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THE
HISTORY
OF
CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER I.

MR. LOVELACE, To JOHN BELFORD, Esq;

Tuesday, *May 2.*

MERCURY, as the Fabulist tells us, having the curiosity to know the estimation he stood in among mortals, descended in disguise, and, in a statuary's shop, cheapened a Jupiter, then a Juno, then one, then another, of the *Dii majores*; and, at last, asked, What price that same statue of Mercury bore? O Sir, says the artist, buy one of the others, and I'll throw you in that for nothing.

How sheepish must the god of thieves look, upon this rebuff to his vanity!

So thou!—A thousand pounds wouldst thou give

VOL. IV.

A

for the good opinion of this single Lady — To be only thought tolerably of, and not quite unworthy of her conversation, would make thee happy. And at parting last night, or rather this morning, thou madest me promise a few lines to Edgware, to let thee know what she thinks of thee, and of thy brethren.

Thy thousand pounds, Jack, is all thy own: for most heartily does she dislike ye all—Thee as much as any of the rest.

I am sorry for it too, as to thy part, for two reasons — One, that I think thy motive for thy curiosity was fear or consciousness: whereas that of the arch-thief was vanity, intolerable vanity: and he was, therefore, justly sent away with a blush upon his cheeks to heaven, and could not brag — The other, that I am afraid, if she dislikes thee, she dislikes me: for are we not birds of a feather?

I must never talk of reformation, she told me, having such companions, and taking such delight as I seemed to take, in their frothy conversation.

I, no more than you, Jack, imagined she could possibly like ye: but then, as my friends, I thought a person of her education would have been more sparing of her censures.

I don't know how it is, Belford, but women think themselves entitled to take any freedoms with us, while we are unpolite, forsooth, and I can't tell what, if we don't tell a pack of cursed lies, and make black white, in their favor—teaching us to be hypocrites, yet stigmatizing us, at other times, for deceivers.

I defended ye all as well as I could: but you know there was no attempting aught but a palliative defence, to one of her principles.

I will summarily give thee a few of my pleas.

“To the pure, every little deviation seemed offensive: yet I saw not, that there was any thing amiss the whole evening, either in the words or behaviour of any of my friends. Some people could talk but upon one or two subjects: she upon every one: no wonder, therefore, they talked to what they understood best; and to mere objects of sense. Had she honored us with more of her conversation, she would have been less disgusted with ours; for she saw how every one was prepared to admire her, whenever she opened her lips. You, in particular, had said, when she retired, that virtue itself spoke, when she spoke: but that you had such an awe upon you, after she had favored us with an observation or two on a subject started, that you should ever be afraid, in her company, to be found most exceptionable, when you intended to be least so.”

Plainly, she said, she neither liked my companions, nor the house she was in.

I liked not the house any more than she: though the people were very obliging, and she had owned they were less exceptionable to herself, than at first: and were we not about another of our own?

She did not like Miss Partington — Let her fortune be what it would, and she had heard a great deal said of her fortune, she should not chuse an intimacy with her. She thought it was a hardship to be put upon such a difficulty, as she was put

upon the preceding night, when there were lodgers in the front-house, whom they had reason to be freer with, than, upon so short an acquaintance, with her.

I pretended to be an utter stranger as to this particular; and, when she explained herself upon it, condemned Mrs. Sinclair's request, and called it a confident one.

She, artfully, made lighter of her denial of the girl for a bedfellow, than she thought of it, I could see that; for it was plain, she supposed there was room for me to think she had been either over-nice or over-cautious.

I offered to resent Mrs. Sinclair's freedom.

No; there was no great matter in it. It was best to let it pass. It might be thought more particular in her to deny such a request, than in Mrs. Sinclair to make it, or in Miss Partington to expect it to be complied with. But as the people below had a large acquaintance, she did not know how often she might have her retirements invaded, if she gave way. And, indeed, there were levities in the behaviour of that young Lady, which she could not so far pass over as to wish an intimacy with her.

I said, I liked Miss Partington as little as she could. Miss Partington was a silly young creature; who seemed too likely to justify the watchfulness of her guardians over her. — But, nevertheless, as to her general conversation and behaviour last night, I must own, that I thought the girl (for girl she was, as to discretion) not exceptionable; only carrying

herself like a free good natured creature who believed herself secure in the honor of her company.

It was very well said of me, she replied: but, if that young Lady were so well satisfied with her company, she must needs say, that I was very kind to suppose her such an innocent—For her own part, she had seen nothing of the London world: but thought, she must tell me plainly, that she never was in such company in her life; nor ever again wished to be in such.

There, Belford!—Worse off than Mercury!—Art thou not?

I was nettled. Hard would be the lot of more discreet women, as far as I knew, than Miss Partington, were they to be judged by so rigid a virtue as hers.

Not so, she said: but if I really saw nothing exceptionable to a virtuous mind, in that young person's behaviour, my ignorance of better behaviour was, she must needs tell me, as pitiable as hers: and it were to be wished, that minds so paired, for their own sakes, should never be separated.

See, Jack, what I get by my charity!

I thanked her heartily. But said, that I must take the liberty to observe, that good folks were generally so uncharitable, that, devil take me, if I would chuse to be good, were the consequence to be, that I must think hardly of the whole world besides.

She congratulated me upon my charity: but told me, that to enlarge her own, she hoped it would

not be expected of her to approve of the low company I had brought her into last night.

No exception for thee, Belford!—— Safe is thy thousand pounds.

I saw not, I said, begging her pardon, that she liked any body (plain dealing for plain dealing, Jack!—— Why then did she abuse my friends?) However, let me but know whom and what she did or did not like; and, if possible, I would like and dislike the very same persons and things.

She bid me then, in a pet, dislike myself.

Curfed severe!—— Does she think she must not pay for it one day, or one night?—— And if one, many; that's my comfort.

I was in such a train of being happy, I said, before my earnestness to procure her to favor my friends with her company, that I wished the devil had had as well my friends as Miss Partington—— And yet I must say, that I saw not how good people could answer half their end, which is to reform the wicked by precept as well as example, were they to accompany only with the good.

I had like to have been blasted by two or three flashes of lightning from her indignant eyes; and she turned scornfully from me, and retired to her own apartment.

Once more, Jack, safe, as thou seest, are thy thousand pounds.

She says, I am not a polite man: but is she, in the instance before us, more polite for a woman?

And now, dost thou not think, that I owe my charmer some revenge for her cruelty in obliging

such a fine young creature, and so vast a fortune, as Miss Partington, to crowd into a press-bed with Dorcas the maid servant of the proud refuser? — Miss Partington too (with tears) declaring by Mrs. Sinclair, that would Mrs. Lovelace do her the honor of a visit at Barnet, the best bed and best room in her guardian's house should be at her service. Thinkest thou, that I could not guess at her dishonorable fears of me? — That she apprehended, that the supposed husband would endeavour to take possession of his own? — And that Miss Partington would be willing to contribute to such a piece of justice?

Thus, then, thou both remindest, and defiest me, charmer! — And since thou relievest more on thy own precaution than upon my honor; be it unto thee, fair one, as thou apprehendest!

And now, Jack, let me know, what thy opinion, and the opinions of thy brother varlets, are of my Gloriana.

I have just now heard, that Hannah hopes to be soon well enough to attend her young Lady, when in London. It seems the girl has had no physician. I must send her one, out of pure love and respect to her mistress. Who knows but medicine may weaken nature, and strengthen the disease? — As her malady is not a fever, very likely it may do so. — But, perhaps, the wench's hopes are too forward. Blustering weather in this month yet. — And that is bad for rheumatic complaints.

LETTER II.

MR. LOVELACE, To JOHN BELFORD, Esq;

Tuesday, *May 2.*

JUST as I had sealed up the inclosed, comes a letter to my beloved, in a cover to me, directed to Lord M.'s. From whom, thinkest thou? — From Mrs. Howe!

And what the contents?

How should I know, unless the dear creature had communicated them to me? But a very cruel letter I believe it is, by the effect it had upon her. The tears ran down her cheeks as she read it; and her color changed several times. No end of her persecutions, I think:

“What a cruelty in my fate!” said the sweet lamenter. — “Now the only comfort of my life must be given up!”

