СЭМЮЭЛ РИЧАРДСОН

CLARISSA HARLOWE; OR THE HISTORY OF A YOUNG LADY — VOLUME 4

Сэмюэл Ричардсон

Clarissa Harlowe; or the history of a young lady — Volume 4

Ричардсон С.

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Содержание

Samuel Richardson
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LETTER I

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 26.

At length, my dearest Miss Howe, I am in London, and in my new lodgings. They are neatly furnished, and the situation, for the town, is pleasant.

But I think you must not ask me how I like the old gentlewoman. Yet she seems courteous and obliging.—Her kinswomen just appeared to welcome me at my alighting. They seemed to be genteel young women. But more of their aunt and them, as I shall see more.

Miss Sorlings has an uncle at Barnet, whom she found so very ill, that her uneasiness, on that account, (having large expectations from him,) made me comply with her desire to stay with him. Yet I wished, as her uncle did not expect her, that she would see me settled in London; and Mr. Lovelace was still more earnest that she would, offering to send her back again in a day or two, and urging that her uncle's malady threatened not a sudden change. But leaving the matter to her choice, after she knew what would have been mine, she made me not the expected compliment. Mr. Lovelace, however, made her a handsome present at parting.

His genteel spirit, on all occasions, makes me often wish him more consistent.

As soon as he arrived, I took possession of my apartment. I shall make good use of the light closet in it, if I stay here any time.

One of his attendants returns in the morning to The Lawn; and I made writing to you by him an excuse for my retiring.

And now give me leave to chide you, my dearest friend, for your rash, and I hope revocable resolution not to make Mr. Hickman the happiest man in the world, while my happiness is in suspense. Suppose I were to be unhappy, what, my dear, would this resolution of yours avail me? Marriage is the highest state of friendship: if happy, it lessens our cares, by dividing them, at the same time that it doubles our pleasures by a mutual participation. Why, my dear, if you love me, will you not rather give another friend to one who has not two she is sure of? Had you married on your mother's last birth-day, as she would have had you, I should not, I dare say, have wanted a refuge; that would have saved me many mortifications, and much disgrace.

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Here I was broke in upon by Mr. Lovelace; introducing the widow leading in a kinswoman of her's to attend me, if I approved of her, till my Hannah should come, or till I had provided myself with some other servant. The widow gave her many good qualities; but said, that she had one great defect; which was, that she could not write, nor read writing; that part of her education having been neglected when she was young; but for discretion, fidelity, obligingness, she was not to be out-done by any body. So commented her likewise for her skill at the needle.

As for her defect, I can easily forgive that. She is very likely and genteel—too genteel indeed, I think, for a servant. But what I like least of all in her, she has a strange sly eye. I never saw such an eye; half-confident, I think. But indeed Mrs. Sinclair herself, (for that is the widow's name,) has an odd winking eye; and her respectfulness seems too much studied, methinks, for the London ease and

freedom. But people can't help their looks, you know; and after all she is extremely civil and obliging,—and as for the young woman, (Dorcas is her name,) she will not be long with me.

I accepted her: How could I do otherwise, (if I had had a mind to make objections, which, in my present situation, I had not,) her aunt present, and the young woman also present; and Mr. Lovelace officious in his introducing them, to oblige me? But, upon their leaving me, I told him, (who seemed inclinable to begin a conversation with me,) that I desired that this apartment might be considered as my retirement: that when I saw him it might be in the dining-room, (which is up a few stairs; for this back-house, being once two, the rooms do not all of them very conveniently communicate with each other,) and that I might be as little broken in upon as possible, when I am here. He withdrew very respectfully to the door, but there stopt; and asked for my company then in the dining-room. If he were about setting out for other lodgings, I would go with him now, I told him; but, if he did not just then go, I would first finish my letter to Miss Howe.

I see he has no mind to leave me if he can help it. My brother's scheme may give him a pretence to try to engage me to dispense with his promise. But if I now do I must acquit him of it entirely.

My approbation of his tender behaviour in the midst of my grief, has given him a right, as he seems to think, of addressing me with all the freedom of an approved lover. I see by this man, that when once a woman embarks with this sex, there is no receding. One concession is but the prelude to another with them. He has been ever since Sunday last continually complaining of the distance I keep him at; and thinks himself entitled now to call in question my value for him; strengthening his doubts by my former declared readiness to give him up to a reconciliation with my friends; and yet has himself fallen off from that obsequious tenderness, if I may couple the words, which drew from me the concessions he builds upon.

While we were talking at the door, my new servant came up with an invitation to us both to tea. I said he might accept of it, if he pleased: but I must pursue my writing; and not choosing either tea or supper, I desired him to make my excuses below, as to both; and inform them of my choice to be retired as much as possible; yet to promise for me my attendance on the widow and her nieces at breakfast in the morning.

He objected particularly in the eye of strangers as to avoiding supper.

You know, said I, and you can tell them, that I seldom eat suppers. My spirits are low. You must never urge me against a declared choice. Pray, Mr. Lovelace, inform them of all my particularities. If they are obliging, they will allow for them—I come not hither to make new acquaintance.

I have turned over the books I found in my closet; and am not a little pleased with them; and think the better of the people of the house for their sakes.

Stanhope's Gospels; Sharp's, Tillotson's, and South's Sermons; Nelson's Feasts and Fasts; a Sacramental Piece of the Bishop of Man, and another of Dr. Gauden, Bishop of Exeter; and Inett's Devotions, are among the devout books:—and among those of a lighter turn, the following not ill-chosen ones: A Telemachus, in French; another in English; Steel's, Rowe's, and Shakespeare's Plays; that genteel Comedy of Mr. Cibber, The Careless Husband, and others of the same author; Dryden's Miscellanies; the Tatlers, Spectators, and Guardians; Pope's, and Swift's, and Addison's Works.

In the blank leaves of the Nelson and Bishop Gauden, is Mrs. Sinclair's name; and in those of most of the others, either Sarah Martin, or Mary Horton, the names of the two nieces.

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I am exceedingly out of humour with Mr. Lovelace: and have great reason to be so, as you will allow, when you have read the conversation I am going to give you an account of; for he would not let me rest till I gave him my company in the dining-room.

He began with letting me know, that he had been out to inquire after the character of the widow, which was the more necessary, he said, as he supposed that I would expect his frequent absence.

I did, I said; and that he would not think of taking up his lodging in the same house with me. But what, said I, is the result of your inquiry?

Why, indeed, the widow's character was, in the main, what he liked well enough. But as it was Miss Howe's opinion, as I had told him, that my brother had not given over his scheme; as the widow lived by letting lodgings, and had others to let in the same part of the house, which might be taken by an enemy; he knew no better way than for him to take them all, as it could not be for a long time, unless I would think of removing to others.

So far was well enough. But as it was easy for me to see, that he spoke the slighter of the widow, in order to have a pretence to lodge here himself, I asked him his intention in that respect. And he frankly owned, that if I chose to stay here, he could not, as matters stood, think of leaving me for six hours together; and he had prepared the widow to expect, that we should be here but for a few days; only till we could fix ourselves in a house suitable to our condition; and this, that I might be under the less embarrassment, if I pleased to remove.

Fix our-selves in a house, and we, and our, Mr. Lovelace—Pray, in what light—

He interrupted me—Why, my dearest life, if you will hear me with patience—yet, I am half afraid that I have been too forward, as I have not consulted you upon it—but as my friends in town, according to what Mr. Doleman has written, in the letter you have seen, conclude us to be married—

Surely, Sir, you have not presumed—

Hear me out, my dearest creature—you have received with favour, my addresses: you have made me hope for the honour of your consenting hand: yet, by declining my most fervent tender of myself to you at Mrs. Sorlings's, have given me apprehensions of delay: I would not for the world be thought so ungenerous a wretch, now you have honoured me with your confidence, as to wish to precipitate you. Yet your brother's schemes are not given up. Singleton, I am afraid, is actually in town; his vessel lies at Rotherhithe—your brother is absent from Harlowe- place; indeed not with Singleton yet, as I can hear. If you are known to be mine, or if you are but thought to be so, there will probably be an end of your brother's contrivances. The widow's character may be as worthy as it is said to be. But the worthier she is, the more danger, if your brother's agent should find us out; since she may be persuaded, that she ought in conscience to take a parent's part against a child who stands in opposition to them. But if she believes us married, her good character will stand us instead, and give her a reason why two apartments are requisite for us at the hour of retirement.

I perfectly raved at him. I would have flung from him in resentment; but he would not let me: and what could I do? Whither go, the evening advanced?

I am astonished at you! said I.—If you are a man of honour, what need of all this strange obliquity? You delight in crooked ways—let me know, since I must stay in your company (for he held my hand), let me know all you have said to the people below.—Indeed, indeed, Mr. Lovelace, you are a very unaccountable man.

My dearest creature, need I to have mentioned any thing of this? and could I not have taken up my lodgings in this house unknown to you, if I had not intended to make you the judge of all my proceedings?—But this is what I have told the widow before her kinswomen, and before your new servant—'That indeed we were privately married at Hertford; but that you had preliminarily bound me under a solemn vow, which I am most religiously resolved to keep, to be contented with separate apartments, and even not to lodge under the same roof, till a certain reconciliation shall take place, which is of high consequence to both.' And further that I might convince you of the purity of my intentions, and that my whole view in this was to prevent mischief, I have acquainted them, 'that I have solemnly promised to behave to you before every body, as if we were only betrothed, and not married; not even offering to take any of those innocent freedoms which are not refused in the most punctilious loves.'

And then he solemnly vowed to me the strictest observance of the same respectful behaviour to me.

I said, that I was not by any means satisfied with the tale he had told, nor with the necessity he wanted to lay me under of appearing what I was not: that every step he took was a wry one, a needless wry one: and since he thought it necessary to tell the people below any thing about me, I insisted that he should unsay all he had said, and tell them the truth.

What he had told them, he said, was with so many circumstances, that he could sooner die than contradict it. And still he insisted upon the propriety of appearing to be married, for the reasons he had given before—And, dearest creature, said he, why this high displeasure with me upon so well-intended an expedient? You know, that I cannot wish to shun your brother, or his Singleton, but upon your account. The first step I would take, if left to myself, would be to find them out. I have always acted in this manner, when any body has presumed to give out threatenings against it.

'Tis true I would have consulted you first, and had your leave. But since you dislike what I have said, let me implore you, dearest Madam, to give the only proper sanction to it, by naming an early day. Would to Heaven that were to be to-morrow!—For God's sake, let it be to-morrow! But, if not, [was it his business, my dear, before I spoke (yet he seemed to be afraid of me) to say, if not?] let me beseech you, Madam, if my behaviour shall not be to your dislike, that you will not to-morrow, at breakfast-time, discredit what I have told them. The moment I give you cause to think that I take any advantage of your concession, that moment revoke it, and expose me, as I shall deserve.—And once more, let me remind you, that I have no view either to serve or save myself by this expedient. It is only to prevent a probable mischief, for your own mind's sake; and for the sake of those who deserve not the least consideration from me.

What could I say? What could I do?—I verily think, that had he urged me again, in a proper manner, I should have consented (little satisfied as I am with him) to give him a meeting to-morrow morning at a more solemn place than in the parlour below.

But this I resolve, that he shall not have my consent to stay a night under this roof. He has now given me a stronger reason for this determination than I had before.

