

THE

Suspicious Lovers:

A NOVEL.

In THREE VOLUMES.

By the Author of WOODBURY.

VOL. I.

Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes;
The canker galls the infants of the Spring,
Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd;
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.

SHAKESPEARE.

LONDON:

Printed for J. WILKIE, *St. Paul's Church-Yard*; and
E. and C. DILLY, in the *Poultry*.

MD CC LXXVII

LETTER I.

Miss MELVERN to Miss AIRSBY.

Broomhill.

TOO scrupulous a care, my dear Sophia, in our matrimonial concerns, proceeds as often from avarice, as from discretion; and those whom the world extols as very *prudent girls indeed*, more frequently marry with a view to what is called making their fortune, than from any striking merit in the man, who addresses them, or any particular preference or attachment of their own hearts.

The woman who grasps at a large settlement without weighing the merits of him who offers it, has no occasion to complain if she should be unhappy; she has what she wanted, she condition'd for wealth, but forgot to take the heart into the bargain.

Esteem and reason are so *Clairvoyant* that with a glance they can discover numberless imperfections, which the softer passion would overlook.—

Reason is seldom elated by hope, or depressed with fear;—Love is all hope, or fear, its pleasures momentary, its anxieties, the alternate inhabitants of the same breast.

Be satisfied then my heart, with pleasures less refined, since thou wilt feel pains less acute; and embrace the sober maxims of reason.

I have already known too many strange reverses, have seen too much of that fallacious happiness dissolve which wealth and grandeur give, ever to form a wish to be exalted to any state, higher than that which now courts my acceptance.

From my unhappy mother's indiscretions, I hope I shall learn to avoid those errors which have proved fatal to so many of my sex; who intoxicated with pleasures, have gratified the most unworthy inclinations; and then what ensues, but reproach and shame!—

My misfortunes you well know commenc'd almost with my existence; beneficial misfortunes let me call them, which as I grew up, plucked the seeds of vanity from my bosom, ere they had time to take root there.

Perseverance is the soul of virtue, it will safely pilot us through a life full of temptations and trials.

My father, fatal recollection! married for love: Had reason directed his choice, notwithstanding what I have said above in the playfulness of my heart, he might still have been living and happy: Nor was he convinced of his error, 'till ruin came upon him; nor did he ever feel a gleam of comfort, 'till just before his own death, his brother, who dy'd

abroad, left me so nobly independent: The only joy I felt at it was occasioned by the wish that he might long survive to share it with me.

The absence of my poor brother, who, my father pretended was banished to a foreign clime by his extravagancies, continually preyed upon his mind.—When they parted, I remember he took the amiable youth in his arms—weep not for me, said my Harry to him, your tears affect me more than any thing you ever did, you have not deprived me of all; I have a heart form'd to virtue by the best of friends, our dear Mr. Airsby; I have received such an education through his means, as will support me in almost any country—integrity of heart, and a conscience void of offence, will in absence prove such a consolation to me, as not all your fortune could have yielded without it.—All happiness does not centre in the possession of riches.—Here my father unable longer to sustain the torrent of affection, broke from him—they parted—never to meet again.—

Had my mother spent as much time in cultivating her mind, as in embellishing her person, which is by nature lovely, she would at the close of life, have tasted that internal source of comfort, piety only can yield upon a dying bed.

If misery it to mark my future days, I hope it will not be effected by a rash marriage; at least as far as human prudence can judge. What I am going to communicate must surprize you—Should the youth yclep'd Leland re-urge his suit, I may not prove inflexible.

My poor father married for love, and was undone; now you shall see what a hand I shall make of it, upon the sober principles of *reason*, and *prudence*.—Had I ever seen the man I preferred to Leland, I would not do him the injustice to marry him. He possesses many requisites to make a good husband, his character is moral, his person pleasing, his understanding, if not of the very first order, is tolerably well cultivated; and the greatest error of which his judgment can be accused, is his kind partiality for your Harriot.

Were my fortune smaller, I believe Sir Thomas would be less anxious to promote a match between his son and me, as he has so many children;—for my own part, I am neither mercenary nor ambitious; were Mr. Leland's fortune less than it is, it would not weigh with me.

I have heard the melting mood is catching; now should the sighs of the gentle swain awaken pity, and pity grow into downright love—why who knows?—Adieu, make haste home—hundredth cousins can have no claim upon you—come then to your

HARRIOT MELVERN.

LETTER II.

JAMES LELAND, Esq; to Mr. DANVERS,

Leland Park.

A Fine moralist that Confucius, Dick, when he said—“He that in the morning, hath heard the voice of virtue, may die at night, this man will not repent living, and death will not be a pain unto him.”—Death I hope is far off, nor did I ever so much wish for life as at present, one of the blessed consequences of having listen’d “in the morning to the voice of virtue.”—

With some reluctance I had engaged to accompany Sir Harry Foxmore on a mischievous occasion—some conversations I have lately had with my amiable Miss Melvern, on the beauty of virtue, and the depravity of vice, the pleasures resulting from the one, and the shame and remorse attendant on the other, have enabled me to make a few serious reflections, not mal-a-propos; and the result was, that the destruction of innocence, was not so great a victory as the maxims of a libertine would suggest to him—my rhetoric had its desired effect on Foxmore—we parted—I turn’d my horse’s head towards Broomhill, where my morality was rewarded with the sight of Miss Melvern, with not “a prying shepherd near.”

Her looks indicated a mind too serene in itself to give another pain—Her amiable behaviour made me unguarded in my joy—a gentle reproof recalled me to order.—I seiz’d a lucky moment to push my fortune—I pleased my passion again—with diffidence I urged my moderate fortunes, as being a younger brother—it was touching on a tender string.

Now Mr. Leland, interrupted she with ineffable sweetness, you are growing serious—this subject has been so often discussed between us, that I am come to a determination, and if you are not endow’d with uncommon fortitude, you will shudder at its consequences—your own merits, Sir, will hold the place of every other consideration in my heart, your’s will be severely proved, when in possession of so faulty a creature as her, you are pleased to distinguish; I have already received too many proofs of your regard, to doubt the sincer ity of it—If then you can resolve to take me with all my errors, this hand is your’s, and I hope time will convince you, it is not unaccompanied by my heart.—

I was all joy, all gratitude at a declaration so unexpected, she all confusion at the testimonies I gave her of it—For continued I—

“Bliss goes but to a certain bound,
“Beyond tis agony.”

True love, my dearest friend, moves not by the calm impulses of reason:—Do you really think so Mr. Leland? If reason be not united with love, you will live to repent: For if reason had not pleaded powerfully in your favour, you would not so easily have gained

your point—my disposition is naturally placid; its hopes and fears nearly on a counterpoise: I do not approve precipitately, but am persevering in my attachments. The most violent passions soonest subside—tho' my feelings are less lively than those of many others, yet I am not capricious—in the most perfect friendships much must be mutually forgiven—Doubt not, Danvers, but that I assented to the truth of all she said, and that I am your's,

LELAND

Copyright Chawton House Library

LETTER III.

Mr. DANVERS, in Answer.

Chester.

BEAUTY is the last thing one of us *homme du tems* should seek for in a wife; glowing cheeks—ruby lips—and sparkling eyes, have nothing to do in the affair. Dost think that a wife's eyes are to shine for the sole purposes of pleasing her husband?—'Sdeath, man, thou wilt be no sooner noosed, than thou wilt be the only person they will never dart a single beam upon.—Every worthless gallant, every despicable petit maitre will be preferred to the honest dupe of a husband.

How many noble fellows have been ruined by gambolling after blue, and black eyes.—If a man will marry, let him; but what a plague has love to do with the matter?—Let gold gild the pill a husband will never be at a loss for a toy *hors de son domestique*, for every petty country assembly can furnish him with amusement—maids, wives, and widows, are kindly condescending—all such adepts in the science of dissimulation, that even grandmothers will presume to pass themselves upon us for Flora's and Hebe's: I lately saw one tripping in a minuet, upon a pair of high heels, with as much celerity as a goose hobbling before her young ones to a pond; a little reeling now and then, when an unstrung nerve disconcerted the equilibrium.

How did I hear a fond parent exclaim a few nights ago at a country assembly, on seeing her offspring exhibiting her finely polished limbs in a minuet: [How many roguish thoughts Leland, has such an infantine performance put into my head] to a lady sitting next her—look Mrs. Romney, is not my girl an Angel—does she not dance divinely?—She has learnt these twelve years of Mr. Scrapum, the best master in the country—How d'ye like her dress, is it not sweet? it has been my study night and day these three weeks, to get it ready for her against she left school.—Here Miss finished her minuet, and her partner led her up to her mamma; she was a lovely girl, and expressed all the timidity natural to her sex and years, unwarped by bad example and flattery. The mother took notice of her emotion, and chid her severely for it.

Oh mamma, said the pretty simple soul, I am frightened out of my wits; pray don't oblige me to dance again 'till I am a great deal older, before so much company.—Lord, child, mutter'd the mother, what behaviour is this, after all the expence I have been at for your education?—you should have left all this blushing and stuff at school; what should people be ashamed of, when they have got as good cloaths as their neighbours? The young lady was attempting an excuse, when an elegant young fellow accosting them, petition'd the mother's leave for Miss to dance with him—the girl look'd petrified, whilst the bright beams of delight danced in her Mamma's eyes—She presented him with the reluctant hand of her child—he led her out, and when she had a second time displayed herself, she returned saying, have I not done my best now Mamma? I was not half so much frighten'd as before; in a little time I dare say I shall not be frighten'd at all—I lost what followed.

Thus, Leland, you see how early, and by what imperceptible degrees, the delicacy of infant minds is subdued.—'tis a folly to be surprized at any indiscretions they may commit hereafter.

I counted no less than fourteen of these infant blossoms, brought forth to be blighted in this mart of vanity; to prostitute their growing beauties to the gaze of libertines.—A party of us got together, and selected those amongst them which bid fairest for reputation in the annals of gallantry, whilst their prudent Mamma's were at the card tables. We pour'd such doctrine into their ears, as never proceeded from the lips of a pious matron. The sweet souls unpractis'd in the arts of mankind, readily adopted all we said in behalf of their charms; and would as soon have doubted the truth of their catechism, as the validity of our assertions.

At these early initiations into life, the first intrigues are formed—here the first deviations from the rule of right commence—here the fort is left unguarded, which every coxcomb may seize at will; and should the poor unexperienced girl, at so early an age, settle her affections on an embroidered scoundrel, the poor child is not to be blamed, not being capable of distinguishing the bullion from the dross—she is then perhaps by the severity of this very parent, the sole cause of her error, deprived of her liberty, and treated with the utmost rigour,—whereas had she remained at home a few years longer, her mind and person would have been embellished with the sex's best, and most permanent endowments; there would then be a prospect of felicity in a partnership with them for life.—But a girl of refinement is hardly to be found; and if she were, she would be shun'd with as much abhorrence by her own sex, as the cut of a ruffle, or fashion of a cap, which has been discarded a whole season—They have no enlargement of heart—no stability of conduct, and no respect for virtue.—The fault lies not so much in human nature, as in the manner in which it is cultivated.

Nay, are not our rising generation of young nobility, as soon as they can speak, put under the tuition of French courtesans, the refuse of our travelled gentlemen? they are placed in our best families, to inculcate the seeds of morality in the minds of their pupils—Even our Lord Jackey's, Lord Tommy's, and Master Billy's, have their Mademoiselles.

But to the Purpose, are you sure the woman whom you underwrite an Angel, will always remain such? Can a daughter of one of the most arrant demi-reps about town, have hitherto lived untainted with libertinism?

What right has a man of your free principles to expect heaven should work a miracle in his favour? Would this bird of paradise appear half so lovely in your eyes divested of her plumage, which report values at 20,000l.?—Where there is such a fortune in the case, 'tis a confounded hard matter to decide whether that, or the Lady has the strongest claim upon a young man's affections. Adieu, &c.

R. DANVERS.

LETTER IV.

JAMES LELAND, Esq; to Mr. DANVERS.

Leland Park.

A Truce, a truce, dear Dick, with thy staggering propositions, 'tis unmanly to torture a wretch when ready for his execution.—Thou has drawn a woeful picture of *le Beau sexe*.

I acknowledge 'tis absurd to hunt for modesty and virtue in our London markets, where every handsome face is set up to the highest bidder. Though I believe, that licentiousness was never so prevalent, yet in the more retired walks of life, you will still find characters which are models of female excellence---such is the good Mrs. Airsly, with whom my Harriot has for some years resided. Though her abilities are common, they are so much improved by a right study, as to make her exemplary in the respective characters, of Friend---Mother---Wife; she never appears but she diffuses happiness around her; my Harriot is an exact copy of this amiable original.

Miss Melvern, at my entreaties, goes to town for a few weeks, as it will be a means of accelerating matters. My impatience at present, but ill brooks delay.

She has no guardians living to consult, and her fortune is chiefly lodged amongst Bankers. Her generosity to me greatly over rates my merits---she will leave the direction of every thing to my honour. I would have rewarded her for it with a thousand kisses, but the whimsical little gypsey disappointed me---supposing she were a goddess---why goddesses have condescended. Adieu, &c.

LELAND.

LETTER V.

Miss MELVERN, to Miss AIRSBY.

Broomhill.

NOT return to Broomhill my Sophy, before I go to London, to hasten this awful ceremony.---The approbation of all my friends flatters me, I have acted properly.---I have a most obliging letter from my mother in answer to one I sent her, informing her, as I thought it my duty, of my approaching change of situation, she earnestly entreats I will accept of an apartment in her house, and says, she has been for some time, in a very ill state of health.—You know not how much my heart is torn to have a parent, who lives a disgrace to the name——till I hear of her reformation, I shall never be truly happy.

Farewell,

H. MELVERN.

LETTER VI.

Mrs. MELVERN, to Miss MELVERN.

Portman-square.

My dear Child,

WHEN I wrote to you last, * I but imperfectly expressed how welcome the sight of you would be to me. You do not know what a change a few months has made in your mother.—A sick bed is no flatterer---it shews us what we are---I tremble at the thought. Your heart ever delighted in doing good---your tender pity only can dispense comfort to an unhappy parent---conviction of my errors hath at length awakened remorse, and remorse despair—come then and ease my distractions—yet how dare I look up to you for pity—but the wicked have no reliance on each other.

If you cannot consent to take up with an apartment in my house, permit me at least to see you, wherever you shall appoint—I want support—in your society, my much injured child, I shall be sure to find it. Adieu, &c.

C. MELVERN.

* This Letter does not appear.

LETTER VII.

EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

Dear Charles,

M—, Ireland.

QUITE head sick, heart sick, and I may add soul sick of this detestable county; I mean that part of it to which I am confined, for a very short time longer I hope.—My father is attending the Parliament in Dublin, he still retains the same lively benevolent disposition, as when last you saw him.

In his absence the honours of his house have devolved on me.

The old mansion, so long fam'd for the hospitality of its owner, is constantly throng'd with all the Fox-hunters and Bon Vivans in the country. Our days and nights are spent in riot and sensuality, female conversation is a felicity of which they have not the least idea; I mean the conversation of the elegant and amiable part of the sex, who are here excluded to the great mortification of your Belville, for to me that society is tasteless wherein they do not make a part.

My friends eat, drink, revel and feel sorrow even in the very bosom of joy, for their passions know no director, but the ungoverned will.

I wish my father would quit this estate, and reside wholly with me, on mine in Dorsetshire, when my house is finished; as I shall then begin to look out for a Mistress to place in it, whose tenderness now in the days of my youth, shall restrain me from all irregularities, and whose sprightly conversation shall cheer my wintry days. I shall every hour bless God, that she was capable of keeping me all her own, before time had debilitated my feelings, or satiety made vapid every enjoyment.

My next will be from London. Adieu, shake off that impenetrable gloom which hangs about you, and believe me your friend.

BELVILLE.

Copyright Chawton House Library

LETTER VIII.

Miss MELVERN, to Miss AIRSBY.

Portman-square.

“Cease to lament for that thou canst not help,
And study help, for that which thou lament’st;
Time is the nurse, and breeder of all good.”

THE crisis of my fate approaches, whether the swift winged minutes will come impeded with peace, futurity alone will show. My mother received me with those tender emotions, of which I thought her incapable. Her health is much mended and her mind seems totally disengaged from the world—her conversation is rational, and serious.—When she mentions my brother, grief overwhelms her.

Her penitence affects me; I cannot resolve to quit her, whilst I behold her in such a state of humiliation; she confesses she has never felt a pleasure equal to what my conversation gives her. To have her reformation effected is my highest wish—I have paid no visit but to Mrs. Clifford, since I came to town.

I have been much solicited to make one of the vast number which nightly throng the public haunts of dissipation; I cannot allow that to be a pleasure, wherein the mind has no participation; besides, I do not want to try the depth of Mr. Leland’s affection, by suffering myself to be gallanted by fine fellows, to every public spectacle; my nature rejects the very idea of a coquet—I would not pain Mr. Leland by *badinant* with coxcombs.—If women, by such a conduct, intend to awaken their lover’s feelings, I think it is making a dangerous use of power; tho’ the lover may come full of humiliations---yet the husband comes armed with reproaches.---A lover’s passions are ardent, a husband’s memory tenacious.

When Mr. Leland has fixt on a house in the country, I will prevail on my mother to take one, as near us as possible, it will perfect my pleasure, that while I fulfil the duties of a wife, I can execute those of a daughter.

Tell the best of friends, your dear father, and mother, to be under no concerns for my health, as I take every prudent method to preserve it.

Adieu, &c.

H. MELVERN.

LETTER IX.

To the same.

Portman-square.

YOU know that my mother's reformation and happiness are the dearest wishes of my heart.

She had been very low, and much indisposed for a fortnight, I spent most of my time with her, and at intervals read to her, such of our best authors as are more calculated to invite sinners to repentance by their moderation, than to deter them from it by their violence; I made use of every persuasive argument to comfort her, as her reflections almost overcame her.

A few mornings ago, when I paid my duty to her, I found she had been very ill all night. Soon after her woman Bret entered with looks strongly mark'd with horror, and whisper'd something to her mistress, at which she clasped her hands in an agony.—The more I begg'd to be informed of the occasion, the more reluctance they discovered.-- At length my mother said she would rise---which I opposed, but she urged the necessity of it, as a gentleman was come to speak with her on particular business. She gave orders for Mr. Perkins to attend her in the library.—As breakfast was waiting for me in the adjoining room, I sat down to it, but in no enviable state of mind. What the former part of the conversation was between my mother and Mr. Perkins, I know not; this is what I heard of it. You cannot blame me, Madam, said Mr. Perkins, I am but Sir William's agent, the notes of hand have long been due, and the bond must be immediately cancell'd, if not, I am ordered to proceed to extremities, and I must not quit your house 'till I have an order for 1400l.—Then I am undone, rejoined my mother, if Sir William cannot wait 'till I have settled some affairs, for I have not a friend in the world who will advance the sum for me. The lawyer continued to be inflexible; my mother to petition for time.—

I flew into the room, and gave him an order on my banker for the sum demanded—When he was gone, I embraced my mother with more satisfaction than ever I had done in my life—the excess of her gratitude was the only sensation I felt of pain.

—Of what joy do those deprive themselves, whose sordid souls will not suffer them to drink at the fountain of benevolence! Adieu,

H. MELVERN.

LETTER X.

To the same.

Portman-Square.

MY spirits are too much discomposed to answer as I ought your friendly packet—My tears will flow, tho' unbidden—the best tempers are not always equal—but I find I have a proud heart, which takes reproof reluctantly—I thought it my duty to inform Mr. Leland of the trifles I had done for my mother—He calls me indiscreet, bids me make a retrospect of her past life, and if I can find it graced with one action deserving my kindness, he should think his reproof ill timed.

Do you not think it, my Sophy, indelicate in Mr. Leland to reproach me for my mother's conduct?—Should the benevolent suffer the child of affliction, much more a parent, to bend beneath its weight, when they can dispense the cordial blessings of peace to them?

Now tranquillity is once more restored to my mother, she chides my dilatoriness in the preparations I am making for an approaching event. She has just presented me with her picture richly set; also a fine suit of pearl, and some diamonds, of which she says she shall never have any farther use.

Adieu,

H. MELVERN.

LETTER XI.

Miss AIRSBY in Answer.

Broomhill.

“TIME and chance happeneth to all men,” and as sure as he is born, so sure he must die, tho’ he be an elder brother, and the honours and riches of generations centre in him— Why then should your enamorado Leland’s brother, ’Squire Thomas, be exempted from the general lot.---Alas, poor Thomas is dying, or dead, that’s all; and his brother James is sent for express.—See how the world goes, Mrs. Harriot! reflecting minds, such as your Sophy’s, will be always drawing good out of evil---one brother dies, whose bosom was never soften’d by humanity---soothed by friendship---or warmed by love---and the other---Oh I will tell you while I think of it, begg’d me to inform you of the cause of his absence, fearing he should not be able to write to you for some time.

Now if one of the Lady Destinies should spin the thread of this youth’s existence so finely, that it snaps—the world will be no great losers by the bargain, for his virtues never gained him a friend.

I am just in that flow of spirits to be very ludicrous, how amazing it is, that half the world mistake dullness for sobriety, and sprightliness for levity.

You know I have always affirmed avarice to be the Leland family vice; I condemn it in them perhaps, because I have never been tempted—I wish the Lady Fortune would one day prove me, and in one of her gamboling humours, would make a visit to Broomhill *en passant*, and throw her purse into my lap. Now I am one of those sort of sinners, who love dearly to parly with temptation—if it is but to prove my strength by resisting; tho’ I much fear when she came freighted with gold, my resistance would be but feeble, for it not gold the most powerful of all temptations? it has even been known, incredible as it may seem, to have corrupted the fidelity of statesmen, and it is the baume de vie for which the patriots roar.

The power of gold is almost unlimited—it can purchase fine cloaths, jewels, equipages, parrots, monkeys, lap-dogs, and lovers—it will procure respect from inferiors, and the semblance of friendship every where—it will purchase honours and titles—and husbands, more than are good.

Now let me see what it cannot purchase,—a lost good name—no!—wisdom—no!—happiness—no!—relief for a wounded heart—no!—health—no!—a true friend—no!—a constant lover—no!— I won’t be rich then, temptation I defy thee! I find thy gaudy trappings, superficial, and unsubstantial, they dazzle the eye, but yield no real satisfaction to the possessor, for we do not see them exempt from

“All the ills that flesh is heir to.”

You know not how much I rejoice in your absence, as it encreases my consequence, for I am look'd upon as somebody, now you are out of the parish.—A little envy, Harriot, there was never a female without it; but after all, mine is but a borrow'd lustre, you are the luminary from which I receive it. As I pass thro' the village, Oh how the blessings and praises of the good old souls dilate my heart, when from my hands they receive the liberal bounties of your's. We cry and curtesey, and curtesey and cry again; 'till the mutual joy grows too big for utterance—then I snatch up my muff, put on my pattens, and continue my route; kind looks, and kind words follow me every where, and bring me back to Broomhill: When I give an account of my peregrinations, my father and mother bless me by turns, and then a night of sweet sleep prepares me chearfully to fulfil the duties of the following day.

In the morning I awake from pleasing dreams, wherein I taste all the pleasures of the beau monde, without corrupting my morals, or impairing my health. And sometimes I see the world as it really is—every body appearing for what they are not, promises made which were never designed to be fulfilled—oaths taken for the jest of breaking them---virtue in rags---and vice in a coach and six.

Tho' my visions of the night lead me thro' a variety of scenes, with which I awake perfectly satisfied, yet there is a wonder amongst you, of which my imagination can form no idea, a prodigy amongst mankind, history has never shewn us the like; no, not when Troy had her Hector, Greece her Achilles, Macedonia her Alexander, and Rome her Caesar—his universal powers can communicate to the soul every various passion, with the same breath he can melt it into pity, or rouse it into rage; nature herself became a bankrupt when she made a

GARRICK.

Witness, S. AIRSBY.

LETTER XII.

EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

London.

NOT a week has pass'd, my dear Charles, since my arrival, and fate has cast her irrevocable die; it was no sooner thrown than chaos enwrapped it in her inexplicable web.

What are the sex but nature's riddles, thrown out for mankind to solve---but whoever pretends to define them justly, must have keener perceptions than those with which mankind are generally endowed.

For after he has fathomed the depths of metaphysicks, probed ancient and modern philosophy to the core, compassed the whole earth on the pinions of imagination; after all his toil and trouble, ask him his definition of the sex, his reply would be---That woman, is woman---whom the ignorance of mankind often miscals angel, or goddess.

An Ignis Fatuus hath beguiled my senses----she must be found---O Bothwell! she is an angel---that is, I mean an angel of a woman---no etherial spirit---but one of the most perfect of creation's works.

The night after my arrival here, I went with a party to the play, my good or ill fortune there, call it which you will, placed me next my little divinity---I fear I survey'd her with an earnestness not consistent with politeness: An elderly lady sat on one side of her, a genteel young man in mourning behind her, who I found was of her party, to whom she expressed herself with great freedom---During the performance, I frequently made observations upon it to her---which she answered with much good sense, accompanied with the utmost reserve of countenance- -as the scenes grew interesting, her feelings bore a lively testimony to them.

When the curtain dropt, her party left the house; I follow'd them out, and found the ladies in the lobby, just as I was about to address the youngest, that disgrace to nobility---Lord ——, made his appearance, tho' so early in the evening, it was evident he was intoxicated---he accosted her in the most brutal manner, saying, come along with me, I will give you thousands, where he, pointing to me, will not give you pounds---You are an angel upon my soul. I severely reprov'd him for the insult, begging the lady to be under no apprehension.---He asked me how I dared to insult a man of his rank?---I told him that no rank could justify an undue liberty. On this a high altercation ensued between us---he drew his sword; I wrested it from him, telling him 'twas neither giving an instance of his politeness or courage: that he had mistaken the lady; he uttered a thousand imprecations; and, staggering, dropt on a seat.