Miss Howe's correspondence, no doubt.

But should she be so much grieved at this? This correspondence was prohibited before, and that, to the daughter, in the strongest terms: but yet carried on by both; altho' a brace of impeccables, an't please ye. Could they expect, that a mother would not vindicate her authority? — And finding her prohibition ineffectual with her perverse daughter, was it not reasonable to suppose she would try what effect it would have upon her daughter's friend? — And now I believe the end will be effectually

answered: for my beloved, I dare say, will make a point of conscience of it.

I hate cruelty, especially in women; and should have been more concerned for this instance of it in Mrs. Howe, had I not had a stronger instance of the same in my beloved to Miss Partington; for how did she know, since she was so much afraid for herself, whom Dorcas might let in to that innocent and less watchful young Lady? But nevertheless I must needs own, that I am not very sorry for this prohibition, let it originally come from the Harlowes, or from whom it will; because I make no doubt, that it is owing to Miss Howe, in a great measure, that my beloved is so much upon her guard, and thinks so hardly of me. And who can tell, as characters here are so tender, and some disguises so flimsy, what consequences might follow this undutiful correspondence?—I say, therefore, I am not sorry for it: now will she not have any body to compare notes with: any body to alarm her: and I may be saved the guilt and disobligation of inspecting into a correspondence that has long made me uneasy.

How every thing works for me!—Why will this charming creature make such contrivances necessary, as will increase my trouble, and my guilt too, as some would account it? But why, rather I should ask, will she fight against her stars?

LETTER III.

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, Esq.

Edgware, Tuesday Night, *May 2.*

WITHOUT staying for the promised letter from you to inform us what the Lady says of us, I write to tell you, that we are all of one opinion with regard to her; which is, that there is not of her age a finer woman in the world, as to her understanding. As for her person, she is at the age of bloom, and an admirable creature; a perfect beauty: but this poorer praise, a man, who has been honored with her conversation, can hardly descend to give; and yet she was brought amongst us contrary to her will.

Permit me, dear Lovelace, to be a means of saving this excellent creature from the dangers she hourly runs from the most plotting heart in the world. In a former, I pleaded your own family, Lord M.'s wishes particularly; and then I had not seen her: but, now, I join her sake, honor's sake, motives of justice, generosity, gratitude, and humanity, which are all concerned in the preservation of so fine a woman. Thou knowest not the anguish I should have had (whence arising, I cannot devise) had I not known before I set out this morning, that the incomparable creature had disappointed thee in thy cursed view of getting her to admit the specious Partington for a bedfellow.

I have done nothing but talk of this Lady ever since I saw her. There is something so awful, and yet so sweet, in her aspect, that were I to have the Virtues and the Graces all drawn in one piece, they should be taken, every one of them, from different airs and attitudes in her. She was born to adorn the age she was given to, and would be an ornament to the first dignity. What a piercing, yet gentle eye; every glance, I thought, mingled with love and fear of you! What a sweet smile darting through the cloud that overspread her fair face, demonstrating, that she had more apprehensions and grief at her heart, than she cared to express.

You may think what I am going to write too flighty; but, by my faith, I have conceived such a profound reverence for her sense and judgment, that, far from thinking the man excusable who should treat her basely, I am ready to regret that such an angel of a woman should even marry. She is in my eye all mind: and were she to meet with a man all mind likewise, why should the charming qualities she is mistress of, be endangered? Why should such an angel be plunged so low as into the vulgar offices of domestic life? Were she mine, I should hardly wish to see her a mother, unless there were a kind of moral certainty, that minds like hers could be propagated. For why, in short, should not the work of bodies be left to mere bodies? I know, that you yourself have an opinion of her little less exalted. Belton, Mowbray, Tourville, are all of my mind; are full of her praises; and

swear, it would be a million of pities to ruin a woman in whose fall none but devils can rejoice.

What must that merit and excellence be which can extort this from us, free-livers, like yourself, and all of us your partial friends, who have joined with you in your just resentments against the rest of her family, and offered our assistance to execute your vengeance on them? But we cannot think it reasonable, that you should punish an innocent creature, who loves you so well, and who is in your protection, and has suffered so much for you, for the faults of her relations.

And here, let me put a serious question or two. Thinkest thou, truly admirable as this Lady is, that the end thou proposhest to thyself, if obtained, is answerable to the means, to the trouble thou givest thyself, and to the perfidies, tricks, stratagems, and contrivances thou hast already been guilty of, and still meditatest? In every real excellence she surpasses all her sex. But in the article thou seekest to subdue her for, a mere sensualist, a Partington, a Horton, a Martin, would make a sensualist a thousand times happier than she either will or can.

Sweet are the joys that come with willingness.

And wouldst thou make her unhappy for her whole life, and thyself not happy for a single moment?

Hitherto, it is not too late; and that, perhaps, is as much as can be said, if thou meanest to preserve her esteem and good opinion, as well as person; for

I think it is impossible she can get out of thy hands, now she is in this cursed house. O that damned hypocritical Sinclair, as thou callest her! How was it possible she should behave so speciously as she did all the time the Lady staid with us! — Be honest, and marry; and be thankful that she will condescend to have thee. If thou dost not, thou wilt be the worst of men; and wilt be condemned in this world and the next: as I am sure thou oughtest, and shouldest too, wert thou to be judged by one, who never before was so much touched in a woman's favor: and whom thou knowest to be

Thy partial friend,

J. BELFORD.

Our companions consented, that I should withdraw to write to the above effect. They can make nothing of the characters we write in; so I read this to them. They approve of it; and of their own motion each man would set his name to it. I would not delay sending it, for fear of some detestable scheme taking place.

THOMAS BELTON.

RICHARD MOWBRAY.

JAMES TOURVILLE.

Just now are brought me both yours. I vary not my opinion, nor forbear my earnest prayers to you in her behalf, notwithstanding her dislike of me.

LETTER IV.

MR. LOVELACE, To JOHN BELFORD, Esq;

Wednesday; May 3.

WHEN I have already taken pains to acquaint thee in full with my views, designs, and resolutions, with regard to this admirable woman, it is very extraordinary that thou shouldst vapor as thou dost in her behalf, when I have made no trial, no attempt: and yet, givest it as thy opinion in a former letter, that advantage may be taken of the situation she is in; and that she may be overcome.

Most of thy reflections, particularly that which respects the difference as to the joys to be given by the virtuous and the libertine of the sex, are fitter to come in as after-reflections, than as antecedencies.

I own with thee, and with the poet, "That sweet are the joys that come with willingness" — But is it to be expected, that a woman of education, and a lover of forms, will yield before she is attacked? And have I so much as summoned this to surrender? I doubt not but I shall meet with difficulty. I must, therefore, make my first effort by surprise. There may possibly be some cruelty necessary: but there may be consent in struggle; there may be yielding in resistance. But the first conflict over, whether the following may not be weaker and weaker, till willingness ensue, is the point to be tried. I will illustrate what I have said by the

simile of a bird new caught. We begin, when boys, with birds; and, when grown up, go on to women; and both, perhaps, in turn, experience our sportive cruelty.

Haft thou not observed the charming gradations by which the ensnared volatile has been brought to bear with its new condition? How, at first, refusing all sustenance, it beats and bruises itself against its wires, till it makes its gay plumage fly about, and overspread its well secured cage. Now it gets out its head; sticking only at its beautiful shoulders: Then, with difficulty, drawing back its head, it gasps for breath, and, erectedly perched, with meditating eyes, first surveys, and then attempts, its wired canopy. As it gets breath, with renewed rage, it beats and bruises again its pretty head and sides, bites the wires, and pecks at the fingers of its delighted tamer. Till at last, finding its efforts ineffectual, quite tired and breathless, it lays itself down, and pants at the bottom of the cage, seeming to bemoan its cruel fate, and forfeited liberty. And after a few days its struggles to escape diminishing, as it finds it to no purpose to attempt it, its new habitation becomes familiar; and it hops about from perch to perch, resumes its wonted cheerfulness and every day sings a song to amuse itself, and reward its keeper.

