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The History Of Clarissa Harlowe

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help thinking even the accidental emanations of it amiable in Tomlinson, though demonstrated in a female case; and judging better of him for being capable of such?

LETTER XX.

Mr. LOVELACE, To JOHN BELFORD, Esq;

THIS debate between the captain and me was hardly over, when the three women, led by Miss Rawlins, entered, hoping no intrusion — But very desirous, the maiden said, to know if we were likely to accommodate.

O yes, I hope so. You know, Ladies, that your sex must, in these cases, preserve their forms. They must be courted to comply with their own happiness. A lucky expedient we have hit upon. The uncle has his doubts of our marriage. He cannot believe, nor will any body, that it is possible that a man so much in love, the Lady so desirable —

They all took the hint — It was a very extraordinary case, the two widows allowed. Women, Jack, (as I believe I have observed elsewhere) have a high opinion of what they can do for us. — Miss Rawlins desired, if I pleased, to let them know the expedient; and looked as if there was no need to proceed in the rest of my speech.

I begged, that they would not let the Lady know

I had told them what this expedient was; and they should hear it.

They promised.

It was this; That to oblige and satisfy Mr. Harlowe, the ceremony was to be again performed. He was to be privately present, and to give his niece to me with his own hands — And she was retired to consider of it.

Thou seest, Jack, that I have provided an excuse, to save my veracity to the women here, in case I should incline to marriage, and she should chuse to have Miss Rawlins's assistance at the ceremony. Nor doubted I to bring my fair one to save my credit on this occasion, if I could get her to consent to be mine.

A charming expedient! cried the widow. They were all three ready to clap their hands for joy upon it. Women love to be married twice at least, Jack; though not, indeed, to the same man. And all blessed the reconciliatory scheme, and the proposer of it; and, supposing it came from the captain they looked at him with pleasure, while his face shone with the applause implied. He should think himself very happy, if he could bring about a general reconciliation; and he flourished with his head like my man Will. on his victory over old Grimes; bridling by turns, like Miss Rawlins in the height of a prudish fit.

But now it was time for the captain to think of returning to town, having a great deal of business to dispatch before morning: nor was he certain that

he should again be able to attend us at Hamstead before he went home.

And yet, as every thing was drawing towards a crisis, I did not intend that he should leave Hamstead this night.

A message to the above effect was carried up, at my desire, by Mrs. Moore; with the captain's compliments, and to know if she had any commands for him to her uncle.

But I hinted to the women, that it would be proper for them to withdraw, if the Lady did come down: lest she should not care to be so free before them on a proposal so particular, as she would be to us, who had offered it to her consideration.

Mrs. Moore brought down word, that the Lady was following her. They all three withdrew; and she entered at one door, as they went out at the other.

The captain accosted her, repeating the contents of the message sent up; and desired, that she would give him her commands in relation to the report he was to make to her uncle Harlowe.

I know not what to say, Sir, nor what I would have you to say, to my uncle—Perhaps you may have business in town—Perhaps you need not see my uncle, till I have heard from Miss Howe; till after Lady Betty—I don't know what to say.

I implored the return of that value, which she had so generously acknowledged once to have had for me. I presumed, I said, to flatter myself that Lady Betty, in her own person, and in the

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name of all my family, would be able, on my promised reformation and contrition, to prevail in my favor; especially as our prospects in other respects with regard to the general reconciliation wished for, were so happy. But let me owe to your own generosity, my dearest creature, said I, rather than to the mediation of any person on earth, the forgiveness I am an humble suitor for. How much more agreeable to yourself, O best beloved of my soul, must it be, as well as obliging to me, that your first personal knowledge of my relations, and theirs of you (for they will not be denied attending you) should not be begun in recriminations and appeals! As Lady Betty will be here so soon, it will not, perhaps, be possible for you to receive her visit with a brow absolutely serene. But, dearest, dearest creature, I beseech you, let the misunderstanding pass as a slight one—As a misunderstanding cleared up. Appeals give pride and superiority to the persons appealed to, and are apt to lessen the appellant, not only in their eye, but in her own. Exalt not into judges those who are prepared to take lessons and instructions from you. The individuals of my family are as proud as I am said to be. But they will cheerfully resign to your superiority—You will be the first woman of the family in every one's eyes.

This might have done with any other woman in the world but this; and yet she is the only woman in the world of whom it may with truth be said. But thus, angrily, did she disclaim the compliment.

Yes, indeed!—(and there she stopt a moment,

her sweet bosom heaving with a noble disdain) — Cheated out of myself from the very first! A fugitive from my own family! Renounced by my relations! Insulted by you! — Laying humble claim to the protection of yours! — Is not this the light in which I must appear not only to the Ladies of your family, but to all the world? — Think you, Sir, that in these circumstances, or even had I been in the happiest, that I could be affected by this plea of undeserved superiority? — You are a stranger to the mind of Clarissa Harlowe, if you think her capable of so poor and so undue a pride!

She went from us to the further end of the room.

The captain was again affected — Excellent creature! I called her; and, reverently approaching her, urged further the plea I had last made.

It is but lately, said I, that the opinions of my relations have been more than indifferent to me, whether good or bad; and it is for your sake, more than for my own, that I now wish to stand well with my whole family. The principal motive of Lady Betty's coming up, is, to purchase presents for the whole family to make on the happy occasion.

This consideration, turning to the captain, with so noble-minded a dear creature, I know, can have no weight; only as it will show their value and respect. But what a damp would their worthy hearts receive, were they to find their admired new niece, as they now think her, not only not their niece, but capable of renouncing me for ever! They love me. They all love me. I have been guilty of carelessness and levity to them, indeed; but of care-

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lessness and levity only; and that owing to a pride that has set me above meanness, though it has not done every thing for me.

My whole family will be guarantees for my good behaviour to this dear creature, their niece, their daughter, their cousin, their friend, their chosen companion and directress, all in one. — Upon my soul, captain, we may, we must be happy.

But, dearest, dearest creature, let me on my knees (and down I dropt, her face all the time turned half from me, as she stood at the window, her handkerchief often at her eyes) on my knees, let me plead your promised forgiveness; and let us not appear to them, on their visit, thus unhappy with each other. Lady Betty, the next hour that she sees you, will write her opinion of you, and of the likelihood of our future happiness, to Lady Sarah her sister, a weak-spirited woman, who now hopes to supply to herself, in my bride, the lost daughter she still mourns for!

The captain then joined in, and re-urged her uncle's hopes and expectations, and his resolution effectually to set about the general reconciliation; the mischief that might be prevented; and the certainty that there was, that her uncle might be prevailed upon to give her to me with his own hand, if she made it her choice to wait for his coming up. But, for his own part, he humbly advised, and fervently pressed her, to make the very next day, or Monday at farthest, my happy day.

Permit me, dearest Lady, said he, and I could kneel to you myself (bending his knee) though I

have no interest in my earnestness, but the pleasure I should have to be able to serve you all; to beseech you to give me an opportunity to assure your uncle, that I myself saw with my own eyes the happy knot tied!—All misunderstandings, all doubts, all diffidences, will then be at an end.

And what, Madam, rejoined I, still kneeling, can there be in your new measures, be they what they will, that can so happily, so reputably, I will presume to say, for all around, obviate the present difficulties?

Miss Howe herself, if she love you, and if she love your fame, Madam, urged the captain, his knee still bent, must congratulate you on such a happy conclusion.

