

**EATON
BARRETT**

THE HEROINE

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The Heroine:

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Eaton Stannard Barrett

The Heroine

INTRODUCTION

'In Glamorganshire, of a rapid decline, occasioned by the bursting of a blood-vessel, Eaton Stannard Barrett, esq., a native of Ireland, and a student of the Middle Temple. He published "All the Talents", a Poem, 8vo. 1817. – "The Comet", a mock newspaper, 8vo. 1803. – A very pleasing poem intituled "Woman", 8vo. 1810. – "The Heroine, or Adventures of Cherubina", 3 vols. 12mo, 2d. edit. 1814. This volume is said to abound in wit and humour.'

Very little can now be added to this obituary notice, which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for April, 1820. The young Irishman whose death it records was born at Cork in 1786, received his education chiefly in London, addicted himself to the law, and was early diverted into the profession of letters, which he practised with great energy and versatility. Besides the works mentioned above, he wrote a serio-comic romance called *The Rising Sun*, and a farcical comedy, full of noise and bustle, called *My Wife, What Wife?* The choice of this last phrase (sacred, if any words in poetry are sacred) for the title of a rollicking farce indicates a certain bluntness of sensibility in the author. He

was young, and fell head over ears in love with cleverness; he was a law-student, and took to political satire as a duck takes to the rain; he was an Irishman, and found himself the master of a happy Irish wit, clean, quick, and dainty, but no ways searching or profound. At the back of all his satire there lies a simple social creed, which he accepts from the middle-class code of his own time, and does not question. The two of his works which achieved something like fame, *Woman, a Poem*, and *The Heroine*, here reprinted, set forth that creed, describing the ideal heroine in verse, and warning her, in prose, against the extravagances that so easily beset her. The mode in female character has somewhat changed since George was king, and the pensive coyness set up as a model in the poem seems to a modern reader almost as affected as the vagaries described in the novel. Yet the poem has all the interest and brilliancy of an old fashion-plate. Here is woman as she wished to be in the days of the Regency, or perhaps as man wished her to be, for it is impossible to say which began it. Both gloried in the contrast of their habits. If man, in that age of the prize-ring and the press-gang, was pre-eminently a drinking, swearing, fighting animal, his indelicacy was redeemed by the shrinking graces of his mate.

For woman is not undeveloppt man,
But diverse:

as the poet of the later nineteenth century sings. But Tennyson

was anticipated in this discovery by Mr. Barrett:

Yes, heaven a contrast not unmeet, designed
Between the bearded and the blushing kind.

Those who often see the bearded kind clad in overcoats, carrying umbrellas, and timorous of social greetings, may have some difficulty in recognizing the essential truth of the following lines, which describe man in his grandeur, as his blushing consort loves to think of him:

Man, from those moments, when his infant age
Cried for the moon, ambitious aims engage,
One world subdued, more worlds he wishes given,
He piles his impious tower to clamber heaven;
Scoops cities under earth; erects his home
On mountains of wild surges, vales of foam;
Soars air, and high above the thunder runs,
Now flaked with sleet, now reddened under suns.
Even in his pastime man his soul reveals;
Raised with carousing shout, his goblet reels.
Now from his chase imperial lions fly,
And now he stakes a principedom on a die.
What would he more? The consecrated game
Of murder must transmit his epic name,
Some empire tempts him; at his stern command,
An armed cloud hails iron o'er the land.
Earth thunders underneath the pondrous tread,

Son slaughters sire, the dying stab the dead.
The vallies roar, that loved a warbling mood,
Their mutilated lilies float on blood;
And corpses sicken streams, and towns expire,
And colour the nocturnal clouds with fire.
Last, vultures pounce upon the finished strife,
And dabble in the splash of human life.

Such is man, all magnificence and terror. And now a softly
trilling note ushers in the partner of his cares:

But the meek female far from war removes,
Girt with the Graces and endearing Loves.
To rear the life we destine to destroy,
To bind the wound we plant, is her employ.
Her rapine is to press from healing bud,
Or healthful herb, the vegetable blood;
Her answer, at the martial blast abhorred,
Harmonic noise along the warbling chord.
To her belong light roundelay and reel,
To her the crackling hearth and humming wheel;
(Sounds of content!) to her the milky kine,
And Peace, O Woman, gentle Peace is thine.

Their studies are as dissimilar as their tastes. Nothing less than
a comet will excite the curiosity of man; for woman the flower-
garden is science enough:

Prone o'er abstruse research, let man expound
Dark causes; what abyss our planet drowned;
And where the fiery star its hundred years
Of absence travels, ere it re-appears.
To Woman, whose best books are human hearts,
Wise heaven a genius less profound imparts.
His awful, her's is lovely; his should tell
How thunderbolts, and her's how roses fell.

Here is the genesis of the Early Victorian ideal of female beauty. The author describes, with heart-felt sentiment, its graces and charms,

The beautiful rebuke that looks surprise,
The gentle vengeance of averted eyes;

– which last line so pleased him that it occurs again in *The Farewell* (Letter XXV of *The Heroine*). The shorter poem, like the longer, has the indescribable old-world charm of a pressed rose-leaf, an elegant tarnished mirror, a faded silken fan, a vanished mode. The secret of this sentimental type of beauty perhaps lies here, that the simplicity and shyness and ardour of youth are reduced, not by a conscious science, but by the timid rules of propriety and modesty, to the service of an all-prevailing coquetry. Ovid, as expounded by Mrs. Chapone or Miss Hannah More, gains something in the delicacy of his methods, and loses nothing of his empire:

Ut quondam iuvenes, ita nunc, mea turba, puellae
Inscribant spoliis: Naso magister erat.

It must be said, however, that the author of *Woman, a Poem* does not confine himself to the alluring graces. His best known and most quoted lines are written in praise of courage and fidelity:

Not she denied her God with recreant tongue,
Not she with traitrous kisses round him clung;
She, while Apostles shrank, could danger brave,
Last at his cross and earliest at his grave.

If he were to survive in a single quotation, it is probably by these lines that the author, who spent much labour on the revision and polishing of his poem, would wish to be remembered.

It may seem strange that the author of this romantic poem on *Woman* should have been so ready to parody the new school of prose romance. Miss Cherry Wilkinson, when she took the name of *Cherubina*, and commenced heroine, might certainly have found some useful hints for her behaviour in this earlier treatise. But the fact is that no parodist is successful who has not at some time fallen deeply under the spell of the literature that he parodies. Parody is, for the most part, a weak and clinging kind of tribute to the force of its original. Very perfect parodies, which catch the soul, as well as the form, of the models that they

imitate, almost lose their identity and become a part of that which they were meant to ridicule. Feeble parodies, where poor matter, not strong enough to speak for itself, claims notice by the aid of a notorious tune, are even more conspicuously dependent on the vogue of their original. The art of a tailor is seen in the cut of a coat; to make a mechanical copy of it, substituting tartan or fustian for velvet, is what any Chinese slave can do. It is form in literature which is difficult to invent. When a poem or a story, by the individuality and novelty of its form, has caught the public taste, there are always some among its victims who are nothing if not critical. They cannot forget it, yet it does not content them. They think it narrow and partial in its conception; it does not mirror Nature exactly as they see her; in short, they have ideas of their own. These ideas perhaps have not vitality enough to create their own definite form, so when a form is presented to them they seize on it for their purpose. Hence every new and original kind in literature produces a tribe of imitators, some of them contented imitators, who undersell the first author with colourable copies; others discontented imitators, or parodists, who offer their own substitute for the author's wares, yet stamp it with his brand. The compliment is the same in either case; and the effect is not much different, for nothing so quickly exhausts the popularity of a work of art as its power of multiplying its kind. Some congenital weakness, it is fair to say, there must have been in the original, when the form designed for a single purpose serves so many others. The weakness is not always easy to detect;

but it is always there. It may be the weakness of excess; an ample and loose-folded robe like Walt Whitman's is characteristic of its wearer, but can soon be adapted to a borrower. Or it may be the weakness of defect; the music and solemnity of the *Psalms of Life* are a world too wide for the shrunken body of the thought that they conceal. A perfect conception expressing itself inevitably in the form that has grown with its growth defies imitators. The great things of Virgil and of Dante suffer no parody. And this is what is meant by a classic.

Yet lesser books have their day; and young authors, or old authors trying a new kind of work, often begin by imitation. They discover their genius by their failure. The famous parodies (so to call them) are not parodies at all; their freedom from the servility of parody is what has given them their place in literature. Cervantes may have thought that he could criticize and banter the romances of chivalry by telling the adventures of a poor and high-minded gentleman travelling on the roads of Spain; but once the new situation was created it called for a new treatment. Fielding doubtless intended to parody Richardson by a tale of the chastity of a serving-man; and it is easy to see how a mere wit would have carried out the design. But Fielding, like Cervantes, was too rich in ideas, and too brave in purpose, to be another man's mocking servitor. First Mrs. Slipslop incommodes the framework by her intrusion, and then Parson Adams enters to complete the disaster. The breakdown of these pretended parodies is always due to the same cause – the appearance on an artificially designed scene

of real character. Character, where it is fully conceived, will not take its orders from the scene-shifter; it reacts in surprising ways to slight accidental provocations; it will not play the part or speak the words assigned to it; it is consistent with nothing but itself; from self-revelation it soon passes to self-assertion, and subdues the world to its will, disordering all the puppet-show.

It cannot be claimed for Eaton Stannard Barrett that he proved superior to the task which he undertook. There is little or no real character in *The Heroine*. Perhaps Jerry Sullivan, the faithful Irish servitor, with his ready speech and bold resourcefulness, comes nearest to the life, but even he is drawn, like Lever's comic Irishmen, not intimately. A few touches of verisimilitude are sufficient to portray a servant, whose business is to come when he is called and to help others in their necessities. The heroine herself has no breath in her; she is inconceivably credulous, impossibly ignorant, and even while she talks the author often forgets her very existence and speaks in her stead, so that she seems to be quizzing her own fatuity. Perhaps this incompetent portraiture was to be expected from the author of *Woman, a Poem*, but it takes some of the edge off the fun of the book. Cherubina is not a girl, with silly, flighty notions in her head, such as romance engenders, but a pedantic female lawyer, determined to order her life, down to the smallest detail, on precedents borrowed from her favourite reading. Miss Austen's girls, in *Northanger Abbey*, talk like girls; Cherubina talks like a book. Nevertheless, Miss Austen herself read *The Heroine*,

and confessed to the pleasure she had from it. It enjoyed a high and brief reputation. The first edition appeared in 1813; the second followed it in the space of a year; and in 1816 the author, before he was thirty years old, may have read a notice of himself in the *Biographical Dictionary of the Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland* concluding with the following eulogy: 'This work (*The Heroine*) has been pronounced not inferior in wit and humour to *Tristram Shandy*, and in point of plot and interest infinitely beyond *Don Quixote*.'

Let us save what remnants we can of this monstrous pronouncement. Of character, as has been said, there is next to none in *The Heroine*; so that only those who can read *Don Quixote* and *Tristram Shandy*, careless of the characters portrayed, might possibly be able to return a verdict on the comparison. There are many readers of books who grudge labour spent on character-drawing; the long colloquies between *Don Quixote* and *Sancho* or between my *Uncle Toby* and *Corporal Trim* they would be glad to see abbreviated, so they might get back to the confusion and bustle of life. Why all this dissection of the heart, while there are crowns to be broke? What the soldier said is not evidence; it is what he did that they desire to hear. For readers of this temper there is abundance of entertainment in *The Heroine*, if once they can bring themselves to accept the perilously slender illusion. The scenes described are as full of movement as a harlequinade. No Irish fair is richer in incident. And there is such a flow of high spirits; the author carries the whole business through

with such unflagging zest, that the farce, though it hardly ever touches on the confines of comedy, is pleasant farce, instinct with good nature and good fellowship. Those who like a book that saves them from the more exacting companionship of their own thoughts might do worse than read *The Heroine*.

This is lukewarm praise; but the book has a stronger claim than this on the interest of the reader; it marks a crisis in literary history. The author was a well-read man, and all the fashionable literature of his day is reflected in his pages. He was familiar with the essayists and moralists of the eighteenth century; indeed, he often falls into their attitude in his opposition to the extravagances of the Romantic movement. His parody of Johnson's later style is one of the very best of the multitude of Johnsonian imitations. Boswell, writing before 1791, was able to enumerate a distinguished array of disciples and copyists, among them Hugh Blair, Professor of Rhetoric at Edinburgh, George Colman the elder, Robertson the historian, Gibbon, Miss Burney, Mrs. Barbauld, Henry Mackenzie, Vicesimus Knox, and last, John Young, Professor of Greek at Glasgow, whose *Criticism on the Elegy written in a Country Church-yard, being a continuation of Dr. Johnson's Criticism on the Poems of Gray* (1783) is rightly praised by Boswell as the most perfect of all professed imitations of Johnson's style. It is only half a parody; Johnson's method in criticism has been so thoroughly assimilated by the author, that some of Johnson's strong sense filters in here and there as if by oversight. Horace Walpole said of it,

acutely enough, that the author seemed to wish to be taken by Gray's admirers for a ridiculer of Johnson, and by Johnson's admirers for a censurer of Gray. But if this is the best imitation of Johnson's critical manner, his biographical style and his light occasional verse have never been so happily mimicked as in the *Memoirs of James Higginson, by Himself*, which occur in Letter X of *The Heroine*. Johnson continued to be the most influential teacher of English prose until Macaulay, by introducing a more glittering kind of antithesis and a freer use of the weapons of offence in criticism, usurped his supremacy.

A more voluminous and easier literature had enthralled the popular taste for some thirty or forty years before the author of *The Heroine* delivered his attack. Only a few are now remembered even by name of that horde of romances which issued from the cheap presses, in the train of Mrs. Radcliffe. It is reasonable to suppose that many of them, which had not the help of that great preservative of a bad book, good binding, have perished from off the face of the earth. They are not yet old enough to be precious, as Elizabethan trash is precious, and doubtless the surviving copies of some of them are even now being cast out from lumber-rooms and remote country libraries, to suffer their fate by fire. Their names are scattered plentifully up and down the *Bibliotheca Britannica* and other monumental compilations, where books that go under in their fight against time have Christian burial and a little headstone reserved for them. In *The Heroine* only the chief of them are referred to

by name. The romances of Mrs. Radcliffe —*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Italian*, and *The Bravo of Venice*— are praised as being 'often captivating and seldom detrimental'. The rivals of Mrs. Radcliffe who wrote those enormously popular works, *The Children of the Abbey* and *Caroline of Lichtfield*, receive a less respectful treatment. At the close of his book the author of *The Heroine* summarizes his indictment against these and their kind: 'They present us with incidents and characters which we can never meet in the world; and act upon the mind like intoxicating stimulants; first elevate, and then enervate it. They teach us to revel in ideal scenes of transport and distraction; and harden our hearts against living misery, by making us so refined as to feel disgust at its unpoetical accompaniments.' Throughout the book he keeps up a running fire of criticism. When Cherubina visits Westminster Abbey, 'It is the first,' she says, 'that I have ever seen, though I had read of thousands.' She apologizes for using the vulgar word 'home' — 'you know that a mere home is my horror'. She confesses that she is very inadequately armed with religion — 'I knew nothing of religion except from novels; and in these, though the devotion of heroines is sentimental and graceful to a degree, it never influences their acts, or appears connected with their moral duties. It is so speculative and generalized, that it would answer the Greek or the Persian church, as well as the Christian; and none but the picturesque and enthusiastic part is presented; such as kissing a cross, chanting a vesper with elevated eyes, or composing a well-worded prayer.'

