, to have interrupted such an agreeable party; but I had a word or two for her private ear.

Oh! pardon me, Major, said the confident thing, casting an amorous glance at her gallant, I have noting private from Monsieur Gabriel.

Very well, madam, then I beg to know, how you came in possession of the bracelets you sold to Dighen, the jeweller, yesterday.

Mon dieu! cried she, what be they stole? ah, I thought Louisa was sly, but I never thought she was teif—no.

Whom do you mean? interrupted I, sternly, how came you by the bracelets?

Oh! Major, rejoined she, in a fawning tone, don't put yourself in a passion, I can tell you very well; Monsieur Mitard pick up a very pretty young woman at N——, when we come from Lord Squander's fete, we keep her two, tree months, and she give us the bracelet for her bord.

Ah! where is she now? cried Harley, this must be Miss de Courci.

Madame shrug'd her shoulders, I know nothing, she leave us with Lord Morden, we never see her after.

This cannot be Agnes, said I, ironically.

No, sir, answered he fiercely, it cannot, you I fancy are not acquainted with that lady.

Oh! joined Mitard, the lady I mean was Louisa Fermer; we were now interrupted by the captain, who informed us his vessel was all this while under sail with a fine breeze, and that the boatmen begged if so be as we chose to proceed to Dunkirk, we would please to discharge them.

On this information we took a hasty leave of Mitard, who, I dare say, was rejoiced at our departure; and returned to our station in the boat, without interchanging a word

with each other: Harley could not want amusement, he had the stars, and the harmony of his own sighs: but as for me, the cold night air, and falling damps, rendered my situation very uncomfortable; and I resolved within myself as we approached Greenwich, that I would knock up Tom Hotham, who being a bachelor, I could disturb without risk, and take a bed at his house; while I was making this arrangement Harley started up, and said there was a fire that instant burst out in the house on the hill before us.

Forgetting I was a few years older than him, and not having then in my mind my aforesaid alacrity for sinking; I must needs attempt to get up in equal haste, but missing the center of gravity, was in a moment plunged into the most disagreeable cold bath I ever was in in my life.

The moon (to be poetical) had now withdrawn her silver beams; the flames of the fire increased amazingly, and cast such a glare on the water, that although as they were rowing against the tide, we were carried contrarywise, I could distinctly see the boat; though they had lost all sight of me; the men indeed were not instantly aware of the accident, and had pulled two or three strokes, before they knew it.

I saw the consternation they were in, but though some score years ago I could swim, I had now neither strength or skill to support myself against the tide; I gave myself up for a lost man, and as I could not call out, made some kind of hollow noise, which I thought would be the last salutation I should give this dear wicked world—Harley heard me, and, noble, generous fellow, threw his coat off, and plunging into the river, swam towards me, in the moment when my senses failed, and I was sinking never to rise; he grasped hold of my collar, and upheld me by main strength, 'till the watermen guided by him took us both in—for my own part, I had swallowed per force a quantum sufficit to drown some half score of your wish wash fellows, and was myself totally insensible, for many minutes after I was carried on shore.

The first thing I saw on opening my eyes, was the poor fellow I had been so pre-determinedly angry with, still without his coat in his wet linen, assisting an apothecary of the neighbourhood in my recovery: what I said to *him*, I do not remember; but this I know, that I played the woman with my eyes; I am cursed angry with the fellow, he would not be a soldier, but nevertheless, Ned Harley shall be my heir: I insisted on his changing his wet cloaths for some the landlord furnished him with, but when I was laid snug, and dry on a good bed, instead of complying with my desire, out sallied my knight errant in quest of more adventures to the fire, and in less than half an hour, rushes into my room with a lifeless female in his arms.

What the plague, Harley, have you been diving again?

No sir, I received this precious burthen from the air—the landlady and a maid-servant were summoned, who chafed her temples, and applied the usual volatiles, and conceive my astonishment, when the two sparkling blue eyes of Julia Neville open'd in a direct stare in my face.

Oh! my dear Major, cried the little bold hussey, running to my bed-side, what providence brought you and Mr. Harley to Greenwich, just in the very minute to save the life of your little friend?

I was dumb with amazement, and Julia, half frantic with joy, went on—

I thought it was all over with me, there was old Arnold, raving and fidgetting about his Nancy, his beautiful Nancy, and Madam Fussock, his wife, screaming out to save her boys, and her china, and begging, and praying her best glasses might be taken care of; the maids all busy preserving of their own trumpery, the stair case which led to my room burnt down before the noise awakened me, when I clung to the window screaming with terror; and oh! I thought then on my own dear mamma, if she had known my situation at that moment, how would her dear maternal heart, have ached, for her child; but there I stood, an example to all such whimsical girls, the grand daughter of an earl, an heiress, and the Lord knows what beside, and no soul to pity me; it was in vain that I begged for help, that I rent the air with my cries, all the rabble of the place were too busy about their friends the Arnold's to mind *me*; I knew Harley the moment I saw him, and actually believed he was an angel sent from heaven to my relief, I surprised him enough I believe, when I called on him to save me, to save Julia Neville, he ran for a ladder, and seemed to fly with me out of the window like a bird, and I was so overjoyed to find you were here, and altogether, that I lost my senses.

Aye child, said I, you lost those when you left your mother; but how the plague came you acquainted in such a place as this?

Why Major, answered the pretty pleader, I may as well tell you the truth, for you will know it; I was so tired of our moping family, so sick of that creature Lord Morden, and so longed to see Reuben: that I—I—in short I wrote to him, to come and carry me off; but I was well paid for my folly; instead of being ready to jump out of his skin for joy, if you will believe me, he wrote me a long stupid letter about honor, and gratitude due to Lady Mary; which so enraged *me*, that I was then resolved to run away, if it were only to teize *him*, and I got, but you must not ask by what means to board in the house (which is now burned) for a trifle, beside teaching the beauty, their daughter, to thrum an old spinnet and make fillagree; to be sure, if it had not been for thinking on Reuben's refusing me, and mamma's vexation, I should have led a fine laughable life there, I assure you I governed the whole family.

Oh! no doubt, replied I, but I hope, madam, you will in future learn to govern yourself.

That I never shall, returned Julia, so Major, you will act your usual friendly part, in advising mamma to give me a master; but, oh, heaven! where is Harley? there is the sweetest girl who I have not seen, where is Harley?

Gone to the fire again, answered the maid.

Good God! she exclaimed, Miss Farquar is certainly burnt, what a selfish creature was I not to think of her before, run, no, I will go myself; and she kept her word, I could not prevail on her to let the servant make enquiries after the person, about whom she was so anxious, but I directed a man and woman to follow her.

She returned so grieved, and shocked, that I insisted on her retiring to a chamber which I had ordered to be prepared for her—the poor young woman is missing, my God, General! I tremble to think how near Lady Mary was to become childless.

I could not sleep, but was obliged to remain in bed on account of a medicine I had taken, as morning approached this restraint became very painful to me, for notwithstanding I sent out every half hour, I could hear no tidings of Harley: about six I got up, and went to the place where the house had stood, which was now burnt to the ground: the sufferers were taken in by some of the neighbours, and only a few firemen and watermen about, I was shocked to hear the young woman's death confirmed, and no less shocked, than astonished at not hearing of Harley, I am half distracted, I have not to this hour been able to learn one syllable concerning him; not a house in the town, or its environs, but what I searched, and this detained me at Greenwich till noon.

I could not prevail on Julia to return to her mother; I have therefore now left her under the protection of the dowager Mrs. Butler, 'till she can make her terms with Lady Mary.

We remain in the utmost consternation about Harley, what can be become of him? Mr. Butler thinks he has by some unexpected means, or other, heard something of Agnes; nothing else, he says, would induce him to act so unaccountably; but he adds, if that be the case, we must not be surprised if we hear of him when and where we have least reason to expect it; I am willing to adopt Mr. Butler's opinion, because I think were it otherwise, if he is alive we should hear either of, or from him.

I have not yet been at St. Jame's-place, Mrs. Butler, (whom I sent to for that purpose) came down in her carriage to Greenwich, to fetch Julia, since which time I have been entirely taken up in searching after Harley, and writing to you.

I congratulate you, General, on your boy's conduct; "very hard," says little Julia, "he should refuse me, because I have a great fortune, when so many girls are run away with for no other reason in the world."

Julia has a *mind*, notwithstanding her volatility, she weeps incessantly for her companion, who perished in the flames. I gave you her little history exactly in her own words, because you should be sensible of the honor of your boy.

God bless you, my dear General, I am almost as eager to hear of Harley, as you are to recover Agnes.

MELROSE.

LETTER LV.

General Moncrass to Major Melrose.

Belle-Vue.

My dear Major,

THE period is at length arrived, you so ardently wished for; the riddle-me-ree, so grievous to your open heart, is in part expounded; the inclosed letter from Madame St. Lawrens, whom you knew at Lisbon, before she was professed; and those of Agnes de Courci to her, will convince you of the laudability of my conduct to the latter, and be in part, a solution of the enigmas, which have involved us all in such distress: and there is yet another discovery, a cursed one, which will come in thunder to the heart of Lady Mary: but her good sense, and native dignity of mind, will support her under it, when she is convinced of the honor, and faith of her Moncrass; and believe me, Major, I did not feel more real rapture, at the first fond hope of possessing my beloved Mary, than I now do, as events gradually open a mystery I could not before explain.

I am still an invalid, or should have now been with you; therefore entreat you will go to the scoundrel Mitard, and take Agnes immediately under your protection; Mrs. Vallmont will join you in three days after you receive this, to conduct her to me—should Mitard presume to prevaricate about her, threaten him, put him to death.

Agnes de Courci, the daughter of Agnes! the niece of Reuben Moncrass! insulted by an opera singer!

Oh! Major, does not the christian name of this dear girl, bring to your recollection, the amiable creature you saw quit the world twenty-five years ago at Lisbon? whom family misfortunes obliged to take the veil, in all the pride of bloom and beauty? her whose abjuration of the world left such indelible regret on your mind? whose image you have sworn, rendered you invulnerable to a serious passion for any other woman? how often have you sighed forth the name of Agnes, yet could not penetrate the veil which fate had cast over her child? yes, Melrose! long did I mourn the fair apostate to our holy church, long resent the wounded fame of my family; but longer still did I lament my lost, my only sister; and the affections of a brother, a twin brother, are far more durable than the religious anger of a catholic: oh! beloved sister! when I received her from the warm heart of my honored father, her face wet with the maternal tears of her virtuous mother, did I not promise to be to her every fond relative from whom she was then parting? blessed shades of my revered parents! if ye are permitted to hover over your son, if in the mansions of bliss ye recognize the spirit of your now happy daughter, you know it was her *own* disastrous fate, not my neglect, not any omission of mine, which so fatally severed the sacred trust from a brother's protecting love—her story, Major, is a dreadful one, it will draw tears of blood from your heart; the moment the sad tale penned by herself arrives, you shall see it: but oh! she is no more! her pure spirit is now before the throne of him, *she only* had offended. Melrose drop a tear to the memory of the most

wronged of women, and grieve with me, that her injuries were known, too late for redress, or revenge; but “vengeance is mine, saith the Lord;” why then rises this swelling rage in my soul? why do my hands tremble, and the hot tear stain my paper? vengeance—ample vengeance has the almighty already taken; thou my sister, art a ministring angel, but who shall say, where the soul is, which destroyed thee?

Oh! Agnes, thy parting sighs, thy groans, thy agonies, will ever live in my memory: “be a father to my child, see that she suffer not by the ignominy under which I languish, restore her to the rights of birth and fortune, clear the fame of your dying sister:” these were the parting words of the Agnes you admired, the sister I adored; and can I forget them? oh! never, never, recover her daughter, restore her to me, openly in the face of the day, I acknowledge her, she is an honor to my family, to myself: in her, the meekness of christianity, is happily blended, with the proper dignity of uncontaminated virtue; no false pride, no undue arrogance, in her, disgusts the most penetrating observer; she has so much innate gratitude in her disposition, that the Marchioness St. Lawrens, insisted on her being early informed she was of honourable birth, and independant expectations, least a sense of obligation, should lower her in her own estimation: woud not her sensibility, said the noble Marchioness: hers, is not the pride of situation, of personal charms, or of temporal advantage; it is the true dignity of noble blood, united with as noble sentiments: and such Major, indeed is Agnes, for in every other sense, she is

“Humility herself, divinely mild,
Sublime religion’s meek, and modest child.”

The misfortunes of her mother, endear her to my soul; she is at present the very first cause with me; nay, I know not whether the domestic grief my protection of her has occasioned, is not on the whole, a matter of internal triumph to me; were I to expend my whole fortune in litigation with the heirs of Neville, what a poor sacrifice would that be, in comparison with the misery of existing near a year, disunited from my adored wife. Sister! beloved Agnes! art thou sensible, canst thou *now* know, thy brother gave up all *his* peace, to secure thine.

She came to me, Major, unattended, and unadorned; a hired chaise, without a single servant, brought her to Bath; her dress was as plain, as deep mourning could make it, she had, to avoid observation, left her nuns apparel at Paris; I had no remembrance of *her* face, but the moment I cast my eyes on her daughter, who in a plain white jacket, looked the blooming handmaid of the graces; my sister, the sister I left at Lisbon, seemed to appear before me, in the very dress, and form, in which I saw her, the day before she was professed.

And does nature then speak to the heart of General Moncrass? said a weak and tremulous voice, which called my attention to the pale mourner, whom the young Agnes was supporting; ah! continued she, gazing earnestly on my face; it is the same noble, open countenance, the same feeling heart, the same sensibility, which still graces the faultless form of Reuben Moncrass.

Nature did then indeed speak to my heart, but the countenance of the fainting female, who sunk on my bosom, did not immediately explain her claims on the soft distress that pervaded my whole system.

She revived, and her eyes opened; as she raised them to heaven, I started; she perceived she was recollected, and mildly requested her young companion to withdraw.

Oh! Melrose, what a scene followed. She sunk on her knees before me, and bending her head and body almost to prostration, hiding her wan face with her emaciated hands, could only weep and groan.

If said I, as my heart informs me, in contradiction to your altered person, you are my sister, my lost Agnes?

Oh! no! no! groaned the penitent Agnes, not *your* sister, not the daughter of the noble Earl, the virtuous Countess of Moncrass, but a poor, wretched, undone, deserted apostate.

Oh! Reuben, I dare not call thee brother; from the high pinnacle, on which thy unstained honour places *thee*, canst thou stoop in mercy, to the degrader of thy race, to her whose folly is thy reproach; to a wretch whose bursting heart, will soon, very soon be laid open, with all its secret woes, before an offended God.

Oh! Major, it was indeed my sister, it was all that grief, and misery had left of the once beautiful Agnes: it was the only treasure bequeathed me, by my honoured father; it was her, whose cheeks, while bathed in duteous tears at parting from her parents, yet glowed in modest confidence, and joy, at being consigned to the protection of her favorite brother: then, she was the opening flower, which the fell blight of sorrow had not blasted! what alas! was she now?

Need I, Major, tell *you*, that I received her, with all her wrongs, to my heart of hearts; that while I clasped her weak, and almost expiring form in my arms; I vowed to perform, religiously, and scrupulously, every behest of her heart; that I received, with solemn regard from her hands, her only child; and that I resolved, whatever it might cost me, to preserve inviolate, 'till her death, the secret history of her unhappy life; yes, my friend! this I swore, and had you seen the innate composure, which extended to her countenance; had you heard the elegant gratitude of her acknowledgements; and had you witnessed her devout thanksgiving to heaven, and her ardent prayers for blessings on her brother, and child; the impression of all on *your* memory, would have been as indelible, as it is on *mine*.

Dear saint! could I wound thee, by telling thee the difficulties of my situation? Oh! no! what barbarian would wilfully disturb the serenity of thy satisfied mind, when all thy griefs were reposed in the sympathising heart of thine only brother; had she known, that the beloved of my soul, my wife, and her lovely daughter, were the beings my promise to her, would oblige me to distress, what an entire reverse, would it have made in the system of consolation, which she fondly said, would support her in her last moments:

God be praised! she died in ignorance of the anguish I have felt on her account; and of the present situation of her daughter.

Reuben delivers you this letter; he rides express to town, accompanied by father Dominick, the good priest, who brought from the Marquis St. Lawrens, my sister's papers and certificates, which were lodged in his hands.

My son has my permission to run away with my sweet Julia immediately; if she will *now* consent to accompany him to Scotland; father Dominick will attend them, and I know, the dear girl will not object to *his* repeating the ceremony; my son will give up every thing for love, but his honor, and his religion.

You are surprised at this arrangement: Lord Ruthven will rave, and Lady Mary consider it as a fresh injury; but no matter; it is an event, necessary to the grand development, which will take place, the instant I receive the packet, from the Abbess St. Lawrens.

I do not suffer myself to doubt, but you will find Agnes at Mitard's; and as you will be awkwardly predicamented, to receive a young lady into *your* house, beg you will, in my name, request Mrs. James Butler to invite her to Soho-square.

Adieu, Major, if the excruciating torture of the gout, did not contradict the assertion; I would tell you I expected to be quite happy; yet how infinitely easier to be endured are the most severe bodily pains, than those which are inflicted by grief, and sensibility on the mind.

MONCRASS.

LETTER.

The Abbess St. Lawrens to General Moncrass.

Paris.

IN the short letter I wrote from Abbeville,* I informed you of the beatification of our once-loved, *now* sainted St. Clare: she died General, as she had lived; a pattern of piety, and an example of resignation; her last hours, were painful in the extreme, considering, how her fine form had before suffered, from her long, and lingering decay.

The bishop attended her last moments, with the attentive piety, which became his character; he held one cold hand, while the other grasped her crucifix, through every extremity of her dying agonies; Victoire, said she, after many hours painful struggles, fixing her dim eyes on me; —we shall meet—yes, St. Clare, dear friend of my soul!—*we shall assuredly meet*—they were her last words, the thought gave a faint smile to her features, which death could not remove.

She had given her cabinet to my care, six days before she expired; and it was my intention to have arranged, and sent her papers to you; but I am deprived of the fortitude, which I trusted, would have enabled me to fulfil her desire, and gratify you, by letters from England, which distresses me, in a manner that affects my body, as well as soul.

From what unaccountable fatality, sir, arose the cruel mistake, which has driven your niece from your protection? fate had drawn the sable veil, which her mother entreated, might conceal her birth; all mystery ended with St. Clare's life; I had already anticipated the triumph of justice, and of truth; when a young man, who followed me to Abbeville, told me an improbable story of the malevolence of your countrymen, which on my return here, I find confirmed, in the letters from my dear child.

I feel myself inclined to upbraid, to reproach you; but you are a partner in her injuries—injuries which I cannot comprehend, how you can share, without punishing; or at least, without convincing the narrow world, how infinitely her soul, as well as yours, outsoar their wicked surmises.

But perhaps, a delicate, and scrupulous regard, to the injunction of my St. Clare, rendered you silently acquiescent, under so bitter a calumny; and you waited with patience the moment when her death—but let me not call it her death, for *she* can never die—you waited then the commencement of her eternal life, to be absolved of your vow of secrecy; but sir, you have in that case, religiously performed one duty, at the expence of another.

*This letter does not appear.

Where is now the dear, the sacred deposit, which your blessed sister left in your hands? read her letters which I inclose,* the people she is with, the indignities to which she may be exposed, will, I have no doubt arouse you into an immediate, and active enquiry after her; you will certainly, when you have recovered her, declare her near affinity; you will take the proper steps to prove the marriage of her mother, and claim for her, the legal inheritance, which that marriage secures to her daughter.

But in the mean time, sir, while *we* arrange, providence may totally annihilate our plans; the object for whom we are so solicitous may suffer, she may be lost; she may fall, the victim of the evil machinations, to which she is exposed; and the fear her letters authorises, actually derange my senses.

Recover her, sir, for the love of Jesu, recover my Agnes—I cannot touch her mother's papers, while I am thus uncertain of the fate of her child—her writing, over which my eyes flow, are reproaches to my heart; Where is my Agnes? are the only words, that present themselves to my ideas, throughout a posthumous volume, addressed to you; but which from weakness, were put loose in her cabinet, and by that means, became mixed with other papers; most of them letters from the vile Neville, which I will spare you the indignity of seeing.

Oh! General, but that I am too anxious to send you my child's letters, to detain Mr. Harley; who poor youth is not fit for the world; what volumes could I write, without exhausting my feelings for her, who no longer groans, under the pressure of that fate, for which *I* still weep.

Till I hear from you, General, 'till I know my Agnes is openly, and honorably received, to her natural home, to the arms of her acknowledged uncle; or 'till she re-enters my convent, 'till her welcome return, fills every vacuum in my temporal wishes; peace will be a stranger to

VICTOIRE ST. LAWRENS.

St. Clare's paquet shall follow as soon as I have resolution to make it up.

*The letters wrote previous to Agnes's leaving the Mitard's.

LETTER LVI.

Edward Harley, Esq; to J. Butler, Esq;

Belle-Vue.

HOW often have I called on my friend, and on my amiable Caroline for consolation, how often wearied you with my complaints, with my despair; and shall a day, an hour pass, when my heart is filled with the most transporting rapture—when my glad eye again reviews with joy, the dear scenes of my youthful pleasures, when the bright gleams of prosperity gild my opening prospect, and when the rapture of love, of reciprocal tenderness expand my heart, without my offering all my best hopes to the participation of such faithful such partial friends?

No, my Caroline! lifted above mortality as I really am, I feel, that *bliss*, beyond what my most sanguine hope painted to my wishes—that even *Agnes*, with the purity of an angel, united to the softest tenderness of dear complying woman, cannot render me perfectly happy, 'till you share it with me.

Yet where, or how shall I begin the extatic tale? I am lost in grateful rapture, when I reflect on the wonderful means by which my felicity has been brought about: and when I recollect the agonies which had almost deprived me of reason, I can hardly believe my happiness is real.

But is it indeed so? am I now writing in the General's library at Belle-Vue? is it certain that I have just left my *Agnes*, in all her world of beauty, mild as the gentlest zephyr's—her melodious voice which beggars all descriptions, rendered yet softer by the sweetest of all passions, her cheeks suffused with blushes, and the modest accents of avowed tenderness for her grateful Harley, yet hanging on her coral lips? oh! is all this real? yes, Butler! but let me relate to the best of sisters, and of friends how I have attained, thus suddenly, to the summit of felicity.

We find, by a letter the General received from Major Melrose, that you are acquainted with our water excursion—but it is also proper, I should tell you by what means I got the information, which carried me after the Dunkirk packet, in pursuit of my *Agnes*; oh! heaven! and is she indeed mine? the thought is too transporting, I must lay down my pen—

* * * * *

I have relieved my full heart—do not despise me, Butler—I have actually been shedding tears—and now will, with more composure, while my *Agnes* is retired with Madame Vallmont, continue my happy story.

You understood by my last, I resolved to go to London; I went post all the way, near Barnet a man called to my driver to beg he might get up behind, which was surlily

refused—it was then near midnight; but what were hours to me? nor night, nor day afforded rest to my sad spirit! the man kept running, and when he could be heard, repeated his petition, at length, and what right, thought I, have I to roll thus at ease; while a fellow creature, whose anxiety may be equal with my own, is thus kept on the rack, both by his impatience, and inability to reach the end of his journey? who knows but he is like me a hapless, deserted lover, and now in this moment experiencing the two extremes of hope and fear, and may not all the nearest, and dearest interest of his heart depend on the hour on which he arrives at the place he is so eager to reach?

These reflections had their weight, I bid the driver open the door of my chaise, and the man very thankfully accepted a seat in it; the act of kindness, totally independent of curiosity being all my aim, I immediately relapsed into the train of corroding reflection, which my fellow traveller had interrupted.

It was so late, or rather early when we stopt at the inn, that I did not chuse to break on your regular hours but ordered a bed there. The person I had taken up was so anxious to be gone, that he was as little disposed as myself, to lose a moment in compliments.

In the morning, after I had breakfasted, and was preparing to come to you, he returned to the inn; and desired to be admitted to thank me for the favor I had done him. In the course of his acknowledgements, he informed me, that he was mate of a French trader—had been to Barnet to take leave of his wife who lived there, previous to his sailing, which was to have been that day; but, that he had received a letter from the captain, informing him that a young lady, who wished to leave England immediately, had engaged him to sail with the morning tide, for which she had made him a very handsome compensation, and he required his mate to join him instantly, “now” continued the man, “as ill luck would have it, I was out spending the evening with my wife, and sister, and did not come home ’till I ought to have been on board, so that notwithstanding your kindness I have lost the voyage.”

A lady, friend? said I, eagerly.

“Yes” answered he, “some young hussey or other, she was in a plaguey hurry, to get out of the kingdom, not for any good I suppose, though they say she was devilish handsome too.”

To me, who conceived the beauty of the whole earth to center in my Agnes, this was undoubted intelligence of her; I ran, or rather flew to Tower-hill, where I met Major Melrose—I have therefore now to carry my narrative on, from the time I left Miss Neville in the Major’s apartment at Greenwich.

I returned by a kind of instinct to the fire; the family who were not injured were making great lamentation, and poor Miss Farquar was echoed from one to the other, ’till it drew the notice of several bystanders, who were informed, a young lady slept in a part of the house which had first taken fire, and the stair-case being burnt, it was impossible for her to have escaped, neither had she been seen attempting it; at that instant the part they were speaking of fell in, and poor Miss Farquar was again the object of general pity.

From this scene rendered more awful by the terrible end of a fellow creature, I was returning by the place from whence I was so fortunate as to rescue Miss Neville, (which having no valuables in it was now deserted) and was lifting my eyes in thankfulness to the providence which had preserved her, when I thought I could perceive a female figure, in a leaning attitude at the window, from whence I had taken Julia; but as the shutter was of a light colour, and the figure rested quite against it, I could not for some time distinguish.

I still continued with my eyes fixed on the place, 'till observing the flames rapidly approaching, and still more confirmed in my idea, that some unhappy being was in a state of insensibility either from fright, or suffocation; I resolved to attempt the rescue humanity demanded; the ladder I had got for Miss Neville was removed, and the people were some gathered round the other part of the building, where the Arnold's principal valuables were, endeavouring to save what they could; and others, who were friends to the sufferers, had their attention fixed on the croud, to prevent their being pilfered, of what they had saved from the fire; a few firemen, and very few there were indeed; but those were also employed in preserving the property.

I called repeatedly both on them, and on the inanimate victim, without gaining any attention from either; at last a lad came up, who asked me if I did not think *that* was a woman? pointing to the window; before I could answer, some trees which were planted at the side of the house took fire, and I then plainly discerned the figure of a female, partly resting on the window frame, and partly against the shutter, and apparently insensible to the danger which surrounded her.

I cried out with sympathetic terror—three or four stout fellows, watermen, came running towards me, and perceiving there was a life at stake very readily offered their assistance, in our confusion we could not get a ladder, although I afterwards found we had several times walked over the one I myself had left there—the object before us seemed to inspire the honest waterman, as well as myself; they dragged a large deal table from some other part of the ruins, and placing it against the wall, stood firm while I by help of their shoulders entered the window, where I found a young person alive indeed, but in a strong convulsion fit; I had not a moment to lose, I caught her in my arms, and was in the act of lifting her out of the window, when the inner part of the room gave way, the floor fell in, and I was providentially left on a kind of cross beam, which formed the bow of the room, with the person still in my arms.

I now expected every moment to be buried in the ruins; the men who had humanely assisted me, were so much frightened by the sudden crash of the building, that they retreated very precipitately from the window, nor could all my persuasions and entreaties prevail on them to resume their stations; they advised me to preserve my own life, if I could, declaring it to be an impossibility to save the woman—and with this cordial advice they left me to my fate.

The lad who was still in sight got on the table, but his efforts were too weak to be of any service; I bid him run to the firemen and prevail on them to come to our assistance,

a moment might be fatal, which he was going to do, but jumping off the table, entangled his feet in the ladder, and with a joyful cry, and an effort of strength nothing but innate humanity could give him, raised it against the tottering fabric, and I had the supreme happiness to bring my heavenly burthen safe to the ground—

* * * * *

Oh! thou Almighty, thou merciful God! thou whose inscrutable wisdom is infinite as thy goodness—and both, boundless as thy power, oh! mayest thou withdraw the breath of life from thy thankful servant, when the blessing of that hour is forgotten.

* * * * *

Sir (said the poor lad, capering for joy) my mother lives just by—better carry the woman there, she'll be out of the croud; and the good creature ran before to shew me the way.

My hair, which had got out of the ribbon was burnt, my face, and hands were singed, and blackened by the smoke and sulphur, but by supporting my angel—for, oh! Butler! it was Agnes herself partly out of the window, I had preserved her from injury.

We presently got to the house (or I should I believe, say hut) where we found the boy's mother was gone to the fire, and had left a light on her rush chair, which would in all probability, had we not arrived in the instant, have made her a sufferer by the same calamity she was witnessing at her neighbours.

There was a bed in the room on which I laid my Agnes; ah! when will my heart cease to throb when I proudly call her mine! the boy brought water, and I was beginning to bathe her temples, when he approached with a light, and I discovered—heavenly God!—I yet tremble—I cease to respire—I feel her deliverance, but Butler I also feel, and sink under the horror of the sensation, the *moment*, the *atom* there was between me and eternal perdition: to live! to exist! to breathe the vital air! and walk erect among the sons of men when *she* was no more!—*impossible!*—*impossible!*

Again the violence of my agitation breaks on my narrative—oh! my friend, I yet see her, lifeless, and deserted—the flower of the world—the pride of nature—the soul of elegance and harmony—the life and light of my existence, was within one little moment of being *lost forever*—do you not shudder, Butler?—sinks not your Caroline with terror on your bosom—oh! if you have sympathy—if you love your Harley—you will like him, fly the dreadful recollection, and rejoice it is past.

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER.

Edward Harley to J. Butler in continuation.

Belle-Vue.

THE first view of my Agnes deprived me of motion—I forgot her situation—the lad held the water in one hand, and the light in the other—I looked, and looked again—I examined her features—knelt before her—felt her hands—her hair—nay, I ventured to touch her cheek, it was then I perceived my hands were black, the print of my fingers remained on her delicate skin. Oh! Butler, what triumph was there in that? yet my soul glowed in transport, when I beheld the trace of my touch, on the soft down of her cheek. Avaunt, ye sensualists, you in whose gratifications soul has no share, and you whose passions are lost in the tasteless apathy, you miscall wisdom—look not on my Agnes—despise not her adoring Harley—for on trifles even lighter than this will the enamoured soul dwell with rapture.

But hark! she sighs—her eyes open—they shine on her Harley—they illumine the poor hut—she cast them fearfully round.

Where am I? who are you, sir? what a terrible dream am I awoke from, or is it real? where is?—but who are you sir?

I was at her feet, Butler, but could not speak a word.

How did I get here? said she, addressing the boy, is Mr. Arnold's house burnt?

Aye, down to the very ground, and you must have been burnt in it, an it had not been for I, and that gentleman.

She cast her lovely eyes down on me, they were swimming with tears, the black on my face prevented her knowing me.

I thank you, sir, I remember now too much—yes, (turning half from me) I thank you, sir, I am a very poor creature, not worth saving, my thanks are poor, but I have nothing else to offer—will you (to the lad) conduct me where I may find the unfortunate family?

What I felt at that moment is inexpressible, not knowing that my face was of the same sable hue with my hands, I concluded the coldness of her address was intended; she was going, she had actually reached the door, my arms were spread and I fell down on my face, I could not speak—she was alarmed.

Alas! sir, what is the matter? are you hurt? speech was now returned to me.

Ah! Agnes! cried I, cruel Agnes! stay and see me expire at your feet, to obtain that one privilege, I have long followed thy fleeting shade, leave me not now without pardoning the wretched Harley.

She instantly returned from the door, and extending her white hand, Harley, is it you? is it indeed you? and am I so happy as to owe my life to Harley? rise my friend, why do you talk of death? you who are so worthy to live, and be the happiest of men. Oh! Butler, what words were these, I hardly dared to breathe lest I should lose a particle she uttered, she acknowledged her Harley was dear to her.

I am going, said the angel, to my friends in France, where I must never see my generous deliverer; but I may pray for him, I may acknowledge without blushing, how mentally dear he is to me.

No Agnes, answered I, let me conduct thee back to the noble, the injured Moncrass; Madame St. Lawrens commands.

Ah! what is it you say, Harley, do you know that honored friend and St. Clare? oh! do they yet love their unfortunate Agnes? how know you it is their command I should return to General Moncrass? have they received my letters? are they acquainted with the reason of my quitting Belle-Vue? what have I not suffered since I took that step, but (putting both her hands before her face, and with a tone at once graceful and moving) who could bear? but say (as if flying from the recollection) have you seen Madame St. Lawrens?

I answered I had.

And St. Clare? but why did they not answer my letters? oh! you would not believe to what cruel indignities, what hardships their silence has exposed me.

I told her Madame St. Lawrens was not at her convent when they arrived, that when she returned from Abbeville—

From Abbeville do you say—oh! my God! what has happened there? St. Clare, my beloved St. Clare is then no more—oh! my heart suggested some dreadful reason for their not writing. Blessed virgin! (falling on her knees, and crossing her lovely arms on her breast, her streaming eyes lifted up to heaven) if from thy holy bosom, my loved, my honored St. Clare, can look down on the miserable being she has left to deplore her loss, oh! may she know the pangs of duteous sorrow which now rend the heart of her Agnes; alas, dear saint! why was I not with thee? why did I not administer to thy last moments? Oh! Harley, your looks confirm my sad presages, she is dead, St. Clare the most tender friend, the maternal guide of my youth is no more.

I could not deceive her, and my silence was a mournful confirmation of the fatal event; yet I besought her to be comforted, Madame St. Lawrens yet lives, and lives but in her Agnes.

Oh! let us fly to her, my dear, my honored lady Abbess; what have not been your sufferings in this dreadful separation; but you are following St. Clare, a saint on earth can have no doubts but she shall rejoin that angel in her state of purification, let us go, sir, let me throw myself with all my faults at her feet, she will forgive, and pity the frailty of her Agnes.

It was with great difficulty I could persuade her to desist from her resolution of going to France; I urged Madame St. Lawrens's wish, the General's impatience to see her,

his indisposition, and the letters he had received from St. Clare wrote with her dying hand, which required her immediate presence at Belle-Vue.

The last plea affected her, she would go, she would never disobey the injunctions of her beatified friend.

By this time the boy was fast asleep; he neither understood our conversation, nor did our agitation excite his curiosity; I roused him, and, Agnes chusing, if, as she said she was to go to Belle-Vue, to set out without any present explanation with the Arnold's; sent him to get a post-chaise, he returned in five minutes, I, prouder of my burden than of a monarch's diadem, lifted her into the chaise, and followed myself: we drove to the first stage beyond London, when I prevailed on her to take some rest, while I made some purchases in the town, such as a cloak, and some linen I thought she would want.

I told the woman at the shop the accident of the fire; and the escape of my angel, that she had a long journey to go, and left it to her to procure what necessaries might be immediately wanted; she acquitted herself so well that I had the bliss to see my Agnes appear dressed in her new habiliment, and smiling her approbation at the pains her happy Edward had taken.

I did not you may be sure hurry the drivers, never was such a journey—I opened my full and honest heart to the charmer of my soul; but, oh! Butler! how shall I do justice to the modest delicacy of her manner, when she owned all the affections of her heart were your Edwards,

My heart, said she (the crimson glow of modesty mantling in her cheek) is all I can call my own; *that* it is no merit in me to give you, for the truant had left *me*, it had abjured *my* power, long before I was sensible of its loss, but in making this confession, I do not engage my person, *that* must not be disposed of but with the approbation of Madame St. Lawrens; yet one thing I *will* promise my Harley, he shall never have any competitor in the heart of Agnes, but her God.

Think—no, you cannot, it is not in language to express, in heart to conceive my transports during the three days we were on the road.

When we arrived at Belle-Vue, Madame de Vallmont was walking on the lawn; she saw Agnes, and too happy for caution, ran back into the house, and informed the General of our arrival; then without waiting to know the effect of her precipitancy, returned as quickly to welcome Miss de Courci back; who was immediately summoned to the General's apartment.

My agitation during the painful suspense which her stay occasioned, is not to be described; I waited alone near an hour; no door opened, nor being was heard to move; all was still, and hush as silence itself; at length a storm succeeded the calm, Miss de Courci was in fits, the General relapsed, and the house in confusion.

Madame de Vallmont came to me, and apologised for leaving me so long; the General, said she, is too much affected to see you, Miss de Courci is very ill, and as for me, my heart feels too much for these amiable persons; you must leave us now, you will soon hear from us.

I begged she would charge herself with my respectful compliments, and with a heavy heart returned to the Hermitage.