Then turning her face, she saw the captain half kneeling — O Sir! O captain Tomlinson! — Why this undue condescension? extending her hand to his elbow, to raise him. I cannot bear this! — Then casting her eye on me, Rise, Mr. Lovelace — Kneel not to the poor creature whom you have insulted! — How cruel the occasion for it! — And how mean the submission!

Not mean to such an angel! — Nor can I rise, but to be forgiven!

The captain then re-urged once more the day — He was amazed, he said, if she ever valued me —

O captain Tomlinson, interrupted she, how much are you the friend of this man! — If I had never valued him, he never would have had it in his power to insult me; nor could I, if I had never regarded him, have taken to heart as I do the

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insult (execrable as it was) so undeservedly, so ungratefully given — But let him retire — for a moment let him retire.

I was more than half afraid to trust the captain by himself with her. He gave me a sign that I might depend upon him. And then I took out of my pocket his letter to me, and Lady Betty's, and Miss Montague's, and Lord M. . 's letters (which last she had not then seen); and giving them to him, Procure for me, in the first place, Mr. Tomlinson, a re-perusal of these three letters; and of this, from Lord M. . And I beseech you, my dearest life, give them due consideration: and let me on my return find the happy effects of that consideration.

I then withdrew; with slow feet however, and a misgiving heart.

The captain insisted upon this re-perusal previously to what she had to say to him, as he tells me. She complied, but with some difficulty; as if she was afraid of being softened in my favor.

She lamented her unhappy situation; destitute of friends, and not knowing whither to go, or what to do. She asked questions, sifting questions, about her uncle, about her family, and after what he knew of Mr. Hickman's fruitless application in her favor.

He was well prepared in this particular; for I had shown him the letters and extracts of letters of Miss Howe, which I had so happily come at. Might she be assured, she asked him, that her brother, with Singleton, and Solmes, were actually in quest of her?

He averred that they were.

She asked, If he thought I had hopes of prevailing on her to go back to town?

He was sure I had not.

Was he really of opinion, that Lady Betty would pay her a visit?

He had no doubt of it.

But, Sir; but, captain Tomlinson—(impatiently turning from him, and again to him) I know not what to do—But were I your daughter, Sir—were you my own father—Alas! Sir, I have neither father nor mother!

He turned from her, and wiped his eyes.

O Sir! you have humanity! (she wept too) There are some men in the world, thank heaven, that can be moved. O Sir, I have met with hard-hearted men—in my own family too—or I could not have been so unhappy as I am—But I make every body unhappy!

His eyes no doubt ran over.

Dearest Madam! Heavenly Lady!—Who can—who can—hesitated and blubbered the dog, as he owned. And, indeed, I heard some part of what passed, though they both talked lower than I wished; for, from the nature of their conversation, there was no room for altitudes.

Them, and Both, and They!—How it goes against me to include this angel of a creature, and any man on earth but myself, in one word!

Capt. Who can forbear being affected?—But, Madam, you can be no other man's.

Cl. Nor would I be. But he is so sunk with me,

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To fire the house!—An artifice so vile!—Contrived for the worst of purposes!—Would you have a daughter of yours—But what would I say?—Yet you see, that I have nobody in whom I can confide!—Mr. Lovelace is a vindictive man!—He could not love the creature whom he could insult as he has insulted me!

She paused. And then resuming—In short, I never, never can forgive him, nor he me. Do you think, Sir, I would have gone so far as I have gone, if I had intended ever to draw with him in one yoke?—I left behind me such a letter—

You know, Madam, he has acknowledged the justice of your resentment—

O Sir, he can acknowledge, and he can retract, fifty times a day—But do not think I am trifling with myself and you, and want to be persuaded to forgive him, and to be his. There is not a creature of my sex, who would have been more explicit, and more frank, than I would have been, from the moment I intended to be his, had I had a heart like my own to deal with. I was always above reserve, Sir, I will presume to say, where I had no cause of doubt. Mr. Lovelace's conduct has made me appear, perhaps, over-nice, when my heart wanted to be encouraged and assured; and when, if it had been so, my whole behaviour would have been governed by it.

She stooped; her handkerchief at her eyes.

I inquired after the minutest parts of her behaviour, as well as after her words. I love, thou knowest, to trace human nature, and more

particularly female nature, through its most secret recesses.

The pitiful fellow was lost in silent admiration of her. And thus the noble creature proceeded.

It is the fate in unequal unions, that tolerable creatures, thro' them, frequently incur censure, when, more happily yoked, they might be entitled to praise. And shall I not shun an union with a man, that might lead into errors a creature who flatters herself that she is blest with an inclination to be good; and who wishes to make every one happy with whom she has any connexion, even to her very servants?

She paused, taking a turn about the room—the fellow, devil fetch him, a mummy all the time: then proceeded:

Formerly, indeed, I hoped to be a humble means of reforming him. But, when I have no such hope, is it right (you are a serious man, Sir) to make a venture that shall endanger my own morals?

Still silent was the varlet. If my advocate had nothing to say for me, what hope of carrying my cause?

And now, Sir, what is the result of all?—It is this—That you will endeavour, if you have that influence over him which a man of your sense and experience ought to have, to prevail upon him, and that for his own sake, as well as for mine, to leave me free to pursue my own destiny. And of this you may assure him, that I never will be any other man's.

Impossible, Madam! I know that Mr. Lovelace would not hear me with patience on such a topic. And

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I do assure you, that I have some spirit, and should not care to take an indignity from him, or from any man living.

She paused — then resuming — And think you, Sir, that my uncle will refuse to receive a letter from me? (How averse, Jack, to concede a tittle in my favor!)

I know, Madam, as matters are circumstanced, that he would not answer it. If you please, I will carry one down from you.

And will he not pursue his intentions in my favor, nor be himself reconciled to me, except I am married?

From what your brother gives out, and affects to believe, and Mr. Lovelace's living with you in the same —

No more, Sir — I am an unhappy creature!

He then re-urged, that it would be in her power instantly, or on the morrow, to put an end to all her difficulties.

How can that be? said she: the licence still to be obtained? The settlements still to be signed? Miss Howe's answer to my last unreceived? — And shall I, Sir, be in such a HURRY, as if I thought my honor in danger if I delayed? Yet marry the man from whom only it can be endangered! — Unhappy, thrice unhappy, Clarissa Harlowe! — In how many difficulties has one rash step involved thee! — And she turned from him, and wept.

The varlet, by way of comfort, wept too: yet her tears, as he might have observed, were tears that indicated rather a yielding than a perverse temper.

There is a sort of stone thou knowest, so soft in the quarry; that it may in a manner be cut with a knife; but if the opportunity be not taken, and it is exposed to the air for any time, it will become as hard as marble, and then with difficulty it yields to the chizel *. So this Lady, not taken at the moment, after a turn or two crosses the room, gained more resolution; and then she declared, as she had done once before, that she would wait the issue of Miss Howe's answer to the letter she had sent her from hence, and take her measures accordingly — leaving it to him, mean time, to make what report he thought fit, to her uncle — the kindest that truth could bear, she doubted not from captain Tomlinson: and she should be glad of a few lines from him, to hear what that was.