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Alas! my dear, how vain a thing to say, what we will, or what we will not do, when we have put ourselves into the power of this sex!—He went down to the people below, on my desiring to be left to myself; and staid till their supper was just ready; and then, desiring a moment's audience, as he called it, he besought my leave to stay that one night, promising to set out either for Lord M.'s, or for Edgeware, to his friend Belford's, in the morning, after breakfast. But if I were against it, he said, he would not stay supper; and would attend me about eight next day—yet he added, that my denial would have a very particular appearance to the people below, from what he had told them; and the more, as he had actually agreed for all the vacant apartments, (indeed only for a month,) for the reasons he before hinted at: but I need not stay here two days, if, upon conversing with the widow and her nieces in the morning, I should have any dislike to them.

I thought, notwithstanding my resolution above-mentioned, that it would seem too punctilious to deny him, under the circumstances he had mentioned: having, besides, no reason to think he would obey me; for he looked as if he were determined to debate the matter with me. And now, as I see no likelihood of a reconciliation with my friends, and as I have actually received his addresses, I thought I would not quarrel with him, if I could help it, especially as he asked to stay but for one night, and could have done so without my knowing it; and you being of opinion, that the proud wretch, distrusting his own merits with me, or at least my regard for him, will probably bring me to some concessions in his favour —for all these reasons, I thought proper to yield this point: yet I was so vexed with him on the other, that it was impossible for me to comply with that grace which a concession should be made with, or not made at all.

This was what I said—What you will do, you must do, I think. You are very ready to promise; very ready to depart from your promise. You say, however, that you will set out to-morrow for the country. You know how ill I have been. I am not well enough now to debate with you upon your encroaching ways. I am utterly dissatisfied with the tale you have told below. Nor will I promise to appear to the people of the house to-morrow what I am not.

He withdrew in the most respectful manner, beseeching me only to favour him with such a meeting in the morning as might not make the widow and her nieces think he had given me reason to be offended with him.

I retired to my own apartment, and Dorcas came to me soon after to take my commands. I told her, that I required very little attendance, and always dressed and undressed myself.

She seemed concerned, as if she thought I had repulsed her; and said, it should be her whole study to oblige me.

I told her, that I was not difficult to be pleased: and should let her know from time to time what assistance I should expect from her. But for that night I had no occasion for her further attendance.

She is not only genteel, but is well bred, and well spoken—she must have had what is generally thought to be the polite part of education: but it is strange, that fathers and mothers should make so light, as they generally do, of that preferable part, in girls, which would improve their minds, and give a grace to all the rest.

As soon as she was gone, I inspected the doors, the windows, the wainscot, the dark closet as well as the light one; and finding very good fastenings to the door, and to all the windows, I again had recourse to my pen.

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Mrs. Sinclair is just now gone from me. Dorcas, she told me, had acquainted her, that I had dismissed her for the night. She came to ask me how I liked my apartment, and to wish me good rest. She expressed her concern, that they could not have my company at supper. Mr. Lovelace, she said, had informed them of my love of retirement. She assured me, that I should not be broken in upon. She highly extolled him, and gave me a share in the praise as to person. But was sorry, she said, that she was likely to lose us so soon as Mr. Lovelace talked of.

I answered her with suitable civility; and she withdrew with great tokens of respect. With greater, I think, than should be from distance of years, as she was the wife of a gentleman; and as the appearance of every thing about her, as well house as dress, carries the marks of such good circumstances, as require not abasement.

If, my dear, you will write, against prohibition, be pleased to direct, To Miss Laetitia Beaumont; to be left till called for, at Mr. Wilson's, in Pall Mall.

Mr. Lovelace proposed this direction to me, not knowing of your desire that your letters should pass by a third hand. As his motive for it was, that my brother might not trace out where we are, I am glad, as well from this instance as from others, that he seems to think he has done mischief enough already.

Do you know how my poor Hannah does?

Mr. Lovelace is so full of his contrivances and expedients, that I think it may not be amiss to desire you to look carefully to the seals of my letters, as I shall to those of yours. If I find him base in this particular, I shall think him capable of any evil; and will fly him as my worst enemy.

LETTER II

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [WITH HER TWO LAST LETTERS, NO. LVIII. LIX. OF VOL. III., ENCLOSED.] THURSDAY NIGHT, APRIL 27.

I have your's; just brought me. Mr. Hickman has helped me to a lucky expedient, which, with the assistance of the post, will enable me to correspond with you every day. An honest higler, [Simon Collins his name,] by whom I shall send this, and the two enclosed, (now I have your direction whither,) goes to town constantly on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; and can bring back to me from Mr. Wilson's what you shall have caused to be left for me.

I congratulate you on your arrival in town, so much amended in spirits. I must be brief. I hope you'll have no cause to repent returning my Norris. It is forthcoming on demand.

I am sorry your Hannah can't be with you. She is very ill still; but not dangerously.

I long for your account of the women you are with. If they are not right people, you will find them out in one breakfasting.

I know not what to write upon his reporting to them that you are actually married. His reasons for it are plausible. But he delights in odd expedients and inventions.

Whether you like the people or not, do not, by your noble sincerity and plain dealing, make yourself enemies. You are in the real world now you know.

I am glad you had thoughts of taking him at his offer, if he had re-urged it. I wonder he did not. But if he do not soon, and in such a way as you can accept of it, don't think of staying with him.

Depend upon it, my dear, he will not leave you, either night or day, if he can help it, now he has got footing.

I should have abhorred him for his report of your marriage, had he not made it with such circumstances as leave it still in your power to keep him at distance. If once he offer at the least familiarity—but this is needless to say to you. He can have, I think, no other design but what he professes; because he must needs think, that his report of being married to you must increase your vigilance.

You may depend upon my looking narrowly into the sealings of your letters. If, as you say, he be base in that point, he will be so in every thing. But to a person of your merit, of your fortune, of your virtue, he cannot be base. The man is no fool. It is his interest, as well with regard to his expectations from his own friends, as from you, to be honest. Would to Heaven, however, you were really married! This is now the predominant wish of

Your ANNA HOWE.

LETTER III

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE THURSDAY MORNING, EIGHT O'CLOCK.

I am more and more displeased with Mr. Lovelace, on reflection, for his boldness in hoping to make me, though but passively, as I may say, testify to his great untruth. And I shall like him still less for it, if his view in it does not come out to be the hope of accelerating my resolution in his favour, by the difficulty it will lay me under as to my behaviour to him. He has sent me his compliments by Dorcas, with a request that I will permit him to attend me in the dining-room,—meet him in good humour, or not: but I have answered, that as I shall see him at breakfast-time I desired to be excused.

TEN O'CLOCK.

I tried to adjust my countenance, before I went down, to an easier air than I had a heart, and was received with the highest tokens of respect by the widow and her two nieces: agreeable young women enough in their persons; but they seemed to put on an air of reserve; while Mr. Lovelace was easy and free to all, as if he were of long acquaintance with them: gracefully enough, I cannot but say; an advantage which travelled gentlemen have over other people.

The widow, in the conversation we had after breakfast, gave us an account of the military merit of the Colonel her husband, and, upon this occasion, put her handkerchief to her eyes twice or thrice. I hope for the sake of her sincerity, she wetted it, because she would be thought to have done so; but I saw not that she did. She wished that I might never know the loss of a husband so dear to me, as her beloved Colonel was to her: and she again put the handkerchief to her eyes.

It must, no doubt, be a most affecting thing to be separated from a good husband, and to be left in difficult circumstances besides, and that not by his fault, and exposed to the insults of the base and ungrateful, as she represented her case to be at his death. This moved me a good deal in her favour.

You know, my dear, that I have an open and free heart; and naturally have as open and free a countenance; at least my complimenters have told me so. At once, where I like, I mingle minds without reserve, encouraging reciprocal freedoms, and am forward to dissipate diffidences. But with these two nieces of the widow I never can be intimate—I don't know why.

Only that circumstances, and what passed in conversation, encouraged not the notion, or I should have been apt to think, that the young ladies and Mr. Lovelace were of longer acquaintance than of yesterday. For he, by stealth as it were, cast glances sometimes at them, when they returned; and, on my ocular notice, their eyes fell, as I may say, under my eye, as if they could not stand its examination.

The widow directed all her talk to me, as to Mrs. Lovelace; and I, with a very ill grace bore it. And once she expressed more forwardly than I thanked her for, her wonder that any vow, any consideration, however weighty, could have force enough with so charming a couple, as she called him and me, to make us keep separate beds.

Their eyes, upon this hint, had the advantage of mine. Yet was I not conscious of guilt. How know I then, upon recollection, that my censures upon theirs are not too rash? There are, no doubt, many truly modest persons (putting myself out of the question) who, by blushes at an injurious charge, have been suspected, by those who cannot distinguish between the confusion which guilt will be attended with, and the noble consciousness that overspreads the face of a fine spirit, to be thought but capable of an imputed evil.

The great Roman, as we read, who took his surname from one part in three (the fourth not then discovered) of the world he had triumphed over, being charged with a great crime to his soldiery, chose rather to suffer exile (the punishment due to it, had he been found guilty) than to have it said, that Scipio was questioned in public, on so scandalous a charge. And think you, my dear, that Scipio did not blush with indignation, when the charge was first communicated to him?

Mr. Lovelace, when the widow expressed her forward wonder, looked sly and leering, as if to observe how I took it: and said, they might take notice that his regard for my will and pleasure (calling me his dear creature) had greater force upon him than the oath by which he had bound himself.

Rebuking both him and the widow, I said, it was strange to me to hear an oath or vow so lightly treated, as to have it thought but of second consideration, whatever were the first.

The observation was just, Miss Martin said; for that nothing could excuse the breaking of a solemn vow, be the occasion of making it what it would.

I asked her after the nearest church; for I have been too long a stranger to the sacred worship. They named St. James's, St. Anne's, and another in Bloomsbury; and the two nieces said they oftenest went to St. James's church, because of the good company, as well as for the excellent preaching.

Mr. Lovelace said, the Royal Chapel was the place he oftenest went to, when he was in town. Poor man! little did I expect to hear he went to any place of devotion. I asked, if the presence of the visible king of, comparatively, but a small territory, did not take off, too generally, the requisite attention to the service of the invisible King and Maker of a thousand worlds?

He believed this might be so with such as came for curiosity, when the royal family were present. But otherwise, he had seen as many contrite faces at the Royal Chapel, as any where else: and why not? Since the people about court have as deep scores to wipe off, as any people whatsoever.

He spoke this with so much levity, that I could not help saying, that nobody questioned but he knew how to choose his company.

Your servant, my dear, bowing, were his words; and turning to them, you will observe upon numberless occasions, ladies, as we are further acquainted, that my beloved never spares me upon these topics. But I admire her as much in her reproofs, as I am fond of her approbation.

Miss Horton said, there was a time for every thing. She could not but say, that she thought innocent mirth was mighty becoming in young people.

Very true, joined in Miss Martin. And Shakespeare says well, that youth is the spring of life, the bloom of gaudy years [with a theatrical air, she spoke it:] and for her part, she could not but admire in my spouse that charming vivacity which so well suited his time of life.

Mr. Lovelace bowed. The man is fond of praise. More fond of it, I doubt, than of deserving it. Yet this sort of praise he does deserve. He has, you know, an easy free manner, and no bad voice: and this praise so expanded his gay heart, that he sung the following lines from Congreve, as he told us they were:

> Youth does a thousand pleasures bring, Which from decrepid age will fly;
> Sweets that wanton in the bosom of the spring, In winter's cold embraces die.