The ladies were almost dying with terror, and I had only time to beg them to be under no apprehensions, when their friend return'd, saying the coach was ready.

The old lady inform'd him of the escape they had had, the eyes of the young one thank'd me for my protection, and at length in a tremulous voice, she entreated me not to think of the affront when they were gone, but only of my own safety---as the offender seem'd more an object of pity than resentment---I bow'd---their coach drove off.---The conclusion of the evening must be the subject of another letter. Adieu,

E. BELVILLE.

LETTER XIII.

To the same,—In Continuation.

London.

AFTER the play my friends prevailed upon me to go to the masquerade---I was habited *en Turc*. About midnight we were set down amidst the motley scene, in Oxford-street.

The humours of a masquerade are so much like the manners of the world out of it, that I am at a loss to guess why it should be distinguished by that name, any more than the daily exhibitions we see on the stage of life, mankind striving to deceive each other---for how frequently do we see Lords representing old women---chambermaids---politicians and prostitutes *attempting* the characters of vestals---and vestals---to be sure there are some!

I was seriously reflecting on this great misuse of time, when a couple of female masks accosted me, one of which, by her voice, I knew to be my fair incognita, in the dress of an hay-maker: After a secret conversation, we were interrupted by a country 'Squire---telling my lovely peasant that as the harvest was plentiful—he was in search of assistants to gather it in—I begg'd him not to parly with destruction, and from Johnson's Irene, as suited to my character, I address'd my nymph:

Wilt thou descend, fair daughter of perfection,
To hear my vows, and give mankind a Queen?
How will the matchless beauties of my fair one
—Adorn a throne and dignify dominion!

In a tone of voice which expressed all the beauties of harmony, and all the dignity of expression, she return'd,

Why all this glare of splendid eloquence,
To paint the pagentries of guilty state;
If I for these renounce the hopes of Heaven,
Immortal crowns, and fullness of enjoyment.—
—Empire and love (cry'd I) shall share the blissful day,
And varied life steal unperceiv'd away.

She rejoined she had often heard empire and love much talk'd of, but as to the latter, she believed there was no such thing. I entreated to know what reason she had to think so, and urg'd many things in its defence.

Without making me a reply, she said she would go in search of her English man—Behold him here, return'd I unmasking, your words have power to make me what you will.—“Transport me to Thebes, to Athens, when you will, or where.

Here a Friar made his appearance I discovered to be the gentleman I saw with her at the play.—Dear father, cry'd she, you are come just in time to preserve your daughter, who has been closely attacked by a Turkish corsair, but finding he could not make me swerve from my duty, he was tempting me with a Paradise of rosy bowers and singing birds, a reward the Mahometans always promise to their obedient captives. Here a croud of masks separated us for a time.—I followed the Peasant and Friar round the apartments, and felt an anxiety I never knew before; chance frequently brought us together, but I could seldom engage her to myself, at length with only her female friend, I met her in one of the outward apartments, she was unmasked, and on my entrance put it on.

Let the petition, said I, which is preferred with humility, receive a gracious hearing, those eyes unveiled, like yon rising sun (for it just began to appear) will dispense a blessing on whomsoever they shine. When a panegyrick is made at the expence of truth, reply'd she, it loses its effect.

Modern orators, Sir, study more to display their own powers, than convince the ignorant.

From whom, my pretty rustic, did you acquire this knowledge of the world, were I your ghostly father, I should like to bring you to confession—there is but one crime, for which I would not grant you absolution.

The most perfect judgments, rejoined she, as being finite, are fallible, therefore give me leave to convince you you are wrong in your's, for your reason seems strangely bewilder'd—You are an insensible creature, cry'd I, who talk of reason, because you know not what love is.

Love, Sir, in the sense I understand it—is the enthusiastic rhapsodies of our modern pretty fellows; founded on vanity, rais'd by self applause, and govern'd wholly by the tongue: Now as modern ideas, and modern sentiments, are engender'd in so uncultur'd a soil, there is little probability they can affect a mind thus forewarn'd,—further, as to what love is—

It is, Madam, the charming offspring of hope, the loadstone of the mind, which so closely attracts to it one dear object, as to exclude every other---it is the very fountain of bliss.

Or rather say, interrupting me, it is a false creation of the brain---a phantom dress'd up by caprice, which dazzles the eye; but whether it has the least influence on the heart, I must leave it to casuists to determine.

So fine an external, resumed I, could never have been formed from inanimate matter---I see, tho' imperfectly, the soul of tenderest sensibility must have been blended with so perfect a composition; and I flatter myself I shall live to hear you declare, that true love is no false creation of the brain, but a substantial good; and that you will extend the sceptre of mercy to the humblest of your slaves; dropping on one knee—

Again we were interrupted, tho' for two hours after this, I enjoyed her conversation almost without interruption; I tried every means to learn her name, and place of abode, but to no purpose. She thanked me in the most obliging terms, for the care I had taken of her the preceding part of the evening. But at length, after all my watchfulness, I lost my prize.—Bothwell, how short is the temporary Paradise, which hope raises in the breast of her children, the fabric dissolves; and the purgatory of disappointment opens to the view.

In this state of perplexity I conclude myself ever your's,

E. BELVILLE.

LETTER XIV.

To the same.

London.

I Have seen the lovely torment again Bothwell, and notwithstanding that, she is as totally beyond my reach, as the golden sands of Pactolus from the wretch, whom poverty confines within a prison.

This morning, with no other accompaniment than “hope's Quarter-staff,” I stroll'd to Kensington-gardens, where after taking a few turns, I met the enchantress which drew me thither; with some friends, two ladies, and a gentleman, the latter less formidable to my fears, than him I had seen with her two evenings before.

I took care my approach should be chasten'd with the utmost respect.—After my first salutation, the old ladies seem'd more inclin'd to enter into conversation with me, than the young one—she gave me her attention, and that was all; the old gentleman was agreeably facetious, and his good humour was a spur to the conversation.

It was the first time, Charles, I ever found myself embarrassed, addressing a beautiful young woman—I never was so dissatisfied with myself,—I thought she perceived it. Endeavouring to correct my errors, I was perpetually falling into greater—near two hours elapsed, when I thought our interview but just begun.—

I attended them to their coach, which stood at the gate, where I had dismounted, intending to follow them, but Philip had walked my horse half way up the park; it was a cruel disappointment to me, yet I doubted not I should be able to overtake them. But fortune was in one of her frolics, and played me a trick—They were lost to me, past recovery.—

O Bothwell! the charming creature gave me such a look at parting, as would have disarmed a Philosopher of his indifference—and created love in the breast of an Anchorite—her words dropt as dews from heaven, and refreshed where'er they fell.— And as to her eyes, when nature created them,

Instead of eyes, two burning lamps she set,
In silver sockets, shining like the skies.

If I have any skill in phisiognomy, her mind is the seat of virtue, and on her lips, truth has fixed her residence. Adieu.

BELVILLE.

LETTER XV.

CHARLES BOTHWELL, Esq; to Mr. BELVILLE.

Dear Edmund,

WRITING to a philosopher of love, will avail as little, as talking reason to a woman, bent on the gratification of her purpose.—Thou man of absurdity what has woman to do with man's happiness? Search the records of antiquity, from mother Eve, down to your incognita, and you will find my assertion verify'd.

Why look you Belville into the very first page of the world, you will find man was expelled his paradise by the machinations of a woman.

Did not the Trojan beauty, by the influence of her saucy eyes, blow up such a fire among mankind, as to prove the destruction of the finest fellows the world ever saw?

Did not that wanton gypsey, Cleopatra, fascinate, by the witchery of her charms, the conquerors of nations? And was not St. Anthony subdued by a woman, after he had withstood the temptations of the arch-fiend in *propria persona*? Have not kings, princes, and nobles alike fallen victorious to their pride?—And now love's ritual is to be closed, with the very renowned, and heroick adventures, of Edmund Belville.

Precipitancy in almost any concern in life may have a less fatal tendency, than that which relates to marriage, an imprudent step in the affairs of life, a wife perseverance, may surmount—marriage ends with an honest man, but with life—it is an error repentance cannot wash out—I know much of the sex—dear has that knowledge cost me—but of that no more!—

Would women wish to please, let them be gentle as zephyrs, not furious as tempests—violets and not tulips—seeking the shade, not courting the sun.

BOTHWELL.

LETTER XVI.

Mr. DANVERS to Mr. LELAND.

A Word of advice Leland, thou knowest that fortune has not only smiled, but downright laughed at thee; in the unexpected conveyance she has made of thy brother, to the kingdom of spirits.

I therefore advise thee, *en ami*, not to marry in haste; disinterested as Miss Melvern has hitherto shewn herself, she may have her motives for it. Consider how nearly she is allied to licentiousness.—Every thought of a wife should be as chaste as, “unsun’d snow.”

When women, be they ever so virtuously inclin’d, are connected with those of their own sex, who are void of sentiment and principle, by imperceptible degrees, they lose that purity which ought ever to distinguish them.—And after long observation you will find, that what at first was only compulsion, in time becomes habit.—Now Miss Melvern, whom you say was ever the child of obedience, must naturally have imbibed some of her mother’s sentiments, which her prudence may not suffer her to disclose.

What mad fellows are men in love! and what pretty simpletons are women under the influence of the same passion!—Adieu, make your own deductions.

DANVERS.

LETTER XVII.

Mr. LELAND, in Answer.

London.

YOUR remonstrances, Richard, are both *mal a propos* and ineffectual—within a month the fates will decree my Harriot mine—you never saw Miss Grosvenor—reflection avaunt—she is young, amiable, sings and plays divinely and is heiress to 50,000l.

Miss Melvern possesses an art, I have seldom found amongst women; that of keeping the encroaching sex at a distance, even where partiality pleads in preference; yet she is neither superciliously reserved, nor affectedly coy.

Adieu.

LELAND.

LETTER XVIII.

Miss MELVERN, to Miss AIRSBY.

Portman-square.

*LA moderation des personnes heureuses, vient du calme que la bonne fortune donne
a leur humeur,*

Said I to Mr. Leland, on a compliment he paid my good temper, would it not be wicked to be otherwise, when my best friends make it their study to promote it.

My mother's, I may say exemplary conduct, has given my bosom a tranquillity I never could have known without it; Ah my Sophy, could you judge of her tenderness for me, you would forget she had ever wronged me.—

Where does happiness reside, at the table of luxury?—No ! in the self-approving bosom then?—I had much to say, I dare not trust myself.

Farewell,

H. MELVERN.

LETTER XIX.

To the same.

Portman-square.

Henceforth I'll bear affliction,
Till it cry out itself, enough, enough.

THE dreams of fancy are fled, the shadows of hope are departed from me—my sorrows only are faithful—Oh for a moment's pause from thought. Grief, shame, and indignation are powerful combatants in a weak bosom.—I will tell you—No, it is impossible, my pen refuses the painful task—my tears obstruct my sight—I must pause * * *
* * * Again I take up my pen—you will chide my griefs, you will bid me be comforted—

“Ah! who can minister to a mind diseas'd,
“Or from the memory pluck a rooted sorrow.”

As the certainty of an evil is not more painful than the expectation of it, I will endeavour to tell you—That my mother supporting Mrs. Clifford's entreaties, that I should accompany her for a few days to her seat in Berkshire,——I comply'd the more readily, as Mr. Leland was on a visit near St. Albans.

I went, and on the fourth day a servant arrived from town, with a letter for me, from Bret, informing me her mistress lay at the point of death.—Entering the house on my arrival, I beheld with Pierre, “rich hangings, intermixt and wrought with gold, tumbled into a heap for public sale.”

Thro’ every room as I pass’d to my mother’s, I saw strange men, who I afterwards found were officers of justice. When I came to her chamber all was dark and dismal, as my own thoughts, her groans pierced my heart—I dropped on my knees by her bedside, my tears would not suffer me to speak.

My mother believing I was her woman, in trembling accents said, she should never more embrace her child; and beg her pardon with her dying breath, for all the injuries she had done her.

For awhile [she] was quite overcome on finding me so near her, and afterwards said she was sorry to see me, as my tender heart was not prepared to witness a scene, more horrible even than the pangs of death—pray not, continued she, for the life of your poor mother, if you would not wish to see her in this condition, dragged to a prison.

My senses seemed suspended, I could make her no reply, but they return’d on hearing the sound of men’s feet approaching the chamber, swearing they would drag my mother away by force.

One of them entering, approach’d the bed, and repeated what he had spoke before, insisting that she should rise and leave her present lodging for a jail.

I sprung from off the bed and dropt down at his feet, I would have petitioned for mercy, but terror kept me silent—I fell into a fit, and when I recovered I found myself in another room. I tore myself from the hands of my servant and flew I knew not whether.— When I reached the great drawing-room, which was all in disorder, a man had just unhung my father’s picture, intending it as I suppos’d for sale.—Its dear venerable looks, awakened every tender feeling in my soul—as I gaz’d upon it; I thought it seemed to say “Virtue is not to meet with its reward in this life; glorious to the possessor are the rewards for filial piety;” he seemed to be stepping forth from his frame to meet me. I extended my arms to receive his embrace—I sunk down before it—I clasped my hands—my eyes only fixed on heaven could supplicate its pity.

The man endeavouring to part me from it, rouz’d me ! the screams of my mother drew me to her chamber, where I found they were going to take her from her bed—I entreated they would spare her till to-morrow, till I knew what was to be done, but it had not the least effect upon them; they would hear of nothing but of a prison, or immediate payment.

They presented me papers to sign, if (said they) I had a mind to preserve my mother from shame. In a feeble voice she said she would sooner suffer all the rigour of the law, than I should do it—her shrieks and their clamours drowned my senses—I

signed I know not what—but I soon found the men quitted not only my mother's chamber, but her house. I sent off an express to Mr. Leland, with the following letter.

To Mr. LELAND.

My dear Sir,

“CAN you pardon my importunity at a time when your moments are devoted to your friends? There is another friend, Sir, who, oppressed with anguish, now looks up to you as her benefactor. How shall I tell it you, my mother, dear unfortunate woman, if she escape death, cannot a prison!—I hope I have in some measure arrested the cruel hand of the necessitous; from your kind consolation I have every thing to expect—hasten then, dear Sir, if you would ever wish to confer a benefit on the truly wretched,

HARRIOT MELVERN.”

Instead of his personal attendance, I received the following billet,

My dearest Harriot,

“I cannot with propriety leave our friends till to-morrow, as many are assembled here on my account—attending the honour of seeing you, take care of your sweet self—be discreet to your mother, her conduct to you exacts no returns of duty!—

“Consider what you have lately done for her—Miss Grosvenor begs you to accept of her best wishes.—Adieu till we meet; ever your's.

LELAND.”

Barbarous, cruel man cried I when I had read it! long, long may you live to enjoy the society of your friends, but grant me resolution heaven to despise the man whom pity cannot soften.

Grief, abstinence, and the fatigue I had undergone, exhausted my spirits, and I continued almost in a state of stupefaction till Sally informed me of Mr. Leland's arrival; he had been in the house two hours before I knew it.—I now forgot I was unhappy, on wings of joy I flew to meet him as my deliverer—but when I saw him, resentment suppress'd every other emotion.

He saluted me with coldness, I started from him, and at a distance gazed on him with looks, that expressed nothing but indignation!—My eyes asked him if he were Leland?—My heart answered yes—I burst into tears.

My dearest life, said he, I little thought when we parted, I should have cause to reproach you for indiscretions of which your romantic duty has made you guilty—I hoped my advice would have weighed with you—I hear you have ruined yourself to preserve a worthless parent—Since I have been in the house, I have been informed you have promised her creditors payment, perhaps to the amount of your fortune, for I have

heard her debts were great—you may have ruined yourself—such preceptancy was unpardonable—how can you answer it?

Good heavens, interrupted I, if this is the consolation I am to expect from you, pray leave me, Sir, I can learn to bear distress, but never your reproaches.

I deserve not your regard; I have preserved I hope my mother from prison, and from death; her sufferings were too great for my poor heart to bear, to make its burden easy, I gave peace to her's.—I feel our souls will never be at unison; Mr. Leland, it were better then——

You are very petulant my love, and must be sensible I mean nothing but what is for you good: what has happened cannot lessen my affection for you, tho' your fortune may be ruined, I hope my father will make no objection to every thing going on between us, the same as ever.

A proud heart like mine Mr. Leland, will not receive favours, where it cannot confer them, your father shall not be under the painful necessity of telling me, how much his family would be disgraced by an alliance with me. When I promised to become your's, I was mistress of myself and fortune, had not situations altered, that promise had never been revoked——times now are changed; you are elated with success, I am humbled with misfortunes; may you long live to reap every blessing your fortune can bestow; whilst, with whatever I may have left of mine, I shall in obscurity, enjoy at least one satisfaction, that I did not suffer my mother, to end her few remaining days in a prison, whilst the means was in my power to detain her from it: from this moment all connection between us, is dissolved; you, Sir, are free—for I never will give my hand,—

Stay, Madam, interrupted he—Why all this agitation? I—I—I love you, as well as ever—you cannot say your extraordinary conduct has not given occasion for my reproofs!—But surely your reason:——

My reason was never less affected, Sir, than at this moment—when I tell you I bear you no resentment—a thorough knowledge of my own imperfections, urges me to say what I have said;—may you long be happy, and when next you make a tender of your vows, may the lady to whom they are addressed, be for ever exempt from trials like those I have known, and under which you think I have conducted myself so indiscreetly.

I am thankful I alone shall suffer for my imprudence, and that no kind friend will share in my disgrace.—With a countenance somewhat softened, he said, “he hoped I was not serious in my determination, and that he was only sorry—for—because—he thought my mother—but as to himself—he was ready as ever to accept my hand--- notwithstanding the loss of my fortune.”——

Mr. Leland, returned I, I am not astonished at your conduct; I have acquired from observation some knowledge of human nature; you act, but as a thousand others would in your situation:---I know too well the expences dissipated wives bring with them, to blame your behaviour, in a point so essential to happiness, where hands, not hearts are joined.

What fortune I may have left I know not, but this I know, if it is in the least diminished, it never can be an equivalent to your's; be it what it will, it will afford me a meer subsistence; my pride and my prosperity expired together!

You do not treat me Madam, interrupted he, as a friend, or lover!—tho' I fear you are dispossessed of every thing, I again make you an offer of my hand---you talk of generosity whilst you act in direct opposition to it.—Pardon me, Sir, my head has suffered much within these few days; what I have further to beg is this—I hope my conduct has not been so flagrantly bad, as to rob me of your esteem---continue it to me, 'tis all I ask---on other terms we never meet again.—Offering him my hand—which with great agitations he accepted——saying I was a dear strange girl, and he hoped I would suffer myself to be persuaded,——and could I have the resolution to give him up?

Can you suppose Mr. Leland, I should want resolution to do a common piece of justice; you are the first to accuse me of my ruined fortune, and to blame me for the cause; I am thankful it happened at a time, when your's, could not be injured by it—— Thus, Sir, I release you from all engagements—and if hereafter a thought of my existence should ever steal into your mind—think of me, as one to whom your happiness was dear.

I was too much affected to proceed—I hasten'd out of the room—more dead than alive—soon after he sent to speak with me—but I refused, I still suffered too much from our last interview, to hazard another.—Gracious powers to what am I reserved! I cannot proceed, give me patience, give me resolution !

LETTER XX.

To the same—in Continuation.

YES, my friend, I must,

“Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak,

Whispers the o'er fraught heart, and bids it break.”

Can tears relieve my sorrows?- no!--Can they unsluice my heart of its anguish?—no!—Hitherto you are acquainted but with the mere shadow of my trouble----the reality is yet to come.

I continued regardless of every thing for many hours after Mr. Leland left me----my mother sent frequent enquiries after my health, and begged I would not endanger it, by visiting her, as she was much better—I continued very ill all night, and the next day; at length on the second I got up, and when I waited on my mother found her, to my surprize, also risen, she appeared greatly agitated, and begged I would breakfast with her, as she wanted to talk with me on very particular business.—

At length Mr. Kelly, (a servant she kept out of livery, a very young, and very handsome fellow, made his appearance) with an effrontery which filled me with indignation; he threw himself into an easy chair, and having enquired after our healths, began humming a tune—my mother's confusion was great, when she said, my dear Harriot, I much wish to have a conference with you.

Mr. Kelly's preference then, I hope, madam, said I, may be dispensed with.

The wretch look'd insultingly upon me; my pride took the alarm, my mother observing it said, Mr. Kelly my dear—but her voice faltered, she could not proceed.

My mother, Mr. Kelly, desires your absence, said I—You may be mistaken in that return'd he, with a sneer—I was ready to burst with indignation—at length the woman—Oh nature, nature! why was I given such a parent?—proceeded!

After you quitted Mr. Leland the other day, my dear, he insisted on seeing me—Mr. Kelly's presence I hope may be dispensed with, Madam, whilst my affairs are the subject of conversation.

As an instance of your duty, said she, I beg you will permit him to stay—I bow'd, she went on—In the first place I am a petitioner for Mr. Leland—you must receive his visits again:—

Not for the world, return'd I with warmth, on the terms you wish—the principles on which I have acted towards him all persons of delicacy must approve.

I should admire your spirit on every other occasion Harriot, but where your future welfare is at stake, permit me to say, you act very indiscreetly;— he is amiable, in possession of a large fortune.

La! Miss, interrupted the wretch who sat by, your Mamma has so many round about ways before she can come to the business she is upon, that she will lose herself, before she is got half through; the thing is, you must marry Mr. Leland, if you ever expect to have a handsome maintenance again; as twice the sum of your fortune will not pay her debts; and all you have done, will but quiet her creditors for the present, she has been so unfortunate, now as things have turned out so badly, I make you the offer of living with me, till you and the 'Squire have made up matters.

Live with you Mr. Kelly? your request has so surprized me, that I know not how to thank you for it as I ought—Till my mother is better, with her leave I will stay where I am.

Well that is as I would wish, returned he, you shall not find me a cruel step-father—What does the man mean said I with quickness?—Why, returned he, I mean nothing but kindness; and I tell you, you may live as long as you please with my wife and me;—has not your mother told you she and I have been married these four months?

I was not prepared for this stroke, it rob'd me for sometime of my faculties; on recovering them, I grasp'd my mother's hand in an agony, and then pushing her from me---called on my dear departed father; and my much injured brother to assist me!—My mother wept!—For shame Madam, said I, add not hypocrisy to the crimes of which you have already been guilty:—when tears flow, they should be the gracious signs of penitence.—Is it possible you can have disgraced yourself and family, by an alliance with so despicable a wretch?

In faltering accents she answered in the affirmative.

I told her, that I began to see how much my unsuspecting innocence had been abused, wished her as happy as a retrospect of her past life would make her, and bid her remember, that the innocent under the severest trials, would always find a protector in Him, who could burst the cords of iniquity asunder, tho' they were united by the most secret guilt.

Here with difficulty I got off to my chamber, and ordered Sally to call a coach.—In a few minutes I quitted for ever my paternal roof—where to fix I knew not.—“The world was all before me.” Sally gave orders I should be conducted to Mrs. Clifford's, from whence I now write to you—I sent her back to Portman-square, to bring away whatever belonged to me. She returned with the following billet, addressed to me from Mr. Kelly's wife.

BILLET.

“I am heartily sorry, my dear child, for still you are dear to me, that you should think so unkindly of the step I have taken, relative to the deserving Mr. Kelly; I wish you could bring yourself to be reconciled to it, as no body is more disposed to be your friend than he is, who joins with me, to intreat you would accompany us in an excursion we intend speedily to make.—Let me beg of you to return instantly, where you will be kindly received, by your affectionate mother,

C. KELLY.”

Sally return'd fraught with intelligence from Bret, who, shock'd at my mother's conduct, had laid open to her, the whole scene of iniquity, which I cannot here repeat, only that her illness was counterfeited to terrify me to discharge her debts, and the pretended creditors were friends of Kelly's, who assisted in carrying on the cheat.

I wrote afterwards to Mrs. Kelly, and made Sally transcribe my letter, for you.

If I was too severe, let the situation under which it was written, plead for me.

To Mrs. KELLY.

Madam,

“Those who like me have suffered by deceit, cannot readily trust to appearances.

I thank you for your offers, but I trust I shall not be reduced to seek protection from that source, which has destroyed my peace for ever.

You are sorry I should take your late step unkindly——can you suppose me divested of all delicacy; if I have lost my feelings?

“Pursue your intended excursion, but be assured that no climate can extract the stings of a bad conscience, or allay the anguish of heart-gnawing guilt.

“In your future pursuits after pleasure, take care that the shade of my departed father does not obtrude upon you, whilst plunged in the gulph of pleasure, you exclude every thought of your much injured children.——Will not reflection sometimes admonish, when the gay scenes of delight shall animate your prospect.

“Satan will not always be faithful, even to those who serve him best.—Virtue alone supports her children.

“Take care that the arts by which you have deceived others may not one day be levelled against yourself.

“Mr. Kelly, taught by your example, may at length act by you, as you have done by me; tho’ he may not have recourse to a death bed to effect it.

“Think a moment, Madam, before you plunge into fresh crimes, that there is a power to whom you must be accountable for every action.

“Tho’ the thread of life be so finely attenuated, that it may stretch out to a hundred years, the final hour will come at last; there is no arresting the arrow of death, there is no parlying with eternity.——A moment can disunite the cords of life——a moment can waft the departing spirit into the presence of an incens’d Creator: the time will then be short to petition for mercy for a life of offence.

“Do you remember with what counterfeited earnestness you lately besought heaven to mitigate your pains; pains practised but to deceive me?

“That in the hour of adversity you may never want a friend, is the sincere wish of

HARRIOT MELVERN.”

Mrs. Clifford is just arrived—to say she pities me were inadequate to her feelings. She has sent for a Lawyer to consult with him on my affairs.