This morning an invitation to dinner was brought by a servant, who told me, he had the honor to be appointed to wait on his master's niece.

His niece, answered I, I never heard he had one.

O your honor knows her well enough, Miss de Courci is his niece.

The invitation was from the General, and concluded with a desire, if Mr. Harley had recovered the fatigue of his journey, to see him early.

I immediately obeyed the welcome mandate, and was admitted to the General as soon as I was announced.

Never, my dear Butler, was a man so altered, the traces of sorrow and sickness were too visible on his fine countenance, but a gleam of pleasing satisfaction predominated. Dear Harley, said the worthy man, making an ineffectual effort to rise, what obligations have you conferred on me, on my amiable girl; how can I reward the service I have received from you?

Oh! Butler! Madame St. Lawrens had said, my Agnes was heiress to immense wealth—that was a circumstance I had not once thought of during our journey; to love, to be beloved by her, was a source of such boundless joy, I could admit of no other thought; but it now rushed on my memory, and the General's acknowledgment contributed to oppress me.

How easy, thought I, would it be to reward me, if indeed he values so highly the life I preserved, by bestowing on me the only blessing after which my heart aspires; but then the fatal, the to me undesirable acquisition of wealth, recurred to my idea; how should I dare from my humble station, with my moderate fortune, to look up to the paragon of the earth; who besides the beauty of her charming person, and the goodness of an angel, had also the endowments of wealth, to render her an object of universal adoration? I turned pale, my voice faltered—I dared not meet the General's eye, but my fears were quickly dispersed.

Sit down, my worthy young friend, continued the truly noble minded General, it was the axiom of a wise writer, that "there cannot be a more unhappy man in the world, than him who has never experienced adversity." I am not that unhappy man; but my sorrows did not proceed merely from a sudden reverse of fortune, my whole life hitherto, (a short interval only excepted) has been one continued series of misfortune; I yet remember when at your age I first saw and loved Lady Mary Ruthven; I then experienced the bitterness of hopeless love, the mortification of degraded fortunes, and the anguish of

despair, neither the calamities of my family, nor the successive disappointment of my hopes, were to be compared to what I then suffered.

Yet to me,

“Sweet have been the uses of adversity,
Which like the toad ugly and venomous
Wears yet a jewel in his head.”

I have been a strict observer of your disposition, and I speak it to your credit; the more narrowly I have attended to the movements of your mind, the better I have been pleased; I early saw your attachment to Agnes, I knew your fortune was moderate, but the many years of experience I have had, the various vicissitudes of fortune I have seen, have at least taught me one useful lesson; it has shewn me, the only intrinsically valuable work of the creation, is the *human heart*; yours, Mr. Harley, is above price, and Agnes only can equal you in *modest merit*, in *virtue*, and in *truth*.

Perhaps I shall incur the world's censure for thus disposing of my niece, perhaps I might flatter myself, that her beauty, and fortune, would if seen, and known, restore the house of Moncrass to its pristine honors, but ambition has no charms for her, and far from me be the wish to inspire her with so turbulent a passion.

You are acquainted with the history of my family; a beloved twin sister and myself were the only remains of an antient and honorable house: heirs to the misfortune entailed on an unhappy race, we were born to be buffeted with the billows of adversity: my poor bark was safely laid up in port; patience, and fortitude, had enabled me to support myself, 'till my gracious maker, by his own unerring wisdom, conducted me with peace and honor to the arms of the woman I adored. But my sister became a victim to deceit, and treachery; she sunk under the accumulated woes inflicted on her by a barbarous violater of female honor; yet she had no fault, no crime, after the breach of her holy vows to expiate; that indeed was of such an atrocious nature, no wonder the justice of an offended God pursued her, and made the object of her sinful apostacy, the source of her misery, she is now no more, Agnes is her only child.

He stopt a moment and turned his head away.

As soon as the benevolence of our sovereign was generally known, my unhappy sister obtained (what she had long sought for in vain) some tidings of her brother; she was a lay member of the convent where she breathed her last, and therefore her absence was dispensed with, while she brought her child to me, briefly told her sad story, and claimed my protection, for the offspring of her ill-placed love.

There were circumstances attending her history I could not immediately reveal, my beloved wife conceived herself injured, she considered my attachment to Agnes as criminal, nothing would render her easy, but discoveries I was bound not to make, we parted; but it was not so easy to eradicate the tenderness so many years had impressed on my heart; my love for her, and my life were bound in the same chain; my health has been

declining, had I died she would have seen her Moncrass was unfortunate, but not guilty. I have now hope our reunion will not be deferred, 'till I am no longer capable of assisting the dear woman to reconcile her violent resentment against me to her own heart.

Reuben is gone to London, with my consent to take his Julia's offered hand; it will hurt Lady Mary at first, but in the end she will know it is an act of kindness. You have in the mean while, *my* leave to pay your court to Agnes, win her my boy, and wear her.

Butler, Caroline—do you think I did not kneel, ah! conceive the happiness of your

HARLEY.

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LETTER LVII.

General Moncrass to Major Melrose.

Belle-View.

WITH Ned Harley on the right, and Agnes on the left of my gouty chair, I call for your congratulations my dear Major. Hope once more returns to the habitation she had deserted, and I now look forward to lengthened days and a tranquil old-age. I commission you to promise every thing to my dear Mary—as to the Earl's narrow surmise, respecting my design to aggrandize my son, at the expence of Miss Neville, a short time will convince him how little I deserve such an illiberal censure; and the reflection will rebound from *me* to *him*. The moment I hear from Reuben that Julia and him are one, I will inclose to you the long, sad history of Agnes Moncrass, a history that will involve both Lady Mary, and her daughter in difficulties she does not foresee; she refuses to believe my consanguinity to Agnes, 'till the marriage hath actually taken place—ungenerous Mary! shall I owe nothing to your confidence? well, be it so—mine will be the *triumph*.

Now the mysteries *are* in a train for exposition, you will not deny us your company; you will surely grace the nuptials of your young favorite, and you will see in my charming niece, the same blooming creature you lamented so much at Lisbon.

The punishment of the French scoundrel is an object beneath our attention, but it is certainly right to reward the Arnold's; yet that I think may be deferred 'till the return of the happy pairs (as I trust they will be) to London. Agnes says, she shall like to see Julia make her own explanation at Greenwich.

Be so good as to hasten Dighten, I would have the two sets exactly alike, and if there are finer in the possession of any private lady in the kingdom, I shall not forgive him.

* * * * *

Reuben and his bride are this moment arrived—I inclose the packet for Lady Mary, which you will deliver to her immediately.

MONCRASS.

LETTER LVIII.

Major Melrose to General Moncrass.

London.

My dear General,

MY chaise was at the door, and a whole cargo of trunks chained on containing new finery, to deck out the old beau, at the approaching wedding, when I received your packet.

As I expected so soon to see you, I did not in my last inform you, that the Earl of Ruthven had been attacked with a second paralytic stroke; and that Lady Mary had again attended him to Bath.

I have waited on Mrs. Dowager Butler, she told me, she had heard from you, and that she should follow Lady Mary to Bath in two days; I consulted her on the necessity of my being the personal olive bearer, and we both agreed, that after the extreme violence of her resentment, the conviction of your faith, and her own error, would come more acceptably to Lady Mary unwitnessed; shall I confess, General? I was rejoiced the dowager's opinion tallied with mine on this occasion.

To confess truth, I felt myself far more inclined to join the contented party at Belle-Vue, than to do penance in the company of the worst half of the old peer. All Lord Ruthven's pleasantries and good-humour lay on the side which is now dead, nothing remains but dotage on his daughter, and an undiminished, nay faith, I think it is an increased regard for the dignity of his rank—*our family—our house—and our name*, is the cuckoo song he is never weary of singing; and you know, General, it will be natural for Lady Mary to be happy, when she receives your letter; and it will be just in her to be penitent, for the injury she has done you; both which from what I know of her ladyship, I think she will chuse to be in solo: in that case, as I said before, I must have waited to escorte her to Belle-Vue; and in the interval, for no lady can set out on a journey, without giving half a thousand directions about filling the imperial, should have been consigned to old honor, and dignity, instead of which, I shall be a man of consequence at Belle-Vue.

For these wise reasons, all approved by the old dowager who is Lady Mary's double; *mind that*, General; I have sent Alton express to Bath, with your dispatches; and shall set out to-morrow, on my way to Belle-Vue.

My boy, my dear runaway boy invites me, and let me tell you, I am in my own estimation of importance enough to be consulted on the marriage settlement.

When I adored your divine sister, how little did I foresee a child of her race, would inherit my fortune, but so it shall be—and notwithstanding your family pride, General, he must be a Melrose, let Reuben support your name, and Harley mine.

That little madcap Julia, cost me this morning a thousand pounds; she will have the vanity to say, her eyes wanted no brilliants to set them off—as to Mrs. Harley, she and I shall settle our accounts privately.

An old fellow! no such matter—I am this day but one and thirty; and shall be six years younger when I see my boys happiness compleat.

Have you any very young, very handsome, and very witty damsels in your part of the world, to whom I may in an *honorable* way, toss my handkerchief? I shall be lost, if you have nobody I can make love to.

Madame Vallmont is too old, and Mrs. Butler still older, what as Lord Ogleby says, “can I possibly do with these women?” who are neither young nor foolish.

Tell Julia, she must romp with me, and tell that angelic creature, Agnes, I will not bate her an ace of her mother’s beauty—let me see, she had blue eyes, Agnes, it seems has black; well, as we can’t have blue, why black must do; but her long dark eye lashes, her full but arched brow, her forehead of ivory, her coral lips which always a little divided shewed the pearl, she called teeth, the dimple on her left cheek, and the two brown moles near her under lip, the flowing hair, neck, shape, and arms, of Agnes Moncrass, I shall look for in her daughter, besides

“Song, beauty, youth, harmony,
For these were all hers.”

I shall love the gipsey I know I shall, better than any human being, if she is like her mother.

Certainly, counsellor, if you trust her, though upon my soul, ’tis no small risk.

I was in terrible distress, for a beautiful lass to make love to, when just in the God speed, who should come in, but Butler, and his pretty wife. He is obliged to attend the circuit, and she, impatient to be at Belle-Vue: I told her, I was as mad, as a simple, rattle brained *old fellow could* be, and advised her not to put herself under my protection.

Indèed, Major, she shall.

Well said, Butler, keep to the *she shall*, and thou art in luck.

I breakfast with them to-morrow, and then, hey presto, and away to Belle-Vue.

MELROSE.

The PACQUET.

LETTER LIX.

General Moncrass to Lady Mary Moncrass.

Belle-View.

IT is now, my dear Mary, ten months, since the fatal separation took place that deprived the fondest husband the sincerest friend, of all that was dear to him in woman; a period of time more painfully tedious to your Moncrass, than even the equal number of years which divided me from my first, last and only love; when dwelling among savages, my soul inclined to beings more congenial with itself, and when in the whole christian world, which in comparison with the Ethiop, was all that was desirable; my Mary Ruthven still dwelt on my imagination, loveliest, among the lovely.

Yet dear wife of my fond affection, I blame not you, and believe existence would now be a burthen to me, were I not sure that you would acquit me of every thought of inconstancy to the woman on whom I doat; and of every intention to offend your noble father, or injure my lovely Julia.—Alas! my dearest life! the vices that doom that dear child to bear the mark of heritable shame, does not originate with Moncrass. No, Lord Ruthven! the misfortunes of your family take their date from your tearing more than his life from him, her on whom 'till death he will doat.

I have wrote to Mrs. Butler to entreat she will be with you when this packet arrives, and I beg my loved wife will recollect that the man whose villany has so deplorably injured her is at his *grand account*: that Moncrass her real husband yet lives to adore her, to protect her child, and drop to the veil of oblivion over every painful remembrance; and if the love she once bore him, is not totally eradicated, that thought will carry her with fortitude through the sad story of Agnes, *once Moncrass*, and tremble not Mary, dear creature remember, that though I allowed, in the excess of passion, under the dominion of the baneful influence of jealousy, for all the weakness of a fond woman; yet in a cause where justice, and humanity are blended; I expect you will resume your former perfect self, and soar above the narrow prejudices of weaker minds: in a word, that you will again be the daughter of the house of Ruthven, the wife of Moncrass.

This Agnes Moncrass then whom at my departure from the Brazils, I left a professed nun, and whom you have often seen me lament as lost, not only to me but to God—was the woman whose visit to me in England, was the occasion of so many bitter hours to us both—the young creature for whom my Mary believed I abandoned *her*—her daughter, and both parent and child had a legal right to the name of—but my trembling hand cannot write the hateful characters, which robs my wife of her matronly right, and stigmatizes her only child; indeed my love I cannot—must after once more entreating you to be yourself, refer you to my poor sister's last packet.

MONCRASS.

LETTER LX.

St. Clare to General Moncrass.

Inclosed in the preceding.

Abbeville.

THE awful moment is approaching, it is already in view; when your sister will appear, with all her sins on her head, before the omnipotent creator of the world; when her immortal soul, no longer incumbered with this frail, this slow consuming body, will mount to the blessed throne, where mercy is united with justice; where the sad secret which has long rankled in her perturbed bosom will be laid bare, and where the irrevocable sentence of happiness, or misery, will be pronounced on the deathless part of your Agnes.

This therefore, brother, is the solemn period your unhappy sister fixes on, to pen her sad tale; even now, when the last important change, which proves in one silent moment, more than ages of eloquence, and philosophy, the futility, the nothingness of all human attainments, is already at hand; when you, my loved Reuben, and one more link of the heavy chain which once dragged my soul from heaven, are only in existence.

The all-seeing eye, my brother is *now* on me, it pierces the dark cell of unabsolved penitence; at the time you will read this letter, I shall behold my maker face to face; I pray I may be in mercy spared, that my painful existence may be lengthened, 'till I have retraced the dreadful story of my woes, and of my offences; that so my fate, may afford a warning to atone in some degree, for the sinfulness of an example, which has dishonored my family, my friends, and my religion.

Unprejudiced by passion, unbiassed by interest, under the immediate eye of God, and in momentary expectation of the last summons to his judgment, ah! my brother! need I other vouchers for my veracity?

When warm in youthful ardour, glowing with courage, and shining in wisdom; far above his years; I parted with the most amiable of brothers; he left me, happiest among the happy, and innocent, yet why need I say that, is it in nature for the *guilty* to be *happy*?

Victoire St. Lawrens was a novice in the convent where I was professed; and so entire was our friendship, she implored her father the Marquis to suffer her to take her vows at Lisbon, although his recal to France was hourly expected; but even filial love gave place to the union of friendship and religion; she, but ah! brother! need I speak of her virtue, her piety, or her benevolence; have they not increased with her years, and are they not at this moment, bright presages of eternal glory?

Beloved St. Lawrens—thou constant friend to the unfortunate Agnes—thy tears e'er thou wilt see this last address from a dying penitent, will have bedewed the urn of

her, who ever loved the virtue she could not emulate; from the grave, Victoire, I call on thee; thy sacred word, the unimpeached pledge of truth, will confirm the story of my disastrous fate; for hast thou not been to me, the firm rock on which my soul rested?

At the moment when the misfortunes of our family, severed from me my uncle, and my brother, my tears flowed into the bosom of Victoire, there I found consolation; she was equally the ministring angel of comfort, and of hope; my grief at parting with the dear, and only relations heaven had spared me; was softened by her wisdom and tenderness.

I was young and inexperienced in the ways of the great world, the little one epitomized within the walls of our convent, shewed, it is true, the same instances of selfishness, and narrow minds which dishonor the God to whom they were devoted.

But how inadequate were those, to the number of the daughters of sanctity, and meekness; and Victoire was herself an host to the credit of religion—the bright rays of her unspotted purity shone on me, I shared in the encomiums bestowed on her; our friendship was as perfect as our nature's were uncorrupt; we were uncontaminated by bad example, and alike free from the turbulent passion of pride, or the more degrading one of envy, and our cheerfulness was not tainted by unrepented sin.

In this sweet intercourse of friendship, and the religious exercises of our convent; ah! what a blessed retrospect, it was then only your sister knew real peace.

The confidence which the Marchioness St. Lawrens placed in her Victoire was unlimited; that amiable woman had formed the mind of her daughter after her own model, and knew the strength of her principles.

She furnished her apartment with books, selected carefully for the embellishment of her mind, without inspiring a desire of mixing in society; I partook with Victoire of the pleasure this maternal indulgence afforded.

At our devotions, one soul seemed to animate us, and our superior, who was not remarkably lavish of her commendations, would often say, such pure offerings to God reflected honor on her sisterhood.

Thus my brother, from seventeen to nineteen, blamelessly lived your Agnes; at that period—

Oh God! have the deluge of tears I have shed, the blood which has dropped from my heart, the sorrow, the distraction which has rent my soul; God of mercy! has it not all expiated? oh! before I go hence and am no more shall I not know it has?

An English lady was placed by her brother as a boarder at our convent, Miss Mountague was handsome, lively and fascinating; she had a wildness in her manner which appeared to be tempered with innocence, and sweetness of disposition. She

distinguished Victoire and her friend, and we were equally pleased with her; we were soon made the confidants of her situation.

Mr. Mountague and herself were nearly related to the English consul to whom they were visitors, when he discovered that a favoured lover had followed his sister to Lisbon, whom neither he nor the consul approved; she was therefore sent to the convent, to be kept if possible, from having any connection with the person they disliked.

This procedure exceedingly exasperated Miss Mountague, who represented her lover, in all the glowing colours of a first and fond attachment; he was a man she protested of innate worth, and unimpeach'd honor; that her brother's dislike to him arose from mere family pique, that he *assumed* a right he had *not* of fettering her inclinations, and that in fine, as soon as she was at age, she would certainly give her hand, and fortune, to him who was already in possession of her heart.

Young women, even after they have abjured the world themselves, feel an aptitude to become interested partizans in every tale of love committed to their confidence.

Victoire, and I were anxious for the fate of the persecuted Miss Mountague, and her charming lover, and notwithstanding the vigilance of the lady Abbess, who as Miss Mountague was a catholic had hopes, which were probably encouraged by her brother, of prevailing on her to take the veil, he found means to write to her, letters, and billets, which we read with eager curiosity; they were pen'd with all the ardour of juvenile attachment, happily blended with a fine understanding; and proved the talents of the writer to have been cultivated with no small pains.

Victoire, whose happy temperament of mind accorded with the vows she was destined to take, considered those letters as glowing pictures of the human mind; whose fervor, being directed to the creature instead of the creator, was disturbed by its own violence.

She acknowledged the elegant style of the writer, but *her* general comment was—what pity such fine talents were not employed in the service of the holy church; if he were a priest, could we send him on a mission, what heart so obdurate but must be conquered by his eloquence; what ignorance so stubborn, but must be subdued by the vivacity of his ideas; ah! Mountague, she would add, you owe this man to God.

My mind, fated to error, was more warm in its approbation, on less laudable motives; I had hitherto no conception of other sentiments, than what the devotions we regularly paid our Maker, my friendship for Victoire, and the fraternal love for an absent brother inspired; but Miss Mountague's correspondence, her passionate expressions, and her animated description of her own feelings, though all strictly delicate, discovered a new, and altogether pleasing union of soul, from which *my* vow excluded *me*.

That vow, and all its concomitants, once so desirable became less, and less pleasing; the world, as the fair seducer painted it; was too great a sacrifice to be given up, without some experience, and great deliberation.

The misfortunes of my family, recurred with aggravated sorrow to my memory; it had not only deprived me of parents, fortune, and family honors; but it had also cut me off from all the social blessings of existence, and immured me in the prime of my days, in the austere gloom of a convent, when the delight I took in the dangerous conversation of the English boarder, convinced me, that my fate and inclinations were far from being united. But as the wanderings of the heart were ever attended with a conviction that it was now too late to recal my vow, or change my situation; the new impression which arose from the imbecility and inexperience of a young mind, wore insensibly away.

The correspondence of the lovers was at length discovered, and for some time Miss Mountague was a prey to the most anxious suspense.

One day she was told a lady from the consul waited to speak to her at the grate: what new expedient? cried she, as she sullenly obeyed the summons—she staid a long while; and at her return, her countenance flushed, and animated, anticipated the confidence she was disposed to place in us—she owned she had heard from her lover, whose passion enabled him to surmount every obstacle; the same lady, she said, promised to visit the convent next day, and would be accompanied by a Scotch friend, extremely desirous of paying her respects to me.

It is not mere fancy, my dear brother, which through life impresses the mind with an affectionate, a sympathetic regard for our native country: No, it is a combination of the most pleasing ideas, which calls the memory back through the subtle maze of passing events, to the place from whence we derive our existence; and there fixes it, with a partial and melting sensibility, on scenes of juvenile pleasure; the endearing fascination unites person to place; and thus, while we remember the regretted and never to be recalled scenes of our youth, when borne by destiny to a different part of the globe; the involuntary joy we feel on meeting those, whose first breath were drawn with ours, is an oblation every congenial mind will offer to its native country.

Scotland was a paradise to which I must never return, but it was nevertheless the Eden of my imagination.

Our noble castle, graced with an owner whose open heart, and giving hand, rendered it the asylum of distress; and the dignity, the virtue of our parents, yet lived in my memory.

What were the luxuriant vineyards, the fertile earth, which from its heated bowels sent forth the choicest fruits, and most esteemed viands? what in comparison were they to the serene highland brow, where once our lofty turrets overlooked the large domain, and numerous vassalage, of the house of Moncrass? to the white flocks which fed in peaceful luxury on the mountain tops, the cattle which graced the valley sides, the native sound of our old minstrels bagpipe, and the rude dance in our large hall, where at sun-set, the

young men and maidens met to solace in honest mirth, after the labours of the day? a thankful sacrifice no less acceptable to the prince of peace, than holy prayers, from the deep monastic cell.

Ah! Moncrass! even now, while the dim glimmering of the consuming taper, remind me how fast the long night approaches; *even now*, when in humble hope of the eternal day, which I trust will break on my soul, still to thee dear native Scotland do I turn; and as my first breath, so will my last be thine.

Forgive me, brother, I wander, alas! no wonder; my senses sink at the recollection.

Oh! Scotland! dear country! that saw my noble father! the father also of his clan! the friend of mankind! him, and his manly sons, fit forms for heroes! and fit minds for saints! with all their faithful followers laid low: my mother too, my graceful matronly elegant mother! with her young Duncan, her last born, blooming cherub, brother! brother! *we* were absent, *we* can only conceive, the agonies of her soul, when abandoning herself to despair, she fled from her castle:—ah! could not her birth, her innate dignity? could not the innocence of the blue-eyed Duncan save them?

Oh! Scotland! Scotland! how hast thou encroached on the few hours of life, left the miserable daughter of a ruined family—thy name was a passport to my unalienable heart; *that* Miss Mountague well knew.

Ah! said I, Victoire, this stranger; perhaps she was known to my father, my mother, my brothers, fallen is the boast of Scotland, alas! *they* are no more.

Eagerly did I wait her arrival.

Miss Mountague was unusually solicitous about the decoration of her person; and when I saw her charmingly attired for the interview, I for the first time regretted, that my order would not suffer me to add the same ornamental additions to my person, which I simply fancied were all that were wanting, to render me equally lovely with her.

The important bell at length rang, the visitors were announced.

I ran to apprise Victoire, to my extreme vexation the Marchioness was in the garden with her, I was therefore obliged to accompany the English boarder alone; I regretted the absence of my friend, as if from a presage of the events which were to take their date, from this fatal visit; and expressed a repugnance at going to the grate, without her, which Miss Mountague found it no easy matter, to subdue; at length, partly prevailed on by her entreaties, and partly laughed out of the childish subjection, as she gaily termed my attachment to Victoire, I accompanied her to the grate.

Two tall elegant figures were waiting, they accosted us very politely in the English tongue; Miss Mountague presented me as Lady Agnes Moncrass, her friends were full of acknowledgments for the honor I conferred on them, *one of them*, her I thought my

countrywoman, *particularly*. The wild girl, insisted on removing my veil, merely to satisfy them, I had the cast of my family, and was not an ugly Portuguese.

There was a sprightly kind of resolution in this young woman, which was seldom overcome; yet her perseverance had nothing disgusting in it, with Victoire and me, she always carried any point she chose; she detested the holy order, among whom her brother had placed her; nuns, not individually, but as a body, were her aversion; and notwithstanding all our asseveration, that the habit was our choice, she gave Victoire and myself, the appellation of beautiful martyrs.

Well, brother! you conceive the source of my ruin; you behold me in violation of our rules, unveiled; nothing of flattery was omitted to reconcile me to myself on the occasion, and the gratitude of the two strangers for such an unusual favor, was unbounded.

Ah! said the one, who had not before visited Miss Mountague, is it possible so young, so enchantingly lovely, you can resolve to bury such beauty, such elegance in a cloyster? yet, added the insinuator, that resolution, though injurious to yourself, may, in the general be of advantage to society; since wherever you are seen, the impressions made by that face, will be indelible.

The tender tone in which this speech was delivered, and the sigh which followed it, rather surprised, but did not alarm me.

Miss Mountague presently removed to the farther end of the grate, and the conversation she was holding was sinking into a low whisper, which she appeared not to wish should be interrupted; and as I could readily conjecture the subject on which she was so wholly engrossed, I could not but enter on some kind of chat with the other visitor; yet when she praised the beauty of my person, and regretted my vow, I thanked her, but had the prudence to change the subject.

We insensibly spoke of music, *that* she found was the next enchanting thing about me, I was indeed a *Moncrass*, my mother was allowed to be a perfect harmonist, my tears started, so you know brother she was.

My part in the anthem we chaunted at mass the Sunday before, was I found familiar to this person, who remarked on my beautiful tenor notes, and declared, that while *my* voice was distinguished, the church was the heaven of heavens.

A message from the Marchioness St. Lawrens, called me unwillingly from the grate, which I left, I confessed with reluctance; Miss Mountague was quite out of humour, and I observed, a saddening cloud gathering in the eyes of my new friend, which communicated to my own.

I attended the Marchioness, but was restless, absent, and inattentive; I fancied myself indisposed; even the company of my beloved Victoire, grew irksome, I retired on

pretence of a violent head-ach to my cell: even there, the voice, look, and engaging manner of the stranger pursued me.

The sensations, excited by the too pleasing recollection, of all that had passed during my stay at the grate, were altogether new, and delightful; there needed not the attraction of country to tempt me, to a second meeting with the charming stranger; I even desired it, most ardently desired it; and was unreasonably displeased with Miss Mountague, at our next interview, because she gave no hint that her friends wished to repeat their visit.

The next day high mass was performed, for the soul of one of the heads of a neighbouring convent; ah! thought I, if my friend received such pleasure from the sound of my voice, shall I not gratify so obliging a creature, by my best exertions? doubtless, if I was tolerable *before*, I shall be more so *now*.

If ever my voice merited the encomiums bestowed on it—it was then; the whole choir complimented me, do you not shudder at my wickedness? yes, my soul was raised to a rapturous pitch of harmony; the sisters revered the fervency of my devotion, and the bishop who performed the service, told our superior, that my voice inspired devotion in the most careless; it is said the good prelate truly seraphic; and I observed that in the body of the church, the voice of Agnes, wrought more on my flock than my sermon: blushes crimsoned my guilty cheeks, at the commendations, which had the real source of my zeal been known, would have been changed to reproof; I congratulated myself it was not; ah! brother, in that hour of sin, I forgot the all-searching eye of heaven is everywhere.

Victoire questioned me respecting the strangers, I told her they were agreeable, but forbore to add, that they were enchanting.

The next day, Miss Mountague asked me to walk in the garden, Victoire as usual accompanied us; I read in the eyes of the English boarder, her vexation, and ungratefully participated her sentiments.

I had no doubt of the sincerity of Victoire's attachment to me, nor did I ever put *her* friendship in competition with that of the English boarder; neither had I yet felt the reproaches of my own conscience: but I was blind to the danger, and sensible only to the pleasure of seeing, and conversing, with an amiable person, whose attention I did not wish to share, even with Victoire; there was however no avoiding her company, she hung in her usual familiar manner on my arm, estimating the integrity of *my* heart, exactly by her *own*; and conscious of no concealments herself, suspected none in me; we continued together 'till the bell rang, and as we returned without separating, our boarder had no opportunity of speaking to me alone, as I saw Victoire was a restraint on her.

Just after vespers, Miss Mountague was summoned to the grate, and to my extreme mortification received her friends alone.

My chagrin at this trifling incident, is inconceivable; I had begun a work basket, which I meant to present to my agreeable countrywoman—but my senses were so entirely

deranged by this illusory slight, that unknowing what I did, I was beginning to take it to pieces.

Victoire snatched it from me, what are you thinking of Agnes? said she, in amazement you have begun the prettiest piece of work in the world, and are going to destroy it, before it is finished; why would you remove the flowers?

I had again recourse to my head-ach and walked into the garden, leaving her to arrange the ornament on the basket.

The moment I was alone, I burst into tears, and in that situation was overtaken by Miss Mountague; fancying myself slighted by her, I endeavoured to conceal my vexation.

You are always, said she, so cemented to the side of Victoire, there is no speaking to you, poor Mrs. Douglas, added she, in a fretful tone, was really grieved at not seeing you; there is no expressing the friendship she has conceived for you, read, extending towards me a rich pocket-book, how tenderly she laments your absence.

I have before said, my dear brother, I had not the remotest suspicion of any intrigue, or intended imposition in those people, yet I involuntarily started back.

Nay, said she, putting the book coldly in her pocket, if it be so, if you will not suffer any one to love you but sister Victoire, I shall inform Mrs. Douglas.

Cruel, I answered, I esteem Mrs. Douglas, I had almost said, above all women; but that would be an injury to Victoire.

To say nothing of me, interrupted she, archly.

Well, said I, I am too ingenuous to talk to you, but Mrs. Douglas is the most pleasing person I have seen; and to own the truth, I was not pleased you did not invite me to the grate to day when I knew she was there.

How could I, said she, eagerly, without Victoire?

I started, I had, it is true, some fears that Victoire would so far eclipse my poor charms, both of person, and mind, as to attract the regard, I desired to engross to myself—but I did not comprehend how the same motive should operate on Miss Mountague, and I had yet generosity enough to be offended, at the implied indignity, offered my friend.

It is paying no compliment to the penetration of your friends, Miss Mountague, replied I, gravely, to suppose they would not be pleased with so engaging a creature as Victoire; if Mrs. Douglas is really as good, and sensible as she appears, it is only necessary Victoire should be presented to her; love, and esteem will certainly follow—but how is it, my dear, *you* have taken a dislike to a woman, who is a pattern of piety, politeness, and good-humour?

Me! cried Miss Mountague, I protest I have taken no dislike to her; I only think her a great deal too good, to be entrusted with *all* my mad secrets: but come, Agnes, we talk *at* rather than *to* each other; will you read what poor Douglas has written in the pocket-book? or shall I seal it up, and invite Victoire to our next conference?

Doomed to inevitable destruction, I not only opened the pocket-book, but by consenting to accompany her to the grate without Victoire, I deprived myself of the benefit of her wise observations, and the guard *her prudence*, would have placed over *my folly*.

On opening the book, I found a few lines written, which I here copy for your perusal; you will see my dearest Moncrass, some of the arts made use of to destroy your sister, ah, me! how painful is recollection.

Written in the pocket-book.

There was a time charming lady Agnes, when I believed it impossible I could enter the walls of a convent with pleasure; but you my sweet unfortunate Scot are the unconscious magnet of my attraction; where you are is to Douglas an elysium; how my heart throbbed when the bell summoned our friend to the grate this morning; and how, ceasing to respire, I felt the disappointment, thou dear insensible, canst not conceive: will you not, once more, condescend to see the fondest, warmest of friends? shall I never more, except it be at her devotion hear the voice of my amiable countrywoman? *is* Lady Agnes Moncrass insensible? *can* she be ungrateful?

I will suppose you have read the billet; you see, brother, artful as was the style, had I not been so very innocent, it would have alarmed me.

The next day our visitors were announced; ah! madam, said Mrs. Douglas, is this real, or is it an illusion of my senses? do I again behold you? are my fond eyes once more blest with the sight of that heavenly face? then kissing her hand, she extended it with an air of frank invitation to the grate.

I was weak enough to return the compliment, and my fingers were pressed by a hand which shook so violently I was quite terrified; but what became of me when, on looking earnestly through the black gauze veil, which but half exposed the face of the pretended Mrs. Douglas, I saw her drop on her knees, and in a faltering trembling accent, declare the impossibility of longer imposing on me: charming Agnes continued the impostor, do not destroy me with thy frowns; behold at thy feet the most miserable of wretches; no woman, but a lover, a fond, despairing lover; one who knows not hope, who is lost to all the joys of life, but who, if thou art inexorable to his prayers, who, if thou wilt not pardon, alas! thou canst not reward, will shew thee he at least can die—die, Reuben! how glibly do the vain talkers speak of death.

I can give you no description of my fright, and consternation; I suppose I need not now say, the other was also a counterfeit lady.

Mr. Marshall the lover of Miss Mountague, fertile in contrivance had laid the scheme; and foreseeing that if his visits to the convent were often repeated, a nun would be appointed to attend them, he engaged his friend in order to entertain the expected spy, to accompany him; the discovery of their sex was premature, it was not intended to take place till after she left the convent.

Mr. Marshall swore he was undone—Miss Mountague declared she was ruined, Douglas was yet kneeling hardly presuming to look up, but still earnestly imploring compassion and forgiveness—while I stood aghast, viewing each by turns as they spoke, with visible marks of horror, and amazement; unable to form for some minutes any kind of judgment, of the meaning, or intention of either party.

Presently, however, that is to say, as soon as my scattered ideas began to be collected; the whole transaction, with the sense of my own imprudent conduct, rushed at once on my mind; and I felt such real compunction for *my* part in it, that overwhelmed with shame, and terror, I should certainly have fainted, had not Miss Mountague prudently dismissed the gentlemen, and led me to her room—this presence of mind prevented her secret from being discovered, for Victoire was just gone to my cell, and had I seen her, while I was so dreadfully agitated, I should most certainly have told her all: oh! would to God I had—what guilt and misery had I not then escaped.

Miss Mountague threw herself at my feet, she implored my pity; if Mr. Marshall's visits at the grate were now discovered, her brother would remove her to some more strict convent—and perhaps, for what would not resentment aided by money effect, shut her up for life; she should be miserable—deprived of the man she loved—what was life to her, but a prolongation of wretchedness?—answer, added she, Agnes to the God you serve, for the sin my desperation may plunge me into—on the contrary, if you kindly consent to keep my secret, one month—one little month—puts me in possession of my fortune, and renders me mistress of my actions; the consul is too well acquainted with the laws of our country, to lend his sanction to my confinement here, after that period—dear Agnes! you have my life in your hands—for pity's sake, then—

Thus persuaded, blandished, and threatened; I at last promised not to reveal what had happened—no, not to Victoire; on condition that the pretended Mrs. Douglas was not again admitted.

Oh! my brother—if there is a female whose honor, and whose peace is dear to you; preserve, carefully guard her from the unapprehended, and therefore more to be feared danger of corruption from her own sex; without the aid of vicious or inconsiderate woman, the arts of man would be essayed in vain; oh! that my experience had not rendered *me* thus wise; trace the origin of female ruin, to its first source, in all situations and degrees of life, and you will in general find it, in the art or folly of their own sex.

Had I stopped here, had I, though in the participation of the guilty secret, withdrawn myself from her further concerns, I might have saved my soul from actual sin; for let me confess with blushes, that even *now*, crimson o'er my pallid cheek, the impression made on my heart, by the imposter, was indelible as sudden; and considering his disguise, unaccountable; but to those, who knew the specious dissembler, it will not appear strange, that *he* whose fine person, and finer sense, had always been employed in the art of seduction, should win the heart of an *innocent* like your *poor sister*; his manners so delicate, so insinuating, his voice, oh! let me fly the recollection, left even *now*, my soul rebel against the mercy of my God—he was formed for my undoing, his looks,

tender, expressive, and respectful; stole into my heart, that heart where deceit, and disguise were equal strangers; for never till *his* fatal image took possession there, did it harbour one thought which ought to be concealed.

Miss Mountague, cheerfully complied with my condition; she was the next morning summoned to the grate, and I saw her return with swollen eyes, and dejected mein; she looked at me in mournful silence, as she passed me in the garden—but though I was alone did not speak.

Fool, that I was! I feared some terrible event, the constraint I imposed on myself, in not accompanying her to the grate, had cost me very dear, I was on the rack to know all that passed.