And this for a compliment, as he said, to the two nieces. Nor was it thrown away upon them. They encored it; and his compliance fixed them in my memory.

We had some talk about meals, and the widow very civilly offered to conform to any rules I would set her. I told her how easily I was pleased, and how much I chose to dine by myself, and that from a plate sent me from any single dish. But I will not trouble you, my dear, with such particulars.

They thought me very singular; and with reason: but as I liked them not so very well as to forego my own choice in compliment to them, I was the less concerned for what they thought.—And still the less, as Mr. Lovelace had put me very much out of humour with him.

They, however, cautioned me against melancholy. I said, I should be a very unhappy creature if I could not bear my own company.

Mr. Lovelace said, that he must let the ladies into my story, and then they would know how to allow for my ways. But, my dear, as you love me, said the confident wretch, give as little way to melancholy as possible. Nothing but the sweetness of your temper, and your high notions of a duty that never can be deserved where you place it, can make you so uneasy as you are.—Be not angry,

my dear love, for saying so, [seeing me frown, I suppose:] and snatched my hand and kissed it.—I left him with them; and retired to my closet and my pen.

Just as I have written thus far, I am interrupted by a message from him, that he is setting out on a journey, and desires to take my commands.—So here I will leave off, to give him a meeting in the dining-room.

I was not displeased to see him in his riding-dress.

He seemed desirous to know how I liked the gentlewomen below. I told him, that although I did not think them very exceptionable; yet as I wanted not, in my present situation, new acquaintance, I should not be fond of cultivating theirs.

He urged me still farther on this head.

I could not say, I told him, that I greatly liked either of the young gentlewomen, any more than their aunt: and that, were my situation ever so happy, they had much too gay a turn for me.

He did not wonder, he said, to hear me say so. He knew not any of the sex, who had been accustomed to show themselves at the town diversions and amusements, that would appear tolerable to me. Silences and blushes, Madam, are now no graces with our fine ladies in town. Hardened by frequent public appearances, they would be as much ashamed to be found guilty of these weaknesses, as men.

Do you defend these two gentlewomen, Sir, by reflections upon half the sex? But you must second me, Mr. Lovelace, (and yet I am not fond of being thought particular,) in my desire of breakfasting and supping (when I do sup) by myself.

If I would have it so, to be sure it should be so. The people of the house were not of consequence enough to be apologized to, in any point where my pleasure was concerned. And if I should dislike them still more on further knowledge of them, he hoped I would think of some other lodgings.

He expressed a good deal of regret at leaving me, declaring, that it was absolutely in obedience to my commands: but that he could not have consented to go, while my brother's schemes were on foot, if I had not done him the credit of my countenance in the report he had made that we were married; which, he said, had bound all the family to his interest, so that he could leave me with the greater security and satisfaction.

He hoped, he said, that on his return I would name his happy day; and the rather, as I might be convinced, by my brother's projects, that no reconciliation was to be expected.

I told him, that perhaps I might write one letter to my uncle Harlowe. He once loved me. I should be easier when I had made one direct application. I might possibly propose such terms, in relation to my grandfather's estate, as might procure me their attention; and I hoped he would be long enough absent to give me time to write to him, and receive an answer from him.

That, he must beg my pardon, he could not promise. He would inform himself of Singleton's and my brother's motions; and if on his return he found no reason for apprehension, he would go directly for Berks, and endeavour to bring up with him his cousin Charlotte, who, he hoped, would induce me to give him an earlier day than at present I seemed to think of.—I seemed to think of, my dear, very acquiescent, as I should imagine!

I told him, that I should take that young lady's company for a great favour.

I was the more pleased with this motion, as it came from himself, and with no ill grace.

He earnestly pressed me to accept of a bank note: but I declined it. And then he offered me his servant William for my attendant in his absence; who, he said, might be dispatched to him, if any thing extraordinary fell out. I consented to that.

He took his leave of me in the most respectful manner, only kissing my hand. He left the bank note, unobserved by me, upon the table. You may be sure, I shall give it him back at his return.

I am in a much better humour with him than I was.

Where doubts of any person are removed, a mind not ungenerous is willing, by way of amends for having conceived those doubts, to construe every thing that happens, capable of a good instruction,

in that person's favour. Particularly, I cannot but be pleased to observe, that although he speaks of the ladies of his family with the freedom of relationship, yet it is always of tenderness. And from a man's kindness to his relations of the sex, a woman has some reason to expect his good behaviour to herself, when married, if she be willing to deserve it from him.

And thus, my dear, am I brought to sit down satisfied with this man, where I find room to infer that he is not by nature a savage. But how could a creature who (treating herself unpolitely) gave a man an opportunity to run away with her, expect to be treated by that man with a very high degree of politeness?

But why, now, when fairer prospects seem to open, why these melancholy reflections? will my beloved friend ask of her Clarissa?

Why? Can you ask why, my dearest Miss Howe, of a creature, who, in the world's eye, had enrolled her name among the giddy and inconsiderate; who labours under a parent's curse, and the cruel uncertainties, which must arise from reflecting, that, equally against duty and principle, she has thrown herself into the power of a man, and that man an immoral one?— Must not the sense she has of her inconsideration darken her most hopeful prospects? Must it not even rise strongest upon a thoughtful mind, when her hopes are the fairest? Even her pleasures, were the man to prove better than she expects, coming to her with an abatement, like that which persons who are in possession of ill-gotten wealth must then most poignantly experience (if they have reflecting and unseared minds) when, all their wishes answered, (if answered,) they sit down in hopes to enjoy what they have unjustly obtained, and find their own reflections their greatest torment.

May you, my dear friend, be always happy in your reflections, prays

Your ever affectionate CL. HARLOWE.

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[Mr. Lovelace, in his next letter, triumphs on his having carried his two great points of making the Lady yield to pass for his wife to the people of the house, and to his taking up his lodging in it, though but for one night. He is now, he says, in a fair way, and doubts not but that he shall soon prevail, if not by persuasion, by surprise.

Yet he pretends to have some little remorse, and censures himself as to acting the part of the grand tempter. But having succeeded thus far, he cannot, he says, forbear trying, according to the resolution he had before made, whether he cannot go farther. He gives the particulars of their debates on the above-mentioned subjects, to the same effect as in the Lady's last letters.

It will by this time be seen that his whole merit, with regard to the Lady, lies in doing justice to her excellencies both of mind and person, though to his own condemnation. Thus he begins his succeeding letter:]

And now, Belford, will I give thee an account of our first breakfast- conversation.

All sweetly serene and easy was the lovely brow and charming aspect of my goddess, on her descending among us; commanding reverence from every eye, a courtesy from every knee, and silence, awful silence, from every quivering lip: while she, armed with conscious worthiness and superiority, looked and behaved as an empress would look and behave among her vassals; yet with a freedom from pride and haughtiness, as if born to dignity, and to a behaviour habitually gracious.

[He takes notice of the jealousy, pride, and vanity of Sally Martin and Polly Horton, on his respectful behaviour to the Lady: creatures who, brought up too high for their fortunes, and to a taste of pleasure, and the public diversions, had fallen an easy prey to his seducing arts (as will be seen in the conclusion of this work:) and

who, as he observed, 'had not yet got over that distinction in their love, which makes a woman prefer one man to another.']

How difficult is it, says he, to make a woman subscribe to a preference against herself, though ever so visible; especially where love is concerned! This violent, this partial little devil, Sally, has the insolence to compare herself with my angel—yet owns her to be an angel. I charge you, Mr. Lovelace, say she, show none of your extravagant acts of kindness before me to this sullen, this gloomy beauty —I cannot bear it. Then was I reminded of her first sacrifice.

What a rout do these women make about nothing at all! Were it not for what the learned Bishop, in his Letter from Italy, calls the entanglements of amour, and I the delicacies of intrigue, what is there, Belford, in all they can do for us?

How do these creatures endeavour to stimulate me! A fallen woman is a worse devil than ever a profligate man. The former is incapable of remorse: that am not I—nor ever shall they prevail upon me, though aided by all the powers of darkness, to treat this admirable creature with indignity—so far, I mean, as indignity can be separated from the trials which will prove her to be either woman or angel.

Yet with them I am a craven. I might have had her before now, if I would. If I would treat her as flesh and blood, I should find her such. They thought I knew, if any man living did, that if a man made a goddess of a woman, she would assume the goddess; that if power were given to her, she would exert that power to the giver, if to nobody else. And D——r's wife is thrown into my dish, who, thou knowest, kept her ceremonious husband at haughty distance, and whined in private to her insulting footman. O how I cursed the blasphemous wretches! They will make me, as I tell them, hate their house, and remove from it. And by my soul, Jack, I am ready at times to think that I should not have brought her hither, were it but on Sally's account. And yet, without knowing either Sally's heart, or Polly's, the dear creature resolves against having any conversation with them but such as she can avoid. I am not sorry for this, thou mayest think; since jealousy in a woman is not to be concealed from woman. And Sally has no command of herself.

What dost think!—Here this little devil Sally, not being able, as she told me, to support life under my displeasure, was going into a fit: but when I saw her preparing for it, I went out of the room; and so she thought it would not be worth her while to show away.

[In this manner he mentions what his meaning was in making the Lady the compliment of his absence:]

As to leaving her: if I go but for one night, I have fulfilled my promise: and if she think not, I can mutter and grumble, and yield again, and make a merit of it; and then, unable to live out of her presence, soon return. Nor are women ever angry at bottom for being disobeyed through excess of love. They like an uncontroulable passion. They like to have every favour ravished from them, and to be eaten and drunk quite up by a voracious lover. Don't I know the sex?—Not so, indeed, as yet, my Clarissa: but, however, with her my frequent egresses will make me look new to her, and create little busy scenes between us. At the least, I may surely, without exception, salute her at parting, and at return; and will not those occasional freedoms (which civility will warrant) by degrees familiarize my charmer to them?

But here, Jack, what shall I do with my uncle and aunts, and all my loving cousins? For I understand that they are more in haste to have me married than I am myself.

LETTER IV

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE FRIDAY, APRIL 28.

Mr. Lovelace is returned already. My brother's projects were his pretence. I could not but look upon this short absence as an evasion of his promise; especially as he had taken such precautions with the people below; and as he knew that I proposed to keep close within-doors. I cannot bear to be dealt meanly with; and angrily insisted that he should directly set out for Berkshire, in order to engage his cousin, as he had promised.

O my dearest life, said he, why will you banish me from your presence? I cannot leave you for so long a time as you seem to expect I should. I have been hovering about town ever since I left you. Edgware was the farthest place I went to, and there I was not able to stay two hours, for fear, at this crisis, any thing should happen. Who can account for the workings of an apprehensive mind, when all that is dear and valuable to it is at stake? You may spare yourself the trouble of writing to any of your friends, till the solemnity has passed that shall entitle me to give weight to your application. When they know we are married, your brother's plots will be at an end; and your father and mother, and uncles, must be reconciled to you. Why then should you hesitate a moment to confirm my happiness? Why, once more, would you banish me from you? Why will you not give the man who has brought you into difficulties, and who so honourably wishes to extricate you from them, the happiness of doing so?

He was silent. My voice failed to second the inclination I had to say something not wholly discouraging to a point so warmly pressed.