I know not what to do—my head is all confusion; my limbs tremble!—if we meet again—I feel a strong presentiment!—don’t be too much alarmed,—nor condemn poor

Leland.—Pity the man whose soul knows not the satisfaction of doing a generous action—perhaps I have many a bitter tear to shed, e'er we meet again!----My dear brother, shall I behold him no more?—My pen would write, yet my unsteady fingers cannot direct it—If you do not hear from me soon, conclude that—I am ever your's,

HARRIOT MELVERN.

LETTER XX.

JAMES LELAND, Esq; to Mr. DANVERS.

MY prudence, Danvers, suppress'd the feelings of my heart, but it cannot stifle its reproaches!—It has robb'd me of Miss Melvern—I lose her for ever; I hear she is dying at Mrs. Clifford's, I have beg'd to see her, I have been deny'd; her mother's baseness has stript her of every thing; she is escaped with her husband, the abettor of her villany, no one knows where—meet me at Reading, where I may tell you that I have been a wretch, that I hate myself, and that I am your friend.

J. LELAND.

LETTER XXII.

EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

Fenwick Hall.

THOU Sceptic! if thou dost not know what love is, go ask of Solomon the wife, and he will tell thee.

That love is joy, or sorrow, peace, or strife,
'Tis all the colour of remaining life;
And human misery must begin or end,
As he becomes a Tyrant, or a Friend.

Ambition was but the second passion in the breast of Alexander, tho' he conquer'd the world; love was the first, a woman conquer'd him—besides this love so perverts the judgment, as to make the “worse appear the better reason.” By the date of this, you will see I have left London, not for the purposes you expect, I assure you; my senses are not so much influenced by the moon, as to hurry me on to the discovery of that which I am sure I cannot find.

I shall probably pass my summer here with my cousins. Mrs. Fenwick and her eldest daughter are on a visit to her son George, who has an estate independent of his

father, in Worcestershire—poor George is a young gentleman as little distinguished for urbanity of manners, as delicacy of sentiment, and much more calculated to inspire hilarity at a fox-chase, than entertainment in a tete-a-tete.

Should Heaven, in its wrath for my sins, send me such a wife as his mother—I should commit suicide before the honey-moon was elapsed.

Tho' she is what the world calls one of your very good sort of women—a tyrant in principle, a formalist in practice, a denouncer of d———n, on every one who thinks salvation may be found in any church but her own.

She is a perfect Nero in her family, and looks upon true taste to consist in a disapprobation of every thing—Modern wives are the chief objects of her censure, and because temptation hath never urged her to swerve from her conjugal vow, she thinks my poor honest guardian in duty bound to support all her ill humours.—Miss Ellin, her eldest daughter, she has formed exactly on her own plan, being her favourite.

The first principles of literature would have been neglected in her education, had it not been previously necessary to her studying the gamut.

In music she is a tolerable proficient, and tho' arriv'd at the age of nineteen, is an accomplished nothing; rational conversation is a burthen to her, for she was never taught to reflect.

Let a girl learn music if she has a genius; but at the same time let her learn it as a resource after fatigue, from useful and profitable studies.

There is, Charles, an insinuation in harmonious sounds, that may shake the firmest nerves, and when the soft ton'd instrument is made to breathe from so gentle a hand, it may awaken a sensibility which for ever might have lain dormant.

Can a lovely blooming girl create those sounds without her bosom feeling an accordant sympathy? And when the poison begins to operate so early in life, it is not the remonstrances of friends can repel the contagion.

Well, I only wish that every woman who is endowed with so divine an art, was also endowed with a double portion of virtue.—But to return to the family picture, which I shall have finished when I have given a little drapery to the graces of my favourite Kitty. There is a genuine *Naïvetè* in her manners that endears her to all who know her—The study of her life is to give pleasure—But she calls upon me; I promised this evening to shew her a set of young horses I have training up at a farmer's in the neighbourhood, which I purpose taking down with me to Mount Belville, when it is finished.

At this instant the idea of a certain unknown returns, not to merit your censure by speaking of her, I will subscribe myself your's,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXIII.

To the same.

Fenwick Hall.

WHEN I hear people complain, Bothwell, that time hangs heavy on their hands, I could immediately decide that they are incapable of tasting the “feast of reason,” and of intellectual converse. The speculative man, whether he sits, stands, rides, or walks, will find the source of his entertainment originate in his own reflections; let his eye range abroad, and it will take in the great and wonderful works of Creation, let him turn them inward upon himself, and his heart bearing testimony to Almighty Power, will exult with grateful praise!

My little friend, Kitty, is either gay, or grave, as best suits my humour; she reads, rides, or rambles the fields with me incessantly.—Now if she was not my relation you would think—what I assure you could never happen. A delicate friendship is one thing; true love another.

Going with Kitty, as I told you I intended to the farmer’s, he we found was from home, his wife made her appearance, and gave us a friendly invitation into her rural mansion, which is truly romantic: As this was the first visit I made my good dame since I had been in the country, she was very lively in expressing her humble congratulations on seeing my honour’s worship again.—When she had done, Kitty asked her how her crazy lodger did, and said she had been several times coming to enquire after her, adding they say she is very handsome too.

Alack aday, Miss, returned she, people will be saying any thing but their prayers; she has been like to die indeed, and the doctors said if riding, and the country air did not do her good, nothing would.—Thank God she is mainly mended since she came to Elmwood; and as to her being handsome, why handsome is as handsome does, and if her beauty was to be measured by her goodness, she would be as handsome as the Queen of Old England.—This compliment of the good woman’s made us smile, and she run on in her lodger’s praise ’till she was out of breath.

Ah, Mrs. Barnes, said I, you cannot make too much of a good woman, they are black swans now adays.—Your honour is pleased to be merry—

Not more merry than wise, I hope, adopting her style,—so your lodger is both good and handsome, Mrs. Barnes?

She was the sweetest babe, Sir, and never cry’d as other children did; and when I married Thomas Barnes, I shall never forget her, tho’ she was but three years old—applying the corner of her apron to her eyes—I was her nurse, and I don’t believe she loved her own mamma better.—When I was going to leave her, she held out her pretty little hands—But as this was a scene of the pathetic, which surpassed her description, her

articulation grew too thick for utterance—she chang'd the subject, and we finding we were not likely that night to get sight of her lodger, soon after took our leave.

Adieu. You have every thing to command, but the heart of

BELVILLE.

Copyright Chawton House Library

LETTER XXIV.

To the same.

Fenwick Hall.

ABOUT eleven the next morning, led by the parent of original sin—curiosity, my footsteps involuntarily moved towards Elmwood; seeing nobody about, I went directly to the little parlour I was in the preceding night—where I perceiv'd the loveliest image of expiring beauty that ever nature framed, lying on a couch—surpris'd, astonished, and confounded, I stood gazing, motionless! the lady with difficulty rising to know if I wanted Mrs. Barnes.

Bothwell, 'twas the voice of my belov'd I heard!

An involuntary exclamation escaped me at the sound of it; her eye took in my whole figure—she knew me again—the recollection tinged her cheek with a blush; I apologized to her for my intrusion, at the same time congratulated myself for this so unexpected pleasure, which was much allay'd by seeing her so much changed.

As she was about to reply, Mrs. Barnes entered, and without taking the least notice of her fair patient, paid her rustic civilities to me, saying, how much she was rejoiced to see me, and hoped I would do my best endeavours to entertain madam.

The lady hinted something that her health was not in a situation to receive visits from strangers.—La! madam, cry'd the honest soul, 'squire Belville is no stranger, and is the best temper'd gentleman in the world.

When I heard you had a lodger, Mrs. Barnes, said I, I should not have been so long paying my respects to her, had I known she had been an old acquaintance.—Bless me, interrupted she, I am quite glad at heart, but madam never told me she knew you, tho' I have so often discours'd to her about you.—Here the lady and I look consciously awkward, being strangers to each other's name—Afterward I tenderly express'd my concern for her illness; and ask'd how long since it happen'd, after our meeting in Kensington Gardens.—Her lips were preparing a reply, but a tremor invading her whole frame, prevented her, and for some time we continued fearful of her fainting; but recovering at length, and laying her hand on the good woman, she beg'd she might retire—which you may be sure I did not suffer. I took a hasty leave, and only entreated to renew my enquiries after her health. Afterwards meeting the farmer, I told him I had seen his lodger, and found her to be an old acquaintance. Ah! said he, madam Harriot, is the best temper'd lady in the world—but she has had a world of trouble, I have heard, since her father, Mr. Melvern's death.

Having gain'd such material information as her name—I proceeded to ask many particulars about her; I found by the farmer, she had been brought to his house in a dying condition.—When I had got all the knowledge I wanted, I strolled home, and an hour

afterwards sent Williamson to enquire if Miss Melvern was better, and in the evening paid her another visit.—I was received by her with that politeness which ever accompanies good sense——I afterwards told her with what assiduity I had sought her since the morning I lost her at Kensington, and how grateful I was to fortune, for this unexpected introduction; she said, that my gallantry greatly overrated her little merits; and concluded with saying, so multifarious were the scenes which fill up human life, that to-day scarcely retained an idea of yesterday,—she was proceeding when the unbidden tear roll'd down her cheek—

I made my visit accord with decorum, but not with my feelings, that I might not be regarded as an intruder, where I would not wish my presence to be thought obtrusive—I took my leave of her, as I now shall of you.

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXV.

To the same.

I Have visited, and re-visited, and as often have been denied the sight of Miss Melvern.—Her health continues bad, her spirits worse——sometimes I have every thing to fear for the consequences. The good people have communicated to me all they know of her history, but are totally ignorant of her situation for these last few years.

Bothwell, I have frequently thought the art of love is not dissimilar to that of war; delays have often brought the enemy to capitulate, without hazarding a battle; my conduct is so guarded I hope I shall lose nothing by not being precipitate.—The conversation of this amiable woman does not at all tend to lessen the esteem I conceived for her on our first acquaintance; tho' her reserve and coolness do not animate my hopes.

Adieu,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXVI.

Miss MELVERN to Miss AIRSBY.

Elmwood.

GRIEF, my Sophy, is tardy in its operations, tho' it seldom fails of success in the end; the air of Elmwood, tho' it restores health to my body, can never give peace to my mind—when life becomes a burden, is it not

Better be with the dead,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie,
In restless agony?

In your good parents, and the Cliffords, I have still the best of friends.—Let me not murmur then, whilst heaven continues such blessings to me.—I urged such reasons for quitting them, as they could not oppose; for were Mr. Leland to attempt to see me, it would be a shock too great for my spirits to encounter 'till my mind is sufficiently strengthened to bear the contempt and buffetings of the world.—'Till then, at Elmwood, the “world forgetting, by the world forgot,” will I remain to see what health and fortune will do for me; Mr. Clifford has hopes something not inconsiderable may be recovered.

I receive frequent visits from Mr. Belville, a gentleman on a visit in this neighbourhood, he is the same person who I once wrote you, protected me from an insult at the play; and with whom I had afterwards several interviews—he is accompanied by an amiable young lady, his cousin.

With every tender regard to your dear father and mother, I subscribe myself,
Your's

HARRIOT MELVERN.

LETTER XXVII.

EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

Fenwick Hall.

Charles Bothwell!

NEVER, never! will I marry, if Harriot Melvern be not the woman—irrevocable as the Median law is my vow.—She is already dear to my heart as the vital drops which warm it—do not offer to oppose your doctrine of insensibility, to the glowing ardour of my passion—Nor yet be apprehensive I shall engage rashly; not the hand of this amiable woman would I accept, were I assur'd her feelings did not bear a willing testimony to the gift.—

'Tis a critical point to get at the real sentiments of some women; where the sensibilities are exquisite, they feel alike for all who know distress.

In my visits to this amiable woman, I receive the civilities of friendship, but that will not satisfy my heart.

At sight of her the other evening, so well as to be able to walk in the garden, my heart almost leaped from my bosom; she received me with an air of complacency she had never done before. Attending her to a little evergreen bower, she told me she was expecting William to bring her a fishing-rod, for she intended to amuse herself in the stream which ran at the foot of it.

I told her I would gladly exchange situations with William, to be thought of by her in my absence—she look'd confus'd, and I took that opportunity to make her an offer I would have given the world she would have accepted; of my chaise for her airings; and said, that my cousin (for whom she has conceived a great attachment) would think herself happy to attend her; and on my making her some trifling compliment, after having warmly refused my offer—she reply'd,

'Tis happy for my sex the world does not abound with Mr. Belvilles, as women are apt to mistake polite attention, as a tribute due to their merit, and not the effects of gallantry in the giver.

I asked her if she thought that any thing could be more painful to a delicate mind, than to have that construed as a compliment which flow'd from the sincerity of the heart?

I have changed my mind, said she, I won't angle now, on seeing William appear with the rod, I took it from him, he scraped a bow, and retired.

I told her I fear'd the sudden change in her disposition proceeded from some dissatisfaction I had given her,—she gave me such a smile, as I should never have forgot, had it not soon after been driven out by such another.

Fearing her health would be injured by setting so long in the open air, I urged her returning to the house.

She said, my solicitude for her health was obliging; but it was a blessing she had little reason to expect—that she had but few friends, and those had their respective avocations, which must soon blot her from their remembrance.— The tears rushed into her eyes—at length she said, rising, she believed the gloom of the situation had affected her spirits.

I told her we were ever inattentive to places and situations, when in company with those we like.

As she refused angling, I said, I would try my luck, tho' I was not accustomed to be successful.

The reason she rejoin'd is evident, you throw your baits into shallow waters, they are discovered before they can ensnare their prey.

Tho' your allusion may be just, yet it is not drawn with that spirit of charity, with which your conversation is always distinguished, madam; she beg'd I would try my luck to see if she was not a casuist.—I obey'd, the event proved she was in the right,—I caught nothing.

Presenting the line to her, she threw it into the stream, and soon hook'd a fine trout, and immediately throwing it upon the grass, she ran from it, as from something noxious—I brought her back to where it lay expiring, telling her she had just exhibited a striking picture of her sex—who throw their baits but to ensnare the unguarded hearts of men, whom they have no sooner secured than they disregard the prize, and leave them to struggle in their toils, like the poor fish, without a prospect of reward, or liberty.

She declared she was actuated by no motive but humanity—

“For the poor beetle that we tread upon
“In corporal sufferance feels a pang as great
“As when a giant dies!”

But I observ'd the sense of death was most in apprehension, better it were to die happily, than live miserably. That there was a species of animals endowed with the keenest sensibility, who would gladly exchange situations with the trout, to be so pathetically lamented.

Those who are fond of flowers (smiling) Mr. Belville, generally deal in metaphor, but plain sense is satisfied without embellishment.

It is your glory, Miss Melvern, to gain captives, 'tis mine to set them at large, throwing the subject of our contention into the stream, the "brave love mercy," said she; and we slowly walk'd into the house.

Seeing the tea prepared, I knew from experience I should not be a bidden guest; therefore assuming the character of lady of the mansion—I led her to a chair, expressed myself much rejoiced at the honour she did me by her visit, would receive no apologies for her dress; no other company was expected—that I would return the favour the first opportunity, quite *en Chapeau*, and bring my knotting with me, that I was an enemy to all ceremonies, true politeness exacted none, they were the trifling weaknesses by which little minds distinguished themselves.

The dear creature look'd her astonishment at my effrontery, whilst I proceeded in the important article of tea-making, presenting her with a dish, and hoping she would excuse my servant's absence.

You are a very extraordinary creature, Mr. Belville, I should be glad to be convinced your senses were not disorder'd.

Your solicitude, my dearest creature, interrupting her, does me honour—pray is your tea agreeable? Would you chuse any more sugar?—delightful cream, the produce of our own dairy—What a sweet pattern in your ruffles! dear me, where did you get it? I wish you would lend it me—I have the prettiest tambour apron—Were you at church last Sunday? Did you see the bride? What a fright! the man's married indeed!—The match still goes on between you know who.—So Miss R——'s trip is a fine affair—see what it is to be a beauty—I thought it would come to that at last.

Thus, Bothwell, I ran through the whole process of a female visit; and I challenge any two of the sex, who meet together for the laudable purpose of killing time. to say my description is not just.—At last, lady like, I paus'd for want of breath.

You are a tolerable comedian, Mr. Belville—There is one character under your direction I should be vain to shine in, madam,—I should be glad to know which?—suppose it—*Benedict—the Married Man*. How the blush of sensibility added lustre to every lovely feature?

When I got home, Kitty rallied me on my long absence—I told her I had taken a longer ramble than usual, and that on my return, had called at Barnes's to see my horses—that accidentally meeting with Miss Melvern, we had fallen into conversation,—that I had not observed how time pass'd away, and that she had petition'd me to present her compliments to her.

With one of her arch looks, she said, patting me on the shoulder, did you, Belville, accept her commission with reluctance?—but I should much rather you had brought me particulars of your conversation.

Believe me, Kitty, nothing worth exciting your curiosity. Then the more fool you, Belville; a tete-a-tete between a handsome young fellow, and a lovely young girl, and nothing pass'd worth relating to the very curious Kitty Fenwick? Adieu, I am interrupted,
BELVILLE.

Copyright Chawton House Library

LETTER XXVII.

Miss MELVERN, to Miss AIRSBY.

Elmwood.

AGAIN I write to you, but of what can I write? of myself? hateful subject—of humanity, of all the virtues united—of Mr. Belville?

Imitation is one of the first principles we discover; to imitate Mr. Belville, is to copy after the best original—The colouring so animated, the lines so correct; the whole can only be viewed with safety at a distance—its lustre, when it approaches, dazzles the weak sight of your Harriot.

Ah! my Sophy, life teems with other ills than those which sickness brings; the disease of the mind medicine cannot cure.—To sport with our feelings is the delight of mankind—Leland, thou hast taught me professions have no meaning—I have been deceiv'd, I will trust no more.

Will the approbation of my heart make me happy? happy I cannot be without it. At Elmwood, where I expected to have found health and repose, I have found what I dare not ask myself—a tenderness—a compassion—a benevolence to which Mr. Leland's heart was ever a stranger.

I have again been very ill—pardon a weakness I cannot conquer—You are dear as ever to the affections of

HARRIOT MELVERN.

*Your letters are the only consolation I receive—continue to favour me often.

*They do not appear.

* They do not appear.

LETTER XXIX.

To the same.

SURELY this Belville possesses a persecuting spirit; again my pen reverts to him, but there is a gentleness, a persuasion, in his persecution, that to have it cease, is to be—not happy—whilst it perplexes, it charms:—To see him, is to admire him; to hear him is to experience a degree of pleasure unknown 'till then.

However lively my descriptions of Mr. Belville might have been in my former letters, * yet my heart continued Leland's 'till he lost it, by a means as little honourable to himself, as painful to me.

There was a time, my dear, when I might have raised my expectations; but now I am not only destitute of fortune, but my very name is disgraced, by a means I shudder to think on.

I seek every decent method to avoid Mr. Belville; his concern testifies his disappointment—when he is gone, I reproach myself for it. In his absence I receive continual instances of his friendship; little billets, which tho' they express nothing material, yet convey a sensation the most finished composition could not, if written by those indifferent to us.—I never make them a reply; I know the arts of the sex too well, to indulge them in the epistolary way; a correspondence which first was innocent in itself, has in the end often proved of the most dangerous consequence.

As I was airing a few mornings ago, I saw him at a distance in his chaise, with a lady, whom I did not immediately recognize for Kitty Fenwick; I blush to acknowledge I felt an inquietude at it. My horse took fright at something just as the carriage came up to me; Mr. Belville jumped from it and catching me in his arms before I could assure him there was no danger, put me into the chaise to his cousin, stepp'd in himself, and away we drove.

I called to the servants, I expostulated with the master, but to no purpose, he assured me no violence was intended either to my purse or person; and that suppose he were detected, no law could prove the action felony where the temptation was so powerful.

Kitty, interrupting him, said he was a lordly wretch, and would always have his own way, and that I had better make the best of a bad matter.

He is here again; adieu for the present.

H. MELVERN.

* They do not appear,

* They do not appear,

LETTER XXX.

EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

BOTHWELL, hast thou a heart? has that heart sensibilities? are those sensibilities awakened? hast thou ere felt what joy from pity springs? and dost thou know—that

Smiles from reason flow, to brutes deny'd,
And are of love the food.

A continued grief seems to prey upon this amiable girl; in vain are my attempts to amuse her; yet there are moments when from the *larmoyante*, she has appear'd easy and serene—Then I venture to ask after the friend I first saw her with;—her tears flow—I reproach myself—I dare not pursue the subject farther—again my doubts return that she may be under engagements to him I dare not think of.

Consistent with the delicacy of her I love, ought I to expect other proofs of her regard, than those little marks of esteem, which shew she is not insensible to my assiduities?

A refined passion has a thousand little resources from whence to derive happiness: There are a thousand endearing attentions due to a beloved object, tho' her acknowledgement of them be express'd only by a sigh, or an averted glance.

True love consists not in rhapsodical expressions, but silence holds its court in the heart; so tender is the blossom, it fears to expand, lest the rude breath of indifference blast its beauties—its language is that of nature—and its food is hope.

When I gaze on her, I say to myself, beware, my fair friend, of flatterers; mankind, to do credit to themselves, may boast they love thee; but they can never love thee with the purity, the sincerity of a Belville !—Thou art the sun of his existence; beware lest thy caprice should cause it to set in darkness.—Judge of my passion by my silence.

* * * * *

With Kitty's assistance, I have seiz'd a fair prize, convey'd it to my chaise, and kept it prisoner a whole day; at a romantic situation call'd the Rocks, about twelve miles off, where I dispatched Williamson the day before, to prepare every thing fit for her reception.

Having been previously inform'd of the road she was to take in her airing, I got possession of the charming captive, ere she thought of danger.—When she found herself a prisoner, she expressed her resentment at it—Kitty told her that I had turn'd Knight Errant, and that she was not the first innocent damsel I had deceived that day: I raved, said she, as you do, 'till Belville informed me of the charming society he should procure for me, and then I was grateful for the favour.

How! interrupted the dear trembler, Mr. Belville could not tell you I had made an appointment with him—if he did.—Condemn me not, my dear friend, said I, unheard, my better genius inform'd me you would not be so dead to the beauties of nature, or such an enemy to your health, as to suffer so fine a morning to pass away without exercise: I thought it was not impossible but a happy meeting might be the consequence, the event has answer'd my wishes, by submitting patiently for a few hours, tho' you will not encrease my esteem for you, yet my obligations to you will be unreturnable.

You are an artful man, Mr. Belville.

Call it not artifice, Miss Melvern, you know not the force of your power: Sweetly confus'd, she made me no reply—'twas then, gazing on her, I enjoy'd my triumph—'twas then that silence best pleaded the lover's cause—'twas then the averted eye, the glowing cheek, first announced to me she was not indifferent.

Kitty was kindly loquacious after we got to our journey's end, and kept up a conversation with herself for some time, whilst my every thought was swallowed up in contemplating the perfections of my Harriot.

Passing afterwards the rustic windings of a grove, a thousand of its feather'd inhabitants seemed to welcome our approach; their harmony awaken'd new delights in my soul: Of a sudden I was about to seize the lucky moment to plead my passion, when thinking it might possibly meet with a repulse, fear suppress'd my articulation, and my eyes only testify'd the thoughts of my heart—when language, cry'd I, after a pause, can but feebly express our feelings, let the cause which excites them interpret for us.

Kitty joining us was a relief to both; we were entering a close walk overtop'd by two rows of trees, which form'd a canopy of the most delightful foliage; a small rivulet form'd its boundary on one side, and hanging rocks, which seem'd coeval with creation, on the other.

O Belville, exclaimed my cousin, I love you dearly for bringing us to this charming place. I told her, her love would always be flattering to me, and how much it would encrease my obligations to her, if she who had so much influence over Miss Melvern, could but acquire for me the slightest part of her regard, with which I would endeavour to be satisfied, 'till the propriety of my conduct should entitle me to more.

Do you think, Miss Melvern, there is a prospect of success?—She made me no reply.

Kitty, who had again strolled to some distance, returned saying, she had found out the Lover's Cave, which she was sure had been worn out in the rock by the falling of lover's tears, which dissolving the stone, had formed the most astonishing petrefactions, with which the roof was adorned; the surface was here and there flat, with sharp angles, indicating that love has its asperities as well as its sweets: The seats are of the softest moss, and the floor unhewn stone, showing how intimately pleasure and pain are blended;

slow creeping ivy entwines itself about, marking the constancy of simple girls, when the hearts of their lovers are turned to adamant; a weeping willow surrounds it, and the God of Love himself stands sentinel—all its avenues are planted with the roses of temptation; the entrance to it is simple and easy—the difficulty only lies in getting back again.

Without danger, said I, there is no glory; with Miss Melvern's permission we enter it—I would give the world, said Kitty, if I had a lover there to talk nonsense to me—bless me, Harriot, I have heard Belville say such fine things to ladies—Who can doubt that, replied she, (making up her pretty lip) that has once heard Mr. Belville?

I am glad you think so, returned the other, but I do not recollect you ever offered him one in return.

I thanked her for the observation, and we soon reached the cave; there it is, cry'd Kitty, I have paid my devoirs, do you the same—snatching her lovely friend to my heart—To no other Goddess, Kitty, will I offer incense; she first taught my bosom to feel, she alone has a claim to its grateful offerings. I tenderly embraced her.

That's quite a beau-like speech, cry'd Kitty, did you ever hear any thing so fine, Harriot?

To say fine things, said the blushing Angel, is so habitual to Mr. Belville, that their brilliancy loses its effect from its knowing no cessation.

Tho' the sculptor's art, I rejoin'd, can give to marble its highest polish, it cannot invigorate it with vital warmth;—The most perfect work, if not animated with a soul—will be a statue still, said she, smiling—the hand which first created inanimate objects, never intended they should be otherwise. Suppose a human creature was born without sensibilities, is it for human wisdom to condemn that which its Maker created perhaps for the wisest purposes.—One he has endowed with a feeling heart, which was designed as a punishment to its possessor; another without feeling, and that other derives its felicity from thence.

I agree with you, madam; I find your knowledge of human nature has not been the study of a day; that a feeling heart is sometimes given its possessor as a torment, I acknowledge from experience, and that others derive their felicity from the want of it, observation has confirmed to me.