The notable thing is that this attack on the novels of the day was not an isolated protest; it expressed the general mind and echoed the current opinion. Miss Austen, with more suavity and art, had long before said the same thing. The romance was declining; it had become a cheap mechanical thing; and the mind of the nation was turning away from it to reinstate those teachers of moral prudence whose influence had been impaired by the flood, but not destroyed. If any one had been rash enough, in the year 1814, to prophesy the future of literature, he would have been justified in saying that, to all appearances, the prose romance was dead. It had fallen into its dotage, and the hand of Eaton Stannard Barrett had killed it. *The Heroine* seemed to mark the end of an age of romance, and the beginning of a new era of sententious prose.

Such a prophet would have been approved by *The Edinburgh Review* and all the best judges of the time. He would have been wrong, for he could not foresee the accident of genius. Walter Scott, like Cherubina (whose adventures he read and applauded), had fallen a victim to the fascinations of the writers of romance, yet, unlike her, had not allowed them to deprive him of all acquaintance with 'a more useful class of composition' and the toils of active life. Romance was what he cared for, and he brought the sobriety and learning of a judge to the task of vindicating his affection. He proved that the old romantic stories are convincing enough if only the blood of life flows through them. His great panoramas of history are exhibited in the frame-

work of a love-plot. In place of the feeble comic interest of the earlier romances he supplied a rich and various tissue of national character and manners. Ancient legend and song, fable and superstition, live again in his work. And, as if Cherubina's unhappy experiences had all been in vain, there is always a heroine. The readers who had been laughed into scepticism by the wit of the enemy were within a few years won back to poetry and romance; Cherubina was deposed, and in her place there reigned the Bride of Lammermoor.

WALTER RALEIGH.

Oxford,

Christmas, 1908.

Sir,

It was the happiness of Sterne to have dedicated his volumes to a Pitt. It is my ambition to inscribe this work to you. My wishes would be complete, could I resemble the writer as you do the statesman.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most sincere, and most humble servant,

E. S. BARRETT.

THE HEROINE TO THE READER

Attend, gentle and intelligent reader; for I am not the fictitious personage whose memoirs you will peruse in 'The Heroine;' but I am a corporeal being, and an inhabitant of another world.

Know, that the moment a mortal manuscript is written out in a legible hand, and the word End or Finis annexed thereto, whatever characters happen to be sketched in it (whether imaginary, biographical, or historical), acquire the quality of creating and effusing a sentient soul or spirit, which instantly takes flight, and ascends through the regions of air, till it arrives at the moon; where it is then embodied, and becomes a living creature; the precise counterpart, in mind and person, of its literary prototype.

Know farther, that all the towns, villages, rivers, hills, and vallies of the moon, owe their origin, in a similar manner, to the descriptions given by writers of those on earth; and that all the lunar trades and manufactures, fleets and coins, stays for men, and boots for ladies, receive form and substance here, from terrestrial books on war and commerce, pamphlets on bullion, and fashionable magazines.

Works consisting of abstract argument, ethics, metaphysics, polemics, &c. which, from their very nature, cannot become tangible essences, send up their ideas, in whispers, to the moon; where the tribe of talking birds receive, and repeat them for

the Lunarians. So that it is not unusual to hear a mitred parrot screaming a political sermon, or a fashionable jay twittering unfigurative canzonets. These birds then are our philosophers; and so great is their value, that they sell for as much as your patriots.

The moment, however, that a book becomes obsolete on earth, the personages, countries, manners, and things recorded in it, lose, by the law of sympathy, their existence in the moon.

This, most grave reader, is but a short and imperfect sketch of the way we Moonites live and die. I shall now give you some account of what has happened to me since my coming hither.

It is something more than three lunar hours; or, in other words, about three terrestrial days ago, that, owing to the kindness of some human gentleman or other (to whom I take this opportunity of returning my grateful thanks), I became conscious of existence. Like the Miltonic Eve, almost the first thing I did was to peep into the water, and admire my face; – a very pretty one, I assure you, dear reader. I then perceived advancing a lank and grimly figure in armour, who introduced himself as Don Quixote; and we soon found each other kindred souls.

We walked, hand in hand, through a beautiful tract of country called Terra Fertilitatis; for your Selenographers, Langrenus, Florentius, Grimaldus, Ricciolus, and Hevelius of Dantzic, have given proper names to the various portions of our hemisphere.

As I proceeded, I met the Radcliffian, Rochian, and other heroines; but they tossed their heads, and told me pertly that I was

a slur on the sisterhood; while some went so far as to say I had a design upon their lives. They likewise shunned the Edgeworthian heroines, whom they thought too comic, moral, and natural.

I met the Lady of the Lake, and shook hands with her; but her hand felt rather hard from the frequent use of the oar; and I spoke to the Widow Dido, but she had her old trick of turning on her heel, without answering a civil question.

I found the Homeric Achilles broiling his own beefsteaks, as usual; the Homeric Princesses drawing water, and washing linen; the Virgilian Trojans eating their tables, and the Livian Hannibal melting mountains with the patent vinegar of an advertisement.

The little boy in the *Æneid* had introduced the amusement of whipping tops; and Musidora had turned bathing-woman at a halfpenny a dip.

A Cæsar, an Alexander, and an Alfred, were talking politics, and quaffing the Horatian Falernian, at the Garter Inn of Shakespeare. A Catiline was holding forth on Reform, and a Hanno was advising the recall of a victorious army.

As I walked along, a parcel of Moonites, fresh from your newspapers, just popped up their heads, nodded, and died. About twenty statesmen come to us in this way almost every day; and though some of them are of the same name, and drawn from the same original, they are often as unlike each other as so many clouds. The Buonapartes, thus sent, are, in general, hideous fellows. However, your Parliamentary Reports sometimes agreeably surprise us with most respectable

characters of that name.

On my way, I could observe numbers of patients dying, according as the books that had created them were sinking into oblivion. The Foxian James was paraded about in a sedan chair, and considered just gone; and a set of politicians, entitled All the Talents, who had once made a terrible noise among us, lay sprawling in their last agonies. But the most extensive mortality ever known here was caused by the burning of the Alexandrian Library. This forms quite an æra in the Lunar Annals; and it is called The great Conflagration.

I had attempted to pluck an apple from a tree that grew near the road; but, to my surprise, grasped a vacuum; and while Don Quixote was explaining to me that this phænomenon arose from the Berkeleian system of immaterialism; and that this apple was only a globular idea, I heard a squeaking voice just beside me cry:

'I must remark, Madam, that the writer who sent you among us had far too much to say, and too little to do.'

I looked round, but saw nobody.

"'Tis Junius," observed Don Quixote. 'He was invisible on earth, and therefore must be so here. Do not mind his bitter sayings.'

'An author,' continued the satirist, 'who has judgment enough to write wit, should have judgment enough to prevent him from writing it.'

'Sir,' said Don Quixote, 'if, by his works of wit, he can attain popularity, he will ensure a future attention to his works of

judgment. So here is at thee, caitiff!' and closing his visor, he ran atilt at pure space.

'Nay,' cried Junius, 'let us not quarrel, though we differ. Mind unopposed by mind, fashions false opinions of its own, and degenerates from its original rectitude. The stagnant pool resolves into putridity. It is the conflict of the waters which keeps them pure.'

'Except in dropsical cases, I presume,' said Tristram Shandy, who just then came up, with his Uncle Toby. 'How goes it, heroine? How goes it? – By the man in the moon, the moment I heard of your arrival here, I gave three exulting flourishes of my hand, thus 1 2 3 then applying my middle finger to my thumb, and compressing them, by means of the flexory muscles, I shot them asunder transversely; so that the finger coming plump upon the aponeurosis —

In short, – for I don't much like the manner in which I am getting on with the description – I snapped my fingers.

'Now, Madam, I will bet the whole of Kristmanus's, Capuanus's, Schihardus's, Phocylides's, and Hanzelius's estates, – which are the best on our disk, – to as much landed property as could be shovelled into your shoe – that you will get miserably mauled by their reverences, the Scotch Reviewers. My life for it, these lads will say that your character is a mere daub drawn in distemper – the colouring too rich – the hair too golden – an eyelash too much – then, that the book itself has too little of the rational and argumentative; – that the fellow

merely wrote it to make the world laugh, – which, an' please your reverences, is the gravest occupation an author can chuse; – that some of its incidents are plastered as thick as butter on the bread of Mamma's darling; others so diluted, that they wash down the bread and butter most unpalatably, and the rest uncondusive to the plot, moral, and peripeteia. In short, Madam, it will appear that the work has every fault which must convict it Aristotellically and Edinburgo – reviewically, in the eyes of ninety-nine barbati; but which will leave it not the ninety-ninth part of a gry the worse in the eyes of fifteen millions of honest Englishmen; besides several very respectable ladies and gentlemen yet unborn, and nations yet undiscovered, who will read translations of it in languages yet unspoken. Bless me, what hacking they will have at you! Small sword and broad sword – staff and stiletto – flankonnade and cannonade – hurry-scurry – right wing and left wing –'

But Tristram paused short in consternation; for his animated description of a fight had roused the military spirits of Don Quixote and Captain Shandy, who were already at hard knocks; the one with his spear, and the other with his crutch. I therefore took this occasion of escaping.

And now day begins to decline; and your globe, which never sets to us, will soon shed her pale earthshine over the landscape. O how serene, how lovely these regions! Here are no hurricanes, or clouds, or vapours. Here heroines cannot sigh; for here there is no air to sigh withal. Here, in our great pits, poetically called

vallies, we retire from all moonly cares; or range through the meads of Cysatus or Gruemberget, and luxuriate in the coolness of the Conical Penumbra.

I trust you will feel, dear reader, that you now owe more to my discoveries than to those of Endymion, Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Galileus, and Newton. I pray you, therefore, to reward my services with a long and happy life; though much I fear I shall not obtain it. For, I am told, that two little shining specks, called England and Ireland (which we can just see with our glasses on your globe), are the places that I must depend upon for my health and prosperity. Now, if they fall, I must fall with them; and I fancy they have seen the best of their days already. A parrot informs me, that they are at daggers drawn with a prodigious blotch just beside them; and that their most approved patriots daily indite pamphlets to shew how they cannot hold out ten years longer. The Sternian Starling assured me just now that these patriots write the triumphs of their country in the most commiserating language; and portray her distresses with exultation. Of course, therefore, they conceive that her glories would undo her, and that nothing can save her but her calamities. So, since she is conquering away at a great rate, I may fairly infer that she is on her last legs.

Before I conclude, I must inform you of how I shall have this letter conveyed to your world. Laplace, and other philosophers, have already proved, that a stone projected by a volcano, from the moon, and with the velocity of a mile and a half per second,

would be thrown beyond the sphere of the moon's attraction, and enter into the confines of the earth's. Now, hundreds have attested on oath, that they have seen luminous meteors moving through the sky; and that these have fallen on the earth, in stony or semi-metallic masses. Therefore, say the philosophers, these masses came all the way from the moon. And they say perfectly right. Believe it piously, dear reader, and quote me as your authority.

It is by means of one of these stones that I shall contrive to send you this letter. I have written it on asbestos, in liquid gold (as both these substances are inconsumable by fire); and I will fasten it to the top of a volcanic mountain, which is expected to explode in another hour.

Alas, alas, short-sighted mortals! how little ye foresee the havoc that will happen hereafter, from the pelting of these pitiless stones. For, about the time of the millenium, the doctrine of projectiles will be so prodigiously improved, that while there is universal peace upon earth, the planets will go to war with each other. Then shall we Lunarians, like true satellites, turn upon our benefactors, and instead of merely trying our small shot (as at present), we will fire off whole mountains; while you, from your superior attraction, will find it difficult to hit us at all. The consequence must be, our losing so much weight, that we shall approach, by degrees, nearer and nearer to you; 'till at last, both globes will come slap together, flatten each other out, like the pancakes of Glasse's Cookery, and rush headlong into primeval

chaos.

Such will be the consummation of all things.

Adieu.

LETTER I

My venerable Governess, guardian of my youth, must I then behold you no more? No more, at breakfast, find your melancholy features shrouded in an umbrageous cap, a novel in one hand, a cup in the other, and tears springing from your eyes, at the tale too tender, or at the tea too hot? Must I no longer wander with you through painted meadows, and by purling rivulets? Motherless, am I to be bereft of my more than mother, at the sensitive age of fifteen? What though papa caught the Butler kissing you in the pantry? What though he turned you by the shoulder out of his house? I am persuaded that the kiss was maternal, not amorous, and that the interesting Butler is your son.

Perhaps you married early in life, and without the knowledge of your parents. A gipsy stole the pretty pledge of your love; and at length, you have recognized him by the scar on his cheek. Happy, happy mother!

Happy too, perhaps, in being cast upon the world, unprotected and defamed; while I am doomed to endure the security of a home, and the dullness of an unimpeached reputation. For me, there is no hope whatever of being reduced to despair. I am condemned to waste my health, bloom, and youth, in a series of uninterrupted prosperity.

It is not, my friend, that I wish for ultimate unhappiness, but that I am anxious to suffer present sorrow, in order to secure

future felicity: an improvement, you will own, on the system of other girls, who, to enjoy the passing moment, run the risk of being wretched for ever after. Have not all persons their favorite pursuits in life, and do not all brave fatigue, vexation, and calumny, for the purpose of accomplishing them? One woman aspires to be a beauty, another a title, a third a belle esprit; and to effect these objects, health is sacrificed, reputation tainted, and peace of mind destroyed. Now my ambition is to be a Heroine, and how can I hope to succeed in my vocation, unless I, too, suffer privations and inconveniences? Besides, have I not far greater merit in getting a husband by sentiment, adventure, and melancholy, than by dressing, gadding, dancing, and singing? For heroines are just as much on the alert to get husbands, as other young ladies; and to say the truth, I would never voluntarily subject myself to misfortunes, were I not certain that matrimony would be the last of them. But even misery itself has its consolations and advantages. It makes one, at least, look interesting, and affords an opportunity for ornamental murmurs. Besides, it is the mark of a refined mind. Only fools, children, and savages, are happy.

With these sentiments, no wonder I should feel discontented at my present mode of life. Such an insipid routine, always, always, always the same. Rising with no better prospect than to make breakfast for papa. Then 'tis, 'Good morrow, Cherry,' or 'is the paper come, Cherry?' or 'more cream, Cherry,' or 'what shall we have to dinner, Cherry?' At dinner, nobody but a farmer or the

Parson; and nothing talked but politics and turnips. After tea I am made sing some fal lal la of a ditty, and am sent to bed with a 'Good night, pretty miss,' or 'sweet dear.' The clowns!

Now, instead of this, just conceive me a child of misery, in a castle, a convent, or a cottage; becoming acquainted with the hero by his saving my life – I in beautiful confusion – 'Good Heaven, what an angel!' cries he – then sudden love on both sides – in two days he kisses my hand. Embarrassments – my character suspected – a quarrel – a reconciliation – fresh embarrassments. – O Biddy, what an irreparable loss to the public, that a victim of thrilling sensibility, like me, should be thus idling her precious time over the common occupations of life! – prepared as I am, too, by a five years' course of novels (and you can bear witness that I have read little else), to embody and ensoul those enchanting reveries, which I am accustomed to indulge in bed and bower, and which really constitute almost the whole happiness of my life.