I'll tell you, my angel, resumed he, what I propose to do, if you approve of it. I will instantly go out to view some of the handsome new squares or fine streets round them, and make a report to you of any suitable house I find to be let. I will take such a one as you shall choose, and set up an equipage befitting our condition. You shall direct the whole. And on some early day, either before, or after we fix, [it must be at your own choice], be pleased to make me the happiest of men. And then will every thing be in a desirable train. You shall receive in your own house (if it can be so soon furnished as I wish) the compliments of all my relations. Charlotte shall visit you in the interim: and if it take up time, you shall choose whom you will honour with your company, first, second, or third, in the summer months; and on your return you shall find all that was wanting in your new habitation supplied, and pleasures in a constant round shall attend us. O my angel, take me to you, instead of banishing me from you, and make me your's for ever.

You see, my dear, that here was no day pressed for. I was not uneasy about that, and the sooner recovered myself, as there was not. But, however, I gave him no reason to upbraid me for refusing his offer of going in search of a house.

He is accordingly gone out for this purpose. But I find that he intends to take up his lodging here tonight; and if to-night, no doubt on other nights, while he is in town. As the doors and windows of my apartment have good fastenings; as he has not, in all this time, given me cause for apprehension; as he has the pretence of my brother's schemes to plead; as the people below are very courteous and obliging, Miss Horton especially, who seems to have taken a great liking to me, and to be of a gentler temper and manners than Miss Martin; and as we are now in a tolerable way; I imagine it would look particular to them all, and bring me into a debate with a man, who (let him be set upon what he will) has always a great deal to say for himself, if I were to insist upon his promise: on all these accounts, I think, I will take no notice of his lodging here, if he don't.—Let me know, my dear, your thoughts of every thing.

You may believe I gave him back his bank note the moment I saw him.

FRIDAY EVENING.

Mr. Lovelace has seen two or three houses, but none to his mind. But he has heard of one which looks promising, he says, and which he is to inquire about in the morning.

SATURDAY MORNING.

He has made his inquiries, and actually seen the house he was told of last night. The owner of it is a young widow lady, who is inconsolable for the death of her husband; Fretchville her name. It is furnished quite in taste, every thing being new within these six months. He believes, if I like not the furniture, the use of it may be agreed for, with the house, for a time certain: but, if I like it, he will endeavour to take the one, and purchase the other, directly.

The lady sees nobody; nor are the best apartments above-stairs to be viewed, till she is either absent, or gone into the country; which she talks of doing in a fortnight, or three weeks, at farthest, and to live there retired.

What Mr. Lovelace saw of the house (which were the saloon and two parlours) was perfectly elegant; and he was assured all is of a piece. The offices are also very convenient; coach-house and stables at hand.

He shall be very impatient, he says, till I see the whole; nor will he, if he finds he can have it, look farther till I have seen it, except any thing else offer to my liking. The price he values not.

He now does nothing but talk of the ceremony, but not indeed of the day. I don't want him to urge that—but I wonder he does not.

He has just now received a letter from Lady Betty Lawrance, by a particular hand; the contents principally relating to an affair she has in chancery. But in the postscript she is pleased to say very respectful things of me.

They are all impatient, she says, for the happy day being over; which they flatter themselves will ensure his reformation.

He hoped, he told me, that I would soon enable him to answer their wishes and his own.

But, my dear, although the opportunity was so inviting, he urged not for the day. Which is the more extraordinary, as he was so pressing for marriage before we came to town.

He was very earnest with me to give him, and four of his friends, my company on Monday evening, at a little collation. Miss Martin and Miss Horton cannot, he says, be there, being engaged in a party of their own, with two daughters of Colonel Solcombe, and two nieces of Sir Anthony Holmes, upon an annual occasion. But Mrs. Sinclair will be present, and she gave him hope of the company of a young lady of very great fortune and merit (Miss Partington), an heiress to whom Colonel Sinclair, it seems, in his lifetime was guardian, and who therefore calls Mrs. Sinclair Mamma.

I desired to be excused. He had laid me, I said, under a most disagreeable necessity of appearing as a married person, and I would see as few people as possible who were to think me so.

He would not urge it, he said, if I were much averse: but they were his select friends; men of birth and fortune, who longed to see me. It was true, he added, that they, as well as his friend Doleman, believed we were married: but they thought him under the restrictions that he had mentioned to the people below. I might be assured, he told me, that his politeness before them should be carried into the highest degree of reverence.

When he is set upon any thing, there is no knowing, as I have said heretofore, what one can do.* But I will not, if I can help it, be made a show of; especially to men of whose character and principles I have no good opinion. I am, my dearest friend,

Your ever affectionate CL. HARLOWE.

* See Letter I. of this volume. See also Vol. II. Letter XX.

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[Mr. Lovelace, in his next letter, gives an account of his quick return:

of his reasons to the Lady for it: of her displeasure upon it: and of her urging his absence from the safety she was in from the situation of the house, except she were to be traced out by his visits.]

I was confoundedly puzzled, says he, on this occasion, and on her insisting upon the execution of a too-ready offer which I made her to go down to Berks, to bring up my cousin Charlotte to visit and attend her. I made miserable excuses; and fearing that they would be mortally resented, as her passion began to rise upon my saying Charlotte was delicate, which she took strangely wrong, I was obliged to screen myself behind the most solemn and explicit declarations.

[He then repeats those declarations, to the same effect with the account she gives of them.]

I began, says he, with an intention to keep my life of honour in view, in the declaration I made her; but, as it has been said of a certain orator in the House of Commons, who more than once, in a long speech, convinced himself as he went along, and concluded against the side he set out intending to favour, so I in earnest pressed without reserve for matrimony in the progress of my harangue, which state I little thought of urging upon her with so much strength and explicitness.

[He then values himself upon the delay that his proposal of taking and furnishing a house must occasion.

He wavers in his resolutions whether to act honourable or not by a merit so exalted.

He values himself upon his own delicacy, in expressing his indignation against her friends, for supposing what he pretends his heart rises against them for presuming to suppose.]

But have I not reason, says he, to be angry with her for not praising me for this my delicacy, when she is so ready to call me to account for the least failure in punctilio?—However, I believe I can excuse her too, upon this generous consideration, [for generous I am sure it is, because it is against myself,] that her mind being the essence of delicacy, the least want of it shocks her; while the meeting with what is so very extraordinary to me, is too familiar to her to obtain her notice, as an extraordinary.

[He glories in the story of the house, and of the young widow possessor of it, Mrs. Fretchville he calls her; and leaves it doubtful to Mr. Belford, whether it be a real or a fictitious story.

He mentions his different proposals in relation to the ceremony, which he so earnestly pressed for; and owns his artful intention in avoiding to name the day.]

And now, says he, I hope soon to have an opportunity to begin my operations; since all is halcyon and security.

It is impossible to describe the dear creature's sweet and silent confusion, when I touched upon the matrimonial topics.

She may doubt. She may fear. The wise in all important cases will doubt, and will fear, till they are sure. But her apparent willingness to think well of a spirit so inventive, and so machinating, is a happy prognostic for me. O these reasoning ladies!—How I love these reasoning ladies!—'Tis all over with them, when once love has crept into their hearts: for then will they employ all their reasoning powers to excuse rather than to blame the conduct of the doubted lover, let appearances against him be ever so strong.

Mowbray, Belton, and Tourville, long to see my angel, and will be there. She has refused me; but must be present notwithstanding. So generous a spirit as mine is cannot enjoy its happiness without communication. If I raise not your envy and admiration both at once, but half-joy will be the joy of having such a charming fly entangled in my web. She therefore must comply. And thou must come.

And then I will show thee the pride and glory of the Harlowe family, my implacable enemies; and thou shalt join with me in my triumph over them all.

I know not what may still be the perverse beauty's fate: I want thee, therefore, to see and admire her, while she is serene and full of hope: before her apprehensions are realized, if realized they are to be; and if evil apprehensions of me she really has; before her beamy eyes have lost their lustre; while yet her charming face is surrounded with all its virgin glories; and before the plough of disappointment has thrown up furrows of distress upon every lovely feature.

If I can procure you this honour you will be ready to laugh out, as I have often much ado to forbear, at the puritanical behaviour of the mother before this lady. Not an oath, not a curse, nor the least free word, escapes her lips. She minces in her gait. She prims up her horse-mouth. Her voice, which, when she pleases, is the voice of thunder, is sunk into an humble whine. Her stiff hams, that have not been bent to a civility for ten years past, are now limbered into courtesies three deep at ever word. Her fat arms are crossed before her; and she can hardly be prevailed upon to sit in the presence of my goddess.

I am drawing up instructions for ye all to observe on Monday night.

SATURDAY NIGHT.

Most confoundedly alarmed!—Lord, Sir, what do you think? cried Dorcas —My lady is resolved to go to church to-morrow! I was at quadrille with the women below.—To church! said I, and down I laid my cards. To church! repeated they, each looking upon the other. We had done playing for that night.

Who could have dreamt of such a whim as this?—Without notice, without questions! Her clothes not come! No leave asked!—Impossible she should think of being my wife!—Besides, she don't consider, if she go to church, I must go too!—Yet not to ask for my company! Her brother and Singleton ready to snap her up, as far as she knows!—Known by her clothes—her person, her features, so distinguished!—Not such another woman in England!—To church of all places! Is the devil in the girl? said I, as soon as I could speak.

Well, but to leave this subject till to-morrow morning, I will now give you the instructions I have drawn up for your's and your companions' behaviour on Monday night.

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Instructions to be observed by John Belford, Richard Mowbray, Thomas Belton, and James Tourville, Esquires of the Body to General Robert Lovelace, on their admission to the presence of his Goddess.

Ye must be sure to let it sink deep into your heavy heads, that there is no such lady in the world as Miss Clarissa Harlowe; and that she is neither more nor less than Mrs. Lovelace, though at present, to my shame be it spoken, a virgin.

Be mindful also, that your old mother's name, after that of her mother when a maid, is Sinclair: that her husband was a lieutenant-colonel, and all that you, Belford, know from honest Doleman's letter of her,* that let your brethren know.

* See Letter XXXVIII. Vol. III.

Mowbray and Tourville, the two greatest blunderers of the four, I allow to be acquainted with the widow and nieces, from the knowledge they had of the colonel. They will not forbear familiarities of speech to the mother, as of longer acquaintance than a day. So I have suited their parts to their capacities.

They may praise the widow and the colonel for people of great honour—but not too grossly; nor to labour the point so as to render themselves suspected.

The mother will lead ye into her own and the colonel's praises! and Tourville and Mowbray may be both her vouchers—I, and you, and Belton, must be only hearsay confirmers.

As poverty is generally suspectible, the widow must be got handsomely aforehand; and no doubt but she is. The elegance of her house and furniture, and her readiness to discharge all demands upon her, which she does with ostentation enough, and which makes her neighbours, I suppose, like her the better, demonstrate this. She will propose to do handsome things by her two nieces. Sally is near marriage—with an eminent woollen-draper in the Strand, if ye have a mind to it; for there are five or six of them there.

The nieces may be inquired after, since they will be absent, as persons respected by Mowbray and Tourville, for their late worthy uncle's sake.

Watch ye diligently every turn of my countenance, every motion of my eye; for in my eye, and in my countenance will ye find a sovereign regulator. I need not bid you respect me mightily: your allegiance obliges you to that: And who that sees me, respects me not?

Priscilla Partington (for her looks so innocent, and discretion so deep, yet seeming so softly) may be greatly relied upon. She will accompany the mother, gorgeously dressed, with all her Jew's extravagance flaming out upon her; and first induce, then countenance, the lady. She has her cue, and I hope will make her acquaintance coveted by my charmer.