I had indeed resolved never to *see* the fictitious Mrs. Douglas more: *that* was a sacrifice the duties of religion, and the laws of prudence demanded; but did their severity extend to the prohibition of *hearing* of a person, who was in my fond opinion one of the first beings in the creation? it was my misfortune to have known the charming man, but was not that misfortune reciprocal? he had not injured me, and it was not possible knowing the religious order to which I belonged, he could harbour any intentions inimical, either to my peace, or the vow I had taken; why then, secure in my faith, and conscious of the rectitude of my heart; should I deprive myself of the pleasure it gave me, to speak of an amiable man, for whom I might preserve an holy friendship, without injury to honor, or religion?

These were the weak, the fallacious arguments that occurred to me, as I took the circle of our charming garden: fatal sophistry! oh! never let woman trust to the false reasoning of a heart, where passion has once entered; true reason has no residence with love; in the tumult of a fond attachment her voice is not heard, her influence is totally lost, and she is by degrees wholly expelled: yet ingenuous to deceive itself, how many plausible excuses will the mind not admit, and flattering its own weakness, miscall the ruinous folly by the name of reason. But reason, though she appears quietly to retire, and patiently to see her throne usurped—when fell destruction has ravaged the devoted victim, *returns in triumph*, and supported by conscience, strips the veil that obscured her enemies, and speaks in thunder to the sad despairing soul—oh! brother, *thus did I* deal with my better sense, and *thus am I* repaid.

I again met Miss Mountague, who again passed me in silence.

No longer able to conceal my anxiety, or repress my curiosity, when we met again, I hesitatingly accosted her; hoped no ill news occasioned, the sadness of her looks, and ashamed of my own folly, sought to hide the confusion in my countenance, by affecting to gather some flowers, while I asked, if her *friends* were well.

She answered not, but dropped a billet at my feet, and hastily quitted the parterre.

Unhappily, our superior was that instant coming down the walk, accompanied by Victoire, and her mother; the Marchioness, and her son's bride, Madame St. Lawrens, were come to visit my friend, and hearing I was in the garden, were seeking me.

What in this ill-fated moment could I do? the billet lay at my feet; conscience bid me avoid the temptation, wretch that I was! I rejected its admonition.

If I leave it, thought I, the lady Abbess will certainly see it; the contents perhaps will lead to explanations that may ruin poor Mountague, and raise suspicions of me, that would render my future life uneasy; they might even affect the innocent Victoire.

Our superior was a woman of high birth, and haughty spirit, austere in her manner, severe in her principles, and strict in her devotion: she was, nevertheless, extremely open to suspicion, she viewed the actions, and penetrated the designs of her first favorites, with a mistrustful, and cautious observance, and being in her own conduct, an example of rigid propriety, censured without mercy, every error she detected in her little community; she still drew nearer to the place where I yet stood, the guilty billet before me; in an evil moment I took it up, alas! to avoid a temporary mortification, I embraced eternal ruin.

BILLET.

How shall I support my trembling limbs from the convent, should not the object of my adoration deign to hear me? But let me not think it, what thou soft apprehensive charmer, canst thou fear? art thou not guarded, secure, beyond the reach of violence? art thou not inaccessible even to hope? oh! let thy religion, sweet devotee, teach thee mercy; my eternal welfare is in thy keeping; wilt thou not save an immortal soul? let me not depart unblest with thy sight, to look on thee, to hear thee, is all I can ask, or thou bestow; I kneel to thy compassion, once, once more, heavenly nun, once more bless thy Douglas.

You have read the incoherent scrawl. How Moncrass, now that I see the poor contrivance which undid me, dare I hope you will forgive me, for what followed?

The next day Miss Mountague grown bold by success, left a second billet in my cell, even at the foot of the crucifix; and on the succeeding one, a third, more extravagant than either.

I forbear to insult your good understanding, and solid judgment, with their contents; yet, such as they were, they compleated my destruction: long did I dwell in rapture on every line, and implicitly believe the false vows they contained; but it is also long since they have arose in terrible array to punish, and to condemn me; years of penitence have not obliterated the sinful folly from my memory—No! it rises with agonising minuteness, and now fills *that* space with *terror* and *regret*, which *then* glowed with *transport*; I sicken at the recollection and tremble to think, by what progressive villany, that man became the object of my adoration.

Let me not dwell on the hateful particulars; you perceive my fate, I consented to another interview; one only was asked, but another, and another succeeded. What was there in tenderness, in eloquence, in art that was not essayed for my ruin? How often was the sacred Creator of the world, invoked to witness the blackest perjury? What tears were not shed? What anguish feigned? alas! alas! how could I, young, unhackneyed in deceit, and naturally open in my temper, how could I dread danger from vices, which I did not believe existed, among the venial sins, of a degenerate world? Like the innocent lamb, who meets the murderous knife with its offered throat, and fearless of the mortal stab, only bleats from the anguish of the death wound, I fondly believed all my destroyer's vows, shared his regret at my situation, and mourned in real agony the irrevocable vow I had taken; not merely because it was an eternal barrier betwixt me, and the man I adored; but because it inflicted misery on him.

We continued to meet at the grate without suspicion, Miss Mountague was a perfect Argus, but Victoire, was too wise, and too virtuous to be trusted with a secret on which my salvation was staked.

What have I done to you Agnes? she would say, how have I lost your friendship? you avoid me, yes, Agnes, you fly my society, you no longer accompany me to the altar of God, even the path to heaven becomes less desirable to Agnes because her Victoire would tread it with her, how am *I*, or how are *you* changed? my sister, my friend, it is not only Victoire you discard, what is become of that chearful serenity, which used to gild your tranquil days and gave the peace of righteousness to your nights? Oh! Agnes, you have expelled from your heart, friendship, and content; what are the guests you have admitted in their place? your new favorite, the English boarder, has perhaps been giving you sketches of the world, drawn by her lively pencil, and you regret you are not an inhabitant of the place she paints in such glowing colours; be not deceived, my friend, she is herself yet ignorant of the many storms she must encounter; *here* sister Agnes our task is easy, our existence delightful; we live to the glory of the king of kings—we are happy here, we shall be blessed hereafter; how extatic the heavenly enjoyments we are promised, on earth we are free from care, and we shall be received in heaven as the handmaids of our Redeemer; this Agnes is the reward of our pure, our inoffensive lives, return, dear sister, to Victoire—to God.

Alas! Victoire! what painful sensations did thy gentle pleadings create; how often did I throw myself on thy bosom, that faithful seat of holy love, how often has it been wet with my tears—but I was lost, past redemption lost; and instant death, for then the voice of conscience was not heard, would have been less terrible to me, than the deprivation of his sight, on whom my soul hung—and in whom I implicitly confided.

The account he gave of himself, which was also corroborated by Mr. Marshall, was; that he was a younger branch of the house of Douglas, that his father's attachment to the Stuarts had involved his family in the general calamity, which had exterminated mine; his income was a small pension, which however would, if shared with me, be luxury, oh! could he find means to take me from the hated convent.

You tremble, you feel a momentary horror at the apostacy of your sister, you are filled with terror for her lost soul: ah! brother! all was indeed lost; I was eagerly bent on my own destruction, the convent was become hateful to me, it was the sepulchre of my lover's hope; the holy sisterhood, what was their piety to me? were they adored by a Douglas, did they love *like me*, would they not, *like me* languish for freedom? *like me* detest the returning light which shone on my captivity? would they not pine in joyless bondage, and waste the sad hours in vain wishes to escape to the arms of so amiable a lover?

Miss Mountague judged rightly of the disposition of her friends; she was now within a few days of being at age; her brother, too much enraged hitherto to see her, now desired to talk to her in the presence of our superior: it should be, he engaged the last effort he would make to save her from marrying a professed libertine; he desired the two young nuns, her friends, might also be present; he hoped from their known good sense, he should in them find advocates to support his arguments.

Our superior, whose understanding was, at least, in high estimation with herself, was always gratified, when appealed to, in matters where her judgment was the ultimate decision; and though in the case of Miss Mountague, that was not premised, yet she flattered herself, she should either persuade the young lady, to yield to the remonstrances of her brother, or convince him, his opposition to his sister's inclination, was unreasonable; not a little pleased indeed was the good lady, at the compliment Captain Mountague paid her judgment.

Now, said my lover, if ever you escape this dreadful place, Agnes, it must be on the day this conference is held.

I believed it impossible, but added my wish to his, that it were not.

On my knees, Agnes, cried he, in the utmost agitation, let me prevail on you, to be guided by your Douglas; be confident, and nothing can prevent our success; Miss Mountague you well know, will not sacrifice her love for Marshall to her brother's whim; the consequence will be, his declining any further intercourse with her; she will then be released from her confinement, and received to the protection of her relation the consuls lady: when she is gone, think, Agnes, how shall we ever meet more, and can you forever give up the man, who lives but in you? for me, I swear by the Almighty God, the moment you are shut from my sight, shall be my last, *here* if you refuse to join your endeavours with mine, to escape from this worse than prison, my lifeless body shall greet your eyes—your cruel eyes—therefore weep not, but resolve—*now, this very now* is the crisis of our fate, you either give yourself to Douglas, you consent to fly with him, you live in the core of his heart, in the bosom of his love, or you sentence him to die, by his own despairing hand.

The trembling eagerness of him, who too well knew, how inestimable to me, was the life he threatened to end; the big drops of sweat which stood on his bent brow, his eyes raised to heaven, while he made the horrid vow of suicide, all combined to terify,

and persuade; almost insensible with fear, I promised that nothing but death should prevent my following his instructions.

Our superior had an apartment within her parlour, she called her auditory; thither she usually summoned the old nuns on any public occasion, and there also she entertained our bishop, and made her own confessions; it was furnished with books, &c. in a superior style to the parlour, and she resolved to hear Captain Mountague's conference with his sister, and give her judgment thereon in this private apartment; there were two doors to it, one of which opened into our hall, the other into the outer parlour; my lover was acquainted with every particular, he had laid his plan with the utmost caution and deliberation.

Captain Mountague was a little fair man, so delicately formed, that he was called by the young englishmen, chicken Mountague.

As Miss Mountague's intention of quitting the convent was known, the restraint she was first under relaxed; all her letters and messages were delivered to her, and the consul's lady informed her, she had ordered some cloaths, which she intended to present to her, on the day of her coming of age.

On this pretence, a box was sent to the convent, by means of that lady's woman, in which among other things, was a parcel sealed, and addressed to me; containing a suit of Captain Mountague's scarlet cloaths, the colour he usually wore.

The evening before the conference, Douglas advised me to feign indisposition, the deceit was spared me, I was really very ill, my dear Victoire passed the night in my cell, ah! what a night—how did my heart reproach me for my duplicity to my true friend, she prayed for her Agnes, but even the prayers of that righteous woman were ineffective, I had deserted my God and he now abandoned *me*. But though dead to religion, gratitude, and friendship had not lost all influence, my Victoire yet remembers how often and how ardently I embraced her—how—almost speechless with agony I besought her to pray for—to pity the *lost* Agnes.

Her amazement at this expression is not to be conceived, how? lost? my sister! my friend! said she, ah! thou art very ill, thy senses are not right, compose thyself, thou art not lost—God will restore thee.

Never, never, cried I weeping, and at that moment I was on the point of confessing my hidden sin, when the bleeding corpse of Douglas appeared to my imagination, at the grate where he swore it should lay if my escape was prevented; I shrieked, Victoire was terrified, she embraced me, implored me to be comforted, to rely on the intercession of the virgin, she again prayed for me, and thus passed this horrible night.

At last, day approached, when the bells rung to early prayers; the nuns as they passed to chapel all enquired after my health.

Ah! said Victoire, weeping, pray for her, she is indeed much indisposed.

Let me relieve you, sister, said a friendly nun, I will watch with Agnes.

No, answered my friend, she seems now more composed, I will remain with her 'till day, if God sees fit to continue her sickness, you shall watch with her to night.

I now began to tremble, lest the officious zeal of the sisterhood, should prevent my going out of my cell; I therefore affected to be sleepy, and assuring Victoire that I felt myself much better, prevailed on her to leave me; her piety only induced her to comply with my entreaties, she would go, she said, to morning vespers, and pray for her Agnes; I embraced her, I could not restrain my tears, again and again I threw myself on her faithful bosom—softened and surprised, she left me with extreme reluctance—I entreated she would take some rest on her return from chapel, reminded her of the conference, and begged she would make my excuses for not attending; go best of women, said I, pulling my veil over my eyes, which were drowned in tears; the benediction of the saints, and angels follow thee, if I should rise before your return, I will wait for you in the garden.

As soon as she was gone, I wrapped my gown round me, and taking the bundle under my arm, passed the hall into the superior's auditory, which being opened to be aired, I easily found my way through, into the outer parlour, and there entered the light closet which bolted on the inside, and put on the man's apparel. The abbess and all the nuns were gone to vespers; and I waited with incredible patience and resolution, two hours in this place before the ringing of the gate bell announced the expected visitor.—I heard him pass the closet door, with what trepidation may be imagined, I heard the wheel turn, and the portress return to her station.

Miss Mountague had received particular instructions for her conduct; she knew my attachment to Douglas, and how passionately he wished me to be freed from my vows; but as the thing appeared to her totally impossible, and as she was of a very volatile disposition, it never entered her head that such a plan was intended to be carried into execution by her means, without acquainting her with it. But as high spirits are generally soonest affected, Mr. Douglas feared, were she to know the importance *to us* of every minute she passed in the auditory, her anxiety might defeat the very purpose, we were sure she would not fail to forward, all in her power.

Her instructions, which she punctually adhered to, were to commence the conversation in terms, that should enrage her brother; who was a very choleric young man; when it was supposed he would break up the conference in a rage; she was then to affect sudden humility, and by that means, pacify his anger, and recommence the subject of her attachment to her lover, with such mildness, as should give Mr. Mountague hopes of prevailing on her to accede to his will.

Every thing happened exactly as Douglas expected.

In the first emotions of anger, Mr. Mountague was leaving the auditory; the abbess rang her bell to give the portress notice to open the gate, the removal of the seats contributed to the deception, and in that instant I stepped out of the closet; the portress

was hastening with her back towards me to the gate, I found myself in the street deprived of every sense of recollection.

Mr. Douglas was waiting, he received me with transport; Captain, said he, taking me by the arm, you have been detained; then softly, if you love your Douglas, resume your presence of mind, it is too late to retract.

I looked round, the gate of the convent was closed, my very soul died within me.

Come on my love, remember it is your Douglas, that implores you—take courage—the rest of my plan is as well laid as this; we are both lost if we are retaken, if we get clear from hence my life shall be devoted to my Agnes.

His voice reanimated me, I knew the danger we were in, and used my utmost endeavours to keep pace with his wishes; we passed the streets with celerity, and happily without observation, we left the city, and reached the sea shore.

Here Agnes, said Douglas, supporting my tottering steps into a natural cavity in a rock, this must be our dwelling 'till our friend gives us the signal of safety and escape.

The precautions he had taken to prevent my suffering any inconvenience, or taking cold in this place by being exposed to the weather, was a proof of his affection; he had spread a quantity of mats on the floor, if the bottom of the rock, which was covered with shells, could be so called, and over them, as well as on a seat he had made, was spread a rich carpet; he had also provided large fur cloaks to fence me from the cold, there were besides baskets of the best provisions, some wine, and fresh water.

When night advanced, notwithstanding the most tender and delicate assiduities of my lover, I could not suppress the terror my situation raised in my mind.

We were not above a league from my deserted convent, where if I was retaken, a dreadful death was the inevitable punishment of my apostacy; the roaring of the sea, which as the darkness increased, beat dreadfully over our rock; the wind which blew a perfect hurricane; and lastly, the being in such a place, solely accompanied by and in the power of a man, to whom I was not yet married; were all circumstances, which might singly subdue the fortitude of a stronger mind than mine; what therefore must be my terror, under their accumulated weight?

Yet let me here, for alas! such occasions will too soon cease, do justice to the honor, and delicacy, of my lover's behaviour, during this *more* dreadful night, than the *last* which I had passed in the convent.

It is impossible to conceive any thing, more elegantly tender, than his whole deportment; he wept as he supported my fainting body, and when I recovered, cheered my sinking spirits, with the most encouraging protestations of inviolable love, and honor; he endeavoured to inspire me with courage, by assurance of our perfect safety, which could no other way be secured.

For consider my soul, thou treasure of thy Douglas, said he, pressing my cold hands to his breast, the power, policy and intelligence of our enemies; we have not only the civil power to evade, but the whole Romish church are our inveterate foes.

Oh! thou blessed virgin! thou knowest how deep that dreadful truth sunk into my soul; what, cried I, almost frantic, the holy church? the pious bishop, the good sisterhood, Victoire, are you all the foes of the lost Agnes? let me return, let me expiate with my life for my offences; let me be again received into the blessed pale, I have so wickedly deserted.

Agnes, said my lover, falling at my feet, forbear to stab with thy words, the man who adores thee; if thou hast an atom of love for thy Douglas, forbear to wound him with thy unavailing regret; if indeed, continued he, trembling, thou would'st leave me, conceal from me the hateful truth, least it should rob me of the courage necessary to protect and support thee; if Agnes no longer loves her Douglas, what is life to him?

The agitation he was in during this speech, recalled me to a sense of what was due to a man, who had ventured so much in my escape; whom I loved with unutterable tenderness, and to whose honor, I had so unreservedly committed myself; I became more composed and listened to his soothing voice, 'till worn out with fatigue, I dropt asleep in his arms.

I awoke much refreshed, and found he had gently laid me on the seat which was formed, doubtless for that purpose, and having covered me with the cloaks, had laid himself down at my feet, and slept likewise.

It was full day when we awoke, the sea had retreated from the rock, the wind was hushed, and the beams of the sun penetrated our shelter; all was silent around, and my lover advised our conversation to be in whispers; for, said he, I know if it had not been attended with great danger, Marshall would have furnished us with means to leave the coast.

This day appeared less tedious than the former; it was passed in the most delightful anticipations of the happiness we should enjoy in Switzerland; whither my lover intended to carry me; and as my confidence in him, increased every moment, I became less uneasy in the uncomfortable recess, which by degrees lost its horrors; as my love strengthened for Douglas, my regrets at the sinful step I had taken, insensibly lessened, 'till it was no longer remembered.

The second night passed as the first, with increase of confidence on my side, of love and respect on his, and still we heard nothing of Marshall; we were beginning to lay plans for our future existence, and terrified into a belief, that our friends were involved in our distress, when the sea again beating over our rock, I started, ah! Douglas we are betrayed, I am certain I heard the sound of voices.

He eagerly climbed up the back part of the cavity, come, my Agnes, cried he, here are our friends, we have not a moment to lose; and he carried me in his arms to the open beach, where a person muffled in a cloak, who I found to be Captain Marshall, and a large boat with six men waited.

How are my friends? said I, you have no time for enquiries, replied he, adieu, and adieu, as he put a letter into the hands of Douglas, was all we had time to say.

We embarked and presently lost sight of the shore; not a word was interchanged, the men rowed as if their own lives depended on their expedition, and by the time day broke, we were entirely out of the sight of land—a ship, which appeared at a vast distance was the object our men seemed to have in view, and we reached her about noon.

In the mean while, the letter Marshall put into my lover's hand excited my most lively curiosity; I reminded him of it, and he gave it me to peruse.

The contents will ever be engraved on my mind:—my flight from the convent was not discovered 'till evening; Victoire had vainly sought me, after the conference, which ended much to the displeasure of our superior, as she did not find people, who were not dependant on her favour, quite so partial to her opinion, as those who were—she had searched the garden, the chapel, and every where but Miss Mountague's apartment, where it at last occurred to her, I might be; she therefore abandoned any further pursuit, 'till evening vesper, when not meeting me at a part of my devotion I had never before missed; and Miss Mountague declaring she had not seen me, my poor friend ran distracted to the superior, to beg the pond might be dragged, as she feared from my delirium, and despondency the last night, some dreadful catastrophe.

Her request was complied with, but no information was gained, nor any suspicion of my elopement, 'till one of the lay-servants found my wrapper, and shoes in the closet.

It had happened, that the portress who let me out, was suddenly seized with a dizziness she was accustomed to in her head; and was obliged to quit her station, which was then filled by one of the women belonging to the kitchen; who on being personally directed by the abbess had let Mr. Mountague out.

It was in vain the portress on her recovery, and being told this circumstance, protested she had before opened the gate for Mr. Mountague; all she said, was believed to proceed from the disorder in her head, and treated accordingly; 'till the wrapper, and shoes led to a suspicion, that something more than the wanderings of a disordered imagination was the source of her exclamations.

The affair was directly carried to the inquisition, who issued their warrant for bringing Mr. and Miss Mountague before them; the consul appealed from their power to the king; who was pleased to order those young people to remain unmolested.

Victoire was next sent for, but her protectors were still more powerful, as she was daughter to the French ambassador.

The judges of the inquisition and the priests were the more enraged, as they were thus prevented from convicting the supposed accomplices; and had set every possible engine to work, to discover the culprits; my visits, added Marshall at the convent are suspended, but I receive invitations highly flattering to my hopes from the consul.

The vessel on board which you will be received, as an English traveller and his tutor, is bound to Ancona; but will land you on the shore of Barbary, which coast I have informed the captain the young gentleman has a desire to visit; I added, he had lost his passage from Lisbon in an English frigate, by going too far into the country, when she was under sailing orders; you will be set on shore as agreed, from whence I advise you to use all possible expedition 'till you get out of the power of the church of Rome.

This was the substance of Mr. Marshall's letter; and it was too late to object to his plan, had we been so inclined; we reached the vessel and rewarded our pilots, but were yet far from being at ease; for the captain, notwithstanding his agreement, insisted on touching first at Ancona, from whence he intended to freight for the Barbary shore.

Thus remaining still in the jurisdiction of his holiness, we were under constant apprehensions; nevertheless Douglas, at all risques procured a travelling priest, to give us the nuptial benediction as soon as we arrived at Ancona; from whence fortunately we procured a passage on board a Danish merchant ship to Elsineur.

I must not omit to inform you, that Mr. Douglas accounted for my disguise to the priest who married us, by saying I was an English lady who had fled from my friends, to escape a persecution on account of my religion.

If you consider, my dear brother, the pains this man had taken to get me into his power, the restraint his respectful behaviour must have laid on his libertine nature, and the danger he had exposed himself to, you will conclude his joy at the grand completion of his scheme was great; it was indeed unbounded, and his wife became still dearer, than the Agnes Moncrass, who had exposed herself to so many hazards in following him.

We had after our landing at Elsineur, still a long journey to take, before we reached the spot of our destination; but my husband's courage, and perseverance overcame all difficulties, and we were happily settled in a beautiful villa on the bank of the lake of Geneva, when I had advanced too far in my pregnancy to have encountered any further fatigue.

And this, brother, was the most happy period of my life, oh! it was more than so, it was a continued scene of rapture; the tenderness of my husband, was an inexhaustible source of bliss to me, it was the sweet oblivion in which all memory of the past, and all fears for the future were lost; it lulled my conscience, it soothed my cares, and was the tower of strength on which my hope rested; I loved, I adored him, yet would he often dispute pre-eminence with me, on the fond excess of the passion we felt for each other; but ah! how transitory how short lived was this pleasing calm.

The duke of —, who was our neighbour, took a particular liking to my husband, and continually invited him to his parties; but my situation was the apology he offered for declining, any, except hunting, which as he was very fond of the sport, he accepted.

The very first time he partook of his favorite diversion, he was brought home, having in his fall from a vicious horse, received two fractures in his leg, and dislocated his collar-bone; and he was otherwise so much bruised, his life was in the most imminent danger.

All recollection of my sufferings at the sight, was obliterated by a total deprivation of my senses? my child's life was lost, and mine also despaired of—my husband recovered enough to be informed of my situation, without danger to himself, before I was restored to my senses. The measure of my iniquities was not yet full, I had not yet suffered the punishment due to the enormity of my offences, the blow was yet to come which I humbly trust, will at the last great account be received in extenuation, I was yet spared to be numbered among the living.

My recovery was slow and doubtful, the distressful solicitude of my husband is not to be expressed; he was himself very weak, and his constant anxiety for me, preyed on his spirits, impaired his constitution, and retarded the cure of his hurts.

His danger roused me from the stupor the fever had left on my nerves; but my husband was so enervated, and the fever on his spirits continued to increase so fast, our physicians advised, as the dernier resort, the air of Montpellier—he was himself alarmed at a prognostic so terrible, and fell into a profound melancholy, from which I exerted my utmost powers to relieve him—but in vain.

We took the road to Montpellier, my heart breaking over my drooping husband, whose soul appalled by fear of death, shrunk in terror from the impending blow; and terrified at the phantoms of his own conscience, was not one moment satisfied, but when he knew I watched him; I was not only his nurse, but his waking guard.

It was in those sad hours which I passed by the bed of the man I adored, trembling at every sigh, and harrowed by every groan, that conscience first awoke my mind to reflections, forgotten in the reciprocal enjoyment of connubial love; I trembled lest the curses denounced against me by the holy church were now beginning to operate, and thought I foresaw in the loss of my beloved husband, the just vengeance due to my broken vow.

It was indeed beginning, but that had been mercy, even his death, had he breathed his last in my arms, would have been a misery, far short of what I was doomed to suffer.

He still continued to grow worse; one night when I had been offering my weeping oraisons to heaven for his recovery, when I had been imploring the Almighty to spare him, yet a little longer. With folded hands, and streaming eyes, he suddenly besought me to pardon him.

I can neither *live* nor *die*, said he, without confessing how I have *injured* the best of women!

Alas! I replied, you have not injured *me*; supposing he alluded to my leaving the convent, *my own heart* misled me, not my Douglas; let not that sin rest on *thy mind*, it is *me*, who am the delinquent, who ought to feel repentance, and suffer for my offence.

Mistaken angel! answered he, gasping for breath, and dost thou think it is the cursed priestcraft of thy vow, that haunts my mind? do not shudder, it is not yet time, when thou shalt know how I have abused thy unsuspecting nature, when thou hearest me confess, that had I died when I had that fall from my horse, which will I fear, at last destroy me; thou, *thou* my virtuous Agnes, and thy child, had it survived, would have been beggars, without *home, friends, fortune, or character*.

Heavenly powers! answered I, what is it you say, is this a delirium, or what fatal mystery are you about to unravel? we might have been homeless, and what wretches who are so can boast of friends? we might have been destitute of support, but surely the hard world would have left me a widow's right to weep, without wounding my fame.—

No, said he, with violence, it would not, for know thou hast no husband, no such being as —Douglas, is in existence, I am an impostor, I have deceived thee—Now then Agnes, do not curse, but forgive me, and take the only amends in my power to offer.

What he further uttered, I know not, I fell lifeless on the bed by his side; he wept, tore his hair, and raved; called for a clergyman, a *protestant* clergyman.

The servant, whom we had brought with us from Geneva, frightened at his violence, actually ran to the house of an English nobleman, whose family was then at Montpellier, on account of his ill health, who had in their suite a domestic chaplain; him she intreated to come to her master, who was dying, and it was not 'till her return on opening the curtains she discovered my situation.

The good clergyman assisted in my recovery, and in calming the transports of my husband; who without adverting to my vow, or hinting at my elopement from the convent, made the same confession to him, he had before done to me; and implored him to prevail on me to forgive, and receive him *now* as my legal husband; which would, at least, secure to me and mine the protection of his family.

How my soul rose at the deceit practised on my unsuspecting heart, how I detested the imposter one moment, and adored him the next; how often my rejection threw him into despair, from which my frantic tenderness relieved him; you, my brother, who have felt the various excesses of the passion which has ruined your sister, may perhaps, though but imperfectly conceive; let me then hasten to say, that to the reasoning of the divine, and the entreaties of my husband, was added a tender pleader, more interested in the event than myself; I was a second time pregnant, and at length consented to become, according to the rites of the protestant church, the wife of *James Neville*, an Englishman of good family, and as it afterwards proved, heir to large estates in Gloucestershire.

I have already, my dear brother, far exceeded the limits of an epistolary correspondent; but these letters are from the dead; the heart that indites, will cease to throb; the hand that writes, to tremble; life's fitful fever will be past, before you receive them; and all that remains of your once loved sister, will be the daughter of the barbarous man, who ruined her eternal peace, and abandoned her to sorrow, to want, and to the gnawings of the worm which never dies. But I will now close this first packet, lest a confusion should arise to give the best of brothers, one trouble that can be avoided, in the arrangement of the many sheets which will be filled with the sad story, and blotted with the tears of

AGNES NEVILLE.

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LETTER.

St. Clare's posthumous Letter continued.

IT seemed as if revealing his guilty secret was the only thing wanting to recover Mr. Neville; his health and spirits returned with additional lustre; he called me the saviour of his soul and body, and Mr. Dormer, (who was the only person present at our marriage, besides one witness *he* procured on whose prudence he said he could rely) often heard the grateful and tender effusions of a heart, now more endeared to me than ever.

Apprehending that our change of name would excite curiosity, and give occasion for impertinent enquiries; we did not venture to be seen in public at Montpellier, where there then were many people Mr. Neville knew; but left that place as soon as possible, and returned to Geneva, still as Mr. and Mrs. Douglas; where we meant to dispose of our property, and remove to some distant part, either of Switzerland, or Germany (as we feared to venture on catholic ground) and there assume our real name; for he confessed he had reasons, as cogent, as the fictitious ones he had before assigned, which prevented his going to England.

By the time we returned to our house, I was not in a situation to bear the fatigue of travelling; and the continual agitation I had suffered rendered my husband tenderly apprehensive for my life; quiet was certainly necessary, and that I now enjoyed in every sense.

Agnes was born at this happy period; her father received her as the choicest gift of heaven, and how dear she has ever been to the heart of her fond mother, God only knows.

The little cherub was for some months very weakly, and we were in constant apprehension of losing her. The pleasing painful cares, which the sweet stranger brought into the world with her, added to our anxiety to *preserve* her, so occupied us; that we no longer thought of changing our residence; and knowing we could at any time assume our name, I became careless about the matter—I had my fond husband—my lovely child—a pleasant though humble home, where peace and plenty reigned—and what more could I have enjoyed, had I been dignified by the most splendid title?

My husband received his pension through a banker at Paris, who remitted it to him under his feigned name of Douglas; from this person he received an express, which though it gave him a momentary concern, filled him with transport; and oh! how he promised, and swore and how deceived!

A relation from whom he had expectations, was dead, and for us only he rejoiced, his wife should be the Lady Bountiful of his estates—his Agnes the heiress—and himself the happiest of men! He had some affairs to settle in England before he could remove us, but he would go and arrange them, and return to take us in triumph, to his family, and country.

He left us—the *cruel!* barbarous! the worse than savage! left his fond adoring wife—his smiling infant, to grief! to anguish! to despair!

For the first two months I had letters from him every mail. But after that, it was no longer my *husband*—my *lover*—my *friend!* it was Douglas, the imposter, *Douglas*, for by that name he always signed his letters, and *I* from habit unhappily did the same.

I remonstrated on his cruel neglect—bemoaned my own hard fate, and entreated his pity to my unprotected state, his compassion for his child; with alike ill success. For some months he ceased to write at all, but at the end of the eighth he returned—

Yes—the inhuman returned—to impose afresh on my credulity.

The affair he hinted at, as preventing his residence in England, was again, he said, taken up by his enemies (who were people in power) with such acrimony, that he was not safe even in Geneva; *now* that they had *discovered* his retreat: he only ventured to come to me to settle the mode of sending my remittances; he must instantly return; if the disagreeable affair did not terminate to his advantage, heaven knew when he should see me again; two hundred pounds a year would be paid to my order as Agnes Douglas; and without one tender embrace, one look at his poor infant, he quitted our *now miserable* dwelling, with as much haste, as though he feared some dreadful contagion was in it.

The blow was so sudden, so unexpected, and so dreadful; that it threw me into a fever of the brain, from which it was three months before I recovered.

My little Agnes was thought to be dying, when returning reason bid me remember I was a *mother*; and maternal affection was roused at the sight of my sick child; who whether from neglect, or natural weakness, was not only ill, but her little limbs for want of exercise were swelled and contracted, and the fairy as we used to call her, (merely from her sprightliness and agility) was now in danger of becoming a cripple. This sight while it struck to my heart like the icy hand of death, called forth all my faculties; and my sorrows were awhile suspended in the care of my lovely child; whom it pleased heaven to restore, with all the bloom of healthful infancy to her mother's prayer.

You will hardly be persuaded, brother, that so exceedingly simple was I, I actually believed the hasty tale my husband had left my credulity to digest; and that all my senses after the recovery of my child, were absorbed in sorrow for him; I was in constant expectation of his return, and even reproached myself for chiding him for his neglect.

Ah! thought I, at the instant my letters were given to him, he might be overwhelmed with sorrow—do I know he is not now so? was it for *me*, his fond *wife*—the *mother* of his *child*, to aggravate distress, it is *his* misfortune I am not permitted to alleviate? he cannot abandon his wife and child; no! he is himself enduring the woes his absence inflicts on us.

Thus fondly flattering my hopes, and confiding in his honor, I passed two heavy years; but at the end of the second, I was reduced to distress of another kind. My draft

was protested. Monsieur Noverre, the banker who had hitherto paid my pension was dead, and the answer sent by his successor was—that Mr. Neville had closed his account with them.

I should have before told you, that as the pension was paid to my husband by order of Lord Ruthven, I still thought it was to that nobleman's bounty, I owed the subsistence of myself and child: I was therefore not a little surprised, when I found Mr. Neville in his own name had negociated it with the banker; yet, loth still to give up my fond confidence in his principles, I hoped in spite of reason, that a little time would clear up this, and every other ambiguous circumstance, to the credit of *him*, whose *honor*, it was both my duty, and inclination to support.

In the country where we then lived, religion was so tolerated, it was difficult to say what was the established doctrine, most adhered to by the inhabitants. We had a Romish chapel, and a Lutheran church in our little village: the priest to whom I confessed, was a man of unaffected piety, fine sense and universal charity: my sweet Agnes, he used to call his playfellow, and seldom took his evening walk without her. To him, I opened my heart, when having lived another year on the credit my good neighbour gave me, and the sale of what trifling valuables I possessed; I found myself utterly destitute.

Father St. Jerome was the meek practiser of the virtues he taught, he joined with me in opinion, that my husband was more unfortunate than faulty.

Perhaps, said the good man, the nature of the distress in which he is involved, may oblige him to conceal himself; Lord Ruthven may have withdrawn his bounty, and your husband is ignorant of your situation. I have correspondents in England, and will cause enquiry to be made; in the mean while, I will be your almoner: the generous priest was as good as his word, but, oh! brother! how can I describe the anguish I was now fated to endure.

Father Jerome came one morning earlier than his accustomed hour. You have told me Mrs. Douglas, said he, with unusual coldness, and gravity; that your husband and yourself assumed the name of Douglas for *family reasons*; you have made me the confidant of your distress, and I have been willing to approve myself your friend, are you at liberty, may I ask—to disclose those *reasons* to me?

The reverend interrogator looked earnestly in my face, while he was thus solemnly speaking; my countenance underwent a variety of changes, and well might the good man (who knew no disguise in his own actions, and who could suggest no laudable reason why, with respect to him, there should be any in mine) mistake my evident confusion for guilt.

I could not comprehend of what utility *to me*, or satisfaction *to him*, it could be to expose my husband's faults; on the contrary, I believed it my duty to conceal them, to the utmost of my power; when I could do it without injury to my honor, and my religion; yet how to evade so home an interrogation, and to account for its being put was equally hard.

I have always been taught to hold the inventor of a falsehood in abhorrence, nor ever could prevail on myself to consent to evil, that *good* might come of it: after some hesitation therefore, I answered, as I thought my duty to my husband demanded, without violating the truth; that I was *not* at liberty to disclose the reasons for our conduct.

To my unutterable grief, the good father instantly left my house; nor did he as usual call for his playfellow, or condescend to take any notice, either of *her* or *me*, when we met him in our little rambles round the village.

On Friday when I went to mass, instead of that consoling manner that always reached my soul with comfort; he went through the duty of his office, regarding me with a stern, and angry countenance; and as soon as service was over, instead of those benign greetings that were wont to render me respectable to the rest of his flock, he turned into his house without speaking.

Oh! my dear brother! I thought my heart would burst; the only friend (and him raised by heaven) to me and my child, to be thus suddenly and unaccountably prejudiced against me; to be thus cast from the protection of benevolence, condemned unheard.

Alas! what had I done? what tongue so vile to calumniate so very wretched and inoffensive a being? but was this *justice*, was it *religion*, to add to the sorrows of the *poor* and *needy*? how could I have offended father St. Jerome, yet grant I had been so unhappy as to lay under his displeasure, would so good, so holy a man forget the respect due to misfortune?

Oh! no! said I, suddenly stopping, some dreadful cause there is, but *I* am innocent; why then should *I* therefore fear to ask it? I will go back, I will demand of father Jerome the reasons for his behaviour, I will at least know in what I am criminal, and I returned to the village with this resolution.