That I am not deficient in the qualities requisite for a heroine, is indisputable. All the world says I am handsome, and it would be melancholy were all the world in error. My form is tall and aërial, my face Grecian, my tresses flaxen, my eyes blue and sleepy. But the great point is, that I have a remarkable mole just over my left temple. Then, not only peaches, roses, and Aurora, but snow, lilies, and alabaster, may, with perfect propriety, be adopted in a description of my skin. I confess I differ from other heroines in one point. They, you may remark, are always unconscious of

their charms; whereas, I am, I fear, convinced of mine, beyond all hope of retraction.

There is but one serious flaw in my title to Heroine – the mediocrity of my lineage. My father is descended from nothing better than a decent and respectable family. He began life with a thousand pounds, purchased a farm, and by his honest and disgusting industry, has realized fifty thousand. Were even my legitimacy suspected, it would be some comfort; since, in that case, I should assuredly start forth, at one time or other, the daughter of some plaintive nobleman, who lives retired, and slaps his forehead.

One more subject perplexes me. It is my name; and what a name – Cherry! It reminds one so much of plumpness and ruddy health. Cherry – better be called Pine-apple at once. There is a green and yellow melancholy in Pine-apple, that is infinitely preferable. I wonder whether Cherry could possibly be an abbreviation of Cherubina. 'Tis only changing y into ubina, and the name becomes quite classic. Celestina, Angelina, Seraphina, are all of the same family. But Cherubina sounds so empyrean, so something or other beyond mortality; and besides I have just a face for it. Yes, Cherubina I am resolved to be called, now and for ever.

But you must naturally wish to learn what has happened here, since your departure. I was in my boudoir, reading the *Delicate Distress*, when I heard a sudden bustle below, and 'Out of the house, this moment,' vociferated by my father. The next minute

he was in my room with a face like fire.

'There!' cried he, 'I knew what your famous romances would do for us at last.'

'Pray, Sir, what?' asked I, with the calm dignity of injured innocence.

'Only a kissing match between the Governess and the Butler,' answered he. 'I caught them at the sport in the pantry.'

I was petrified. 'Dear Sir,' said I, 'you must surely mistake.'

'No such thing,' cried he. 'The kiss was too much of a smacker for that: – it rang through the pantry. But please the fates, she shall never darken my doors again. I have just discharged both herself and her swain; and what is better, I have ordered all the novels in the house to be burnt, by way of purification. As they love to talk of flames, I suppose they will like to feel them.' He spoke, and ran raging out of the room.

Adieu, then, ye dear romances, adieu for ever. No more shall I sympathize with your heroines, while they faint, and blush, and weep, through four half-bound octavos. Adieu ye Edwins, Edgars, and Edmunds; ye Selinas, Evelinas, Malvinas; ye inas all adieu! The flames will consume you all. The melody of Emily, the prattle of Annette, and the hoarseness of Ugo, all will be confounded in one indiscriminate crackle. The Casa and Castello will blaze with equal fury; nor will the virtue of Pamela aught avail to save; nor Wolmar delighting to see his wife in a swoon; nor Werter shelling peas and reading Homer, nor Charlotte cutting bread and butter for the children.

You, too, my loved governess, I regret extremely.

Adieu.

Cherubina.

LETTER II

It was not till this morning, that a thought of the most interesting nature flashed across my mind. Pondering on the cruel conduct of my reputed father, in having burnt my novels, and discharged you, without even allowing us to take a hysterical farewell, I was struck with the sudden notion that the man is not my father at all. In short, I began with wishing this the case, and have ended with believing it. My reasons are irresistible, and deduced from strong and stubborn facts. For, first, there is no likeness between this Wilkinson and me. 'Tis true, he has blue eyes, like myself, but has he my pouting lip and dimple? He has the flaxen hair, but can he execute the rosy smile? Next, is it possible, that I, who was born a heroine, and who must therefore have sprung from an idle and illustrious family, should be the daughter of a farmer, a thrifty, substantial, honest farmer? The thing is absurd on the face of it, and never will I tamely submit to such an indignity.

Full of this idea, I dressed myself in haste, resolving to question Wilkinson, to pierce into his inmost soul, to speak daggers to him; and if he should not unfold the mystery of my birth, to fly from his house for ever. With a palpitating heart, I descended the stairs, rushed into the breakfast-room, and in a moment was at the feet of my persecutor. My hands were folded across my bosom, and my blue eyes raised to his face.

'Heyday, Cherry,' said he, laughing, 'this is a new flourish. There, child, now fancy yourself stabbed, and come to breakfast.'

'Hear me,' cried I.

'Why,' said he, 'you keep your countenance as stiff and steady as the face on our rapper.'

'A countenance,' cried I, 'is worth keeping, when the features are a proof of the descent, and vindicate the noble birth from the baseness of the adoption.'

'Come, come,' said he, 'your cup is full all this time.'

'And so is my heart,' cried I, pressing it expressively.

'What is the meaning of this mummery?' said he.

'Hear me, Wilkinson,' cried I, rising with dignified tranquillity. 'Candor is at once the most amiable and the most difficult of virtues; and there is more magnanimity in confessing an error, than in never committing one.'

'Confound your written sentences,' cried he, 'can't you come to the point?'

'Then, Sir,' said I, 'to be plain and explicit, learn, that I have discovered a mystery in my birth, and that you – you, Wilkinson, are not – my real Father!'

I pronounced these words with a measured emphasis, and one of my ineffable looks. Wilkinson coloured like scarlet and stared steadily in my face.

'Would you scandalize the mother that bore you?' cried he, fiercely.

'No, Wilkinson,' answered I, 'but you would, by calling

yourself my father.'

'And if I am not,' said he, 'what the mischief must *you* be?'

'An illustrious heiress,' cried I, 'snatched from my parents in her infancy; – snatched by thee, vile agent of the diabolical conspiracy!'

He looked aghast.

'Tell me then,' continued I, 'miserable man, tell me where my dear, my distracted father lingers out the remnant of his wretched days? My mother too – or say, am I indeed an orphan?'

Still he remained mute, and gazed on me with a searching intensity. I raised my voice:

'Expiate thy dire offences, restore an outcast to her birthright, make atonement, or *tremble at retribution!*'

I thought the farmer would have sunk into the ground.

'Nay,' continued I, lowering my voice, 'think not I thirst for vengeance. I myself will intercede for thee, and stay the sword of Justice. Poor wretch! I want not thy blood.'

The culprit had now reached the climax of agony, and writhed through every limb and feature.

'What!' cried I, 'can nothing move thee to confess thy crimes? Then hear me. Ere Aurora with rosy fingers shall unbar the eastern gate –'

'My child, my child, my dear darling daughter!' exclaimed this accomplished crocodile, bursting into tears, and snatching me to his bosom, 'what have they done to you? What phantom, what horrid disorder is distracting my treasure?'

'Unhand me, guileful adulator,' cried I, 'and try thy powers of tragedy elsewhere, for —*I know thee!*' I spoke, and extricated myself from his embrace.

'Dreadful, dreadful!' muttered he. 'Her sweet senses are lost.' Then turning to me: 'My love, my life, do not speak thus to your poor old father.'

'Father!' exclaimed I, accomplishing with much accuracy that hysterical laugh, which (gratefully let me own) I owe to your instruction; 'Father!'

The fat farmer covered his face with his hands, and rushed out of the room.

I relate the several conversations, in a dramatic manner, and word for word, as well as I can recollect them, since I remark that all heroines do the same. Indeed I cannot enough admire the fortitude of these charming creatures, who, while they are in momentary expectation of losing their lives, or their honours, or both, sit down with the utmost unconcern, and indite the wittiest letters in the world. They have even sufficient presence of mind to copy the vulgar dialect, uncooth phraseology, and bad grammar, of the villains whom they dread; and all this in the neatest and liveliest style imaginable.

Adieu.

LETTER III

Soon after my last letter, I was summoned to dinner. What heroine in distress but loaths her food? so I sent a message that I was unwell, and then solaced myself with a volume of the *Mysteries of Udolpho*, which had escaped the conflagration. At ten, I flung myself on my bed, in hopes to have dreams portentous of my future fate; for heroines are remarkably subject to a certain prophetic sort of night-mare. You remember the story that Ludovico read, of a spectre who beckons a baron from his castle in the dead of night, and leading him into a forest, points to his own corpse, and bids him bury it. Well, owing, I suppose, to my having just read this episode, and to my having fasted so long, I had the following dreams.

Methought a delicious odour of viands attracted me to the kitchen, where I found an iron pot upon the fire simmering in unison with my sighs. As I looked at it with a longing eye, the lid began to rise, and I beheld a half-boiled turkey stalk majestically forth. It beckoned me with its claw. I followed. It led me into the yard, and pointed to its own head and feathers, which were lying in a corner. I felt infinitely affected.

Straight the scene changed. I found myself seated at a dinner-table; and while I was expecting the repast, lo, the Genius of Dinner appeared. He had a mantle laced with silver eels, and his locks were dropping with costly soups. A crown of golden fishes

was on his head, and pheasants' wings at his shoulders. A flight of little tartlets fluttered around him, and the sky rained down hock, comfits, and Tokay. As I gazed on him, he vanished, in a sigh, that was strongly impregnated with the fumes of brandy. What vulgar, what disgusting visions, when I ought to have dreamt of nothing but coffins and ladies in black.

At breakfast, this morning, Wilkinson affected the most tender solicitude for my health; and as I now watched his words, I could discover in almost all that he said, something to confirm my surmise of his not being my father.

After breakfast a letter was handed to him, which he read, and then gave to me. It was as follows:

London.

In accepting your invitation to Sylvan Lodge, my respected friend, I am sure I shall confer a far greater favor on myself, than, as you kindly tell me, I shall on you. After an absence of seven years, spent in the seclusion of a college, and the fatigues of a military life, how delightful to revisit the scene of my childhood, and those who contribute to render its memory so dear! I left you while you were my guardian; I return to you with the assurances of finding you a friend. Let me but find you what I left you, and you shall take what title you please.

Yet, much as I flatter myself with your retaining all your former feelings towards me, I must expect a serious alteration in those of my friend Cherry. Will she again make me her playmate? Again climb my shoulders, and gallop me

round the lawn? Are we to renew all our little quarrels, then kiss and be friends? Shall we even recognize each other's features, through their change from childhood to maturity? There is, at least, one feature of our early days, that, I trust, has undergone no alteration – our mutual affection and friendship.

I fear I cannot manage matters so as to be with you before ten to-morrow night: remember I bespeak my old room.

Ever affectionately your's,

Robert Stuart.

To Gregory Wilkinson, Esq.

'There,' cries the farmer, 'if I have deprived you of an old woman, I have got you a young man. Large estates, you know; – handsome, fashionable; – come, pluck up a heart, my girl; ay, egad, and steal one too.'

I rose, gave him one of my ineffable looks, and retired to my chamber.

'So,' said I, locking my door, and flinging myself on the bed, 'this is something like misery. Here is a precious project against my peace. I am to be forced into marriage, am I? And with whom? A man whose legitimacy is unimpeached, and whose friends would certainly consent. His name Robert too: – master Bobby, as the servants used to call him. A fellow that mewed like a cat, when he was whipt. O my Bob! what a pretty monosyllable for a girl like me to pronounce. Now, indeed, my wretchedness is complete; the cup is full, even to overflowing. An orphan, or

at least an outcast; immured in the prison of a proud oppressor – threatened with a husband of decent birth, parentage and education – my governess gone, my novels burnt, what is left to me but flight? Yes, I will roam through the wide world in search of my parents; I will ransack all the sliding pannels and tapestries in Italy; I will explore Il Castello Di Udolpho, and will then enter the convent of Ursulines, or Carmelites, or Santa della Pieta, or the Abbey of La Trappe. Here I meet with nothing better than smiling faces and honest hearts; or at best, with but sneaking villains. No precious scoundrels are here, no horrors, or atrocities, worth mentioning. But abroad I shall encounter banditti, monks, daggers, racks – O ye celebrated terrors, when shall I taste of you?’

I then lay planning an elopement, till I was called to dinner.

Adieu.

LETTER IV

O my friend, such a discovery! – a parchment and a picture.
But you shall hear.

After dinner I stole into Wilkinson's study, in hopes of finding, before my flight, some record or relic, that might aid me in unravelling the mystery of my birth. As heroines are privileged to ransack private drawers, and read whatever they find there, I opened Wilkinson's scrutoire, without ceremony. But what were my sensations, when I discovered in a corner of it, an antique piece of tattered parchment, scrawled all over, in uncouth characters, with this frightful fragment.

This Indenture

For and in consideration of
Doth grant, bargain, release
Possession, and to his heirs and assigns
Lands of Sylvan Lodge, in the
Trees, stones, quarries.
Reasonable amends and satisfaction
This demise
Molestation of him the said Gregory Wilkinson
The natural life of
Cherry Wilkinson only daughter of
De Willoughby eldest son of Thomas
Lady Gwyn of Gwyn Castle.

O Bidley, does not your blood run cold at this horrible scrawl? for already you must have decyphered its terrific import. The part lost may be guessed from the part left. In short, it is a written covenant between this Gregory Wilkinson, and the miscreant (whom my being an heiress had prevented from enjoying the title and estate that would devolve to him at my death), stipulating to give Wilkinson 'Sylvan Lodge,' together with 'trees, stones, quarries, &c.' as 'reasonable amends and satisfaction,' for being the instrument of my 'Demise;' and declaring that there shall be 'no molestation of him the said Gregory Wilkinson,' for taking away 'the natural life of Cherry Wilkinson' – 'only daughter of –' something – 'De Willoughby, eldest son of Thomas' – What an unfortunate chasm! Then follows, 'Lady Gwyn of Gwyn Castle.' So that it is evident I am at least a De Willoughby, and if not noble myself, related to nobility. For what confirms me in this supposition of my relationship to Lady Gwyn, is an old portrait which I found a few minutes after, in one of Wilkinson's drawers, representing a young and beautiful female dressed in a superb style, and underneath it, in large letters, the name of, 'Nell Gwyn.'

Distraction! what shall I do? Whither turn? To sleep another night under the same roof with a wretch, who has bound himself to assassinate me, would be little short of madness. My plan, therefore, is already arranged for flight, and this very evening I mean to begin my pilgrimage.

The picture and parchment I will hide in my bosom during my journey; and I will also carry with me a small bandbox,

containing my satin slip, a pair of silk stockings, my spangled muslin, and all my jewels. For as some benevolent duchess may possibly take me into her family, and her son persecute me, I might just as well look decent, you know.

On mature deliberation, I have resolved to take but five guineas with me, since more would make me too comfortable, and tempt me, in some critical moment, to extricate myself from distress.

I shall leave the following billet on my toilet.

To Gregory Wilkinson, Farmer

Sir,

When this letter meets your eye, the wretched writer will be far removed from your machinations. She will be wandering the convex earth in pursuit of those parents, from whose dear embraces you have torn her. She will be flying from a Stuart, for whose detestable embraces you have designed her.