Miss Partington's history is this: the daughter of Colonel Sinclair's brother-in-law: that brother-in-law may have been a Turkey-merchant, or any merchant, who died confoundedly rich: the colonel one of her guardians [collateral credit in that to the old one:] whence she always calls Mrs. Sinclair Mamma, though not succeeding to the trust.

She is just come to pass a day or two, and then to return to her surviving guardian's at Barnet.

Miss Partington has suitors a little hundred (her grandmother, an alderman's dowager, having left her a great additional fortune,) and is not trusted out of her guardian's house without an old governante, noted for discretion, except to her Mamma Sinclair, with whom now-and-then she is permitted to be for a week together.

Pris. will Mamma-up Mrs. Sinclair, and will undertake to court her guardian to let her pass a delightful week with her—Sir Edward Holden he may as well be, if your shallow pates will not be clogged with too many circumstantials. Lady Holden, perhaps, will come with her; for she always delighted in her Mamma Sinclair's company, and talks of her, and her good management, twenty times a day.

Be it principally thy part, Jack, who art a parading fellow, and aimest at wisdom, to keep thy brother-varlets from blundering; for, as thou must have observed from what I have written, we have the most watchful and most penetrating lady in the world to deal with; a lady worth deceiving! but whose eyes will piece to the bottom of your shallow souls the moment she hears you open. Do you therefore place thyself between Mowbray and Tourville: their toes to be played upon and commanded by thine, if they go wrong: thy elbows to be the ministers of approbation.

As to your general behaviour; no hypocrisy!—I hate it: so does my charmer. If I had studied for it, I believe I could have been an hypocrite: but my general character is so well known, that I should have been suspected at once, had I aimed at making myself too white. But what necessity can there be for hypocrisy, unless the generality of the sex were to refuse us for our immoralities? The best of them love to have the credit for reforming us. Let the sweet souls try for it: if they fail, their intent was good. That will be a consolation to them. And as to us, our work will be the easier; our sins the fewer: since they will draw themselves in with a very little of our help; and we shall save a parcel of cursed falsehoods, and appear to be what we are both to angels and men.—Mean time their very grandmothers will acquit us, and reproach them with their self-do, self-have, and as having erred against knowledge, and ventured against manifest appearances. What folly, therefore, for men of our character to be hypocrites!

Be sure to instruct the rest, and do thou thyself remember, not to talk obscenely. You know I never permitted any of you to talk obscenely. Time enough for that, when ye grow old, and can ONLY talk. Besides, ye must consider Prisc.'s affected character, my goddess's real one. Far from obscenity, therefore, do not so much as touch upon the double entendre. What! as I have often said, cannot you touch a lady's heart without wounding her ear?

It is necessary that ye should appear worse men than myself. You cannot help appearing so, you'll say. Well, then, there will be the less restraint upon you—the less restraint, the less affectation. —And if Belton begins his favourite subject in behalf of keeping, it may make me take upon myself to oppose him: but fear not; I shall not give the argument all my force.

She must have some curiosity, I think, to see what sort of men my companions are: she will not expect any of you to be saints. Are you not men born to considerable fortunes, although ye are not all of you men of parts? Who is it in this mortal life that wealth does not mislead? And as it gives people the power of being mischievous, does it not require great virtue to forbear the use of that power? Is not the devil said to be the god of this world? Are we not children of this world? Well, then! let me tell thee my opinion—It is this, that were it not for the poor and the middling, the world would probably, long ago, have been destroyed by fire from Heaven. Ungrateful wretches the rest, thou wilt be apt to say, to make such sorry returns, as they generally do make, to the poor and the middling!

This dear lady is prodigiously learned in theories. But as to practices, as to experimentals, must be, as you know from her tender years, a mere novice. Till she knew me, I dare say, she did not believe, whatever she had read, that there were such fellows in the world, as she will see in you four. I shall have much pleasure in observing how she'll stare at her company, when she finds me the politest man of the five.

And so much for instructions general and particular for your behaviour on Monday night.

And let me add, that you must attend to every minute circumstance, whether you think there be reason for it, or not. Deep, like golden ore, frequently lies my meaning, and richly worth digging for. The hint of least moment, as you may imagine it, is often pregnant with events of the greatest. Be implicit. Am I not your general? Did I ever lead you on that I brought you not off with safety and success?—Sometimes to your own stupid astonishment.

And now, methinks, thou art curious to know, what can be my view in risquing the displeasure of my fair-one, and alarming her fears, after four or five halcyon days have gone over our heads? I'll satisfy thee.

The visiters of the two nieces will crowd the house.—Beds will be scarce:—Miss Partington, a sweet, modest, genteel girl, will be prodigiously taken with my charmer;—will want to begin a friendship with her—a share in her bed, for one night only, will be requested. Who knows, but on that very Monday night I may be so unhappy as to give mortal offence to my beloved? The shyest birds may be caught napping. Should she attempt to fly me upon it, cannot I detain her? Should she actually fly, cannot I bring her back, by authority civil or uncivil, if I have evidence upon evidence that she acknowledged, though but tacitly, her marriage? And should I, or should I not succeed, and she forgive me, or if she but descend to expostulate, or if she bear me in her sight, then will she be all my own. All delicacy is my charmer. I long to see how such a delicacy, on any of these occasions, will behave, and in my situation it behoves me to provide against every accident.

I must take care, knowing what an eel I have to do with, that the little riggling rogue does not slip through my fingers. How silly should I look, staring after her, when she had shot from me into the muddy river, her family, from which with so much difficulty I have taken her!

Well then, here are—let me see—How many persons are there who, after Monday night, will be able to swear that she has gone by my name, answered to my name, had no other view in leaving her friends but to go by my name? her own relations neither able nor willing to deny it.— First, here are my servants, her servant, Dorcas, Mrs. Sinclair, Mrs. Sinclair's two nieces, and Miss Partington.

But for fear these evidences should be suspected, here comes the jet of the business—'No less than four worthy gentlemen of fortune and family, who were all in company such a night particularly, at a collation to which they were invited by Robert Lovelace, of Sandoun-hall, in the county of Lancaster, esquire, in company with Magdalen Sinclair, widow, and Priscilla Partington, spinster, and the lady complainant, when the said Robert Lovelace addressed himself to the said lady, on a multitude of occasions, as his wife; as they and others did, as Mrs. Lovelace; every one complimenting and congratulating her upon her nuptials; and that she received such their compliments and congratulations with no other visible displeasure or repugnance, than such as a young bride, full of blushes and pretty confusion, might be supposed to express upon such contemplative revolvings as those compliments would naturally inspire.' Nor do thou rave at me, Jack, nor rebel. Dost think I brought the dear creature hither for nothing?

And here's a faint sketch of my plot.—Stand by, varlets—tanta-ra-ra-ra! —Veil your bonnets, and confess your master!

LETTER V

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SUNDAY.

Have been at church, Jack—behaved admirably well too! My charmer is pleased with me now: for I was exceedingly attentive to the discourse, and very ready in the auditor's part of the service. —Eyes did not much wander. How could they, when the loveliest object, infinitely the loveliest in the whole church, was in my view!

Dear creature! how fervent, how amiable, in her devotions! I have got her to own that she prayed for me. I hope a prayer from so excellent a mind will not be made in vain.

There is, after all, something beautifully solemn in devotion. The Sabbath is a charming institution to keep the heart right, when it is right. One day in seven, how reasonable!—I think I'll go to church once a day often. I fancy it will go a great way towards making me a reformed man. To see multitudes of well-appearing people all joining in one reverend act. An exercise how worthy of a rational being! Yet it adds a sting or two to my former stings, when I think of my projects with regard to this charming creature. In my conscience, I believe, if I were to go constantly to church, I could not pursue them.

I had a scheme come into my head while there; but I will renounce it, because it obtruded itself upon me in so good a place. Excellent creature! How many ruins has she prevented by attaching me to herself —by engrossing my whole attention.

But let me tell thee what passed between us in my first visit of this morning; and then I will acquaint thee more largely with my good behaviour at church.

I could not be admitted till after eight. I found her ready prepared to go out. I pretended to be ignorant of her intention, having charged Dorcas not to own that she had told me of it.

Going abroad, Madam?—with an air of indifference.

Yes, Sir: I intend to go to church.

I hope, Madam, I shall have the honour to attend you.

No: she designed to take a chair, and go to the next church.

This startled me:—A chair to carry her to the next church from Mrs. Sinclair's, her right name not Sinclair, and to bring her back hither in the face of people who might not think well of the house! —There was no permitting that. Yet I was to appear indifferent. But said, I should take it for a favour, if she would permit me to attend her in a coach, as there was time for it, to St. Paul's.

She made objections to the gaiety of my dress; and told me, that if she went to St. Paul's, she could go in a coach without me.

I objected Singleton and her brother, and offered to dress in the plainest suit I had.

I beg the favour of attending you, dear Madam, said I. I have not been at church a great while; we shall sit in different stalls, and the next time I go, I hope it will be to give myself a title to the greatest blessing I can receive.

She made some further objections: but at last permitted me the honour of attending her.

I got myself placed in her eye, that the time might not seem tedious to me, for we were there early. And I gained her good opinion, as I mentioned above, by my behaviour.

The subject of the discourse was particular enough: It was about a prophet's story or parable of an ewe-lamb taken by a rich man from a poor one, who dearly loved it, and whose only comfort it was: designed to strike remorse into David, on his adultery with Uriah's wife Bathsheba, and his murder of the husband. These women, Jack, have been the occasion of all manner of mischief from the beginning! Now, when David, full of indignation, swore [King David would swear, Jack: But how shouldst thou know who King David was?—The story is in the Bible,] that the rich man should surely die; Nathan, which was the prophet's name, and a good ingenious fellow, cried out, (which were the words of the text,) Thou art the man! By my soul I thought the parson looked directly at me; and at

that moment I cast my eye full on my ewe-lamb.—But I must tell thee too, that, that I thought a good deal of my Rosebud.—A better man than King David, in that point, however, thought I!

When we came home we talked upon the subject; and I showed my charmer my attention to the discourse, by letting her know where the Doctor made the most of his subject, and where it might have been touched to greater advantage: for it is really a very affecting story, and has as pretty a contrivance in it as ever I read. And this I did in such a grave way, that she seemed more and more pleased with me; and I have no doubt, that I shall get her to favour me to-morrow night with her company at my collation.

SUNDAY EVENING.

We all dined together in Mrs. Sinclair's parlour:—All excessively right! The two nieces have topped their parts—Mrs. Sinclair her's. Never was so easy as now!—'She really thought a little oddly of these people at first, she said! Mrs. Sinclair seemed very forbidding! Her nieces were persons with whom she could not wish to be acquainted. But really we should not be too hasty in our censures. Some people improve upon us. The widow seems tolerable.' She went no farther than tolerable.—'Miss Martin and Miss Horton are young people of good sense, and have read a great deal. What Miss Martin particularly said of marriage, and of her humble servant, was very solid. She believes with such notions she cannot make a bad wife.' I have said Sally's humble servant is a woolen- draper of great reputation; and she is soon to be married.

I have been letting her into thy character, and into the characters of my other three esquires, in hopes to excite her curiosity to see you to-morrow night. I have told her some of the worst, as well as best parts of your characters, in order to exalt myself, and to obviate any sudden surprizes, as well as to teach her what sort of men she may expect to see, if she will oblige me with her company.