When I entered the dwelling of the charitable priest, he was distributing alms to the aged of his flock, with the beams of ineffable pleasure glowing on his countenance; my appearance quickly changed the placid smile, into a disgustful frown.

Far from being dismayed at a reception I knew it must cause *him* some pain to give me, it inspired me with courage; I waited 'till his pensioners were dismissed, and then, in a firm voice though not unaccompanied with tears; entreated he would inform me on what account I had incurred his displeasure.

Your own heart, madam, said he, if you scrutinize it will inform you.

My heart, father, is the seat of misery, but— he interrupted me.

It is the seat of depravity, Mrs. Douglas, had *I* deserved, madam, to be charged with your commissions; to expose my own character, and that of my friend, in soliciting a married man, to make provision for a mistress he had deserted?

I was petrified—he proceeded:

Had you, Mrs. Douglas, put on (as became you) the garb of a magdalen; and solicited through me, the means to bring up your child, and support yourself in a state of penitence, and humility; if I had not succeeded in my application to your paramour, there *are* well disposed christians, there *are some virtuous women*, who would not withhold their alms from so pious a purpose.

Let me comprehend you, sir, answered I, with a mixture of spirit and amazement! who are you describing? to what do you allude? and why are *my* ears wounded with such shocking expletives? speak to me sir, in the language you were used to; let me learn from you the plain meaning of words I am so little accustomed to hear.

There, madam, said he, giving me a letter—you have really more natural confidence than I expected—read that—I am going to my closet, you will not perhaps think of demanding a second audience, but should any further explanation be necessary, you know where to find me: with these words he left the room.

I held the important letter in my hand, which was to unveil a mystery I longed, yet feared to develope; my agitation was so violent, and my hands trembled to that degree, I tore the paper in half before I could see the contents—oh! the horror of that moment is still present to my memory, even *now* I tremble at the recollection—it is too much—I lay down my pen—my sight fails me—

* * * * *

End of the Third Volume

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

In *FOUR VOLUMES*.

Inscrib'd with Permission to Col. HUNTER.

By Mrs. Bennett,
AUTHOR OF THE
WELCH HEIRESS, and JUVENILE INDISCRETIONS.

I know thou wilt grumble, courteous Reader, for every
Reader in the World is a Grumbletonion more or less; and
for my Part, I can grumble as well as the best of ye, when
it is my turn to be a Reader. SCARRON.

VOL. IV.

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MDCCLXXXIX.

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

To GENERAL MONCRASS.

St. Clare's Posthumous Letter continued.

Oh that the painful task was ended, that having reposed my sad story in my brother's noble bosom, I might close my weary eye-lids, and no more behold iniquity—oh shut me up for-ever—let me lose in the grave the memory of my sins and the bitterness of recollection—when will this rebellious spirit be subdued? when shall my soul reject vanity?

* * * * *

The letter was from father Dominick, chaplain to the french minister at London: it contained an account of having succeeded in his enquires after Mr. Neville, who had been married a long time to the only daughter of the Earl of Ruthven; that he was in possession of large family estates, and a great personal fortune; that supposing from those circumstances, this could not be the man after whom he was requested to enquire; he had waited on Lord Ruthven respecting the annuity, who was much surprized, and offended at the application, as *his* allowance to Mr. *Neville abroad*, had naturally ceased, when that gentleman married his daughter, and came into possession of his own large fortune.

Father Dominick further added, that he then thought Mr. Neville must have first assigned, and then continued this annuity to some relation; but on enquiry of himself, he acknowledged *he* was the person who had gone by the name of Douglas, that he left a woman, with whom he had some time cohabited, at Geneva, that the matter of the annuity had slipt his memory, but that he certainly meant to continue it: at the same time as he was a married man, and his wife one of the most amiable of her sex, he entreated the matter might be kept secret, least it should disturb her tranquility.

God knows how I was supported thro' the reading of this letter; yet still loth to believe such *villainy*, (*unheard of by me*) could exist in a human breast; a latent hope would arise, even against possibility, that some mistake or misrepresentation had deceived father Dominick, oh brother,

“Love what we see can from our sight remove,
“And things invisible are seen by love.”

Contrary to the expectation of the good priest, I entered his closet, and after calmly re-perusing the killing letter, told him the real reason of my taking the name of

Douglas, the name of the priest who married us at Ancona, and also that of the protestant divine, who repeated the ceremony at Montpellier.

Never was there a more instantaneous change than that which appeared in father Jerome—he wept over me—and declared he would not rest 'till he had probed the heart of my husband: he would not believe his friend could be mistaken, he knew (he said) how cautious he would be of deceiving *him*; you are not my child (continued he) equal to the fraud and vice which are every day to be met in this bad world, but you shall go to England, I am myself preparing to remove to Paris, where I am recalled by my patron the Marquis St. Lawrens.

I shrieked with surprize, the Marquis St. Lawrens, repeated I—ah! where is he?—and where is Victoire?—that amiable, that dear friend—does she exist?—alas! is the poor Agnes totally obliterated from her remembrance?

What is it I hear? answered the good father—Agnes!—ah wretch is it thou?—and has the Almighty found thee then—does his judgment pursue thee—has he arrested thy fugitive soul—dost thou feel his vengeance? And is it the wretch who tempted thee to forsake thy God—by whom thou also art forsaken?

I heard no more—the forfeiture of life! ah what was that! to the agonizing reproaches of my conscience, which roused by the just severity of the Priest, flash'd conviction on my senses: I fell insensate and prostrate before him.

Why should I shock you, with an account of my sufferings?—I was carried home to my miserable dwelling, but not abandoned by the father; who continued with holy zeal to paint the enormity of my crime, and the certain destruction of my soul, if a life of the strictest penitence was not immediately begun, and if I did not return to the humble practice of the most severe duties of the order I had forsaken.

Ah! my child!—my child! cried I—my sweet injured child!—if I *forsake* thee *who* will *protect* thee?

Vain wretch, answered the good man—*thy protection*! how darest thou, who art an outcast of heaven, presume thy protection will avail her aught? rather instantly leave thy innocent child to any outrage of fate, than draw on *her* the curse of *thy* apostacy.

O brother! this was too hard a task; I put myself entirely under the guidance of the holy man, but implored him to spare to me my child.

On condition of my binding myself to leave the world, immediately on my return, he consented to my taking the child with me, and going to England; there to prove my marriage, and do justice to my poor Agnes; where he enjoined me to leave her under the care of father Dominick, to whom he would write; and who would he was sure, procure for her the protection of the ambassador, to whom he was chaplain—Want no money, added the charitable priest, it is in my power to supply you with, do justice on this heretic, and save your own soul.

I left my house, and family matters, to be disposed of by my ghostly friend, for the advantage of those good people who had given me credit; and set out on my journey to England, with my dear Agnes; the most miserable wretch that breathed the vital air.

Ah brother! think on my distraction—you now know my Agnes—she was then just five years old; her natural beauty, undoubtedly greater in my eye, than that of any other person, her manner, and her temper equally engaging, and her opening sense, all that my most sanguine wish could make it.—Figure to yourself the fondest of mothers, with such a child in her arms, not daring to lift up her soul to the God she had offended—the Saviour she had abandoned—to ask a blessing on the innocent offspring of her guilt.

Then how soon was I to part with her forever! oh what a sacrifice did guilt demand!—what floods of tears flowed on my sleeping infant! for while she was awake, so great was her sensibility at that early period of her life, my tears un-nerved her little frame, and my sorrows were sure to affect her health; in love therefore to her, I was obliged to conceal the anguish that filled my soul, even to madness.

Many—many an hour have I hung over her, 'till my senses have forsook me, and I have been either left in a torpid state of insensibility, or seized with fits of despair, which often tempted me to end a being destined to bear the keenest misery—but the dreadful *hereafter*, the fear of meeting the eye of my angry Creator—blessed be his name, prevented me; and a flood of tears generally calmed my mind after those transports of grief, and passion.

In this situation of mind, I reached London, where my first care was to find father Dominick; who, as soon as he was apprized of my arrival, informed me Mr. Neville was in town; and that, if I wished to see him before we made our public claims, in order to be certain of his identity, he knew the hour at which he usually went out, and we might take a hackney-coach and wait in the street near his door—we did so.—

Ah my brother! there needed no more to prove it was indeed *my* Neville—Oh pardon, pardon merciful God!—and oh, my dearest brother! do you too forgive your miserable sister, if she owns, even now, she could gaze with rapture on the dear—the well-known face,—could she one moment separate the image of the man she loved—from the most wicked, and obdurate of human beings.

At sight of him I fainted in the arms of father Dominick, and even Agnes, tho' so young when left by her cruel father her sweet face glowing with extacy, cried out, Mon papa—mon papa.

Father Dominick brought me back to my lodgings with hardly any signs of existence: with the certainty of Neville's identity, the proofs of his guilt came in such undeniable forms to my senses, that altho' I went to England—resolved, had he been innocent, to tear myself from him, to return in penitence to the altar I had perjured myself

to leave; yet the confirmed depravity of him for whom I had broke my holy vow, and given up salvation, struck to my heart: a slow fever immediately seized my spirits, which continued two months; and it was but at intervals, I knew even my child.

During this period, it pleased Heaven to deprive me of the only friend in whom I confided: my confessor, the blessed Priest to whose pious exhortations I owe the returning mercy of God, was called out of this world, to one where I trust my purified spirit will recognize his.

His effects were claimed by the heirs; and his death, which happened at the country Chateau of the Marquis St. Lawrens, being sudden, he was so far from having made any provision for me, that the memorandums of the different sums he had advanced to, and for me, not being erased from his tablets, by the same mail that brought to father Dominick the account of his death, he was also desired by the heirs to procure from me, the money the deceased had advanced for my use.

Father Dominick was too charitable to be rich; he was indeed at this time labouring under many difficulties in his circumstances, occasioned by his being bound in a considerable sum for a member of his church, who had deceived the world, and broke his faith with his friend.—

Nevertheless, my situation was a bond on his humanity nothing could prevail on him to break; he went to Neville and charged him with the crime he had been guilty of, in marrying his present Lady; and the injury offered *me* and his daughter, by such an atrocious breach of the laws of society.

The trembling culprit half-owning, and half-denying the charge, desired the Priest to call on him the next morning.

But he had then acquired more fortitude, and positively denied his marriage; altho' he acknowledged that he had lived with me, and that Agnes was his daughter: he offered to secure to me the former annuity, and to settle a handsome sum on the child, if I would sign a general release and return to Geneva.

Father Dominick represented to him my situation both of mind and body; but added, he was certain I would accept no compromise—that the Priest who married us at Ancona, was now by the particular favor of a cardinal to whom he was related, raised to the dignity of a prelate; and his word would be received as an indisputable voucher.

Who do you speak of said Neville? I never was at Ancona—far be it from me to dispute the word of the prelate you allude to, but I am sure he will not say he married James Neville to Mrs. Douglas,

You observe brother—poor wretch!

But said my friend, Mr. Dormer, the protestant divine will not be persuaded *he* did not hear the confession of Mr. Neville, who had married Mrs. Douglas under that feigned name; nor, that he did not repeat the ceremony at Mr. Neville's particular request.

Possibly not replied he coolly, you will do well to find him:

He is living sir said Dominick,

I do not deny it father, answered he.

He is in England rejoined Dominick, or was not six weeks back.

Neville smiled, and Dominick saw it was a smile of triumph; he was hastening from him to make fresh enquiries after Mr. Dormer, who we afterwards found was in India, but was detained to have the honesty of his nature, the rectitude of his principles, and the honor of his religion insulted, by the offer of a thousand pounds if he would disgrace himself, by conveying your poor, ruined, and then senseless sister out of the kingdom.—

The reverend father trembled with indignation—Never sir, said he, will I again degrade myself by holding converse with you, 'till I can openly fix the odium you deserve on your despicable character.

Sad accounts those my brother, for your Agnes when her reason, but not her health returned; yet eager to prosecute my claim for the sake of my orphan, as it was then likely she would soon be, and dreading to be a burthen on the good Priest; I formed a resolution as extraordinary as desperate.

I wrote to Neville—my letter was brought back—he was gone to his country seat—he had left the poor creature, his legal wife, *sick, insensible, and destitute*; his beautiful child, *poor*, and but for the charity of some good catholic thro' father Dominick *friendless*—Yes—the hard-hearted man had taken a party with him to his villa, *to shoot*, that was the servant's answer.—

Oh thou Almighty—thou long-suffering Saviour!

I procured his address, and sent my letter by post; the contents of which were to inform him without one reproach, that if he did not do me justice by acknowledging his marriage, I would go to St. James's and cast myself and child at the feet of the Queen of England—that I would declare my wrongs in the presence of the nobility of the country, and rely on the mercy, as well as justice of a woman, who was herself the first *wife* and *mother* in the world: I gave him *one month* to consider of my demand.

A letter to Dominick by return of post without a name—but which I knew to be his hand and seal requested a longer time for consideration, which by Dominick's advice I agreed to.

The interval I employed in giving such instructions to my child, as were most likely to leave lively impressions of her mother's fondness in her memory, in humbling my soul before heaven, and in regaining the bodily strength I had lost in my illness.

I was one morning weeping over my little girl, when Dominick entered the room; you are undone madam said he—you must fly this moment—I commit a sin in giving you this notice; and he threw down two papers one directed to Agnes Moncrass, the other to himself.

That to him was a letter from the Marquis of St. Lawrens; it gave him “notice of an information laid before his holiness against him, for harbouring and abetting an apostate nun, and said, no trouble or expence would be spared, *now she was discovered*, to bring the sinful wretch back to a sense of her guilt; father St. Jerome added the Marquis made us acquainted with the miserable fate of the undone creature, my daughter, whose noviciate was spent with her, was content to find that her penitence equalled her crime, and gave up the thought of ever hearing of her more; but now she will perhaps be returned to her convent at Lisbon, and undergo the merciless sentence of the inquisition, Victoire is much distressed, and begs you will give the poor wretch the inclosed; you have my authority to take care of her child, which we hear is a female; and if the heretic, her father will not acknowledge her, send her to us, the Marchioness will protect her.

“It would be absolutely necessary should Dominick be disposed to assist me, (the Marquis further said) for me to leave the place where I then was, and conceal myself in some remote part of the kingdom, where the catholic religion was least known; that so I might escape the enquiries, which tho’ covert, would be surely set on foot; let her not, continued he, depend on the protection of the laws of the kingdom she is in—you well know the *possibility* of conveying from thence, criminals who have not again been heard of.”

To gratify the ardent request of his daughter it was, that the Marquis took this step in my favor; on whom the censure of the church would be incurred if the transaction became known; he therefore sent this letter by a trusty messenger, who had orders to travel post with it, and recommended inviolable secrecy to father Dominick, of whose integrity he had no doubt—

The other letter which was addressed to me, was from Victoire—ah brother! what a letter! but you will see, and know the beloved writer; the abbess of the convent D——, my Victoire, will when her St. Clare is no more; transfer the tenderness she has ever felt for the ill fated mother, to her innocent child—she will also love the brother of her *then*—yes Victoire! I feel I shall then again be *your sister*.

You know the dreadful punishment not indeed more *dreadful*, than *deserved* inflicted, particularly where the inquisitorial powers is held in any kind of reverence, on the few of the professed sisterhood who have been so wicked as to break their vows,* and may conceive the terror I was in; gladly would I immediately have followed the advice of

The punishment here alluded to is that of being shut up forever between four walls, without light or sustenance.*

See letter LXXII, of Agnes to Madame St. Lawrens.

my true friend, but how to disguise myself, how to escape present, and future detection?—there was not a moment to lose—I took—oh my God! what an embrace—of my child, and having hastily changed the dress I had on, for one I had not yet worn in England; I wrote a line for father Dominick, and sent a catholic servant he had procured to wait on me, with my child to him.

I then immediately left my lodgings on foot, without knowing whither to go, or how to inform myself of the part of England, where according to the Marquis's hint, I should be least likely to meet any of my own religion: after rambling in uncertain terror two hours from street to street, I came to a field which led to the high road, where soon after a stage-coach passed me, which was going to a large town on the western road; weary and indisposed, I was obliged to run every risk of discovery, as I found it impossible either to pursue my undetermined way or to return back on foot; I therefore agreed with the driver, and by the particular providence of God, met a female fellow traveller, to whose humanity I was afterwards indebted for my life.

This good creature, who kept a little shop at the place where we were going; had been to London to fetch from the inoculating hospital, a young orphan girl, whom previous to her taking apprentice, she chose as she informed me should have the small pox; and then proceeded to shew me what a fine sort she had had, how little she was likely to be marked, and how well she had got over the distemper.

I took the infection in that moment, my heart sunk, I conceived the girl had a particular smell, although her mistress assured me she had been above a month well, and out of the hospital; and in short, a sudden faintness came over me which alarmed the woman, who then thought of asking me if I had had the distemper; on finding I had not, she very feelingly regretted her imprudence, begged, instead of going to the Inn where the coach stopped, if I had no acquaintance at Reading, that I would accompany her to her house, and let what would happen she would take care of me: I was the more easily prevailed on to accept her friendly offer, as I knew I had money about me, sufficient to defray my expences, whether I lived, or died; and as I found my indisposition increase every moment.

Twenty-one days my dear brother was my life despaired of, and as if God Almighty doomed me to *feel*, and *know*, my reliance must be on *Him* alone; the beauty which had been my ruin, was destroyed by the distemper; besides the marks which my face still retains, the virulence of the disorder left a disagreeable redness on my skin; the long-eyelashes once the delight of my false husband, were half destroyed, and my eyes too weak, and too sore to bear the light, were no longer objects to excite admiration.

No brother! it was not a vain pride of person, *that* was entirely annihilated; the desertion of Neville, spoke the futility of personal beauty too decidedly to be mistaken: it was *him* the yet dear, the yet *loved father* of my *Agnes*, for whom my heart sunk when I beheld my own altered face—yes the pang was torture, it was *Neville's*.

Ah! thought I, he may now turn disgusted from a face he no longer knows; he may deny his wedded Agnes, she exists no longer; those, and they were witnessed by floods of tears, were my first regrets, but they were also the last struggles of sinful passion; and religion soon reconciled me to the loss of beauty.

But said I, and my heart bounded in rapture; I may now embrace my child, I may fold her to my fond maternal heart, and I may again behold Victoire; severe in virgin purity, in religious fervor as she is, when I can convince her of the sincerity of my repentance, when she is acquainted with my suffering, her soul will re-acknowledge the friend of her youth, and oh heavenly extacy! I may yet be received into the bosom of our holy church without fear of temporal torture.

I need not remark to you, how unlikely it was I should be known with the marks I have described; since you had not the least recollection of the face, of your once well known sister: I continued at Reading 'till I had recovered my strength, and nothing left to distinguish my face, but its homeliness; when I took leave of my hostess, and returned to London.

My first grand object was to see if father Dominick would know me; I accordingly went to the chapel, where I took care to stand so as to attract his notice, and afterwards received the sacrament at his hands, without his having the most remote recollection of my person.

I then wrote to him by post; but as I could not be sure the worthy man might not, particularly if he returned to France, be questioned concerning me, by some of the devotees the wicked Neville had contrived to inform of his protection of me; I forbore to expose him to the disagreeable alternative, of varying from the truth, or betraying me; and only acquainted him, I was out of danger, without informing him of particulars; I implored him to tell me what he had done with my child, and hinted my intention of returning to the religious life I had so wickedly deserted.

His answer confirmed my resolution; my child he said, had been received by the Marchioness St. Lawrens; on whom her beauty, and innocence had gained so much, that she condescended to pass her to her friends as a relation of her own, and called her Agnes De-Courci.

You know the family brother, it is one of the first in France; and the Marchioness was the flower of it when the Marquis espoused her: my child thus nobly protected was placed as boarder in the convent where Victoire was then a professed sister, and now is Superior.

The affection and tenderness shewn my poor child by the sister of my heart was not therefore noticed; it was natural for her to be attached to a relation of the Marchioness, and Agnes was not only beloved by her, the whole sisterhood, considering her as a future member, were fond of the little boarder.

I again addressed the good father in terms of the deepest gratitude; and told him, I was resolved to give the wicked Neville up to the vengeance of Heaven; but that as he (father Dominick) was in possession of all the proofs of my marriage, except the testimony of Mr. Dormer, who was then abroad; I implored him on that gentleman's return, to obtain one also from him, and send all my papers to the Marquis St. Lawrens; not doubting if that nobleman lived; but that when I was no more, my child would be established by law, the real heiress of Mr. Neville; as his prior marriage with me, must annul his latter one with Lady Mary Ruthven.

My next step will surprize you—I wrote, and sent by post to Mr. Neville this one line;—

“Pay to father Dominick one thousand
“pounds, on account of the lost
“Agnes Neville.”

I gave an account of this transaction to father Dominick, and informed him, my intention being, under an assumed name, to procure admittance into one of the most rigid order of nuns, which I could not do without money, I had demanded a sum as my *right* from Neville, I would not accept as a *favor*, to enable me to compass the now first wish of my heart—if he paid it, I begged father Dominick to reimburse himself all the expences he had been at on my account, and remit the rest for Clara Valierre to a banker's at Paris, where I immediately went.

In eight days, Dominick, to *his* surprize, received a draft for the sum I wrote for, tho' not I confess to *mine*; as I had no doubt but the man who had taken such cruel pains to rid himself of my persecution, would gladly part with a sum of money, in hopes he should hear no more of a woman he had injured so vilely.

The father also informed me, my friend the Marquis had paid, and that very liberally, all my debts to him, and to the heirs of father St. Jerome—the good man assured me of his constant prayers, told me he was going to Bologne as the Duke he was chaplain to was dead, having left him a comfortable provision, and desired I would on any future exigence apply to him.

Thus was all care for my temporal welfare drawing to a period; I left Paris, and journeyed to Abbeville, where I entered the convent as a lay-sister in the name of Clara; and had the comfort of often confessing to the same good Prelate, who in his priest's habit had first married me at Ancona.

Here my dear brother, the holy silence of the sequestered walls formed a solemn contrast to the busy scenes in which I had lately been engaged; my heart was soon weaned from all sinful attraction, maternal love, and affection for Victoire, only held a place in a soul I now wholly dedicated to God: but my sin, which I durst not confess, hung in terror

over every hope of eternal peace; the abstinence and penance I endured were yet too weak to expiate my offence; the sisterhood who knew not the magnitude of my crime, and who only witnessed the sincerity of my repentance, added Saint to my name, in token of the respect they bore me; and after six years I took courage to travel to Paris, and presented myself at the convent D——, where Victoire is now Abbess,

And here my brother, your sister drops her languid pen.

To paint the virtuous joy, the undeviating affection, with which my Victoire received the poor penitent to her arms—to say with what more than maternal care, she bred my Agnes—to speak my obligations to her *friendship*—my admiration of her constant *goodness*, my humble veneration of her *piety*—brother it is too much for mortal power!—Now! the blessed *now*! when you read this last address from your sister, will she be able to do justice, to the benevolent spirit of the *woman*, the *friend*, the *saint*, in whose holy friendship she hopes to spend an *endless eternity*—then only—when purified by the pardon of my offences, can I dare to say my soul may mingle with hers—long may my Victoire be spared for the edification, and example of the world, before her beatification shall again join her to her departed friend.

The history of my sorrows, the poignancy of my regrets, and the perfidy of Neville, were lessons her own experience could not teach her, nor the goodness of her heart comprehend.

Ah in what soothing sounds, did the consoling voice of friendship reach my afflicted soul; she presented my child to me, with increased beauty and expanded understanding,—already had Agnes exhibited bright specimens of that docility, and intuitive mind, which at a very early period distinguished her at the convent; and my gratitude to Victoire, and love for Agnes, increased, as I observed the fine accomplishments were blended with an unaffected respect to religion, and that true politeness, received its best polish from true piety.

I had the comfort of embracing my child every year; when indisposition prevented my going to Paris, Victoire visited Abbeville, without any one's suspecting, either, that the little boarder was my child, or that I was the apostate Agnes.

Yet notwithstanding the alteration of my face—my change of name—and the sincere penitence with which I humbled myself before God; the temporal punishment due to my crime, constantly filled me with terror, and anxiety: It is many years since I ceased to wish to live, but a fate so terrible I had wanted courage to meet—and ah my brother! my child bore hard on my peace, and the resignation due to his will whom I had offended; impotent indeed, were my cares, ineffectual my solicitude; alas! what could I do but pray for her? yet a transient gleam of future hope, a fond anticipation of a something yet in embryo, that would support, and protect the innocent victim to a *father's guilt*, often darted on my mind, and gave a momentary relief to the despair that oppressed me; although I could form no idea, from whence a wretch so lost, could expect comfort.

At last *comfort, hope* and *joy* appeared, and the welcome triumvirate wore the form of my dear, long lost brother: even in the sequestered gloom that pervaded our severe sisterhood, that noble act of the King of England; which will render his name immortal, who restored the heirs of the proscribed enemies of his ancestors to their country and fortunes, was received with joy; and many more than my unhappy self; hailed the *power of mercy* with rapture, and veneration; soon did Victoire bless me with the news, that Moncrass yet lived to claim, and to receive our forfeited estates; with this welcome communication, I also received her warm wishes, and those of the Marquis and Marchioness that I would endeavour to influence my brother in favor of my injured child.

What a task was this, how could I dare to appear before my brother? how implore him to pardon a crime, I never could forgive myself? how wish to precipitate him into a quarrel, with so fiery, and impenetrable a spirit, as that of Neville? was he restored to his natal honor, and estate after living so long in oblivion, to be involved in fresh troubles? troubles the more to be feared, as the fame of an injured sister was to be vindicated, the rights of an oppressed niece to be asserted, and a wretch to be forced into the practice of every sacred duty, who had basely violated them all.

Yet on the other hand, my own life drawing near its period, how should I answer to my God, and to my child, if I refused to claim for her the protection of her noble uncle? If *her mother* neglected to procure for her the support of the only person who could and should establish her just right to birth and fortune, whose honor being by ties of blood blended with hers would be her natural and best defence.

Long—long my dearest Moncrass, did your unhappy sister hesitate; long did her conscious guilt and fallen spirit shrink from the idea of exposing all her follies bare to the eye of her noble brother; 'till at length, hearing that Neville no longer lived, and feeling that my miserable existence was rapidly approaching to an end, I was encouraged by the justice, as well as the necessity of—this one—this last effort—and resolved to undertake the journey; to cast myself, and my poor fatherless child with all our misfortunes at your feet—you received us like *yourself*, and I felt in your first embrace, all the dignity of our noble father blended with the mild tenderness of our beloved mother.

In compassion to my fears that a discovery of my person would lead to a conviction of my crime; and in reverence to that holy law which enjoined severe penitence for such atrocious iniquity as mine; you agreed to conceal the birth and affinity, of my Agnes, and to postpone the enforcing her natural rights, 'till her mother had paid the great debt of nature; and stood with all her offences on her head in the presence of *him* who only *could* know, that her repentance had expiated her guilt —

That period is now arrived, the apostate nun, who abandoned her God, and perjured herself at the doors of his house; the, wretched wife of the cruel Neville, in her turn rejected and deserted; no longer groans under the weight of the guilt and sorrow, her own weakness, and his barbarity inflicted—her emancipated spirit unincumbered by her

frail body, *now* soars above the reach of injury; *now* finds refuge where all its aspirations have been long bent—*now* reposes in peace, after all the storms of sin, and passion, on the *bosom* of her *God*.

You Victoire, will receive the last sigh of your poor Agnes; you will see, and pity the pangs, which *friendship*, *fraternal love*, and *maternal fondness* will inflict on her departing spirit.

Ah can I forever part with my sweet girl? can I bear to know that I shall never more behold the manly irradiating countenance of my beloved brother?

Victoire from thee too I must part: nature will groan in the anguish of this eternal separation—yet it is not eternal—we shall meet again, again join in those rapturous orisons, which in the days of innocence united me to thee—be a mother to my child, fail not to point out to her the only path that will lead her to the mansions of eternal peace.

On my brother's honor, on his promise to transfer to my Agnes the love, the tenderness he once bore his unhappy sister, I rest with unlimited confidence—yes *he* has said it—and *his* is the voice of undoubted truth—the peace of my last moments hang on his word.

Father Dominick, now at Bologne, will furnish you with proofs of every material circumstance contained in this long last letter; and oh Moncrass! *remember* it is not merely fortune my daughter claims from her uncle, however atrocious the spiritual guilt of her mother *she* is innocent, *she* is not the offspring of illegitimate passion,—the fame of her mother, with respect to her father, is as pure and as noble as the blood of Moncrass—take her then Reuben to thy heart; vindicate her right, support her honor, and clear the wounded fame of your dying sister.

Farewell my brother, farewell—the icy hand of death is on me;—I respire with extreme difficulty—even your image, and that of my angelic child lose their wonted power over my senses; they no more recall the flush of pleasure on my palled cheek—I hear you named by Victoire, without the throbbing tumult which used to fill my languid bosom—my eyes grow dim—they retreat from earth, they look inward unappalled at the awful, the tremendous change, which is even now begun.

Victoire I press thy trembling hand to my heart—I feel thy tears drop on my cheek—sweet earnest of our future greetings—peace, the peace of righteousness be on you all—my child—my brother—my friend—blessed forbodings! we part a few years, to meet in an endless eternity—where the wicked cease to trouble—and where the weary are at rest—once—oh once more—ye dear inmates of my soul farewell,

AGNES.

LETTER LXII.

Agnes to Madame St. Lawrens.

Belle-Vue.

WHAT a checquered scene, my dear madam, for the last few months, have the life of your Agnes presented.

I have been preserved, miraculously preserved, from a dreadful fate by Mr. Harley;—and it was from him I first learnt our mutual misfortunes, in the beatification of holy St. Clare.

Dear madam! respected lady abbess! I took my pen, I will console said I, my beloved monitress; I will promise to supply to her the place of the friend she has lost—but alas! I feel the presumption of the thought; I am in despair myself, and how can I hope, in any thing to equal St. Clare; permit me therefore madam, to ask from you the comfort I cannot impart.

St. Clare then was more than the friend of your Agnes—she was her Mother—Why my dearest madam? oh why! was the dear claim not revealed; till it was too late to pay her the humble, the tender duty, due to such a parent?—Have I only known a mother to lament her loss?—How often have I seen her eyes overflowing in tenderness, when she pressed me to her aching breast; how often have they been turned to heaven in speechless agony, after contemplating my features: the affection she excited in me, the respect, the reverence I felt for her, was the intuition of nature; my heart hung on her—and after every visit we paid her, the separation was that of soul and body.

Oh my mother!

How amiable were her precepts—how gentle her manners—how unassuming her virtue—how perfect her resignation—how edifying her piety—and, ah madam! Why must I add—how sincere her penitence?

Guard me, you who are the counter part of St. Clare, whose goodness, and whose virtue equal'd her's! oh guard me from the sin of reprobating my own father:—how will his guilty spirit meet his injured wife?—How will he shrink appall'd from the righteous eye of God?—Oh! may he receive the mercy he did not shew, and may the blessed spirit of my dear mother, hover over her orphan daughter—may she interpose between her Agnes, and the malediction denounced against the children of the unrighteous—join dear Lady Abbess with me in this prayer—I tremble least the [sins of] my father, should be visited on me; those sins of my mother are atoned—what agonies did they not inflict—Her delicate form was wasted, by the penances she continually imposed on herself: youth, beauty, health, rest, and peace; were all offered in expiation of her broken vow.

The good bishop you say at her last unreserved confession, gave her full absolution; and she died, with every assurance, that her punishment would *end here*.— Alas for pity.

* * * * *

Yes, it was her righteous prayer, that preserved me, in the midst of flames;—that sent Harley to my aid, when I was no longer sensible of the terrors which surrounded me.

* * * * *

When I concluded my last letter I told you of the engagement I had made to exchange confidence, with the amiable girl they called Betsy.

Mr. Arnold had in his walk, picked up two of the neighbours, and a person from London; these he invited to supper with him, and his spirits were so exhilarated by the expected advancement of his daughter, that when we arose to retire after supper, they insisted on our staying; Betsy must sing, and Miss Arnold play on her spinnet.

Had her situation been less embarrassed she would certainly have spiritedly refused to comply with a request which was in effect a command: but tho' I was ignorant from what cause I knew her apprehensions were as lively as my own: and that Lord Morden, the man, whose visits to Greenwich, so much exhilarated the spirits of the Arnolds, was an object equally terrifying to her, as to me—her little heart struggled with pride, and to me, her eyes evidently display'd the conflict of her mind.

Miss Arnold was seated at her spinet, and the vulgar visitors were staring in admiration of her accomplishments; when Mr. Arnold again insisted, Betsy should accompany his daughter's music with her voice.

What shall I sing? asked she with a sullen, and (for the first time I had observed her spirits sink) a desponding air.—

Any thing—any thing—no matter what *you* sing, so as *my* Nancy can play it; answered the fond father.

She cast a glance at me—there was a mellow sweetness in her eyes that demanded compassion; mine were ready to overflow, but a sense of the importance it might be of to us both, to conceal our agitation restrained me: as she passed me to join Miss Arnold at the instrument, I softly reminded her of the promised interview; and then after the salutations of the night, lighted one of the candles, which were always placed on a side-table, after supper.

What be you going Miss Farquar? said Mrs. Arnold, winking significantly at her husband, dear me you are in a vastacious hurry—you be'nt merry at all to night.

She has no particular cause, said my little champion, turning round in the middle of her song.—

La, Betsy you have put me out, exclaimed Miss —

To be sure she has said Mr. Arnold, who having drank an unusual quantity of a liquor they called grog, was growing very authoritative, which he never was, but when he had drank a glass extraordinary of his favorite beverage; and for to tell you a piece of my mind Miss Farquar, I think you mought as well stay up a bit, as go to bed; what you be'nt like the dog in the manger be you?

I was all amazement! I could not understand what he alluded to in this rude speech, but I found it was amusing as it followed by a loud laugh, in which all but Betsy, and myself joined; I sought information from her expressive eyes, but *they* were cast down.

Irresolute, and trembling; after a moment's pause, (during which the loud laugh continued) I foolishly retreated to my chair, and Betsy leaving Miss Arnold at her spinet, resumed her seat.

I had now unwittingly been guilty of another offence.—

You mought as well put out the candle Miss Farquar, they be'nt so cheap, and I suppose you don't use such mould-candles in France. —

No no, said the men altogether joining in another laugh.

I arose in the greatest hurry to repair my error; but I was fated now, not only to endure mortification, but to deserve it.

After supper the large table at which we had sat, was removed; and a small round one substituted in its place, for the convenience of holding the bottles, glasses, and a large china bowl, in which they mixed their liquor, nearer the men; the bottles were of a monstrous size, and full; the drinkers were yet enjoying their laugh at my expence, when in the trepidation, and confusion occasioned by their brutal behaviour, my foot slipt, and I unfortunately overthrew the whole apparatus.—Some of the contents of the bottles fell on Mrs. Arnold, but more on the men; the carpet was deluged, and all the glass, and the bowl lay in fragments.

Poor Mrs. Arnold stood speechless and aghast; her husband, and his friends, looked at each other with astonishment; but their good humour prevailing, another loud fit of laughter, was followed by Mr. Arnold's ordering fresh bottles, and glasses: mean while his wife's face, which had at the moment of the accident turned very pale, was gradually changing to a sort of blue red.

Nancy Arnold is not naturally an ill-tempered young woman; she had been often witness, to the excesses, into which her mother's temper carried her; and seeing the storm gathering, which threatened to burst on my head, very kindly approached the place where I yet stood, with "a vacant eye" looking at the mischief I had done, and led me out of the room, before Mrs. Arnold recovered her speech.

Shut your door said she miss Farquar, and on no account be provoked to make mamma any answer; she will I am afraid be very outrageous.

I took her advice, and in a few minutes, had reason to congratulate myself on my escape; were I to describe to you madam, all the vulgar insults, the poor woman thought herself entitled to offer me; you would hardly believe, any thing in a female form, could so dishonor her sex: my person, my country, and the confusion of my mind, which occasioned the disaster were alike vilified; she came to my door, and demanded ten guineas, which she declared would not half pay her for the mischief, she *knew* I had *wilfully* done her—even Betsy, lost her influence on the occasion; neither hers, nor Miss Arnold's entreaties, for a long while had the least effect; and I was almost insensible with fear, when after terrible threats of what she would do to-morrow, she was prevailed on to quit my door.

I was my dear madam, you will believe, ill disposed for rest after this scene; nor did I dare to leave my apartment in search of Betsy, as we had preconcerted.