Your motive for this hopeful match I can guess. As you obtained one property by undertaking my death, you are probably promised another for effecting my marriage. Learn that the latter fate has more terrors for me than the former. But I have escaped both. As for the ten thousand pounds willed to me by your deceased wife, I suppose it will revert to you, as soon as I prove that I am not your daughter. Silly man! you might at this moment obtain that legacy, by

restoring me to my real parents.

Alas! Sir, you are indeed very wicked. Yet remember, that repentance is never too late, and that virtue alone is true nobility.

The much injured Cherubina.

All is prepared, and in ten minutes I commence my interesting expedition. London being the grand emporium of adventure, and the most likely place for obtaining information on the subject of my birth, I mean to bend my steps thither; and as Stuart is to be here at ten to-night, and as he must come the London road, I shall probably meet him. Should I recognize him, what a scene we shall have! but he cannot possibly recognize me, since I was only eight years old when we last parted.

Adieu.

LETTER V

The rain rattled and the wind whistled, as I tied on my bonnet for my journey. With the bandbox in my hand, I descended the stairs, and paused in the hall to listen. I heard a distant door shut, and steps advancing. Not a moment was to be lost, so I sprang forward, opened the hall door, and ran down the shrubbery.

'O peaceful shades!' exclaimed I, 'why must I leave you? In your retreats I should still find "pleasure and repose!"'

I then hastened into the London road, and pressed forward with a hurried step, while a violent tempest beat full against my face. Being in such distress, I thought it incumbent on me to compose a sonnet; which I copy for you.

SONNET

Bereft by wretches of endearing home,
And all the joys of parent and of friend,
Unsheltered midst the shattering storm I roam,
On mangled feet, and soon my life must end.
So the young lark, whom sire and mother tend,
Some fowler robs of sire and mother dear.
All day dejected in its nest it lies;
No food, no song, no sheltering pinion near.

Night comes instead, and tempests round it rise,
At morn, with gasping beak, and upward breast: it dies.

Four long and toilsome miles had I now walked with a dignified air; till, finding myself fatigued, and despairing of an interview with Stuart, I resolved to rest awhile, in the lone and uninhabited house which lies, you may recollect, on the grey common, about a hundred paces from the road. Besides, I was in duty bound to explore it, as a ruined pile.

I approached it. The wind moaned through the broken windows, and the rank grass rustled in the court. I entered. All was dark within; the boards creaked as I trod, the shutters flapped, and an ominous owl was hooting in the chimney. I groped my way along the hall, thence into a parlour – up stairs and down – not a horror to be found. No dead hand met my left hand, firmly grasping it, and drawing me forcibly forward; no huge eye-ball glared at me through a crevice. How disheartening!

The cold was now creeping through me; my teeth chattered, and my whole frame shook. I had seated myself on the stairs, and was weeping piteously, wishing myself safe at home, and in bed; and deploring the dire necessity which had compelled me to this frightful undertaking, when on a sudden I heard the sound of approaching steps. I sprang upon my feet with renovated spirits. Presently several persons entered the hall, and a vulgar accent cried:

'Jem, run down to the cellar and strike a light.'

'What can you want of me, now that you have robbed me?' said the voice of a gentleman.

'Why, young man,' answered a ruffian, 'we want you to write home for a hundred pounds, or some such trifle, which we will have the honour of spending for you. You must manufacture some confounded good lie about where you are, and why you send for the money; and one of us will carry the letter.'

'I assure you,' said the youth, 'I shall forge no such falsehood.'

'As you please, master,' replied the ruffian, 'but, the money or your life we must have, and that soon.'

'Will you trust my solemn promise to send you a hundred pounds?' said the other. 'My name is Stuart: I am on my way to Mr. Wilkinson, of Sylvan Lodge, so you may depend upon my sending you, by his assistance, the sum that you require, and I will promise not to betray you.'

'No, curse me if I trust,' cried the robber.

'Then curse me if I write,' said Stuart.

'Look you, Squire,' cried the robber. 'We cannot stand parlying with you now; we have other matters on hands. But we will lock you safe in the cellar, with pen, ink, and paper, and a lantern; and if you have not a fine bouncing lie of a letter, ready written when we come back, you are a dead man – that is all.'

'I am almost a dead man already,' said Stuart, 'for the cut you gave me is bleeding torrents.'

They now carried him down to the cellar, and remained there a few minutes, then returned, and locked the door outside.

'Leave the key in it,' says one, 'for we do not know which of us may come back first.' They then went away.

Now was the fate of my bitter enemy, the wily, the wicked Stuart, in my power; I could either liberate him, or leave him to perish. It struck me, that to miss such a promising interview, would be stupid in the extreme; and I felt a sort of glow at the idea of saying to him, live! besides, the fellow had answered the robbers with some spirit, so I descended the steps, unlocked the door, and bursting into the cellar, stood in an unparalleled attitude before him. He was sitting on the ground, and fastening a handkerchief about his wounded leg, but at my entrance, he sprang upon his feet.

'Away, save thyself!' cried I. 'She who restores thee to freedom flies herself from captivity. Look on these features – Thou wouldest have wrung them with despair. Look on this form – Thou wouldest have prest it in depravity. Hence, unhappy sinner, and learn, that innocence is ever victorious and ever merciful.'

'I am all amazement!' exclaimed he. 'Who are you? Whence come you? Why speak so angrily, yet act so kindly?'

I smiled disdain, and turned to depart.

'One moment more,' cried he. 'Here is some mistake; for I never even saw you before.'

'Often!' exclaimed I, and was again going.

'So you will leave me, my sweet girl,' said he, smiling. 'Now you have all this time prevented me from binding my wound, and you owe me some compensation for loss of blood.'

I paused.

'I would ask you to assist me,' continued he, 'but in binding one wound, I fear you would inflict another.'

Mere curiosity made me return two steps.

'I think, however, there would be healing in the touch of so fair a hand,' and he took mine as he spoke.

At this moment, my humanity conquered my reserve, and kneeling down, I began to fasten the bandage; but resolved on not uttering another word.

'What kindness!' cried he. 'And pray to whom am I indebted for it?'

No reply.

'At least, may I learn whether I can, in any manner, repay it?'

No reply.

'You said, I think, that you had just escaped from confinement?'

No reply.

'You will stain your beautiful locks,' said he: 'my blood should flow to defend, but shall not flow to disfigure them. Permit me to collect those charming tresses.'

'Oh! dear, thank you, Sir!' stammered I.

'And thank you, ten thousand times,' said he, as I finished my disagreeable task; 'and now never will I quit you till I see you safe to your friends.'

'You!' exclaimed I. 'Ah, traitor!'

He gazed at me with a look of pity. 'Farewell then, my kind

preserver,' said he; 'tis a long way to the next habitation, and should my wound open afresh and should I faint from loss of blood –'

'Dear me,' said I, 'let me assist you.'

He smiled. 'We will assist each other,' answered he; 'and now let us not lose a moment, for the robbers may return.'

He took the lantern to search the cellar for his watch and money. However, we saw nothing there but a couple of portmanteaus, some rusty pistols, and a small barrel, half full of gunpowder. We then left the house; but had hardly proceeded twenty yards, when he began to totter.

'I can go no farther,' said he, sinking down. 'I have lost so much blood, that my strength is entirely exhausted.'

'Pray Sir,' said I, 'exert yourself, and lean on me.'

'Impossible,' answered he; 'but fly and save your own life.'

'I will run for assistance,' said I, and flew towards the road, where I had just heard the sound of an approaching carriage. But on a sudden it stopped, voices began disputing, and soon after a pistol was fired. I paused in great terror, for I judged that these were the robbers again. What was I to do? When a heroine is reduced to extremities, she always does one of two things, either faints on the spot, or exhibits energies almost superhuman.

Faint I could not, so nothing remained for me, but energies almost superhuman. I pondered a moment, and a grand thought struck me. Recollecting the gunpowder in the cellar, I flew for it back to the ruin, carried it up to the hall, threw most of it on

the floor, and with the remainder, strewed a train, as I walked towards Stuart.

When I was within a few paces of him, I heard quick steps; and a hoarse voice vociferating, 'Who goes yonder with the light?' for I had brought the lantern with me.

'Fly!' cried Stuart, 'or you are lost.'

I snatched the candle from the lantern, applied it to the train, and the next moment dropped to the ground at the shock of the tremendous explosion that followed. A noise of falling timbers resounded through the ruin, and the robbers were heard scampering off in all directions.

'There!' whispered I, after a pause; 'there is an original horror for you; and all of my own contrivance. The villains have fled, the neighbours will flock to the spot, and you will obtain assistance.'

By this time we heard the people of the carriage running towards us.

'Stuart!' cried I, in an awful voice.

'My name indeed!' said he. 'This is completely inexplicable.'

'Stuart,' cried I, 'hear my parting words. *Never again*', (quoting his own letter,) '*will I make you my playmate; never again climb your shoulders, and gallop you round the lawn!* Ten o'clock is past. Go not to Sylvan Lodge to-night. She departed two hours ago. Look to your steps.'

I spoke this portentous warning, and fled across the common. Miss Wilkinson! Miss Wilkinson! sounded on the blast; but the wretch had discovered me too late. I ran about half a mile, and

then looking behind me, beheld the ruin in a blaze. Renovated by the sight of this horror, I walked another hour, without once stopping; till, to my surprise and dismay, I found myself utterly unable to proceed a step farther. This was the more provoking, because heroines often perform journies on foot that would founder fifty horses.

I now knocked at a farm-house, on the side of the road; but the people would not admit me. Soon after, I perceived a boy watching sheep in a field, and begged earnestly that he would direct me to some romantic cottage, shaded with vines and acacias, and inhabited by a lovely little Arcadian family.

'There is no family of that name in these here parts,' said he.

'*These here!*' cried I, 'Ah, my friend, that is not pastoral language. I see you will never pipe madrigals to a Chloris or a Daphne.'

'And what sort of nasty language is that?' cried he. 'Get along with you, do: I warrant you are a bad one.' And he began pelting me with tufts of grass.

At last, I contrived to shelter myself under a haycock, where I remained till day began to dawn. Then, stiff and chilled, I proceeded on my journey; and in a short time, met a little girl with a pail of milk, who consented to let me change my dress at her cottage, and conducted me thither.

It was a family of frights, flat noses and thick lips without mercy. No Annettes and Lubins, or Amorets and Phyllidas, or Florimels and Florellas; no little Cherubin and Seraphim

amongst them. However, I slipped on (for *slipping on* is the heroic mode of dressing) my spangled muslin, and joined their uglinesses at breakfast, resolving to bear patiently with their features. They tell me that a public coach to London will shortly pass this way, so I shall take a place in it.

On the whole, I see much reason to be pleased with what has happened hitherto. How fortunate that I went to the house on the common! I see plainly, that if adventure does not come to me, I must go to adventure. And indeed, I am authorized in doing so by the example of my sister heroines; who, with a noble disinterestedness, are ever the chief artificers of their own misfortunes; for, in nine cases out of ten, were they to manage matters like mere common mortals, they would avoid all those charming mischiefs which adorn their memoirs.

As for this Stuart, I know not what to think of him. I will, however, do him the justice to say, that he has a pleasing countenance; and although he neither kissed my hand, nor knelt to me, yet he had the decency to talk of 'wounds,' and my 'charming tresses.' Perhaps, if he had saved my life, instead of my having saved his; and if his name had consisted of three syllables ending in i or o; and, in fine, were he not an unprincipled profligate, the man might have made a tolerable hero. At all events, I heartily hate him; and his smooth words went for nothing.

The coach is in sight.

Adieu.

LETTER VI

'I shall find in the coach,' said I, approaching it, 'some emaciated Adelaide, or sister Olivia. We will interchange congenial looks – she will sigh, so will I – and we shall commence a vigorous friendship on the spot.'

Yes, I did sigh; but it was at the huge and hideous Adelaide that presented herself, as I got into the coach. In describing her, our wittiest novelists would say, that her nose lay modestly retired between her cheeks; that her eyes, which pointed inwards, seemed looking for it, and that her teeth were

'Like angels' visits; short and far between.'

She first eyed me with a supercilious sneer, and then addressed a diminutive old gentleman opposite, in whose face Time had ploughed furrows, and Luxury sown pimples.

'And so, Sir, as I was telling you, when my poor man died, I so bemoaned myself, that between swoons and hysterics, I got nervous all over, and was obliged to go through a regiment.'

I stared in astonishment. 'What!' thought I, 'a woman of her magnitude and vulgarity, faint, and have nerves? Impossible!'

'Howsomdever,' continued she, 'my Bible and my daughter Moll are great consolations to me. Moll is the dearest little thing in the world; as straight as a popular; then such dimples; and her eyes are the very squintessence of perfection. She has all her

catechism by heart, and moreover, her mind is uncontaminated by romances and novels, and such abominations.'

'Pray, Ma'am,' said I, civilly, 'may I presume to ask how romances and novels contaminate the mind?'

'Why, Mem,' answered she tartly, and after another survey. 'by teaching little misses to go gadding, Mem, and to be fond of the men, Mem, and of spangled muslin, Mem.'

'Ma'am,' said I, reddening, 'I wear spangled muslin because I have no other dress: and you should be ashamed of yourself for saying that I am fond of the men.'

'The cap fits you then,' cried she.

'Were it a fool's cap,' said I, 'perhaps I might return the compliment.'

I thought it expedient, at my first outset in life, to practise apt repartee, and emulate the infatuating sauciness, and elegant vituperation of Amanda, the Beggar Girl, and other heroines; who, when irritated, disdain to speak below an epigram.

'Pray, Sir,' said she, to our fellow traveller, 'what is your opinion of novels? Ant they all love and nonsense, and the most impossible lies possible?'

'They are fictions, certainly,' said he.

'Surely, Sir,' exclaimed I, 'you do not mean to call them fictions.'

'Why no,' replied he, 'not absolute fictions.'

'But,' cried the big lady, 'you don't pretend to call them true.'

'Why no,' said he, 'not absolutely true.'

'Then,' cried I, 'you are on both sides of the question at once.'
He trod on my foot.

'Ay, that you are,' said the big lady.

He trod on her foot.

'I am too much of a courtier,' said he, 'to differ from the ladies,' and he trod on both our feet.

'A courtier!' cried I: 'I should rather have imagined you a musician.'

'Pray why?' said he.

'Because,' answered I, 'you are playing the pedal harp on this lady's foot and mine.'

'I wished to produce harmony,' said he, with a submitting bow.

'At least,' said I, 'novels must be much more true than histories, because historians often contradict each other, but novelists never do.'

'Yet do not novelists contradict themselves?' said he.

'Certainly,' replied I, 'and there lies the surest proof of their veracity. For as human actions are always contradicting themselves, so those books which faithfully relate them, must do the same.'

'Admirable!' exclaimed he. 'And yet what proof have we that such personages as Schedoni, Vivaldi, Camilla, or Cecilia ever existed?'

'And what proof have we,' cried I, 'that such personages as Alfred the Great, Henry the Fifth, Elfrida, or Mary Queen of Scots, ever existed? I wonder at a man of sense like you. Why,

Sir, at this rate you might just as well question the truth of Guy Faux's attempt to blow up the Parliament-House, or of my having blown up a house last night.'

'You blow up a house!' exclaimed the big lady with amazement.

'Madam,' said I, modestly, 'I scorn ostentation, but on my word and honour, 'tis fact.'