By her after-observation upon each of you, I shall judge what I may or may not do to obtain or keep her good opinion; what she will like, or what not; and so pursue the one or avoid the other, as I see proper. So, while she is penetrating into your shallow heads, I shall enter her heart, and know what to bid my own to hope for.

The house is to be taken in three weeks.—All will be over in three weeks, or bad will be my luck!—Who knows but in three days?—Have I not carried that great point of making her pass for my wife to the people below? And that other great one, of fixing myself here night and day? —What woman ever escaped me, who lodged under one roof with me?—The house too, THE house; the people—people after my own heart; her servants, Will. and Dorcas, both my servants.—Three days, did I say! Pho! Pho! Pho!—three hours!

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I have carried my third point: but so extremely to the dislike of my charmer, that I have been threatened, for suffering Miss Partington to be introduced to her without her leave. Which laid her under a necessity to deny or comply with the urgent request of so fine a young lady; who had engaged to honour me at my collation, on condition that my beloved would be present at it.

To be obliged to appear before my friends as what she was not! She was for insisting, that I should acquaint the women here with the truth of the matter; and not go on propagating stories for her to countenance, making her a sharer in my guilt.

But what points will not perseverance carry? especially when it is covered over with the face of yielding now, and, Parthian-like, returning to the charge anon. Do not the sex carry all their points with their men by the same methods? Have I conversed with them so freely as I have done, and learnt nothing of them? Didst thou ever know that a woman's denial of any favour, whether the least or the greatest, that my heart was set upon, stood her in any stead? The more perverse she, the more steady I—that is my rule.

But the point thus so much against her will carried, I doubt thou will see in her more of a sullen than of an obliging charmer: for, when Miss Partington was withdrawn, 'What was Miss Partington to her? In her situation she wanted no new acquaintances. And what were my four friends to her in her present circumstances? She would assure me, if ever again' —And there she stopped, with a twirl of her hand.

When we meet, I will, in her presence, tipping thee a wink, show thee the motion, for it was a very pretty one. Quite new. Yet have I seen an hundred pretty passionate twirls too, in my time, from other fair-ones. How universally engaging is it to put a woman of sense, to whom a man is not married, in a passion, let the reception given to every ranting scene in our plays testify. Take care, my charmer, now thou art come to delight me with thy angry twirls, that thou temptest me not to provoke a variety of them from one, whose every motion, whose every air, carries in it so much sense and soul.

But, angry or pleased, this charming creature must be all loveliness. Her features are all harmony, and made for one another. No other feature could be substituted in the place of any one of her's but most abate of her perfection: And think you that I do not long to have your opinion of my fair prize?

If you love to see features that glow, though the heart is frozen, and never yet was thawed; if you love fine sense, and adages flowing through teeth of ivory and lips of coral; an eye that penetrates all things; a voice that is harmony itself; an air of grandeur, mingled with a sweetness that cannot be described; a politeness that, if ever equaled, was never excelled—you'll see all these excellencies, and ten times more, in this my GLORIANA.

> Mark her majestic fabric!—She's a temple, Sacred by birth, and built by hands divine;
> Her soul the deity that lodges there:
> Nor is the pile unworthy of the god.

Or, to describe her in a softer style with Rowe,

> The bloom of op'ning flow'rs, unsully'd beauty, Softness, and sweetest innocence she wears, And looks like nature in the world's first spring.

Adieu, varlets four!—At six, on Monday evening, I expect ye all.

LETTER VI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE SUNDAY, APRIL 30.

[Mr. Lovelace, in his last letters, having taken notice of the most material passages contained in this letter, the following extracts from it are only inserted.

She gives pretty near the same account that he does of what passed between them on her resolution to go to church; and of his proposal of St. Paul's, and desire of attending her.—She praises his good behaviour there; as also the discourse, and the preacher.—Is pleased with its seasonableness.—Gives particulars of the conversation between them afterwards, and commends the good observations he makes upon the sermon.]

I am willing, says she, to have hopes of him: but am so unable to know how to depend upon his seriousness for an hour together, that all my favourable accounts of him in this respect must be taken with allowance.

Being very much pressed, I could not tell how to refuse dining with the widow and her nieces this day. I am better pleased with them than I ever thought I should be. I cannot help blaming myself for my readiness to give severe censures where reputation is concerned. People's ways, humours, constitutions, education, and opportunities allowed for, my dear, many persons, as far as I know, may appear blameless, whom others, of different humours and educations, are too apt to blame; and who, from the same fault, may be as ready to blame them. I will therefore make it a rule to myself for the future—Never to judge peremptorily on first appearances: but yet I must observe that these are not people I should choose to be intimate with, or whose ways I can like: although, for the stations they are in, they may go through the world with tolerable credit.

Mr. Lovelace's behaviour has been such as makes me call this, so far as it is passed, an agreeable day. Yet, when easiest as to him, my situation with my friends takes place in my thoughts, and causes me many a tear.

I am the more pleased with the people of the house, because of the persons of rank they are acquainted with, and who visits them.

SUNDAY EVENING.

I am still well pleased with Mr. Lovelace's behaviour. We have had a good deal of serious discourse together. The man has really just and good notions. He confesses how much he is pleased with this day, and hopes for many such. Nevertheless, he ingenuously warned me, that his unlucky vivacity might return: but, he doubted not, that he should be fixed at last by my example and conversation.

He has given me an entertaining account of the four gentlemen he is to meet to-morrow night. —Entertaining, I mean for his humourous description of their persons, manners, &c. but such a description as is far from being to their praise. Yet he seemed rather to design to divert my melancholy by it than to degrade them. I think at bottom, my dear, that he must be a good-natured man; but that he was spoiled young, for want of check or controul.

I cannot but call this, my circumstances considered, an happy day to the end of it. Indeed, my dear, I think I could prefer him to all the men I ever knew, were he but to be always what he has been this day. You see how ready I am to own all you have charged me with, when I find myself out. It is a difficult thing, I believe, sometimes, for a young creature that is able to deliberate with herself, to know when she loves, or when she hates: but I am resolved, as much as possible, to be determined both in my hatred and love by actions, as they make the man worthy or unworthy.

[She dates again Monday, and declares herself highly displeased at Miss Partington's being introduced to her: and still more for being obliged to promise to be present at Mr. Lovelace's collation. She foresees, she says, a murder'd evening.]

LETTER VII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE MONDAY NIGHT, MAY 1.

I have just escaped from a very disagreeable company I was obliged, so much against my will, to be in. As a very particular relation of this evening's conversation would be painful to me, you must content yourself with what you shall be able to collect from the outlines, as I may call them, of the characters of the persons; assisted by the little histories Mr. Lovelace gave me of each yesterday.

The names of the gentlemen are Belton, Mowbray, Tourville, and Belford. These four, with Mrs. Sinclair, Miss Partington, the great heiress mentioned in my last, Mr. Lovelace, and myself, made up the company.

I gave you before the favourable side of Miss Partington's character, such as it was given to me by Mrs. Sinclair, and her nieces. I will now add a few words from my own observation upon her behaviour in this company.

In better company perhaps she would have appeared to less disadvantage: but, notwithstanding her innocent looks, which Mr. Lovelace also highly praised, he is the last person whose judgment I would take upon real modesty. For I observed, that, upon some talk from the gentlemen, not free enough to be easily censured, yet too indecent in its implication to come from well-bred persons, in the company of virtuous prople [sic], this young lady was very ready to apprehend; and yet, by smiles and simperings, to encourage, rather than discourage, the culpable freedoms of persons, who, in what they went out of their way to say, must either be guilty of absurdity, meaning nothing, or meaning something of rudeness.*

* Mr. Belford, in Letter XIII. of Vol. V. reminds Mr. Lovelace of some particular topics which passed in their conversation, extremely to the Lady's honour.

But, indeed, I have seen no women, of whom I had a better opinion than I can say of Mrs. Sinclair, who have allowed gentlemen, and themselves too, in greater liberties of this sort than I had thought consistent with that purity of manners which ought to be the distinguishing characteristic of our sex: For what are words, but the body and dress of thought? And is not the mind of a person strongly indicated by outward dress?

But to the gentlemen—as they must be called in right of their ancestors, it seems; for no other do they appear to have:—

Mr. BELTON has had university education, and was designed for the gown; but that not suiting with the gaiety of his temper, and an uncle dying, who devised to him a good estate, he quitted the college, came up to town, and commenced fine gentleman. He is said to be a man of sense.— Mr. Belton dresses gaily, but not quite foppishly; drinks hard; keeps all hours, and glories in doing so; games, and has been hurt by that pernicious diversion: he is about thirty years of age: his face is a fiery red, somewhat bloated and pimply; and his irregularities threaten a brief duration to the sensual dream he is in: for he has a short consumption cough, which seems to denote bad lungs; yet makes himself and his friends merry by his stupid and inconsiderate jests upon very threatening symptoms which ought to make him more serious.

Mr. MOWBRAY has been a great traveller; speaks as many languages as Mr. Lovelace himself, but not so fluently: is of a good family: seems to be about thirty-three or thirty-four: tall and comely in his person: bold and daring in his look: is a large-boned, strong man: has a great scar in his forehead, with a dent, as if his skull had been beaten in there, and a seamed scar in his right cheek: he likewise dresses very gaily: has his servants always about him, whom he is continually calling upon, and sending on the most trifling messages—half a dozen instances of which we had in the little time I was among them; while they seem to watch the turn of his fierce eye, to be ready to run, before they have half his message, and serve him with fear and trembling. Yet to his equals the man seems tolerable: he talks not amiss upon public entertainments and diversions, especially upon those abroad: yet has a

romancing air, and avers things strongly which seem quite improbable. Indeed he doubts nothing but what he ought to believe; for he jests upon sacred things; and professes to hate the clergy of all religions. He has high notions of honour, a world hardly ever out of his mouth; but seems to have no great regard to morals.

Mr. TOURVILLE occasionally told his age; just turned of thirty-one. He is also of an ancient family; but, in his person and manners, more of what I call the coxcomb than any of his companions. He dresses richly; would be thought elegant in the choice and fashion of what he wears; yet, after all, appears rather tawdry than fine.—One sees by the care he takes of his outside, and the notice he bespeaks from every one by his own notice of himself, that the inside takes up the least of his attention. He dances finely, Mr. Lovelace says; is a master of music, and singing is one of his principal excellencies. They prevailed upon him to sing, and he obliged them both in Italian and French; and, to do him justice, his songs in both were decent. They were all highly delighted with his performance; but his greatest admirers were, Mrs. Sinclair, Miss Partington, and himself. To me he appeared to have a great deal of affectation.

Mr. Tourville's conversation and address are insufferably full of those really gross affronts upon the understanding of our sex, which the moderns call compliments, and are intended to pass for so many instances of good breeding, though the most hyperbolical, unnatural stuff that can be conceived, and which can only serve to show the insincerity of the complimenter, and the ridiculous light in which the complimented appears in his eyes, if he supposes a woman capable of relishing the romantic absurdities of his speeches.

He affects to introduce into his common talk Italian and French words; and often answers an English question in French, which language he greatly prefers to the barbarously hissing English. But then he never fails to translate into this his odious native tongue the words and the sentences he speaks in the other two—lest, perhaps, it should be questioned whether he understands what he says.