She wished him a good journey. She complained of her head; and was about to withdraw: but I stepped round to the door next the stairs, as if I had but just come in from the garden (which, as I entered, I called a very pretty one) and took her reluctant hand, as she was going out: My dearest life, you are not going? — What hopes, captain? — Have you not some hopes to give me of pardon and reconciliation?

She said, she would not be detained. But I would not let her go, till she had promised to return, when the captain had reported to me what her resolution was.

And when he had, I sent up, and claimed her

* The nature of the Bath stone, in particular.

promise ; and she came down again, and repeated (as what she was determined upon) that she would wait for Miss Howe's answer to the letter she had written to her, and take her measures according to its contents.

I expostulated with her upon it, in the most submissive and earnest manner. She made it necessary for me to repeat many of the pleas I had before urged. The captain seconded me with equal earnestness. At last, each fell down on our knees before her.

She was distressed. I was afraid at one time she would have fainted. Yet neither of us would rise without some concessions. I pleaded my own sake ; the captain, his dear friend her uncle's ; and both pleaded, the prevention of future mischief ; and the peace and happiness of the two families.

She owned herself unequal to the conflict. She sighed. She sobbed. She wept. She wrung her hands.

I was perfectly eloquent in my vows and protestations. Her tearful eyes were cast down upon me ; a glow upon each charming cheek ; a visible anguish in every lovely feature — At last, her trembling knees seeming to fail her, she dropt into the next chair ; her charming face, as if seeking for a hiding place (which a mother's bosom would have best supplied) sinking upon her own shoulder.

I forgot at the instant all my vows of revenge. I threw myself at her feet as she sat ; and, snatching her hand, pressed it with my lips. I besought heaven to forgive my past offences, and prosper my future hopes, as I designed honorably and justly by the

charmer of my heart, if once more she would restore me to her favor. And I thought I felt drops of scalding water (could they be tears?) trickle down upon my cheeks; while my cheeks, glowing like fire, seemed to scorch up the unwelcome strangers.

I then arose, not doubting of an implied pardon in this silent distress. I raised the captain. I whispered him — By my soul, man, I am in earnest — Now talk of reconciliation, of her uncle, of the licence, of settlements — And raising my voice, If now at last, captain Tomlinson, my angel will give me leave to call so great a blessing mine, it will be impossible that you should say too much to her uncle in praise of my gratitude, my affection, and fidelity to his charming niece; and he may begin as soon as he pleases, his kind schemes for effecting the desirable reconciliation! — Nor shall he prescribe any terms to me, that I will not comply with.

The captain blessed me with his eyes and hands — Thank God, whispered he. We approached the Lady together.

Capt. What hinders, dearest Madam, what now hinders, but that Lady Betty Lawrance, when she comes, may be acquainted with the truth of every thing? And that then she may assist privately at your nuptials? — I will stay till they are celebrated; and then shall I go down with the happy tidings to my dear Mr. Harlowe. And all will, all must, soon be happy.

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the still trembling fair one. I cannot change my new measures, but with her advice. I will forfeit all my hopes of happiness in this world, rather than forfeit her good opinion, and that she should think me giddy, unsteady, or precipitate. All I will further say on the present subject is this, That, when I have her answer to what I have written, I will write to her the whole state of the matter, as I shall then be enabled to do.

Lovel. Then must I despair for ever — O captain Tomlinson, Miss Howe hates me! — Miss Howe —

Capt. Not so, perhaps — When Miss Howe knows your concern for having offended, she will never advise, that, with such prospects of general reconciliation, the hopes of so many considerable persons in both families should be frustrated. Some little time, as this excellent Lady has foreseen and hinted, will necessarily be taken up, in actually procuring the licence, and in perusing and signing the settlements. In that time Miss Howe's answer may be received; and Lady Betty may arrive; and she, no doubt, will have weight to dissipate the Lady's doubts, and to accelerate the day. It shall be my part, mean time, to make Mr. Harlowe easy. All I fear from delay is, from Mr. James Harlowe's quarter; and, therefore, all must be conducted with prudence and privacy; — as your uncle, Madam, has proposed.

She was silent. I rejoiced in her silence. The dear creature, thought I, has actually forgiven me in her heart! — But why will she not lay me under obligation to her, by the generosity of an explicit

declaration? — And yet, as that would not accelerate any thing, while the licence is not in my hands, she is the less to be blamed (if I do her justice) for taking more time to descend.

I proposed, as on the morrow night, to go to town; and doubted not to bring the licence up with me on Monday morning. Would she be pleased to assure me, that she would not depart from Mrs. Moore's?

She should stay at Mrs. Moore's, till she had an answer from Miss Howe.

I told her, that I hoped I might have her tacit consent at least, to the obtaining of the licence.

I saw by the turn of her countenance, that I should not have asked this question. She was so far from tacitly consenting, that she declared to the contrary.

As I never intended, I said, to ask her to enter again into a house, with the people of which she was so much offended, would she be pleased to give orders for her clothes to be brought up hither? Or should Dorcas attend her for any of her commands on that head?

She desired not ever more to see any body belonging to that house. She might, perhaps, get Mrs. Moore or Mrs. Bevis to go thither for her, and take her keys with them.

I doubted not, I said, that Lady Betty would arrive by that time. I hope she had no objection to my bringing that Lady and my cousin Montague up with me?

She was silent.

To be sure, Mr. Lovelace, said the captain, the Lady can have no objection to this.

She was still silent. So silence in this case was assent.

Would she be pleased to write to Miss Howe?—

Sir! Sir! peevishly interrupting—No more questions: no prescribing to me.—You will do as you think fit. So will I, as I please. I own no obligation to you. Captain Tomlinson, your servant. Recommend me to my uncle Harlowe's favor. And was going.

I took her reluctant hand, and besought her only to promise to meet me early in the morning.

To what purpose meet you? Have you more to say, than has been said?—I have had enough of vows and protestations, Mr. Lovelace. To what purpose should I meet you to morrow morning?

I repeated my request, and that in the most fervent manner, naming six in the morning.

"You know, that I am always stirring before that hour, at this season of the year," was the half-expressed consent.

She then again recommended herself to her uncle's favor; and withdrew.

And thus, Belford, has she mended her markets, as Lord M. would say, and I worsted mine. Miss Howe's next letter is now the hinge on which the fate of both must turn. I shall be absolutely ruined and undone, if I cannot intercept it.

L E T T E R X X I.

Mr. LOVELACE, To JOHN BELFORD, Esq;

Sat. Midnight.

NO rest, says a text that I once heard preached upon, to the wicked—And I cannot close my eyes (yet wanted only to compound for half an hour in an elbow-chair)—So must scribble on.

I parted with the captain, after another strong debate with him in relation to what is to be the fate of this Lady. As the fellow has an excellent head, and would have made an eminent figure in any station of life, had not his early days been tainted with a deep crime, and he detected in it; and as he had the right side of the argument; I had a good deal of difficulty with him; and at last brought myself to promise, that if I could prevail upon her generously to forgive me, and to reinstate me in her favor, I would make it my whole endeavour to get off of my contrivances, as happily as I could (only that Lady Betty and Charlotte must come); and then, substituting him for her uncle's proxy, take shame to myself, and marry.

But, if I should, Jack (with the strongest antipathy to the state that ever man had) what a figure shall I make in rakish annals? And can I have taken all this pains for nothing? Or for a wife only, that, however excellent (and any woman, do I think, I could make good, because I could make any woman

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fear as well as love me) might have been obtained without the plague I have been at, and much more reputably than with it? And hast thou not seen, that this haughty woman (forgive me that I call her haughty! and a woman! Yet is she not haughty?) knows not how to forgive with graciousness? Indeed, has not at all forgiven me? But holds my soul in a suspense which has been so grievous to her own.