To what does all this nonsense tend? rejoined Kitty, why you both seem to be talking *at*, rather than *to*, each other; I know more of the human heart than either of you, and can exactly describe what passes in your's at this moment.

I told her I was not afraid to stand her criticism, provided Miss Melvern consented to undergo a like examination.

Pale with apprehension, she said, a good conscience could always stand the test, but let us not, continued she, endeavour to investigate what the philosophers could never comprehend—the mazes of the human heart! when so many beauties of nature call for our admiration!

Then I wish, Miss Melvern, I were in a state of vegetation; suppose my departed spirit had taken up its residence in that reed, I should like to hear you make my eulogium.

There is a flexibility in a reed, Sir, which could never so far impose on the senses, as to make us believe that the spirit of a mortal man had been transfus'd into it; admitting there was a foundation for the Pythagorean Doctrine, do you think our transformation will not bear some analogy to our state here? Your's cannot be a reed—and why not my sweet friend?

Because the stubbornness of the oak bears a stronger affinity to so persecuting a spirit as Mr. Belville.

Under your directions, my dear madam, I should become all gentleness—I entreated much to become her scholar; but fearing I was incorrigible, she declin'd the charge.

In short, Charles, we spent a most agreeable day; she express'd herself delighted with the situation of the rocks—I told her that to *Encore* her visit would be the best testimony of her approbation—she gave me no encouraging hopes.

I wonder, as her mother is living, they should be separated, which I find is the case.

How apt are we to enter *en detail* when treating of the subject we love.

Adieu,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXX.

Miss MELVERN, to Miss AIRSBY.

Elmwood.

PERPETUAL anxieties operating upon my mind, already enfeebled by my late illness, brought on a return of my fever, which confined me for several days to my bed. The first time I ventured down to my little parlour, to my surprize Mr. Belville was there. So dejected, so languid were his looks, that I betrayed an uneasiness I could not conquer.

He said my concern was more flattering to him than he could express; that his health had suffered no interruption, but his mind had undergone the severest conflict, on account of my indisposition.

His tenderness affected me; I could not refrain from tears——Never, never, said he, wiping them away, did I know what happiness was 'till now.

The entrance of Mrs. Barnes saying a gentleman enquired for Mr. Belville; relieved me; he looked from the window, and said it was his friend Doctor Warren, whom he beg'd leave to introduce to me——I only bowed.

After the introductory compliments, the Doctor, taking my hand, said, People, madam, of common abilities, who follow any profession, are seldom able to converse on any other subject; physic is mine, and your languid countenance naturally introduces it.

Mr. Belville, quitting the room, first assured him, there was not always a dependance to be put on my veracity; and beg'd he would proceed according to his own judgment.

The Doctor, on finding my fever high, propos'd my losing blood, which I strongly oppos'd from an unconquerable timidity——He said, from an instance well known, if tyranny was not suppress'd in its infancy, it would grow too powerful to be subdu'd hereafter.

I was obliged to comply. When Mr. Belville return'd, he made use of every tender argument to prevail on me to take care of a life, he was pleas'd to add, I knew not the value of.

I grew better for the Doctor's prescriptions. When I think of the manner of Mr. Belville's introducing him, (for he had learnt from Mrs. Barnes that I would have no advice) how can I do justice to him? how can a grateful heart but thank him? how can an honest one but shudder at the thought of giving him a moment's pain?

Yet, Sophy, I will not deceive him; I will teach him to despise me; I will tell him of my situation.

Ah! no; that were impossible; can I be the publisher of my mother's disgrace?

Write pity and consolation to your

HARRIOT MELVERN.

LETTER XXXI.

Miss AIRSBY to Miss MELVERN.

Broomhill.

GIVE you consolation, my Harriot? the best I can give to a young woman in love, is to assure her that the author of her passion, returns it with redoubled force.

As this Belville seems to be an honest sort of a gentleman, don't play off your sex's tricks to torment him, purposely because he prefers you to all the world. Were I the King of a people, who act on this principle, I would make the crime felony, for it is violating the common laws of honesty.

Now in one of those delightful moments, when, like father Adam, the gentle Edmund hangs over you enamour'd, saying all the soft, sweet, pretty, non-sensical things, with which I believe the most refined passion must be fed, to keep it alive: You ought, rising, and making him one of your best curtsies to say,

Sir, I am truly sensible of the honour you do me; it is impossible any heart can be more grateful than mine for it; and it is this instant ready to unite its hopes, and fears; its pains, and pleasures, with your's.

He consents, the contract is sign'd with a holy kiss, and there's an end to all the "train of ills that love is heir to! Adieu,

SOPHIA AIRSBY.

LETTER XXXII.

In Answer.

Elmwood.

SOPHY, how ludicrously you treat the most delicate concern in life! in the first heat of my resentment I threw your letter into the fire, and then burnt my fingers

endeavouring to withdraw it.—A coach at the door, Kitty Fenwick stepping from it, obliges me to lay aside my pen.

* * * * *

She came directly to my chamber; What! writing said she? my mamma is below, and is come to ask you to take a ride, and spend a day with us—I look'd alarm'd; she bid me not be frighten'd, for Belville was not at home.— I ask'd her why she should suppose the sight of Mr. Belville should terrify me, for I had done him no wrong?

Tho' I had frequently received invitations to visit at the Hall, I had refused them all 'till now, which I thought I could no longer do with politeness, as Mrs. Fenwick made the invitation in person; I comply'd, and the more readily, as Mr. Belville was absent.

I found by Mrs. Fenwick's conversation, she did not look upon me as an adventurer, for from Mrs. Barnes she was well acquainted with my family and connections, tho' the latter part of my life was known only to myself; Mr. Belville had inform'd her of our acquaintance having commenced in London, so that I was receiv'd by the whole family with as much politeness as I could expect from people sensible of their own consequence.

Mr. Belville return'd just as the coach appear'd to take me home; he led me to it, and to my surprize, stept in himself, ordering the coachman to drive on,—I would gladly have dispensed with this piece of civility—I told him so.

He said positive spirits would have their own way, however distressing their company was to their friends.—Sir, Sir, stammer'd your poor friends.—Sir, Sir, stammer'd your poor friend, indeed I meant not that—I saw he was offended—When he said, ironically, that ladies' meanings were not always famous for their perspicuity: We entered into a crabbed kind of dialogue, which lasted 'till we reached the Farm.

He begged admittance for one half hour,—I could not grant it.—He called me a cruel inflexible;—a tear unluckily dropping from my eye, fell upon his hand—he kiss'd it off, and bowing low, with a sigh, ordered the coachman to drive home.

Adieu,
H. MELVERN.

LETTER XXXIII.

EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

Fenwick Hall.

THE man, Bothwell, who lives on expectation, will never taste of substantial pleasures.

You once told me, and said you spoke from experience, that disappointments were the soul's best physic. That virtue, like gold, must be proved ere its value could be fix'd. And that every opposition we make against temptation, will bring its own reward.

But who can resist temptation, that has beheld a Harriot Melvern? 'Till I had seen her, I was grateful to Heaven for its bounties; but now every thought yields to her—I must conquer this growing evil.—I was not quite so unhappy before George Fenwick's arrival.

Miss Melvern's retir'd way of living, so unlike what she has been used to, makes me apprehensive that misfortunes have overtaken her; would to Heaven she would make me acquainted with the hidden distress which preys upon her soul; if it be the loss of fortune, I could easily remove it, but I have infinitely more to apprehend from another cause.

Whether rich or poor, were I but once lord of her heart, it would be of no consequence with me.

The love of gold is not my actuating principle; it behoves every man to be prudent in the use of it, so far as it enlarges his sphere of usefulness; but for the pleasure of amassing it, surely it is a vice beneath the dignity of a human creature to commit; for of what use is it, unless we make it subservient to our benevolent purposes? And yet there are men who, from no motive but the mere joy of heaping it together, will risk body and soul to attain it.

Fatal infatuation! This naturally leads to a conversation I heard at an inn on my road hither, which pass'd between two gentlemen in the next room to me.

Why, Leland, said one to the other, are you not a stupid fellow, to take on so about a woman, when you ought to sing Te Deum for your escape, as she was possess'd of no dower but her beauty? Had you design'd her for keeping, as she was handsome, you might have felt a momentary anxiety; but a penniless wife is the D—l in this age of expence; and depend upon it she is sufficiently punished for her romantic generosity, to give up without knowing what she was about, such a noble fortune, to preserve an old hag of a mother from a prison.

Danvers, that very circumstance, interrupted the other, has but rais'd her in my esteem; as often as I reflect upon it, I feel myself a villain, and if by accident I draw the attention of a passenger, I think it is excited by his knowledge of my baseness.

Where were my feelings? where was my honour? when the dear injur'd girl, with streaming eyes, inform'd me of her situation, and what she had done to save her mother?

Stimulated as I had been by your letters, it appear'd to me the effects of folly, as her mother had no claim to her affections, unless the irregularity of her conduct was one.

What a purity was there in the regard she professed for me when my limited fortunes could hardly bid me hope for an alliance with her's; and yet when mine became enlarged, and she, for ought I know, became a beggar—I could leave her destitute—cursed infatuation!

O Danvers, she was an Angel!

Admitting she were, Leland, returned he, unless she was endow'd with the powers of Midas, and could transform whatever she touch'd to gold, of what avail would it be?

Will a wife's beauty, if she's honest, allow her husband to race at New-Market? Game at White's? Keep girls at H—s's? figure at a masquerade? Gallant it in side boxes? and all the delightful routine of diversions with which our capital abounds? Therefore gold is the only charm which should dazzle a young fellow to resign his liberty.—To a man, Danvers, of your libertine principles, your arguments may be effectual; but where the bosom has been warm'd by love and aw'd by virtue, they cannot.

The goodness of my beloved's heart was the only crime of which I could reproach her: How does her noble rejection of me, at a time, when I was dear to her, still vibrate on my ears, and shake my inmost soul? Happy I never can be 'till I have received her forgiveness; convinced of her attachment, I have every thing to hope.

The entrance of the waiters, with my supper interrupted the conversation. What sordid souls, Charles, do some men possess; who can reject a woman for an exertion of those virtues, which ought to have endeared her to him.

I have observed, that when once an inordinate love of gold is admitted in the breast, it excludes every generous sentiment from it. I would strongly urge prudence, where there is not a security on one side; and where the parties have been nursed in the lap of luxury.

From good or bad education in the female sex arises the source of our enjoyments in the married life.

I declare to-morrow, could I shake off this infatuation which absorbs my soul, I would as soon marry a girl from the good character of her parents, as for the merit I might discover in herself: for girls in general, who are virtuously brought up, closely follow tracts set them by prudent mothers (tho' the number I grant you are but few;) they will continue to follow virtue when of an age to act for themselves; and what at first they practised from habit, they will at last follow from inclination.

If mothers are light, insipid creatures, how can we expect the daughters should be otherwise? An unexperienced traveller, will always follow the lead of his guide. Adieu,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXXIV.

To the same.

BOTHWELL, I can truly say with the Philosopher, that “pleasures can be admitted only simply, but pains rush in a thousand at a time.”

George Fenwick’s attentions to Miss Melvern might be borne, if it were not for the complacency with which she receives them.

When I go to Elmwood I am deny’d the sight of her, tho’ I see her start from the window at my approach.

George declares Miss Melvern to be the loveliest woman he ever saw.

I called in upon her the other night, she was writing, as I guess’d from the confusion she betray’d, scraping a parcel of papers to her.—Her surprize drew from me an apology for my intrusion—The honour of my company, she said, was what she was not prepared for——

The *honour* of my company, Madam, is that an epithet to be used from friend to friend? but as you are writing, I will not disappoint, by my presence, an anxious lover’s hopes.

She said, my sentiments had in them a generosity peculiar to myself—I would always chuse to do as I would be done by, Madam; were an impertinent intruder to prevent my mistress from conveying the tender sentiments of her heart to me by letter, I could never pardon the offender.

That would be ungenerous, Sir, example has a powerful influence over the human mind.

If I am ungenerous, said I, I have paid dear for my experience; I once loved a young lady more than life, she grew sensible of her power, and treated me with as much indifference as you do at this moment.

If, Sir, I have been any ways negligent in paying you all possible respect, I beg your pardon.——

Confounded stuff, cried I, in a tone of voice she had not been accustomed to hear, for I was roused by an impulse I never felt before, by heavens you despise me, Madam! grasping her hands, answer me one question with all the sincerity of your heart; Was not the gentleman I saw with you in London, an approved, an accepted lover? the strongest motives urge me to know it?

She told me, that when my questions were proposed with more moderation, they would be better entitled to an answer; she struggled to disengage her hands, said my violence hurt them excessively—and burst into tears.—My anger was disarmed, I let them drop—she step'd to the other side of the room to lay aside her papers, but on turning my head, I found she had left it.

Waiting her return for sometime in vain, at length I sent to request the favour of her company for a moment.

She sent for answer, she had letters she was obliged to dispatch.

Thus, Charles, was I obliged to quit the house in a worse state of mind than I entered it; laying all the blame on my narrow, suspicious temper.

The next evening when I waited on her she was from home, but returned soon after, and as it was almost dark, she entered the parlour without seeing me, dropt into a chair, and sigh'd as if her heart would break; a flood of tears ensued, which melted my very soul.

My dearest friend, approaching her, let the tender sorrow by which I see you oppress'd, engage your compassion for me; you know not what I have suffered since last night.

I have lost your regard, I fear, at a time, when mine for you knows no bounds—and I would have wiped away the tears which dim'd the most speaking eyes in the world. Fir'd with resentment, she interpreted my behaviour as a freedom her delicacy could not pardon.

I told her every feeling of my soul was absorb'd in tenderness, and that she must both forgive and pity me.

Instead of a reply she flung out of the room—I saw her no more that night.

I will die but I will repay her coldness with indifference. Expecting her arrival every moment, I will subscribe myself, if not the most fortunate of lovers, yet the sincerest of your friends,

E. BELVILLE.

LETTER XXXV.

To the same.

FENWICK swears he cannot account for my want of taste, in not having discovered beauties in Harriot Melvern, which few of her sex can boast; I told him we judged differently of beauty—so we do indeed, cried he, if you do not think so, for by heaven she is the loveliest woman in Europe! and nothing would make me so happy as her good opinion.

Women's good opinions, I replied, were much easier gained than retained; and left him to the enjoyment of his conquest. Soon after he rode out, and Kitty received a billet from Miss Melvern, acquainting her she could not wait upon her according to promise.

The fiends of jealousy fir'd my bosom at it, ordering my horse immediately, I set out for Elmwood, but she that I was in pursuit of, had left it an hour before.—Learning the rode she took, I pursued her. At length, in a little village, I saw a servant I knew to be Fenwick's, leading his horse; at a distance was another, with Miss Melvern's. But what was become of their riders gave me no small inquietude.—I kept myself concealed, and looking eagerly on all sides, at length through the apertures of a hedge, I spy'd my lady and gentleman, walking in a garden behind a cottage.

What could I do? I had no right to interrupt an interview which might have been obtained with difficulty. They took several turns, and at length entered a little arbour composed of woodbines, jessamines, and other flowering shrubs.

Thomson's advice to the incautious fair one, rushed on my mind; O woman, exclaimed I, thou lovest to parly with temptation!—Their stay in the bower, however, was short; they left the garden: when I saw them mounting their horses I clapt spurs to mine, and passing them on a full gallop, waved my hat in the air.

I saw no more of them that day, on the next George had a billet put into his hands—glancing at the superscription, I saw it was Miss Melvern's writing, my curiosity subsided at once.

I wish you could meet me ten days hence at Mount Belville; I long to see what progress is made in its improvements.—There was a time I deceived myself so far as to think, I would not visit it till I could embellish it with the presence of her, whom, in spite of myself, I adore!—But she despises me, I will shake her off, and resume my liberty.

Adieu,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXXVI.

To the same.

IF Fenwick's was a delicate passion, he ought to conceal it from the eyes of common observation.

Could I forget this enchantress, I would offer that heart to Lady Frances Warrick, Harriot Melvern thinks unworthy her acceptance.

I cannot recollect if in my former letters I ever mentioned her Ladyship to you.— Two summers ago she purchased an elegant villa in this neighbourhood, where she resides for three months in the year; she came down to it a fortnight ago. She is about two and thirty, nature has been lavish to her of personal beauties; and much study has cultivated her mind, beyond what is generally to be found among women.

Before I made her my first visit, the perfections of my Harriot had reached her: she paid my judgment a compliment when she said, that my opinion of the lady should be the standard of hers—I was neither niggard of my praises, nor lavish in my encomiums; they however brought on me a severe rally from her ladyship.

Last night, in spite of my boasted indifference, my feet involuntarily moved towards the farm; I met its amiable inhabitant, walking in a field at some distance from it. I asked her, if celestial objects did not engage her attention entirely, if she would condescend to look down upon a terrestrial one?—With a half smile she said, little persuasion was necessary to convince her of my mortality; or of my cousin George's either, said I, begging to know her opinion of him; she gave it Bothwell, and to my jaundiced eye, partiality heightened the description: I told her I was glad to find he had made such advances in her good graces, because I should recommend her to his protection in my absence, as I was about to leave the Hall.

She thanked me, said my kind intentions in her favour were unnecessary, as she was daily in expectation of a friend with whom she should leave the country.

So unexpected a reply confounded me beyond measure; it was in vain I endeavoured to find with whom she intended to leave it; and what place she had chosen for her residence.

Upon no account do not think of meeting me at Mount Belville, for should this dear creature escape in my absence I should be undone.

Adieu for the present,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXXVII.

To the same.

LADY Frances Warrick spent the day with us; so did the mistress of my heart; I had secretly hoped however she would have refused the invitation—but 'tis hard to subdue our inclinations, she came however, in all her native loveliness. Lady Frances for sometime survey'd her with fixt delight; and whispering me, said, she always thought me a sly fellow, and that if my heart was not beauty proof, it must be deeply wounded.

I only smiled a reply, and her Ladyship turning to Miss Melvern, said, I have been telling Belville, I think him a sly fellow, what are your sentiments of him? pray be candid.

She smilingly said, her acquaintance with me had been of so short a date, and my disposition was so variable, she had not been able to form any fixt opinion, tho' she believed me sincere where once I professed a friendship; I see, return'd the other humorously shaking her head, friends will be partial. I said I should always rank Miss Melvern's approbation among my highest felicities.

Fenwick soon after entering into conversation with Harriot, I took my seat next her Ladyship, but my eyes in spite of me would be wandering after the lovers.

I proved but a dull companion to a woman of vivacity like her Ladyship, who calling to Fenwick, said, she was sure I was in love, for my stupidity betrayed every symptom of a heart *devoué a l'amour*, do you know who is in possession of it?—Not I faith, Madam, returned he, Belville's secrets are his own.

Might I not say the same of you, Fenwick? (looking stedfastly on Harriot,) unless I can find a woman whose sentiments are correspondent with my own, I shall as carefully avoid the snare, as I would the company of an hypocrite; and till I am, what the vulgar call, desperately in for it, I never shall marry, for I hate coquets of every denomination, and prudes are equally my detestation.—To the honest, free-hearted girl alone, will I resign my liberty; who is too honest to disguise, and too sincere to give intended pain.

Now could your Ladyship recommend me to such an one.—I was going on—I believe the room is too warm for you Miss Melvern, said George, you look pale of a sudden; suffer me to lead you into the air; she gave him her hand, he led her out, Kitty following—with difficulty I kept my seat—distracted with doubts, I cannot proceed.

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXXVIII.
Miss MELVERN, to Miss AIRSBY.

Elmwood.

HOW my disappointments multiply! what a blessing would the sight of your dear father have been to your Harriot! but I hope he is not so ill as your fears interpret. Had he come, I would have left Elmwood with him, and have sought some other retreat, where I could have sheltered my wretchedness from the eye of curiosity, and the tongue of malevolence, which I hoped to have escaped here.

The care I have taken to avoid Mr. Belville, and the negligence with which I received his assiduities, have brought on me his hatred. For when I reflected on my unhappy situation, I respected him too much, to encourage his too great partiality, which to every eye must have been visible tho' I wish'd not to gain his love, yet to have secured his esteem would have made me happy; but I have lost them both; Lady Frances Warrick possesses them; he declares her to be the finest woman in England, and if Belville has declared it, 'tis an indisputable truth.

Were I to copy perfection, I would try to catch a grace from Lady Frances—'Tis ungenerous in Mr. Belville to make me feel the advantage she possesses over me—The opinions of men in general are void of sentiment; their ambition is to triumph over those whom nature has incapacitated to defend themselves.

A few days ago I had a short conversation with Mr. Belville, which had in it more of irony than politeness—more of sarcasm than wit; it related to our sex; I stood forth their champion—Yes, said he, seizing my hands—even you

“Have your sex’s virtues,
“Their affectation, pride, ill-nature, noise,
“Proneness to change, e’en from the thing that
 pleas’d you;
“So gracious in your idol dear variety,
“That for another love you would forego
“An Angel’s form to mingle with the Devils.”

What a flattering panegyrist, said I, Mr. Belville would make, were he to paint his pictures from the fountain of his imagination! if you intend I should make the application, Sir, 'tis done already—Those are not our best friends who flatter us most—

There was a time, Madam, I thought you an Angel.

If your imagination, Sir, will dress out an image the imperfection of human nature cannot resemble, yourself alone are to blame.

From the moment, said he, the swathing clothes of a female infant are laid aside, it is dressed out in the robes of dissimulation, ever wearing the mask of virtue externally,

to conceal the want of it within.—Oh, Harriot, Harriot! the thin disguise cannot be concealed from the searching eyes of men—You are all full of tricks, plots, and contrivances; but as to truth or honour,—he paus'd.

That heart, Sir, rejoin'd I, which hath been inur'd to sufferings, can patiently bear reproof; but knowingly I have done nothing deserving your's.—

Miss Melvern, interrupted he eagerly you have thrown my soul into a tumult, and you make it a pleasure to torture a bosom whose feelings you can direct at will—then, casting a look of indignation upon me, he left the house, and immediately Mr. Fenwick made his appearance,—he must have met him.

Surrounded with difficulties on all sides, I can only add that I am your's,
H. MELVERN.

LETTER XXXIX.

To the same.

Elmwood.

THE excessive civilities of George Fenwick are more distressing to me even than Mr. Belville's negligence.

I could not with decency avoid spending Tuesday at the Hall.

Lady Frances Warrick was there; she is a charming woman; her unaffected kindness to me engages my gratitude.—I don't know why, but I was more solicitous to have my dress appear to advantage, than ever I was in my life.

My sack was a painted gauze, a present from my brother; nothing could be more truly delicate that ever sprung from the hands of fancy; I endeavoured that simplicity, not shew, should prevail through my whole appearance. When I was dress'd, I thought of Lady Frances, of Mr. Belville—I burst into tears; in this situation Kitty Fenwick surprised me—Bless me, said she, why you look like an Angel, whilst I see you feel like a mortal; what has happen'd? have you seen Belville or my brother to-day?—I told her I had seen neither, but the unfortunate never wanted a cause for sorrow. I would have prevailed on her to have returned without me, but could not succeed.

I was sitting alone in the drawing-room when Mr. Belville made his appearance, dress'd *au dernier gout*.

Bowing low he approached me, and taking my hand, led me to the upper part of the room to a seat, which I declin'd accepting.

Were it chosen for you, Madam, by any other than myself, would you refuse it?—and he gaz'd upon me 'till I was cover'd with confusion.

At length he said, turning from me with a sigh, you are very lovely, Miss Melvern.—I could not refrain from tears, which he observing, said, that the tear of sensibility on the cheek of beauty, added a new lustre to every charm, and delighted the senses of the beholder.

I just now told you I thought you very lovely, but truths from me gain no credit with you——look in that glass, and you will see reflected in it—all that——

Here Lady Frances was announced; he step to the door to receive her: as they entered I never saw two figures dignify each other so much.

Presenting her Ladyship to me, she kindly saluted me; Belville said, your Ladyship has set me an example the most rigorous justice could not condemn me for following; saluting us both, he rejoined, now have I saluted the only chosen of the graces.

With what women, Belville, do you converse, reply'd her Ladyship, who can be influenced by your flattery, but wits only shine from comparison.

Miss Melvern, said Belville, ought to be grateful for the opportunities I give her of displaying her's, as she never appears to such advantage as when it is levelled at me;—that may be, said her Ladyship, wits seldom direct their satire but to objects they have well studied.

They both seem'd to triumph over my confusion; Belville look'd so confident that it made him quite ugly, and apply'd to me to know if her Ladyship's observation were just——a little piqued I told him that if vanity was offended with all the world, 'twas ever in humour with itself.

George Fenwick's behaviour to me was that of a man pleased with himself, ever confident of success; Belville's to Lady Frances tenderly respectful; to me, easy and negligent.

After dinner we retired to the music parlour; I was obliged to play, and performed intolerably: it was a relief to me that Mr. Belville paid not the least attention to me, but chatted the whole time with Lady Frances, who often reproved him for it.

Dancing was next proposed, and Lady Frances insisted I should dance a minuet with Mr. Belville; 'twas in vain I urged my incapacity, from continual ill health; she would not be refused.—I thought, Madam, said Mr. Belville to her in a whisper, you had been a better judge of the delicacies of your sex—I admire Miss Melvern for her rejection, tho' I feel myself mortified at it; you condemn her without knowing her motives; is there not such a thing as jealousy admissible into the human breast?—I wish

not to receive a pleasure which must give pain to my friend.—My cousin's passions are strong, Miss Melvern's feelings delicate;—This urged me to comply.

Lady Frances, during the visit generously sought every opportunity to encrease my importance—Belville to make me feel the reverse.—The family have an invitation to spend the day with her at Brooklands on Friday, in which I am included.

However weary of the world and myself, I can with truth subscribe myself your

HARRIOT MELVERN.

Copyright Chawton House Library

LETTER XL.

EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

Fenwick Hall.

“This is indeed to conquer,
“And well to be rewarded for the conquest;
“Softness and sweetest innocence she wears,
“And looks like nature in the world’s first spring.”

SUSPICION, Bothwell, has no reward for her votaries but torments, as I have fully experienced.

Since I wrote last, every thing between Miss Melvern and I went on *de pis en pis*, and all the malice my heart ow’d the sex, I vented on her, who least deserved it.

She lately spent the day with us; she was dress’d—why will not all women who wish to make conquests, copy nature and elegance from her?

Tho’ dress is not her study, yet she displays the truest taste in the choice and disposition of whatever she wears;—but on what trifling themes do I employ my pen? when this amiable woman possesses a mind which the Virtues have stamp’d their own—Every kind sentiment Lady F. Warrick express’d in her favour; my feelings acknowledged, tho’ prudence restrained my lips.

As Miss Melvern sought every opportunity of avoiding me, I took every one to engage Lady Frances—in order to kindle the sparks of jealousy in the breast of my Harriot, but as my heart was not interested in the efforts of gallantry I made to entertain her Ladyship, they were cold and languid.

Amongst women, were I to chuse a sister, it should be Lady Frances Warrick: If I ever take a wife it must be Harriot Melvern.

Walking in the Garden one evening with Kitty, she ask’d me if I could possibly divine the cause of Miss Melvern’s unhappiness? for that she never found her alone but in tears;—that she had urged to be informed of the reason; Harriot’s replies had but increased her perplexities: She only told her that the heart which felt real sorrows, never wished to admit a partner in them.

I severely reproached myself, lest the alteration in my behaviour might have added to her anxiety; but then her visible partiality for George confounded me. At all events I determined on making her happy, if it were in my power; with this intent I went to Elmwood, but on seeing Fenwick just quitting the house, my resolution fail’d me; I found I wanted honour at that moment to do a generous action, I returned home.

Tho' I will not meet her to-morrow at Brookland's, said I, as by appointment, I will spend it in endeavouring to promote her happiness.

'Tis the prerogative, Bothwell, only of superior minds to promote another's felicity, in opposition to their own; I blush to tell you the struggles it cost me to do an act of justice. I saw a ray of hope dart in George's eyes when he found I declin'd being of their party, hoping to monopolize this charming woman, unmolested by me.

When the family were gone, with Burke's Philosophical Essays in my hand, I strolled into the Park;—I soon found my mind very unfit to relish the beauties of my book, when closing it of a sudden, in a field not far from Elmwood, I was surpris'd to see a phenomenon, which appeared to have taken shelter from the beams of the sun, under a tree. Summoning up all that was resolute in man, I resolved to accost it; some courteous Hamadryad, said I to myself, ventur'd from her retirement, to visit mankind.

Its vestments were of immaculate white, which loosely flow'd on the verdant carpet of the earth on which the apparition was reclin'd.

As I drew near it my emotions increas'd.—Unperceiv'd I gently threw my arms around it.—Charles, it was no phantom! in my consternation, not knowing by what name to address it, I call'd it Harriot;—but who shall paint its horrors to find itself thus encircled:—Ere they subsided I threw myself on the grass before it.

For some time I continued gazing upon it with silent delight.—At length I pleaded pardon for stealing thus unbidden on its meditations; ask'd why the lustre of its eyes was dim'd with sorrows? and if it would admit a partner in them?

To drop the metaphor—after she had recover'd her surprize, I beg'd to know how she came not to accept of Lady Frances's invitation? She also desired to know my reasons for declining it.—Tho' candour did not dictate *her* reply, I told her frankly, her charming self was the occasion of my refusal, tho' I had not dared to hope for my present felicity.

I ask'd her by what fatal inadvertency I had lost her good opinion? told her that it had render'd me unfit to taste the joys of society, or participate in the pleasures of friendship—Tho' I suspected her heart to be devoted to my cousin; yet I boasted a claim to her regard I could not forego. That as I saw his assiduities were received by her with pleasure, I withdrew mine in consequence, not to excite jealousy in a breast wholly devoted to her; that I had been a careful observer of her actions, and spite of the mutual attachment between them, I perceived her not happy; that I had long waited for a moment like this.—

She attempted to interrupt me, but I was not to be diverted from my purpose, and I said,

If I could be any way accessory in promoting a felicity dearer to me than every other consideration, I lived but in hopes of effecting it. I beg'd her to pardon the suggestion; that I was convinc'd her present situation was not such as she was born to.—My cousins, I fear'd, might rate gold at a higher price than her virtues: that my fortune was not inconsiderable; I entreated her to command that which could be no ways spent so much to my satisfaction, as in promoting the felicity of those who were most deserving it.

She wept bitterly; I severely reproached myself, fearing I had been the unlucky cause of it—earnestly requested her not to construe my request into indelicacy, as the motives which urged it were derived from the purest source.

Tho' she could not accept of my favours, she reply'd her heart was not wanting in gratitude for the intention; and in the first place said, she would undeceive me as to Mr. Fenwick; that whatever might be his sentiments relative to her, she never did, nor ever could, entertain others for him than those of indifference;—and tho' she was as unhappy as one cou'd be whose peace was not murder'd by conceal'd guilt, yet would she never seek to raise her ruin'd fortunes by an alliance wherein the affections of her heart had no share; and were she more destitute than—she paus'd, seem'd much affected—she cou'd not go on.

Then, proceeded I, the anxiety of your mind has not been on Fenwick's account (looking up to her with eyes that spoke nothing but admiration) her negative revived my hopes.

My life, continued she, has been so peculiarly circumstanced, that the illusions with which grandeur naturally inspires youthful minds, have lost their charm: Peace of mind is all the felicity I ever dare to hope for; should I regain it, my vanity can meet with no farther humiliations.

Since I first met you, Sir, in the giddy circles of pleasure, I have been on the verge of the grave; my soul welcom'd the awful moment when I should escape from evils I had not fortitude to bear; but by the assistance of Providence, and the attention of a few kind friends, I am again restored, but to what painful vicissitudes Heaven only knows!

May Heaven avert them all, said I, treat me but with confidence; if I abuse it I give you leave to transfer it to my mortal enemy; look upon me as one in whom all the kind friends you have lost are center'd; look upon me with the kind confidence of a brother.

Like you, Mr. Belville, I have a brother, benevolent, compassionate, generous; should he be ever restored to my prayers, he will thank you for your kindness to his sister.

I beg'd her if my interest or advice could in the least serve her, to command them: I assur'd her I was not impelled by curiosity to learn her story, but in hope that I might be the means of serving her.

I hinted my astonishment to see her so much changed from what she was when first I saw her; her spirits then seem'd attun'd to harmony, and not an uneasy passion ruffled her bosom.

She told me that day, and a few succeeding ones, put a period to her expectations of temporal felicity.—Here her rising sobs suppress'd her articulation.

Bothwell, I am not ashamed to confess the effects excited by a virtuous sensibility; I never was so much affected in my life—she perceived and pitied it.

How nearly does true joy border on the extremes of pain? but sorrow reigns alone in the heart, hope and joy seldom obtruding to divert it.

When we enter'd her parlour, she wish'd me a good morning, tho' it was near four o'clock, so swiftly do the white minutes fly, when contentment counts them over.

I entreated that a day, which had been so fortunate to me, should not be obscured by inauspicious clouds; I would not be deny'd the pleasure of spending it with her: She continued sweetly engaging during my stay.

In what a state of perplexity is my mind;—send your best advice, and continue to believe me your's,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XLI.

CHARLES BOTHWELL, Esq; to MR. BELVILLE.

YOUR last, dear Edmund, found me an inhabitant of the Cambrian Mountains, otherwise I should have answered your tragi-farcical epistle.

In the first place I congratulate you that your fever'd imagination found a healing specific under the spreading foliage of an oak, and that one dose extracted from this sensitive plant, is in a fair way to restore you.

When nature created the sex without strength, she gave them tears, with these they have subdued the hearts of more men, than the fire of embattled squadrons, few have fallen victims to the sword in comparison to those whom love has vanquish'd.

You say you would marry to-morrow, were you sure the woman of your heart could love you, for yourself alone——Romantic, girlish folly! it is doing credit to your choice to suppose that all perfections are center'd in your amiable adventurer.

I tell you, Belville, she is a woman, and may deceive.

Marry if you will; but before you put on the shackles matrimonial, listen to the voice of friendship.

Tho' I know the soundest reasoning will no more avail with a man in love, when contrary to his inclination, than the efforts of a pilot to steer his ship in a direct course during a storm; yet however listen——

Beware of beauty, Belville, it is the drapery with which temptation has decorated her children, that mankind may not discover the deficiencies of the mind within them. Suffer not O Belville the playful images of fancy to obscure the light of reason.

But if thou hast found such a woman whose bosom can know no perfect joy but what it receives from thine, marry her, Edmund, and remember how much tender regard such a treasure demands;—for her lov'd society canst thou relinquish the dangerous paths in which youth, enslaved by passions, are apt to stray?

Let me ask you, for her alone, canst thou resolve to steel thy breast against another love should temptation hereafter spread her snares? Canst thou be faithful to her, should slow disease drink up the melting lustre of her eye? or pluck the bloom of health from the fair cheek?

In short, canst thou dare to love her spite of every decay, with which envious time saps the fairest foundations? if thou canst, take her, and may every blessing which friendship is empower'd to give, attend thee. Adieu,

C. BOTHWELL.

LETTER XLII.

EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

Fenwick-Hall.

Dear Charles!

MY servant brought me your letter when on a visit at Elmwood;—when I had read it, Miss Melvern said, without the spirit of divination, she could venture to foretel my letter was the messenger of good news, by the satisfaction which appear'd on my countenance. I told her I hoped she judged from sympathy, that whatever related to her must give me pleasure——To me, Sir, (a rosy blush softly stealing over every feature) 'tis impossible I should be known to any of your friends.

Is there not a possibility, my sweet friend, of merit's being known by report? Why this charming emotion? People who do no wrong need be under no anxiety concerning what the world shall say of them; but that your charming confusion becomes you so well, I would explain myself.

Teazing, Mr. Belville, it is the height of cruelty to derive pleasure from that which gives another pain: It is not acting generously.

You see the power then, my dear Madam, of example over precept; I copy from your fair self.

It is not in my power, Mr. Belville, to do a generous action; and the weight of an obligation to a grateful mind, is one of the worst of evils.

I love to see proud spirits humbled, rejoined I;—I have not a proud spirit, Sir.—

I have seen characters, Miss Melvern, who in the moment they profess humility, betray a native pride.

If your allusion points to me, Sir, I disclaim it;—I have no pride.

Then never woman had;—the letter in question is from my best friend, to whom, whatever are my sentiments of you, I freely disclose them. Have you no friend to whom you communicate the undisguised thoughts of your heart?

O yes, said she, I recollect now, I did inform a friend of a part of a conversation we had together one day, wherein you said, that women were like toyshops, hung out with baubles, to attract the observation of harmless passengers.

Did no other thought of me steal into your ink? She made me no reply, I continued.

I confess to you, your perfections have often been the subject of my letters.

That you may not think here is an illicit commerce carried on between two friends, and that you are the charming plunder in view (presenting her the letter) I leave you to determine.—

She refused to take it, and insisted I should put it into my pocket—I asked her what gratuity I might expect for my compliance.

The pleasing reflection, Sir, that you have obliged a friend——

Are you my friend Miss Melvern?

Do you think that time, aided by my best endeavours, could ever entitle me to the affection of a brother? If I was poor and destitute, would you relieve me? Were I sick would you feed me from your own hand? Were I dying would you weep for me?—Were I in love? Her blushes and George Fenwick's appearance prevented a reply.

Bothwell, what gem can dignify beauty like the blush of modesty? It cannot bear the test of admiration without indicating that sort of retiring delicacy which trembles at the very attention it excites; and whenever you find a woman divested of those animated suffusions; which display themselves on the most minute occasions, you may be assured she is unaccompanied with sensibility of soul; this is the criterion by which I have almost invariably judged and seldom have been deceived.

Adieu,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XLIII.

EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

Fenwick-Hall.

Monday.

THIS is the last scrawl, dear Charles, I may be able to send you for some time; as we shall set out on a little tour on Thursday, viz. the family of the Fenwick's, Lady Frances Warwick, my Harriot, and her Belville; she had conjured up a thousand objections against accompanying us, but Lady Frances, who distinguishes her with every mark, of friendship, insisted she should be of her *suite*, and at length succeeded.

Yesterday Kitty and I called on Miss Melvern to accompany her to church. When the service was over, Kitty desired us not to go, for she loved to see a wedding of all things. It is the custom here, for the honest souls who embrace the holy state, to do it in presence of the whole congregation, rightly judging that so honourable an institution cannot be too publicly solemnized.

This is my bride, said I to Kitty, taking her friend's hand, who beg'd I would be serious where the occasion was so solemn.

I told her I was never more *serious* in my life; she was sorry that I should be *seriously* bent on being absurd—you would think it an absurdity, Miss Melvern, were I to raise my hopes so high?

She frown'd: now cry'd Kitty, listen, the mischief is going to begin—Belville, how should you feel were you going to pronounce the irrevocable I will? delighted! taking Harriot's hand, were but the only woman, I ever did, I ever can love, to receive my vow.

When the ceremony was over, I left the seat to congratulate the happy pair, who, from having always lived in the village, had been long known to me, and were of excellent character: I saluted the bride, she was a handsome, rural beauty; the bridegroom neither gave you the idea of a hero, or philosopher, yet was perfectly calculated for a husband to the young farmeress, if I may be allowed the expression. The subject of these young folks afforded us conversation, till we got to the Hall.

Harriot spent the day with us, her deportment was consistent with her charming self, tho' too cold, too distant to make a Belville happy—conversing with George she is natural and easy—with me embarrass'd and reserved.

Wednesday.

Yesterday I paid the new married pair a visit—as I had frequently received acts of kindness from the farmer, I took this opportunity to make him some return.—Entering with him on the topick of country business; he complained the changeableness of the season had been very destructive to their crops. The industrious man, farmer, said I, we generally find to be an honest one, therefore I wish you would accept of this, putting a 50l. bill into his hand, and I have a trifle also of the same value Mrs. Smyth, to present you with from Miss Melvern; you have often been kind to her; and she begs that when you see her, you will not offer to thank her for it, and if you did, she is so modest a Lady, she would declare she knew nothing of the matter; so never let it be thought of more.—The women you know farmer will have their own way, and when they behave themselves well, I do not see why they should not. They both stood gaping with silent astonishment—I therefore desired them to keep what I had given them against a rainy day, that provisions were dear, marriage was chargeable, a young family might come on; and hoping I should be god-father to their first boy, retired; here I hoped the affair would have ended.

Calling on Miss Melvern in the evening, as we were returning from the garden; we saw Mrs. Smyth, who was on a visit to Mrs. Barnes, her aunt.—My good girl insisted on her walking into the parlour, telling her, she thought to have called on her, but a head-ach had prevented her; and then asked after the Farmer.—

John Smyth is very well at your humble service Madam, said the rustic; and we should have come together to have thanked your Ladyship, and his honour, if he had not forbid us.

Mr. Belville, returned she, with all imaginable sweetness, could you be unkind enough to prevent my friends from visiting me? but for what would you thank me Mrs. Smyth? I have done you no service.

I must beg his honour's pardon, said she, for not obeying his commands, but if I did not thank you, I am sure *Ghostisies* would haunt me in my bed.

This prating woman, said I to myself, will spoil all, endeavouring to turn the conversation, which this perverse girl would pursue; and again she assured the good woman she was under no obligation to her; this is some mystery Mr. Belville, and I apply to you for an explanation.

I asked her, if her head was better, and said I was sorry to see her look so ill.

Not sufficiently ill to affect my looks, Sir, but I am all impatience to know this secret—I whispered her I would inform her, when the good woman was gone.

I must know it immediately, said she aloud, or I shan't be happy.—A trifle only that has been done for Mrs. Smyth, which she greatly over rates returned I.

You rich folks, cry'd the grateful creature, count hundreds for nothing, and tho' his honour said you expected not to be thanked, I am sure I should never prosper if I did not, and crossing her ruddy arms she curtsy'd to us both. Believe me Mrs. Smyth, interrupted this spirit of perverseness, I have received many civilities from you, which has never been in my power to return.

Yes, so his honour said you would say, when he gave me the 50 l. and ordered me never to thank you, because you would be angry;—mercy upon me, I was never so rich in all my born days, so God bless his honour, and God bless you—and to pray that he may never be false-hearted to your Ladyship, is all such a poor body as I can say.— Curtseying, she withdrew.

When I prove false-hearted to merit transcendent as thine, pressing my dear Harriot's hands to my bosom, then shall I be unworthy the blessing I now enjoy.

Recovering herself after a pretty long pause she demanded an explanation, saying, Now, Sir, I believe—And what does my charming friend believe?

That you, Mr. Belville, have done a generous action, and will own but half of it.

Your sex, Miss Melvern, nay even the most perfect, will be sometimes diverging from the right line.—

And pray, Sir, in this case, who is diverging?—I but demand a reply to a simple question, in which I am concerned. And insist on knowing the truth.

Did you give Mrs. Smyth the sum she mentioned, and say that I sent it her?—

You are a dear perverse girl, why then thus it is; I knew the good opinion you entertained of those people, therefore made the wife a trifling present in your name, not to make the husband jealous; and this is the mighty affair.

You know not Mr. Belville, how highly I should rate your benevolence, were it not tinctured with dissimulation: to remove the odium from you, I will this instant acquaint the good woman with the truth; she was going, had I not detained her by force.

By heavens you hate me, Madam, (with a warmth that surprized her.) Is it a proof of hatred, Sir, to wish the merit of so laudable an action, should entirely revert to yourself; who should wear the crown of virtue, but he who laboured to gain it?

Were I George Fenwick, Miss Melvern;—and what then Sir, (with quickness)—you would sometimes treat me, not unkindly: why do you make it your pleasure to give me pain?

And why, Mr. Belville, do you make it your pleasure to perplex, and disconcert me?

Because I think better of you than you deserve, proud spirits, Madam, are lively in their resentments.—

And meek ones, Sir, are not fit to cope with an artful world. The Mahometans, Madam, do not suppose female bodies invested with souls.

For which reason such a Casuist as Mr. Belville, supposes them to be endowed with a double portion of contradiction—I said I owed the sex no obligation.

Then how can you, Sir, expect they would receive any from you? There is a reciprocation of good offices in friendship; but why should you wonder our feeble minds should not steer uprightly, if the only faculty by which man is made superior to the brute is deny'd us.

There are some persons, Miss Melvern, who stumble, tho' they walk in open day.—You are a flatterer, Mr. Belville.

This however is a proof of my sincerity, snatching her to my heart—and this is a proof of mine, pushing me from her.—She wishing me more wisdom, and I wishing her more sensibility, I took my leave, as I shall of you, my dear Charles: I am ever and truly your's,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XLIV.

To the same.

L——.

HERE we are, after a tour of ten days, my friend Graham received me with that hospitable, that friendly regard, which is seldom to be found amongst the superior order of people; true politeness originates in the mind, such is the case of my friend Graham; had he been placed in the first class of life, his improved understanding would have given an eclat to it.

Tho' his life has been spent in commercial pursuits, yet I hardly know a person more acquainted with the Belle Lettres; my Harriot admires him, but her mind is so pure, is it to be wondered at that, she discovers in him a kindred soul?

Mr. Graham asked us, if we would regale ourselves with the pleasures of a country ball, where both sexes looked upon themselves, as a different order of beings, in proportion as their success in trade, had been greater than their neighbours.

Miss Melvern, in spite of our earnest entreaties, would not accompany us, whilst the tears streamed from her eyes, she told Lady Frances and myself, that if we knew her motives for declining it, we should cease to urge her; it was with the utmost reluctance however we gave up the point.

When we got to the ball, Mr. Graham and myself withdrew to a corner of the room, to make observations on the company. Said he, I know every character in the room, and the history of their ancestors back to the third generation.

I told him, such a nomenclator must be both entertaining and useful to society.—I ask'd him afterwards the reason, why our party were so much the objects of general observation, yet why the company in general seemed to avoid them—I can't help laughing at your ignorance, said he, tho' you have passed your life in the beau monde, you are totally unacquainted with the manner of conducting the very important assemblies of these small towns; I will let you into the whole secret.

You must know then, people here do not risk their reputation for decorum, amongst each other, by offering the least attention to strangers, till the sum total of their fortune is ascertained, when that is done satisfactorily, advances are made, a how d'ye is at length effected, and if the party proves very rich, why the friendship increases in proportion; in most parties all communication is cut off between the sexes.

Female conversation, tho' it be graced with all the flowers of wit, and all the beauties of taste, gains no credit amongst most of our men; a woman's fortune is the only

thing that can give her credit with our beaux, tho' her education will not enable her to sign her marriage articles.

That tall awkward figure, in the blue and gold, is looking out for a partner, observe if he does not fix at the gayest gown.—He stopt a moment, opposite to a pretty genteel woman; that won't do, said my friend, her father has not been long enough removed from a very mean part of the town, into one of the genteeler streets, to give her consequence; nor the next wont do, tho' she is a much finer woman, her fortune will be still less than the others,—no nor the next, for the very same reason.

In short, this neglected of the graces, made the tour of the circle before he could fix; at last he got into another groupe of ladies, where I imagined, from the elegant simplicity of their appearance, he would have found a partner worthy of him, but finding he did not I asked the reason.

A very substantial one, answered Graham, the father of one of them having acquired a tolerable fortune by his industry, and having an uncourtly propensity to pay his debts, he will not in the decline of life turn fine gentleman. Happy in the sphere of life, in which he has ever lived; he does not chuse to be ridiculed for acting out of it.

The situation of the next is nearly similar, when dress'd for the ball, she is obliged to come through her father's shop to the coach, which is to carry her there.

Surely, said I, that cannot prevent her from getting a partner, if she is of character, and in a place where every individual is the carver of their own fortune.

I find you know nothing of precedency, said he.—Don't you see yonder stiff piece of brocade, in close converse with another of her own assortment, whose eyes have a strong partiality for each other—observe they will neither of them want for partners.—The latter is of the very first rank; she is grand-daughter to an Alderman—niece to a Squire, and actually has ten thousand pounds.

Then, returned I, no Plebeian blood flows in her veins, this maid of quality must be entitled to respect, her ancestors cannot have been contaminated with low connections.

You shall hear—the Lady, for the gratification of her pride, would wish all her acquaintance had drank as deeply of the Lethean stream as herself, for then they would not remind her, that the first badge the Alderman ever received from his country, was that which porters usually wear.—And tho' he has long since ceased to affect his neighbours with the effluvia of his profession, was afterwards a vender of salt-fish.—And the 'Squire, till growing rich, he took a partner, amused himself with selling pins, needles, and threads; what I tell you is an absolute fact, and at this time they are all of them living, and men of unblemished character, are honourable and useful members of society; only the insolence of their offspring will sometimes bring upon the father the illiberal censures of little minds.

Here the minuets growing to a conclusion, Graham left me, saying, he had a scheme in his head to mortify those misses of fashion, and set all the room in a buz in a moment—away he went, whispering to all as he pass'd by.

Returning to me, he said he had done for 'em, I ask'd him how? why, said he, they have been asking me who the strangers were I brought with me—Bless me, cry'd I, don't you know? why that gentleman is the great Mr. Fenwick, who made so much noise last election, and spent at least 20,000l. to gain his seat;—that Lady, all cover'd with diamonds, is his wife.—What real diamonds, said they all? bless us! Yes, yes; and those young ladies are their daughters; immense fortunes; and she on the right is Lady Frances Warwick, the celebrated wit, with a vast fortune at her own disposal; and you are (bowing) the accomplish'd Mr. Belville, who has made so much talk in the world, every person of fashion knows Mr. Belville; an estate of 5000l. per ann. son of a Baronet, and heir to the Earldom of —— C——.

I had but just time to tell him he was a mischievous D—l, when the master of the ceremonies, accosting us, beg'd I would honour their assembly by dancing a minuet; I bow'd my assent; he presented me with the hand of the identical Lady before-mentioned, whose translucent blood flow'd from the body corporate, and we burlesqued a minuet together. The fortune hunter, as before described, took out Lady Frances, whose eye, I saw, took in the whole man at once, and now her quality was known, she gain'd consequence every where.—Next Kitty was taken out by the laced beau, who wanted no monitor to inform him of his importance.

You must observe, says Graham, that every rule of decorum here is violated, respect is shewn to persons not on account of their rank, or as they are strangers, but he who has most money, or most assurance, claims a prerogative, family or merit, will not dispute.

A stupid uniformity reign'd throughout the whole entertainment; they seem'd to shun each other as much as they did strangers, lest their dignity should be degraded by familiarizing themselves with those whose fortunes were not on a line with their own.

My fair partner, Miss Stubble, seem'd much flatter'd by my assiduities, as I hung over her (not “enamoured”) whilst she made tea, well knowing what conversation would be pleasing to a fine lady somewhat past her bloom; she affected a supercilliousness to all around her, which became her infinity more than the affected politeness with which she addressed me.

Lady Frances and her beau, began the country dances; my charmer sat expecting every moment when I should offer her my hand, but I determined to disappoint her.

Seeing several pretty girls together totally neglected by the men, Graham told me they seldom danced, though they were really descended from an ancient family, but their father, who was a man of universal benevolence, left them little more than his virtues for

their dower, and they had been much censur'd for appearing at balls amongst people of fortune.

I chose the youngest; her physiognomy pleasing me best, tho' she more than once declined the honour, as she call'd it, of dancing with me—We stood the last couple: as we went up the dance, I was delighted to find my choice had excited the envy of the cats, yet pain'd at the sarcasms thrown out against my fair partner.

Law! some folks are in luck, cry'd one, but see what a sack she has on, I'll swear I have seen her in it these three years—Such trumpery, exclaimed another, tossing up her head. Upon this I took occasion to inspect the dress of the envied Fanny Moreton, and as far as I could judge of things of this nature, it was consistent with the most perfect neatness, and exact propriety; it express'd more taste than magnificence; its surface was neither emboss'd with sunflowers nor pionies, like those of many present.