He loves to tell stories: always calls them merry, facetious, good, or excellent, before he begins, in order to bespeak the attention of the hearers, but never gives himself concern in the progress or conclusion of them, to make good what he promises in his preface. Indeed he seldom brings any of them to a conclusion; for if his company have patience to hear him out, he breaks in upon himself by so many parenthetical intrusions, as one may call them, and has so many incidents springing in upon him, that he frequently drops his own thread, and sometimes sits down satisfied half way; or, if at other times he would resume it, he applies to his company to help him in again, with a Devil fetch him if he remembers what he was driving at—but enough, and too much of Mr. Tourville.

Mr. BELFORD is the fourth gentleman, and one of whom Mr. Lovelace seems more fond than any of the rest; for he is a man of tried bravery, it seems; and this pair of friends came acquainted upon occasion of a quarrel, (possibly about a woman,) which brought on a challenge, and a meeting at Kensington Gravel-pits; which ended without unhappy consequences, by the mediation of three gentlemen strangers, just as each had made a pass at the other.

Mr. Belford, it seems, is about seven or eight and twenty. He is the youngest of the five, except Mr. Lovelace, and they are perhaps the wickedest; for they seem to lead the other three as they please. Mr. Belford, as the others, dresses gaily; but has not those advantages of person, nor from his dress, which Mr. Lovelace is too proud of. He has, however, the appearance and air of a gentleman. He is well read in classical authors, and in the best English poets and writers; and, by his means, the conversation took now and then a more agreeable turn. And I, who endeavoured to put the best face I could upon my situation, as I passed for Mrs. Lovelace with them, made shift to join in it, at such times, and received abundance of compliments from all the company, on the observations I made.*

* See Letter XIII. of Vol. V. above referred to.

Mr. Belford seems good-natured and obliging; and although very complaisant, not so fulsomely so as Mr. Tourville; and has a polite and easy manner of expressing his sentiments on all occasions.

He seems to delight in a logical way of argumentation, as also does Mr. Belton. These two attacked each other in this way; and both looked at us women, as if to observe whether we did not admire this learning, or when they had said a smart thing, their wit. But Mr. Belford had visibly the advantage of the other, having quicker parts, and by taking the worst side of the argument, seemed to think he had. Upon the whole of his behaviour and conversation, he put me in mind of that character of Milton:—

> ————His tongue Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear The better reason, to perplex and dash Maturest counsels; for his thoughts were low; To vice industrious: but to nobler deeds Tim'rous and slothful: yet he pleased the ear.

How little soever matters in general may be to our liking, we are apt, when hope is strong enough to permit it, to endeavour to make the best we can of the lot we have drawn; and I could not but observe often, how much Mr. Lovelace excelled all his four friends in every thing they seemed desirous to excel in. But as to wit and vivacity, he had no equal there. All the others gave up to him, when his lips began to open. The haughty Mowbray would call upon the prating Tourville for silence, when Lovelace was going to speak. And when he had spoken, the words, Charming fellow! with a free word of admiration or envy, fell from every mouth.

He has indeed so many advantages in his person and manner, that what would be inexcusable in another, would, if one watched not over one's self, and did not endeavour to distinguish what is the essence of right and wrong, look becoming in him.

Mr. Belford, to my no small vexation and confusion, with the forwardness of a favoured and intrusted friend, singled me out, on Mr. Lovelace's being sent for down, to make me congratulatory compliments on my supposed nuptials; which he did with a caution, not to insist too long on the rigorous vow I had imposed upon a man so universally admired—

'See him among twenty men,' said he, 'all of distinction, and nobody is regarded but Mr. Lovelace.'

It must, indeed, be confessed, that there is, in his whole deportment, a natural dignity, which renders all insolent or imperative demeanour as unnecessary as inexcusable. Then that deceiving sweetness which appears in his smiles, in his accent, in his whole aspect, and address, when he thinks it worth his while to oblige, or endeavour to attract, how does this show that he was born innocent, as I may say; that he was not naturally the cruel, the boisterous, the impetuous creature, which the wicked company he may have fallen into have made him! For he has, besides, as open, and, I think, an honest countenance. Don't you think so, my dear? On all these specious appearances, have I founded my hopes of seeing him a reformed man.

But it is amazing to me, I own, that with so much of the gentleman, such a general knowledge of books and men, such a skill in the learned as well as modern languages, he can take so much delight as he does in the company of such persons as I have described, and in subjects of frothy impertinence, unworthy of his talents, and his natural and acquired advantages. I can think but of one reason for it, and that must argue a very low mind,—his vanity; which makes him desirous of being considered as the head of the people he consorts with.—A man to love praise, yet to be content to draw it from such contaminated springs!

One compliment passed from Mr. Belford to Mr. Lovelace, which hastened my quitting the shocking company—'You are a happy man, Mr. Lovelace,' said he, upon some fine speeches made him by Mrs. Sinclair, and assented to by Miss Partington:—'You have so much courage, and so much wit, that neither man nor woman can stand before you.'

Mr. Belford looked at me when he spoke: yes, my dear, he smilingly looked at me; and he looked upon his complimented friend; and all their assenting, and therefore affronting eyes, both men's and women's, were turned upon your Clarissa; at least, my self-reproaching heart made me think so; for that would hardly permit my eye to look up.

Oh! my dear, were but a woman, who gives reason to the world to think her to be in love with a man, [And this must be believed to be my case; or to what can my supposed voluntary going off with Mr. Lovelace be imputed?] to reflect one moment on the exaltation she gives him, and the disgrace she brings upon herself,—the low pity, the silent contempt, the insolent sneers and whispers, to which she makes herself obnoxious from a censuring world of both sexes,—how would she despise herself! and how much more eligible would she think death itself than such a discovered debasement!

What I have thus in general touched upon, will account to you why I could not more particularly relate what passed in this evening's conversation: which, as may be gathered from what I have written, abounded with approbatory accusations, and supposed witty retorts.

LETTER VIII

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE MONDAY MIDNIGHT.

I am very much vexed and disturbed at an odd incident. Mrs. Sinclair has just now left me; I believe in displeasure, on my declining to comply with a request she made me: which was, to admit Miss Partington to a share in my bed, her house being crowded by her nieces's guests and by their attendants, as well as by those of Miss Partington.

There might be nothing in it; and my denial carried a stiff and ill- natured appearance. But instantly, upon her making the request, it came into my thought, 'that I was in a manner a stranger to every body in the house: not so much as a servant I could call my own, or of whom I had any great opinion: that there were four men of free manners in the house, avowed supporters of Mr. Lovelace in matters of offence; himself a man of enterprise; all, as far as I knew, (and as I had reason to think by their noisy mirth after I left them,) drinking deeply: that Miss Partington herself is not so bashful a person as she was represented to me to be: that officious pains were taken to give me a good opinion of her: and that Mrs. Sinclair made a greater parade in prefacing the request, than such a request needed. To deny, thought I, can carry only an appearance of singularity to people who already think me singular. To consent may possibly, if not probably, be attended with inconveniencies. The consequences of the alternative so very disproportionate, I thought it more prudent to incur the censure, than to risque the inconvenience.'

I told her that I was writing a long letter: that I should choose to write till I were sleepy, and that a companion would be a restraint upon me, and I upon her.

She was loth, she said, that so delicate a young creature, and so great a fortune as Miss Partington, should be put to lie with Dorcas in a press-bed. She should be very sorry, if she had asked an improper thing. She had never been so put to it before. And Miss would stay up with her till I had done writing.

Alarmed at this urgency, and it being easier to persist in a denial given, than to give it at first, I said, Miss Partington should be welcome to my whole bed, and I would retire into the dining-room, and there, locking myself in, write all the night.

The poor thing, she said, was afraid to lie alone. To be sure Miss Partington would not put me to such an inconvenience.

She then withdrew,—but returned—begged my pardon for returning, but the poor child, she said, was in tears.—Miss Partington had never seen a young lady she so much admired, and so much wished to imitate as me. The dear girl hoped that nothing had passed in her behaviour to give me dislike to her.—Should she bring her to me?

I was very busy, I said: the letter I was writing was upon a very important subject. I hoped to see the young lady in the morning, when I would apologize to her for my particularity. And then Mrs. Sinclair hesitating, and moving towards the door, (though she turned round to me again,) I desired her, (lighting her,) to take care how she went down.

Pray, Madam, said she, on the stairs-head, don't give yourself all this trouble. God knows my heart, I meant no affront: but, since you seem to take my freedom amiss, I beg you will not acquaint Mr. Lovelace with it; for he perhaps will think me bold and impertinent.

Now, my dear, is not this a particular incident, either as I have made it, or as it was designed? I don't love to do an uncivil thing. And if nothing were meant by the request, my refusal deserves to be called uncivil. Then I have shown a suspicion of foul usage by it, which surely dare not be meant. If just, I ought to apprehend every thing, and fly the house and the man as I would an infection. If not just, and if I cannot contrive to clear myself of having entertained suspicions, by assigning some other plausible reason for my denial, the very staying here will have an appearance not at all reputable to myself.

I am now out of humour with him,—with myself,—with all the world, but you. His companions are shocking creatures. Why, again I repeat, should he have been desirous to bring me into such company? Once more I like him not.—Indeed I do not like him!

LETTER IX

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE TUESDAY, MAY 2.

With infinite regret I am obliged to tell you, that I can no longer write to you, or receive letters from you.—Your mother has sent me a letter enclosed in a cover to Mr. Lovelace, directed for him at Lord M.'s, (and which was brought him just now,) reproaching me on this subject in very angry terms, and forbidding me, 'as I would not be thought to intend to make her and you unhappy, to write to you without her leave.'

This, therefore, is the last you must receive from me, till happier days. And as my prospects are not very bad, I presume we shall soon have leave to write again; and even to see each other: since an alliance with a family so honourable as Mr. Lovelace's is will not be a disgrace.

She is pleased to write, 'That if I would wish to inflame you, I should let you know her written prohibition: but if otherwise, find some way of my own accord (without bringing her into the question) to decline a correspondence, which I must know she has for some time past forbidden.' But all I can say is, to beg of you not to be inflamed: to beg of you not to let her know, or even by your behaviour to her, on this occasion, guess, that I have acquainted you with my reason for declining to write to you. For how else, after the scruples I have heretofore made on this very subject, yet proceeding to correspond, can I honestly satisfy you about my motives for this sudden stop? So, my dear, I choose, you see, rather to rely upon your discretion, than to feign reasons with which you would not be satisfied, but with your usual active penetration, sift to the bottom, and at last find me to be a mean and low qualifier; and that with an implication injurious to you, that I supposed you had not prudence enough to be trusted with the naked truth.

I repeat, that my prospects are not bad. 'The house, I presume, will soon be taken. The people here are very respectful, notwithstanding my nicety about Miss Partington. Miss Martin, who is near marriage with an eminent tradesman in the Strand, just now, in a very respectful manner, asked my opinion of some patterns of rich silks for the occasion. The widow has a less forbidding appearance than at first. Mr. Lovelace, on my declared dislike of his four friends, has assured me that neither they nor any body else shall be introduced to me without my leave.'

These circumstances I mention (as you will suppose) that your kind heart may be at ease about me; that you may be induced by them to acquiesce with your mother's commands, (cheerfully acquiesce,) and that for my sake, lest I should be thought an inflamer; who am, with very contrary intentions, my dearest and best beloved friend,

Your ever obliged and affectionate, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER X

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE WEDN. MAY 3.