'Of course you did it accidentally,' said the gentleman.

'You wrong me, Sir,' replied I; 'I did it by design.'

'You will swing for it, however,' cried the big lady.

'Swing for it!' said I; 'a heroine swing? Excellent! I presume, Madam, you are unacquainted with the common law of romance.'

'Just,' said she, 'as you seem to be with the common law of England.'

'I despise the common law of England,' cried I.

'Then I fancy,' said she, 'it would not be much amiss if you were hanged.'

'And I fancy,' retorted I, nodding at her big figure, 'it would not be much amiss if you were quartered.'

Instantly she took out a prayer-book, and began muttering over it with the most violent piety and indignation.

Meantime the gentleman coincided in every syllable that I said, praised my parts and knowledge, and discovered evident symptoms of a discriminating mind, and an amiable heart. That I am right in my good opinion of him is most certain; for he

himself assured me that it would be quite impossible to deceive me, I am so penetrating. In short, I have set him down as the benevolent guardian, whom my memoirs will hereafter celebrate, for having saved me from destruction.

Indeed he has already done so. For, when our journey was almost over, he told me, that my having set fire to the ruin might prove a most fatal affair; and whispered that the big lady would probably inform against me. On my pleading the prescriptive immunities of heroines, and asserting that the law could never lay its fangs on so ethereal a name as Cherubina, he solemnly swore to me, that he once knew a golden-haired, azure-eyed heroine, called Angelica Angela Angelina, who was hanged at the Old Bailey for stealing a broken lute out of a haunted chamber; and while my blood was running cold at the recital, he pressed me so cordially to take refuge in his house, that at length, I threw myself on the protection of the best of men.

I now write from his mansion in Grosvenor Square, where we have just dined. His name is Betterton; he has no family, and is possessed of a splendid independence. Multitudes of liveried menials watch his nod; and he does me the honour to call me cousin. My chamber too is charming. The curtains hang quite in a new style, but I do not like the pattern of the drapery.

To-morrow I mean to go shopping; and I may, at the same time, pick up some adventures on my way; for business must be minded.

Adieu.

LETTER VII

Soon after my last letter, I was summoned to supper. Betterton appeared much interested in my destiny, and I took good care to inspire him with a due sense of my forlorn and unprotected state. I told him that I had not a friend in the wide world, related to him my lamentable tale, and as a proof of my veracity shewed him the parchment, the picture, and the mole.

To my great surprise, he said that he considered my high birth improbable; and then began advising me to descend from my romantic flights, as he called them, and to seek after happiness instead of misery.

'In this town,' continued he, after a long preamble, 'your charms would be despotic, if unchained by legal constraints. But for ever distant from you be that cold and languid tie which erroneous policy invented. For you be the sacred community of souls, the mystic union, whose tie of bondage is the sway of passion, the wish, the licence, and impulse the law.'

'Pretty expressions enough,' said I, 'only I cannot comprehend them.'

'Charming girl!' cried he, while he conjured up a fiend of a smile, and drew a brilliant from his finger, 'accept this ring, and the signature of the hand that has worn it, securing to you five hundred a-year, while you remain under my protection.'

'Ha, monster!' exclaimed I, 'and is this thy vile design?'

So saying, I flung the ruffian from me, then rushed down stairs, opened the door, and quick as lightning darted along the streets.

At last, panting for breath, I paused underneath a portico. It was now midnight. Not a wheel, not a hoof fatigued the pavement, or disturbed the slumbering mud of the metropolis. But soon steps and soft voices broke the silence, and a youth, encircling a maiden's waist with his arm, and modulating the most mellifluous phraseology, passed by me. Another couple succeeded, and another, and another. The town seemed swarming with heroes and heroines. 'Fortunate pairs!' ejaculated I, 'at length ye enjoy the reward of your incomparable constancy and virtue. Here, after a long separation, meeting by chance, and in extreme distress, ye pour forth the pure effusions of your souls. O blissful termination of unexampled miseries!'

I now perceived, on the steps of a house, a fair and slender form, robed in white. She was sitting with her elbow in her lap, and her head leaning on one side, within her hand.

'She seems a sister in misfortune,' said I; 'so, should she but have a Madona face, and a name ending in a, we will live, we will die together.'

I then approached, and discovered a countenance so pale, so pensive, so Roman, that I could almost have knelt and worshipped it.

'Fair unfortunate,' said I, taking her hand and pressing it; 'interesting unknown, say by what name am I to address so gentle

a sister in misery.'

'Eh? What?' cried she, in a tone somewhat coarser than I was prepared to expect.

'May I presume on my sudden predilection,' said I, 'and inquire your name?'

'Maria,' replied she, rising from her seat; 'and now I must be gone.'

'And where are you going, Maria?' said I.

'To the Devil,' said she.

'Alas! my love,' whispered I, 'sorrow hath bewildered thee. Impart to me the cause of thy distress, and perhaps I can alleviate, if not relieve it. I am myself a miserable orphan; but happy, thrice happy, could I clasp a sympathetic bosom, in this frightful wilderness of houses and faces, where, alas! I know not a human being.'

'Then you are a stranger here?' said she quickly.

'I have been here but a few hours,' answered I.

'Have you money?' she demanded.

'Only four guineas and a half,' replied I, taking out my purse.

'Perhaps you are in distress – perhaps – forgive this officiousness – not for worlds would I wound your delicacy, but if you want assistance –'

'I have only this old sixpence upon earth,' interrupted she, 'and there 'tis for you, Miss.'

So saying, she put sixpence into my purse, which I had opened while I was speaking.

'Generous angel!' cried I.

'Now we are in partnership, a'nt we?' said she.

'Yes, sweet innocent,' answered I, 'we are partners in grief.'

'And as grief is dry,' cried she, 'we will go moisten it.'

'And where shall we moisten it, Maria?' said I.

'In a pothouse,' cried she. 'It will do us good.'

'O my Maria!' said I, 'never, never!'

'Why then give me back my sixpence,' cried she, snatching at my purse; but I held it fast, and, springing from her, ran away.

'Stop thief, stop thief!' vociferated she.

In an instant, I heard a sort of rattling noise from several quarters, and an old fellow, called a watchman, came running out of a wooden box, and seized me by the shoulder.

'She has robbed me of my purse,' exclaimed the wily wanton. "'Tis a green one, and has four guineas and a half in it, besides a curious old sixpence.'

The watchman took it from me, and examined it.

"'Tis my purse,' cried I, 'and I can swear it.'

'You lie!' said the little wretch; 'you know well that you snatched it out of my hand, when I was going to give you sixpence, out of charity.'

Horror and astonishment struck me dumb; and when I told my tale, the watchman declared that both of us must remain in custody, till next morning; and then be carried before the magistrate. Accordingly, he escorted us to the watchhouse, a room filled with smoke and culprits; where we stayed all night,

in the midst of swearing, snoring, laughing and crying.

In the morning we were carried before a magistrate; and with step superb, arms folded, and neck erect, I entered the room.

'Pert enough,' said the magistrate; and turning from me, continued his examination of two men who stood near him.

It appeared that one of them (whose name was Jerry Sullivan) had assaulted the other, on the following occasion. A joint sum of money had been deposited in Sullivan's hands, by this other, and a third man, his partner, which sum Sullivan had consented to keep for them, and had bound himself to return, whenever both should go together to him, and demand it. Sometime afterwards, one of them went to him, and told him that the other being ill, and therefore unable to come for the money, had empowered him to get it. Sullivan, believing him, gave the money, and when he next met the other, mentioned the circumstance. The other denied having authorized what had been done, and demanded his own share of the deposit from Sullivan, who refused it. Words ensued, and Sullivan having knocked him down, was brought before the magistrate, to be committed for an assault.

'Have you any defence?' said the magistrate to him.

'None that I know of,' answered he, 'only I would knock him down again, if he touched my honour again.'

'And is this your defence?' said the magistrate.

'It is so,' replied Sullivan, 'and I hope your worship likes it, as well as I like your worship.'

'So well,' said the magistrate, 'that I now mean to do you a

signal service.'

'Why then,' cried Sullivan, 'may the heavens smile on you.'

'And that service,' continued the magistrate, 'is to commit you immediately.'

'Why then,' cried Sullivan, 'may the Devil inconvenience you!'

'By your insolence, you should be an Irishman,' said the magistrate.

'I was an Irishman forty years ago,' replied Sullivan, 'and I don't suppose I am anything else now. Though I have left my country, I scorn to change my birth-place.'

'Commit him,' said the magistrate.

Just then, a device struck me, which I thought might extricate the poor fellow; so, having received permission, I went across, and whispered it to him.

'The heavens smile on you,' cried he, and then addressed his accuser: 'If I can prove to you that I have not broken our agreement about the money, will you promise not to prosecute me for this assault?'

'With all my heart,' answered he; 'for if you have not broken our agreement, you must have the money still, which is all I want.'

'And will your worship,' said Sullivan, 'permit this compromise, and stand umpire between us?'

'I have not the least objection,' answered the magistrate; 'for I would rather be the means of your fulfilling an agreement, than of your suffering a punishment; and would rather recompense your accuser with money than with revenge.'

'Well then,' said Jerry to his accuser; 'was not our agreement, that I should return the money to yourself and your partner, whenever you came together to me, and asked for it?'

'Certainly,' said the man.

'And did you both ever come together to me, and ask for it?'

'Never,' said the man.

'Then I have not broken our agreement,' cried Sullivan.

'But you cannot keep it,' said the other; 'for you have given away the money.'

'No matter for that,' cried Sullivan, 'provided I have it when both of you come to demand it. But I believe that will be never, for the fellow who ran off will not much like to shew his face again. So now will your worship please to decide.'

The magistrate, after complimenting me upon my ingenuity, confessed, he said, with much unwillingness, that Sullivan had made out his case clearly. The poor accuser was therefore obliged to abide by his promise, and Sullivan was dismissed, snapping his fingers, and offering to treat the whole world with a tankard.

My cause came after, and the treacherous Maria was ordered to state her evidence.

But what think you, Biddy, of my keeping you in suspense, till my next letter? The practice of keeping in suspense is quite common among novelists. Nay, there is a lady in the Romance of the Highlands, who terminates, not her letter, but her life, much in the same style. For when dying, she was about to disclose the circumstances of a horrid murder, and would have done so too,

had she not unfortunately expended her last breath in a beautiful description of the verdant hills, rising sun, all nature smiling, and a few streaks of purple in the east.

Adieu.

LETTER VIII

Maria being ordered to state her evidence, 'That I will,' said she, 'only I am so ashamed of having been out late at night – but I must tell your worship how that happened.'

'You need not,' said the magistrate.

'Well then,' she continued, 'I was walking innocently home, with my poor eyes fixed upon the ground, for fear of the fellors, when what should I see, but this girl, talking on some steps, with a pickpocket, I fancy, for he looked pretty decent. So I ran past them, for I was so ashamed you can't think; and this girl runs after me, and says, says she, "The fellor wouldn't give me a little shilling," says she, "so by Jingo, you must," says she.'

'By Jingo! I say by Jingo?' cried I. 'St. Catherine guard me! Indeed, your Excellenza, my only oath is Santa Maria.'

'She swore at me like a trooper,' continued the little imp, 'so I pulled out my purse in a fright, and she snatched it from me, and ran away, and I after her, calling stop thief; and this is the whole truth 'pon my honour and word, and as I hope to be married.'

The watchman declared that he had caught me running away, that he had found the purse in my hand, and that Maria had described it, and the money contained in it, accurately.

'And will your worship,' said Maria, 'ask the girl to describe the sixpence that is in it?'

The magistrate turned to me.

'Really,' said I, 'as I never even saw it, I cannot possibly pretend to describe it.'

'Then I can,' cried she. 'Tis bent in two places, and stamped on one of its sides with a D and an H.'

The sixpence was examined, and answered her description of it.

'The case is clear enough,' said the magistrate, 'and now, Miss, try whether you can advocate your own cause as well as Jerry Sullivan's.'

Jerry, who still remained in the room, came behind me, and whispered, 'Troth, Miss, I have no brains, but I have a bit of an oath, if that is of any use to you. I would sell my soul out of gratitude, at any time.'

'Alas! your Excellenza,' said I to the magistrate, 'frail is the tenure of that character, which has Innocence for its friend, and Infamy for its foe. Life is a chequered scene of light and shade; life is a jest, a stage –'

'Talking of life is not the way to save it,' said the magistrate. 'Less sentiment and more point, if you please.'

I was silent, but looked anxiously towards the door.

'Are you meditating an escape?' asked he.

'No,' said I, 'but just wait a little, and you shall see what an interesting turn affairs will take.'

'Come,' cried he, 'proceed at once, or say you will not.'

'Ah, now,' said I, 'can't you stop one moment, and not spoil everything by your impatience. I am only watching for the tall,

elegant young stranger, with an oval face, who is to enter just at this crisis, and snatch me from perdition.'

'Did he promise to come?' said the magistrate.

'Not at all,' answered I, 'for I have never seen the man in my life. But whoever rescues me now, you know, is destined to marry me hereafter. That is the rule.'

'You are an impudent minx,' said the magistrate, 'and shall pay dear for your jocularities. Have you parents?'

'I cannot tell.'

'Friends?'

'None.'

'Where do you live?'

'No where.'

'At least 'tis plain where you will die. What is your name?'

'Cherubina.'

'Cherubina what?'

'I know not.'

'Not know? I protest this is the most hardened profligate I have ever met. Commit her instantly.'

I now saw that something must be done; so summoning all my most assuasive airs, I related the whole adventure, just as it had occurred.

Not a syllable obtained belief. The fatal sixpence carried all before it. I recollected the fate of Angelica Angela Angelina, and shuddered. What should I do? One desperate experiment remained.

'There were four guineas and half a guinea in the purse,' said I to the girl.

'To be sure there were,' cried she. 'How cunning you are to tell me my own news.'

'Now,' said I, 'answer me at once, and without hesitation, whether it is the half guinea or one of the guineas that is notched in three places, like the teeth of a saw?'

She paused a little, and then said; 'I have a long story to tell about those same notches. I wanted a silk handkerchief yesterday, so I went into a shop to buy one, and an impudent ugly young fellow was behind the counter. Well, he began ogling me so, I was quite ashamed; and says he to me, there is the change of your two pound note, says he, a guinea and a half in gold, says he, and you are vastly handsome, says he. And there are three notches in one of the coins, says he; guess which, says he, but it will pass all the same, says he, and you are prodigious pretty, says he. So indeed, I was so ashamed, that though I looked at the money, and saw the three notches, I have quite forgotten which they were in – guinea or half guinea; for my sight spread so, with shame at his compliments, that the half guinea looked as big as the guinea. Well, out I ran, blushing like a poor, terrified little thing, and sure enough, a horrid accident was near happening me in my hurry. For I was just running under the wheel of a carriage, when a gentleman catches me in his arms, and says he, you are prodigious pretty, says he; and I frowned so, you can't think; and I am sure, I never remembered to look at the money since; and

this is the whole truth, I pledge you my credit and honour, and by the *immaculate Venus*, as the gentlemen say.'

The accusing witness who insulted the magistrate's bench with the oath, leered as she gave it in; and the recording clerk, as he wrote it down, drew a line under the words, and pointed them out for ever.

'Then you saw the three notches?' said I.