I kept up a great sprightliness through the dance, for which I was rewarded with the condescending smiles of the greater part of the company; the amiable Miss Stubble look'd petrified with indignation that I should cease to do homage to her charms.

You have wrought a miracle to night whisper'd Graham, all distinction seems to be at an end; don't you see gold and silver silks, in contact with tissues and brocades, and tabbies and ducapes with down right lustrings—point lace, with brussels and mechlin with simple edging?—The conclusion of the dance broke off our conversation, and soon after we returned to our respective habitations.

What a pity is it, Bothwell, people will set up for their own panegyrists, and disgrace themselves by assuming a consequence, to which they have no claim! what the duce have they to do with precedency, where all are equally entitled to expect it.

Why is this woman to have more dignity than that? Because from avarice, or a peculiar turn of fortune in his favour, her father was enabled to keep a country-house, whilst the other was forced to be content with a lodging in a garden of yew Trees, within sight of the smoke of his own city.

I know no character more entitled to respect than an English merchant, who acts uprightly within his own sphere—But

Lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber upwards turns his face;
But when he once attains the upmost round
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend.

Thus I have often observed it happens amongst people uneducated, they have no sooner enriched themselves than they despise the means, by which their wealth was

obtained, and look down with a contemptuous eye on all those, who are mounting the very hill, which they with much toil and difficulty have at length ascended.

Adieu,

BELVILLE.

Copyright Chawton House Library

LETTER XLV.

Miss MELVERN, to Miss AIRSBY.

Elmwood.

ALAS, my Sophia! I have brought back to Elmwood, that devouring chagrin with which I left it; tho' nothing was left unattempted by Lady Frances, or by Mr. Belville to remove it.—I leave you to guess how much it is increased, by the following billet from Mr. George Fenwick.

BILLET.

Dear Madam,

“If I had not loved you better than any woman I ever saw in my life, I should not have troubled you with this: now if you are the kind, good-hearted girl I have ever thought you, you will permit me to call on you to-morrow at eleven o'clock; I expect you will not disappoint my hopes, as the happiness of my life depends upon it.

Your's ever,
FENWICK.”

After mature deliberation, I thought it best to receive his visit, when I was prepared for it.

He was true to his appointment, his first address was free, but the coldness of mine corrected him.

I am not a man of many words, said he,—I love you, you seem to have but few friends; I wish you to look upon me as your only one,—I cannot live without you.—You shall live with me, in every respect, as if you were my wife; you shall share my fortune with me, in time perhaps my family may be reconciled.

I was not much surprised at a speech so characteristic of its author; I told him he greatly over-rated my merits, and that the honour to which he would raise me, greatly exceeded my humble views, that it was a station I could never fill with satisfaction to him, or credit to myself.

O my angel, exclaimed he, you would adorn any sphere in life.—The more unfit for that, Sir, to which you would raise me; tho' poor, and without friends, as you just observed, I am content with my situation; dress, equipage, and honours, cannot give peace to the guilty breast; heaven has lavished bounties upon you, be thankful for it, nor direct them to purposes, which shall bring down its severest vengeance upon you; look round upon your fellow-creatures, and you will find proper objects on whom to bestow your fortune; these, Sir, are my sentiments, and I was going—but he seized my hands.

By heavens, Madam, you stir not, I will not be refused, were not Belville in the case might I not hope?

I told him he was wrong to suppose Mr. Belville was the least bar to his wishes.

Take care Miss Melvern, if you sport with my passion, the consequences may be fatal.

I assur'd him, I said nothing but the truth.

Looking wildly upon me, you must, you shall consent, 'tis in your power alone to teach me what is right; promise me but——terrified at his looks, I said I would promise would he but permit me to retire—What will you promise returned he with quickness?

To lay your proposals, Sir, before some of my best friends;—are they such as I can depend on Miss Melvern?

I told him they were not less his friends than mine, if they consented I had done; if not, he must not take it ill if we never met again.

Here he fell into a rhapsody of most extatic nonsense, entreating to know who they were, that on his knees, he might solicit their consent.

What say you, Sir, to Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick, and their amiable daughters.

Now the flame burst out, he vowed revenge, I trembled for the consequences. Recovering a little, I ask'd him, who had most cause to seek revenge, the injured or injurer? is this the cause, Sir, in which your noble nature would exert its friendship for me, O shame, shame! do not you blush to take this unmanly advantage over a distressed, helpless woman?

Only pardon what is past Miss Melvern, I will marry you to-morrow, by heaven I will.

The fairest promises, Sir, cannot subdue an ungrateful nature, she that was thought fit for your mistress, declares herself unworthy to be your wife.

Then thus I seize my treasure, catching hold of me——I called for Mrs. Barnes, who I had desired to stay in the next room, till our conference was over.——She entered followed by Mr. Belville.——His stern looks so terrified me, that I sunk almost breathless into a chair.

Fenwick told him, that since he was become a spy upon his actions, he demanded satisfaction for the insult.

Mr. Belville reply'd, that he was not a man to be intimidated, by menaces; that he was ready to give it him; and giving me a look of ineffable contempt—was going—but returned—

I see, said Fenwick, you have made me your dupe, yet refuse to give me satisfaction.

I fancy, Sir, reply'd the other; the subject in dispute is not worth a quarrel, but in defence of my honour you will never find me backward.

You dare not meet me, Belville, on terms of honour.—It shall be proved, however, said he, come on Sir—they both were going.

I sprung from my seat, I seized Mr. Fenwick by the arm—subdued by terror I sunk at his feet—he tore himself from my grasp—they left the room.

I continued in a state of distraction for more than two hours; when Mr. Belville returned: the extremes of joy, may prove as fatal in its consequences as those of sorrow; to see Mr. Belville again, and to all appearance unhurt, quite overpowered me: when he said he and his cousin were friends again, I could not speak, Mrs. Barnes informed him of all that had happened, concealing, as I had pre-advised her, Mr. Fenwick's first proposal, lest the insult offered me might be attended with dangerous consequences.

Mr. Belville's tenderness now was as distressing to me, as his anger had been; he severely condemned himself for his impetuosity, and said his great regard for me only could entitle him to my forgiveness.

He added that having found a letter in Fenwick's apartment from me, intimating an appointment, strange forebodings had possess'd his soul.

I know not what I said, or what I did, but his pity, his contrition, fixt his empire more firmly in my heart.

If you cannot love, at least pity your

H. MELVERN.

P.S. This moment brings me a letter from Mr. Fenwick, he has left the Hall, he makes an honourable offer of himself, and hopes his future behaviour, will entitle him to my friendship.—I thought to have sent you the substance of the quarrel between Mr. Belville and his cousin, but time will not permit.

END *of the* FIRST VOLUME.

THE
SUSPICIOUS LOVERS:
A NOVEL.

In THREE VOLUMES.

By the Author of WOODBURY.

VOL. II.

Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes;
The canker galls the infants of the Spring,
Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd;
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.

SHAKESPEARE.

LONDON:

Printed for J. WILKIE, *St. Paul's Church-Yard*; and
E. and C. DILLY, in the *Poultry*.

MDCCLXXVII.

LETTER I.

Miss AIRSBY to Miss MELVERN.

I Protest, Harriot, I would not fall in love, tho' the tempter were a Belville—What proud high spirited passionate fellows are the very best of these men creatures; they are enough to terrify poor honest girls out of their senses: knowing them as you do, are you not ashamed to let them bluster you out of your's?

Why child, the most perfect of them know nothing of the passion of love! for instead of making it a commerce of sentiment, they treat it only as a traffic of words; they do not study to improve themselves in the art of love, but to inspire others with it; and I am afraid that to you soft silly souls the task is not difficult.

When I fall in love it must be with some rational creature; the counterpart of my father, who is not one of your blusterers; his violence never breaks my mother's heart, in order to exhaust his tenderness to heal it.

Were I a painter, I would sketch out a picture of love—the back ground should be chaos; you and Belville might sit for principal figures, throwing flowers and herbs at each other; such as *bleeding hearts, love in a maze, wormwood, thyme and rue*, but no *heart's ease*—Its drapery shall be drawn by the pencil of contradiction, and colour'd with the ink of jealousy.

Adieu; love me as I am honest, and believe me ever your's. Leland, for the first time, has made his appearance in the country since your dismissal of him—I won't tell you what he said, but this, that he would give the world to learn your address; without your permission he shall not know it, from

SOPHIA AIRSBY.

LETTER II.

Edmund BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

THERE is Charles——

Dans le Coeur de l'homme un generation perpetuelle de passions, enforte que la ruine de l'une, est Presque toujours l'establissement de l'autre.

No sooner is one doubt suppress'd than another rises; no sooner does one hope dawn than it is obscur'd; what a state of perplexity have I liv'd in since I wrote last!

On Tuesday evening Lady Frances drank tea with us; Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick were from home; Miss Melvern, Kitty, and I had dragged hither by force.

In the course of the conversation her Ladyship rallied me, that I still continued to lead a single life, though so general an admirer of the sex; partly for that reason, I told her, for the eye that was always roving could fix at no central point.

I am very nice, said I, in the choice of a wife. Were chance to introduce me to a young Lady of more than common endowments, looking round, as your Ladyship, or

Miss Melvern, I would not marry her, if the character of her parents were not indisputable.

You are very nice, indeed, said her Ladyship, but all rules are liable to exceptions.

If she could procure any that would stand the test. I beg'd she would, for I was ever open to conviction; I ask'd Harriot if she was not of my opinion, and if she were a man, and not of loose principles, would she like to marry a woman whose parents were of doubtful character, or whose mother's was mark'd with indelible indiscretions? for girls being more immediately brought up under the mother's eye, naturally contract their manner, whether bad or good.

She look'd rather embarrassed, yet entirely conceded to my sentiments, and beg'd to hear her Ladyship's defence.

The instance in question, said she, is of a daughter, who ought to be adored for the very vices of the mother. Some time before I left London a circumstance happen'd which became the general subject of conversation—a Lady of family, but without fortune, had married a country gentlemen with a very good one, who was so enamour'd with her beauty as to give up the reins of domestic government entirely into her hands; she was a woman who loved pleasure, and gave into every fashionable excess; at length his estate was mortgaged past redemption, she banish'd his children from his house, too late he repented of his folly, and died of a broken heart.

A relation dying just before, left his daughter an independent fortune; the mother hearing of this, recalled her daughter, treated her with every tender mark of affection, and readily consented to her marriage with the son of a Baronet, to whom she had been long attached; just before the marriage the mother performed a master stroke; she affected an entire reformation of conduct, which made the other forget she had ever behaved with unkindness to her.

The mother had privately married a footman, and he not chusing to be responsible for her debts, with the assistance of an infamous attorney, laid a scheme to get possession of the whole fortune; they drew up bills upon her bankers for very large sums of money, but how to make her sign them was the difficulty; at length the abandon'd mother, was to have recourse to a sick bed, several of their friends in iniquity, to whom large sums had been lost at play, were to represent officers of justice, the whole house was thrown into disorder, the daughter was sent for from the country to embrace a dying mother, when she beheld, as she supposed, men going to drag her mother from her dying bed to a prison, her tender nature was at once subdu'd; ignorant of the villainies of mankind, she sign'd the notes without knowing what she did, which dispossess'd her of the greater part of her fortune, and tho' every means was taken afterwards to preserve it, the plunderers had fled with their booty.

And what became of the young lady? said Kitty, I doat upon her; don't you Harriot?

With concern, during Lady Frances's conversation, I observ'd Miss Melvern look'd ill; by degrees she grew more so, and after a few struggles, she became to all appearance a corpse.

I could not disguise my feeling, my soul was in agony; our attempts to recover her were in vain. 'till Dr. Warren's arrival, he soon brought her to life, but it was a long time before she recover'd her reason; she talk'd incoherently, frequently calling on the name

of Leland; when she grew better, I left her in the hands of the ladies, the Doctor advising she should try to rest.

When Lady Frances returned to me, she found me in a dreadful state of dejection—I see, said she, art cannot conceal, where nature pleads—This love assumes an infinity of shapes, there is but one can hold its empire over our hearts, where the motive is virtue, and the end happiness.

Belville, you love, I both honour and pity you.—I could only bow my reply; her coach drawing up, we parted.

Adieu, BELVILLE.

Copyright Chawton House Library

LETTER III.

To the same.

Fenwick Hall.

BOTHWELL, how complicated, how permanent are human miseries! our joys how few and transient? Hope, with her flattering images, can no more deceive my senses; I have lost my Harriot; she is dead to me! so is all the world besides.—Her virtues were the ties that bound me to her—Yet I lose her—Insupportable thought!

What a treasure have I lost!—how refin'd were her sentiments, how superior her talents, such as nature seldom bestows on handsome women;—a modest grace gave dignity to every feature; her fine eyes were the depositories of tenderest sensibility.—Whatever she said, whatever she did, indicated a gentleness of mind within; whoever paid her a compliment, my heart approv'd and thank'd them for it;—if she bestowed an alms on a beggar, I wish'd to become the object of her bounty to be distinguished by her pity.—Tho' her conversation delighted all around her, yet even her silence was dear to me—and if she glanced but a kind look towards me, I said to myself, her friendship for thee, Belville, is of a superior kind; and the next moment my heart would tell me I deceived myself—Then again would I exclaim, should all mankind become thy slaves, they cannot love thee with half the purity of thy Edmund; they will love thee but for those charms which a few fleeting moments will destroy: but I will love thee for the beauties of thy mind, they are impress'd on my soul, they have taught me all I know of good: then take to thy protection the work of thine own hands.—I cannot proceed.—

Farewell,

BELVILLE.

LETTER IV.

To the same in continuation.

Fenwick-Hall.

I Had conquer'd all my scruples, and intended to lay open the situation of my heart to her who alone possess'd it. I went to Elmwood for the purpose—Miss Melvern was from home—The next day she and Lady Frances were to dine with us.

I was walking in the garden, waiting their arrival, when company was announced, (Mr. Martin and his family, with some friends of their's;) tho' this *contre tems* was not agreeable, yet I behaved towards them with civility.

Soon after, seeing Lady Frances's carriage arrive, I stept out to receive her, Miss Melvern was with her, I told them I had some rational creatures to present to them—I am glad on't, said her Ladyship, but I am sure they can't be men—Harriot smiled—I led them to the garden—Ah! Mr. Belville, exclaimed Miss Melvern, what have you done? let me retire. I cannot see Mr. Leland. The gentleman hearing his name pronounced, advanced to meet her, looking as if doubtful of her person—Heavens! said he at length, it is my Miss Melvern; joy kindling in his eyes—she was pale and trembling; he took her hand and press'd it to his lips.

My tenderness caught the alarm, and the name of Leland struck through my heart, I remember'd it was the same she called on in her delirium—An embarrassing silence ensued; at length he began to express his joy at finding her, to which she made no reply; a summons to dinner broke off the interview, and Miss Melvern entreated Kitty to make her excuse for not appearing at table.—I went out to try my influence; I found her in tears; I could only ask her if Mr. Leland was an accepted lover?

She would not answer my question—only beg'd I would return to company—I obey'd, and Mr. Leland told me I could not be sensible of the obligations I had laid him under for introducing me to Miss Melvern; that I had rais'd him from the most abject state of despair, to a life of hope.

This was no cordial to spirits depressed as mine; and what I suffer'd during dinner is not to be described.

When it was over, Miss Melvern not appearing, he beg'd leave to be introduced to her; Kitty took upon her the office: he no sooner saw her, than throwing himself at her feet, and wrapping his arms about her, he poured forth the excess of his joy; entreated her forgiveness for what was past, and solicited her returning love; you once appointed a Wednesday to make me the happiest of mankind; let to-morrow then be witness that I am dear as ever to you.

Here Kitty, not being able to refrain from tears, left the room; tho' Miss Melvern did her utmost to retain her.

It was an hour and a half before the lovers made their appearance.—May heaven be ever bountiful in his blessings to you Miss Melvern, said I, as I pass'd by her, going into the garden, why this dejection when all is happiness before you? Pardon me, that I did not immediately recollect Mr. Leland was the gentleman I saw you with in London—she only sigh'd.

Lady Frances soon joined me, I have suffered too severely myself Mr. Belville, said she, from disappointed love, not to feel for you; you will wonder when I tell you, I was the unfortunate cause of Miss Melvern's late illness, you may remember the story I related of an abandoned mother, that mother was her's, and she the wretched daughter: Mr. Leland's friend has given us many interesting particulars.

I heard her Ladyship indeed, and that was all, the name of Leland perplexed me, I recollected it at length to be the same one I once overheard in a dialogue between two friends on my road hither, of which I sent you a particular account.

I told Lady Frances of it, she was too generous to prescribe rules for a disease she saw was past a cure.

I beg'd her to see Miss Melvern, to plead for me, to tell her my only hope was to have been the tender soother of her every care.—And then, correcting myself, I entreated she would not mention me; that from Leland's own lips I had heard how tenderly he was beloved, till he lost her heart by his folly, and which I was well convinced he would now recover.

We went into the house; all had been full of commotion, and wonder there, Mr. Leland and the company were gone—Kitty was lively in her censures of Leland, and wished him hang'd.

I reproved her for wishing ill to any one, whom Miss Melvern distinguished.

Fine talking, said she, I am sure Harriot loves him, tho' she cannot readily forgive him, when they are married I believe you will think otherwise.

I beg'd her not to mention that hour if she would not hasten my destruction, and striking my forehead with a violence of which I was not aware, a stream of blood instantly gushed from my nose.—

Kitty concluding I had killed myself, flew out of the room; and in a moment after returned with Miss Melvern; their countenances strongly marked with horror.

Ah Mr. Belville, cry'd the former, what have you done, relieve my fears—Not that, said I, which would have given a period to the pangs of disappointment. I assured her it was only a trifling accident, that her solicitude, her kind anxiety, would soon effect a cure.—I held out my hand to court her's, she did not refuse it me, I pressed it to my bosom.

The secret my dear Madam, said I, you have so long endeavoured to conceal from me, is at length disclosed, may Mr. Leland restore that peace to your bosom, your tenderness for him claims,—when a second day is appointed to put him in possession of this dear hand—remember Belville.

She rushed out of the room; a sigh escaped her, which took refuge in my bosom.

When I enquired for her, I found she was gone to Elmwood.—To meet Leland, said I to myself, where she can enjoy his loved society without interruption.

Under pretence of writing, I withdrew to my apartment, where I have passed a terrible night.

* * * * *

There are certain weaknesses in the human heart, that sometimes require more difficulty to conquer than the strongest passions.

I could not withhold myself from visiting Elmwood this morning, tho' I knew my presence would be unwelcome there; hearing Mr. Leland had two hours advantage of me, I returned—returned, to doubt no more.

Charles, I find something strangely amiss in me I cannot conquer—my present feelings are too poignant to attend to the admonitions of reason, to talk of philosophy in the first attacks of grief, were madness—nature must have way—the soothing of friendship will be grateful to a wounded mind.

Have I not lost a Harriot Melvern?—Farewell,

BELVILLE.

LETTER V.

Miss MELVERN, to Miss AIRSBY.

Elmwood.

AGAIN I write, tho' my letter * of yesterday morning informed you of the strange events which have lately come to pass; however censurable my conduct may appear to my friends here, now the discovery is made I cannot reproach myself, that I kept my mother's unhappy conduct a secret; it has however lost me Mr. Belville's friendship, tho' I have regained a lover in Mr. Leland, his contrition comes too late, I can resolve to be miserable, but never to unite my fate with his.

To-morrow I shall once more become an adventurer in the world; Mrs. Barnes will accompany me to London, when you shall hear more from

HARRIOT MELVERN.

LETTER VI.

Charles BOTHWELL, Esq; to Mr.
BELVILLE.

PITY you my friend, you should command my heart, could it make you happy.

My bosom has long felt all the pangs of disappointed passion; tho' I have never disclosed the secret of it to you—I have loved, and that with all the ardency of which a susceptible soul is capable.

Our misfortunes arise from different causes, however similar may be the effects. A pre-engagement annihilates your hopes, a perfidious woman, mine.

Do not look on this concealment of my passion, as a breach of friendship, when chance first introduced me to you at Vienna, I was but just beginning to recover of a disease which for many months had been declared past a cure—a change of climate restored me in some measure to health, but my peace of mind is gone for ever.

If I had not once been deceived by a woman, I would venture to affirm, you are the Lord of Harriot's heart.—When you meet, do not use her unkindly, she has a lively and tender soul; whatever may be its sentiments respecting you, it deserves delicate and generous treatment.—I will prescribe for you—no I will not—let prudence guide your feelings.

Adieu, BOTHWELL.

* This letter does not appear.

LETTER VI.

Mr. BELVILLE, to Charles BOTHWELL, Esq.

Fenwick-Hall.

HOW dearly, when under affliction, do we love those who adopt our sentiments.

But do you not deceive me Charles, when you say that I am Lord of Harriot's heart? Doctor Warren was with me, when your letter arrived; for the people here will persuade me, I have been very ill; and being not of the most flexible temper when oppos'd—I was not easily governed—the Doctor was denouncing some of his physical threats, feeling my pulse with one hand, while in the other he held a black phial of some vile nostrum; I had no sooner glanced my eyes over the latter, than up I started, dashed the Spartan broth from his hand, and looking stedfastly upon him, told him I was not a child in leading strings to be governed by promises, or terrified by threats; that I was capable to act for myself.

My friend tells me I am Lord of Harriot's heart, that was the medicine I wanted; he smilingly said, he thought he never saw my senses more disordered than at that moment.

I told him, I was however thankful I could distinguish right from wrong; that Bothwell had said I was Lord of Harriot's heart; and I was well convinced she was Queen of my soul; and that he was a Doctor of physick.

If you go on at this rate, answered he, I suppose my next visit must be to pay my congratulations to Mrs. Belville.—This reply put an end to my deliberations.

Perhaps whilst I write, Leland is pouring forth the tender effusions of his bosom before her—distracting thought!—when I heard of her last he was with her.

Will she not pay a short tribute of regard to my memory? must all my fond affection for her end thus? must she never know that I the unhappiest of men, was the faithfullest of lovers?

Adieu, BELVILLE.

P.S. Bothwell—she is gone—Elmwood no longer contains the idol of my affections—yes, she is gone, and with her—but I can write no more.

LETTER VII.

Lady F. WARWICK, to Mr. BELVILLE.

Brooklands.

OBSERVATION must have confirmed Mr. Belville's opinion, that there are few women educated in the modern mode, who will not readily disregard every act of propriety when she had a folly or caprice to gratify. In this case Lady Frances Warwick having forfeited her claim, does not wish to appear before Mr. Belville under a character to which she has no pretensions; but as a woman, subject to all her sex's weaknesses; as the following circumstance must fully evince.

Men of the world, will not be surprized that fine ladies do not square their actions by philosophical rules, as the extravagant purchase she had made of a little Canary-bird, will justify.

Now as the vendor informed her, the little creature, with attention, might be made useful in a double capacity, might talk as well as sing, as it is very young, its voice may be modulated to any touch of harmony—from the softest notes of love, to the most animated sounds of joy!

If Mr. Belville, whose merits both as musician and linguist, are well known, will take upon himself the trouble, to give it a few lessons, he must think himself recompensed for his pains, if in time it should be able to say, *I love you.*

To-morrow morning, health permitting, Lady Frances Warwick would be glad Mr. Belville's first lecture should be held, at Brooklands.

LETTER VIII.

Edmund BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

Fenwick-Hall.

My dear Charles!
WHAT whimsical contrarieties compose a woman's mind, and by what easy and almost imperceptible gradations do they steal into our souls?

A sensible woman has a thousand ways to charm, tho' her complexion has lost its bloom, and time hath dimmed the lustre of her eyes. I do not mean to insinuate that this is Lady Frances Warwick's case.

Tho' she has beauty still to captivate, she can pity the sorrowing heart; she laments my situation, and agreeably tries to divert my melancholy; she appoints me preceptor to her Canary-bird: such trifling, my friend, cannot chase a rooted anguish from my bosom.

Yet I will endeavour to struggle against it.

* * * * *

In CONTINUATION.

I have seen Lady Frances's Canary-bird.
—As I had not met her Ladyship since the day on which my misfortunes commenced, I was a good deal affected, her concern increased at it. She thanked me for my ready compliance with her humour, and said she only wished to divert me from a melancholy, which if indulged, might be attended with the most fatal consequences; her fine eyes testifying the feelings of her heart: I asked her, if she, who could approve and distinguish merit should wonder at my attachment to it?

I won't be flattered Belville, interrupting me, I have taken your case into serious consideration, and if my friendship can any ways contribute to your happiness you may command it. Some days ago I waited upon Miss Melvern before she quitted Elmwood; I may be guilty of an indiscretion, in informing you of what pass'd between us, my dependence is upon your silence.

Too much agitated to suffer her to proceed, I asked a thousand questions before she could answer one; positively Belville, said she, if you do not confine your extacies within the limits of discretion I am silent—at length she proceeded.

I found Miss Melvern in a most pitiable state of dejection, I was surpriz'd, as Mr. Leland had but just quitted her.

Ah my dear Madam, grasping her hands; you distract me. Pry'thee Belville don't be so teizing, another interruption and I am dumb. My reason felt her reproof, my eyes look'd their submission.

She continued—when my soothings had in some measure raised her spirits; in all the confidence of friendship she told me every circumstance of her life.

Tell me then my dear Lady, did she mention me? Did she pity those sufferings she cannot remove?

Good morning to you Mr. Belville, (rising) I find your disease incurable, and re-seating herself, a smile passed over her lips.

I told you Miss Melvern acquainted me with every secret of her heart; one material circumstance is, she will never marry Leland.—

Bothwell, here my vows of taciturnity dissolved in air.—I fell at her feet, thou dear harbinger of peace! exclaimed I, say again that Harriot Melvern will never marry Leland, and my grateful heart——

Pshaw, interrupted she, that is true however, but it does not follow, she will accept of *you*.