At this silent moment, I think, that if I were to pursue my former scheme, and resolve to try whether I cannot make a greater fault serve as a sponge to wipe out the less; and then be forgiven for that; I can justify myself to myself; and that, as the fair invincible would say, is all in all.

As it is my intention, in all my reflections, to avoid repeating, at least dwelling upon, what I have before written to thee, tho' the state of the case may not have varied; so I would have thee to re-consider the old reasonings (particularly those contained in my answer to thy last expostulatory nonsense;) and add the new, as they fall from my pen; and then I shall think myself invincible;—at least, as arguing rake to rake.

I take the gaining of this Lady to be essential to my happiness: and is it not natural for all men to aim at obtaining whatever they think will make them happy, be the object more or less considerable in the eyes of others.

As to the manner of endeavouring to obtain her, by falsification of oaths, vows, and the like—Do not the poets of two thousand years and upwards tell us, that Jupiter laughs at the perjuries of lovers? And

let me add to what I have, heretofore, mentioned on that head, a question or two.

Do not the mothers, the aunts, the grand-mothers, the governesses of the pretty innocents, always, from their very cradles to riper years, preach to them the deceitfulness of men? — That they are not to regard their oaths, vows, promises? — What a parcel of fibbers would all these reverend matrons be, if there were not now and then a pretty credulous rogue taken in for a justification of their preachments, and to serve as a beacon lighted up for the benefit of the rest?

Do we not then see, that an honest prowling fellow is a necessary evil on many accounts? Do we not see, that it is highly requisite that a sweet girl should be now and then drawn aside by him? — And the more eminent the girl, in the graces of person, mind, and fortune, is not the example likely to be the more efficacious?

If these postulata be granted me, who, I pray, can equal my charmer in all these? Who, therefore, so fit for an example to the rest of the sex? — At worst, I am entirely within my worthy friend Mandeville's assertion, That private vices are public benefits.

Well then, if this sweet creature must fall, as it is called, for the benefit of all the pretty fools of the sex, she must; and there's an end of the matter. And what would there have been in it of uncommon or rare, had I not been so long about it? — And so I dismiss all further argumentation and debate upon

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Wafer'd on, as an after-written introduction to the paragraphs which follow, marked with turned comma's (thus, " :)

LORD, Jack, what shall I do now!—How one evil brings on another!—Dreadful news to tell thee!—While I was meditating a simple robbery, here have I (in my own defence indeed) been guilty of murder! A bloody murder!—So I believe it will prove.—At her last gasp!—Poor impertinent opposer! Eternally resisting!—Eternally contradicting! There she lies, weltering in her blood! Her death's wound have I given her!—But she was a thief, an impostor, as well as a tormentor. She had stolen my pen.—While I was fullenly meditating, doubting, as to my future measures, she stole it; and thus she wrote with it, in a hand exactly like my own; and would have faced me down, that it was really my own hand-writing.

"But let me reflect, before it be too late. On the manifold perfections of this ever-admirable creature let me reflect. The hand yet is only held up. The blow is not struck. Miss Howe's next letter may blow thee up. In policy thou shouldest be now at least honest. Thou canst not live without her. Thou wouldest rather marry her than lose her absolutely. Thou mayest undoubtedly prevail upon her, inflexible as she seems to be, for marriage.

But if now she find thee a villain, thou mayest never more engage her attention, and she, perhaps, will refuse and abhor thee.

"Yet already have I not gone too far? Like a repentant thief, afraid of his gang, and obliged to go on, in fear of hanging till he comes to be hanged, I am afraid of the gang of my cursed contrivances.

"As I hope to live, I am sorry (at the present writing) that I have been such a foolish plotter, as to put it, as I fear I have done, out of my own power to be honest. I hate compulsion in all forms; and cannot bear, even to be compelled to be the wretch my choice has made me!—So now, Bel-ford, as thou hast said, I am a machine at last, and no free agent.

"Upon my soul, Jack, it is a very foolish thing for a man of spirit to have brought himself to such a height of iniquity, that he must proceed, and cannot help himself; and yet to be next to certain, that his very victory will undo him.

"Why was such a woman as this thrown in my way, whose very fall will be her glory, and, perhaps, not only my shame, but my destruction?

"What a happiness must that man know, who moves regularly to some laudable end, and has nothing to reproach himself with in his progress to it! When, by honest means, he attains this end, how great and unmixed must be his enjoyments! What a happy man, in this particular case, had I been, had it been given me to be only what I wished to appear to be!"

Thus far had my conscience written with my pen;

and see what a recreant she had made me!—I seized her by the throat—There!—There, said I, thou vile impertinent!—Take that, and that!—How often have I given thee warning!—And now, I hope, thou intruding varletess, have I done thy business!

Puleing, and low-voiced, rearing up thy detested head, in vain implorest thou my mercy, who, in thy day, hast showed me so little!—Take that, for a rising blow!—And now will thy pain, and my pain from thee, soon be over.—Lie there!—Welter on!—Had I not given thee thy death's wound, thou wouldest have robbed me of all my joys. Thou couldest not have mended me, 'tis plain. Thou couldest only have thrown me into despair. Didst thou not see, that I had gone too far to recede?—Welter on, once more I bid thee!—Gasp on!—That thy last gasp, surely!—How hard diest thou!

Adieu!—Unhappy man! Adieu!

'Tis kind in thee, however, to bid me Adieu!—

Adieu, adieu, adieu, to thee, O thou inflexible, and, till now, unconquerable besom-intruder—Adieu to thee for ever!

LETTER XXII.

MR. LOVELACE, To JOHN BELFORD, Esq;

Sunday Morn. *June 11.* 4 o'Clock.

A FEW words to the verbal information thou sentest me last night concerning thy poor old man; and then I rise from my seat, shake myself, refresh, new dress, and so to my charmer, whom, notwithstanding her reserves, I hope to prevail upon to walk out with me on the heath, this warm and fine morning.

The birds must have awakened her before now. They are in full song. She always gloried in accustoming herself to behold the sun-rise; one of God's natural wonders, as once she called it.

Her window salutes the east. The valleys must be gilded by his rays, by the time I am with her; for already have they made the up-lands smile, and the face of nature chearful.

How insuitable wilt thou find this gay preface to a subject so gloomy, as that I am now turning to!

I am glad to hear thy tedious expectations are at last answered.

Thy servant tells me, that thou art plaguily grieved at the old fellow's departure.

I can't say, but thou mayst look as if thou wert; harassed as thou hast been for a number of days and nights with a close attendance upon a dying man,

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beholding his drawing-on hour—Pretending, for decency's sake, to whine over his excruciating pangs—To be in the way to answer a thousand impertinent inquiries after the health of a man thou wishedst to die—To pray by him—for so once thou wrotest to me!—To read by him—To be forced to join in consultation with a crew of solemn and parading doctors, and their officious zanies the apothecaries, joined with the butcherly tribe of scarificators; all combined to carry on the physical farce, and to cut out thongs both from his flesh and his estate—To have the super-added apprehension of dividing thy interest in what he shall leave with a crew of eager-hoping, never-to-be-satisfied relations, legatees, and the devil knows who, of private gratifiers of passions laudable and illaudable—In these circumstances, I wonder not that thou lookest before servants (as little grieved at heart as thyself, and who are gaping after legacies, as thou after heirship) as if thou, indeed, wert grieved; and as if the most wry-faced woe had befallen thee.