Mrs. Arnold's voice still re-sounded over the whole house, tho' she was I perceived in her daughter's apartment, at the other extremity of the building:

The men, whose noise encreased as mid-night advanced, were yet in the parlour, where we had left them; and were amusing themselves, with what they called singing.

The impressions of terror, and disgust, which the unmatronly Mrs. Arnold's behaviour, had left on my mind; the uncertainty of what the very morrow (on which she threatened to avenge the injury I was unable to atone, in the only way which could possibly mitigate her anger) might bring forth, from beings still more dreadful to *me* than even *her*; all conspired to distress me.

I thought of you, of St. Clare, they have abandoned me cried I, wringing my hands, tears streaming from my eyes; they desert their Agnes, and she is no longer the care of heaven—I am environed with dangers—there is no way to escape—I am lost even to hope—but what have I done? how have I deserved? and a proud sense of conscious innocence swelled my heart; my tears ceased to flow, an indignant apathy rendered me bold—

This woman cannot kill me said I—*she* dares not even offer me any violence—and the utmost malice of her words, will want the power to reach the soul of Agnes De-Courci—but that wicked lord, and his despicable adherents; alas (and again I wept) more

callous far in iniquity, than the unamiable Mrs. Arnold in temper; what will my innocence, my pride, the conscious rectitude of my heart, what will these avail if I am so unhappy as to be again in their power? oh let me die first? I will once more if possible escape from them, and if heaven do not bless my wish to return to France, I will implore the protection (alas of whom?) whom said I, starting with joy at the thought, which darted like a sun-beam on my mind, of the woman who injured me, who falsely accused me of having injured her; of Lady Mary Moncrass.

There was nothing so desperate madam, in this scheme; it even appeared so eligible to me, I wondered I had not before adopted it; my placing a confidence in her, thought I, will be attended with many obvious good effects, it will by clearing *my* honor, restore peace to *her* bosom, and reconcile her, to her husband.

It will be a safe, and honorable means, of returning me to my dear convent—

And, it will convince Harley—but what am I saying? said I self corrected—

In short, the more I pondered on this plan, the more pleased I was with it; I immediately sat to the escrutoire, and wrote a letter, which I determined openly to send her ladyship next morning: and also to acknowledge my name, and connection, by way of screening myself from any future insults from Mrs. Arnold, and to extort from her, the protection of her house, 'till my letter was answered.

It is inconceivable, my dear lady Abbess, with what confidence, and alacrity I addressed Lady Moncrass; no doubt of her goodness—no fear of her censure—impeded the joyful expedition in which I wrote—she is noble!—she is virtuous!—this I said to my heart, over, and over, as I folded the letter, which I laid ready addressed on the table; and after the storms of the day, dropt to sleep in my cloaths, with a composure, to which I had been long a stranger: while the hurricane still continued raging in the house.

I remember the clock went one, before I had finished my letter—my sleep was most probably the sounder, from the serenity of my mind; and I think it was about half past three, when I was awakened, by a want of breath and an effort to cough—I found myself almost in a state of suffocation, and heard a cracking noise, which was instantly succeeded by a light at my window, which I saw with affright came from the flames below stairs.

I ran, half senseless, to the door of my room; the stair-case had already taken fire, from the parlour below, where we had spent the preceding disastrous evening—I saw the danger I was in—the stairs only led to my room, and an adjoining one, which was the best chamber—I forced myself down through fire, and smoke, and happily gained the hall—I looked back madam—a moment later I must have perished—the room I left was already in flames.

The family were all alarmed, and running to, and fro' in the utmost consternation and affright—Mr. and Mrs. Arnold were shrieking for help, and calling for their children, who tho' they were clinging about them, they seemed not to recollect—the maids, and man were lamenting, and the latter ringing an alarm bell.

They saw not me nor had I power to speak.

As soon as Mrs. Arnold found her children were safe, she began to call as loud for help to preserve her property; and having then recovered a little, from the stupid terror, that had benumbed my faculties; I was preparing to offer my little assistance—when I thought of Betsy—my amiable friend—my little protectress.

I looked wildly round—I shrieked—ah she is not here—she is perishing—I gasped for breath—I might have died, nobody minded me.

I have before told you, Miss Arnold's apartments, as they were called, were in a new built wing at one end of the house, under which was the kitchen.

Where I slept was a correspondent one at the other, over the parlour—and to each of those wings there was a separate flight of stairs.

Miss Arnold was a treasure too precious to be trusted far from her father, she slept in a closet adjoining his chamber, but her cloaths, works, books, &c. were kept in the room allotted for her particular use, where also Betsy slept.

I looked with dreadful anxiety towards the stairs, they were yet standing. I then ran, or rather flew to the door, and rapp'd almost suffocated, again, with smoke.

She did not answer me.

I shrieked out, fire, fire, and again rapp'd,

I heard her then, running about the room, lamenting she could not find the door; and presently I found she had unbarred her window.

I turned my head, the flames were ascending, the stairs took fire, it was impossible for me to return.

The dreadful fate from which I had so recently escaped, and from which I was so anxious to save my friend, now seemed inevitable.

Fear, and desperation, gave me strength and courage; which I acknowledge to be the immediate mercy of God—I burst open the door.

I saw my friend, and was flying to her, but her words as she leaned out of the window, stopped and petrified me—I fell against the door, which closing with my weight, preserved the room a few moments longer.—

Mr. Harley, cried she, for God's sake save me; save the life of Julia Neville.
I in a moment saw him enter—Dear Julia!—sweet maid! How? but this is no time—let me preserve you while yet I can.

She threw her arms round him, while he bore her to a ladder he had placed against the house; and both vanished from my astonished sight.

I then ran with avidity to the window, my eyes followed them, he made his way through the croud, Julia yet in his arms; while I, the poor, forlorn, deserted Agnes, was left by *him*, by all the world; to worse than annihilation.

I now saw myself once more devoted to death:—but ah madam! in the one moment between me, and eternity—Harley occupied all my thoughts—he has left me to perish, said I, the fortunate Julia Neville engrosses all his tenderness—all his care.

I beheld the wild confusion before me with resignation, I asked not for help.

The family, and those who had come to their assistance, passed and repassed; the ladder on which Harley had both ascended, and preserved Julia Neville, was by accident thrown down; this occasion'd a little stop under the window, where I yet stood; but I had neither power, or wish to supplicate for assistance—Harley was gone—my eyes were aching fixed on the spot where I last saw him—all nature died before me—I lost my senses, nor recovered, till I had been providentially saved by my better Angel! who at first, covered with smoke, and scorched by the fire, I did not know.

After this happy event, after what you know of Harley, and after my former voluntary confessions; say my beloved lady Abbess, will the sanction of your invaluable blessing, be added to that of my uncle? without it I never can accept Mr. Harley, and without him, why should I blush to acknowledge it, your Agnes cannot be happy: to you madam, my more than parent, I hold myself accountable for every act of my life: in you St. Clare yet lives, it is you who speak her sentiments, who breathe her piety, and who practice her virtues: withhold not then dear madam your unbiassed opinion, on this great event of my life. You know Mr. Harley, you have seen, how open his countenance, how mild his conversation, and how pleasing his address; but you are yet to learn, how equally he tempers gravity with gaiety, how devoted to rectitude, how judicious his sentiments, and how animated his friendship: happy is the being to whom he is a friend; “he loves them in prosperity—defends them in adversity—and laments them in death.”

Do not blame your Agnes, it is not the partial voice of passion only, which speaks in praise of Harley; the noble and unprejudiced Heart, of General Moncrass, is devoted to

his young friend; and the re-union of the worthiest pair in the world is protracted only 'till your consent arrives.

The dread always on the spirits of my beloved mother, least she should be discovered to be the same Agnes who eloped from the convent at Lisbon; and for whose apprehension great rewards were offered, added to some other private reasons, induced the General to preserve inviolate from his dearest friends, every particular concerning my birth and affinity to him; and thence the mistaken, and scandalous report, which gave rise to the misunderstanding between my uncle and his Lady. A Major Melrose, one of the worthiest of men, tho' a free liver; has already waited on Lord Ruthven, Lady Mary's Father; we have not yet heard the final result, but Lord Ruthven fixes the criterion of his returning confidence in the General, to depend on my union with Harley.

Thus madam, the will of heaven appears to co-operate with the choice of your Agnes—but let me add, if that choice does not receive your full approbation, if the unbiassed sanction of my second mother, does not fully accord with the reasons I have adduced; then will I forego every pleasing hope *here*, for the equally pleasing one, of adding to the comforts of my early instructress, my constant friend; and throw myself into the bosom of your happy convent, in the firm confidence, that God will accept the vows of your

AGNES.

LETTER LXIII.

General to Lady Moncrass.

Belle-View.

YOU have now my dearest Mary before you, the history of that unfortunate sister, for whom you have so often seen my tears to flow; poor Agnes! the same moment gave us birth, sorrow, and disappointment, followed us from the grave of our parents: many years our fates, were equally marked with distressful incidents, would to God the similarity had still continued; that I had seen my sister bending downwards in life, with the same peace, and tranquility, which lately has, and I trust yet will, be the happy lot of her brother: but she is no more, and I turn my beloved wife, from the urn of my departed sister, to the arms of the best of women, and of wives.

You see Mary, without disclosing the secret entrusted to me by a dying saint, I could not accede to your conditions: and how could I assume courage, had that not been the case, to tell you, that your Julia must be deprived of the rights of birth, and fortune, in favor of a niece of mine, the very person most obnoxious to you? my anxious eagerness to unite her to my son is now explained: I could not dare to violate a promise, extorted from me, by the grief, and injuries of an expiring sister; it was not only the bonds of fraternal love; it was the claims of justice, and humanity; yet how could I prevail on myself, to take any step in favor of my niece, that would fix dishonor on the daughter of my wife? sweet amiable Julia, why must the iniquities of thy father, be visited on thee? yet shall a stain rest on the house of Moncrass? shall a daughter of that noble race, live disgraced, and unacknowledged, while a male of our honored name exists?

Oh Mary, think of the conflicts I suffered between my love for you, and my desire to see justice done to the child of my injured sister; torn with agonizing regrets, abandoned by you, deprived of the dear society my soul panted after, the anguish of my mind, extending to my body, and utterly at a loss what step to take, in remedy of those complicated ills: I had even *now*, almost called you cruel, *now* when I am anticipating with transport, your return to my arms, never more to be separated.

Your Julia, *my* Julia, and her husband, are with me; she is no longer Julia Neville; she now honors the name of Moncrass; and on thursday next, Edward Harley espouses my niece; there will then, no longer be an Agnes Neville; perish the name, may it sink with the villainy of their father, into the gulph of eternal oblivion.

Permit me my love, to remind Lord Ruthven; who I flatter myself, will now think more favorably, of a man who ever honored, and esteemed *him*; of the disposition he made of his fortune, when you was given to the most worthless of men; his whole estate is I think bound to the child, or children you might bear to Neville: let me forebear to wound my adored wife, yet it is proper she should be apprised that her marriage not being

legal, her daughter cannot inherit under that settlement, nor in her unpleasant predicament, as heir at law to her own mother; the advanced age, and ill health of Lord Ruthven, renders this matter of immediate importance, as it may be necessary, in order to have the former settlement annulled; that the whole matter should go into the court of equity.

I have named thursday, for the nuptials of Harley and my niece; because I flatter myself, my beloved Mary, will immediately bless me with her presence; and should she be so disposed, there will be time for her to grace the ceremony; and, because we have not yet received the absolute consent of madam St. Lawrens, which we expect by express; Mrs. James Butler is here, her worthy husband will very soon join us; and I send an invitation this post, to our faithful Constance. You will be received as the angel of peace by your Moncrass, and hailed as the good genius of Belle-Vue, by all its inhabitants; Gallina petitioned to be the bearer of this letter, he has orders to wait your commands; I shall count the tedious hours, 'till I feel the genuine drops of sensibility, which I know will steal down my Mary's cheeks, when she is re-united to her fond adoring husband,

MONCRASS.

My Mary, when she says all she wishes for me to her venerable father; will be sure not to over rate the duty, and respect I feel for him; and should his Lordship, condescend personally to give his dear daughter to my arms, a second time; how willingly shall I submit to the procrastination of my own happiness, for the pleasure of adding so much to hers.

LETTER LXIV.

The Abbess St. Lawrens to Agnes.

WHAT, oh thou ever endearing child of my heart, what can I answer, to thy solemn application? why dost thou call with such tender earnestness, on *me*, for *my* consent to an union, that will forever divide thee, from thy second mother? and why must the misgivings of my heart, be imputed even by myself, to a latent self love?—

Agnes my child! the child of my St. Clare! must I then part with thee? how can I give thee up for ever?—how forego the sweet solace of thy conversation?—shall I sanction an union that robs our community of so dear a member? that exposes a destined spouse of heaven, to the temptations of a vain world?

Oh tell me not of the merit, the worth, the graces of the insinuating Harley: the riches, the honor, and splendor that awaits thy union with him: I know them all—but Agnes, hast thou well considered it? this man may lead thee through life, he may strew thy path with rose leaves whose velvet down, may conceal the pointed thorn beneath; but again I say, hast thou considered? art thou aware that thou canst not enter the presence of our God with him?

Art thou sure my sweet girl! child of my heart! sister of my faith! art thou confident thy love for thy holy religion, *can* withstand the tempter, in a form so adored? Will he not pervert my child? shall I not eternally lose her?

Oh Agnes! born with all thy mother's softness, her beauty, and her native virtue; be not thou heir to her anguish: avoid the sin that will require such ample penitence to atone it: be not an apostate to the faith, in which thou wert born, in which thy whole race have died.—

What dost thou ask? my consent? to what—to thy happiness? is that the request of Agnes Neville to Victoire St. Lawrens?

Oh blessed virgin! witness how fully my agonized heart accords with all that can add to her temporal felicity.

Sanctity O God! to her, the sacrifice I offer of my own peace to hers—oh! may she be happy *here*, without risque to the long *hereafter*.

Take Harley, take to thine heart, the inestimable jewel on which all my fondness hangs; but, as thou wouldest escape the malediction of my holy community, as thou hopest for the prayers of the righteous, for the immaculate dew-drops of mercy, on thee, and on thy posterity, seek not to weaken the faith of my child—

Worship thou the blameless tenor of *her* life, and keep a strict watch over thine *own*—but presume not thou amiable heritic to place thy image between Agnes, and her crucifix—thy power, between my sister and her redeemer—

Trembling with fear, with regret, with fond maternal love, and convulsed with grief, do I resign her.

Alas! my tears blind me—

Yet once more—*once* did I say—oh never shall I cease to adjure thee my child—my beloved—my friend—to persevere in thy faith—that so my glad spirit, may greet thee, in those mansions where there are no marrying, nor giving in marriage—where St. Clare, and her Agnes may be again united to

VICTOIRE ST. LAWRENS.

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LETTER LXV.

Edward Harley, Esq. to James Butler, Esq.

Belle-Vue.

YOUR Caroline arrived here last night, in perfect health, and spirits; how rapid are the approaches to friendship in congenial beings, Agnes and my sister are already inseparable.

I wonder not Edward said Caroline, as we returned from a ride she invited me to take with her to the hermitage this morning, at your passion for Miss De Courci; she is more lovely than even you described her; I expected to see a beautiful finely accomplished woman, but Agnes is more; there is a certain graceful perfection in her form, and a sublimity in the contour of her countenance, which gives one an idea of something seraphic; a something one feels without the power to express it; then her voice, I never heard any thing so melodious, so meltingly soft, you must have been impenetrable not to have been captivated by her.

Ah James, how flattered was I by this eulogium on my charmer; how doubly so at my return, to hear *her* speak, not less partially of my sister.

What a lot is mine, oh! may no envious cloud arise to obscure the bright horizon of my felicity; spare her to me Oh merciful God! while *she* is mine I will bend in patient resignation to thy dispensations! however grievous, however afflicting, thy wisdom may decree them to be!—She passes my window, she smiles, her eye beams ineffable sweetness; Oh forbear! forbear! to such excess do I doat on thee, and such is thy power over my senses, that even thy smiles, dear object of my unalterable fondness, are productive of agony; yes they are pleasure, to extreme of pain; do you comprehend me Butler? no! for tho' you love you have not like me been hopeless; you cannot conceive the transition from deep despair, to joy, to rapture.

Thursday next; oh this painful sensibility! I tremble as I write, my heart bounds to my throat, I almost cease to respire.

Thursday next—how my soul anticipates the proud triumphing of that day—I shall look down on princes, I shall clasp my own Agnes, to my faithful bosom, it will be past the power of mortal efforts to tear her from me:—she will be *mine*—do you Butler feel like me, the force of that expression? *mine*—she, Agnes De Courci will be *mine*.—Oh that it were come! that it were past!

How hard to bear is excess of joy, mine is the more so, as while I tremble with extasy, my heart sinks in fearful apprehension, least some fatal accident should yet intervene, betwixt me, and heaven: I have run over in my mind every thing that can

possibly happen, to blast my fond aspiring hopes, and I see no one event, death only excepted, which can have that baneful effect; yet such is my agitation, so much does my soul hang on next thursday; that I shrink with terror, I am appalled at impossibilities.

But is it indeed possible? Oh Butler, where are now thy fatal prognostics, who now is injured by my inactive spirit? I grant that retirement is the nurse of sensibility: that passion has most power over a mind, not occupied by the care, and politics of the great world, and that I in particular, am vulnerable to the soft impressions, yet where is the evil? she whose grace, and figure, would adorn a court; whose sense, beauty, and accomplishments are seldom equalled and seldomer exceeded, she condescends to think like her Edward; she wanders with him through his favorite walks, listens with pleasure to the harmony of his natural aviary, sits with content by the side of his clear stream, and blesses his humble roof with her angelic smile; where then, is thy terror denouncing foresight? oh thou prophane augurer, come, be a convert, come see how lovely content can be.

The General has sent the credentials of his faith to Lady Mary, and we expect her ladyship will do honor to our nuptials; but greatly as I respect her, and much as I wish every event that will add to the happiness of General Moncrass, yet *my* wishes, *my* hopes, *my* desires; are all so entirely centered on one dear object, I fear no event that will not deprive me of her, I desire none in which she is not a principal.

You have heard of the generosity of Major Melrose, madame St. Lawren's answered his liberal application in my favor, with her full consent; my Agnes therefore gives her hand to the most grateful of lovers, with *her* approbation; her letter to Agnes on the occasion is charming.—Madam St. Lawrens is a bigot to her religion and fears for the faith of my beloved, she dreads my influence, but the soul of my Agnes is the temple of purity, sacred be the religious tenets of that heart where never an unhallowed idea entered. One whole delicious hour this morning, did my Agnes rest on my shoulder, while I held it for her perusal; and I kissed, unreprieved, the sweet stillicide off her glowing cheeks, at every sentence of tenderness, from her respectable friend. Again, and again, I exultingly exclaim what a lot is mine!

The hermitage is enlarging, under the inspection of the Major, who is so pleased with its present simple appearance; that he will not suffer the architect, who was sent for by the General on purpose to *beautify it*, (his own words) to move without him; we will make it as much larger, and more convenient as you please, or as you can Mr. architect he says, but as to its beauty what alteration you make, must be for the worse.

Julia is here as playful, and more happy than ever: she is now dressing my angel's hair, (you never Butler saw such hair) in a thousand fantastical forms, to make her, the wild thing says, as handsome as Miss Arnold; but, gaily correcting herself, as Mrs. Arnold said, I shall never be solid, or wise, else should I stand here, attempting an impossibility. Apropos of the Arnolds.

Lord Morden, whose designs on Miss De-Courci, carried him to Greenwich; never out of his way, discovering the mistake occasioned by his passionate entreaties, to be admitted to see her; and probably understanding from the present situation of the Ruthven, and Moncrass families, that they would not furnish him, with either wife, or mistress, had the address to turn his fine arts against the simple Nancy Arnold, and actually prevailed on her to elope with him: the scheme was however frustrated, by the sudden return of old Arnold, from one of his short voyages: who arrived at his own door in the instant the noble lord was handing his Nancy into a post-chaise: pushed Miss up the steps, and locked the door: my lord made unlimited use of his well hung tongue, he had a vast deal to say, to very little purpose; Arnold spoke not a word, but he made a very liberal use of his fists; in short, his lordship after being rescued by his servants, made a very precipitate retreat to town, carrying with him some marks of Mr. Arnold's resentment, which exposes him to the laugh of the great world.

Poor Arnold cried the generous Julia; what will become of him if the pride of his heart in his beautiful Nancy is lost? all that has happened to the nonsensical thing is owing to us; we should do something for the poor beauty, to put her in conceit with herself, and in good humour with the world;—a present from the General has accordingly been sent as an acknowledgment for the civilities shewn the ladies; and a promise of patronage should any of the family need it; a promise which from General Moncrass, is of great value to people who have sons to provide for in the world—nor Butler do not you suppose I have forgot the lad who assisted me in preserving my Agnes—*forgot him* what a thought was that.

Tuesday,

I deferred sending this letter yesterday, as Caroline thought you might possibly be with us, but yours which she has just received forbid, that hope—if it were in nature for me to be sensible of a want of any thing, when near my Agnes, it would be your company; but I will not profess, what I do not feel; I certainly wish, most sincerely wish you were here, but while blest with the endearing smiles of my Agnes, no vacuum can possibly subsist, in the soul of your

HARLEY.

LETTER LXVI.

Agnes to Madame St. Lawrens.

Thursday,

Belle-Vue.

I Retire from the society of my partial friends, from the fond attention of the most amiable of lovers, to address the dear protectress of my infancy, the beloved and respected guide of my early days, for the last time, before I vow to give that heart, to *man*, which notwithstanding my ardent affection for Harley, I often feel, whether from the early impressions of piety, the natural love I bear your dear sisterhood, or what other cause *I know not, but I do feel it should be devoted to God*. Your consent madam is arrived, but what a consent! it is not given, I see too plain, it comes not from your open heart, with that free grace which distinguishes all your voluntary actions; it is *wrested, extorted, I feel this*, and my heart wants the confidence its own approbation has hitherto insured—but I am overpowered, I only hinted a half formed wish to delay the solemn contract, I was instantly besieged with reproaches that spoke the kindest meaning, and with persuasion which had the power of compulsion; Harley did not speak—he could not—he sat in breathless agitation—while the gentle Caroline wept, and the lively Julia laughed me out of my own judgment; the General, and madam Vallmont looked seriously displeased; *am not I a good catholic* Agnes said the latter extending her hand;

I respectfully kissed it in token of assent.

I do not doubt *your* steadfast adherence to your religion.

I would not wed her to a prince, with whom I thought it would be endangered, said my uncle, his fine face glowing, and as we are entered on the topic, which tho' I was at first displeased, I begin to think not totally unnecessary, you and I Edward will talk it over; he then arose and Mr. Harley followed him to his library.

Father Dominick, was requested to attend.

They were a very short time absent.

My Harley, tho' steady in his own faith, warmly disclaimed every idea of warping mine; he engaged his honor unasked, never to enter on any conversation with me that should lead to religious discussions, and they returned to the drawing room.

My uncle entered with that fine open brow of pleasure which extends its influence to all around.

A charming english poet—Hayley, whose works I believe are not translated, had surely my dear uncle in his mind when he pourtrayed one who

“Nor moderations dupe nor sanctions brave,
“Nor guilts apologist nor flatterys slave,
“Wise but not cunning, temperate not cold,
“Servant of truth and in that service bold.”

Oh it is my uncle himself!

I am entering madam, on new duties, new cares, and situations, to which in your calm convent, I was a stranger: the world opens, with every flattering promise to my expectation.

Major Melrose could not be more warmly attached to my Harley, to the tender name of father, (a name alas! he any more than your Agnes never knew) was added to that of friend; he has already settled a fine estate on him, and solemnly declares him heir to all his fortune.

Mr. Montford a humorous old merchant, whose riches are immense; pleased at his alliance with a niece of General Moncrass, without being further informed of my story, re-adopts a partiality, which had begun to give way to disgust at the inactive turn of my Edward, and declares him joint heir, with his niece, to all his wealth.

My cruel father died in possession of every thing but honor, and happiness: unable from his constant disquietude of mind to enjoy the riches he possessed, detested by the woman for whom he abandoned my poor mother, and perpetually harrassed by the fear of a discovery, which would have freed Lady Mary from the misery, his tyrannic and unquiet spirit inflicted, he lived a narrow soul'd libertine, on a very small part of his income; regardless of the accumulations, increasing in the hands of his steward, which were found at his death to be immense, and are, the General says, my right.

Behold me therefore dear lady Abbess, on the point of entering the great world, in possession of full power to gratify every temporal wish: the man I adore doting on me, living but in my smiles, and ready to immolate his vital blood to insure my happiness.

My looks are watched, and my steps followed, for the kind purpose of anticipating my wishes, even before they are formed; yet my dear madam something still is wanting which neither the fondness of Harley, the kindness of friends, nor the far more impotent power of riches can supply.

Oh St. Clare! dear injured saint! thy image follows me in my walks, it is ever present in society, and my dreams are all full of thy sad story: I long to weep with her Victoire over the direful sin of her apostacy, her subsequent misery, and despair, and finally to rejoice with you, at her blessed penitence, and resignation:—how little

conscious was I when she received me, from your convent; that I was forever leaving our dear sisterhood, that I was to be taken from your protection never to return; and how much less did I suspect, the fondness of St. Clare, was indeed the tenderness of the best of mothers;—that I was daughter to the most cruel, the most obdurate of men; that I was the source of that continual anguish, which made such rapid devastations in the health of my beloved parent.

My heart which beat with a sensation altogether new and pleasing, as we approached the white cliffs of Dover; was at that time deserted by the soft, the sympathetic sensation, which has often, both before and since affected my whole frame; and which at this moment, I presume to say, beats in unison with the monotony of my youth; yes madam; the Major has informed you of the important change to-morrow will make in my fate, and you feel an excess of solicitude; you recollect a thousand instances of affection on your part, of melting tenderness on that of St. Clare, of juvenile fondness, and gratitude on mine; your feelings, have something in them at once too painful, and too pleasing for expression.

You tremble at the solemnity of an act which invests a stranger with all power over the child of your adoption; you feel the awful calm of the present moment, but altho' Providence and fortune, seems equally to smile on the future, you abandon the comforts of probability, and you feel all the horrors of the possible:—this then is sympathy, for such are the sensations of your Agnes.

Yet what have I to fear? father Dominick,—I am interrupted by a summons from my Edward the most tender, the most gentle; a fond meaning can put into words; pardon me madam, I leave you, to join him on the lawn, his eyes, swimming in fond expectation, are fixed on my window; dear amiable youth! why sinks the heart which is wholly thine, at the idea of to-morrow? Ah what would my sufferings be were I to be torn from thy arms? were any fatal accident *now* to divide me from my Harley?

* * * * *

I am re-assured, I asked comfort and confidence of my Edward; his voice is the herald of peace, and his tears the sweet oblation which passionate sensibility extorts from the manly bosom: with a mind too elegant in itself to stoop to common forms, Mr. Harley is naturally polite; his deportment, and address, are too refined, and easy to be either the result of instruction or study: his is the grace of nature; his person, with no other ornament but a habit of excessive cleanliness, appears always adorned: it is but since he has loved your Agnes that his fine hair has been dressed, and it was so lovely in the garb of rusticity, that I could almost regret the necessity of complying in some degree with custom; not that he is less attractive from this alteration, for no outward mode can injure the form of Edward Harley.

My eyes when I joined him were swelled, my tears had dropped on the letter I was addressing to you. This amiable man Madame would sink under any calamity that befel

your Agnes. What excess of sorrow and apprehension took possession of his features; with what inexpressible tenderness did he chase from my bosom, the said train of ideas, which had taken possession there; dear comforter, he proposes a journey to the continent, as soon after our marriage, as our friends will spare us.

If you love your Edward, if the peace of his soul is dear to you said he, be chearful; thy whole life my Agnes, shall be guarded from disquiet; in the bosom of thy Harley.

“If I love my Edward, if the peace of his soul is dear to me:” Oh God! thou knowest how dearer than life he is to me, and I will be chearful: I will bless the dearest of men, his wishes shall be gratified, I will no longer suffer the sad retrospect of the past, or dread of the future, to dwell on my mind, and damp the transports of love, and generosity.

Father St. Dominick, I was going to inform you, consents to remove to Belle-Vue: General Moncrass has yet had no regular chaplain, and the good priest will divide his time betwixt our two families: ah madam! are you at a loss to account for my sinking spirits? my Edward is a heretic, avaunt, avaunt, ye sickening ideas, he is a christian, he is an honor to his maker.—

My poor mother had not heard I find, neither did the General inform her, of his alliance with Lady Mary; he generously concealed from *her* the circumstances which rendered her sad story of such importance to him, and his amiable wife; we expect her to-morrow, but should her ladyship not honor us with her presence, her absence will not protract the ceremony; adieu then, dearest madam adieu. For the honor of your protection, the blessing of your instruction, and the benefit of your example, suffer your grateful Agnes on her knees, to thank you; and oh! most honored madam, still continue to me your inestimable affection, still offer to the God you serve prayers for my spiritual, and temporal welfare; and still believe, in every change of time, and circumstance, in every wish, desire, and avocation of my mind; I shall, 'till called hence forever, be your unalterable

AGNES.

LETTER LXVII.

Mrs. James Butler to J. Butler, Esq.

Belle-Vue.

It is one of the greatest mortifications I have yet known; that on this day of general jubilee when my heart is ready to burst its little prison, my dear James is prevented from participating in the joy of his fond Caroline; you bid me write but that was unnecessary, I cannot half enjoy my own happiness, till I impart it to you.

It is now just six o'clock, and even the lazy Julia's bell has rung; is it not pleasant to observe, how the celebration of a wedding enlivens the countenances of all the domestics in a family? they seem to feel their consequence augmented, by their share in the festival. I have amused myself this half hour, in fancying I could read the state of their hearts, as they pass with unusual alertness about the house; the men I conclude are all anticipating their own happiness, when their respective dulcinea's shall consent; and their circumstances will enable them to marry. The damsels I imagine who have not lovers, believe this day will give them one; and those who have, see their fate in that of the lovely Agnes. Of this same Agnes my dear James much, very much may be said, and yet leave the description of her beauty and accomplishments far behind: she is already dressed, a fine spotted book muslin coat and train over a white lutestring, with a blowse cap of the same richly laced, fastened at the top with very valuable pearl pins, earrings, necklaces and bracelets to correspond, are the whole finery of her bridal dress; yet in this simple attire it is impossible to conceive any thing more elegant than her appearance. Edward's cloaths are embroidered in the highest taste, he means his dress as a compliment to the bride, and therefore it is as rich as possible, almost covered with spangles; Julia who has hitherto made no appearance, since her marriage, has her toilet spread with a profusion of Jewels, presents from the General, in such variety, she shall be, she says, at a loss where to place them all; her dress is a beautiful painted Italian crape. You have made me so fine by your last obliging present, that with the addition of my own, and my aunt Montford's jewels, I shall be a little queen of diamonds too; Mr. Moncrass in compliance with the taste of his wife, will also be richly dressed.

I have peep'd into the bride's dressing room; Edward was on his knees, in the act of worshipping his divinity, her sweet eyes bent on him with such a solemn affection, that I really felt as if I had interrupted devotion, and withdrew immediately: from thence I ran to Julia, who I found up to the ears in business and finery; every chair filled, and she in the midst of it, scolding her woman, for having literally but one pair of hands.

As Lady Mary is not come, the General looks very gloomy; we have not a soul but our own family; Father Dominick performs the ceremony, according to the Romish rites first in the saloon; then we proceed, the General, Edward, Agnes, and myself in the family coach, Mr. Moncrass and Julia in their new vis-à-vis, Major Melrose, Madam Vallmont,

the Rector and his lady in Edward's elegant post-coach: —The inns of four of the nearest villages, are ordered to be open for the entertainment of the populace; and the old, and infirm, served from thence at their own houses.

We have breakfasted, and expect the summons to the salloon every moment:—Edward trembles too much, dear fellow! he has hardly strength to support the bride.

* * * * *

The popish ceremony as uncle Montford would call it is over—the carriages are drawing up. Adieu.

* * * * *

Well James, joy, joy, to you, to myself, Edward is married: Mrs. Harley, sweet creature! threw herself into my arms; but it is impossible to say any more, we are all going to take parts in a little concert. Adieu.

CAROLINE BUTLER.

LETTER LXVIII.

Mrs. J. Butler to James Butler, Esq.

Belle-Vue.

I am out of breath with terror, the last five hours my dear James have exhibited an awful instance of the incertitude of all human events; and proved, more than volumes of the best writing, the incapacity of weak mortals to judge, or to ask a boon of providence most necessary for their own happiness.

What piles of felicity in our little circle, were gilded by the beams of this morning's sun; what ruin, what devastations are witnessed by its departing rays—

You must come to us immediately, I foresee, with anguish, your presence will be necessary, on a business more urgent, and perhaps more dreadful, than that of supporting your poor Caroline.

Yet heaven knows she never wanted it so much.

I trust this will find you at L——, but if the assizes are closed there, the express will follow you.

Delay not a moment—

Isaac is an age getting ready, Oh God that my thoughts could but reach you.

Should Edward be come to you—but this is a surmise without hope—take him to London instead of returning with him here, as in that case I shall be collected enough to remain where I am, without you, as long as my presence may be necessary,

And

Should the above surmise be happily realised, the best thing that can be done for him, is to persuade him to go abroad.

He will explain this letter.

But if you do not meet him, come my beloved James to your fond Caroline, with the utmost speed.

I cannot get that methodical creature, Isaac to hurry, tho' he sees me trembling with impatience.

Yet I have neither spirit, nor composure to tell you our situation.

It is a detail no less prolix, than fatal; the sum indeed might appear in three dreadful words.

But James, tho' my heart is bursting, I cannot help fancying myself at this moment, a greater philosopher than yourself.

The shock it has given me, renders *me* fearful of suddenly alarming *you*—

Oh thank God Isaac is at last ready, come my dearest life and come safe to

Your

CAROLINE BUTLER.

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LETTER LXIX.

Agnes to Madame St. Lawrens.

Belle-Vue.

DEAR blessed friend! of the miserable Agnes, how will your heart bleed, how are you doomed to suffer from your exalted friendship, your love for the wretched St. Clare, and her more wretched daughter! yet what have I said? *more* wretched! stop presumptuous pen, how dare I who can acquit myself to you, and to God? how dare I murmur?

Alas! alas! my heart is breaking, I know not to what excess despair may drive me, I need your protection, your consolation, I write to implore it, send I beseech you a lay sister, to fetch me hence; will they persuade, they will entreat, my uncle, dear worthy man, will command, the insinuating Caroline will weep, and Julia will not be denied; but ah! I cannot stay among them.

No Victoire! no! I have ventured on that tempestuous ocean, where the peace of my poor mother was wrecked: I stood on the brink of a gulph, which yet gapes for my destruction; I tremble at the precipice I have—but have I escaped? hide me madam, from the horror of my own ideas.

I was married to—heavenly father I can not say it—I dare not think it.

Dear ill-fated youth! unhappy! undone Harley! yes madam, tremble: raise your pure heart with mine, to that divine source, where for wise purposes inexplicable to weak mortals, this dreadful mystery was ordained; oh St. Clare! friend! saint! mother! could not all thy piety, thy prayers, and penitence; preserve thy poor orphan, from the horrid, the *unnatural* crime of wedding her own—

I cannot write it—he is gone, he is fled, he hides his anguish in impenetrable secrecy. Alas whither! whither! dear youth! art thou flown! why didst thou leave the warm heart that beat only to God and thee; our misfortunes are the visitation of the most high, we are miserable but we are guiltless.

His heart madam is the mansion of rectitude, he is appalled at the guilt into which we were plunging; and am I less affected? do I feel the mystic horror of our fate, less than him? No, but he has not like me, been taught to form a plan of temporal felicity, independent of the passions: he knows not, that even here, in this vale of misery, an unhappy mortal may find a sanctuary from grief, from despair; his religion leads not to such peaceful retreats, as our dear convent.

Oh Edward! why art thou gone? why hast thou left thy Agnes, thy friend? still now, and ever wilt thou be present to my thoughts.

Can I forget the anguish of that fatal moment, when, his frame convulsed, his eyes bursting from their orbit, and his faltering tongue unable to utter any other sound than, "miserable Harley!" "lost Agnes!" yet, overpowered by the sense of guilt, he had resolution to tear himself from his Agnes: yes Madame! my arms were innocently, tho' vainly extended to detain him; I saw, tho' ignorant of the cause, his inward conflicts; the iron hand of despair distorted that countenance, where a moment before, every manly grace were seen to shine with unspeakable lustre.

Oh to recal him, to comfort, to support his drooping soul; alas my Edward! and are we parted to meet no more?—shall I no more hear him speak? no more delight in the wisdom, and harmony of his accents? and can it be? Oh too sure, do I not even sin in wishing to behold him?