I have vanity Lady Frances, were she to suffer me to improve the regard I flattered myself she entertained for me; previous to Leland's renewing his addresses to her—who knows?

You are so eager Mr. Belville to come to the *denouement*, that you won't let me tell half my story; I will punish you for it, for you have not once asked after my Canary-bird, which was the principal cause of procuring you this visit.

Who is the trifler now, answered I? only tell me, do you think Miss Melvern, when I know where to find her, will refuse to admit me to her presence? My mind once at ease, the instruction of your Canary-bird shall become one of my choicest pleasure; I will teach it to warble such plaintive sounds, that even your heart shall catch the soft contagion.

Let us try the experiment then in my dressing-room, said she, I led her to it,—entering she exclaimed the bird was flown, she began singing “sweet little foolish fluttering thing.”

The harmony of her voice drew it from her closet, slow, and pensive its motion—I became annihilated before it, the undulating flutter of its wings proclaimed its agitation, it drop'd upon a chair—the action recovered me—I flew to it—I could not speak.

Lady Frances beg'd me to be gentle in my admonitions, and treat her favourite, not with the severity of a master, but the tenderness of a friend—said that its name was Harriot—and withdrew.—

O Bothwell, who shall paint the tumult of my bosom, or depict the astonishment of my sweet friend, who as little expected to see me, as I did her.

Her coldness, her reserve, chilled my transport.—In a few words I informed her my passion for her commenced, the first moment I saw her, which her charming behaviour had hourly increased; that her want of confidence in me, had imposed silence on my lips, spite of my impatience to tell her all I felt.

She thanked me for the favourable sentiments I was pleased to entertain of her; but said in her present situation she was by no means capable of doing justice to them.

I told her, tho' it were in her power to withhold happiness from me, she could not command me not to love her, and that those tears I saw collecting in her eye, I flattered myself, were the harbingers of a sympathetic feeling.—Honour and justice, said she, Mr. Belville, command I should be explicit—I will not deceive you, were it possible my heart could over-rate your generous intentions, it certainly does, tho' many concurring circumstances prevent my acknowledging them, in the manner you wish;—after this declaration, I must entreat that all your solicitations end.

I asked her if it was any irregularity in my conduct, that forbade her to unite her fate with mine, or if Mr. Leland still continued to possess her heart? that however I might be his inferior in every other respect; in my tender regard for her, I could know no superior.—

As to Leland, she said, her determination was fixt never to be his, before she received my visits at Elmwood.

I then told her in what manner I came to the knowledge of her history, at the inn, little imagining the injured mistress of Leland, could be the idol of my affections.

Then you know my unhappy story Sir.—Only to raise my admiration of your virtues, my dearest friend, said I, and hope a time will come, when in me you will behold every tender friend in one.

Never, never, said she; it shall not be said, that my indigence took advantage of your partiality to draw you in, to do an act unworthy of you—I never can be your's.—She burst into tears and quitted the room.

I did not offer to detain her.—A few minutes after, I had a summons from Lady Frances to attend her in the next apartment, Miss Melvern was with her.

Said her Ladyship, I did not think you would have been so hard a taskmaster Belville, as to have reduced your scholar to tears the first lesson.—But good heavens! looking upon me, what a dolorous countenance have we here! I believe I shall have reason to chide you both.—Sit you down on that sofa, and we will place our scholar in the middle.

Come Harriot, continued her Ladyship, tell me the whole affair, if the task your master has enjoined you be too hard, I will entreat that a part of it be remitted, and let us make this day, a holiday.

What I enjoined Miss Melvern, Madam, said I, I am much pain'd to find is a task.—The favour which comes not voluntary, is a restraint—I commanded this Lady's love, where I ought only to have solicited her friendship.

Come, come, interrupted she, I see you are both children, playing at cross-purposes, I have lived some years in the world longer than either of you, at a very early period in life, I became my own mistress; I was much flattered, I was fond of power; my happiness was the purchase of it.—I do not touch on this subject but to warn my Harriot, not to take advantage of her's—to trifle with the felicity of a man I know she prefers to all the world.—You were formed for each other. I guess her present struggles are those, which naturally arise in a delicate mind.—The misfortunes in her family having sunk her in her own esteem, she would not wish the man who is dear to her, should be dishonoured by an alliance with her: these Mr. Belville are the sentiments which from time to time I have collected from Miss Melvern; you are to make what advantage of them you please.

I entreated Harriot to speak, her blushes raised my hopes, which her silence deny'd to confirm.

At length she said, she was never truly miserable till now.—Then I have done said I, heaven forbid I should wish to sound my happiness on the destruction of your's.

Whilst she endeavoured to undeceive me, the dignity of her soul irradiated every feature, the blush of modesty stole over her cheek, whilst the graces dwelt on her lips. Had a philosopher beheld her at that moment, he would have felt the extremes of two passions, admiration and love; in fine she wanted arguments to support her cause—at length she confessed—Ah, what did she not confess!—that I only sued for that which was not in her power to withhold from me.

I was grateful—a silence ensued, to me how eloquent—I am permitted to visit her again.

Bothwell, I am happy—and ever thine,

BELVILLE

LETTER IX.

Miss MELVERN, to Miss AIRSBY.

Brooklands.

What has been said, I ask my soul what done?
How flow'd our mirth, and whence the source begun?

THE streams of joy, or sorrow in the bosom of your Harriot, must have their source originate in Mr. Belville.

I was writing to you when Lady Frances Warwick did me the honour to look in upon me at Elmwood.—I had just settled every thing for my departure for London.—She said she wished to divert my melancholy, and insisted on my taking an airing with her.

Tho' my refusal was obstinate, I was forced to comply—Inattentive to surrounding objects, I knew not where I was till the coach stop'd at Brooklands.

Its hospitable mistress said, as I had often expressed a regard for her, I must not take amiss this piece of finesse, tho' her motive was selfish: she wished to have me all to herself; she would send to the good souls at the farm not to expect me; I told her of the impossibility of my stay, that I should quit the country in the morning; it was all to no purpose. She won upon my heart, by every tender mark of affection—I could not refuse her: it is a powerful relief my Sophy, to the aching bosom, to pour forth its griefs, into that of a sympathizing friend; such is Lady Frances: and the only reproach I ever received from her, was, that I had not yielded to her solicitations, and placed an earlier confidence in her.

I told her of every circumstance of my life, nor hesitated, till I came to that part which related to Mr. Belville, she perceived my agitation, if confirmed her suspicions.

After I had been with her several days, she said she would lay her life, that if Belville was to peep in upon us in one of our tete-a-tetes, he would say the subject of our

conversation was our lovers.—I am a very miserable woman, Harriot, my shew of happiness is forced.—I have loved, my heart bleeds for the consequences.

Here she was call'd out, and soon returned with Mr. Belville, but pale, dejected, and emaciated, from an illness they cruelly attribute to me; my feelings were not proof against the shock, such an alteration in him gave me; it served but to increase his power over me.

Tho' I never conducted myself so ill, yet he interpreted every thing in his favour—he urged how necessary I was to his happiness'—and I, the difference in our situations—he only coveted a heart all his own, he was pleased to say.—My silence proved it his.

I afterwards reproached myself for the apparent coldness with which I received his addresses: you will wonder when I tell you, the strength of my regard for him was the motive, and not a womanish littleness to shew the force of my power—He is generous in his friendships, and ardent in his love, I could not bear to take advantage of them to raise my own consequence.

The daughter of a footman, said I to myself, shall not abuse thy goodness—I afterwards told him so.

Adieu, he comes.

H. MELVERN.

LETTER X.
In Answer.

Broomhill.

I find, then, heroism in love, is to reject all you regard, and retain whatever you wish to reject.

What poor absurd creatures are women in love! a more formal creature would say, ditto of men, with this difference—the women are crocodiles, the men Proteus's, who can assume any character but that of a rational one; can roar like a lion—prate like a parrot—growl like a bear—and scratch like a kitten;—can fawn and cringe like a money, whilst he wounds you with the stings of a wasp—This moment like the war horse, noble, bold, and intrepid; the next like a mouse peeping out at holes and corners, to ensnare its prey, when poor puss is off guard.

Were men but honest, and women not perverse, the empire of Cupid would soon be dispeopled, its subjects would revolt, and enlist themselves under the banners of common sense.

Love ends when its intricacies cease to perplex: Hymen's sentence once pronounced, the whole christal fabrick of woman's happiness dissolves—and “leaves not a wreck behind.”

But after all, I believe 'tis necessary the sexes should guard a little against each other.

Eloquent language may proceed from the lips of an infidel—the willing heart of course believes;—therefore stratagem can only be oppos'd by stratagem.

Bless me, I think I hear you cry, you may rail at love who have never seen a Belville—True love, like the lily of the vale, is fond of concealment; but as the fragrance of the one occasions its discovery, as the concealment of the other, proves its reality.

Had you taken less pains to have concealed your sentiments from this grand inquisitor, he perhaps had been less anxious to have obtained the discovery.

So you have generously put an end to his probation; no more jealousies, no more doubts to alarm the glowing breast—all gentle submission you—all grateful rapture he—and thus ends the history.

Looking over Johnson's Dictionary, I do not find a satisfactory definition of the word *man*—were people to ask for mine—it should be this—WOMAN'S TORMENT! Adieu, S. AIRSBY.

LETTER XI.

Miss MELVERN, to Miss AIRSBY.

Brooklands.

YOUR last, is too saucy for me to animadvert upon.—I shall therefore proceed to tell you I bear reproof better than I should have done, had not adversity taught me patience; the proudest minds are ever subject to the greatest humiliations.

Yesterday my vanity receiv'd such a lecture as I trust I shall be the better for, for some time at least: To Mrs. Fenwick I am indebted for it.

Her appearance surpris'd me; she beg'd to see me alone; at my approach her eyes flashed fire; her address to me was rather abrupt.

Miss Melvern, you are not the young woman I took you for: I treated you with civility because I thought you would not abuse it; (I cursey'd) but since I find you are laying traps to catch young men, I must tell you you are a very worthless body.

You injure me, Madam, to suppose—

Hold your tongue, politely interrupted she, what is the use of all the learning in the world, if it won't make people honest? let me tell you, you are no match for my son, tho' you are a gentlewoman; gentility must soon come to rags, if there is nothing to keep it up—you shall never enter my doors again, Miss.

Permit me, Madam, notwithstanding your prohibition, to say something in my defence;—hitherto I am unconscious of intending any ill to you, or your family; false reports may have misled you.

People, Miss, harden'd in guilt, have all their wits about them; if you are not lost to all sense of shame, I can shew you that will make you blush.

I see, Madam, (quite provok'd) when under the influence of passion, you will never mislead an enemy by flattery.—Don't be pert, child, it does not become folks without a shilling to contradict people of fortune.

Madam, I do not blush to own I am poor; but innocence has a right to assert itself—If fortune has sported with my peace, I am under obligations to no man.

Don't lie, child, don't lie; when did you last receive a letter from my son?

Your son, Madam?—not immediately recollecting the very heroic epistle he sent me at Elmwood—My hesitation she took as an earnest of my guilt, and clasping her hands, exclaimed, when people have forfeited their veracity; what can one expect? but no wonder, I think your father is a footman.

True, Madam, but a delicate mind would endeavour to sooth the afflicted bosom with tenderness, not wound it by reproaches. My real father was a gentleman, and had he lived 'till now, would not have suffer'd the first woman in England to treat me with indignity; you, Madam, may not always be superior to calamity, severely as I have felt its rod, I dare look up to virtue as my friend.

People of your sort, said she, are always preaching up virtue, the better to conceal their crimes: Have not you, by your arts, endeavoured to debauch the principles of my son?

Perhaps, said I, with some warmth, if the fact were proved, the seduction might be found to arise from the opposite party.—Read the letter, said she, putting one into my hands. The means by which she obtained it I know not; it was from her son, and addressed to me—I will transcribe it, as it is some sort of justification of this enraged woman's conduct.

B I L L E T.

My dear Harriot!

The abrupt manner in which we were separated, could not make me forego the pleasure of entertaining you on a subject in which my heart is so much interested; your answer to my last was not as satisfactory as I had room to expect, which makes me comprehend you thought my proposals were inadequate to your merits—you know my person and fortune are at your command; therefore hasten to convince me that I am the happiest of me, as well as your affectionate

GEORGE FENWICK.

Was ever any thing my, dear Sophy, so provokingly absurd? I could easily have vindicated myself, had not Mrs. Fenwick previously declared she would not believe any thing I should say; however I ventured at last to tell her, all that had pass'd between her son and me; and that circumscribed as my situation was, I would not even accept of his hand, tho' the gift came authorized by her.

At length she seemed perplexed and confounded, and began to apologize for her warmth of temper, hoped I would forget what was past, and beg'd my pardon.

Mortified and provok'd as I was, I answer'd her with more asperity than I as aware of; I told her I should not be solicitous what sentiments she entertain'd of me, after she had so humbled me in my own opinion, for when once we had forfeited our self-esteem, we were seldom anxious to gain that of the world: My love for the amiable Kitty,

was the best stimulus to my forgiveness; an accommodation soon ensued, and before she went away, she gave me a very pressing invitation to the Hall.

She was no sooner gone, than I gave free vent to my tears—leaning my head on the elbow of a sofa, which I cover'd with my apron—I was calling my heart to a very severe account, for the licence it had taken in presuming to think it was, in its present state of mortification, an object worthy of a Belville's regard; when Lady Frances enter'd, and seating herself by me, began to condole with me.

I told her all that had past, and the reproaches I was making myself; that blinded by passion, I could suffer the man, whose honour was dearer to me than life, to do an action which must throw an irreparable shade over it, in the eyes of the world; no, Lady Frances, said I, Mr. Belville's fame shall not be stained by an alliance with the daughter of a footman—I will teach him to separate love from esteem, and will be content with the latter; to give him up entirely I cannot, but with life.

She kindly chid me, and said, self depreciation bordered so near upon vanity, that she could not bear to think I should be capable of it; beg'd me to dry up my tears, for that Mr. Belville was expected every minute.

I entreated her to say I was ill, gone out, or any thing, that I might avoid seeing him. She said she was glad to see me a little piqued; that as he had not kept his last appointment, she supposed I thought he had been detained by a pair of sparkling eyes.

I told her I had the reliance on his honour, that whatever engagements he might break with me, I never could entertain thoughts to his disadvantage; for the mind that once became the slave of suspicion, was unworthy Mr. Belville's regard—he is too noble—too generous—too good; I feel my own unworthiness; forbid it honour! forbid it love! that he should ever disgrace himself by an union, with such a poor destitute creature as I am—O Belville! tho' to preserve thy honour I can give thee up—yet never shall this bosom admit one thought which does not turn to thee; and I sigh'd as if my heart would have burst.

Heaven grant me life, cry'd Belville, to reward you for this tender declaration, (he had enter'd the room with Lady Frances, and seeing me in the situation above described, beckon'd her to take no notice of his being there) at the sound of his voice I shrieked aloud, and was thrown into the utmost agitations. He pressed my hands to his lips, as he had frequently done, whilst I related my little narrative, believing it to be Lady Frances, whom I severely reprov'd for the trick she had put upon me—Mr. Belville's tender soothings but encreas'd my confusion; I beg'd he would suffer me to retire.

I was not permitted;—No, said he, I cannot part with the bright day the first moment it ever dawn'd upon me.

Oh, my Sophy! 'tis not 'till after we have buffeted the billows of affliction, we can truly feel the gentle tides of happiness flowing in upon the soul.

I fear the latter never will be the case with my amiable benefactress; peace of mind is a blessing to which she is a stranger, in company she affected a sprightliness for which she dearly pays in her hours of retirement.—She weeps—I press her to know the cause—again she weeps—if she be miserable, with every blessing of fortune smiling around her, who shall dare be happy?

Adieu,

H. MELVERN.

LETTER XII.
EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

Fenwick-Hall.

BOTHWELL, my Harriot is all loveliness, she breathes the very soul of tenderness, her language is that of purity, of soft persuasion; coquetry is a vice unknown to her, her actions are directed by that impulsive modesty, which is ever sure to charm; what are the joys the sensualist can boast, compar'd with those chaste and refined delights resulting from a commerce of sentiment, of sensibility!—of virtue?

What infinite advantages has he, who strictly adheres to the laws of God, and man, over him who lives in open violation of them? tho' the punishment for breaking them were to terminate with life; the one will find a source of pleasure, in the approbation of heaven, which no reverse of fortune can destroy—divest the libertine a moment of his sensual delights and what a wretched being he becomes! to God he dares not look up for protection, for he renounced him in the days of his prosperity—nor to man, for neither promises, nor oaths were kept by him.—Perhaps he will expect to find it in the convivial glass; conscience will sometimes prevail over the powers of wine; it is a daring invader, it will obtrude itself into his most secret retirements; it will steal upon his senses, when music shall in vain exert her powers.

Virtue alone Charles can suppress the usurper, and he who will not embrace the counsels of wisdom, will pass his days in anguish of heart and bitterness of soul.

Adieu, BELVILLE.

LETTER XIII.
Miss AIRSBY to Miss MELVERN.

Broomhill.

I can prove Harriot, that all you true *lovers* are little better in your senses than maniacs, what a circumambulation you take to say no, when yes, yes, hangs at your tongue's end; and were you in your right senses you would put this impatient Belville out of doubt, and yourself out of pain; the next time of *asking*.

My principal motive for wishing it, is a selfish one, the severity of the approaching season reminds me of the honour I once enjoy'd, when I exercised the office of your almoner, and of your present incapacity of exerting that warm benevolence, which used to gladden every bosom it beamed upon.

I know the generous heart of Belville will joyfully indulge your's, in every humane gratification.

The poor widow Parker and her helpless daughters, (who have seen happier days) are reduced to the greatest distress, since your supporting bounty can no longer relieve them; there are many others who equally feel your loss.

I can only tell them to look forward to better days—poor consolation for the bosom which famine devours. I drop a tear, and silently withdraw myself from those miseries, I cannot redress; then I am tempted to repine at providence, and then I bless him for his contempt of riches; when he sent them amongst the Lelands.

Were my spirit ever permitted to inhabit another form, it should be that of Lady Frances Warwick. Tell her how much I am her debtor, her kindness to you, I cannot repay, tho' my heart is all gratitude for it.

Adieu,
SOPHY AIRSBY.

LETTER XIV.
To Miss AIRSBY, in Answer.

YOUR sarcasm on lovers has been a subject for much conversation, between Lady Frances and myself.

There is an artful insinuation in the characters of men of the world, that obliges our sex always to be upon the defensive.—Convinced as I am of Mr. Belville's attachment to me, yet the creature is not to be trusted with power.

Tho' to confess the truth upon examining my heart, I find there is not part in it, wherein he does not occupy a place, and spite myself, I *fear* I must accept him, *with all his faults*.

Since the receipts of your letter, some unexpected remittances have enabled me to send you the arrears I am in to my poor friends, and again I invest you with your former office as you desire, present twenty pounds of the inclosed bill to the poor widow, dispose of another twenty toward cloathing old men, ditto for old women, and the other forty as you shall think proper.

When you have executed my little commission don't inform me of the manner, for when you write I would have it be only of love, and Belville!—Whom you must blame if my letter is not of its usual length, endeavouring to chastise him, for presuming on my indulgence, I have strained my wrist, which makes my writing not legible.

Adieu, Belville esteems you; but he swears he can never love, but

HARRIOT MELVERN.

LETTER XV.
To Miss MELVERN, in Answer.

Broomhill.

“THE bountiful hand shall be blessed, for he giveth of his bread to the poor.” Cruel Harriot, to forbid my thanking you for the favours of your last.

I wish you could have seen the tears of grateful joy that fell as I distributed your unexpected bounty, through out the village.—I met with my share of pleasure, and praise too, for the good old Clerk said, I was the comeliest *Miss* in all the country—we love those who flatter us Harriot; but few of us are so candid as to say so.

I have been under much concern for the pain in your wrist, and as you rightly judged, with much difficulty decyphered your letter; Mr. Belville's behaviour must have been very extraordinary to merit such severe correction.—I do not wonder to hear he fills up every corner of your heart: another time I shall obey your injunctions, and only write of *love* and *Belville!*

Mr. Leland has paid a short visit at the Park, I saw him at church, he studiously avoided any conversation with me.—Report says he is going to be married, so Harriot Melvern be not the woman, it matters not to

SOPHIA AIRSBY

LETTER XVI.

Miss MELVERN, in Answer.

Brooklands.

IF there is any solution to your problem, send me some clue, by which I may find it out: without it, my judgment labours in vain; and if you swear the facts stated in it are irrefragable, I deny them.

By return of post send the letter you say I have written, to prove to me I am not out of my senses.

One hundred pounds to be divided amongst the poor,—every corner of my *heart* is *Belville's*—strained my wrist in correcting his presumption—circumstances all totally unknown to your

HARRIOT MELVERN.

LETTER XVII.

To the same.

Brooklands.

YOUR packet which was to have cleared up my doubts, arrived when Mr. Belville was present—I glanc'd it over, lost in confusion—take what followed in dialogue.

Scene, a saloon at Brooklands, the Dramatis Personae, Mr. Belville, lady Frances Warwick, Harriot Melvern.—(*Belville apart to Lady Frances Warwick, whilst Harriot reads.*)

If the eyes and heart be at unison Lady Frances, Miss Melvern's must be in a tumult. Observe the alternate passions how they dethrone each other.

Lady Frances. My life for it Belville, but a favour'd lover sues.

Belville. Dear Lady Frances, do not terrify me with false alarms, my vanity suggests to me, more favourable thoughts.

Lady Frances. Don't deceive yourself, a man in love never ask'd advice of reason.

(*Harriot rising in a passion,*)

Mr. Belville, answer me without hesitation what first brought sin into the world?

Belville. Woman's curiosity!

Harriot, gravely. You are now, Sir, to come upon your trial.

Belville. So your heart be my judge I yield myself your prisoner. (Bowing.)

Harriot. In a point so essential, the prisoner is not allowed to direct, Lady Frances, there stands the greatest of hypocrites.

Lady Frances. If we cannot find one to match him amongst our own sex, he shall be condemned without jury, and die without benefit of clergy.

Harriot. Of whom, Mr. Belville, did you learn the art of dissimulation?

Belville. From every fair face I have seen.

Harriot. Your crime is of such a nature, Sir—

Belville. Not exceeding the bounds of your clemency; I hope that my Harriot's tender partiality for her Belville!—

Harriot. Worse, and worse, Lady Frances, recommend submission to the prisoner.

Lady Frances. Read his indictment first, otherwise my partiality is strongly inclined in his favour.

(*Belville*, falling on his knees,)

As you are good to me, so may heaven crown all your wishes, in that great day, you shall pronounce the irrevocable, *I will!*

Lady Frances. Your good wishes procure your enlargement,—who waits there? take off the prisoner's chains.

Belville. I accept your pardon, but will part with my chains only with my life; Regulus's were not dearer to him.—

Harriot. Tho' forgery is death by the law, yet I remit your punishment to perpetual banishment: confess you are the author of this letter—or drag him to instant death.

Belville. O suffer mercy to soften justice—read my accusation.

Harriot. You must remember Lady Frances, I told you I had lost a letter of Miss Airsby's—the prisoner found it.

Belville. Liberty, liberty! a loss is no robbery, but where was it lost? from under your pillow? from off your toilet? or from—

Harriot, interrupting him. From neither, Sir, for then you could not have found it.

Belville. Take care, Madam, how you proceed, for I can bring an action against you, for false accusation.

Harriot. When an adversary's cause is bad, he has ever recourse to threats, instead of arguments—When you found my letter, what tempted you to read it?

Belville. Love!

Harriot. You do not deny the charge then—

Belville. I do not, if it be a crime I glory in it.

Lady Frances. Death for his presumption, Harriot!

Belville. If death is to be my doom, mount you the rostrum first, and pronounce my oration—and “when you my unlucky deeds relate, speak of me as one that lov’d not wisely, but too well!”

Harriot. Your vanity, Sir, needs no herald to proclaim it; you plead guilty to the charge of having found my letter, and wrote an answer to it, to Miss Airsby, to which you forged my name.

Belville. You are at liberty, Madam, to make use of *mine* on every occasion.

Harriot, blushing. You are departing from the subject, Sir; I find you understand the chicane of the law, no man can perplex an evidence more effectually: In the letter in question did you not send bank bills to be distributed, in my name, amongst some indigent people at Broomhill?

Belville. Were all mankind of my opinion, indigence should be unknown in this land of liberty and wealth; but the vanity of some, and the avarice of others, refuse the common supports of life to those who best deserve them. let Miss Airsby’s letter be read.

Harriot. You have it, Sir.

Belville. And will keep it ‘till I know what advantage will accrue to me from delivering it.

Lady Frances. Produce the letter, Belville, and Harriot shall read the whole correspondence aloud.

Harriot. I should die first; your Ladyship may dismiss the prisoners.

Belville, rising. I scorn a pardon where my honour is held dubitable. Attend ye then, my fair judges, and thou, O soft persuasive eloquence, descend, to grace my speech! while I a simple tale deliver.—’Twas on a summer’s eve, sitting beneath the umbrageous foliage of an oak—the lovely Harriot by my side, inclining her attentive ear unto my tale of love—her beauteous face averted; when with her lily hand she drew from forth her pocket a ‘kerchief white, to hide from my too eager gaze the glowing blush the tender tale had raised, when with it dropt a letter;—forthwith bending low, I took it up, and to by bosom strait convey’d it—judge of the rest.

Lady Frances. Mr. Belville, you are free; not guilty upon my honour.

Belville. The Gods themselves could express their gratitude but as men;—thus let me thank your Ladyship.
(*Embraces hers.*)

Lady Frances. An act of justice finds its reward in itself. (*Snatches the letter written by Belville, and superscribed Melvern. She reads to herself, and after a pause—*

”In your answer, Sophy, let me hear nothing but of *love* and *Belville!*—hum—(to *Belville.*) After all, *Belville*, you must confess you are a very impudent fellow; however, as the thing was done with a good grace, I pardon you; the motive justifies the act.