Then, as I have often thought, the reflection that must naturally arise from such mortifying objects, as the death of one with whom we have been familiar, must afford, when we are obliged to attend it in its slow approaches, and in its face-twisting pangs, that it will one day be our own case, goes a great way to credit the appearance of grief.

And this it is that, seriously reflected upon, may

temporarily give a fine air of sincerity to the wailings of lively widows, heart-exulting heirs, and residuary legatees of all denominations; since, by keeping down the inward joy, those interesting reflections must sadden the aspect, and add an appearance of real concern to the assumed fables.

Well, but, now thou art come to the reward of all thy watchings, anxieties, and close attendances, tell me what it is; tell me if it compensate thy trouble, and answer thy hope?

As to myself, thou seest, by the gravity of my style, how the subject has helped to mortify me. But the necessity I am under of committing either speedy matrimony, or a rape, has saddened over my gayer prospects, and, more than the case itself, contributed to make me sympathize with thy present joyful sorrow.

Adieu, Jack. I must be soon out of my pain; and my Clarissa shall be soon out of hers—For so does the arduousness of the case require.

LETTER

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LETTER XXIII.

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, Esq;

Sunday Morning.

I HAVE had the honor of my charmer's company for two complete hours. We met before six in Mrs. Moore's garden. A walk on the heath refused me.

The sedateness of her aspect, and her kind compliance in this meeting, gave me hopes. And all that either the captain or I had urged yesterday to obtain a full and free pardon, that re-urged I; and I told her, besides, that capt. Tomlinson was gone down with hopes to prevail upon her uncle Harlowe to come up in person, in order to present to me the greatest blessing that man ever received.

But the utmost I could obtain was, that she would take no resolution in my favor till she received Miss Howe's next letter.

I will not repeat the arguments I used: but I will give thee the substance of what she said in answer to them.

She had considered of every thing, she told me. My whole conduct was before her. The house I carried her to, must be a vile house. The people early showed what they were capable of, in the earnest attempt made to fasten Miss Partington upon her; as she doubted not, with my approbation—(Surely, thought I, she has not received a duplicate

of Miss Howe's letter of detection!) They heard her cries. My insult was undoubtedly premeditated. By my whole recollected behaviour to her, previous to it, it must be so. I had the vilest of views, no question. And my treatment of her put it out of all doubt.

Soul all over, Belford! she seems sensible of liberties, that my passion made me insensible of having taken; or she could not so deeply resent.

She besought me to give over all thoughts of her. Sometimes, she said, she thought herself cruelly treated by her nearest and dearest relations: at such times, a spirit of repining, and even of resentment, took place; and the reconciliation, at other times so desirable, was not then so much the favorite wish of her heart, as was the scheme she had formerly planned — of taking her good Norton for her directress and guide, and living upon her own estate in the manner her grandfather had intended she should live.

This scheme she doubted not that her cousin Morden, who was one of her trustees for that estate, would enable her (and that, as she hoped, without litigation) to pursue. And if he can, and does, what, Sir, let me ask you, said she, have I seen in your conduct, that should make me prefer to it an union of interests, where there is such a disunion in minds?

So thou seest, Jack, there is reason, as well as resentment, in the preference she makes against me! — Thou seest, that she presumes to think, that

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she can be happy without me; and that she must be unhappy with me!

I had besought her, in the conclusion of my urged arguments, to write to Miss Howe before Miss Howe's answer could come, in order to lay before her the present state of things; and if she would pay a deference to her judgment, to let her have an opportunity to give it, on the full knowledge of the case —

So I would, Mr. Lovelace, was the answer, if I were in doubt myself, which I would prefer; marriage, or the scheme I have mentioned. You cannot think, Sir, but the latter must be my choice. I wish to part with you with temper—Don't put me upon repeating —

Part with me, Madam, interrupted I!—I cannot bear those words!—But let me beseech you, however, to write to Miss Howe. I hope, if Miss Howe is not my enemy —

She is not the enemy of your person, Sir;—as you would be convinced, if you saw her last letter * to me. But were she not an enemy to your actions, she would not be my friend, nor the friend of virtue. Why will you provoke from me, Mr. Lovelace, the harshness of expression, which, however deserved by you, I am unwilling just now to use; having suffered enough in the two past days from my own vehemence?

I bit my lip for vexation. I was silent.

* The Lady innocently means Mr. Lovelace's forged one. See p. 197, & seq.

Miss Howe, proceeded she, knows the full state of matters already, Sir. The answer I expect from her respects myself, not you. Her heart is too warm in the cause of friendship, to leave me in suspense one moment longer than is necessary, as to what I want to know. Nor does her answer depend absolutely upon herself. She must see a person first; and that person, perhaps, must see others.

The cursed smuggler-woman, Jack! — Miss Howe's Townsend, I doubt not! — Plot, contrivance, intrigue, stratagem! — Underground moles these women — But let the earth cover me! Let me be a mole too, thought I, if they carry their point! — And if this Lady escape me now!

She frankly owned, that she had once thought of embarking out of all our ways for some one of our American colonies: but now that she had been compelled to see me (which had been her greatest dread, and which she would have given her life to avoid) she thought she might be happiest in the resumption of her former favorite scheme, if Miss Howe could find her a reputable and private asylum, till her cousin Morden could come. But if he came not soon, and if she had a difficulty to get to a place of refuge, whether from her brother or from any body else (meaning me, I suppose) she might yet, perhaps, go abroad: for, to say the truth, she could not think of returning to her father's house; since her brother's rage, her sister's upbraidings, her father's anger, her mother's still more-affecting sorrowings, and her own consciousness under them all, would be insupportable to her.

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O Jack! I am sick to death, I pine, I die, for Miss Howe's next letter! I would bind, gag, strip, rob, and do any thing but murder, to intercept it.

But, determined as she seems to be, it was evident to me, nevertheless, that she had still some tenderness for me.

She often wept as she talked, and much oftener sigh'd. She looked at me twice with an eye of undoubted gentleness, and three times with an eye tending to compassion and softness: but its benign rays were as often snatched back, as I may say, and her face averted, as if her sweet eye were not to be trusted, and could not stand against my eager eyes; seeking, as they did, for a lost heart in hers, and endeavouring to penetrate to her very soul.

More than once I took her hand. She struggled not much against the freedom. I pressed it once with my lips. She was not very angry. A frown indeed; but a frown that had more distress in it than indignation.

How came the dear soul (clothed as it is with such a silken vesture) by all its steadiness *?—Was it necessary, that the active gloom of such a tyrant of a father, should commix with such a passive sweetness of a will-less mother, to produce a constancy, an equanimity, a steadiness, in the daughter, which never woman before could boast of?—If so, she is more obliged to that despotic father than I could have imagined a creature to be, who gave

(*) See Vol. I. p. 61, 62. 106. 155, 156. for what she herself says on that steadiness which Mr. Lovelace, though a deserved sufferer by it, cannot help admiring.

distinction to every one related to her beyond what the crown itself can confer.

I hoped, I said, that she would admit of the intended visit, which I had so often mentioned, of the two Ladies.