'As plain as I see you now,' replied she, 'and a guilty poor thing you look.'

'And yet,' said I, 'if his Excellenza examines, he will find that there is not a single notch in any one of the coins.'

"Tis the case indeed,' said the magistrate, after looking at them.

He then questioned both of us more minutely, and turning to me, said, 'Your conduct, young woman, is unaccountable: but as your accuser has certainly belied herself, she has probably belied you. The money, by her own account, cannot be her's, but as it was found in your possession, it may be your's. I therefore feel fully justified in restoring it to you, and in acquitting you of the crime laid to your charge.'

Jerry Sullivan uttered a shout of joy. I received the purse with silent dignity, gave Maria back her sixpence, and hurried out of the room.

Jerry followed me.

'Why then,' cried he, shaking me heartily by the hand, as we walked along, 'only tell me how I can serve you, and 'tis I am the

man that will do it; though, to be sure, you must be the greatest little scapegrace (bless your heart!) in the three kingdoms.'

'Alas!' said I, 'you mistake my character. I am heiress to an immense territory, and a heroine – the proudest title that can adorn a woman.'

'I never heard of that title before,' said Jerry, 'but I warrant 'tis no better than it should be.'

'You shall judge for yourself,' said I. 'A heroine is a young lady, rather taller than usual, and often an orphan; at all events, possessed of the finest eyes in the world. Though her frame is so fragile, that a breath of wind might scatter it like chaff, it is sometimes stouter than a statue of cast iron. She blushes to the tips of her fingers, and when other girls would laugh, she faints. Besides, she has tears, sighs, and half sighs, at command; lives a month on a mouthful, and is addicted to the pale consumption.'

'Why then, much good may it do her,' cried Jerry; 'but in my mind, a phthisicky girl is no great treasure; and as for the fashion of living a month on a mouthful, let me have a potatoe and chop for my dinner, and a herring on Saturday nights, and I would not give a farthing for all the starvation you could offer me. So when I finish my bit of herring, my wife says to me, winking, a fish loves water, says she, and immediately she fetches me a dram.'

'These are the delights of vulgar life,' said I. 'But to be thin, innocent, and lyrical; to bind and unbind her hair; in a word, to be the most miserable creature that ever augmented a brook with tears, these, my friend, are the glories of a heroine.'

'Famous glories, by dad!' cried Jerry; 'but as I am a poor man, and not particular, I can contrive to make shift with health and happiness, and to rub through life without binding my hair. – Bind it? by the powers, 'tis seldom I even comb it.'

As I was all this time without my bonnet (for in my hurry from Betterton's I had left it behind me), I determined to purchase one. So I went into a shop, with Jerry, and asked the woman of it for an interesting and melancholy turn of bonnet.

She looked at me with some surprise, but produced several; and I fixed on one which resembled a bonnet that I had once seen in a picture of a wood nymph. So I put it on me, wished the woman good morning, and was walking away.

'You have forgotten to pay me, Miss,' said she.

'True,' replied I, 'but 'tis no great matter. Adieu.'

'You shall pay me, however,' cried she, ringing a bell, and a man entered instantly from an inner room.

'Here is a hussey,' exclaimed she, 'who refuses to pay me for a bonnet.'

'My sweet friend,' said I to her, 'a distressed heroine, which I am, I assure you, runs in debt every where. Besides, as I like your face, I mean to implicate you in my plot, and make you one of the *dramatis personæ* in the history of my life. Probably you will turn out to be my mother's nurse's daughter. At all events, I give you my word, I will pay you at the *denouement*, when the other characters come to be provided for; and meantime, to secure your acquaintance, I must insist on owing you money.'

'By dad,' said Jerry, 'that is the first of all ways to lose an acquaintance.'

'The bonnet or the money!' cried the man, stepping between me and the door.

'Neither the one nor the other,' answered I. 'No, Sir, to run in debt is part of my plan, and by what right dare you interfere to save me from ruin? Pretty, indeed, that a girl at my time of life cannot select her own misfortunes! Sir, your conduct astonishes, shocks, disgusts me.'

To such a reasonable appeal the man could not reply, so he snatched at my bonnet. Jerry jumped forward, and arrested his arm.

'Hands off, bully!' cried the shopman.

'No, in troth,' said Jerry; 'and the more you bid me, the more I won't let you go. If her ladyship has set her heart on a robbery, I am not the man to balk her fancy. Sure, did not she save me from a gaol? And sure, would not I help her to a bonnet? A bonnet? 'Pon my conscience, she shall have half a dozen. 'Tis I that would not much mind being hanged for her!'

So saying, he snatched a parcel of bonnets from the counter, and was instantly knocked down by the shopman. He rose, and both began a furious conflict. In the midst of it, I was attempting to rush from the shop, when I found my spangled muslin barbarously seized by the woman, who tore it to pieces in the struggle; and pulling off the bonnet, gave me a horrid slap in the face. I would have cuffed her nicely in return, only that

she was more than my match; but I stamped at her with my feet. At first I was shocked at having made this unheroic gesture; till I luckily recollected, that Amanda once stamped at an amorous footman.

Meantime Jerry had stunned his adversary with a blow; so taking this opportunity of escape, he dragged me with him from the shop, and hurried me through several streets, without uttering a word.

At length I was so much exhausted, that we stopped; and strange figures we were: Jerry's face smeared with blood, nothing on my head, my long hair hanging loose about me, and my poor spangled muslin all in rags.

'Here,' said Jerry to an old woman who was selling apples at the corner of the street, 'take care of this young body, while I fetch her a coach.' And off he ran.

The woman looked at me with a suspicious eye, so I resolved to gain her good opinion. It struck me that I might extract pathos from an apple, and taking one from her stall, 'An apple, my charming old friend,' said I, 'is the symbol of discord. Eve lost Paradise by tasting it, Paris exasperated Juno by throwing it.' – A loud burst of laughter made me turn round, and I perceived a crowd already at my elbow.

'Who tore her gown?' said one.

'Ask her spangles,' said another.

'Or her hair,' cried a third.

"'Tis long enough to hang her,' cried a fourth.

'The king's hemp will do that job for her,' added a fifth.

A pull at my muslin assailed me on the one side, and when I turned about, my hair was thrown over my face on the other.

'Good people,' said I, 'you know not whom you thus insult. I am descended from illustrious, and perhaps Italian parents –'

A butcher's boy advanced, and putting half a hat under his arm; 'Will your ladyship,' said he, 'permit me to hand you into that there shop?'

I bowed assent, and he led me, nothing loath. Peals of laughter followed us.

'Now,' said I, as I stood at the door, 'I will reward your gallantry with half a guinea.'

As I drew forth my money, I saw his face reddening, his cheeks swelling, and his mouth pursing up.

'What delicate sensibility!' said I, 'but positively you must not refuse this trifle.'

He took it, and then, just think, the brute laughed in my face!

'I will give this guinea,' cried I, quite enraged, 'to the first who knocks that ungrateful down.'

Hardly had I spoken, when he was laid prostrate. He fell against the stall, upset it, and instantly the street was strewn with apples, nuts, and cakes. He rose. The battle raged. Some sided with him, some against him. The furious stall-woman pelted both parties with her own apples; while the only discreet person there, was a ragged little girl, who stood laughing at a distance, and eating one of the cakes.

In the midst of the fray, Jerry returned with a coach. I sprang into it, and he after me.

'The guinea, the guinea!' cried twenty voices at once. At once twenty apples came rattling against the glasses.

'Pay me for my apples!' cried the woman.

'Pay me for my windows!' cried the coachman.

'Drive like a devil,' cried Jerry, 'and I will pay you like an emperor!'

'Much the same sort of persons, now-a-days,' said the coachman, and away we flew. The guinea, the guinea! died along the sky. I thought I should have dropt with laughter.

My dear friend, do you not sympathize with my sorrows? Desolate, destitute, and dependent on strangers, what is to become of me? I declare I am extremely unhappy.

I write from Jerry's house, where I have taken refuge for the present; and as soon as I am settled elsewhere, you shall hear from me again.

Adieu.

LETTER IX

Jerry Sullivan is a petty woollendraper in St. Giles's, and occupies the ground-floor of a small house. At first his wife and daughter eyed me with some suspicion; but when he told them how I had saved him from ruin, and that I was somehow or other a great lady in disguise, they became very civil, and gave me a tolerable breakfast. Then fatigued and sleepy, I threw myself on a bed, and slept till two.

I woke with pains in all my limbs; but anxious to forward the adventures of my life, I rose, and called mother and daughter to a consultation on my dress. They furnished me with their best habiliments, for which I agreed to give them two guineas; and I then began equipping myself.

While thus employed, I heard the voices of husband and wife in the next room, rising gradually to the matrimonial key. At last the wife exclaims,

'A Heroine? I will take my corporal oath, there is no such title in all England; and if she has the four guineas, she never came honestly by them; so the sooner she parts with them the better; and not a step shall she stir in our cloathes till she launches forth three of them. So that's that, and mine's my own, and how do you like my manners, Ignoramus?'

'How dare you call me Ignoramus?' cried Jerry. 'Blackguard if you like, but no ignoramus, I believe. I know what I could call

you, though.'

'Well,' cried she, 'saving a drunkard and a scold, what else can you call me?'

'I won't speak another word to you,' said Jerry; 'I would not speak to you, if you were lying dead in the kennel.'

'Then you're an ugly unnatural beast, so you are,' cried she, 'and your Miss is no better than a bad one; and I warrant you understand one another well.'

This last insinuation was sufficient for me. What! remain in a house where suspicion attached to my character? What! act so diametrically, so outrageously contrary to the principle of aspersed heroines, who are sure on such occasions to pin up a bundle, and set off? I spurned the mean idea, and resolved to decamp instantly. So having hastened my toilette, I threw three guineas on the table, and then looked for a pen and ink, to write a sonnet on gratitude. I could find nothing, however, but a small bit of chalk, and with this substitute, I scratched the following lines on the wall.

SONNET ON GRATITUDE

Addressed to Jerry Sullivan

As some deputed angel, from the spheres

Of empyrean day, with nectar dewed,
Through firmamental wildernesses steers,
To starless tracts of black infinitude —

Here the chalk failed me, and just at the critical moment for my simile had also failed me, nor could I have ever gotten beyond infinitude. I got to the street door, however, and without fear of being overheard; to such an altitude of tone had words arisen between husband and wife, who were now contesting a most delicate point — which of them had beaten the other last.

'I know,' cried Jerry, 'that I gave the last blow.'

'Then take the first now,' cried his wife, as I shut the door.

Anticipating the probability that I should have occasion for Jerry's services again, I marked the number of the house, and then hastened along the street. It was swarming and humming like a hive of bees, and I felt as if I could never escape alive out of it. Here a carriage almost ran over me; there a waggoner's whip almost blinded me. Now a sweep brushed against me. 'Beauty!' cried a man like a monkey, and chucked my chin, while a fellow with a trunk shoved me aside.

I now turned into a street called Bond Street, where a long procession of carriages was passing. I remarked that the coachmen (they could not be gentlemen, I am sure) appeared to stand in great estimation; for the ladies of one carriage used to nod most familiarly to the driver of another. Indeed, I had often heard it said, that ladies and coachmen are sometimes

particularly intimate; but till now I could never believe it.

The shops next attracted my attention, and I stopped to look at some of them. You cannot conceive any thing more charming: Turkish turbans, Indian shawls, pearls, diamonds, fans, feathers, laces; all shewn for nothing at the windows. I had but one guinea remaining!

At length feeling tired and hungry, and my feet being quite foundered, I determined to lose no farther time in taking lodgings. Perceiving 'Apartments to let,' written on a door, I rapped, and a servant girl opened it.

'Pray,' said I to her, 'are your northern apartments uninhabited?'

She replied that there were two rooms on the second floor disengaged, and comfortably furnished.

'I do not want them comfortable,' said I; 'but are they furnished with tapestry and old pictures? That is the point.'

'There is only master's face over the chimney,' said she.

'Do the doors creek on their hinges?' asked I.

'That they don't,' said she, 'for I oiled 'em all only yesterday.'

'Then you shewed a depraved taste,' cried I. 'At least, are the apartments haunted?'

'Lauk, no!' said she, half shutting the door.

'Well then, my good girl, tell me candidly whether your mistress is like the landladies one reads of. Is she a fat, bustling little woman, who would treat me to tea, cakes, and plenty of gossip, and at the end of a week, say to me, "out, hussy, tramp

this moment;" or is she a pale, placid matron, worn to a thread-paper, and whose story is interwoven with mine?"

'Deuce take your impudence!' cried she, slapping the door in my face.

I tried other houses with no better success; and even when I merely asked for common lodgings, without stipulating for spectres or tapestry, the people would not accommodate me, unless I could procure some recommendation besides my own.

As I had no friend to give me a character, it became necessary to make a friend; so I began to look about for a fit subject. Passing a shop where eggs and butter were sold, and lodgings to be let, I perceived a pretty woman sitting behind the counter, and a fine infant playing upon it. I thought that all this bore an auspicious appearance; so I tottered into the shop, and placing myself opposite to the woman, I gazed at her with an engaging and gentle intelligence. She demanded my business.

'Interesting creature!' whispered I, pressing her hand as it rested on the counter. 'O may that little rosy fatling –'

Unfortunately there was an egg in the hand that I took, which I crushed by the compression, and the yolk came oozing between her fingers.

'Reptile!' cried she, as she threw the fragments in my face.

'Savage!' cried I, as I ran out of the shop, and wiped off the eggy dishonours.

At length I reached an immense edifice, which appeared to me the castle of some brow-knitting baron. Ponderous columns

supported it, and statues stood in the niches. The portal lay open. I glided into the hall. As I looked anxiously around, I beheld a cavalier descending a flight of steps. He paused, muttered some words, laid his hand upon his heart, dropped it, shook his head, and proceeded.

I felt instantly interested in his fate; and as he came nearer, perceived, that surely never lighted on this orb, which he hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. His form was tall, his face oval, and his nose aquiline. Seducing sweetness dwelled in his smile, and as he pleased, his expressive eyes could sparkle with rapture, or beam with sensibility. Once more he paused, frowned, and waving his arm, exclaimed, with an elegant energy of enunciation!

'To watch the minutes of this night, that if again this apparition come, he may approve our eyes, and speak to it!'

That moment a pang, poignant, but delicious, transfixed my bosom. Too well I felt and confessed it the dart of love. In sooth, too well I knew that my heart was lost to me for ever. Silly maiden! But fate had decreed it.

I rushed forward, and sank at the feet of the stranger.

'Pity and protect a destitute orphan!' cried I. 'Here, in this hospitable castle, I may hope for repose and protection. Oh, Signor, conduct me to your respected mother, the Baroness, and let me pour into her ear my simple and pathetic tale.'

'O ho! simple and pathetic!' cried he. 'Come, my dear, let me hear it.'

I seated myself on the steps, and told him my whole story. During the recital, the noble youth betrayed extreme sensibility. Sometimes he turned his head aside to conceal his emotion; and sometimes stifled a hysterical laugh of agony.

When I had ended, he begged to know whether I was quite certain that I had ten thousand pounds in my power. I replied, that as Wilkinson's daughter, I certainly had; but that the property must devolve to some one else, as soon as I should be proved a nobleman's daughter.