Now, let me tell thee, that I have known a bird actually starve itself, and die with grief, at its being caught and caged. But never did I meet with a woman who was so silly.— Yet have I heard the dear souls most vehemently threaten their own lives on such an occasion. But it is saying nothing

in a woman's favor, if we do not allow her to have more sense than a bird. And yet we must all own, that it is more difficult to catch a bird than a Lady.

To pursue the comparison — If the disappointment of the captivated Lady be very great, she will threaten, indeed, as I said: she will even refuse her sustenance for some time, especially if you entreat her much, and she thinks she gives you concern by her refusal. But then the stomach of the dear fullen one will soon return. 'Tis pretty to see how she comes to by degrees: pressed by appetite, she will first steal, perhaps, a weeping morsel by herself; then be brought to piddle and sigh, and sigh and piddle, before you; now and then, if her viands be unfavory, swallowing with them a relishing tear or two: then she comes to eat and drink, to oblige you: then resolves to live for your sake: her exclamations will, in the next place, be turned into blandishments; her vehement upbraidings into gentle murmurings — How dare you, traitor! — into How could you, dearest? She will draw you to her, instead of pushing you from her: no longer, with unsheathed claws, will she resist you; but, like a pretty, playful, wanton kitten, with gentle paws, and concealed talons, tap your cheek, and with intermingled smiles, and tears, and caresses, implore your consideration for her, and your constancy: all the favor she then has to ask of you! — And this is the time, were it given to man to confine himself to one object, to be happier every day than other.

Now,

Now, Belford, were I to go no further than I have gone with my beloved Miss Harlowe, how shall I know the difference between her and another bird? To let her fly now, what a pretty jest would that be! — How do I know, except I try, whether she may not be brought to sing me a fine song, and to be as well contented as I have brought other birds to be, and very shy ones too?

But now let us reflect a little upon the confounded partiality of us human creatures. I can give two or three familiar, and, if they were not familiar, they would be shocking, instances of the cruelty both of men and women, with respect to other creatures, perhaps, as worthy as (at least more innocent than) themselves. By my soul, Jack, there is more of the savage in human nature than we are commonly aware of. Nor is it, after all, so much amiss, that we sometimes avenge the more innocent animals upon our own species.

To particulars.

How usual a thing is it for women as well as men, without the least remorse, to ensnare, to cage, and torment, and even with burning knitting-needles to put out the eyes of the poor feathered songster (thou see'st I have not yet done with birds) which, however, in proportion to its bulk, has more life than themselves (for a bird is all soul); and of consequence has as much feeling as the human creature! When at the same time, if an honest fellow, by the gentlest persuasion, and the softest arts, has the good luck to prevail upon a mew'd up Lady to countenance her own escape, and she

consents to break cage, and be set a flying into the all-cheering air of liberty, mercy on us! what an outcry is generally raised against him!

Just like what you and I once saw raised in a paltry village near Chelmsford, after a poor hungry fox, who, watching his opportunity, had seized by the neck, and shouldered, a sleek-feathered goose: at what time we beheld the whole vicinage of boys and girls, old men, and old women, all the furrows and wrinkles of the latter filled up with malice for the time; the old men armed with prongs, pitchforks, clubs, and catsticks; the old women with mops, brooms, fire-shovels, tongs, and pokers; and the younger fry with dirt, stones, and brickbats, gathering as they ran like a snowball, in pursuit of the wind-outstripping prowler; all the mongrel curs of the circumjacentcies yelp, yelp, yelp, at their heels, completing the horrid chorus.

Remembrest thou not this scene? Surely thou must. My imagination, inflamed by a tender sympathy for the danger of the adventurous marauder, represents it to my eye, as if it were but yesterday. And dost not thou recollect how generously glad we were, as if our own case, that honest Reynard, by the help of a lucky style, over which both old and young tumbled upon one another, and a winding course, escaped their brutal fury, and flying catsticks; and how, in fancy, we followed him to his undiscovered retreat; and imagined we beheld the intrepid thief enjoying his dear-earned purchase with a delight proportioned to his past danger?

I once made a charming little savage severely repent the delight she took in seeing her tabby favorite make cruel sport with a pretty sleek beady-eyed mouse, before she devoured it. Egad, my love, said I to myself, as I sat meditating the scene, I am determined to lie in wait for a fit opportunity to try how thou wilt like to be tost over my head, and be caught again: how thou wilt like to be patted from me, and pulled to me. Yet will I rather give life than take it away, as this barbarous quadrupede has at last done by her prey. And after all was over between my girl and me, I reminded her of the incident to which my resolution was owing.

Nor had I at another time any mercy upon the daughter of an old Epicure, who had taught the girl, without the least remorse, to roast lobsters alive; to cause a poor pig to be whipt to death; to scrape carp the contrary way of the scales, making them leap in the stew-pan, and dressing them in their own blood for sauce. And this for luxury-sake, and to provoke an appetite; which I had without stimulation, in my way, and that I can tell thee a very ravenous one.

Many more instances of the like nature could I give, were I to leave nothing to thyself, to show that the best take the same liberties, and, perhaps, worse, with some sort of creatures, that we take with others; all creatures still! and creatures too, as I have observed above, replete with strong life, and sensible feeling!—If, therefore, people pretend to mercy, let mercy go through all their actions.

I have read somewhere, That a merciful man is merciful to his beast.

So much at present for those parts of thy letter in which thou urgest to me motives of compassion for the Lady.

But I guess at thy principal motive in this thy earnestness in behalf of this charming creature. I know that thou correspondest with Lord M. who is impatient, and has long been desirous, to see me shackled. And thou wantest to make a merit with the uncle, with a view to one of his nieces. But knowest thou not, that my consent will be wanting to complete thy wishes?—And what a commendation will it be of thee to such a girl as Charlotte, when I shall acquaint her with the affront thou puttest upon the whole sex, by asking, Whether I think my reward, when I have subdued the most charming woman in the world, will be equal to my trouble?—Which, thinkest thou, a woman of spirit will soonest forgive; the undervaluing varlet who can put such a question; or him, who prefers the pursuit and conquest of a fine woman to all the joys of life? Have I not known even a virtuous woman, as she would be thought, vow everlasting antipathy to a man who gave out, that she was too old for him to attempt? And did not Essex's personal reflection on queen Elizabeth, that she was old and crooked, contribute more to his ruin, than his treason?

But another word or two, as to thy objection relating to my trouble and reward.

Does not the keen foxhunter endanger his neck

and his bones in pursuit of a vermin, which, when killed, is neither fit food for men nor dogs?

Do not the hunters of the noble game value the venison less than the sport?

Why then should I be reflected upon, and the sex affronted, for my patience and perseverance in the most noble of all chases; and for not being a poacher in love, as thy question may be made to imply?

Learn of thy master, for the future, to treat more respectfully a sex that yields to us our principal diversions and delights.

Proceed anon.

L E T T E R V.

Mr. LOVELACE. In continuation.

WELL sayest thou, that mine is the most plotting heart in the world. Thou dost me honor; and I thank thee heartily. Thou art no bad judge. How like Boileau's parson, I strut behind my double chin! Am I not obliged to deserve thy compliment? And wouldst thou have me repent of a murder before I have committed it?

"The Virtues and Graces are this Lady's handmaids. She was certainly born to adorn the age she was given to."—Well said, Jack—"And would be an ornament to the first dignity." But what praise is that, unless the first dignity were adorned

with the first merit?—Dignity! gewgaw!—First dignity! thou idiot!—Art thou, who knowest me, so taken with ermine and tinsel?—I, who have won the gold, am only fit to wear it. For the future, therefore, correct thy style, and proclaim her the ornament of the happiest man, and (respecting herself and sex) the greatest conqueror in the world.

Then, that she loves me, as thou imaginest, by no means appears clear to me. Her conditional offers to renounce me; the little confidence she places in me; entitle me to ask, What merit can she have with a man, who won her in spite of herself, and who fairly in set and obstinate battle, took her prisoner?