Oh my sad heart! were I with you, could I rest my aching head on your maternal bosom, yet, even there could I lose the memory of my misfortunes, 'till the unhappy fugitive is restored to his friends, to the consolation of innocence? No, no! *that* once effected, Edward once more restored to a laudable confidence in himself; how gladly shall I bid this tumultuous, this hateful world adieu.

Send for me dear Madam, let me return to your protection, oh that I never had left it! that my poor departed mother, had suffered me to offer my vows in expiation of her violated ones; oh! that it had been my happy fate, to have lived in ignorance, and died in peace.

I can no more, my head! my head! shall I die here? shall I expire among people, in a family who were blessed in the world, and in each other, before the miserable Agnes came among them? before the contagion of her misfortunes infected the house of tranquility? my pen drops from my fingers, my head, oh! how it throbs.

An amiable creature, the congenial spirit to poor Harley, promises to explain this incoherent letter—this must be the approach of death—every limb is in exquisite torture—dear tender Caroline I resign myself to you—my pen falls. Adieu adieu best——

— —

LETTER LXX.

Mrs. Butler to Madame St. Lawrens.

Belle-Vue.

Dreadful Madam, dreadful to me is the explanation I have promised.

To retrace the scenes which have passed, and which still hang in dark suspense over us, is a task really terrible; and it is rendered still more so, by the dangerous situation of our dear Agnes; the agitation of her mind has thrown her into a high fever, but she is yet sensible; and implores me, with such extreme, such pathetic earnestness, to give you the particular of a story, which nearly destroyed us all, I cannot resist her affecting importunity; tho' I am extremely indisposed, and very ill able to support myself under the grief, and suspense which I feel at Harley's absence; but the supplicating looks of the dear Agnes are not to be resisted.

You are informed Madam, the nuptials were to take place Thursday, and that we were in hourly expectation of Lady Mary's arrival.

The General's anxiety during the separation from his Lady, had materially affected his health; and the gout, which had only once before attacked him, was removed with difficulty from his stomach into the extreme parts; it was now fixed on his right foot, which with the weakness a course of medicine had left on his constitution, rendered it improper, if not dangerous for him to take so long a journey, as from Belle-Vue to Bath; or it is most probable he would not have waited Lady Mary's arrival here.

After the ceremony, oh madam! what a ceremony, never shall I forget it, nor will I ever be present at another.

The glow of modesty crimsoned over the cheek of the charming Agnes, but her mind, above the common forms, which influence some brides I have seen of less understanding, conscious of no latent reason to be ashamed of the vow she was taking, communicated its dignity to her countenance; her bright eyes met those of the transported Harley, as with a fine mellow low voice, but perfectly distinct, she pronounced the solemn, "I Agnes, take thee, Edward," and with equal presence of mind, she went through all her part of the awful contract.

To describe Edward must be to have seen him, oh my poor! poor brother!

After the ceremony we met in the saloon: the General plays capitally on the violoncello, and I need not say to *you* that Agnes on the harp is harmony itself; I sat to the organ, Edward took his flute, we were all musical—even Madame Vallmont and father

Dominick bore a part in one of Bach's fine compositions—The door flew open—and my mother rush'd in, all pale and trembling—followed by my uncle Montford.

We expected Mrs. Butler would have accompanied Lady Mary, her terrific countenance, and agitation, therefore alarmed us on her account.

How is my wife, where is Lady Mary, dear Constance say but is she well? cried the General, and we all crowded round her.

She threw herself on a chair, and asked faintly for a glass of water; before it could be got, tears seemed to relieve her, but she was some time incapable of speaking.

The General's gout was no more remembered, he stamped in agony; Speak, Constance, for God's sake relieve me from this dreadful suspense; where is my Mary my wife?

Mrs. Butler, as soon as she could speak, begged the General would not alarm himself; his Lady was not ill, not dangerously ill, she was as well as—as —

As what madam, speak I conjure you, as what? interrupted the General, trembling, and in the same instant ringing the bell —

Dear General do not thus alarm yourself; Lady Mary's greatest malady *now*, is her concern for you, yet she is indisposed.

A servant appeared, the horses were ordered to be put to the travelling chaise; for *me*, said the General, is she distressed for *me*? let me fly to her.

Mr. Montford had in the mean time walked with Harley across the saloon; a scream from Agnes called my attention from Mrs. Butler, to her, where I saw—

Good God! how shall I describe the anguish of that moment.

My uncle had an open letter in his left hand, the fore finger of his right was in the act of pointing out to Harley the contents of what was written on the paper, but Edward had already heard enough; he stood, his eyes cast upwards with such horrid earnestness, the whites only were visible; his features were distorted with inward convulsion; drops of sweat rolled down his forehead, his brows were contracted, his hands clasped together, and never was there seen, so striking an emblem, of hopeless distraction.

Poor Agnes! whose attention was first excited with ours about Mrs. Butler, had it soon mournfully engaged by a more interesting object; she marked the changes in his countenance, 'till his senses appear'd to forsake him, it was then she shrieked, and ran to clasp her arms around the lost Edward.

In vain for some time, were all her efforts to rouse him from this distressing torpidity of soul; she called on him by the tenderest appellations, her own Edward, her dearest Harley, her husband.

At that he started, tears gush'd from his eyes, and oh! what groans, what direful groans rent his bosom; Miserable undone Edward! cried he, again straining his eyes upwards, then suddenly fixing them on her, lost, lost Agnes!

Edward—dear Edward what means my more than life? Oh whence this horrid distraction? and again she was throwing her arms around him.—

With a look, heavenly God! what a look—he disengaged himself from her fond grasp, and twisting his hands in his fine hair, which he pulled out by the roots, and scattered as he went, ran out of the house with such celerity, and we were all so stupified, so afraid of enquiring, yet so eager to know what had caused such a sudden revolution, from the excess of happiness, to the extreme of misery, that he was not followed, 'till he was out of sight and no one could tell the path he had taken.—

The Major and the Rector went immediately to the Hermitage, he had not been seen there, nor have we since heard of him; but to return to the dreadful exposition.

Agnes threw herself into my arms, and wildly demanded why her Harley had left her? where he was gone? and what was the cause of this tempest in a mind, which was wont to be hush'd into infant mildness at the voice of his Agnes?

Too, too soon, were her enquiries answered.—

Ah madam! you who are a saint on earth, whose soul already participates in the serene joys of the blessed, even *you* could not have borne this scene, without lamenting that two of the most lovely, and most deserving of God's creatures, should be thus rendered the most unhappy.

You have heard from Major Melrose, in his application for your sanction, to the marriage of Edward Harley, to Miss De Courci, all that we knew of that young man's history—My aunt Montford bred him as her own son, and my mother who had married imprudently, dying when I was in my infancy, she had also the goodness to adopt me: we were thus brought up together, and the fraternal love he ever evinced for me, was returned by the warmest sisterly attachment.

During the life of Mr. Neville, the acquaintance which had subsisted between my aunt's family, and that at Belle-Vue, was entirely dropped: it was very seldom that charming seat was visited by Mr. Neville, and when it did happen, Mrs. Montford did not chuse to give him the trouble of refusing to let Lady Mary be seen by her, it being his invariable custom to deny his Lady to all her old friends.

On Mr. Neville's death however, my aunt was amongst the first who paid her respects to the noble widow; and then presented to her young Harley—who, from that period became a great favorite with her ladyship.

Mr. Neville madam, I need not inform you, was a man of dissolute manners—He had early in life seduced a young ward of his father's—Miss Woodburne—whose brother fell in his attempt to punish the destroyer of his sister's honor.

The poor girl lost her reason when the tidings of his death, and Neville's flight was told her, *she* left her guardian's house, and became an insane wanderer; in that situation—but I cannot go on—I must get Mr. Dominick to transcribe Mrs. Montford's letter to Lady Mary, which she wrote during her last illness; I will then if I am able, resume my pen, at present I can only entreat you will pray for Agnes, for Harley, for the distressed friend and sister of both,

CAROLINE BUTLER.

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LETTER LXXI.

Mrs. Ann Montford to Lady Mary Moncrass.

(Inclosed in the preceding letter, copied
by father Dominick.)

Hermitage.

My dear Lady Mary,

THE cancer which has so many years afflicted me, is no longer to be parried by the art of medicine, I always knew it would be my end; the formidable advances it now makes on my constitution, and the impossibility of repelling it, are omens of a speedy dissolution, I cannot misinterpret—my worldly affairs are all arranged, except the secret you have so often solicited me to reveal respecting my dear Edward: I told you it should not die with me; no Lady Mary, I am too much interested in his future welfare, to conceal from you a story that will make you his friend, when I am no more—you will have an old maid's confession—but no matter—you may arraign her folly but you will acquit her of guilt.

How has it escaped your observation Lady Mary, that my Edward is the image of your late husband? Of the only man I ever loved.

When Mr. Neville was first your mother's favorite at Belle-Vue, my heart was enslaved by his exterior perfections, I loved him from a youth, and through all the changes of his variable fortune; how he, whose vanity was so great, came not to take advantage of my partiality, is not so easily understood, but I believe he never suspected it; as the little civilities he paid me were free from design, he was not at the trouble to conceal any of his sentiments; his mind I remember I used to think was undressed when he conversed with me, but it was like the dishabille of a beautiful woman, when unadorned, most attractive; I excused his vices when they would admit it, and I studied his follies, till they became as natural to me as my own.

But when Miss Woodburne's affair came out, that was too gross even for me to pardon; and the conviction of his abandoned principles, affected my spirits so much, I was glad to accept my brother's invitation to visit his Somersetshire estates, in hopes I should get rid, by change of scene, of the melancholy I was falling into.

My brother was always partial to me, he rode, walked, and indeed devoted his whole time to my amusement.

We were one evening, strolling down a meadow, by the side of a river near his house, when we saw a young woman plunge into the stream from the opposite side; my brother ran immediately to her assistance, nor was I far behind him. The river, fortunately

as the weather had long been dry, was shallow; and my cries which were heard by the domestics, hastened them to us; they assisted in getting the body to my brother's house, where, notwithstanding the first medical skill we could procure, it was four hours before she was pronounced out of danger.

My brother was struck with her beauty, but the melancholy in which she was totally absorbed: was an attraction to me far more potent, he *saw* she was handsome but I *felt* she was unhappy.

Instead of thanking, she reproached us for preserving her; yet we persevered in our kindness, we saw she was well bred, and could not doubt but her origin was respectable, although we had likewise every reason to suppose she had been imprudent, as she was very visibly pregnant.

Her intellects were touch'd, she would often rave, and oftener keep a profound silence—but she had intervals which exhibited a most amiable mind; she was naturally tender, and grateful, and her acknowledgments for our kind *intentions*, a distinction she would always make, increased the affection we felt for her.

Quiet, and attention, by degrees, restored her to her reason; she then acquainted us, she was the ruined Miss Woodburne, of whom we had heard too much.

Poor meek creature, she could not support herself under the accumulated weight of guilt, and sorrow, when her brother's death was added to her own ruin, her agonies were too acute for her intellectual faculties; she flew from her guardian—your uncle Neville, and had been wandering about the country, avoiding the high-roads, and hiding from the sight of her fellow creatures, who she fancied were in pursuit of her, as the murderess of her brother, till the moment in which prompted by fear, and despair, she had sought to end her wretched being: she concluded her affecting story, with entreaties that we would not discover her to her guardian, but suffer her to breathe her last with us; and not abandon her guiltless infant, when it became an inhabitant of the earth.

We engaged to fulfil all her behests, and endeavour'd to banish the despair which had taken possession of her, but without success; she lived only to bring her child into the world.

My partiality for Mr. Neville has never been, notwithstanding his libertine character, wholly eradicated; with *his* graceful form and insinuating manners on my mind, it is little wonder my heart continued inaccessible to any other of his sex: and so, I am an old maid.

Again I cannot help asking, how it could escape your observation? For never were there two created beings, that more resembled each other, than Mr. Neville and my Edward; he has the fine figure, and understanding of his father, without his vices; and I actually am cherishing my first passion for Neville, while I indulge my fondness for

Edward; a confession, that may perhaps, and that in no small degree, lessen the opinion your Ladyship have been pleased to entertain of the urbanity of those motives, by which you supposed me to be actuated, in my conduct towards him.

Without knowing the claims he *should* have on Mr. Neville's fortune, you have promised Lady Mary to patronize my boy, when Ann Montford is no more: and the reliance I have on your word, is a comfort I would not part with on any terms; you will not I am sure, for *I know you*, be less his friend, for the discovery I have made of his mother's misfortune and of his father's depravity—

I attended, at her dying request, her remains to Gloucestershire, and saw her corpse laid at the feet of her father.

Her fortune, and her brother's estate, to which she was heir, were very considerable; but, as she was under age, it was not in her power to settle any part of either on her son, neither could he, who was illegitimate, inherit it; *he* therefore, could derive no advantage from a discovery of his mother's shame; and to own the truth, I did not wish to divide my right to the young orphan, with any other person; I therefore left the village church, without answering a single question concerning the deceased, and returned to the Hermitage with my dear charge.

You know Lady Mary how abundantly I think myself overpaid, for my care of this boy; by the gratitude, and affection he bears me, and how I exult in his personal, as well as mental graces.

I divide my little fortune between him, and Caroline Brookes, only child of an unfortunate sister who married a man totally unworthy of her; but he also is dead, I will not therefore say more on that head, than that my brother, as partial to Edward as myself, engages to dispose of his large fortune in the same manner I have left my small one.

The mind of Edward Harley has been formed, and his talents cultivated under my inspection; you knew his tutor the excellent Doctor Allen.

I am perfectly satisfied with his disposition myself; but ah! Lady Mary, while gratifying my own peculiar turn in the embellishment of his mind, I forgot perhaps he must be like other men; he is now only virtuous, honest, and honorable, "I took that season of life when the soul as yet unhacknied in the ways of men, is susceptible of every fine impression, when the sublime and beautiful of virtue, inflame it with a laudable enthusiasm, and worldly passions had not yet entangled it in their snares," to model his inclination and lead his taste.

But in a world, where the innocence of the dove, should be entwined with the guile of the serpent, with that warmth of feeling, that exquisite sensibility, what will become of him.

Take him Lady Mary I beseech you under your protection; without, if possible to avoid it, disclosing to him his disgraceful birth, which his poor mother beg'd he might never know.

Should I not again have the happiness to see you Lady Mary, suffer my extreme illness to be an apology for this trouble—my surgeon talks of the knife, but I will not submit to the operation, and my complaint is mortal.

Yet I trust I shall again see the dear friend I now with reluctance part with.

May your comforts dear Lady Mary, increase with your years; may your faultless example, excite in your lovely Julia, a desire to emulate, she never can excel her valuable mother.

May the worthy General continue to deserve you—human perfection can go no farther.

While the venerable Earl is spared to the most affectionate of daughters, may he be blessed with health, and spirits, and when it shall please the Almighty to call him hence, may you Lady Mary, bear the short separation, with the fortitude and resignation, which has hitherto rendered your character, a model of female perfection.

Adieu Madam, once more let me recommend my Edward to your patronage, and I know you will sometimes condescend to enquire after my pretty Caroline—but *she* has relations—Edward none—you will also, sometimes remember

ANN MONTFORD.

LETTER LXXII.

Mrs. Butler to Madame St. Lawrens.

In continuation.

THUS then madam, you perceive, how from a combination of events, and from a concealment which no human policy could predict would end thus miserably, Edward and Agnes are undone.

The tenderness which reciprocally attached the wretched pair to each other would, had they known their consanguinity have stopped at the fraternal bond; but, mutually amiable—charming in their persons—elegant—delicate—and brilliant in their understandings; the first favorable impression increased by degrees, 'till it ended in a passion too potent to be subdued by reason, lessened by time, or transfered to any other object.

In Harley it had indeed taken early and deep root, it was a part of himself, and what may be the consequence of the discovery to him, I tremble to think.

My greatest fear for Agnes, arises from the delicacy of her constitution.

Her love for Edward would I am convinced have stood the test of time, or any change of circumstances; but should her invaluable life be spared from the ravages of the fever, I think we may hope, that her mind untainted with guilt, and unappalled with inward reproaches, will in time, recover the shock it has received.

Her innate principles, look not to externals, her God, and her conscience are the umpire of her actions, to them she makes her appeal, and she will consider the discovery, late as it was made, as the peculiar intervention of Heaven, to preserve her from an union so retrograde to humanity.

She will not I venture to predict, admit another inmate to her bosom; her plan of passing through life was made, and all her ideas of happiness formed, before she left your convent.

Her love for Harley, while it engrossed her passions, could not wholly reconcile her to the world; tho' courted to its enjoyments by the object of her fond affections, who also doated on her.

She is now she says convinced of the wisdom of her first plan, and deplores that she ever abandoned it, for one so illusory.

She will not be prevailed on to stay amongst us; no madam! you will again receive your Agnes, she will be your's forever; and we shall recollect her as a heavenly vision which just passed our sight and vanished.

She will indeed leave an impression, no time can erase; but she will be lost to us, we shall see her no more; she is at this instant earnestly praying that she may be spared to return to your convent, to die at your feet.

The good Priest prays by, and comforts her—but what is become of him she cries? Oh where is my Edward? She is incessantly enquiring if I, if the Major, or any body has heard of him? If we can form no conception where he is gone?—Would to God! we could.

Three days ago Belle-Vue was a scene of joy and festivity, it is now frightful, and gloomy as a desert.

When Lady Mary came to the part of St. Clare's history, which discovers Neville to be her husband and the father of Agnes; the idea of the unnatural marriage which it might be perhaps too late to prevent, struck her so forcibly she fell into hysteric fits which continued 'till after my mother joined her at Bath, with intention to accompany her hither.

Mrs. Butler was informed by her woman of the paquet Lady Mary had received, for she was unable to speak herself, but altho' she could presume so much on the friendship subsisting between them, as to read the contents, and altho' she was herself extremely shock'd at the baseness of Neville, and affected by the misfortunes of St. Clare, she owned she was surprized it should have so great an effect on Lady Mary.

But when that lady sufficiently recovered, to be able to reveal the real source of her grief, there required little persuasion to prevail on Mrs. Butler, who is one of the most humane creatures breathing, to set off express to Belle-Vue and break the matter to the General. Mr. Montford was at his seat in Somersetshire, and as the road to Belle-Vue passed it, Lady Mary in a short note requested he would accompany her.

My dear mother, ever active in the cause of benevolence, tho' long an invalid, forgot all her own complaints, and travelled two hundred and fifty miles across the country, without stopping longer than to change horses, in hopes to be in time to prevent the marriage. She left her Ladyship confined to her bed, which when the General understood, he set off to Bath with Julia, leaving his son to escort Mrs. Butler; who was too much concerned for her friend to stay from her, while she was in such a situation; tho' she, was unable to travel back with the same expedition she had come to Belle-Vue.

All that the most tender parent could say, in alleviation of the misfortunes of this unhappy brother, and sister, and in solemn promise of unceasing paternal fondness, and protection did General Moncrass say to his lovely niece; who urged his hasty departure to his wife, and implored him to prevail on Lady Mary to believe, she lamented the

incessant trouble, she was the innocent cause of to her—Sweet creature! she endeavoured to conceal the anguish of her heart, from her uncle, and promised him, she would make herself as easy as the nature of her situation would admit.

Mrs. Moncrass was visibly divided between duty to the best of mothers, and compassion for her distressed friend; the former however, as it was fit, prevailed.

Mr. Moncrass, and Mrs. Butler followed the General and Julia early the next morning; they all earnestly recommended the unfortunate bride, to the peculiar care of Mrs. Vallmont and myself.

Major Melrose who loves Edward as his son, is continually on horse-back in search of him—but, if he yet lives—ah me! what a surmise was that—He has probably left England.

I have wrote to Mr. Butler, who I know will leave every other business, the moment he receives my letter, and come to join his endeavours with the Major to trace the poor fugitive; I know *his* influence over the mind of Harley, is greater than that of any other person; perhaps I might add too, with all respect to the Major, who is an excellent character, his feelings would be more congenial to the anguish of the dear Edward; could we but find him.

* * * * *

Saturday evening.

Agnes continues so ill that I want heart to send away this letter; and oh! my own sad forebodings; hitherto a stranger to any distress, absent from my beloved husband and thus robbed of the dear companion of my infancy, how unfit am I to be the scribe on such an occasion.

Monday.

Nothing but sorrow Agnes lives, but that is all; Lady Mary's life is, we hear in danger from a billious attack, the General relapsed, and Mrs. Butler in the utmost distress—she doats on Lady Mary.

Tuesday.

My Butler is thank God arrived, safe, and well, some comfort in that; dear generous creature! he is in agonies for Harley.

Wednesday.

I congratulate you, and rejoice myself, our Agnes is better; the crisis of her fever was favorable.

Her physicians order her to be kept very quiet; and flatter us, if she does not relapse, the worst is now past; I do not suffer a breath to be heard, no not my sighs for Edward,—unhappy Edward!

Mr. Butler is gone to the Hermitage, tho' hopeless of success, to renew the enquiries already made in that neighbourhood, after our dear wanderer; he has he says, sometimes a latent hope he is gone abroad; yet he trembles at his name, his fears are grounded on a thorough knowledge of his friend, those fears, oh madam! they want a name.

Thursday.

Mrs. Butler writes by desire of the General and Lady Mary, to request all possible care may be taken of Agnes; that she may be considered as the heiress of Mr. Neville, addressed by his name, and in every respect treated as the General's nearest relation.

But what are appellations, or form, to such a mind as her's? Who that knows her will suppose she would at such a time as this, be interested about mere hereditary possessions? No madam—*your* Agnes, *my* Agnes cannot now receive a consolation, in which the mind does not share.

Ah Caroline! said she just now, when I read to her Mrs. Butler's letter; tell me that Edward is found, that he lives, and resigns himself to the will of his Maker; that his heart is purified from an incestuous passion, that he acknowledges his sister, his unfortunate sister, joint heir with him to the direful consequence of the crimes of their unnatural father—and I will hail thee as the patriarch of old did the returning dove; thy voice will be music to the sad soul, where fear and desolation dwells; but, 'till I know *his* fate, 'till I am sure *he* exists, 'till I am certain he is restored to peace; what are names, but sounds in which I delight not? what are riches but trash I cannot enjoy? And what are temporal honors but snares to a mind unfortified by religion? Edward continued she, clasping her uplifted hands, return, return to thy friends, thy home, let me see thee happy, and then with what joy shall I resign in thy favor, all my right to the wealth of him who destroyed *thy* mother, and murdered *mine*—My home is at the convent D——, the relatives of my heart live there, in the practice of piety in the service of the blessed Virgin; *there* I should be welcomed with transport, were I to return to them, stript of every earthly good, but my honor—Blessed sanctuary for the broken-spirited—holy asylum for the offspring of iniquity—how do I long once more to join our heavenly choir.—

This woman, this Agnes is already soaring above mortality; when I hear her melodious voice uttering religious rhapsodies, I feel a kind of solemn awe I cannot describe; a respect, a veneration.

But *true religion*, respected lady Abbess however different in outward professions, and in form of worship, is I believe one invariable impulse, over the whole face of the creation; how indeed should it fail to be so? since the source from whence it arises is the same, the beneficence of the Father of the universe, is equally extended to all the inhabitants of the earth, it is a thankful sense of *his* unceasing goodness, *his* inexhaustible mercy, and *our own* unworthiness, that lays the foundation of all religious sentiments.

The Indian, whose mind cannot boast that expansion, we of the enlightened world receive from the holy scripture, instruction, and example; pays *his* adoration to the glorious sun, he hails the returning light with thankful rapture; and his soul prostrates itself in love and gratitude at the shrine from whose genial warmth, he supposes every good proceeds; this then in *him* is *true religion*.

We *know*, we *feel*, we owe all our earthly blessings to a superior Power; and the greatness, the sublimity, the glory, the mercy of that Being, who from such an immensity of distance, such superiority of wisdom, condescends to pay attention to the wants of the meanest reptile that creeps on the earth; must fill us with a stronger sense of true religion, in proportion to the larger share of reason with which he has been pleased to endow us.

So that, madam; it is no small happiness to me, to be assured from my own feelings that *you* in your cloister, our dear *Agnes* and *myself*; have all the same sense of the divine goodness, are animated by the same thankful piety, and shall all be ultimately received into the celestial joy of the same God.—

Pardon madam, this unsolicited confession of faith, it is extorted by my love for Agnes, and my desire to be mentally admitted to the friendship of madam St. Lawrens.

Agnes, or as the General commands, Miss Neville, being now, God be praised better, and continuing to recover, I congratulate her friends at the convent of D——, on the happy turn her fever has taken, and beg leave to subscribe myself

Madam,

Your respectfully obliged,

Humble servant,

C. BUTLER.

LETTER LXXIII.

Agnes to Madame St. Lawrens.

Belle-View.

ONCE more madam, the child of sorrow addresses her best friend; her view of an eternity that had no horrors in it to her, but which seemed on the contrary to invite her sad spirit to rest, closes; and she returns, reluctant, and hopeless, to the temporal concerns, which must be arranged, before she finally leaves a world where her peace has been sacrificed to transient good and permanent evil.

I am yet weak, I dare not look back—the retrospect would incapacitate me for the task, which justice, and duty demands.

To ask your opinion, and wait its arrival would detain me here too long; it would not only rob me of many hours of rest in your arms, but inflict an equal degree of heightened sorrow, by prolonging my stay in a family, whose tranquility will be restored, when I have forever left it.

I have sent for an english attorney, madame Vallmont is his ostensible employer: any visible preparations for my departure from hence would afflict the generous friends, whose kindness encreases with my sorrows; Mr. Butler eloquently persuades, and his amiable wife weeps as she folds me to her bosom; they soothe, they entreat, my uncle, dear worthy man! already lays plans for my future greatness, and his noble wife prides herself on the restitution of all my fathers fortune, generous woman!

My intention is to make a legal renunciation of the riches which has been fatal to me, and which I never can want. Were there no other claimant; were not the rights of my sister, of the sweet Julia! incontestible, altho' our father's depravity would perhaps deprive her of a legal title—I might reserve some part of his immense wealth, for charitable uses; I might devote it to the pious purpose of having mass continually offered for his soul; but God will, I humbly trust preserve *me* from the mistake, I have so often heard *you* condemn: the Judge of the universe, the Fountain of mercy, will not accept the produce of injustice, or the gleanings of avarice, however charitably or piously bestowed, in expiation of mortal sin; no! the offerings acceptable to the Saviour of man, are those which come from the purified heart—yes the heart which has itself, done justice, and loved mercy; may approach the altar of God, with sacrifice, and such only will be accepted.—

In the conviction then Madam, that it is simply an act of common justice, I am anxious to secure to Julia, the fortune to which she is before Heaven, undoubted heir *after* me—after me did I say—oh! that I had ever remained in ignorance of my care-crowned

rights, that I had existed only for the service of my Maker, the fond solicitude of dear St. Clare for my temporal welfare, has been the bane of my happiness.

Ah Madam! do you not tremble at the abyss of anguish into which I was on the point of plunging? The marriage vows had passed my lips, nature groans at the recollection; father Dominick declares me absolved from the sin I unknowingly committed, but my wounded spirit still dwells on the enormity of those evils, which but for the interposing mercy of Providence might have marked that fatal vow with unutterable horror.

Merciful God! I thank thee, I will devote the remainder of my days to thy praise—One, one only prayer have I to offer to thee, I prostrate myself before thee, I cry to thee in the anguish of my soul, oh spare, protect, restore the unhappy, the innocent partner of my guilt; give me to know he yet lives, blast not his youth with the agonies of despair—save him from the temptations of hopeless sorrow—Oh! be his safeguard against himself—suffer not the brightest of thy works to fall a sacrifice to sin.

My eyes flow with tears they drop on my paper, you perceive the traces, my sight is dim'd, oh whither has his perturbed spirit borne the dear, the amiable Edward? Mr. Butler, his bosom, his confidential friend, a young man who honors his own heart by his anxiety for Harley, trembles for him; he is perpetually seeking, yet dreading to find him; pale fear sits on his cheek at every sound of the gate bell, he wants the resolution to ask the business of any stranger that arrives; and his amiable wife, who is tenderness and delicacy itself nurtured by the same breast, fed by the same hand, and early taught the same principles as my unfortunate brother, is actually the philosopher from whom we all learn fortitude.

Madame de Vallmont harassed by our perpetual uneasiness, sick of this world, and aspiring to a future, resolves to be my companion to D——; if therefore you have not already sent the lay-sister, there will be no occasion; Madame de Vallmont is a woman of honor, great knowledge of the world, and used to travel; I shall be safe in her protection, and benefited by her society.

* * * * *

The attorney has been here and I have legally renounced all claims on the fortune of my unhappy father in favor of Julia.

This is a step my dear Lady Abbess, you will not perhaps at first approve; because I know it is your wish to have the fame of my dear mother vindicated, by the public justice done her daughter.

There appears I confess to have been a time when that motive had great weight with *her*: but dear Madam, the only real disgrace on *her* character, was that of having broken her first vows to Heaven; every calamity which succeeded *that sinful act*, were the

natural consequences of it: and you see that a publick avowal and proof of her marriage, serves only to render the memory of the dead hateful, and to involve a noble, and innocent family in shame and distress; without accomplishing the fond mother's wish, of rendering her child happy.

The misfortunes of the family of Moncrass, had so sunk them in the memory, as well as estimation of the world; that those who remember the elopement of my mother from the convent at Portugal, recollect only her apostacy; they do not trouble themselves to search out of what family she was.

My uncle's honor, spotless as the brightest day, and unclouded by a single deviation from the strictest rectitude, still supports the ancient virtue of his ancestors.

After him comes the amiable, the sensible, the elegant Moncrass his son, whose youth opens with every promise, to succeed his father in honor as in name.

How then Madam can the revival of the story of the forgotten Agnes, whose crime must be repeated as often as her injuries are remembered, and in the estimation of every member of our holy church, be considered as the primary source of her misfortunes? How can it add to the honor of her family?

She is no more—the ghastly smile of malice, the mysterious air of calumny, which affects to conceal what it knows, and would appear tender of the heart it wishes to stab, no longer injures *her*—All the mighty the important ills of mortality have passed away—the world itself appears to *her* but as a little speck in the immensity of space—*her* offence is pardoned—*she* rests in peace, in the bosom of her God—and her pure soul is uncontaminated by one vindictive thought.

This renunciation then concerns not St. Clare, it is your Agnes only who resigns what she can never enjoy; she gives up the treasure, the habitation of the wicked, and does not holy writ actually pronounce, that these shall become desolate!—The soul which has been formed, the mind which has been cultivated by Madame St. Lawrens, dares seek *her* treasure where the moth cannot corrupt, and conscious that she was created for nobler purposes, looks down on all the kingdoms of the earth: in this act Madam, there is besides, true wisdom, it is even the result of that self-love, to which all mankind have a propensity. I gratify my own heart without offending my Maker.

Major Melrose will provide amply in addition to what he has already done for my—oh Madam!—*my brother*—to Julia therefore my amiable, my charming sister, the daughter of my father, have I resigned all my pretentions.

Were not my recovery retarded by my uncertainty of the fate of my Edward, I should be soon, very soon on my way to D——; I have not informed my uncle of the step I have taken, with respect to my fortune; nor given him or any one of the family, but Madame de Vallmont a hint how soon I mean to leave England; because I am sure their

mistaken affections, would wish to detain me; mistaken indeed! beloved friends! you love your Agnes, you wish her happy; but would restrain her from taking the only path that in her estimation will lead to peace.

* * * * *

I am so far recovered, that I have ventured to walk on the lawn, and feel the more air I take, the sooner I shall be able to set out;—no tidings yet of Harley, Mr. Butler, and his sweet wife have again been at the Hermitage, he has not been seen there:—well, God's will be done, I will not close this letter, 'till I can announce the time of my departure.

* * * * *

I have rode round this beautiful seat in a small cabriole, Mr. Butler was so polite as to drive me;—he is a most amiable young man—no language can describe the painful sensations I endured, when thro' the opening of trees I saw the white buildings at the Hermitage; poor Edward! how often has he directed my eye to the spot, where he formed his visionary plans of happiness—does he exist? Is he yet among the living?

* * * * *

Well Madam, my strength returns, my soul pants for your society, three days hence I leave Belle-Vue for ever.

Mr. Butler is inexpressibly polite, he invited us to take our tea in a small summer room, on the brink of a delightful river which rolls its crystal waves along several miles of green enamelled banks; and is the same that passes by the Hermitage, and supplies the stream, and fountains which decorate that delightful retreat—On the point of a rugged precipice which hangs at the extremity of the grove over this river—poor Edward had a neat gothic library, which he named the cell of contemplation:—

“Close by the cell a glassy mirror flow'd,
“Whose stream was shelter'd with a waving wood:
“The inner part display'd
“A cool retreat amidst surrounding shade:—
“So thick the twining branches nature wove,
“No sight, no sun could reach the dusky grove.”

It was filled with books, and musical instruments, and this was the place where he received my uncle and me, at our first visit.

May I dear Madam, with innocence retrace the days that are *no more*?

We surprized the young Philosopher, as he was called, the General commanded me previous to our going, to endeavour to prevail on him to quit the inactive life he adopted, in opposition to the wishes of all his friends.

On our arrival at the Hermitage, not finding him in the house, we sauntered after the servant, to the place I have described, there in the enjoyment of peace, and the pursuit of wisdom, we found—*my brother* —.

Edward Harley Madam is the mildest, yet at the same time the most intrepid of men.

I attempted to obey the General, but the place, the scene, the silent eloquence of Harley, instead of convincing *him* subdued *me*.

At different times afterwards he prevailed on me to give him drawings to ornament this favorite spot, and in memory of my first gift erected a small white obelisk in front of it, sacred to friendship; thither after my return to Belle-Vue, would the irresistible pleader often tempt me to go with him; there have we spent whole hours and there alas! what splendid, what inexhaustible schemes of happiness did he not form.—

The river, the stream therefore which smoothly glides, and gently laves the sides of our summer-room at Belle-Vue, is the same that rushes at the Hermitage, over incredible large stones, and forms a natural cascade, just above the library, ah my friend! what sensations did this recollection give rise to, it was by plunging into a river the mother of my Edward would have precipitated her soul into eternal ruin; how would he have been affected had he known her sad story; with what horror would he have retreated from the bank on which he delighted to recline.

Oh how unconscious of guilt, how fearless of danger was he at our last excursion to his favorite cell;—my tears dropped into the clear stream as I sadly retraced those tranquil moments, after my aching eyes had vainly sought him among the trees where he usually waited for me.

The music, which was penserosa, gave additional solemnity to the scene;—they fear'd I should be too much affected, and would drag me away; but I find my mind more composed after this little excursion, and have prevailed on them to indulge me with a second summer-house visit to-morrow.

* * * * *

I am infinitely better my dear Madam to-day—I have been favored with most affectionate letters from the General, Lady Mary, and Mr. and Mrs. Moncrass; they wish me to join them at Bath—and Mrs. Butler is invited as well as Madame Vallmont,—I do not mean to answer those flattering proofs of affection, 'till I do it from Paris. I know my uncle will oppose my return to you, he offers to my view a thousand temptations; but

where is the merit of a rejection that accords with my only hope? I am entitled to retire from the world, oh how dreadful have been the lessons of experience, it has taught me!

Obliging Mr. Butler! affectionate Caroline! friendly Melrose!—I attend you for the last time—I dare not disclose my purpose to them, yet how often will my heart beat with gratitude, and true friendship to each; how painful will my sensations be, when I reflect, we never may meet again.

Madame Vallmont takes care of our conveyance, I have settled all my private affairs; and send this letter off, that it may inform you, how soon my poor tempest-beaten heart, will ask consolation, and repose, with God and you.

AGNES.

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LETTER LXXIV.

James Butler, Esq. to Mrs. Dowager Butler.

Belle-Vue.

I AM call'd on by manly fortitude, by duty, and by friendship; to combat with patience the pangs of unutterable grief: uncommon exertions are expected from reasonable beings, when they are assailed by uncommon calamities; this my dear mother is one of the invaluable lessons you have taught your children, not more by precept than example; I venerate your wisdom, but cannot imitate it.

I am here among beings, who are sinking under the visitation of providence; they look to *me* for *consolation*, to *me*, who am least able, either to give or receive it; they beseech me to write, Oh! my dear mother on what a subject; they think it is proper the General should be informed of our situation, which is so dreadful it will need all your prudence to break it to him, so as to soften the woes it will inflict, so as to arm him against those, that—will too probably follow.

Edward Harley Madam is no more.