He then made still more accurate inquiries about it; and after having satisfied himself:

'Beshrew my heart!' exclaimed he; 'but I will avenge your injuries; and ere long you shall be proclaimed and acknowledged the Lady Cherubina De Willoughby. Meantime, as it will be prudent for you to lie concealed from the search of your enemies, hear the project which I have formed. I lodge at present in Drury-lane, an obscure street; and as one apartment in the house is unoccupied, you can hire it, and remain there, a beautiful recluse, till fortune and my poor efforts shall rescue from oppression the most enchanting of her sex.'

He spoke, and seizing my hand, carried it to his lips.

'What!' cried I, 'do you not live in this castle, and are you not its noble heir?'

'This is no castle,' said he, 'but Covent Garden Theatre.'

'And you?' asked I with anxiety.

'Am an actor,' answered he.

'And your name?'

'Is Abraham Grundy.'

'Then, Mr. Abraham Grundy,' said I, 'allow me to have the satisfaction of wishing you a very good evening.'

'Stay!' cried he, detaining me, 'and you shall know the whole truth. My birth is illustrious, and my real name Lord Altamont Mortimer Montmorenci. But like you, I am enveloped in a cloud of mysteries, and compelled to the temporary resource of acting. Hereafter I will acquaint you with the most secret particulars of my life; but at present, you must trust to my good faith, and accept of my protection.'

'Generous Montmorenci!' exclaimed I, giving him my hand, which he pressed upon his heart.

'Now,' said he, 'you must pass at these lodgings as my near relation, or they will not admit you.'

At first, I hesitated at deviating from veracity; but soon consented, on recollecting, that though heroines begin with praising truth, necessity makes them end with being the greatest story-tellers in the world. Nay, Clarissa Harlowe, when she had a choice, often preferred falsehood to fact.

During our walk to the lodgings, Montmorenci instructed me how to play my part, and on our arrival, introduced me to the landlady, who was about fifty, and who looked as if the goddess of fasting had bespoken her for a hand-maid.

With an amiable effrontery, and a fine easy flow of falsehood, he told her, as we had concerted, that I was his second cousin, and

an orphan; my name Miss Donald (Amanda's assumed name), and that I had come to Town for the purpose of procuring by his interest, an appointment at the Theatre.

The landlady said she would move heaven and earth, and her own bed, for so good a gentleman; and then consented to give me her sleeping-room on the ground-floor, at some trifle or other, – I forget what. I have also the use of a parlour adjoining it. There is, however, nothing mysterious in these chambers, but a dark closet belonging to the parlour, whither I may fly for refuge, when pursued by my persecutors.

Thus, my friend, the plot of my history begins to take a more interesting shape, and a fairer order of misfortune smiles upon me. Trust me, there is a taste in distress as well as in millinery. Far be from me the loss of eyes or limbs, such publicity as the pillory affords, or the grossness of a jail-fever. I would be sacrificed to the lawless, not to the laws, dungeoned in the holy Inquisition, not clapped into Bridewell, recorded in a novel, not in the Newgate Calender. Were I inelegantly unhappy, I should be wretched indeed.

Yes, my Bidy, sensations hitherto unknown now heave my white bosom, vary the carnation of my cheeks, and irradiate my azure eyes. I sigh, gaze on vacancy, start from a reverie; now bite, now moisten my coral lip, and pace my chamber with unequal steps. Too sure I am deeply, distractedly in love, and Altamont Mortimer Montmorenci is the first of men.

Adieu.

LETTER X

The landlady, his lordship, and another lodger, are accustomed to dine in common; and his lordship easily persuaded me to join the party. Accordingly, just as I had finished my last letter, dinner was announced, so having braided my tresses, I tripped up stairs, and glided into the room. You must know I have practised tripping, gliding, flitting, and tottering, with great success. Of these, tottering ranks first, as it is the approved movement of heroic distress.

'I wonder where our mad poet can be?' said the hostess; and as she spoke, an uncouth figure entered, muttering in emphatic accents,

'The hounds around bound on the sounding ground.'

He started on seeing me, and when introduced by his lordship, as Mr. Higginson, his fellow lodger, and a celebrated poet, he made an unfathomable bow, rubbed his hands, and reddened to the roots of his hair.

This personage is tall, gaunt, and muscular; with a cadaverous countenance, and black hair in strings on his forehead. I find him one of those men who spend their lives in learning how the Greeks and Romans lived; how they spoke, dressed, ate; what were their coins and houses, &c.; but neglect acquainting themselves with the manners and customs of their own times.

Montmorenci tells me that his brain is affected by excessive study; but that his manners are harmless.

At dinner, Montmorenci looked all, said all, did all, which conscious nobility, united with ardent attachment, could inspire in a form unrivalled, and a face unexcelled. I perceived that the landlady regarded him with eyes of tender attention, and languishing allurements, but in vain. I was his magnet and his Cynosure.

As to Higginson, he did not utter a word during dinner, except asking for a bit of *lambkin*; but he preserved a perpetuity of gravity in his face, and stared at me, the whole time, with a stupid and reverential fixedness. When I spoke, he stopped in whatever attitude he happened to be; whether with a glass at his mouth, or a fork half lifted to it.

After dinner, I proposed that each of us should relate the history of our lives; an useful custom established by heroines, who seldom fail of finding their account in it; as they are almost always sure to discover, by such means, either a grandmother or a murder. Thus too, the confession of a monk, the prattle of an old woman, a diamond cross on a child's neck, or a parchment, are the certain forerunners of virtue vindicated, vice punished, rights restored, and matrimony made easy.

The landlady was asked to begin.

'I have nothing to tell of myself,' said she, 'but that my mother left me this house, and desired me to look out for a good husband, Mr. Grundy; and I am not as old as I look; for I have had my

griefs, as well as other folks, and every tear adds a year, as they say; and 'pon my veracity, Mr. Grundy, I was but thirty-two last month. And my bitterest enemies never impeached my character, that is what they did'nt, nor could'nt; they dare'nt to my face. I am a perfect snowdrop for purity. Who presumes to go for to say that a lord left me an annuity or the like? Who, I ask? But I got a prize in the lottery. So this is all I can think to tell of myself; and, Mr. Grundy, your health, and a good wife to you, Sir.'

After this eloquent piece of biography, we requested of Higginson to recount his adventures; and he read a short sketch, which was to have accompanied a volume of poems, had not the booksellers refused to publish them. I copy it for you.

MEMOIRS OF JAMES HIGGINSON

BY HIMSELF:

'Of the lives of poets, collected from posthumous record, and oral tradition, as little is known with certainty, much must be left to conjecture. He therefore, who presents his own memoirs to the public, may surely merit the reasonable applause of all, whose minds are emancipated from the petulance of envy, the fastidiousness of hypercriticism, and the exacerbation of party.

'I was born in the year 1771, at 24, Swallow Street; and

should the curious reader wish to examine the mansion, he has every thing to hope from the alert urbanity of its present landlord, and the civil obsequiousness of his notable lady. He who gives civility, gives what costs him little, while remuneration may be multiplied in an indefinite ratio.

'My parents were reputable tobacconists, and kept me behind the counter, to negotiate the titillating dust, and the tranquillizing quid. Of genius the first spark which I elicited, was reading a ballad in the shop, while the woman who sold it to me was stealing a canister of snuff. This specimen of mental abstraction (a quality which I still preserve), shewed that I would never make a good tradesman; but it also shewed, that I would make an excellent scholar. A tutor was accordingly appointed for me; and during a triennial course of study, I had passed from the insipidity of the incipient *hic, hæc, hoc*, to the music of a Virgil, and the thunder of a Demosthenes.

'Debarred by my secluded life from copying the polished converse of high society, I have at least endeavoured to avoid the vulgar phraseology of low; and to discuss the very weather with a sententious association of polysyllabical ratiocination.

'With illustrations of my juvenile character, recollection but ill supplies me. That I have always disliked the diurnal ceremony of ablution, and a hasty succession of linen, is a truth which he who has a sensitive texture of skin will easily credit; which he who will not credit, may, if he pleases, deny; and may, if he can, controvert. But I assert the fact, and I expect to be believed, because I assert it. Life, among

its quiet blessings, can boast of few things more comfortable than indifference to dress.

'To honey with my bread, and to apple-sauce with my goose, I have ever felt a romantic attachment, resulting from the classical allusions which they inspire. That man is little to be envied, whose honey would not remind him of the Hyblean honey, and whose apple-sauce would not suggest to him the golden apple.

'But notwithstanding my cupidity for such dainties, I have that happy adaptation of taste which can banquet, with delight, upon hesternal offals; can nibble ignominious radishes, or masticate superannuated mutton.

'My first series of teeth I cut at the customary time, and the second succeeded them with sufficient punctuality. This fact I had from my mother.

'My first poetical attempt was an epitaph on the death of my tutor, and it was produced at the precocious age of ten.

EPITAPH

Here lies the body of John Tomkins, who Departed this life, aged fifty-two; After a long and painful illness, that He bore with Christian fortitude, though fat. He died lamented deeply by this poem, And all who had the happiness to know him.

'This composition my father did not long survive; and my mother, to the management of the business feeling quite

unequal, relinquished it altogether, and retired with the respectable accumulation of a thousand pounds.

I still pursued my studies, and from time to time accommodated confectionaries and band-boxes with printed sheets, which the world might have read, had it pleased, and might have been pleased with, had it read. For some years past, however, the booksellers have declined to publish my productions at all. Envious enemies poison their minds against me, and persuade them that my brain is disordered. For, like Rousseau, I am the victim of implacable foes; but my genius, like an arch, becomes stronger the more it is opprest.

'On a pretty little maid of my mother's, I made my next poetical effort, which I present to the reader.

TO DOROTHY PULVERTAFT

If Black-sea, White-sea, Red-sea ran
One tide of ink to Ispahan;
If all the geese in Lincoln fens,
Produc'd spontaneous, well-made pens;
If Holland old or Holland new,
One wond'rous sheet of paper grew;
Could I, by stenographic power,
Write twenty libraries an hour;
And should I sing but half the grace
Of half a freckle on thy face;

Each syllable I wrote, should reach
From Inverness to Bognor's beach;
Each hairstroke be a river Rhine,
Each verse an equinoctial line.

'Of the girl, an immediate dismissal ensued; but for what reason, let the sedulous researches of future biographers decide.

'At length, having resolved on writing a volume of Eclogues, I undertook an excursion into the country to learn pastoral manners, and write in comfort, far from my tailor. An amputated loaf, and a contracted Theocritus, constituted my companions. Not a cloud blotted the blue concave, not a breeze superinduced undulation over the verdant tresses of the trees.

'In vain I questioned the youths and maidens about their Damons and Delias; their Dryads and Hamadryads; their Amabœan contentions and their amorous incantations. When I talked of Pan, they asked me if it was a pan of milk; when I requested to see the pastoral pipe, they shewed me a pipe of tobacco; when I spoke of satyrs with horns, they bade me go to the husbands; and when I spoke of fawns with cloven heel, they bade me go to the Devil. While charmed with a thatched and shaded cottage, its slimy pond or smoking dunghill disgusted me; and when I recumbed on a bank of cowslips and primroses, my features were transpierced by wasps and ants and nettles. I fell asleep under sunshine, and awoke under a torrent of rain. Dripping and disconsolate, I returned to my mother, drank some

why; and since that misadventurous perambulation have never ruralized again. To him who subjects himself to a recurrence of disaster, the praise of boldness may possibly be accorded, but the praise of prudence must certainly be denied.

'A satirical eclogue, however, was the fruit of this expedition. It is called *Antique Amours*, and is designed to shew, that passions which are adapted to one time of life, appear ridiculous in another. The reader shall have it.

ANTIQUÉ AMOUR

AN ECLOGUE

'Tis eve. The sun his ardent axle cools
In ocean. Dripping geese shake off the pools.
An elm men's shadows measure; red and dun,
The shattered leaves are rustling as they run;
While an aged bachelor and ancient maid,
Sit amorous under an old oak decayed.
He (for blue vapours damp the scanty grass)
Strews fodder underneath the hoary lass;
Then thus, – O matchless piece of season'd clay,
'Tis Autumn, all things shrivel and decay.
Yet as in withered Autumn, charms we see,

Say, faded maiden, may we not in thee?
What tho' thy cheek have furrows? ne'er deplore;
For wrinkles are the dimples of threescore:
Tho' from those azure lips the crimson flies,
It fondly circles round those roseate eyes;
And while thy nostrils snuff the fingered grain,
The tinct thy locks have lost, thy lips obtain.
Come then, age urges, hours have winged feet,
Ah! press the wedding ere the winding sheet.
To clasp that waist compact in stiffened fold,
Of woof purpureal, flowered with radiant gold;
Then, after stately kisses, to repair
That architectural edifice of hair,
These, these are blessings. – O my grey delight,
O venerable nymph, O painted blight,
Give me to taste of these. By Heaven above,
I tremble less with palsy than with love;
And tho' my husky murmurs creak uncouth,
My words flow unobstructed by a tooth.
Come then, age urges, hours have winged feet,
Ah! press the wedding ere the winding sheet.
Come, thou wilt ne'er provoke crimconic law,
Nor lie, maternal, on the pale-eyed straw.
Come, and in formal frolic intertwine,
The braided silver of thy hair with mine.
Then sing some bibulous and reeling glee,
And drink crusht juices of the grape with me.
Sing, for the wine no water shall dilute;
'Tis drinking water makes the fishes mute.

Come then, age urges, hours have winged feet;
Ah! press the wedding, ere the winding sheet.
So spoke the slim and elderly remains
Of once a youth. A staff his frame sustains;
And aids his aching limbs, from knee to heel,
Thin as the spectre of a famished eel.
Sharpening the blunted glances of her eyes,
The virgin a decrepid simper tries,
Then stretches rigid smiles, which shew him plain,
Her passion, and the teeth that still remain.
Innocent pair! But now the rain begins,
So both knot kerchiefs underneath their chins.
And homeward haste. Such loves the Poet wrote,
In the patch'd poverty of half a coat;
Then diadem'd with quills his brow sublime,
Magnanimously mad in mighty rhyme.

'With my venerable parent, I now pass a harmless life. As we have no society, we have no scandal; ourselves, therefore, we make our favourite topic, and ourselves we are unwilling to dispraise.

'Whether the public will admire my works, as well as my mother does, far be from me to determine. If they cannot boast of wit and judgment, to the praise of truth and modesty they may at least lay claim. To be unassuming in an age of impudence, and veracious in an age of mendacity, is to combat with a sword of glass against a sword of steel; the transparency of the one may be more beautiful than the opacity of the other; yet let it be recollected, that

the transparency is accompanied with brittleness, and the opacity with consolidation.'

I listened with much compassion to this written evidence of a perverted intellect. O my friend, what a frightful disorder is madness!

My turn came next, and I repeated the fictitious tale that Montmorenci had taught me. He confirmed it; and on being asked to relate his own life, gave us, with great taste, such a natural narrative of a man living on his wits, that any one who knew not his noble origin must have believed it.

Soon afterwards, he retired to dress for the theatre; and when he returned, I beheld a perfect hero. He was habited in an Italian costume; his hair hung in ringlets, and mustachios embellished his lip.

He then departed in a coach, and as soon as he had left us:

'I declare,' said the landlady to me, 'I do not like your cousin's style of beauty at all; particularly his pencilled eyebrows and curled locks, they look so womanish.'