She was here. She had seen me. She could not help herself at present. She ever had the highest regard for the Ladies of my family, because of their worthy characters. There she turned away her sweet face, and vanquished an half-risen sigh.

I kneeled to her then. It was upon a verdant cushion; for we were upon the grass-walk. I caught her hand. I besought her with an earnestness that called up, as I could feel, my heart to my eyes, to make me, by her forgiveness and example, more worthy of them, and of her own kind and generous wishes. By my soul, Madam, said I, you stab me with your goodness, your undeserved goodness! and I cannot bear it!

Why, why, thought I, as I did several times in this conversation, will she not generously forgive me? Why will she make it necessary for me to bring Lady Betty and my cousin to my assistance? Can the fortress expect the same advantageous capitulation, which yields not to the summons of a resistless conqueror, as if it gave not the trouble of bringing up, and raising its heavy artillery against it?

What sensibilities, said the divine creature, withdrawing her hand, must thou have suppressed!—What a dreadful, what a judicial hardness of heart must thine be; who canst be capable of such emotions as sometimes thou hast shown; and of such sentiments,

as sometimes have flowed from thy lips; yet canst have so far overcome them all, as to be able to act as thou hast acted, and that from settled purpose and premeditation; and this, as it is said, throughout the whole of thy life, from infancy to this time!

I told her, that I had hoped, from the generous concern she had expressed for me, when I was so suddenly and dangerously taken ill—(The Ipecacuanha experiment, Jack!)

She interrupted me.—Well have you rewarded me for the concern you speak of!—However, I will frankly own, now that I am determined to think no more of you, that you might (unsatisfied as I nevertheless was with you) have made an interest—

She paused. I besought her to proceed.

Do you suppose, Sir, and turned away her sweet face as we walked; do you suppose, that I had not thought of laying down a plan to govern myself by, when I found myself so unhappily over-reached, and cheated, as I may say, out of myself?—When I found, that I could not be, and do, what I wished to be, and to do; do you imagine, that I had not cast about, what was the next proper course to take?—And do you believe, that this next course has not cost me some pain, to be obliged to—

There again she stopt.

But let us break off discourse, resumed she. The subject grows too—She sighed—Let us break of discourse—I will go in—I will prepare for church—(The devil! thought I) well as I can appear in these

every day worn clothes — looking upon herself — I will go to church.

She then turned from me to go into the house.

Bless me, my beloved creature, bless me with the continuance of this affecting conversation — Remorse has seized my heart! — I have been excessively wrong — Give me further cause to curse my heedless folly, by the continuance of this calm, but soul-penetrating conversation.

No, no, Mr. Lovelace. I have said too much. Impatience begins to break in upon me. If you can excuse me to the Ladies, it will be better for my mind's sake, and for your credit's sake, that I do not see them. Call me to them over-nice, petulant, prudish; what you please, call me to them. Nobody but Miss Howe, to whom, next to the Almighty, and my own mother, I wish to stand acquitted of wilful error, shall know the whole of what has passed. Be happy, as you may! — Deserve to be happy, and happy you will be, in your own reflection at least, were you to be ever so unhappy in other respects. For myself, if I shall be enabled, on due reflection, to look back upon my own conduct, without the great reproach of having wilfully, and against the light of my own judgment, erred, I shall be more happy, than if I had all that the world accounts desirable.

The noble creature proceeded; for I could not speak.

This self-acquittal, when spirits are lent me to dispel the darkness which at present too often over-clouds

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my mind, will, I hope, make me superior to all the calamities that can befall me.

Her whole person was informed by her sentiments! She seemed to be taller than before. How the God within her exalted her, not only above me, but above herself!

Divine creature! (as I thought her) I called her. I acknowledged the superiority of her mind; and was proceeding — but she interrupted me — All human excellence, said she, is comparative only. My mind, I believe, is indeed superior to yours, debased as yours is by evil habits: but I had not known it to be so, if you had not taken pains to convince me of the inferiority of yours.

How great, how sublimely great, this creature! By my soul, I cannot forgive her for her virtues! — There is no bearing the consciousness of the infinite inferiority she charged me with. — But why will she break with me, when good resolutions are taking place? — The red-hot iron she refuses to strike — O why will she suffer the yielding wax to harden?

We had gone but a few paces towards the house, when we were met by the impertinent women, with notice, that breakfast was ready. I could only, with up-lifted hands, beseech her to give me hope of a renewed conversation after breakfast.

No; she would go to church.

And into the house she went, and up stairs directly. Nor would she oblige me with her company at the tea-table.

I offered by Mrs. Moore to quit both the table

and the parlour, rather than she should exclude herself, or deprive the two widows of the favor of her company.

That was not all the matter, she told Mrs. Moore. She had been struggling to keep down her temper. It had cost her some pains to do it. She was desirous to compose herself, in hopes to receive benefit by the Divine worship she was going to join in.

Mrs. Moore hoped for her presence at dinner.

She had rather be excused. Yet, if she could obtain the frame of mind she hoped for, she might not be averse to show, that she had got above those sensibilities, which gave consideration to a man who deserved not to be to her what he had been.

This said, no doubt, to let Mrs. Moore, know, that the garden conversation had not been a reconciling one.

Mrs. Moore seemed to wonder, that we were not upon a better foot of understanding, after so long a conference; and the more, as she believed, that the Lady had given in to the proposal for the repetition of the ceremony, which I had told them was insisted upon by her uncle Harlowe. But I accounted for this, by telling both widows, that she was resolved to keep on the reserve, till she heard from captain Tomlinson, whether her uncle would be present in person at the solemnity, or would name that worthy gentleman for his proxy.

Again I enjoined strict secrecy, as to this particular; which was promised by the widows, as well for themselves, as for Miss Rawlins; of whose

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taciturnity they gave me such an account, as showed me, that she was secret-keeper general to all the women of fashion at Hamstead.

The Lord, Jack! What a world of mischief, at this rate, must Miss Rawlins know! — What a Pandora's box must her bosom be! — Yet, had I nothing that was more worthy of my attention to regard, I would engage to open it, and make my uses of the discovery.

And now, Belford, thou perceivest, that all my reliance is upon the mediation of Lady Betty, and Miss Montague; and upon the hope of intercepting Miss Howe's next letter.

LETTER XXIV.

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, Esq;

THE fair inexorable is actually gone to church, with Mrs. Moore and Mrs. Bevis. But Will. closely attends her motions; and I am in the way to receive any occasional intelligence from him.

She did not chuse (a mighty word with the sex! as if they were always to have their own wills!) that I should wait upon her. I did not much press it, that she might not apprehend, that I thought I had reason to doubt her voluntary return.

I once had it in my head to have found the widow Bevis other employment. And I believe she would have been as well pleased with my

company as to go to church; for she seemed irresolute when I told her, that two out of a family were enough to go to church for one day. But having her things on (as the women call every thing) and her aunt Moore expecting her company, she thought it best to go—Left it should look oddly you know, whispered she, to one who was above regarding how it looked.

So here am I in my diningroom; and have nothing to do but write, till they return.

And what will be my subject, thinkest thou?—Why the old beaten one, to be sure; self-debate—through temporary remorse: for the blow being not struck, her guardian angel is redoubling his efforts to save her.