As to what thou inferrest from her eye when with us, thou knowest nothing of her heart from that, if thou imaginest there was one glance of love shot from it. Well did I note her eye, and plainly did I see, that it was all but just civil disgust to me and to the company I had brought her into. Her early retiring that night, against all entreaty, might have convinced thee, that there was very little of the gentle in her heart for me. And her eye never knew what it was to contradict her heart.

She is, thou sayest, all mind. So say I. But why shouldst thou imagine, that such a mind as hers, meeting with such a one as mine; and, to dwell upon the word, meeting with an inclination in hers, should not propagate minds like her own?

Were I to take thy stupid advice, and marry; what a figure should I make in rakish annals! The

Lady in my power: yet not having intended to put herself in my power: declaring against love, and a rebel to it: so much open-eyed caution: no confidence in my honor: her family expecting the worst has passed; herself seeming to expect, that worst will be attempted: (Priscilla Partington for that!) What! wouldst thou not have me act in character?

But why callest thou the Lady innocent? And why sayest thou she loves me?

By innocent, with regard to me, and not taken as a general character, I must insist upon it, she is not innocent. Can she be innocent, who, by wishing to shackle me in the prime and glory of my youth, with such a capacity as I have for noble mischief, would make my perdition more certain, were I to break, as I doubt I should, the most solemn vow I could make? I say, no man ought to take even a common oath, who thinks he cannot keep it. This is conscience! This is honor! — And when I think I can keep the marriage-vow, then will it be time to marry.

No doubt of it, as thou sayest, the devils would rejoice in the fall of such a woman. But this is my confidence, that I shall have it in my power to marry when I will. And if I do her this justice, shall I not have a claim to her gratitude? And will she not think herself the obliged, rather than the obliger? Then, let me tell thee, Belford, it is impossible so far to hurt the morals of this Lady, as thou and thy brother-varlets, have hurt others of the sex, who now are casting about the town firebrands and double death. Take ye that thistle to mumble upon.

* * *

A short interruption. I now resume.

That the morals of this Lady cannot fail, is a consideration that will lessen the guilt on both sides. And if, when subdued, she knows but how to middle the matter between virtue and love, then will she be a wife for me: for already I am convinced, that there is not a woman in the world that is love-proof and plot-proof, if she be not the person.

And now imagine (the charmer overcome) thou seest me sitting supinely cross-kneed, reclining on my sofa, the God of Love dancing in my eyes, and rejoicing in every mantling feature; the sweet rogue, late such a proud rogue, wholly in my power, moving up slowly to me, at my beck, with heaving sighs, half-pronounced upbraidings from murmuring lips, her finger in her eye, and quickening her pace at my "Come hither, dearest?"

One hand stuck in my side, the other extended to encourage her bashful approach—Kiss me, love!—Sweet, as Jack Belford says, are the joys that come with willingness.

She tenders her purple mouth (her coral lips will be purple then, Jack!) sigh not so deeply my beloved!—Happier hours await thy humble love, than did thy proud resistance.

Once more bend to my ardent lips the swanny glossiness of a neck late so stately.—

There's my precious!—

Again!—

Obliging loveliness!—

O my ever blooming glory!—I have tryed thee enough. —To morrow's fun—

Then I rise, and fold to my almost-talking heart the throbbing bosomed charmer.

And now shall thy humbled pride confess its obligation to me!—

To morrow's fun—And then I disengage myself from the bashful passive, and stalk about the room —To morrow's fun shall gild the altar at which my vows shall be paid thee!

Then, Jack, the rapture! then the darted sunbeams from her gladdened eye, drinking up at one sip, the precious distillation from the pearl-dropt cheek! Then hands ardently folded, eyes seeming to pronounce, God bless my Lovelace! to supply the joy-locked tongue: her transports too strong, and expression too weak, to give utterance to her grateful meanings!— All — all the studies — all the studies of her future life vowed and devoted (when she can speak) to acknowledge and return the perpetuated obligation!

If I could bring my charmer to this, would it not be the eligible of eligibles? —Is it not worth trying for? —As I said, I can marry her when I will. She can be nobody's but mine, neither for shame, nor by choice, nor yet by address: for who, that knows my character, believes that the worst she dreads, is now to be dreaded?

I have the highest opinion that man can have (thou knowest I have) of the merit and perfections of this admirable woman; of her virtue and honor too; altho' thou, in a former, art of opinion, that

she may be overcome. Am I not, therefore, obliged to go further, in order to contradict thee, and, as I have often urged, to be sure, that she really is what I really think her to be, and, if I am ever to marry her, hope to find her?

Then this Lady is the mistress of our passions: no one ever had to so much perfection the art of moving. This all her family know, and have equally feared and revered her for it. This I know too; and doubt not more and more to experience. How charmingly must this divine creature warble forth (if a proper occasion be given) her melodious elegiacs! — Infinite beauties are there in a weeping eye. I first taught the two nymphs below to distinguish the several accents of the lamentable in a new subject, and how admirably some, more than others, become their distresses.

But to return to thy objections — Thou wilt, perhaps, tell me, in the names of thy brethren, as well as in thy own name, That among all the objects of your respective attempts, there was not one of the rank and merit of my charming Miss Harlowe.

But let me ask, Has it not been a constant maxim with us, that the greater the merit on the woman's side, the nobler the victory on the man's? And as to rank, sense of honor, sense of shame, pride of family, may make ruffled rank get up, and shake itself to rights: and if any thing come of it, such a one may suffer only in her pride, by being obliged to take up with a second-rate match instead of a first; and, as it may fall out, be the happier, as well as

the more useful, for the misadventure; since (taken off her public gaddings, and domesticated by her disgrace) she will have reason to think herself obliged to the man who has saved her from further reproach; while her fortune and alliance will lay an obligation upon him; and her past fall, if she have prudence and consciousness, will be his present and future security.

But a poor girl (such a one as my Rosebud for instance) having no recalls from education; being driven out of every family that pretends to reputation; persecuted most, perhaps, by such as have only kept their secret better; and having no refuge to fly to—The common, the stews, the street, is the fate of such a poor wretch; penury, want, and disease, her sure attendants; and an untimely end, perhaps, closes the miserable scene.

And will ye not now all join to say, that it is more manly to attack a lion than a sheep?—Thou knowest, that I always illustrated my eagleship, by aiming at the noblest quarries; and by disdaining to make a stoop at wrens, phyl-tits*, and wag-tails.

The worst respecting myself, in the case before me, is, that my triumph, when completed, will be so glorious a one, that I shall never be able to keep up to it. All my future attempts must be

* Phyl-tits, q. d. Phillis-tits, in opposition to Tom-tits. It needs not now be observed, that Mr. Lovelace, in the wanton gaiety of his heart, often takes liberties of coining words and phrases in his letters to this his familiar friend. See his ludicrous reason for it in Vol. III. Let. xxi. parag. antepenult.

poor to this. I shall be as unhappy, after a while, from my reflections upon this conquest, as Don John of Austria was, in his, on the renowned victory of Lepanto, when he found that none of his future achievements could keep pace with his early glory.

I am sensible, that my pleas and my reasonings may be easily answered, and, perhaps, justly censured; but by whom censured? Not by any of the confraternity, whose constant course of life, even long before I became your general, to this hour, has justified what ye now, in a fit of squeamishness, and through envy, condemn. Having, therefore, vindicated myself and my intentions to you, that is all I am at present concerned for.

Be convinced then, that I (according to our principles) am right, thou wrong; or, at least, be silent. But I command thee to be convinced. And in thy next, be sure to tell me that thou art.

LETTER VI.

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, Esq.

Edgware, Thursday, *May 4.*

I KNOW that thou art so abandoned a man, that to give thee the best reasons in the world against what thou hast once resolved upon, will be but acting the madman whom once we saw trying to buffet down a hurricane with his hat. I hope, however, that the Lady's merit will still avail her with thee. But if thou persistest; if thou wilt avenge thyself on this sweet lamb, which thou hast singled out from a flock thou hatest, for the faults of the dogs who kept it: if thou art not to be moved by beauty, by learning, by prudence, by innocence, all shining out in one charming object; but she must fall, fall by the man whom she has chosen for her protector; I would not for a thousand worlds have thy crime to answer for.