'What!' said I, 'not admire Hesperian, Hyacinthine, clustering curls? Surely you would not have a hero with overhanging brows and lank hair? These are worn by none but the villains and assassins.'

I perceived poor Higginson colouring, and twisting his fingers; and I then recollected that his brows and hair have precisely the faults which I reprobated.

'Dear, dear, dear!' muttered he, and made a precipitate retreat

from the room.

I retired soon after; and I now hasten to throw myself on my bed, dream of love and Montmorenci, and wake unrefreshed, from short and distracted slumbers.

Adieu.

LETTER XI

This morning, soon after breakfast, I heard a gentle knocking at my door, and, to my great astonishment, a figure, cased in shining armour, entered. Oh! ye conscious blushes, it was my Montmorenci! A plume of white feathers nodded on his helmet, and neither spear nor shield were wanting.

'I come,' cried he, bending on one knee, and pressing my hand to his lips, 'I come in the ancient armour of my family, to perform my promise of recounting to you the melancholy memoirs of my life.'

'My lord,' said I, 'rise and be seated. Cherubina knows how to appreciate the honour that Montmorenci confers.'

He bowed; and having laid by his spear, shield, and helmet, he placed himself beside me on the sofa, and began his heart-rending history.

'All was dark. The hurricane howled, the hail rattled, and the thunder rolled. Nature was convulsed, and the traveller inconvenienced.

'In the province of Languedoc stood the Gothic Castle of Montmorenci. Before it ran the Garonne, and behind it rose the Pyrenees, whose summits exhibiting awful forms, seen and lost again, as the partial vapours rolled along, were sometimes barren, and gleamed through the blue tinge of air, and sometimes frowned with forests of gloomy fir, that swept downward to their

base.

'My lads, are your carbines charged, and your daggers sharpened?' whispered Rinaldo, with his plume of black feathers, to the banditti, in their long cloaks.

'If they an't,' said Bernardo, 'by St. Jago, we might load our carbines with the hail, and sharpen our daggers against this confounded north-wind.'

'The wind is east-south-east,' said Ugo.

'At this moment the bell of Montmorenci Castle tolled one. The sound vibrated through the long corridors, the spiral staircases, the suites of tapestried apartments, and the ears of the personage who has the honour to address you. Much alarmed, I started from my couch, which was of exquisite workmanship; the coverlet of flowered gold, and the canopy of white velvet painted over with jonquils and butterflies, by Michael Angelo. But conceive my horror when I beheld my chamber filled with banditti!

'Snatching my sword, I flew to a corner, where my coat of mail lay heapt. The bravos rushed upon me; but I fought and dressed, and dressed and fought, till I had perfectly completed my unpleasing toilette.

'I then stood alone, firm, dignified, collected, and only fifteen years of age.

Alack! there lies more peril in thine eye,
Than twenty of their swords. —

'To describe the horror of the contest that followed, were beyond the pen of an Anacreon. In short, I fought till my silver skin was laced with my golden blood; while the bullets flew round me, thick as hail,

And whistled as they went for want of thought.

'At length my sword broke, so I set sail for England.

'As I first touched foot on her chalky beach; Hail! exclaimed I, happy land, thrice hail! Take to thy fostering bosom the destitute Montmorenci – Montmorenci, once the first and richest of the Gallic nobility – Montmorenci, whom wretches drove from his hereditary territories, for loyalty to his monarch, and opposition to the atrocities of exterminators and revolutionists.

'Nine days and nights I wandered through the country, the rivulet my beverage, and the berry my repast: the turf my couch, and the sky my canopy.'

'Ah!' interrupted I, 'how much you must have missed the canopy of white velvet painted over with jonquils and butterflies!'

'Extremely,' said he, 'for during sixteen long years, I had not a roof over my head. – I was an itinerant beggar!'

'One summer's day, the cattle lay panting under the broad umbrage; the sun had burst into an immoderate fit of splendour, and the struggling brook chided the matted grass for obstructing

it. I sat under a hedge, and began eating wild strawberries; when lo! a form, flexile as the flame ascending from a censer, and undulating with the sighs of a dying vestal, flitted inaudible by me, nor crushed the daisies as it trod. What a divinity! she was fresh as the Anadyomene of Apelles, and beautiful as the Gnidos of Praxitiles, or the Helen of Zeuxis. Her eyes dipt in Heaven's own hue.' —

'Sir,' said I, 'you need not mind her eyes: I dare say they were blue enough. But pray who was this immortal doll of your's?'

'Who!' cried he. 'Why who but — shall I speak it? Who but — the Lady Cherubina De Willoughby!!!'

'I!'

'You!'

'Ah! Montmorenci!'

'Ah! Cherubina! I followed you with cautious steps,' continued he, 'till I traced you into your — you had a garden, had you not?'

'Yes.'

'Into your garden. I thought ten thousand flowerets would have leapt from their beds to offer you a nosegay. But the age of gallantry is past, that of merchants, placemen, and fortune-hunters has succeeded, and the glory of Cupid is extinguished for ever!

'You disappeared, I uttered incoherent sentences, and next morning resumed my station at a corner of the garden.'

'At which corner?' asked I.

'Why really,' said he, 'I cannot explain; for the place was then

new to me, and the ground was covered with snow.'

'With snow!' cried I. 'Why I thought you were eating wild strawberries only the day before.'

'I!' said he. 'Sure you mistake.'

'I declare most solemnly you told me so,' cried I.

'Why then,' said he, 'curse me if I did.'

'Sir,' said I. 'I must remark that your manners –'

'Bless me!' cried he, 'yes, I did say so, sure enough, and I did eat wild strawberries too; but they were *preserved* wild strawberries. I had got a small crock of them from an oyster woman, who was opening oysters in a meadow, for a hysterical butcher; and her knife having snapt in two, I lent her my sword; so, out of gratitude, she made me a present of the preserves. By the bye, they were mouldy.

'One morning, as I sat at the side of the road, asking alms, some provincial players passed by me. I accosted them, and offered my services. In short, they took me with them; I performed, was applauded; and at length my fame reached London, where I have now been acting some years, with much success; anxious as I am, to realize a little money, that I may return, in disguise, to my native country, and petition Napoleon to restore my forfeited estates.

'Such, fair lady, such is my round, unvarnished tale.

'But wherefore,' cried he, starting from his seat; 'wherefore talk of the past? Oh! let me tell you of the present and of the future. Oh! let me tell you, how dearly, how devotedly I love you!'

'Love me!' cried I, giving such a start as the nature of the case required. 'My lord, this is so – really now so –'

'Pardon this abrupt avowal of my unhappy passion,' said he, flinging himself at my feet. 'Fain would I have let concealment, like a worm in the bud, feed on my damask cheek; but, oh! who could resist the maddening sight of so much beauty?'

I remained silent, and with the elegant embarrassment of modesty, cast my blue eyes to the ground. I never looked so lovely.

'But I go!' cried he, springing on his feet. 'I fly from you for ever! No more shall Cherubina be persecuted with my hopeless love. But Cherubina, the hills and the vallies shall echo, and the songsters of the grove shall articulate Cherubina. I will shake the leaves of the forest with my sighs, and make the stream so briny with my tears, that the turbot shall swim into it, and the sea-weed grow upon its banks!'

'Ah, do not!' said I, with a look of unutterable anguish.

'I will!' exclaimed he, pacing the chamber with long strides, and slapping his heart, 'and I call all the stars of respectability to witness the vow. Then, Lady Cherubina,' continued he, stopping short before me; 'then, when maddened and emaciated, I shall pillow my haggard head on a hard rock, and lulled by the hurricanes of Heaven, shall sink into the sleep of the grave.' —

'Dear Montmorenci!' said I, quite overcome, 'live for my sake – as you value my – friendship, – live.'

'Friendship!' echoed he. 'Oh! Cherubina, Oh! my soul's

precious treasure, say not that icy word. Say hatred, disgust, horror; any thing but friendship.'

'What shall I say?' cried I, ineffably affected, 'or what shall I do?'

'What you please,' muttered he, looking wild and pressing his forehead. 'My brain is on fire. Hark! chains are clanking – The furies are whipping me with their serpents – What smiling cherub arrests yon bloody hand? Ha! 'tis Cherubina. And now she frowns at me – she darts at me – she pierces my heart with an arrow of ice!'

He threw himself on the floor, groaned grievously, and tore his hair. I was horror-struck.

'I declare,' said I, 'I would say any thing on earth to relieve you; – only tell me what.'

'Angel of light!' exclaimed he, springing upon his feet, and beaming on me a smile that might liquefy marble. 'Have I then hope? Dare I say it? Dare I pronounce the divine words, she loves me?'

'I am thine and thou art mine!' murmured I, while the room swam before me.

He took both my hands in his own, pressed them to his forehead and lips, and leaned his burning cheek upon them.

'My sight is confused,' said he, 'my breathing is opprest; I hear nothing, my veins swell, a palpitation seizes my heart, and I scarcely know where I am, or whether I exist!'

Then softly encircling my waist with his arm, he pressed me

to his heart. With what modesty I tried to extricate myself from his embrace; yet with what willing weakness I trembled on his bosom. It was Cherubina's hand that fell on his shoulder, it was Cherubina's tress that played on his cheek, it was Cherubina's sigh that breathed on his lip.

'Moment of a pure and exquisite emotion!' cried he. 'In the life of man you are known but once; yet once known, can you ever be forgotten? Now to die would be to die most blest!'

Suddenly he caught me under the chin, and kissed me. I struggled from him, and sprang to the other end of the room, while my neck and face were suffused with a glow of indignation.

'Really,' said I, panting with passion, 'this is so unprovoked, so presuming.'

He cast himself at my feet, execrated his folly, and swore that he had merely fulfilled an etiquette indispensable among lovers in his own country.

"'Tis not usual here, my lord,' said I; 'and I have no notion of submitting to any freedom that is not sanctioned by the precedent of those exalted models whom I have the honour to imitate.'

'I fancy, my lord, you will find, that, as far as a kiss on the hand, or an arm round the waist, they have no particular objection. But a salute on the lip is considered inaccurate. My lord, on condition that you never repeat the liberty, here is my hand.'

He snatched it with ardor, and strained it to his throbbing bosom.

'And now,' cried he, 'make my happiness complete, by making this hand mine for ever.'

On a sudden an air of dignified grandeur involved my form. My mind, for the first time, was called upon to reveal its full force. It felt the solemnity of the appeal, and triumphed in its conscious ability.

'What!' cried I, 'knowest thou not the fatal, the inscrutable, the mysterious destiny, which must ever prevent our union?'

'Speak, I conjure you,' cried he, 'or I expire on the spot.'

'Alas!' exclaimed I, 'can'st thou suppose the poor orphan Cherubina so destitute of principle and of pride, as to intrude herself unknown, unowned, unfriended; mysterious in her birth, and degraded in her situation, on the ancient and illustrious House of Montmorenci?'

'Here then I most solemnly vow, never to wed, till the horrible mystery which hangs over my birth be developed.'

You know, Biddy, that a heroine ought always to snatch at an opportunity of making a fatal vow. When things are going on too smooth, and interest drooping, a fatal vow does wonders. I remember reading in some romance, of a lady, who having vowed never to divulge a certain secret, kept it twenty years; and with such inviolability, that she lived to see it the death of all her children, several of her friends, and a fine old aunt.

As soon as I had made this fatal vow, his lordship fell into the most afflicting agonies and attitudes.

'Oh!' cried he, 'to be by your side, to see you, touch you, talk

to you, love you, adore you, and yet find you lost to me for ever. Oh! 'tis too much, too much.'

'The milliner is here, Miss,' said the maid, tapping at the door.

'Bid her call again,' said I.

'Beloved of my soul!' murmured his lordship.

'Ma'am,' interrupted the maid, opening the door, 'she cannot call again, as she must go from this to Kensington.'

'Then let her come in,' said I, and she entered with a charming assortment of bonnets and dresses.

'We will finish the scene another time,' whispered I to his lordship.

His lordship swore that he would drop dead that instant.

The milliner declared that she had brought me the newest patterns.

'On my honour,' said I to his lordship, 'you shall finish this scene to-morrow morning, if you wish it.'

'You may go and be – Heigho!' said he, suddenly checking himself. What he was about to say, I know not; something mysterious, I should think, by the knitting of his brows. However, he snatched his spear, shield, and helmet, made a low bow, laid his hand on his heart, and stalked out of the chamber. Interesting youth!

I then ran in debt for some millinery, drank hartshorn, and chafed my temples.

I think I was right about the kiss. I confess I am not one of those girls who try to attract men through the medium of the

touch; and who thus excite passion at the expence of respect. Lips are better employed in sentiment, than in kissing. Indeed, had I not been fortified by the precedent of other heroines, I should have felt, and I fear, did actually feel, even the classical embrace of Montmorenci too great a freedom. But remember I am still in my noviciate. After a little practice, I shall probably think it rather a pleasure to be strained, and prest, and folded to the heart. Yet of this I am certain, that I shall never attain sufficient hardihood to ravish a kiss from a man's mouth; as the divine Heloise did; who once ran at St. Preux, and astonished him with the most balmy and remarkable kiss upon record. Poor fellow! he was never the same after it.

I must say too, that Montmorenci did not shew much judgment in urging me to marry him, before I had undergone adventures for four volumes. Because, though the heroic etiquette allowed me to fall in love at first sight, and confess it at second sight, yet it would not authorize me to marry myself off quite so smoothly. A heroine is never to be got without agony and adventure. Even the ground must be lacerated, before it will bring forth fruits, and often we cannot reach the lovely violet, till we have torn our hands with brambles.

I did not see his lordship again until dinner time; and we had almost finished our repast, before the poet made his appearance and his bow. His bow was as usual, but his appearance was strangely changed. His hair stood in stiff ringlets on his forehead, and he had pruned his bushy eyebrows, till hardly one bristle

remained; while a pair of white gloves, small enough for myself, were forced upon his hands. He glanced at us with a conscious eye, and hurried to his seat at table.

'Ovid's Metamorphoses, by Jupiter!' exclaimed Montmorenci. 'Why, Higginson, how shameful for the mice to have nibbled your eyebrows, while Apollo Belvidere was curling your hair!'

The poet blushed, and ate with great assiduity.

'My dear fellow,' continued his lordship, 'we can dispense with those milk-white gloves during dinner. Tell me, are they mamma's, dear mamma's?'

'I will tell my mother of you!' cried the poet, half rising from his chair.

Now his mother is an old bed-ridden lady in one of the garrets. I then interfered in his behalf, and peace was restored.

After dinner, I took an opportunity, when the landlady had left the room, to request ten pounds from his lordship, for the purpose of paying the milliner. Never was regret so finely pictured in a face as in his, while he swore that he had not a penny upon earth. Indeed so graceful was his lamentation, so interesting his penury, that though the poet stole out of the room for ten pounds, which he slipped into my hand, I preferred the refusal of the one to the donation of the other.

Yes, this amiable young nobleman increases in my estimation every moment. Never can you catch him out of a picturesque position. He would exhaust in an hour all the attitudes of all the statues; when he talks tenderness, his eyes glow with a moist fire,

and he always brings in his heart with peculiar happiness. Then too, his oaths are at once well conceived and elegantly expressed. Thunderbolts and the fixed stars are ever at his elbow, and no man can sink himself to perdition with so fine a grace.

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