If it be not that (and yet what power should her guardian angel have over me?) I don't know what it is, that gives a check to my revenge, whenever I meditate treason against so sovereign a virtue. Conscience is dead and gone, as I told thee; so it cannot be that. A young conscience growing up like the phoenix, from the ashes of the old one, it cannot be surely. But if it were it would be hard, if I could not overlay a young conscience.

Well then, it must be love, I fancy. Love itself, inspiring love of an object so adorable—Some little attention possibly paid likewise to thy whining arguments in her favor.

Let love then be allowed to be the moving principle; and the rather, as love naturally makes the lover loth to disoblige the object of its flame;

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and knowing, that an offence of the meditated kind will be a mortal offence to her, cannot bear that I should think of giving it.

Let love and me talk together a little on this subject — Be it a young conscience, or love, or thyself, Jack, thou seest that I am for giving every wiffler audience. But this must be the last debate on this subject; for is not her fate in a manner at its crisis? And must not my next step be an irretrievable one, tend it which way it will?

* * *

And now the debate is over.

A thousand charming things (for love is gentler than conscience) has this little urchin suggested in her favor.

He pretended to know both our hearts: and he would have it, that though my love was a prodigious strong and potent love; and though it has the merit of many months faithful service to plead, and has had infinite difficulties to struggle with; yet that it is not the right sort of love.

Right sort of love! — A puppy! — But, with due regard to your deityship, said I, what merits has she with you, that you should be of her party? Is hers, I pray you, a right sort of love? Is it love at all? She don't pretend that it is. She owns not your sovereignty. What a devil moves you, to plead thus earnestly for a rebel, who despises your power?

And then he came with his If's and And's — And it would have been, and still, as he believed, would

be, love, and a love of the exalted kind, if I would encourage it by the right sort of love he talked of: and in justification of his opinion pleaded her own confessions, as well those of yesterday, as of this morning: and even went so far back as to my Ipecacuanha-illness

I never talked so familiarly with his godship before: thou mayest think, therefore, that his dialect sounded oddly in my ears. And then he told me, how often I had thrown cold water upon the most charming flame that ever warmed a Lady's bosom, while yet but young and rising.

I required a definition of this right sort of love. He tried at it: but made a sorry hand of it: nor could I, for the soul of me, be convinced, that what he meant to extol, was love.

Upon the whole we had a notable controversy upon this subject, in which he insisted upon the unprecedented merit of the Lady. Nevertheless I got the better of him; for he was struck absolutely dumb, when (waving her present perverseness, which yet was a sufficient answer to all his pleas) I asserted, and offered to prove it, by a thousand instances impromptu, that love was not governed by merit, nor could be under the dominion of prudence, or any other reasoning power: and that if the Lady were capable of love, it was of such a sort of love, as he had nothing to do with, and which never before reigned in a female heart.

I asked him, What he thought of her flight from me, at a time when I was more than half overcome by the right sort of love he talked of?

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—And then I showed him the letter she wrote, and left behind her for me, with an intention, no doubt, absolutely to break my heart, or to provoke me to hang, drown, or shoot myself; to say nothing of a multitude of declarations from her, defying his power, and imputing all that looked like love in her behaviour to me, to the persecution and rejection of her friends; which made her think of me but as a last resort.

Love then gave her up. The letter, he said, deserved neither pardon nor excuse. He did not think he had been pleading for such a declared rebel. And as to the rest he should be a betrayer of the rights of his own sovereignty, if what I had alledged were true, and he were still to plead for her.

I swore to the truth of all. And truly I swore: which, perhaps, I do not always do.

And now what thinkest thou must become of the Lady, whom love itself gives up, and conscience cannot plead for?

LETTER XXV.

MR. LOVELACE, To JOHN BELFORD, Esq;

Sunday afternoon.

O Belford! what a hair's-breadth escape have I had! — Such a one, that I tremble between terror and joy, at the thoughts of what might have happened, and did not.

What a perverse girl is this, to contend with her fate; yet has reason to think, that her very stars fight against her! I am the luckiest of men! — But my breath almost fails me, when I reflect upon what a slender thread my destiny hung.

But not to keep thee in suspense; I have, within this half-hour obtained possession of the expected letter from Miss Howe—And by such an accident! But here, with the former, I dispatch this; thy messenger waiting.

LETTER

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LETTER XXVI.

Mr. LOVELACE.

In Continuation.

THUS it was—My charmer accompanied Mrs. Moore again to church this afternoon. I had been very earnest, in the first place, to obtain her company at dinner: but in vain. According to what she had said to Mrs. Moore, I was too considerable to her to be allowed that favor. In the next place, I besought her to favor me, after dinner, with another garden-walk. But she would again go to church. And what reason have I to rejoice that she did!

My worthy friend Mrs. Bevis thought one sermon a day, well observed, enough; so staid at home to bear me company.

The Lady and Mrs. Moore had not been gone a quarter of an hour, when a young country-fellow on horseback came to the door, and inquired for Mrs. Harriot Lucas. The widow and I (undetermined how we were to entertain each other) were in the parlour next the door; and hearing the fellow's inquiry, O my dear Mrs. Bevis, said I, I am undone, undone for ever, if you don't help me out!—Since here, in all probability, is a messenger from that implacable Miss Howe with a letter; which, if delivered to Mrs. Lovelace, may undo all we have been doing.

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What, said she, would you have me do?

Call the maid in this moment, that I may give her her lesson; and if it be as I imagine, I'll tell you what you shall do.

Widow. Margaret!—Margaret! Come in this minute.

Lovel. What answer, Mrs. Margaret, did you give the man, upon his asking for Mrs. Harriot Lucas?

Peggy. I only asked, What was his business, and who he came from? (For, Sir, your Honor's servant had told me how things stood:) and I came at your call, Madam, before he answered me.

Lovel. Well, child, if ever you wish to be happy in wedlock yourself, and would have people disappointed, who want to make mischief between you and your husband, get out of him his message, or letter if he has one, and bring it to me, and say nothing to Mrs. Lovelace, when she comes in; and here is a guinea for you.

Peggy. I will do all I can to serve your Honor's worship for nothing (nevertheless, with a ready hand, taking the guinea:) for Mr. William tells me what a good gentleman you be.

Away went Peggy to the fellow at the door.

Peggy. What is your business, friend, with Mrs. Harry Lucas?

Fellow. I must speak to her her own self.

Lovel. My dearest widow, do you personate Mrs. Lovelace—For heaven's sake do you personate Mrs. Lovelace!

Wid. I personate Mrs. Lovelace, Sir! How can I do that?—She is fair: I am brown. She is slender: I am plump —

Lovel. No matter, no matter—The fellow may be a new-come servant: he is not in livery, I see. He may not know her person. You can but be bloated and in a dropfy.

Wid. Dropfical people look not so fresh and ruddy as I do —

Lovel. True—But the clown may not know that. 'Tis but for a present deception.

Peggy, Peggy, call'd I, in a female tone, softly at the door. Madam, answered Peggy; and came up to me to the parlour-door.

Lovel. Tell him the Lady is ill; and has lain down upon the couch. And get his business from him, whatever you do.

Away went Peggy.

Lovel. Now, my dear widow, lie along on the settee, and put your handkerchief over your face, that, if he will speak to you himself, he may not see your eyes and your hair.—So—That's right. I'll step into the closet by you.

I did so.

Peggy (returning.) He won't deliver his business to me. He will speak to Mrs. Harry Lucas her own self.