Upon my faith, Lovelace, the subject sticks with me, notwithstanding I find I have not the honor of the Lady's good opinion. And the more, when I reflect upon her father's brutal curse, and the villainous hard-heartedness of all her family. But, nevertheless, I should be desirous to know (if thou wilt proceed) by what gradations, arts, and contrivances, thou effectest thy ungrateful purpose. And, O Lovelace, I conjure thee, if thou art a man, let not the specious devils thou hast brought

her among, be suffered to triumph over her; nor make her the victim of unmanly artifices. If she yield to fair seduction, if I may so express myself; if thou canst raise a weakness in her by love, or by arts not inhuman; I shall the less pity her: and shall then conclude, that there is not a woman in the world who can resist a bold and resolute lover.

A messenger is just now arrived from my uncle. The mortification, it seems, is got to his knee; and the surgeons declare, that he cannot live many days. He, therefore, sends for me directly, with these shocking words, "That I will come and close his eyes." My servant or his must of necessity be in town every day on his case, or on other affairs; and one of them shall regularly attend you for any letter or commands. It will be charity to write to me as often as you can. For altho' I am likely to be a considerable gainer by the poor man's death, yet I cannot say, that I at all love these scenes of death and the doctor so near me. The doctor and death I should have said; for that's the natural order, and, generally speaking, the one is but the harbinger to the other.

If, therefore, you decline to oblige me, I shall think you are displeased with my freedom. But let me tell you at the same time, that no man has a right to be displeased at freedoms taken with him for faults he is not ashamed to be guilty of.

J. BELFORD.

LETTER VII.

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE.

I THANK you and Mr. Hickman for his letter, sent me with such kind expedition; and proceed to obey my dear menacing tyranness.

She then gives the particulars of what passed between herself and Mr. Lovelace on Tuesday morning, in relation to his four friends, and to Miss Partington, pretty much to the same effect as in Mr. Lovelace's Letter, N^o. i. And then proceeds:

He is constantly accusing me of over-scrupulousness. He says, "I am always out of humor with him: that I could not have behaved more reservedly to Mr. Solmes: and that it is contrary to all his hopes and notions, that he should not, in so long a time, find himself able to inspire the person whom he hoped so soon to have the honor to call his; with the least distinguishing tenderness for him beforehand."

Silly and partial encroacher! not to know to what to attribute the reserve I am forced to treat him with! But his pride has eaten up his prudence. It is, indeed, a dirty low pride, that has swallowed up the true pride, which should have set him above the vanity that has overrun him.

Yet he pretends, that he has no pride but in

obliging me: and is always talking of his reverence and humility, and such sort of stuff: but of this I am sure, that he has, as I observed the first time I saw him, too much regard to his own person, greatly to value that of his wife, marry he whom he will: and I must be blind, if I did not see, that he is exceedingly vain of his external advantages, and of that address, which, if it has any merit in it to an outward eye, is perhaps owing more to his confidence, than to any thing else.

Have you no beheld the man when I was your happy guest, as he walked to his chariot, looking about him, as if to observe what eyes his specious person and air had attracted?

But, indeed, we have seen homely coxcombs as proud as if they had persons to be proud of; at the same time that it was apparent, that the pains they took about themselves but the more exposed their defects.

The man who is fond of being thought more or better than he is, as I have often observed, but provokes a scrutiny into his pretensions; and that generally produces contempt. For pride, as I believe I have heretofore said, is an infallible sign of weakness; of something wrong in the head or heart, or in both. He that exalts himself, insults his neighbour; who is provoked to question him even that merit, which, were he modest, would, perhaps, be allowed to be his due.

You will say, that I am very grave: and so I am. Mr. Lovelace is extremely sunk in my opinion since Monday night: nor see I before me any thing that
can

can afford me a pleasing hope. For what, with a mind so unequal as his, can be my best hope?

I think I mentioned to you, in my former, that my clothes were brought me. You fluttered me so, that I am not sure I did. But I know I designed to mention that they were. They were brought me on Thursday; but neither my few guineas with them, nor any of my books, except a Drexelius on Eternity, the good old Practice of Piety, and a Francis Spira. My brother's wit, I suppose. He thinks he does well to point out death and despair to me. I wish for the one, and every now and then am on the brink of the other.

You will the less wonder at my being so very solemn, when, added to the above, and to my uncertain situation, I tell you, that they have sent me with these books a letter from my cousin Morden. It has set my heart against Mr. Lovelace. Against myself too. I send it inclosed. If you please, my dear, you may read it here.

Col. MORDEN, To Miss CLARISSA HARLOWE.

Florence, *April 13.*

I AM extremely concerned to hear of a difference betwixt the rest of a family so near and dear to me, and you still dearer to me than any of the rest.

My cousin James has acquainted me with the offers you have had, and with your refusals. I

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wonder not at either. Such charming promises at so early an age as when I left England; and those promises, as I have often heard, so greatly exceeded, as well in your person as mind; how much must you be admired! How few must there be worthy of you!

Your parents, the most indulgent in the world, to a child the most deserving, have given way it seems to your refusals of several gentlemen. They have contented themselves at last to name one with earnestness to you, because of the address of another whom they cannot approve.

They had not reason it seems from your behaviour to think you greatly averse: so they proceeded: perhaps too hastily for a delicacy like yours. But when all was fixed on their parts, and most extraordinary terms concluded in your favor; terms, which abundantly show the gentleman's just value for you; you flew off with a warmth and vehemence little suited to that sweetness which gave a grace to all your actions.

I know very little of either of the gentlemen: but of Mr. Lovelace I know more than of Mr. Solmes. I wish I could say more to his advantage than I can. As to every qualification but one, your brother owns there is no comparison. But that one outweighs all the rest together. It cannot be thought that Miss Clarissa Harlowe will dispense with morals in a husband.

What, my dearest cousin, shall I first plead to you on this occasion? Your duty, your interest, your temporal, and your eternal welfare, do, and

may all, depend upon this single point—The morality of a husband.—A woman who has a wicked husband may find it difficult to be good, and out of her power to do good; and is, therefore, in a worse situation than the man can be in, who has a bad wife. You preserve all your religious regards, I understand. I wonder not that you do. I should have wondered, had you not. But what can you promise yourself, as to perseverance in them, with an immoral husband.

If your parents and you differ in sentiment on this important occasion, let me ask you, my dear cousin, who ought to give way? I own to you, that I should have thought there could not any where have been a more suitable match for you, than with Mr. Lovelace, had he been a moral man. I should have very little to say against a man, of whose actions I am not to set up myself as a judge, did he not address my cousin. But, on this occasion, let me tell you, my dear Clarissa, that Mr. Lovelace cannot possibly deserve you. He may reform, you'll say: but he may not. Habit is not soon or easily shaken off. Libertines, who are libertines in defiance of talents, of superior lights, of conviction, hardly ever reform but by miracle, or by incapacity. Well do I know mine own sex. Well am I able to judge of the probability of the reformation of a licentious young man, who has not been fastened upon by sickness, by affliction, by calamity: who has a prosperous run of fortune before him: his spirits high: his will uncontrollable: the company he

keeps, perhaps such as himself, confirming him in all his courses, assisting him in all his enterprises.

As to the other gentleman, suppose, my dear cousin, you do not like him at present, it is far from being unlikely, that you will hereafter: perhaps the more, for not liking him now. He can hardly sink lower in your opinion: he may rise. Very seldom is it, that high expectations are so much as tolerably answered. How indeed can they, when a fine and extensive imagination carries its expectation infinitely beyond reality, in the highest of our sublunary enjoyments? A woman adorned with such an imagination sees no defect in a favored object (the less, if she be not conscious of any wilful fault in herself) till it is too late to rectify the mistakes occasioned by her generous credulity.

But suppose a person of your talents were to marry a man of inferior talents; who, in this case, can be so happy in herself, as Miss Clarissa Harlowe? What delight do you take in doing good! How happily do you devote the several portions of the day to your own improvement, and to the advantage of all that move within your sphere! — And then such is your taste, such are your acquirements in the politer studies, and in the politer amusements; such your excellence in all the different parts of oeconomy fit for a young Lady's inspection and practice; that your friends would wish you to be taken off as little as possible by regards that may be called merely personal.