I am astonished that my mother should take such a step—purely to exercise an unreasonable act of authority; and to oblige the most remorseless hearts in the world. If I find that I can be of use to you, either by advice or information, do you think I will not give it!—Were it to any other person, much less dear to me than you are, do you think, in such a case, I would forbear giving it?

Mr. Hickman, who pretends to a little casuistry in such nice matters, is of opinion that I ought not to decline such a correspondence thus circumstanced. And it is well he is; for my mother having set me up, I must have somebody to quarrel with.

This I will come into if it will make you easy—I will forbear to write to you for a few days, if nothing extraordinary happen, and till the rigour of her prohibition is abated. But be assured that I will not dispense with your writing to me. My heart, my conscience, my honour, will not permit it.

But how will I help myself?—How!—easily enough. For I do assure you that I want but very little farther provocation to fly privately to London. And if I do, I will not leave you till I see you either honourably married, or absolutely quit of the wretch: and, in this last case, I will take you down with me, in defiance of the whole world: or, if you refuse to go with me, stay with you, and accompany you as your shadow whithersoever you go.

Don't be frightened at this declaration. There is but one consideration, and but one hope, that withhold me, watched as I am in all my retirements; obliged to read to her without a voice; to work in her presence without fingers; and to lie with her every night against my will. The consideration is, lest you should apprehend that a step of this nature would look like a doubling of your fault, in the eyes of such as think your going away a fault. The hope is, that things will still end happily, and that some people will have reason to take shame to themselves for the sorry part they have acted. Nevertheless I am often balancing—but your resolving to give up the correspondence at this crisis will turn the scale. Write, therefore, or take the consequence.

A few words upon the subject of your last letters. I know not whether your brother's wise project be given up or not. A dead silence reigns in your family. Your brother was absent three days; then at home one; and is now absent: but whether with Singleton, or not, I cannot find out.

By your account of your wretch's companions, I see not but they are a set of infernals, and he the Beelzebub. What could he mean, as you say, by his earnestness to bring you into such company, and to give you such an opportunity to make him and them reflecting-glasses to one another? The man's a fool, to be sure, my dear—a silly fellow, at least—the wretches must put on their best before you, no doubt—Lords of the creation!— noble fellows these!—Yet who knows how many poor despicable souls of our sex the worst of them has had to whine after him!

You have brought an inconvenience upon yourself, as you observe, by your refusal of Miss Partington for your bedfellow. Pity you had not admitted her! watchful as you are, what could have happened? If violence were intended, he would not stay for the night. You might have sat up after her, or not gone to bed. Mrs. Sinclair pressed it too far. You was over-scrupulous.

If any thing happen to delay your nuptials, I would advise you to remove: but, if you marry, perhaps you may think it no great matter to stay where you are till you take possession of your own estate. The knot once tied, and with so resolute a man, it is my opinion your relations will soon resign what they cannot legally hold: and, were even a litigation to follow, you will not be able, nor ought you to be willing, to help it: for your estate will then be his right; and it will be unjust to wish it to be withheld from him.

One thing I would advise you to think of; and that is, of proper settlements: it will be to the credit of your prudence and of his justice (and the more as matters stand) that something of this

should be done before you marry. Bad as he is, nobody accounts him a sordid man. And I wonder he has been hitherto silent on that subject.

I am not displeased with his proposal about the widow lady's house. I think it will do very well. But if it must be three weeks before you can be certain about it, surely you need not put off his day for that space: and he may bespeak his equipages. Surprising to me, as well as to you, that he could be so acquiescent!

I repeat—continue to write to me. I insist upon it; and that as minutely as possible: or, take the consequence. I send this by a particular hand. I am, and ever will be,

Your most affectionate, ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE THURSDAY, MAY 4.

I forego every other engagement, I suspend ever wish, I banish every other fear, to take up my pen, to beg of you that you will not think of being guilty of such an act of love as I can never thank you for; but must for ever regret. If I must continue to write to you, I must. I know full well your impatience of control, when you have the least imagination that your generosity or friendship is likely to be wondered at.

My dearest, dearest creature, would you incur a maternal, as I have a paternal, malediction? Would not the world think there was an infection in my fault, if it were to be followed by Miss Howe? There are some points so flagrantly wrong that they will not bear to be argued upon. This is one of them. I need not give reasons against such a rashness. Heaven forbid that it should be known that you had it but once in your thought, be your motives ever so noble and generous, to follow so bad an example, the rather, as that you would, in such a case, want the extenuations that might be pleaded in my favour; and particularly that one of being surprised into the unhappy step!

The restraint your mother lays you under would not have appeared heavy to you but on my account. Would you had once thought it a hardship to be admitted to a part of her bed?—How did I use to be delighted with such a favour from my mother! how did I love to work in her presence! —So did you in the presence of your's once. And to read to her in winter evenings I know was one of your joys.—Do not give me cause to reproach myself on the reason that may be assigned for the change in you.

Learn, my dear, I beseech you, learn to subdue your own passions. Be the motives what they will, excess is excess. Those passions in our sex, which we take pains to subdue, may have one and the same source with those infinitely-blacker passions, which we used so often to condemn in the violent and headstrong of the other sex; and which may only be heightened in them by custom, and their freer education. Let us both, my dear, ponder well this thought: look into ourselves, and fear.

If I write, as I find I must, I insist upon your forbearing to write. Your silence to this shall be the sign to me that you will not think of the rashness you threaten me with: and that you will obey your mother as to your own part of the correspondence, however; especially as you can inform or advise me in every weighty case by Mr. Hickman's pen.

My trembling writing will show you, my dear impetuous creature, what a trembling heart you have given to

Your ever obliged, Or, if you take so rash a step, Your for ever disobliged, CLARISSA HARLOWE.

My clothes were brought to me just now. But you have so much discomposed me, that I have no heart to look into the trunks. Why, why, my dear, will you fright me with your flaming love? discomposure gives distress to a weak heart, whether it arise from friendship or enmity.

A servant of Mr. Lovelace carries this to Mr. Hickman for dispatch-sake. Let that worthy man's pen relieve my heart from this new uneasiness.

LETTER XII

MR. HICKMAN, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE [SENT TO WILSON'S BY A PARTICULAR HAND.] FRIDAY, MAY 5.

MADAM,

I have the honour of dear Miss Howe's commands to acquaint you, without knowing the occasion, 'That she is excessively concerned for the concern she has given you in her last letter: and that, if you will but write to her, under cover as before, she will have no thoughts of what you are so very apprehensive about.'—Yet she bid me write, 'That if she had but the least imagination that she can serve you, and save you,' those are her words, 'all the censures of the world will be but of second consideration with her.' I have great temptations, on this occasion, to express my own resentments upon your present state; but not being fully apprized of what that is—only conjecturing from the disturbance upon the mind of the dearest lady in the world to me, and the most sincere of friends to you, that that is not altogether so happy as were to be wished; and being, moreover, forbid to enter into the cruel subject; I can only offer, as I do, my best and faithfullest services! and wish you a happy deliverance from all your troubles. For I am,

Most excellent young lady, Your faithful and most obedient servant, CH. HICKMAN.

LETTER XIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY, MAY 2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I will summarily give thee a few of my pleas.

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

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

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

She did not like Miss Partington—let her fortune be what it would, and she had heard a great deal said of her fortune, she should not choose an intimacy with her. She thought it was a hardship to be put upon such a difficulty as she was put upon the preceding night, when there were lodgers in the front-house, whom they had reason to be freer with, than, upon so short an acquaintance, with her.

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

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

I offered to resent Mrs. Sinclair's freedom.

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

I said, I liked Miss Partington as little as she could. Miss Partington was a silly young creature; who seemed to justify the watchfulness of her guardians over her.—But nevertheless, as to her own, that I thought the girl (for girl she was, as to discretion) not exceptionable; only carrying herself like a free good-natured creature who believed herself secure in the honour of her company.

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

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

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

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

See, Jack, what I get by my charity!

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

She congratulated me upon my charity; but told me, that to enlarge her own, she hoped it would not be expected of her to approve of the low company I had brought her into last night.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And now, dost thou not think that I owe my charmer some revenge for her cruelty in obliging such a fine young creature, and so vast a fortune, as Miss Partington, to crowd into a press-bed with Dorcas the maid-servant of the proud refuser?—Miss Partington too (with tears) declared, by Mrs. Sinclair, that would Mrs. Lovelace do her the honour of a visit at Barnet, the best bed and best room in her guardian's house should be at her service. Thinkest thou that I could not guess at her dishonourable

fears of me?—that she apprehended, that the supposed husband would endeavour to take possession of his own?—and that Miss Partington would be willing to contribute to such a piece of justice?

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

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

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

LETTER XIV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY, MAY 2.

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

And what the contents?

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

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

Miss Howe's correspondence, no doubt.

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

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

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

LETTER XV

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. EDGWARE, TUESDAY NIGHT, MAY 2.

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

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

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

You may think what I am going to write too flighty: but, by my faith, I have conceived such a profound reverence for her sense and judgment, that, far from thinking the man excusable who should treat her basely, I am ready to regret that such an angel of a woman should even marry. She is in my eye all mind: and were she to meet with a man all mind likewise, why should the charming qualities she is mistress of be endangered? Why should such an angel be plunged so low as into the vulgar offices of a domestic life? Were she mine, I should hardly wish to see her a mother, unless there were a kind of moral certainty, that minds like hers could be propagated. For why, in short, should not the work of bodies be left to mere bodies? I know, that you yourself have an opinion of her little less exalted. Belton, Mowbray, Tourville, are all of my mind; are full of her praises; and swear, it would be a million of pities to ruin a woman in whose fall none but devils can rejoice.

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

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

Sweet are the joys that come with willingness.

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

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

Thy partial friend, J. BELFORD.

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

THOMAS BELTON,
RICHARD MOWBRAY,
JAMES TOURVILLE.

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

LETTER XVI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. WEDNESDAY, MAY 3.

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

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

I own with thee, and with the poet, that sweet are the joys that come with willingness—But is it to be expected, that a woman of education, and a lover of forms, will yield before she is attacked? And have I so much as summoned this to surrender? I doubt not but I shall meet with difficulty. I must therefore make my first effort by surprise. There may possibly be some cruelty necessary: but there may be consent in struggle; there may be yielding in resistance. But the first conflict over, whether the following may not be weaker and weaker, till willingness ensue, is the point to be tried. I will illustrate what I have said by the simile of a bird new caught. We begin, when boys, with birds; and when grown up, go on to women; and both perhaps, in turn, experience our sportive cruelty.

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

Now let me tell thee, that I have known a bird actually starve itself, and die with grief, at its being caught and caged. But never did I meet with a woman who was so silly.—Yet have I heard the dear souls most vehemently threaten their own lives on such an occasion. But it is saying nothing in a woman's favour, if we do not allow her to have more sense than a bird. And yet we must all own, that it is more difficult to catch a bird than a lady.

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

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

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

To particulars:

How usual a thing is it for women as well as men, without the least remorse, to ensnare, to cage, and torment, and even with burning knitting-needles to put out the eyes of the poor feather'd songster [thou seest I have not yet done with birds]; which however, in proportion to its bulk, has more life than themselves (for a bird is all soul;) and of consequence has as much feeling as the human creature! when at the same time, if an honest fellow, by the gentlest persuasion, and the softest arts, has the good luck to prevail upon a mew'd-up lady, to countenance her own escape, and she consents to break cage, and be set a flying into the all-cheering air of liberty, mercy on us! what an outcry is generally raised against him!

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

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

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

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.