Lovel. (holding the door in my hand) Tell him, that this is Mrs. Harriot Lucas; and let him come in. Whisper him (if he doubts) that she is bloated, dropfical, and not the woman she was.

Away went Margery.

Lovel. And now, my dear widow, let me see what a charming Mrs. Lovelace you'll make!—Ask, if he comes from Miss Howe. Ask, if he live with her. Ask, how she does. Call her, at every word, your dear Miss Howe. Offer him money—Take this half-guinea for him—Complain of your head, to have a pretence to hold it down; and cover your forehead and eyes with your hand, where your handkerchief hides not your face.—That's right—And dismiss the rascal—(Here he comes)—as soon as you can.

In came the fellow, bowing and scraping, his hat poked out before him with both his hands.

Fellow. I am sorry, Madam, an't please you, to find you be'n't well.

Wid. What is your business with me, friend?

Fellow. You are Mrs. Harriot Lucas, I suppose, Madam?

Wid. Yes. Do you come from Miss Howe?

Fellow. I do, Madam.

Wid. Dost thou know my right name, friend?

Fellow. I can give a shrewd guess. But that is none of my business.

Wid. What is thy business? I hope Miss Howe is well?

Fellow. Yes, Madam; pure well, I thank God. I wish you were so too.

Wid. I am too full of grief to be well.

Fellow. So belike I have hard say.

Wid. My head aches so dreadfully, I cannot hold it up. I must beg of you to let me know your business?

Fellow. Nay, and that be all, my business is soon known. It is but to give this letter into your own partiklar hands—Here it is.

Wid. (Taking it.) From my dear friend Miss Howe?—Ah, my head!

Fellow. Yes, Madam: but I am sorry you are so bad.

Wid. Do you live with Miss Howe?

Fellow. No, Madam: I am one of her tenant's sons. Her Lady mother must not know as how I came of this errand. But the letter, I suppose, will tell you all.

Wid. How shall I satisfy you for this kind trouble?

Fellow. No how at all. What I do is for love of Miss Howe. She will satisfy me more than enough. But, may-hap, you can send no answer, you are so ill.

Wid. Was you ordered to wait for an answer?

Fellow. No. I cannot say as that I was. But I was bidden to observe how you looked, and how you was; and if you did write a line or so, to take care of it, and give it only to our young Landlady, in secret.

Wid. You see I look strangely. Not so well as I used to do.

Fellow. Nay, I don't know that I ever saw you but once before; and that was at a stile, where I met you and my young Landlady; but knew better than to stare a gentlewoman in the face; especially at a stile.

Wid. Will you eat, or drink, friend?

Fellow. A cup of small ale, I don't care if I do.

Wid. Margaret, take the young man down, and treat him with what the house affords.

Fellow. Your servant, Madam. But I staid to eat as I came along, just upon the heath yonder, or else, to say the truth, I had been here sooner (thank my stars, thought I, thou didst.) A piece of powdered beef was upon the table, at the sign of the Castle, where I stopt to inquire for this house: and so, thoff I only intended to whet my whistle, I could not help eating. So shall only taste of your ale; for the beef was woundily corned.

Prating dog! Pox on thee! thought I.

He withdrew, bowing and scraping.

Margaret, whispered I, in a female voice (whipping out of the closet, and holding the parlour-door in my hand) get him out of the house as fast as you can, lest they come from church, and catch him here.

Peggy. Never fear, Sir.

The fellow went down, and, it seems, drank a large draught of ale; and Margaret finding him very talkative, told him, she begg'd his pardon; but she had a sweetheart just come from sea, whom she was forced to hide in the pantry; so was sure he would excuse her from staying with him.

Ay, ay, to be sure, the clown said: for if he could not make sport, he would spoil none. But he whispered her, that on Squire Lovelace was a damnation rogue, if the truth might be told.

For what, said Margaret? And could have given

him, she told the widow (who related to me all this) a good dowse of the chaps.

For kissing all the women he came near.

At the same time, the dog wrapped himself round Margery, and gave her a smack; that, she told Mrs. Bevis afterwards, she might have heard into the parlour.

Such, Jack, is human nature: thus does it operate in all degrees; and so does the clown, as well as his betters, practise what he censures; and censure what he practises! Yet this sly dog knew not but the wench had a sweetheart locked up in the pantry! If the truth were known, some of the ruddy-faced dairy wenches might, perhaps, call him a damnation rogue, as justly as their betters of the same sex might Squire Lovelace.

The fellow told the maid, that, by what he discerned of the young Lady's face, it looked very rosy to what he took it to be; and he thought her a good deal fatter, as she lay, and not so tall.

All women are born to intrigue, Jack; and practise it more or less, as fathers, guardians, governesses, from dear experience can tell; and in love-affairs are naturally expert, and quicker in their wits by half than men. This ready, tho' raw wench, gave an instance of this, and improved on the dropfical hint I had given her. The Lady's seeming plumpness was owing to a dropfical disorder, and to the round posture she lay in—Very likely, truly. Her appearing to him to be shorter, he might have observed was owing to her drawing her feet up, from pain, and because the couch was too short,

she supposed — Adso, he did not think of that. Her rosy color was owing to her grief and head-ach — Ay, that might very well be — But he was highly pleased that he had given the letter into Mrs. Harriot's own hand, as he should tell Miss Howe.

He desired once more to see the Lady at his going away, and would not be denied. The widow, therefore, sat up, with her handkerchief over her face, leaning her head against the wainscot.

He asked, If she had any partiklar message.

No: She was so ill she could not write; which was a great grief to her.

Should he call next day? for he was going to London, now he was so near; and should stay at a cousin's that night, who lived in a street call'd Fetter-lane.

No: she would write as soon as able, and send by the post.

Well then, if she had nothing to send by him, mayhap he might stay in town a day or two; for he had never seen the lions in the tower, nor bedlam, nor the tombs; and he would make a holiday or two, as he had leave to do, if she had no business or message that required his posting down next day.

She had not.

She offered him the half-guinea I had given her for him; but he refused it, with great professions of disinterestedness, and love, as he called it, to Miss Howe; to serve whom, he would ride to the world's-end, or even to Jericho.

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at my heart was I when he was gone; for I feared nothing so much as that he would have staid till they came from church.

Thus, Jack, got I my heart's-ease, the letter of Miss Howe; and thro' such a train of accidents, as makes me say, that the Lady's stars fight against her. But yet I must attribute a good deal to my own precaution, in having taken right measures: for had I not secured the widow by my stories, and the maid by my servant, all would have signified nothing. And so heartily were they secured, the one by a single guinea, the other by half a dozen warm kisses, and the aversion they both had to such wicked creatures as delighted in making mischief between man and wife, that they promised, that neither Mrs. Moore, Miss Rawlins, Mrs. Lovelace, nor any body living, till a week at least were past, and till I gave leave, should know any thing of the matter.

The widow rejoiced that I had got the mischief-maker's letter. I excused myself to her, and instantly withdrew with it; and, after I had read it, fell to my short-hand, to acquaint thee with my good luck: and they not returning so soon as church was done (stepping, as it proved, in to Miss Rawlins's, and tarrying there a-while, to bring that busy girl with them to drink tea) I wrote thus far to thee, that thou mightest, when thou camest to this place, rejoice with me upon the occasion.

They are all three just come in.

I hasten to them.