Had grief, had disease deprived me of my friend, my tears would have bedewed his urn, I should have lamented his early fate, but secure in the uprightness of his principles, I should have consoled myself in the assurance, that *of such is the kingdom of heaven*.

But now he is indeed lost, he has rush'd unbidden into the presence of his creator; *he*, who never injured mortal, whose existence was one continued scene of benevolent kindness, whose religion was worthy of the God that made him, *he* has in his *last act*, abjured the mercy of the judge of the world.

Dear Lady Mary, what a task is hers! she only can prepare the good General, for the sad trial which I fear awaits him. True religion Madam never appeared so amiable to me, as at this moment, it is thence, we must now derive consolation, all mortal expedients are vain.

But I must be more explicit, the painful recital is assigned to me, because no other person here, *can* undertake it.

Agnes was gaining strength, both of mind and person; the fever had left her; her lovely countenance began to be reanimated by that perfect bloom, which rendered her fairest, among the fair; yet the melancholy which anxiety for the fate of Harley has occasioned still remained; she no longer trembled at his name, but a fixed sorrow seem'd to fill her mind; she was absent, and gloomy when we could prevail on her to join our

soulless parties *we* strove indeed to appear chearful, but our dreadful forbodeings were too visible to escape her observation.

She was every day engaged at her pen, in her own appartment 'till evening, when we prevailed on her to air in the park; the first of these little excursions not only amused, but pleased her; I had previously ordered the musical instruments to be removed to the summer room, and had placed some oratorios on the forte piano; she immediately selected the Messiah, and began the recitative—Comfort ye my people—you are but little acquainted with this charming woman, you have not heard her sing—the divine subject swelled with the harmony of her voice and execution into real comfort; we were inspired, and each took an instrument; she led through the whole oratorio—and when I expressed a fear that the exercise of her heavenly voice might retard her recovery, she answered with energy, *No Sir*, it will rather accelerate it; we took coffee there and returned to the house before sunset.

The next morning she favored us with her company at breakfast, and gracefully thanked us, me in particular, for the serene evening our solicitude to amuse her had afforded—It was a foretaste added she, of the divine avocations, which will soon employ all my hours: yet, that room, that stream which passes the gothic—she stopped, and hesitated—Ah! what less than the soul-moving notes of the immortal Handel, could have so effectually soothed the sad tumult which filled my poor breaking heart, as memory recur'd to—again she stopped—but *he* who exalts the valley, and lays the mountain low, will not forsake my Edward; oh Sir! taking my hand, you are affected, you tremble, you fear for your friend; join with me, dropping on her knees, and clasping her white hands with fervency, her face and neck crimsoned over, and her fine eyes cast upwards; join with me to implore the God of mercy, to avert the dreadful blow we fear.

Lovely Agnes! thy fervent prayers were vain, the Fiat was gone forth—the ill-fated youth was past recal.—

She arose, and glided from us like a vision.—

We then gave vent to our sorrows, and our fears; and the Major, as if struck by her mention of the river, passing by the gothic cell; recollected, that altho' the door, and window shutters next the grove were fast, the other front over the cascade might not be so; *my Caroline shuddered*—I will go said he this very afternoon, and search that place; I may at least discover some clue to lead to the poor wanderer.

Never let the wisdom of man, despise the power of instinct, the presentiment of evil.—

Did Major Melrose wish more earnestly to recover our friend, than myself? Was he more interested in his fate? more steady in his friendship? and more warm in his attachment? No my dear mother, truly might I say, my love for him surpassed the love of women; yet I trembled at the apprehension of the discoveries which might be made, in the

cell; I feared some hidden, some dreadful mystery, which I dared not to explore; and when the Major requested I would stay and attend the ladies, I felt as if a load had been removed from my mind; as if I had escaped some impending danger, as if, but I—I cannot describe it.

The Major, as Agnes had obligingly promised to favor us with her company at dinner, deferred going to the Hermitage 'till she retired, fearing his absence might alarm her.

My lines you see are crooked, but the tremor on my fingers, is infinitely short of that at my heart.

After dinner Agnes withdrew to her closet, but engaged to go to the summer-room in the evening, the Major then ordered his horse.

About six the cabriole, (she was too weak to walk across the park) was brought to the door; she was in better spirits than I had yet seen her.

How good you all are, said she, as she returned the salute of the ladies, who were just before us; and pressing my hand as I assisted her into the cabriole, how good, and how happy are you Mr. Butler, in the possession of that amiable creature; when you no longer see Agnes Neville, rest assured her orisons will be offered to heaven for your continued felicity;—my Edward, my brother if he yet exists, must do—all the rest; *he* will thank you for your kindness to his *sister*—My heart swelled to my eyes, an unbidden tear dropped on her delicate hand—she started—You have heard bad news—oh! tell me—tell me all, relieve me from this aching suspense, which whatever countenance I wear preys here, putting her hand to her heart—it was to no purpose I assured her I had not heard of Harley, she continued to implore me, to tell her what had happened, with such terrific earnestness, that I was obliged to stop several times, as the motion of the carriage added to her agitations; and deprived her of the power to respire: the ladies saw she was ill, and joined us; but it was not 'till we had reached the summer-house, we could at all succeed in our endeavours to pacify her.

Don't we miss somebody said she looking round, where is the Major?
I stammered, and again the weight of those dismal apprehensions of I knew not what, which had so recently affected *her*, almost suffocated *me*.

He has letters to write, said Madame Vallmont, with more presence of mind.

Agnes looked a meaning she did not give to words; tea and ice were served, and we began our little concert.

The river at this place, you know Madam, is wider than at any other part, the current which comes from the hill runs very rapid, 'till it divides just under the waterfall at the Hermitage, from thence it glides more gently, till it again joins in the great river
T——.

The sun was now near setting, not a breath of air stir'd a leaf of the flowers which grow in profusion round the room; Agnes was in the recitative "Thy rebuke hath broken his heart," and her own as well as ours was flowing at her eyes; when Madame Vallmont arose, and going nearer the window; I beg pardon said she, but heavenly as your music is, I must interrupt it; see Mr. Butler! there is something coming down with the stream, so very brilliant it dazzles my sight, I have seen it this half hour, and have been trying to make out, what it can possibly be.

Agnes immediately left the piano, we all crowded round the window, and as Madame Vallmont said, could plainly discern something floating towards us in the river; on which the rays of the setting sun play'd, with uncommon lustre.

Slow, too slow for our eager curiosity, it advanced; the servants had been dragging; and had drawn out the nets just above the park paling; we perceived their attention was attracted, by the same object with ours, and as they were nearer to it, could sooner distinguish what it was.

Presently we saw they were alarmed, some jumped into the river, others put out their hooks, and a couple ran towards the summer-room, to unchain the pleasure-boat, which is fastened under the window.

In that instant, Major Melrose enter'd; with looks so wan, so full of terror, and despair; that like poor King Henry I found my loss, ere he his tongue; he threw himself pale, breathless, and trembling on the ground; and spreading his hands over his face wept aloud.

I could no longer support Agnes, who was standing on a stool to have a greater command of the river; my arms slackened in their power, I fell back on a chair.

Caroline flew to me, Agnes stared with wild affright, without seeming to see any of us.

Madam Vallmont, who had still continued to gaze earnestly on the river, presently turned from the window; and altho' her countenance was equally expressive of terror, and grief, she endeavoured to conceal her agitation, and taking a hand of each of the ladies, entreated them to return with her to the house.

Caroline, who tho' terrified at the situation in which she saw us, had no distinct idea of the cause; hung round me, beg'd to share my anxiety, and would not be persuaded to leave me; Madame Vallmont then exerted all her influence to prevail on Agnes to accompany her, but the dear creature was still immovable as marble.

The Major, who was actually unable to speak, 'till relieved by a copious shower of tears, which seemed to ease his manly heart; then gave utterance to his grief.

Dear ill-fated youth! generous, unfortunate creature!! Oh what hast thou done! rash boy, thou hast torn from my soul the prop on which I thought to have rested! hadst thou died in the bed of honor, hadst thou fallen the victim of sickness, but such cool premeditated *self* murder! Oh my dear Harley! how little did I foresee! when thy life was bravely ventured to save mine, thou wouldst have chosen a watry bed to die in thyself.

As if awakened from death, Agnes started, it must be so, cried she, darting out of the room.

My Caroline sunk with the Major's last words into my arms, to all appearance dead; how I got her to the house I know not, her danger engaged all my attention, 'till *she* was restored to life, I thought not of the catastrophe I had so much feared.

As soon as my dearest wife recovered her reason, she asked after poor Agnes; and our surprise was mutual at finding, neither her, the Major, nor Madame Vallmont were returned to the house; at her earnest request I then hastened back to the summer-room, which I found quite deserted.

I then, guided by the sound of Madame Vallmont's voice went round to the grass plot by the park palings; where I beheld the poor desolate dying Agnes; her hair torn, and dishevelled, hanging in loose ringlets; her head cloaths and neck covering, lying in tatters on the ground; her beautiful arms bare, and all the symptoms of wild distraction glaring round the lovely ruin.

She was just then changing from a fit of raving, to melancholy madness; and was sitting on the ground by the dead body of our lost Edward; his head, swollen, and disfigured, was on her lap; with one hand she held a smelling bottle to his nose; the other with her eyes were lifted to heaven, in a supplicating attitude; Madame Vallmont in agony was beseeching her to go with her, and endeavouring to cover her head, and neck, which however she would not suffer her to do; and to complete the sad group, the Major stood at the feet of the corpse, his arms folded, his eyes fix'd, and no sign of sense; except the most bitter groans.

Why Madam? said I to Mrs. Vallmont, why do you permit her to continue in sight of such an object? Oh my poor Edward! and I could not help kneeling on the other side of the body.

You remember Madam he ran from us in his bridal cloaths; the unwelcome errand on which you came to Belle-Vue, possibly engrossed your attention, so much, you did not observe his dress, it was embroidered in the first taste, with foil and spangles; I bespoke it at his desire in London; Nothing said the unhappy youth, can be too elegant for my Agnes, and since I am in grace with her, "I will maintain it at some little cost."

In this fatal dress he plunged from the precipice of his cell into the river; where we suppose he must have lain under water and again floated at the only time when it was

possible he could be seen by his unhappy sister; as we find, she intended leaving us the next morning, her departure for the convent of Madame St. Lawrens was fixed, and the time she had passed in her apartment had been devoted to the final arrangement of her affairs.

Madame Vallmont rather hurt at my manner asked me, how I would have her act; Do you suppose Sir said she, I want either spirit, or inclination to enforce any measure that would tend to the restoration of my beloved friend? no Sir! yet I cannot tear her from that affecting object, nor had I strength equal to such an act, would I, my heart would not let me do it.

I had now taken his lifeless hand, and could no longer restrain my tears, dear Harley! friend! brother! I called him. Agnes heard me, What, cried she, are there more brothers lost? hush, be silent, breathe not, stir not, wake not my beloved, my own Edward, my—Oh no! no! pardon, pardon, 'twas but for a moment—Alas Sir! rising on her knees, and gently laying his head on the grass, then crossing her bare arms on her heaving bosom, and looking with mournful wildness in my face; Alass Sir! it was involuntary, we were ignorant of the sin, you see, pointing to the body, he *is innocent*, and the Lady Abbess will receive her poor Agnes.

Mrs. Vallmont in hopes to prevail on her to leave the body, begged she would immediately set out; I am ready my dear Agnes to accompany you to Paris said the good woman, offering to assist her to rise.

No, no, no, no, repeated she with quickness, shaking her head, her hair flying about, it is all over, we will not part, in heaven there are no marriages; oh! casting her eyes tenderly on the corps, what heart so hard to injure thee; cruel! barbarous! we had mothers once, and they are angels; but we have no father, no mother now; we will lay on the cold ground—together; ah poor, poor Edward! why didst thou leave me? I looked, and looked for thee 'till my head ached and my heart was bursting—he took me Sir, again addressing me, out of the fire, and his poor hands were burnt, and his face was scorched; you know best—to be sure, but I would ask one simple question—you gave me absolution, you told me I might love him without sin, yet here you see he lies, and the wind blows on his poor head, and he is wet, and cold, but I, I will cover him, I will hide him here in my heart; and oh my dear mother! the raving fit returned, the sweet creature actually tore her cloaths off; the housekeeper, her own maid, Mrs. Vallmont's and other female servants, were now melancholy and affrighted spectators of a scene, that struck every beholder with anguish.

I bid them force her from the body, but their utmost strength was unequal to the task; she clasped her arms round it, called on her Edward, her brother to save to protect her; I was obliged myself to unclasp her hand by force, and carry her in my arms; still she grasped at the body; and once so twisted her hands in his hair, that in the violent struggle, two large locks were torn from his head.

As soon as I had taken her in my arms, the body was removed; when she saw the men touch it, her shrieks which pierced my ears as we crossed the park were the most dismal that ever sorrow wrung from distraction; and continued without intermission, 'till Doctor Greville took some blood from her, and forced a medicine down her throat, which from her violent struggles he had great difficulty to do.

During the operation she called in the most pathetic terms, on Edward, on her mother, Dear St. Clare hear the cries of your Agnes, carry me to Madame St. Lawrens, deep, deep bury me deep, take me from the sons of violence; oh sillicide! sillicide! what hast thou done? the mothers were thy victims, must the children also bleed? oh spare us! spare us!

Her shrieks still sound in my ears, the Doctor's humanity was as conspicuous as his skill, he was sensibly affected.

The medicine was intended to compose her mind, I doubt it has benumbed her faculties, without having that effect; she now lies quiet indeed, and her eyes are closed, but such sighs break from her, as would melt the most insensible.

If on her recovery from her present stupor, for indeed it is not rest; she should ask any questions, the Doctor who continues with her will answer according to the state she is in; her apartment is darkened, and no breath heard but her own deep sighs; soon, soon I fear it will be more silent; it is I think impossible, considering her late illness, and subsequent weakness, she should ever more be restored to health.

As to Edward, his end has fatally justified all my apprehensions; I ever dreaded his extreme sensibility, and it woefully confirms the maxim I so ineffectually enforced with all my might to *him*, that *the greatest danger to young minds is keeping them unemployed*; the time which in youth is not *well* filled, will in the end prove to be the source of evils innumerable.

We have removed the body into the house, where a shocking ceremony must be gone through.

The Major found the front of the cell fastened up, but on examination perceived that the door on the other side was open; he then went round, and up the dismal steps.

The moment he entered, he saw the hat with the white favor which the wretched bridegroom had worn, lying on the ground; on the table were two papers, one sealed and without directions, the other, six lines intended for a will; we have not had courage yet to open the sealed paper, nor have we indeed mentioned having found either; as we fear the coroner will be scrupulous in his verdict: his death now bears some appearance of accident, and you will not doubt but we wish to have it so considered.

My heart my good, my honored mother, labours under the keenest impressions of sorrow, yet am I, tho' so ill qualified, obliged to assume the office of comforter.

My poor Caroline's grievous situation, could only give me strength of mind; she has successive faintings every half hour, she is indeed dreadfully affected; yet I dare not expect you here, this fatal event, and that which will, I am firmly of opinion follow it; will render your presence necessary at Bath.

The Major is extremely indisposed, he keeps to his apartment, *that* indeed we all do; his is a generous, brave, yet tender heart—I just looked in on him this morning, his hat was slapt, a silk handkerchief was loosely tied round his neck, he was walking up and down his room, and seemed afraid to trust his voice in making any enquiries; to mine, after *his* health, he could only answer, Never never worse; and turning from me—She is alive I think they say, it is more than I expected.

His valet informs me he has not been in bed the night—and thus miserable are all the inmates of Belle-Vue.

It is not for me Madam to dictate to you, you are certainly the best judge how to break this dismal matter to the General; my Caroline is at present too ill to be removed, nor would she, if she were not, leave the unhappy Agnes; yet I fervently hope, the General will so arrange us, that we may soon and forever leave this place; God protect the best of mothers prays her dutiful and affectionate

J. BUTLER.

LETTER LXXV.

Mr. Butler in continuation.

Belle-Vue.

I proceed Madam, to inform you, that the coroner's verdict being in favor of the last respect we could pay to the memory of my friend, we are just returned from his interment—to *whom* as he said, did *he* belong? yet never was a man more sincerely lamented.

To avoid the croud we had every reason to expect would assemble on the sad occasion, we appointed the midnight hour for the solemn act, of consigning his loved remains to his original dust.

But the veneration and respect of some, and the gratitude and affection of others of his neighbours, were too vigilant to be eluded; *they* were no less assiduous in their enquiries, than *we* in our precautions.

We had forbid the bells tolling, the melancholy circumstances attending his death, were of a nature that required concealment; and a private funeral was what decency demanded from us, who knew, with all his former virtue, beneficence and goodness of heart; he had at last, acted a part unworthy of a man, and a christian; but as our reasons were not known, and as few people suspected, and fewer really knew, the manner of his leaving the world, there were many who took great offence at the hour, and privacy of his interment.

At the foot of the hill which leads to his village, we were met by a large body of people; most of them carrying torches; whose sighs, and groans, were the only oral proof of their number; ten boys, and ten girls, to whom he annually allowed warm cloathing, and for whose schooling he paid for chaunting in the church, immediately began an anthem, the rest respectfully opened a way for the hearse, and coach, and then fell into a procession behind.

The moon Madam faintly shone, we saw her transient beams through the trees as we passed, the *now* deserted hermitage—the white obelisk, which the lamented Edward consecrated to friendship, struck us with sorrow, and regret; the wind chair from whence he took views of the fine vale of Belle-Vue, now never more to be occupied, looked I thought like a gaping sepulchre; and the timber, and bricks, which lay in confused heaps round the house, they were intended to decorate; gave it already the appearance of that ruin, in which it will soon lie; the whole time we were passing the wall, our own feelings were too accute for utterance, but the sobs, and whispering lamentations of the men, women, and children who followed the hearse, were too general, not to be heard.

When the corpse was taken out of the hearse, six young men clad in decent mourning, insisted, tho' in the most respectful whispers, on carrying it, the undertakers men with some reluctance therefore resigned their office; and we proceeded to the body of the church, which was so filled with decent people, that when our procession came in, it was extremely crouded, a great number eagerly pressed round the coffin, some to touch, others to see what contained the last remains of him, they called the good young squire.

I directed the pall to be removed, and they who could read, sobbed over the simple inscription,

Edward Harley, obit 23d of August,
Ætat. 23
Alas how dear!

I could not help particularly remarking a very decent white headed old man, whose spectacles were often put on to read the inscription, but as often taken off to be wiped; and he was after numberless efforts, obliged to relinquish the attempt, and retired audibly sobbing among the croud; this was old Lucas of the mill.

When their affectionate curiosity was gratified, the service was concluded; and the Major, myself, and Mr. Montford, hastened from the sacred spot, where now rests the mortal part of our beloved Edward; but the vault was no sooner closed, than the grief, which respect had kept silent among the people, broke out into the most clamorous wailings.

The friend of the poor, of mankind was no more.

He never strained on a tenant in all his days, said a rough looking farmer, I shall never have so good a landlord.

My own son, cried a decent elderly woman, was not dearer to me.

How respectful was he to the aged, said an old veteran, who is an officer on half pay.

And how good to the sick, joined a pallid looking husbandman.

How charitable to the poor was echoed by them all.

And said a pretty damsel modestly advancing, her face covered with tears, how tender hearted to poor maidens, these were the gloves he gave me at Patty Lucas's burial, I little thought I should wear them at his own.

This simple remembrance renewed the sighs, and groans of the whole assembly; *one* remembered when he was last seen in the village, *another* had particularly remarked how blooming Madam Agnes, and the good squire looked, when they went to pay master Thrifty his rent, for farmer Clod's sick widow.

This brought another mourner to our particular notice, it was the widow herself; a thin sickly looking woman, with a fine infant in her arms, and three others hanging to her gown and apron.

Yes said she, he preserved a home for the widow, and he fed her fatherless children! he was too good for this world, my dear Johnny is now with him, and *may be* who knows but I may see them both in a better place.

Another repeated his very words, and as if by consent they again all crouded towards the vault, the rector at their head; insomuch that we pressed with difficulty through them, and returned home so unfit for conversation, that we parted without breaking silence.

Agnes continues totally deprived of her reason, her raving returned yesterday morning; and how shall I say it? her fine form and lovely arms, were obliged to be confined by a strait waistcoat, which gave her infinite pain, she struggled and remonstrated but it was absolutely necessary; after bruising her delicate limbs with her vain endeavors to loosen the straps, she lay some time without moving.

In that interval the Major went to her bed side, merely as he said to look at her before he went to the funeral: she had not yet known any body, but his mourning struck her; she gazed earnestly at him.

You are dressed then, said she, in a faint low voice, but *that, that* is the mockery of woe; where is Edward? is he dressed too? let me ask you Major, what have you done with him? he would not have served *you* so—you know he plunged into the water to save *you*—but nobody will assist him, but *me*, and they have bound *me*, see, see, there! he sinks he is lost; help! help! —Oh Edward! my dear dear brother! they hold me, they will not let me come to thee.

The gleam of hope, which the recollection of the Major raised, then vanished; she continued dismally raving, and shrieking, 'till we were out of hearing; when she was forced to swallow another potent draught, which as usual threw her into a stupor, that prevented her exhausting herself by raving, without rendering her insensible to sorrow.

I inclose Edward's posthumous letter, which you will please to return—we have none of us fortitude enough to copy it.

Mr. Montford pressed us to go with him to his seat—but Caroline is still very ill—and I despair of her amendment here. Adieu dear Madam.

J. BUTLER.

LETTER LXXVI.

Harley's posthumous Letter to Mr. Butler.

I have escaped Butler—I tore myself from her arms—I burst in anguish—I die in despair.

Once I could shed tears—now my brain burns to madness, and the soothing stillicide of unutterable grief no longer washes my haggard cheeks.

This *was* the cell of contemplation—It is *now* the cavern of despair.

Hither the son of sorrow brings his load of anguish—and here will he forever lay down.

Thou Butler, wouldst bid me live—and with all the sophistry of art, and reason, prove that the proper and rational exercise of a manly mind is to combat misfortune and resign itself to fate—But I have *that* within *me* surpasseth all that heart ever conceived, all that tongue ever uttered— — — Hark—What is she whose voice in pleasing terror still vibrates on my ear?—whose form filling the space of the whole creation hangs like a transparent curtain before my eyes!—It is my *wife*—my *sister*—

* * * * *

Oh God! thou only witness of my last agonies—thou seest the struggles of my soul—thou knowest how inadequate is the strength of thy poor creature, to the task thy justice inflicts on the unhappy son of a perjured father.

The incestuous fever still burns in my veins—still throbs at my heart—Oh pardon—pardon—I resign the life thou hast been pleased to load with guilt—

I could brave misfortune—I could endure calamity—but I cannot live the victim of so horrible a passion.

Shall the despairing lover of his *own sister*, dare to appear in the presence of the pure of heart?—*Never! never!*—Am I not the offspring of infamy—heir only to the weak folly of my frail mother, to the wicked arts of my father? and should not such a race be exterminated?—What vacuum shall I leave in the world?—what trace of my existence?—to whom do I belong?

Life instead of ending, will aggravate my offences—even now, I hear her soft voice dying on the summer breeze—her image floats before my eyes.

The tumult in my senses, is a summons to death; then only, when the vital blood has ceased to flow, shall I cease to adore her.

Unhappy mother!—oh! that the hand of charity had not arrested thy early fate, that thou and thy guilty burthen had perished, e'er he had cause to curse in the frenzy of despair, the being thou gavest him.

Insult not thou hateful light the dark anguish of my soul, with thy piercing rays—what have I to do with thee?—I see without thy officious aid, the black abyss before me,—the impassable gulph that will soon separate me from my *friend*—my *sister*—from *Agnes*—it is terrible, it appals my senses; but still more terrible—still more am I appall'd at that which now environs me—I strain my aching sight—I look round—no one way is left to escape—to fly from myself—no mortal power can help the self-devoted—the poison is rooted in my nature—it is a part of me—

Sister! Agnes! Angel! oh why! why so late! Father of the creation wilt thou not be merciful—

Under the foam of the rushing torrent—at the foot of the precipice, let my beating brain have rest—

Let my sorrows sink for ever—let them be hid beneath the surface of the passing stream.

It was the fate one parent consigned me to, e'er yet I bore the hateful likeness of the other.

I complete my destiny—

This was the place from whence the soul of Agnes recoiled, when first her angel form irradiated my dwelling—here—when my love had received the sanction of her friends, and the assent of the purest of female hearts, how often have I led her “nothing loth” and while on my knees I breathed my ardent vows; the falling cascade, the dashing of the waters against the rock under our feet, and the impervious shade, all conspired to bind in solemn compact, that union which nature abhorred to witness—oh Agnes! those vows must be no more remembered—hast thou forgotten them? are they all expunged from thy memory? canst thou not select one? not one? a brother might offer in pure fraternal love, to a virtuous, a beloved sister? oh no! no! my only asylum from the fascinating guilt, is *death*.

Butler farewell—adieu my Caroline—*here* we meet no more—and oh, thou—whom I dare not name—wilt thou not sometimes think—sometimes drop a tear over the fate of thy departed Edward?—if there has been an action of my life, on which thy uncontaminated mind dares to dwell, without the anguish of that self reproach under which I die; let it be ever present to thy memory, cherish it for the sake of him to whom thou wert dearer than life, but do not lament the act that restores thee to the blessings of society—my existence would have impeded thy happiness—and (for do I not know thy

heart, thy gentle—thy sympathising heart) my sufferings would have been the bane of thy peace—thou wilt now rise superior to the storm in which I perish; a few short moments, and I am no more—I dare not pray for you. Self-convinced of the sinfulness of the deed I am on the point of committing, I dare not ask of God, ought but mercy to the immortal part of,

The lost

EDWARD.

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LETTER LXXVII.

Mrs. Dowager Butler to J. Butler, Esq.

Bath.

My dearest Son,

I Send this express, and shall follow it with Mr. and Mrs. Moncrass to morrow.

To say your young friend is lamented here is poorly to express our sorrow and regret at his premature departure; but as every poison is said to contain its own antidote, so every affliction to which in this life we are subject, when viewed with the calm eye of patient resignation, has a bright side. In all the calamities with which it has pleased heaven to visit me; and you know my dear James they were many; I have been enabled to preserve my fortitude, by the certainty that in the end, the events I most deplored, would turn to matter of consolation, and that I should bend in future thankfulness for present evil.

Considering the man, his peculiar turn of mind, and more peculiar situation; the impressions he early received from that romantic, tho' worthy woman, Mrs. Montford, and the refined sensibility, so dangerous to him, but delightful to her, which she took such uncommon pains to cultivate; and considering also his unfortunate attachment to Miss Neville, and the critical development of the fatal secret of their consanguinity; the rash step which so sinfully ended his mortal existence, was not more to be dreaded than expected.

The General and Lady Mary are drowned in tears, yet are more grieved than surprised; but the situation of his niece affects her uncle too much, the gout returned to his stomach soon after your letter arrived.

Lord Ruthven is also very ill; his pride ill-brooks the disgrace the wicked Neville entailed on his family; and the impossibility of *now* avenging the injury done Lady Mary, increases in no small degree the weakness natural to his age and infirmity.

Lady Mary is far from well, but her apprehensions for the lives of two persons so dear to her, while they occupy her mind, give her strength, and spirits, to assist in the care of them. She deplores the poor maniac, and feels the utmost concern for your Caroline; she insists on my coming to you, and Mrs. Moncrass, whose love for Agnes is truly sisterly, begs to accompany me, her husband escorts us.

My impatience to join your endeavours for the restoration of your amiable wife equals my desire to oblige Lady Mary, who thinks the General will be pleased at my being with Agnes.

Doctor C—— from hence, and Doctor M—— from London, are engaged to go immediately to Belle-Vue, the former travels with us.

Poor Harley, my tears will flow at the recollection of his many amiable qualities, but I console myself my dear son in the reflection, that had he lived, he could never have regained his peace of mind; he was certainly guiltless in his passion for his sister, but there is something so distressing in the retrospect of such a connection, it would have always preyed on him; his sentiments were too refined, his ideas too delicate, to be engaged in, or amused by the common avocations which Pliny justly calls, “The solemn impertinences of life:” and tho’, as the same author observes, “that sort of death which we cannot impute to the hand of providence, is of all others the most to be lamented,” and tho’ we who are blessed with the enlightened doctrine of christianity, believe the sin of suicide, to be the most desperate, and unpardonable against the trinity; yet the mourners for poor Harley, are certain he would not have thus abandoned his friends, and blasted their hopes, of his regaining his peace of mind, if in truth they were not desperate: for my own part, I am convinced, neither the precepts of philosophy, nor the commerce of the world, would have ever restored the unhappy youth to himself; while therefore I lament as a christian, the manner of his death, I cannot help considering it, as the end of his temporal sorrow; and with respect to eternity, oh God how unmeasureable are thy mercies!

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER LXXVIII.

Mrs. Butler to Lady Mary Moncrass.

Belle-Vue.

I write, as your Ladyship commanded, the instant of my arrival; and would to God I could send you either hope or comfort, the former would be deceiving you, and the latter is not to be found in this dwelling.

I regret bringing Mrs. Moncrass, I cannot prevail on her to leave the dark chamber, where the miserable maniac is—she conceits that she recollects her, and will not suffer the medicines to be administered, by any but herself; which however nothing but fear would induce Agnes to swallow.

Sweet creature! her arms are very much swelled, and mark'd with the straps of the strait waistcoat; Julia insisted on having it taken off, she is sure her poor sister will be patient with *her*; finding she had continued three hours quiet, the doctors were consulted on the propriety of getting her up; they feared a raving fit, but as your daughter would not cease her importunities they at length consented. Agnes suffered them to do what they pleased with her, not exhibiting the least sign either of satisfaction, or the reverse; nature my dear friend is not quite exhausted, but her reason is totally gone.

* * * * *

I was extremely shocked on entering the dismal apartment just now.

Mrs. Moncrass was on her knees, rubbing her arms, which were swelled, and bathing them with her tears; Agnes was in the attitude of stooping to her, and whispering, but so low, that it was impossible to distinguish her words; when she saw me, tho' the room was so dark, she could not distinguish had she been sensible, who I was; she was alarmed, and stop'd; as I approached, her agitation seemed to increase, and taking something out of her bosom, she gave it in a hurry to Julia, then opening her wrapper, she said she in a low weak voice, I have it not—do not! do not! faintly attempting to scream; let me go to Madame St. Lawrens, St. Clare *will weep*, looking at her *swelled arms*, then leaning back in her chair, and closing her eyes, she whispered inwardly.

I could not bear to stay any longer in the room, and entreated Mrs. Moncrass to accompany me to a more chearful apartment; but as I said she will not be prevailed on to leave her: what she was so anxious to conceal from me, was some hair she had torn from poor Harley's head when she was forced from his body; and though so entirely lost to recollection, in other respects, she remembered to reclaim the deposit, as soon as I was gone; this trifling incident convinces Julia she is a favourite, and the good creature will not stir from her chamber.

My daughter is still very ill, and weak, and my son too much affected himself to console her; I have consented to their departure, as the melancholy scene will be renewed as long as they remain here; Mr. Montford, who now fears he shall lose Caroline, entreats them to go to him, and left his coach for their conveyance; Mrs. Benson, a worthy matronly woman; who was housekeeper to Mrs. Montford, and since to Harley, attends her young lady, as she always call'd Mrs. Butler; they leave us to-morrow.

Major Melrose is become a perfect misanthrope, he neither eats nor drinks with us, or stirs out of his own room, except to that of Agnes; and morning, and evening to the spot, where Harley's body was laid, when first taken out of the river; I told him of the General's situation, and of your distress; all bad madam, answered he, very bad, but I will go to them as soon as this poor girl is released, she will soon be the happiest among us, she will soon be with the dear boy.

My son had not resolution to go to the Hermitage; his man went to affix his seals to the different locks, 'tis a dismal place, he says, the grass is already grown over the walks, and the beautiful woods are entirely deserted; we cannot prevail on any of the servants to inhabit the house, it is a received notion among the common people, that the squire walks:

My spirits are so depressed that I can say little to you on such a combination of distressful circumstances; only request you to call to mind how many blessings are yet in your possession, your Moncrass is the very Moncrass you have so long loved, without deviating from the honor, and constancy of his character; you must sooth, and comfort him, you must prepare him for the worst; and you must yourself remember, we are commanded "*not to mourn like those who have no hope.*"

Agnes the instant she is released from this world, will join the seraphic choir in the heaven of heavens.

If spirits are allowed to recognize each other in a future state as I firmly *hope*, and *believe* they are, the bosom of the sainted mother, will receive the blameless spirit of her beatified child; in this faith I feel a kind of holy reverence, every time I enter the chamber, I see it is true her emaciated form, lovely even in death, I hear her groans, and witness the restless wanderings of her mind; but I cannot help thinking that even *now*, the spirit of St. Clare is permitted to hover over her daughter.

Doctor C—— writes to the General, he approves of all that has been done by Doctor Greville; but coincides in his opinion, that the sweet saint is dying—poor Madame Vallmont—but we are all mourners.

C. BUTLER.

LETTER LXXIX.

Mrs. Butler in continuation.

Belle-View.

Midnight.

I Am excessively fatigued, the faculties of my mind, as well as body seem utterly exhausted; a tasteless insipidity, and weariness pervades my whole system; yet I have no inclination to retire to rest.

The Doctors are apprehensive this night may prove decisive, they think before the last change takes place, it is probable, Agnes may have an interval of reason: cold sweats, and inward convulsions have for the last two hours seized her, I have really expected her dissolution every moment; she is however now rather better.

Julia will not believe she is near her end, she flatters herself there is yet hope.

Morning.

Mrs. Moncrass is laid down, I take my pen by the bed-side of Agnes; no need *now* of the strait waistcoat; Doctor M—— arrived at five in the morning—they have cut off her fine hair, and laid a blister on her head—she made not the least resistance, but rather seemed pleased; she thought she was taking her vows; the cutting off the hair you know is a ceremony always observed by nuns at their profession; she would kneel, and we supported her; oh! how solemn was her look, she prayed in french with such fervour that she seemed lifted above mortality, but was so weak she fainted before the operation was finished.

When it was over, we laid her on the bed, the cold sweats returned and her convulsions were stronger than the last night; but both these mortal symptoms are gone off, and she seems to rest for the first time since she lost her reason.

Evening.

They hope much from the blister, that it may prolong her life, I will not doubt; but as to her recovery, I believe that impossible.

Midnight.

She is still composed, I am retiring to rest.

Morning.

I was awoke at six, by Julia, who informed me that Agnes was perfectly sensible; that Father Dominick had been called at her desire, and was now in her chamber with Madame De Vallmont, shut up at their devotions; and added she with a smile of hope, Agnes speaks quite strong—I persuaded her to repose on my bed, and promised to watch in her place.

* * * * *

The good priest has just left me, he has, he told me administered the sacrament to Agnes, she was quite composed and spoke of Harley's death with a serene resignation. She enquired with some degree of solicitude where he was buried, and on being told, said softly, it cannot be, she spoke of her approaching dissolution, and directed him to take into his possession, some deeds out of her cabinet, (of which she gave him the key) and after her death deliver them with her thankful, and dutiful commendation to the General; she requested her body might be sent to Madame St. Lawrens, for interment—Madame Vallmont had some conversation with her, he *believes* respecting the embalment, he extolled her piety, and natural goodness of heart, he lamented the miserable end of Harley, and left *me* in tears for the early fate of the dying Agnes.

I then went to her apartment, the curtains were thrown open, and Madame Vallmont sat at the head of the bed supporting her young friend. Although she had before seen me for so short a time, she immediately recollected me; and after looking earnestly in my face, closed her eyes, and tears which she had not shed since the fatal evening, forced their way through her silken eyelashes; she articulated several words but we could only distinguish—*fatal messenger*—Judging by this, that the sight of me renewed the memory of the dreadful past, I retreated out of her sight, but did not leave the room.

Mrs. Moncrass could not long compose herself to rest, she very soon returned to Agnes.

Oh my beloved Julia cried Agnes, how long have you been with me? when did you come?—Come to close the dying eyes of your poor friend.

Not so my Agnes replied Julia, not my dear friend to close your eyes, but to assist in restoring you to health, to your friends; your noble uncle is breaking his heart about you.