But as to what may be the consequence respecting yourself, respecting a young Lady of your talents,

from the preference you are suspected to give to a libertine, I would have you, my dear cousin, consider what that may be. A mind so pure, to mingle with a mind impure! And will not such a man as this engross all your solitudes? Will he not perpetually fill you with anxieties for him and for yourself?—The divine and civil powers defied, and their functions broken through by him, on every not merely accidental, but meditated occasion. To be agreeable to him, and to hope to preserve an interest in his affections, you must probably be obliged to abandon all your own laudable pursuits. You must enter into his pleasures and distastes. You must give up your own virtuous companions for his profligate ones—Perhaps be forsaken by yours, because of the scandal he daily gives. Can you hope, cousin, with such a man as this, to be long so good as you now are? If not, consider which of your present laudable delights you would chuse to give up? Which of his culpable ones to follow him in? How could you brook to go backward, instead of forward, in those duties which you now so exemplarily perform? And how do you know, if you once give way, where you shall be suffered, where you shall be able, to stop?

Your brother acknowledges, that Mr. Solmes is not near so agreeable in person as Mr. Lovelace. But what is person, with such a Lady as I have the honor to be now writing to? He owns likewise, that he has not the address of Mr. Lovelace: but what a mere personal advantage is a plausible address, without morals? A woman had better take a husband

whose manners she were to fashion, than to find them ready fashioned to her hand, at the price of his morality! a price that is often paid for travelling accomplishments. O my dear cousin, were you but with us here at Florence, or at Rome, or at Paris (where also I resided for many months) to see the gentlemen whose supposed rough English manners at setting out are to be polished, and what their improvements are in their return through the same places, you would infinitely prefer the man in his first stage to the same man in his last. You find the difference on their return — A fondness for foreign fashions, an attachment to foreign vices, a supercilious contempt of his own country and countrymen (himself more despicable than the most despicable of those he despises); these, with an unblushing effrontery, are too generally the attainments that concur to finish the travelled gentleman!

Mr. Lovelace, I know, deserves to have an exception made in his favor; for he is really a man of parts and learning: he was esteemed so both here and at Rome; and a fine person, and a generous turn of mind, gave him great advantages. But you need not be told, that a libertine man of sense does infinitely more mischief, than a libertine of weak parts is able to do. And this I will tell you farther, that it was Mr. Lovelace's own fault that he was not still more respected than he was, among the Literati here. There were, in short, some liberties in which he indulged himself, that endangered his person and his liberty; and made the best and most worthy of those who honored him with their notice,

give him up, and his stay both at Florence and at Rome shorter than he designed.

This is all I chuse to say of Mr. Lovelace. I had much rather have had reason to give him a quite contrary character. But as to rakes or libertines in general, I, who know them well, must be allowed, because of the mischiefs they have always in their hearts, and too often in their power to do your sex, to add still a few more words upon this topic.

A libertine, my dear cousin, a plotting, an intriguing libertine, must be generally remorseless — Unjust he must always be. The noble rule, of doing to others what he would have done to himself, is the first rule he breaks; and every day he breaks it; the oftener, the greater his triumph. He has great contempt for your sex. He believes no woman chaste, because he is a profligate. Every woman who favors him, confirms him in his wicked incredulity. He is always plotting to extend the mischiefs he delights in. If a woman loves such a man, how can she bear the thought of dividing her interest in his affections, with half the town, and that, perhaps, the dregs of it? Then so sensual! — How will a young Lady of your delicacy bear with so sensual a man? A man who makes a jest of his vows; and who, perhaps, will break your spirit by the most unmanly insults. To be a libertine, at setting out, all compunction, all humanity, must be overcome. To continue to be a libertine, is to continue to be every thing vile and inhuman. Prayers, tears, and the most abject submission, are but fuel

to his pride: wagering, perhaps, with lewd companions, and, not improbably, with lewder women, upon instances which he boasts of to them of your patient sufferings, and broken spirit, and bringing them home to witness to both.

I write what I know has been.

I mention not fortunes squandered, estates mortgaged, or sold, and posterity robbed—Nor yet a multitude of other evils, too gross, too shocking, to be mentioned to a person of your delicacy.

All these, my dear cousin, to be shunned, all the evils I have named to be avoided; the power of doing all the good you have been accustomed to do, preserved, nay, increased, by the separate provision that will be made for you: your charming diversions, and exemplary employments, all maintained; and every good habit perpetuated: and all by one sacrifice, the fading pleasure of the eye! Who would not (since every thing is not to be met with in one man) who would not to preserve so many essentials, give up so light, so unpermanent a pleasure?

Weigh all these things, which I might insist upon to more advantage, did I think it needful to one of your prudence—Weigh them well, my beloved cousin; and if it be not the will of your parents that you should continue single, resolve to oblige them; and let it not be said, that the powers of fancy shall (as in many others of your sex) be too hard for your duty and your prudence. The less agreeable the man, the more obliging the compli-

ance. Remember, that he is a sober man — A man who has reputation to lose, and whose reputation, therefore, is a security for his good behaviour to you.

You have an opportunity offered you to give the highest instance that can be given, of filial duty. Embrace it. It is worthy of you. It is expected from you; however, for your inclination sake, we may be sorry that you are called upon to give it. Let it be said, that you have been able to lay an obligation upon your parents (a proud word, my cousin)! which you could not do, were it not laid against your inclination! — Upon parents, who have laid a thousand upon you; who are set upon this point: who will not give it up: who have given up many points to you, even of this very nature: and in their turn, for the sake of their own authority, as well as judgment, expect to be obliged.

I hope I shall soon, in person, congratulate you upon this your meritorious compliance. To settle and give up my trusteeship, is one of the principal motives of my leaving these parts. I shall be glad to settle it to every one's satisfaction; to yours particularly.

If on my arrival I find a happy union, as formerly, reign in a family so dear to me, it will be an unspeakable pleasure to me; and I shall, perhaps, so dispose my affairs, as to be near you for ever.

I have written a very long letter, and will add

no more, than that I am, with the greatest respect,
my dearest cousin,

Your most affectionate and faithful servant,

WM. MORDEN.

I will suppose, my dear Miss Howe, that you have read my cousin's letter. It is now in vain to wish it had come sooner. But if it had, I might, perhaps, have been so rash as to give Mr. Lovelace the fatal meeting, as I little thought of going away with him; but I should hardly have given him the expectation of so doing, previous to the meeting, which made him come prepared; and the revocation of which he so artfully made ineffectual.

Persecuted as I was, and little expecting so much condescension, as my aunt, to my great mortification, has told me (and you confirm) I should have met with, it is, however, hard to say, what I should or should not have done as to meeting him, had it come in time: but this effect I verily believe it would have had—To have made me insist with all my might, on going over, out of all their ways, to the kind writer of the instructive letter, and on making a father (a protector, as well as a friend) of a kinsman, who is one of my trustees. This, circumstanced as I was, would have been a natural, at least an unexceptionable protection.—But I was to be unhappy! And how it cuts me to the heart

to think, that I can already subscribe to my cousin's character of a libertine, so well drawn in the letter which I suppose you now to have read!

That a man of a character, which ever was my abhorrence, should fall to my lot!—But depending on my own strength; having no reason to apprehend danger from headstrong and disgraceful impulses; I too little, perhaps, cast up my eyes to the Supreme Director: in whom, mistrusting myself, I ought to have placed my whole confidence—And the more, when I saw myself so perseveringly addressed by a man of this character.

Inexperience and presumption, with the help of a brother and sister who have low ends to answer in my disgrace, have been my ruin!—A hard word, my dear! But I repeat it upon deliberation: since, let the best happen which now can happen, my reputation is destroyed; a rake is my portion: and what that portion is, my cousin Morden's letter has acquainted you.

Pray keep it by you, till called for. I saw it not myself (having not the heart to inspect my trunks) till this morning. I would not for the world this man should see it; because it might occasion mischief between the most violent spirit, and the most settled brave one in the world, as my cousin's is said to be.

This letter was inclosed (opened) in a blank cover. Scorn and detest me as they will, I wonder that one line was not sent with it—were it but to have more particularly pointed the design of it, in the same generous spirit, that sent me the Spira.

The sealing of the cover was with black wax. I hope there is no new occasion in the family to give reason for black wax. But if there were, it would, to be sure, have been mentioned, and laid at my door—perhaps too justly!

I had begun a letter to my cousin; but laid it by, because of the uncertainty of my situation, and expecting every day for several days past to be at a greater certainty. You bid me write to him some time ago, you know. Then it was I began it: for I have great pleasure in obeying you in all I may. So I ought to have; for you are the only friend left me. And moreover, you generally honor me with your own observance of the advice I take the liberty to offer you: for I pretend to say, I give better advice than I have taken. And so I had need. For I know not how it comes about, but I am, in my own opinion, a poor lost creature: and yet cannot charge myself with one criminal or faulty inclination. Do you know, my dear, how this can be?

Yet I can tell you how, I believe—One devious step at setting out!—That must be it:—Which pursued, has led me so far out of my path, that I am in a wilderness of doubt and error; and never, never, shall find my way out of it: for, altho' but one pace awry at first, it has led me hundreds and hundreds of miles out of my path: and the poor estray has not one kind friend, nor has met with one directing passenger, to help her to recover it.

But I, presumptuous creature! must rely so much upon my own knowledge of the right path!—little

apprehending that an *ignis fatuus* with its false fires (and yet I had heard enough of such) would arise to mislead me! And now, in the midst of fens and quagmires, it plays around me, and around me, throwing me back again, whenever I think myself in the right track. But there is one common point, in which all shall meet, err widely as they may. In that I shall be laid quietly down at last: and then will all my calamities be at an end.

But how I stray again; stray from my intention! I would only have said, that I had begun a letter to my cousin Morden some time ago: but that now I can never end it. You will believe I cannot: for how shall I tell him, that all his compliments are misbestowed? That all his advice is thrown away? All his warnings vain? And that even my highest expectation is to be the wife of that free-liver, whom he so pathetically warns me to shun.

Let me, however, have your prayers joined with my own (my fate depending, as it seems, upon the lips of such a man) "That, whatever shall be my destiny, that dreadful part of my father's malediction, that I may be punished by the man in whom he supposes I put my confidence, may not take place! That this for Mr. Lovelace's own sake, and for the sake of human nature, may not be! Or, if it be necessary, in support of the parental authority, that I should be punished by him, that it may not be by his premeditated or wilful baseness; but that I may be able to acquit his intention,

if not his action!" — Otherwise, my fault will appear to be doubled in the eye of the event-judging world. And yet, methinks, I would be glad, that the unkindness of my father and uncles, whose hearts have already been too much wounded by my error, may be justified in every article, excepting in this heavy curse: and that my father will be pleased to withdraw that before it be generally known; at least that most dreadful part of it which regards futurity!

I must lay down my pen. I must brood over these reflections. Once more, before I inclose my cousin's letter, I will peruse it: and then I shall have it by heart.

LETTER VIII.

Miss CLARISSA HARLOWE, To Miss HOWE.

Sunday Night, *May 7.*

WHEN you reflect upon my unhappy situation, which is attended with so many indelicate and even shocking circumstances, some of which my pride will not let me think of with patience; all aggravated by the contents of my cousin's affecting letter; you will not wonder, that the vaporishness which has laid hold of my heart, should rise to my pen. And yet it would be more kind, more friendly in me, to conceal from you, who take such a generous interest in my concerns, that worst part of my

griefs, which communication and complaint cannot relieve.

But to whom can I unbosom myself but to you? When the man who ought to be my protector, as he has brought upon me all my distresses, adds to my apprehensions; when I have not even a servant on whose fidelity I can rely, or to whom I can break my griefs as they arise; and when his bountiful temper and gay heart attach every one to him; and I am but a cypher, to give him significance, and myself pain? — These griefs, therefore, do what I can, will sometimes burst into tears, and these mingling with my ink, will blot my paper. And I know you will not grudge me the temporary relief.

But I shall go on in the strain I left off with in my last; when I intended rather to apologize for my melancholy. But let what I have above written, once for all, be my apology. My misfortunes have given you a call to discharge the noblest offices of the friendship we have vowed to each other, in advice and consolation; and it would be an injury to it, and to you, to suppose it needed even that call.

She then tells Miss Howe, that now her clothes are come, Mr. Lovelace is continually teasing her to go abroad with him in a coach, attended by whom she pleases of her own sex, either for the air, or to the public diversions.

She gives the particulars of a conversation that has

passed between them on that subject, and his several proposals. But takes notice, that he says not the least word of the solemnity which he so much pressed for before they came to town; and which, as she observes, was necessary to give propriety to his proposals.

Now, my dear, says she, I cannot bear the life I live. I would be glad at my heart to be out of his reach. If I were, he should soon find the difference. If I must be humbled, it had better be by those to whom I owe duty, than by him. My aunt writes in her letter, that she dare not propose any thing in my favor. You tell me, that, upon inquiry, you find, that, had I not been unhappily seduced away, a change of measures was actually resolved upon; and that my mother, particularly, was determined to exert herself for the restoration of the family-peace; and, in order to succeed the better, had thoughts of trying to engage my uncle Harlowe in her party.

Let me build on these foundations. I can but try, my dear. It is my duty to try all probable methods to restore the poor outcast to favor. And who knows but that once indulgent uncle who has very great weight in the family, may be induced to interpose in my behalf? I will give up all right and title to my grandfather's devises and bequests, with all my heart and soul, to whom they please, in order to make my proposal palatable to my brother. And that my surrender may be effectual, I will engage never to marry.

What

What think you, my dear, of this expedient? Surely they cannot resolve to renounce me for ever. If they look with impartial eyes upon what has happened, they will have something to blame themselves for, as well as me.

I presume that you will be of opinion, that this expedient is worth trying. But here is my difficulty: if I should write, my hard-hearted brother has so strongly confederated them all against me, that my letter would be handed about from one to another, till he had hardened every one to refuse my request; whereas, could my uncle be engaged to espouse my cause, as from himself, I should have some hope; as I presume to think he would soon have my mother and my aunt of his party.

What, therefore, I am thinking of, is this —
“ Suppose Mr. Hickman, whose good character has gained him every body’s respect, should put himself in my uncle Harlowe’s way? And (as if from your knowledge of the state of things between Mr. Lovelace and me) assure him not only of the above particulars, but that I am under no obligations that shall hinder me from taking his directions? ”

I submit the whole to your discretion, whether to pursue it at all, or in what manner. But if it be pursued, and if my uncle refuses to interest himself in my favor upon Mr. Hickman’s application as from you (for so, for obvious reasons, it must be put) I can then have no hope; and my next step, in the mind I am in, shall be to throw myself into the protection of the Ladies of his family.

It were an impiety to adopt the following lines,

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because it would be throwing upon the decrees of Providence a fault too much my own. But often do I revolve them, for the sake of the general similitude which they bear to my unhappy, yet undesign'd error.

To you, great gods! I make my last appeal:
Or clear my virtues, or my crimes reveal.

If wand'ring in the maze of life I run,
And backward tread the steps I fought to shun,
Impute my error to your own decree:
My feet are guilty; but my heart is free.

The Lady dates again on Monday, to let Miss Howe know, that Mr. Lovelace, on observing her uneasiness, had introduced to her Mr. Mennell, Mrs. Fetchville's kinsman, who managed all her affairs. She calls him a young officer of sense and politeness, who gave her an account of the house and furniture, to the same effect that Mr. Lovelace had done before; as also of the melancholy way Mrs. Fetchville is in.

She tells Miss Howe, how extremely urgent Mr. Lovelace was with the gentleman, to get his spouse (as he now always calls her before company) a sight of the house. And that Mr. Mennell undertook that very afternoon to show her all of it, except the apartment Mrs. Fetchville should be in when she went. But that she chose not to take another step till she knew how she approved of her scheme to have her uncle founded; and with what success, if tried, it would be attended.