I hope not rejoined Agnes, he feels I do not doubt my calamity,—but a little time will reconcile him to the only event which could restore my peace, and reunite me to God—Oh Julia my sweet sister, what a heart must mine have been to have seen what I have seen, and lived;—I go at an early period of life, my years it is true are few, but my afflictions, oh Julia! how heavy have they been, yet blessed be the holy Jesus, I have no unrepented sin to impede my flight to the mansion of peace; I shall be restored to my dear mother! I shall be among the chosen of heaven! and see my Redeemer face to face! and what is the happiness of the most happy *here*, compared to that? I wished indeed to die with Madame St. Lawrens, but my soul will reach the throne of mercy as soon from

hence, and let I implore you, my body be carried to her convent; let my dust be mixed with the holy earth of the pious sisterhood. Weep not Julia, rather pray for my release; you know not putting her hand to her heart, what I have suffered *here*; do you not tremble to think, that had my life been now lengthened, the fate of that dear unhappy brother might have been contagious?—oh Julia, poor! poor Edward! he was *your* brother, as well as *mine*—and he was all that was virtuous, tender, and good;—but he is gone—he died for me, and (weeping) he was wet, and cold,—but do not discover it, I hid him here, here in my heart's core; she was now wandering, again, and poor Julia sunk on her knees by the side of the bed in tears; I sent for the Doctors who were displeased, we had suffered her to talk so much.

She would rise, where was her new muslin? she would be dressed, and walk out; she had promised to meet some body, no matter who.

The Doctors mildly persuaded her, but in vain—they feared a violent paroxysm would be fatal, she was therefore indulged.

Madame Vallmont presented her wrapper, she refused it with indignation.

Was not she going out? did not every body dress? she would have her white lutestring, and new muslin; this was her bridal dress, and at last to gratify her it was brought; she ordered her maid to put it on, and tho' so faint as hardly to be heard, she was not to be put out of this whim; it was just thrown round her, she then attempted to walk, but sunk suddenly into Madame Vallmont's arms, whom we assisted to place her in an easy chair, and then at the doctor's request left the room.

Noon.

She is now in a sweet slumber, yet speaks inwardly, St. Clare, Victoire, Edward frequently pass her lips; this sleep must be refreshing, it is the first natural rest she has had.

Three o' Clock.

My son and daughter are just gone, Caroline fainted as they were lifting her into the coach. I have again looked in on Agnes, she is still asleep she breathes much easier, and no longer talks. Julia and I are both indisposed, we are going to walk in the air; the dark close room affects my head—Madame Vallmont worn out with fatigue is laid down on Agnes's bed, whose nurse and maid watch in her stead.

* * * * *

Great God, what a scene! all is over Lady Mary! Agnes is no more!

Sweet saint!! thy face has recovered its tranquil beauty, madness and misery are vanquished! I am too much affected to give you particulars, Major Melrose will take the pen.

C. BUTLER.

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LETTER LXXX.

Major Melrose to Lady Mary Moncrass.

Madam,

Belle-Vue.

I write, I *oblige* myself to write to you, because it is necessary you should know our present situation, and because you shall have time to digest the proper method of breaking to the General, the death of his niece; if indeed we ought to call that death, which in such a creature, is rather to be looked on as a period to mortality, than the end of life: and I am so selfish as to wish, the first agonies of grief may subside before I join you.

Mrs. Butler informed you of the tranquil state in which she left the angelic Agnes; I afterwards saw her myself.

They had placed a pillow between her head and easy chair, at the back of which the nurse when I left her stood.

Madame Vallmont wearied with continual watching was dropt asleep.

Miss Neville's maid, a poor young thing she had taken under her protection out of charity; tired undoubtedly of her confinement in a dark room, asked me if I thought she might venture to go down into the servant's hall to dinner; to which as the nurse was present, and Agnes so easy I assented.

The countenance of the divine creature was then perfectly placid; her arms, which still bear the marks of the strait waistcoat, hung, one over the elbow of the chair, the other rested on a small table, on which stood the volatiles they had often occasion to use in the apartment—she was wrapped in a fine muslin dress, her head loaded with linen on the top, on account of the blister; so that her forehead down to her eyebrows was covered; but there was enough of her face seen to display inconceivable beauty.

I contemplated the lovely wreck a few minutes, and then took my daily walk to the spot of earth, on which the body of my preserver was laid, when it was taken out of the water.

And here let me avow, I loved, and I lament Edward Harley, as a fond father would, his only hope. I am a batchellor of fortune, I was ill treated by the only relations I have, before I became independant of the world; my property was earned in the field of honor, under the torrid zone—my riches are asiatic, but they are not the price of my integrity—consanguinity, is the last thing I shall think of in the disposal of my estates—the brave fellow preserved my life, at the risk of his own; the longer I knew him, the dearer he was to me; but he is gone—he is out of the reach of *my gratitude*—nevertheless

there is not a being he valued, a place he approved, or an incident that will bring him to my memory, but what I will cherish.

The grass plot therefore, where his body lay, attracts *me*, I visit it twice, sometimes more, every day; and if Belle-Vue was mine, I would there erect a cenotaph that should proclaim to all who saw it, the love Jack Melrose bore to Edward Harley.

But—poor fellow! he is as I said gone—his honest soul, and humane disposition, could not parry the shafts of his adverse fortune; they entered and rankled in his only vulnerable part; he found his wounds were incurable, and therefore voluntarily resigned his life.

This now among the ancients would be recorded as a virtue—with us moderns it is a heinous sin—well be it so, his death we trust has expiated; it is plain I, at least do not think his is a condemned spirit; for I am never so easy, as when I fancy I am, where it may possibly hover—accordingly, I take a pleasure, unknown to minds, whose attachments are bounded by the poor shallow confines of mortality, in marking the very grass his poor body pressed—there as I said before, if the place was mine, his monument should reach the skies; and there I was, in a reverie the most acceptable to me, when I heard a confused sound of women's voices approaching me.

I had scarce lifted up my eyes, when I beheld a female figure dart across the lawn, leap the Ha Ha with the speed of an arrow, and ran towards me, which had the exact appearance of what we are told of a spectre. It was Agnes! her loose flowing white dress and ghastly woe-worn looks, the celerity with which she advanced to the place where I stood, and my late reflection, all contributed to unman me; I trembled, and had but just presence of mind to receive her in my arms.

So inattentive was the poor thing to every object, but that on which her disordered imagination was fixed, she neither saw, nor regarded me; but weak, exhausted; and out of breath; she sunk involuntary on my bosom; her eyes hollow, and dreadfully dim, seemed starting from their orbits, her head with a convulsive motion was turned from side, to side, as if in search of something, which not perceiving, she meekly crossed her arms on her breast, and lifting her eyes upward, with a look so mournful, yet so resigned, that it will be ever present to my memory; she fetched a deep sigh, her sweet face like an overcharged lilly dropped on my breast, and with another deeper sigh she expired.

* * * * *

I had no idea she was dead, the faintings she had been subject to, were often attended with symptoms as alarming as those which now appeared; I therefore hastened towards the house with my lifeless burthen, and was soon met by Mrs. Butler, and your daughter, whom she had passed with incredible swiftness, followed by a posse of the domestics, who alarmed by the cries of the *nurse*, were coming in pursuit of her; *she* also had the misfortune to slumber when left with Agnes, and although she was awakened by

the rustling of her cloaths as the dear maniac ran or rather flew out of the apartment, yet it was impossible either to stop, or overtake her.

Ah sir! cried Mrs. Butler, as soon as she looked on her face, she is gone! she will never more revive!

Mrs. Moncrass would not be of her opinion, she kissed her cold lips, her Agnes she was sure would yet recover.

Doctor M—— had walked out, and doctor C—— was gone to view the Hermitage; I went immediately in pursuit of the former, leaving the women all employed in vain application of the volatile, &c. and had the good fortune to meet him on the terrace—on our return the countenances of all present, announced their despair; a vein was breathed, that is, it was cut, merely to satisfy your Julia, and Madame Vallmont. We were then retiring but fainting and hysterics among the ladies, and the truly pitiable situation of the little waiting girl, who from the moment she heard of her mistress's running out, blamed herself for the consequence; rendered the doctor's assistance necessary.

As to me madam, I am not of importance to any body, and were it not, that my soul on principle condemns the act; I should I believe, soon join the departed pair.

It was among the last requests of the deceased that her mortal remains should be deposited in the church of Madame St. Lawrens's convent: your Julia is very urgent to accompany her there!

What cries she, raising her tearful eye to mine, shall Agnes! my friend! my sister! be sent out of the kingdom, without *one* weeping follower, whose blood, as well as love she shared?? dear Major let me see her corpse received by Madame St. Lawrens; it will be a relief to my heart, as long as I have the power of recollection.

Mr. Moncrass did not indeed speak, but—I saw by his looks, he disapproved of this wild scheme of his wife: I therefore proposed, that she should immediately return with Mrs. Butler, and Madame Vallmont to Bath; and that Mr. Moncrass should attend the corpse with me to Paris—we prevailed on her after a great many lady like objections, to consent to this arrangement: which was no sooner fixed, than an objection was started by Madame Vallmont, which was not to be obviated.

She declared her resolution, not only to attend the body, but to end her days, and leave her own to be deposited near her young friend in the convent.

I had indulged some vague distant hope of prevailing on this good woman, to accept an arm chair for herself, and a cushion for her dog, at my fire side: there were subjects which even “in narrative old age” I foresaw would amuse us—she would never tire of talking of Agnes, nor I of Harley; and the virtues of the two unfortunates were so

nearly allied, they would be naturally blended; Mrs. Vallmont's prudence created respect, her years, as well as character, would blunt the edge of satire and scandal; for which, and many other reasons I had formed the aforesaid plan. But all my air castles are fallen, no settlement, friendship, or protection; will change her resolution; notwithstanding Mrs. Butler, both in your name, and her own, courted her acceptance of independence, in whatever way would most conduce to her happiness.

The woman Lady Mary was right, she is not fit for the world, nor the world for her—I wish you could see with what delicate courage, what mournful composure, she declines every assistance in the management of the defunct, she has wrapped, the body dressed as she was at the time of her beatification, in a fine sheet, and laid it with the assistance of her own maid only, in the coffin. Will any good creature for love or money undertake to dispose of my weather-beaten body in the same decent manner?

We just hinted the heat of the weather; but she will not hear of embalment, and begs with such earnestness, and adduces such reasons, why the sweet form of irresistible beauty, should not be submitted to the labour of mere operators; that we cannot oppose the opinion of a woman, whose notions are an honor to female delicacy.

We now wait the General's commands, and shall proceed as soon as we receive them—the ladies on their return to Bath, Father Dominick, Reuben, Madame Vallmont, the little waiting girl, and myself to Dover.—

Would I could add any thing in comfort to my friend; had I the power, if my own feelings would permit me I should certainly attempt it; since it was the saying of a very sensible fellow, "that it is the criterion of true manhood to *feel* those impressions of sorrow, it cannot resist, and to *admit* not be *above* consolation." But alas Madam! very wise things may be said, and wrote, when sorrow is at a distance, it is at present too near us all to add practice to theory.

I have the honor to be, &c.

J. MELROSE.

LETTER LXXXI.

Lady Mary Moncrass to Major Melrose.

Bath.

Dear Sir,

I Can only say it is the General's desire, that every behest of his beloved, and ever regretted niece, be scrupulously observed, and it is also his wish, that Madame De Vallmont be indulged in every request she condescends to make, both with respect to Miss Neville, and herself. I will not add to *your* distress Major, by describing *ours*; my dear Moncrass needs your presence, but we acquiesce in the obligation your humanity confers, and shall ever acknowledge your attention to our lamented relation.

We beg sir, you will in the General's name, settle Madame Vallmont's worldly affairs, in a way that will not, either take her mind from the religious character she means to fill, nor, should she hereafter change her resolution, be a bar to her re-entrance into the world: we inclose unlimited credit on our banker, and Major Melrose will pardon our saying *we* must be the only patrons of Madame Vallmont.

The General bids me tell you, his heart will give you welcome, and need I assure you sir, my gratitude is as lively as my friendship.

I have the honor to be, &c.

M. MONCRASS.

LETTER LXXXII.

*Lady Mary Moncrass to Simon Brown,
Steward at Belle-Vue.*

Bath.

Mr. Brown,

IT is our positive commands, that all our servants, dependants and tenants, at Belle-Vue; be furnished with decent mourning; and that the same funeral respect be paid in every particular to the memory of Miss Agnes Neville, niece to General Moncrass, as was shewn to the late Countess, my mother; you are to take particular care to order the bells to toll, and to distribute alms to the poor, in every town, and village through which the hearse passes, in the way to Dover; you are to attend the funeral, accompanied by six of our men servants; Madame Vallmont will do us the honor to use our chaise; and Peggy, Miss Neville's maid will attend her. Madame Vallmont's own servant who we find she has discharged; will accept from me twenty guineas for mourning, and consider herself as under my particular protection; we trust you will be strictly attentive to our commands; the General, and myself, will esteem your future services, as you acquit yourself on this occasion.

M. MONCRASS.

LETTER LXXXIII.

Madame Vallmont to Lady Mary Moncrass.

Convent D——, Paris.

I Avail myself madam, of the opportunity of Major Melrose's return to England; and his polite offer of charging himself with my letter, to address for the last time, any of the inhabitants of the great world; and to take a long farewell of the friends, whom I nevertheless reverence and esteem.

It is not that I would have it believed, *my* grief at the last sad wound to my affections, in the loss of my loved young friend is the mortal stab to my worldly happiness; no Lady Mary: but her spotless mind, and steady adherence to her religious duties; her invariable attachment to the strict tenets of honor and virtue, and her constant aspiration, even when her happiest prospects were opening, after the eternity, where *now*, her unsullied spirit, rejoices in the bosom of the holy virgin; was an example, I thank my gracious God, I *can* want no inducement to follow; while the heaven of heavens, is open to penitent sinners.

Were it possible madam I could ever more stand in need of pecuniary assistance, I should honor *myself*, in accepting an obligation from Lady Mary Moncrass, but it is not: my own little fortune, will more than supply all the wants of a woman, who is disrobed of vanity; that, and myself, I devote to the service of my Redeemer.

I am flattered by your distinction, and grateful for your offered favor; and that my mind now soars above the one, and that I cannot need the other, does not lessen the value of your condescension, and generosity; may you madam, enjoy uninterrupted happiness on earth, and may we meet in an endless eternity.

The worthy Major, intreats me to inform you of the manner, in which the Abbess St. Lawrens received us at her convent: he will not trust his feelings to speak, or write on the subject, to you, or the General; his heart he says, is grief worn, and he fears to add affliction, where he wishes to administer consolation.

The task madam, is less difficult, than may be expected by those who knew not the mind of the departed saint; and who are strangers to Madame St. Lawrens.

Her consent to the espousal, of her beloved Agnes to an heretic; was extorted, by the tenderness of her solicitude, for the happiness of her young friend, with whose fondness, for the wretched Harley, she was perfectly acquainted; yet, it was literally a consent, without approbation.

The temporal happiness of the child of her heart, as far as human foresight could perceive, was secured: in her alliance with Mr. Harley, but, in the arms of an amiable heretic, whom she so well loved, who could vouch for her faith? who could say *that* would remain unshaken?

Messieurs Melrose, and Montford on the part of Harley, and the General on that of his niece, had convinced her of the unobjectionable establishment, and splendid fortune, which would attend her marriage—but those, far from dispelling the apprehensions of the Abbess, encreased them.

She considered them as snares, that might in time, undermine the principles of the religion, on which in the opinion of all good catholics, the salvation of Agnes depended; she was already lost to her, and from the gentleness of her dispositions under the influence of a sensible and beloved husband, was she not in the greatest danger of being also lost to her God?

She had pondered on these reflections, she had wept over their probability, and prayed against their influence, with a fear and anxiety, only to be conceived by those who knew her exalted friendship, and purified love, for St. Clare, and her lovely daughter.

Madame St. Lawrens, can have no doubt about her own future state, the casting off her frail cloathing, is the only change necessary to her salvation: she can scarcely be called an inhabitant of the earth: but this is not enough with those whom she loved in her state of probation; she would soar into immortality.

At this period she received, the (to her) joyful intelligence that Agnes was returning to the convent—eager to recal those vows from man, which she had long wished to offer to God.

The Abbess at this welcome news, called her sisterhood together, by whom she is entirely beloved,—they were no strangers to the anxiety of her mind, they were indeed sharers in it; often had they united their fervent prayers with her's, for the salvation of Agnes; and they now, gladly joined in thankful praise, to the King of kings, for restoring her to *them*—to *himself*.

The unnatural union—the fatal mystery—the procrastinated development: Madame St. Lawrens looked upon as a part of the awful curses, denounced on the children of the wicked: and rejoiced that her Agnes would escape, the further temporal vengeance of an offended God, in her convent; where she impatiently expected her arrival.

But, when the fatal tidings of her distraction, and death reached her, instead of those violent bursts of grief, which from her known fondness for the deceased were expected; all regret for Agnes, was momentarily lost in the consolation of knowing she had not participated in the guilt, and horror which marked the last sad act of her ill-fated

brother: that *anguish*, not despondency; that *grief*, not a want of faith in the mercy of her God, had robb'd her of reason, and ended her life: the saint-like woman in spiritual extacy, prostrated herself at the altar, and while floods of tears streamed from her eyes, adored the Being who had preserved her Agnes from the sin into which the despairing Harley had plunged.

Oh my child! my child! said the pious woman, my own, my beloved Agnes; how well can I spare the few short years of comfort, I fondly hoped to spend in thy society *here*. Rejoice with me my sisters! my friends! we now know for certain we shall see again our dear sister, we no longer fear the power of an heretic, over her immortal soul.

Rejoice with me said the holy St. Lawrens—alas! Madam her tears *would* flow—sighs of fond regret *would* rend her heart—and the poignancy of her grief *would* remind her she was yet a mortal: she sunk lifeless into the arms of an attendant nun.

We arrived at the convent soon after her recovery, she was apprised of the dying request of Agnes, and Father Dominick had left us before we entered the gates of Paris, to prepare her for our reception.

Her spirit she confessed, shrunk from the trial. I know said she I ought to feel nothing but pious joy; that I should hail the approach of her remains with thankful gratitude; and such I trust I *do* feel, for the mercy God has shewn my child.—But to think I shall see her *no more*—that the embrace I took when she left my convent, should be *the last*—the *very last*,—that the eyes which looked more than tongue can utter—are *forever* closed—that I shall *no more* see them elevated with piety, or glistening with sensibility—that the heart, where grateful affection for me, was exceeded only by that she owed her Maker, has *ceased to throb*; oh it is too! too much!

The convent bell announced our arrival, she was before pale; a death-like hue overspread her countenance: Let us go Father, let us meet her, as *she* deserved to be met: I no longer *feel* the weakness of mortality—I shall soon be *reunited* to my Agnes.

We passed with the corpse through the church—the grating which separates the choir, and the folding doors of the convent, were on this occasion thrown open; so that as we advanced, we perceived the good Father entering the opposite door, followed by the Lady Abbess and all the nuns, in solemn procession. The Bishop and Priest were standing at the altar.

The seats were crouded with fashionable people, among whom, were the St. Lawrens and de Courci families, who with their suites were in deep mourning; several other people of distinction, indeed most of those who might really be termed so wore black in compliment to them.

The coffin was borne by our attendants to the grating, where it was received on a kind of bier with straps, and carried some paces within by six nuns; who on a motion from the Abbess, then rested it on stools placed for that purpose.

After a solemn pause, occasioned by the involuntary burst of grief which spread like a contagion from Madame St. Lawrens through the whole sisterhood: she advanced towards the coffin, and crossing her breast, cast her streaming eyes to heaven as if to pray for fortitude.

The Major wept aloud—Mr. Moncrass was as much affected, and poor Peggy, push'd out of our party and spreading her arms over the coffin laid her face on it, and took her last leave of her beloved mistress, with torrents of tears.

The Abbess after struggling some time with her emotions, approached, with a look of pensive resignation, still nearer the coffin; and in very intelligible english, and a firm tone of voice; she kneeling thanked the blessed Virgin for restoring the mortal part of her beloved Agnes, to their holy church! her faith unshaken—her principles uncorrupted—and her person undefiled—for the sorrows it had pleased God to inflict on her, she lifted up with elevated looks her soul in thankfulness—whom thou lovest O God said she thou chastenest—it was the rod of thy love, which preserved our Agnes from binding her soul in covenant with an heretic; which preserved *her* from the sin into which *he* fell; and which renders her thus early, a pure and spotless offering to thee. We weep, but thou wilt sanctify our tears; we *now know* our Agnes is in paradise with thee! heavenly Jesus!—Great God we thank thee!

She then arose, and resting her right hand on the coffin waved her left to the gentlemen, with an action inimitably graceful; and bowed her body; while her tears drop'd from her eyes on the marble pavement.

Madame St. Lawrens—the dear corpse of Agnes—the sisterhood—and myself; were then eternally shut in from a sinful world; the grate closed, and forever separated *me*, from friends I *esteem*, but *cannot regret*.

High mass then instantly began in the church, and as soon as it was ended; the nuns returned in procession with the corpse into the private chapel; where we had hourly prayers as well as high mass in the church three days; Agnes was then laid in the vault, where the Lady Abbess herself means to be inter'd.

I grieve Madam to add my fears, that an event, which happen when it may, will fill this convent with grief, is not far distant; St. Clare's death was the menace; but this the blow. The Abbess's health certainly declines, she honors me with her particular favor, we weep over the misfortunes of St. Clare, but she avoids mentioning Agnes.

After the last obsequies were perform'd, the gentlemen sent to request they might be permitted to pay their compliments at our grate, previous to their departure; the Abbess

returned a polite answer to the Major declining *his* visit to *her*, but Moncrass said she, is the son of the bravest of soldiers—the best of men—the brother of St. Clare—the—

Tears stop'd her utterance—her agonies at the mention of Agnes are indescribable: in a few moments she proceeded—Let *him* be instantly admitted; this is the last, sad trial, let him come, while yet I *can* receive him.

The countenance of the young gentleman pourtray'd his feelings, he advanced towards the Abbess with a respectful diffidence: it was in vain she attempted to speak, he knelt on one knee, and pressed her extended hand to his lips.

After several ineffectual efforts to speak, she drew her veil over her face, and putting a shagreen case into his hand motioned for him to withdraw.—

He again with a look of reverence even to devotion kissed her hand; and after this silent but eloquent interview—Madame St. Lawrens sought comfort, as is *her* constant custom when oppressed by the grievous recollection of the fate of her friends, at the feet of her crucifix.

Oh Lady Mary! you should know this woman—yet after all that can be said of her, is it not her highest eulogium, that she formed the mind of Agnes? and is worthy of all the enthusiastic love and reverence that angel bore her?

The case Madam you will be told, for I think you never saw St. Clare or her daughter; contains a most exquisite likeness of each, if I may judge of the former, by the latter; and that of Madame St. Lawrens is I think one of the finest paintings I have seen—The jewels in which they are set, and ornamented, are a proof of the magnificent spirit of the venerable Marchioness St. Lawrens—at whose particular request they were sent to her jeweller's, to be set according to her directions.

I have only one thing now Madam to add, it is in respect to the deed which Father Dominick will deliver to General Moncrass. I enclose a letter * written by Agnes to Madame St. Lawrens on the subject, when it was executed; which will prove to you, it was her own deliberate act: as long as she retained her senses, I know it was her first wish that her father's *vices*, her mother's *injuries*, and her *own* and her *brother's misfortunes* should be sunk in oblivion.

I perfectly comprehend the nobleness of that spirit, which impels you to make public her affinity to the General, and to pay every possible regard to the memory of St. Clare even at the expence of yourself, and daughter; but consider Lady Mary, both St. Clare and Agnes are now equally above worldly *honor*—and worldly *injuries*. With such a deed in your possession for the future security of your daughter, you who are so sanguine to pay respect to the memory of the deceased, and to fulfill all her other behests,

will not I trust oppose her in this her *principal one*: but consider Mr. Neville's *villainy* as yet undiscovered; his *wife* as unheard of; and the hapless *Agnes*, as never to have existed.

And should the fatal story ever find its way into the world; I pray it may be through some humane being, who will drop a sympathetic tear to the memory of the dead, and in respect to the living, conceal their names and throw an impenetrable veil over their real characters;

Farewell Madam, after telling you; the General and your Ladyship; his son, and your daughter; the worthy Mrs. Butler her gentle unassuming daughter-in-law, her sensible son, and every person to whom Agnes was dear; have the constant prayers of this convent, what more acceptable can be added from

LEONORA DE VALLMONT.

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LETTER LXXXIV.

Major Melrose to Madame Vallmont.

London.

Madam,

THE date of this letter will inform you, I am returned to my own solitary home. You commanded me to write, and tho' I had so little influence over *you*, I am you see a tractable old Grecian, fair words will make me do wonderful things.

I have *breathed*, for I deny its being *living*, three days in my own warm corner; I say to one—go—and he goeth—to another—come—and he cometh—but tho' the poor devils certainly do their best; they neither come, nor go, to please me.

If the whim takes me, I may, with impunity kick all my domestics down stairs; tho' I desire you, and your black veil'd sisterhood will understand, it is a whim that very seldom *does* take me.

Jermyn-street, with my little box in the middle of it, stands exactly as I left it. My black fellow, in conjunction with my honest old house-keeper, pique themselves not a little, on the excellent order of the territories over which they have presided. I do not perceive a cat more, or less, than when I whirl'd out of town, to be present at a fatal ceremony *never* out of my *mind*; yet with all these privileges, comforts, and *so forth*, I find myself in a very scurvy mood.

Were you ever Madam afflicted with the English malady called the vapours or hypo? if not, permit me to recommend it to you, to put up prayers in your convent immediately, that it may be always as effectually separated from you, as him, who is at this moment, groaning most lamentably under its tyranny.

'tis a plaguy thing to feel oneself as Shakespere says, 'Subject to every skiey influence, the sport of every paltry atom,' to owe the ease of one's mind not only to the disposition of one's body, but almost to every thing which surrounds us.

The fact is Madam, I am now, and have been ever since I left Paris, aye and long before I went there; whatever face I might put on the matter, internally wretched: and as it is blowing at this time, a cursed cold easterly wind I could fancy myself surrounded with hobgoblins.

I have wished to write to you every hour, but the chief prerogative of the aforesaid malady, is to prevent one from doing, what one has the best mind to; and what indeed, would be most likely to effect a cure; finding however like all other encroachers, the less I

resist, the more potent it grows; I have turned to my secretaire with a firm resolution to be very well, while I am writing to you.

My tablets are before me, your commands I see were. That I should inform you of our arrival in England. Reception at Bath. The General's health. Lady Mary's procedure in respect to the last request of the best of young women, and a few other mem's, all of which I shall come to in time.

We arrived—but what does that signify?—suppose us at the Crescent.

Lady Mary and her daughter met us at the drawing-room door; the emotions of Julia, were a kind hysterical mixture of joy, and grief; she clasped her arms round her husband, rejoiced at his return, then wept for —— but like Madame St. Lawrens, we will resolve *not to name her*.

Lady Mary's low, and graceful curtsy, without speaking, was at once eloquent, and affecting; she extended her hand, and led me in silence, to the General's apartment.

Our friend! my dear Reuben, said she, sinking beside him, on the sofa, and bursting into tears.

Mary, my beloved Mary! said the General, his voice scarcely articulate—he returned my affectionate embrace, and we were all silent.

Lady Mary still wept—*my* eyes were fixed on the carpet—and the General groaned, both from mental and bodily pain.—

Oh Major! said he, after a few moments—had I followed your counsel had I revealed—

Why my dearest Reuben, interrupted Lady Mary, will you give way to these unavailing regrets?

Unavailing indeed! repeated he sighing—but it is a debt due to *you*—the concealment—the secrecy I mistakenly thought incumbent on me to observe; my ill judged adherence to a rash promise, which would not have been extorted, had my unhappy sister known its importance to my peace; has been the destruction of *her*, whom it was meant to serve; and it has filled every faculty of my soul, with unutterable grief: oh Major!! what a wreck of all that was lovely in woman, and amiable in man have you seen; how terrible must have been those agonies, which could so totally unhinge a mind, so perfect, so placid as hers.

Major, said Lady Mary, interrupting him again, I dare not leave you together; *your* mind will naturally revert, to the dear, the regretted objects, we have so recently lost; the General is distressingly mindful of every particular, on which it is hurtful for him to dwell; one point only remains to be settled, which requires no discussion.

I shou'd have felt a laudable, an innate gratification, in the public acknowledgment of Miss Neville, as the legal heiress of her father; and have considered, the exposing the covert acts of a libertine, as a *debt due to humanity*; that the *warning*,

and *example*, might at least operate, for the future *benefit* of mankind: but the request of Agnes, the opinion of Madame De Vallmont, have *their due influence*; I give up my *own* wish, to *theirs*; the will of the deceased, shall be punctually complied with.

The General was going to speak, but she pressed her cheek, wet with tears to his; and implored him to suffer the subject to be changed. We have settled my Reuben, said the charming woman! all that is necessary; let us not be so selfish, as to confine our solicitude, to our own concerns the Major looks ill, he has suffered from the fatigue of travelling, as well as from mental disquiet; we must *now* endeavour to give rest to *his mind*, as well as body.

Thus did the amiable Lady Mary, govern the weakness of two lords of the creation; and thus did she, continue to encrease her ascendancy, over her fond husband; by a rational, and unwearied attention, to those sorrows, which notwithstanding all, *still* corrodes in his bosom.

I continued with them eight days, and it was with reluctance, they would then suffer me to depart. But I found myself indisposed, and fancied, that when seated on my own throne, vulgarly called an elbow chair, I should be better; and so I told her ladyship, when notwithstanding all her polite, and friendly invitations, I left them.

But—I no sooner arrived *here*, no sooner mounted my *throne* than my vagrant ideas carried me away to Belle-Vue, I wanted to be reading the most expressive countenance nature ever formed; I languished for the opening of two coral lips, which are *forever closed*; I listened after the sound of a voice, *no more heard*.

I abdicated my throne, and rambled from one apartment, to another; but change of place, had no power over my *mind*; I remembered the delightful ranges over bricks, stones, and mortar; which very happily engrossed my attention at the Hermitage; the grateful effusions of the heart of him, on whose arm I then hung, recur'd to my memory, and I found, I wanted support, across my own little dressing room. Then came the villainous english malady, which I have for the present routed, by writing to you.

Had you madam, been so generous, as to weigh your own gratification, in your retirement, against the good, your society would have done, the soul of a *very honest fellow*! you would have been now here in person, to chase away this formidable enemy.

I *will* call myself an *honest fellow*, tho' if you were to know the horrors, I am continually a prey to, you would be apt to believe I was haunted by one of the most troublesome, rascals of a conscience, that ever poor sinner was tormented with. But it is a *lying malady*, I repeat it, *I am an honest fellow*! Never drew my sword in cold blood, nor uttered a falsehood with intent to deceive, in my life! never got a dirty shilling, nor turned my back on a friend, or foe in distress! some little flirtation with your bewitching sex, may perhaps rise up in judgment against me; but no seduction, no plots for the corrupting of innocence, no desertion of whatever female, chose to put her trust in me; *once* in my

life, and *but once*; I had a hankering after a pretty little harmless thing, daughter to one of my serjeants; and believe I should have succeeded, but the father was killed in an engagement—the mother broke her heart—the girl became naturally a kind of protegee—and *that* ended the affair—thank God that it *did end so*—what a devil of a hand, would this same English malady make of me, if among the many phantoms it raises to harass me, I beheld *in my mind's eye*, the two murdered mothers, Agnes Moncrass, and Sophia Woodburne, with their respective children.

Gallantry! Libertinism! for I begin to think they are synonymous terms, unfeeling monsters! with what effrontery do they stalk into the first societies in this refined age; *how* boldly spread their destructive snares, how proudly view the conquests which are followed by shame, despair and death; and how unblushing hear the story of those innocents, who are every day discovered, to be their victims!

Oh Madam! now that the calamities I have witnessed in our small circle, carries my mind yet farther into the consequences of this vice; I actually tremble!

While a man of the world pursues a common act of gallantry which in *his* estimation, is a mere bagatelle how may not delicacy, honor, and even human nature, be wounded: what actions abhorrent to God, and unsuspected by man, may he not himself commit, and entail on his posterity.

How many titles, gained by the manly exertions of some brave loyalist. How many hereditary estates, purchased with the blood and life of some antient progenitor fall to the offspring of intrigue! while the real heir of a noble family, and large estates, with all the fire, high spirit, and fine sentiments of his race; feels his innate worth, cramp'd within the narrow powers of a portionless younger brother.

How many respectable fathers, feel the shame of a seduced daughter, glow on their burning cheeks! while conscience perhaps, pleads the *great*, and *just* law of retribution! If indignant honor triumph over paternal affection, and he spurns her from him, *who* will protect *her*, who is abandoned by her *own father*?

But if tenderness prove stronger than resentment, he sinks under the sorrow she inflicts, and feels a dagger in the commiseration she excites.

How many noble matrons, whose lives have pass'd in the amiable, the celestial duties of a virtuous wife, a tender mother, retreat in anguish from observation; and deluges her private apartment with tears, wrung from her unspotted soul, by the weakness and folly, of *that daughter*, whose beauty, elegance, and sparkling wit, was *once* her *proud boast*.

How many of the less valuable mothers, conceal, in inexorable resentment, the internal reproaches of her own heart, for the unguarded example, careless instruction, and neglected education, *she* has given her ill taught daughter. Amid the disappointment of

hopes, the pity of friends, and the scorn of enemies; amidst the bitterest of all evils, the self-reproach of a bad parent, is the greatest.

And can we madam refuse the sigh of regret, the tear of pity to the thousands of beautiful faces, *now* deprived of their first grace, *modesty!* whom we meet among all ranks, and description of people. The same eyes sparkle in the side box to-day, that offend our senses on a dung-hill to-morrow. The day opens on their innocence, health, and peace, it closes on their infamy, disease, and desperation, yet they were all once innocent, designed by heaven for the *ornament*, but rendered by *man*, the *pest* of society.

In the rising generation, God defend us Madam! what an instance has the fate of our poor young friends afforded, of the unnatural unions, the scenes of abomination, which *may* be, and undoubtedly daily *are*, the consequences of that indiscriminate freedom of manners, that disgrace the present age.

Oh to stretch invention, to search the east for a jewel, to crown the ingenuity of that being, who should invent a means of preventing an evil so growing, so contagious.

Should the sad tale we have witnessed, be ever known to the world; should it speak to the heart of one of the many Neville's, who flutter round the young and gay; should it hold a mirror to his heart, and persuade one libertine to abandon his triumph, e'er it is complete; *Edward* nor *Agnes* will have died in *vain*.

I had written so far, when wanting heart to conclude, I gave myself up to my sworn enemy: I ate without appetite, drank without goût, and after numberless efforts, slept without resting, and so fine a day.

I have been so long used to converse with people of *your sort* Madam, that I could not bear to level myself at once to the common run of how d'ye's, who have done their best towards wearing out the knocker of my door. But yesterday a pretty modest rap, given by a servant who seemed to know the master of the house was, but *ill at ease*, was followed by the entrance of a lady, her nurse, and a fine little boy, named Edward Harley.

Mrs. Butler heard I was in town, and indisposed. Poor girl! she has little of that Hebe I carried to Belle-View; left in her own countenance.

Her tears did not flow, but gradually filled her eyes, and rolled down her cheeks.

She called me her *brother's friend!* and pointed to my observation, the features of her boy, which she *would* persuade me, resembled *his*.

She said I was too much alone—and shewed me a letter from Mrs. Dowager Butler, replete with good sense, in which, among other things, she desired her daughter would prevail on me to escort her to Mr. Montford's; where Mr. Butler, and herself were to meet us; and while away the dismal months, of November, and December.

Mr. Montford, said Mrs. Butler, the tears still rolling down her cheeks, begs you will honor him with your company. He is a plain man, but what he wants in elegance, he will make up in real goodness of heart. His house is within twenty miles of Bath; the

General's family make frequent excursions there. My mother is never what is termed very merry, but then neither is she ever sad, the philanthropy of her disposition, renders her anxious to impart the happy equality of her own mind, to her friends, and in this amiable endeavour she is often successful.

We cannot promise to be gay, but I hope we shall in time be chearful; our party will be happier, and our hearts improved, by the society of Major Melrose; my little Edward will steal into his heart, and his mother will merit his commendation, by teaching her son the simple graces of his unfortunate namesake.

Well Madam, I have suffer'd myself to be coaxed by this good-hearted girl, again to leave my own throne; and I am going to Montford's, where I perhaps may recover some degree of chearfulness, but as to gaiety, a distinction Mrs. Butler very properly made—

“Save me from the gaiety of those
“Whose head-achs nail them to a noonday bed;
“And save me from those whose haggard eyes
“Flash desperation and betray their pangs
“For property stript off by cruel chance,
“From gaiety that fill the bones with pain,
“The mouth with blasphemy, the heart with woe.”

Adieu Madam, may you enjoy a double portion of that happiness of which your obstinacy deprives him who will nevertheless always think of you with esteem and affection.

J. MELROSE.

FINIS.