Mr. Lovelace in his humorous way, gives his friend an account of the Lady's peevishness and dejection, on receiving a letter with her clothes. He regrets that he has lost her confidence; which he attributes to his bringing her into the company of his four companions. Yet he thinks he must excuse them, and censure her for over-niceness; for that he never saw men behave better, at least not them.

Mentioning his introducing Mr. Mennell to her,

Now, Jack, says he, was it not very kind of Mr. Mennell (captain Mennell I sometimes called him; for among the military men there is no such officer, thou knowest, as a lieutenant, or an ensign)—was it not very kind in him to come along with me so readily as he did, to satisfy my beloved about the vaporish Lady and the house?

But who is captain Mennell? methinks thou askest: I never heard of such a man as captain Mennell.

Very likely. But knowest thou not young Newcomb, honest Doleman's nephew?

O-ho! Is it he?

It is. And I have changed his name by virtue of my own single authority. Knowest thou not, that I am a great name-father? Preferments I bestow, both military and civil. I give estates, and take them away at my pleasure. Quality too I create. And by a still more valuable prerogative, I degrade by virtue of my own imperial will, without any

other act of forfeiture than for my own convenience. What a poor thing is a monarch to me!

But Mennell, now he has seen this angel of a woman, has qualms; that's the devil! — I shall have enough to do to keep him right. But it is the less wonder, that he should stagger, when a few hours conversation with the same Lady could make four much more hardened varlets find hearts. — Only, that I am confident, that I shall at last reward her virtue, if her virtue overcome me, or I should find it impossible to persevere — For at times, I have confounded qualms myself. But say not a word of them to the confraternity: nor laugh at me for them thyself.

In another letter, dated Monday night, he writes as follows:

This perverse Lady keeps me at such distance, that I am sure something is going on between her and Miss Howe, notwithstanding the prohibition from Mrs. Howe to both: and as I have thought it some degree of merit in myself to punish others for their transgressions, I am of opinion, that both these girls are punishable for their breach of parental injunctions. And as to their letter carrier, I have been inquiring into his way of living; and finding him to be a common poacher, a deer-stealer, and warren-robber, who, under pretence of higgling, deals with a set of customers, who constantly take all he brings, whether fish, fowl, or venison, I hold myself justified (since Wilson's conveyance

must at present be sacred) to have him stript and robbed, and what money he has about him given to the poor; since, if I take not money as well as letters, I shall be suspected.

To serve one's self, and punish a villain, at the same time, is serving public and private. The law was not made for such a man as me. And I must come at correspondencies so disobediently carried on.

But, on second thoughts, if I could find out that the dear creature carried any of her letters in her pockets, I can get her to a play or to a concert, and she may have the misfortune to lose her pockets.

But how shall I find this out; since her Dorcas knows no more of her dressing or undressing than her Lovelace? For she is dressed for the day, before she appears even to her servant. Vilely suspicious! Upon my soul, Jack, a suspicious temper is a punishable temper. If a woman suspects a rogue in an honest man, is it not enough to make the honest man who knows it, a rogue?

But as to her pockets, I think my mind hankers after them, as the less mischievous attempt. But they cannot hold all the letters that I should wish to see. And yet a woman's pockets are half as deep as she is high. Tied round the sweet Levities, I presume, as ballast-bags, lest the wind, as they move with full sail, from whale-ribbed canvas, should blow away the gypsies.

He then, in apprehension that something is meditating between the two Ladies, or that something

may be set on foot to get Miss Harlowe out of his hands, relates several of his contrivances, and boasts of his instructions given in writing to Dorcas and to his servant Will. Summers; and says, that he has provided against every possible accident, even to bring her back if she should escape, or in case she should go abroad, and then refuse to return; and hopes so to manage, as that, should he make an attempt, whether he succeed in it, or not, he may have a pretence to detain her.

He then proceeds as follows :

I have ordered Dorcas to cultivate by all means her Lady's favor; to lament her incapacity as to writing and reading; to show letters to her Lady, as from pretended country relations; to beg her advice how to answer them, and to get them answered; and to be always aiming at scrawling with a pen, lest inky fingers should give suspicion. I have moreover given the wench an ivory-leaved pocket book, with a silver pencil, that she may make memoranda on occasion.

And let me tell thee, that the Lady has already (at Mrs. Sinclair's motion) removed her clothes out of the trunks they came in, into an ample mahogany repository, where they will lie at full length, and which has drawers in it for linen. — A repository, that used to hold the richest suits which some of the nymphs put on, when they are to be dressed out, to captivate, or to ape quality. For many a countess, thou knowest, has our mother equipped;

nay, two or three dutcheffes, who live upon quality-terms with their Lords. But this to such as will come up to her price, and can make an appearance like quality themselves on the occasion: for the reputation of persons of birth must not lie at the mercy of every underdegreed sinner.

A master-key which will open every lock in this chest, is put into Dorcas's hands; and she is to take care, when she searches for papers, before she removes any thing, to observe how it lies, that she may replace all to a hair. Sally and Polly can occasionally help to transcribe. Slow and sure with such an Argus-eyed charmer must be all my movements.

It is impossible that one so young and so inexperienced as she is, can have all her caution from herself; the behaviour of the women so unexceptionable; no revellings, no company ever admitted into this inner-house; all genteel, quiet, and easy, in it; the nymphs well bred, and well read; her first disgusts to the old one got over—It must be Miss Howe, therefore (who once was in danger of being taken in by one of our class, by honest Sir George Colmar, as thou hast heard) that makes my progress difficult.

Thou seest, Belford by the above precautionaries, that I forget nothing. As the song says, it is not to be imagined

On what slight strings
Depend those things,
On which men build their glory!

So far, so good. I shall never rest till I have discovered in the first place, where the dear creature puts her letters; and in the next till I have got her to a play, to a concert, or to take an airing with me out of town for a day or two.

* * *

I gave thee just now some of my contrivances. Dorcas, who is ever attentive to all her Lady's motions, has given me some instances of her mistress's precautions. She wafers her letters, it seems, in two places, pricks the wafers, and then seals upon them. No doubt but the same care is taken with regard to those brought her; for she always examines the seals of the latter before she opens them.

I must, I must come at them. This difficulty augments my curiosity. Strange, so much as she writes, and at all hours, that not one sleepy or forgetful moment has offered in our favor!

A fair contention, thou seest: nor plead thou in her favor her youth, her beauty, her family, her fortune. Credulity, she has none; and with regard to her tender years, am I not a young fellow myself? As to beauty, pr'ythee, Jack, do thou, to save my modesty, make a comparison between my Clarissa for a woman, and thy Lovelace for a man. For her family, that was not known to its country a century ago: and I hate them all but her. Have I not cause?—For her fortune; fortune, thou knowest, was ever a stimulus with me, and this for reasons not ignoble. Do not girls of fortune adorn themselves on purpose to engage our attention? Seek they not to draw us into their snares?

Depend they not, generally, on their fortunes, in the views they have upon us, more than on their merits? Shall we deprive them of the benefit of their principal dependence?—Can I, in particular, marry every girl who wishes to obtain my notice? If, therefore, in support of the libertine principles for which none of the sweet rogues hate us, a woman of fortune is brought to yield homage to her emperor, and any consequences attend the subjugation, is not such a one shielded by her fortune, as well from insult and contempt, as from indigence?—All, then, that admits of debate between my beloved and me, is only this—Which of the two has more wit, more circumspection—And that remains to be tried.

A sad life, however, this life of doubt and suspense, for the poor Lady, to live, as well as for me; that is to say, if she be not naturally jealous—If she be, her uneasiness is constitutional, and she cannot help it, nor will it, in that case, hurt her. For a suspicious temper will make occasions for doubt, if none were to offer to its hand. My fair one, therefore, if naturally suspicious, is obliged to me for saving her the trouble of studying for these occasions—But after all, the plainest paths in our journeys through life are the safest and best I believe, altho' it is not given me to chuse them. I am not, however, singular in the pursuit of the more intricate paths; since there are thousands and ten thousand, who had rather fish in troubled water than in smooth.