Harriot, aside to her heart. Dear amiable *Belville*, how various are thy powers of pleasing!—(to *Lady Frances*)—generosity, humanity—and benevolence, are powerful pleaders where partiality fits advocate.

Belville, catching Harriot in his arms. Whilst my friend’s partiality vouchsafes to become my advocate, I shall not only be the happiest, but the most grateful of men.

Harriot. Oppress’d as I am with your goodness, suffer me to retire—and think me not ungrateful.

He leads her to the door.—Exit Harriot

Curtain drops.

LETTER XVIII.

EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

Fenwick-Hall.

I Know of no stronger similarity between two things than between the passion of love, and that of gold!

A miser’s every wish centers in his gold, so does a lover’s in his mistress.

A miser carefully conceals his gold from the desiring eyes of men, so would a lover his mistress.

A miser views whatever is perfect, fair and good in his gold, so does a lover in his mistress.

A miser’s bags of gold receive all his fond caresses: On whom should a lover bestow his, but on his mistress?

Rob a miser of his *gold*, and you destroy his *hopes*;—rob a love of his *mistress*, and there’s an end of *his*.

Thank Heaven my *Harriot*, though handsome, is no coquet, and in every thing she is the reverse of our modern beauties, who have no sensations but what a compliment made to their vanity inspires.

However, men may be pleased with coquetish mistresses, they can be happy only with domestic wives.

I am delighted when I hear *Lady Frances* descanting on the follies of coquets; with a blush she confesses she derives her knowledge from sad experience.

She is, however, an excellent woman, and next to my *Harriot*, I should prefer her at an Hymeneal fire side, to all the women I know; the gay, the grave, and the tender, are so nicely assimilated in her disposition, as to render her a charming companion for a man of sense. What say you, shall I speak a good word for you? An instance of friendship this; if what the world reports be truth, that she and I intend slipping our necks together into

the matrimonial noose—Her Ladyship is diverted at the thought, and will not fail to strengthen it, for she loves to have the knowing ones taken in.—My cousin seem to cherish it, but do not speak out, Kitty alone is in the secret—George Fenwick is amongst us again, I will leave no means untry'd to recover his friendship, I pity him to my soul; who but must compassionate the man a Harriot Melvern has refus'd?

I will not carry him to Brooklands tho', for if the serpent had not been in Paradise, Eve had not been tempted.

Adieu,
BELVILLE.

LETTER XIX.
CHARLES BOTHWELL, Esq; to Mr. BELVILLE.

IF the subject of your letters, my dear Edmund, always treat of *la Belle passion*, in pity to my feeling let them be always accompanied by a portion of Nepenthe, to still the busy workings of my soul—I have loved; what days of exquisite felicity have I not enjoy'd with her who inspir'd it—but she was finite, and a woman!

I agree with you, and my opinion is strengthened by observation, that Lady Frances is by nature endow'd with every faculty to please, if she is not much alter'd since I was acquainted with her some years ago—Her tender regard to your Harriot raises her still higher in my opinion—but should my heart ever prove faithless to its former passion, it will not stray toward her Ladyship.

The bitter pill the sex has given me, will regurgitate, and when it does, it is but adding bitters to my natural gall.

Tell the amiable Harriot I think as well of her as I can of any one of the sex to which she belongs; and that you have a sincerity and tenderness in your nature, to which she will be ever entitled; but on the other hand, there is so much jealousy inherent in your nature, that the slightest inattention in her, will ever keep it on the alarm.

Thus you think you have passed all the anfractuons mazes of love, and have only level ground to tread.

I was once in your situation—I thought as you do now;—but the scene changed!—If you accelerate matters, I may look in upon you at Mount Belville before I set off for Scotland, where I shall spend some months. Adieu,

BOTHWELL.

LETTER XX.
From Mr. BELVILLE, in Answer.

Mount Belville.

WITH your last (for which I thank you) I received a letter from my steward informing me, that every thing was ready at Mount-Belville, and only waited for my approbation.

My cousins were all desirous to see it, and proposed making a party with Lady Frances and Miss Melvern, the latter cruelly disappointed my hopes, because Fenwick was to be of the party, but he too afterwards declin'd accompanying.

This awaken'd my suspicions, I guess'd his reason for refusing—the event justified me, it was too late however to recede, I trusted to my Harriot's affection for me, and brought only my vacant self hither.

What a revolution, Charles, does a few years make in our sentiments! there was a time when I thought that to be master of myself, this old mansion, its fine woods and lawns, a pack of hounds, and a set of hunters, I should be the happiest, as well as most independent man breathing; but since love has laid siege to my heart, I can no longer claim it.

Tho' Lady Frances, who is a Cornelly in taste, approves of every thing—I feel myself horribly dissatisfied—the most frightful inquietudes haunt me; a thousand times I say to myself, my Harriot does not love me—she expressed not the least regret for my absence—When I took leave of her, she appeared unmoved, neither did I see her at the window taking a last look as my chaise drove off.

A real passion can only be shewn by a strict observance of every minute and delicate attention.

She certainly does not love me in the manner my tenderness for her deserves!—Read over my letters again, and see if you can find in them an instance wherein I have described her as having return'd my affection with equal sincerity.

On second thoughts, should you discover it, do not tell it me, it is better to be misled by hope, than sink into despair.

In short, my dear Charles, her enchanting powers have gain'd an empire over my heart, and her gentleness makes the yoke a pleasing burden.

I have written to my dear girl; I begin to fear rather impetuously, if it prove so, her goodness must pardon an error excess of tenderness occasioned.

Adieu, BELVILLE.

LETTER XXI.

To the same.

Fenwick Hall.

WHEN I first waited on Miss Melvern after my return hither, which was the same evening, I whisper'd Lady Frances to excuse me, and telling her I hoped to see her at Brooklands before I quitted it—I pretended to my cousins a matter of business required my absence—the plea was admitted.

When I got to Brooklands, there was no Harriot to be found, she had strolled out no one knew whither.

I was fretted to the soul; in about an hour she returned, leaning upon the arm of a young gentleman—The case is evident, thought I, why I was not indulged with her company at Mount Belville. On seeing me, her companion retired.

The confident girl approached me with evident marks of satisfaction; made the tenderest enquiries after my health, and that of her friend—Dissatisfied to see her look so

pleas'd, I only return'd her the most distant civility; was apprehensive, as her guest had withdrawn himself, my presence was unwelcome—and would take my leave.

With looks which expressed no evident marks of discomposure, she said, she hoped she should never be a tax upon her friends—Lady Frances thinks you very capricious, Miss Melvern, said I—and I know she thinks you, Mr. Belville, very suspicious. What else does she think?—That there are people, Madam, in the world, incapable of making a generous use of power.

How is it possible, Sir, little minds should support what has overset the greatest? and what farthest?

That nature has given you more beauty than sensibility, Miss Melvern.—Her Ladyship's first thought flatters me, and too much susceptibility will prove a torment to its possessor; a state of indifference only is a state of happiness.

Your anxiety for your friends, Madam, will never break in upon your quiet.

Could Mr. Belville compliment the head and heart together, he would be the most agreeable of flatterers!

Do you really think so, Madam?

Whilst I retain your good opinion, Sir, I shall be little anxious to gain that of the rest of mankind—Could I but be assured these were your real sentiments, Miss Melvern—Have I ever given you room to doubt them, Mr. Belville—Never, never, my dearest friend—(quite subdu'd)—pardon a doubt the sincerity of my regard for you occasions.

You refus'd to indulge me with your company at Mount Belville, I felt the utmost inquietude at it.

I fear'd, forgive my suspicions—but who was that young gentleman that brought you home?

When she told me he had lately married Mr. Cambridge's daughter, the good old Rector, I could have devour'd her with love—I told her my bosom should never entertain another thought injurious to her tenderness, if she would pass an act of oblivion on what had happened.

I do forgive you, Mr. Belville, but remember people of violent passions prove their own tormentors.

Harriot Melvern, you, like Caesar, were born to conquer.—Supposing it were true, Sir, Reply'd she, you see that like Hannibal, I know not how to make advantage of the victory.

The more conquests I gain, my dear friend, will serve but to swell the lift of your triumphs, the lesser power will be ever swallowed up in the greater, as meteors vanish before the sun. When will you learn wisdom, Mr. Belville? rejoined she.

When I have a wife to teach me, seizing her hands—A rapid circulation of the blood gave the roses which revelled upon her cheeks, a deeper tint—and—but I am interrupted.

Adieu,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXII.

Miss MELVERN, to Miss AIRSBY.

Brooklands.

WE are not to be less discreet in our conduct, tho' providence is pleased to thwart our intentions.

Some little dissatisfactions have arisen between Mr. Belville, and me, tho' I have endeavoured to give him no cause for anxiety: there is an impetuous ardency in his nature that cannot brook the shadow of disregard, where he esteems.

I had received the most pressing invitation to spend the day at Mr. Fenwick's, which you will not be surprised to hear, I declined accepting.—

Lady Frances went:—about an hour before I had reason to expect her return, I was surprised with a visit from Mr. George Fenwick; my fears suggested to me, I could not treat my enemy with too much civility to ensure a safe retreat, as the same conduct had succeeded whilst our friends were at Mount Belville; his behaviour then, as now, was very unexceptionable, he renewed his addresses with diffidence, and politeness; I beg'd he would never entertain me more on the subject, if we were to continue friends: he threw out many insinuations against Mr. Belville, which I parried with more finesse, than I thought I was capable of; yet he seemed staggered at the report, which prevailed concerning him and Lady Frances.

I wished him gone a thousand times, lest Mr. Beville should return with her Ladyship, which did not fail to happen, Kitty also accompanied them, and is to stay with us a few days.

I fear my countenance expressed the strongest marks of guilt, as they entered: O Harriot! cry'd Kitty, accosting me, I am to spend several days with you, I hope we shall be the happiest creatures in the world.

If I am a phisiognomist, said Belville, I never saw happiness more forcibly depicted, than on Miss Melvern's countenance, at this instant: your sprightly brother my sweet Coz, possesses a peculiar talent of making Ladies happy, when once he exerts his powers of pleasing.—Drawing me to one side of the room, he whispered me, that these interviews might be attended with unhappy consequences, that if his heart was in my possession, his honour was in his own, and knowingly he would be no woman's dupe—with all possible gentleness I endeavoured to assure him he was in an error, and wished only for an opportunity to convince him of it.

His stern looks so terrified me I was obliged to leave the room, the gentlemen left the house soon after.

I told Lady Frances all that had happened, she said Belville could not be too much punished for his credulity—these weeds of suspicion, continued she, if not early plucked up, will choak the nobler flowers which have hitherto flourished in his bosom, in such

full luxuriance. When next you see him assume an easy inattention; for these creatures would rather we raved at their inconstancy, than treat it with neglect—This love, I speak from long and sad experience, assumes a variety of shapes, whim and caprice, mark its actions; this hour and sports and graces smile in its train; the next they are driven out, by the fiends of suspicion and jealousy.—Love seldom finds its felicity in the present tense, recollection, or anticipation only give it.—Now Harriot, when you next see the wild gusts of passion blow high; receive them with the gentle calm of indifference, and let us see, for whom victory will declare.

I told her, I was not formed to figure in the character of a coquet, that I feared I should rather seek to convince Mr. Belville of his error, than sport with his credulity; that I should treat his foibles as *impromptus*, and not as the effects of deliberate unkindness.

Adieu,

H. MELVERN.

LETTER XXIII.

CHARLES BOTHWELL, Esq; to Mr. BELVILLE.

Dear Belville,

PERFECTION is no female you are convinced e're this; for tho' the bright orb of night illumines the traveller with her rays, yet we often see her step behind a cloud and leave the atmosphere in a minute, as dark as tho' she had never shone: 'tis just so with the sex, this moment they can raise in us sensations the most delightful, and the next, can make our feelings a burden to us.

Suppose Miss Melvern, and your cousin *have* their assignations, they have their reasons for it no doubt, I thought it was a thing so commonly practised in the world; as not to have excited your wonder at this time of day.—Were men in love ever to ask advice of reason, it would preserve the bosom from many a pang?

Whether you take the hint or not, I am your's,

C. BOTHWELL.

LETTER XXIV.

Miss MELVERN to Miss AIRSBY.

Brooklands.

WHAT are misfortunes my Sophy, but ministring spirits to our felicity hereafter? As fairest flowers are soonest subject to decay, so are the noblest minds most liable to be tainted with suspicion—Mr. Belville's conduct continues to give me the utmost inquietude, I endeavour to appear chearful but cannot succeed.

On Tuesday his servant brought him a letter whilst he was with me, after having read it, with some emotion, he said he should be under the necessity of quitting me for a few days.

He sat looking upon me for some time, at length taking my hand he said—Why did heaven create you thus lovely? Or why did it make other bosoms than mine sensible of your beauty? Then sighing, he walked the room in great agitation.

At that moment Mr. Fenwick entered it, Belville's looks almost annihilated me; with difficulty I left the room, and returned no more to company whilst they staid.

The next morning I had a note from Mr. Belville, signifying that he was just ready to set out on his journey, and intimating that he should expect an explanation of my conduct at his return.

Mr. Fenwick has visited us every day since Mr. Belville left us, tho' I avoid all conversation with him as much as possible. I accidentally met him last night in the garden, he detained me a long time; again at my feet, he made a thousand professions, again I repulsed him, and I fear with more contempt than was prudent.

He has told Lady Frances, that a servant of his accidentally saw Mr. Belville at Chester with a Lady; but this he beg'd might be kept a secret, for if men intrigued, few of them were so indelicate as to wish to have it published.

Lady Frances would not have told me this, had she not been mortally piqued at Mr. Belville's conduct.

I cannot my Sophy, yet suspect him of wrong, whose daily life appears to be so much in the right; I told her so: she shook her head at my ignorance of a sex, who make, or mar our happiness as they please.

Adieu,

H. MELVERN.

LETTER XXV.

To the same.

I Had been weeping all day, when Mr. Belville first made his appearance after his expedition to Chester—he approached me armed with all his errors, his eyes darting fire, his lips quivering with rage; I was ready to faint, he perceived it, but mistaking the cause, said, how powerful are the operations of guilt on a mind that has a strong sense of right and wrong!

At length I ventured to say, I was glad to see him after his journey, which I hoped had been a pleasant one.

He looked, as if he thought what I said was apocryphal.

That my presence once gave you pleasure, madam, I believe; but my peace and honour demand an explanation of your conduct.

I try'd to smile him into good humour, I beg'd this day, might be dedicated to cheerfulness, and that tomorrow, if I saw he had recovered his wonted disposition, I would give to all his interrogations, such replies as he might expect, and I with truth might declare.

He called me an artful girl, said I wanted the strengthen my cause by futile delays, but it would not succeed with a man resolved.—I could not refrain from tears. I told him, that my heart so long accustomed to his kindness, was not proof again his displeasure; that I was convinced I had some enemies, who must have prejudiced me in his opinion.

He was going to speak but I interrupted him—come, Sir, said I, suffer yourself to be intreated—I see you are distressed—you know not what I feel; I held out my hand to him in token of reconciliation, but he toss'd it with indignation from him.—Had I been disposed for relation I might have asked after the Lady he had been so long a journey to visit.

This behaviour did not repulse me, again I attempted to sooth him—the return he made me for it was, that I was born to load him with the heaviest misery, that ever man felt—there was a time, he said, I could have calm'd the wildest tempest in his soul.

Before the Lady at Chester, thought I, had robb'd me of your affection—I conjured him to tell me by what means I lost that power, that I would confess my fault, and endeavour to repair it.

There never yet, said he ironically, was a man, who could foil a woman at her own weapons.

I have done Sir—but had not my unfortunate family, thrown an odium on my character, you would not thus have insulted a woman of virtue. In all the sad vicissitudes of my life, I hope my veracity stands unimpeached; you know you have sought every means to win my affections, I do not blush to tell you what effect they have had upon my heart, it could not resist your kindness, I told you so, and I told you, your tenderness then made you overlook the difference between us—Without I had given you cause for offence, I do not think myself entitled to bear your resentment—As we cannot meet friends let us never meet again—and was going—dearest, best of women, said he, throwing his arms round me, (for I could not conceal my tears) why do you weep? I only who have lost your regard have cause for sorrow—could you have commanded the affections of your heart you would not have given them to Fenwick—hear but the cause of my anguish, and if you can, pity me.

Never, said I, with indignation, rather let the mind which becomes a prey to suspicion, feed in silence on its imaginary wrongs.—I broke from him, and he left the house soon after.

Adieu,

HARRIOT MELVERN.

LETTER XXVI.

EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

Fenwick-Hall.

BOTHWELL, tho' my charming Harriot's affections seem totally alienated from me, yet she is deeply rooted in mine as ever.

The pleasures of life are but delusions, misfortunes only realities, I acquainted you of a very disagreeable accident which called me from the Hall for a few days.

I quitted Miss Melvern in the utmost state of dejection; for Fenwick's assiduities had for some time made me feel, that mine were importunate to her.

By my faithful Williamson I was informed they had often rode out together in Lady Frances' chaise; I determined my own eyes should convince me of her infidelity, I

returned from my expedition privately to Brooklands, where my suspicions were soon confirmed.

There I had the satisfaction of seeing Fenwick at her feet in the garden, breathing out his passion. And she received his homage with all the apparent satisfaction of a weak silly woman, vain of her own attractions; more than once I was going to rush upon them—but contempt restrained my fury.

I quitted the garden, the scene I beheld there was stampt on my heart.

O Charles! 'twas the *mind* of Harriot Melvern I loved—now that is debased, I will see her no more; nay she has forbid me ever to see her again.

Pardon my weakness ye who know what it is to love—I must see her—I must fly to her this moment.

Just return'd from Brooklands, Lady Frances only appear'd with that dignity and that composure which mark her superior mind. My tongue falter'd when I pronounced the name of her friend, in vain did my eyes roll on all sides, expecting when she would make her appearance; her Ladyship misconstrued their meaning, and bid me be under no apprehensions of seeing any thing disagreeable, Miss Melvern would take care that her presence should not be obtrusive.

I entreated for an interview with her if but for five minutes: and why can you wish it? interrupted she, 'tis a bad mind that will torture, what it most *pretends* to value.

Do you reckon love like mine, Lady Frances, only a *pretence*; am I not despis'd? have I not been deceiv'd? The semblance of affection from the woman I adore cannot gratify so capacious a heart as mine.

She arose, apologized for leaving me, but business of importance obliged her to it—She withdrew, after waiting half an hour, and nobody appearing, I quitted the house.—On my return home, I met a servant in livery I knew to be Lady Frances's—I ask'd him after his Lady and Miss Melvern; the latter, he told me, had been very ill for several days, and, by his Lady's orders, he had been for Doctor Warren to attend her.

I forgot her unkindness at once; I represented her to myself as dying by my cruelty. When I got home, Kitty met me, she saw my anxiety; I took hold of her arm, and leading her into a room where we could be private, said that her poor friend was dead, and that I had kill'd her. She was much terrified 'till I explain'd the matter, and more surpris'd that I should imagine my Harriot entertain'd one sentiment of her brother injurious to me: she told me farther, how much his visits had distress'd her, and that whilst we were at Mount Belville, she was obliged to pretend illness to avoid him, and shut herself up in her apartment; by some accident or other he was inform'd of all her movements; she concluded with saying, that the woman who expected to find happiness with high spirited me, "reckon'd without her host."

Bothwell, this passion, love, no sooner takes possession of our hearts, than every other becomes subservient to it, and when its tendency is virtuous, it is humble in prosperity, constant in adversity, and tender in all its operations.—Adieu, I only wait for fresh horses to carry me to Brooklands.

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXVII.
Lady FRANCES WARWICK to Miss AIRSBY.

Brooklands.

WHERE mind meets mind, little introduction is necessary to form a connection between them. I therefore shall not apologize to you for taking up the pen, which our Harriot would have done, to have written to the dear society of Broomhill, had I not oppos'd it.

The poor girl has been much indisposed since she wrote last, her health at not time perfect.

We have had strange commotions amongst us—for earthquakes read heartaches—such cataracts of tears, such whirlwinds of sighs, driven about by the tempest of jealousy, and such flashes of eye-lighting. as had nearly frightened our friend out of her wits. Had not the wind shifted about—the war of words ran high between our lovers for some time, he menacing, she soothing—I told her she was wrong; what shall I do? said she, it is wrong to give up our best friends the moment they most need our assistance; the man whom we esteem for his virtues, let us pity for his errors, tho' Mr. Belville's reproaches wound me deeply, yet how much more should I feel them had I done any thing to deserve them; I am certain he does not act from caprice, but from a motive he thinks justifiable.

Notwithstanding all her resolution, the inquietude of her mind so prey'd upon her health, as in few days to make her appear almost a corps, during which time she avoided Mr. Belville whenever he came.

A few nights ago, about ten o'clock, we were sitting together, I was called down—it was to Mr. Belville; he gasp'd my hands, and was too much agitated to speak; his behaviour so frightened me I could hardly ask him what was the matter—he shook his head—his fine hair all disorder'd—my—my Harriot; is she dead? shall I never see her more?—When I saw you this evening, why did you not inform me of the anguish that was preparing for me? why was the dear creatuer's illness concealed from me?—I told him for very prudent motives, lest he should treat her worse than he had done already.

He called me cruel to treat his affliction so lightly, entreated me to conduct him instantly to the dear sufferer; but no, first, said he, see her yourself, tell her I have been grossly deceived; language cannot describe what I have suffer'd, what I still suffer. I endeavoured to expostulate with him, but he was incapable of giving me the least attention; I really pitied him; when he had exculpated himself to my satisfaction, I advised him to return home immediately.

Starting up, he swore he never would 'till he had had one glance of his Harriot, for he fear'd my friendship for him might soften my accounts of her illness.

Finding he was not to be soothed, I comply'd on his promising to be discreet.

I left him in an anti-chamber, where he might see her from the door, and went in to her. I told her that since I left her, I had heard from Mr. Belville, that he had inform'd me how unhappily he had been misled by appearances, for which even she could not blame him, when she came to be inform'd of the whole affair; that he would continue in a state little short of distraction 'till he had implor'd and receiv'd her forgiveness; that I had invited him to breakfast, provided she had no objection.

She said she was glad for his honour he was justified, but beg'd when he came, she might not see him—She was proceeding, when Belville's emotions betrayed him—he rushed into the room—he threw himself at her feet, she fell almost motionless into my arms: tho' I blamed Belville's rashness, I gave him half my pity; the recollection of what he endured still pains me.

When she was a little recover'd, she beg'd him to leave her, as she was not in a situation to undergo his persecution.

And where, interrupting her, and to whom shall I fly to ease my heart of its weight of woe, if you drive me from you?—Then, addressing me, beg'd I would intercede for him, saying that he had no home, no friend, if he still continued under her displeasure, for if her kindness does not soften my pillow, continued he, how shall I find repose?—Misery will be my sole companion, she alone will be faithful to me.

At length she told him she would see him in the morning, and bid him remember 'twas her wish he should take care of his health.—Wiping away her tears, he said, if she was interested in it, it then became of importance to him. He soon after took his leave.

I appointed him the next morning at ten, but his impatience brought him at seven.

I rallied him upon it, he said, if I had been truly in love, I could not wonder at it; that he already looked upon our Harriot as his wife, and that no legal tie, could unite her closer to his affections.

All this is but mere rhapsody, said I, (wanting to discover the cause of his journey to Chester) I'll lay my life your heart is not beauty proof, were another fair face to shew itself; handsome fellows like you Belville, seldom entertain lasting attachments; and you seem rather born to make conquests, than to set down in the peaceful shades of Mount Belville, to make love to your wife.

Never fear, madam, interrupted he; that an attachment formed on such principles as mine, should end but with my life.

My Harriot's gentleness, will correct my impetuositities, and I shall live but to copy her virtues.

You are a vile hypocrite, Belville, amiable as you acknowledge Harriot to be, yet there are moments I dare say, when she must yield the palm to the fair Lady who sent for you to Chester.

Good heavens Madam! and I think he never look'd so handsome as in this state of confusion; from whom could you receive this information?

Your agitation vouches the truth of it however Mr. Belville, what a monster of iniquity are you to treat the poor girl as you have done, for having accidentally met Fenwick! But she knows of all your rogueries, I promised her I would reproach you the first time I saw you; notwithstanding her entreaties to the contrary.—What vile wretches are the very best of you men; your guilt betrays you—we will call another subject.—

No, Madam, said he, with a becoming degree of warmth, my honour yet we never doubted, and must not now be suspected by you. That my absence was partly occasioned by a woman I confess; an unhappy one too; but never has my heart swerved, from that fond regard I have felt for Miss Melvern, from my first acquaintance with her,—to quit

her in the abrupt manner I did, was painful to me; friendship, not love, claimed my presence—tell my best love so—and tell her—not a single sentence of this conversation, interrupted I; for my curiosity would entitle me to her censure.

At length after much painful expectation the idol of his wishes appeared, like a beautiful flower drooping in the shade, wanting the beams of the sun to revive it—Belville was that sun; under his kind influence the fading blossom revived; he warmed it into life, and gave it new vigour.

Suffice it to say, an act of oblivion passed, and we spent the day together, like those whom neither guild confounds, nor fear betrays.
Your's ever, and most affectionately,

F. WARWICK.

LETTER XXVIII.

EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr. BOTHWELL.

Fenwick-Hall.

WHO, Bothwell can resist the powers of eloquence in the woman he loves? Tho' conquer'd, I am a victor still, paradoxical as it may appear to thee; I am the slave of Harriot Melvern; she has subdued my passions—I have vanquished her heart.—To describe all I have felt since I wrote to you last, were impossible, to tell you how great is my present felicity, were as impossible; and yet I fear to enjoy the present moment, lest the next should be less perfect.

I believe, Charles, there are few men, whose abuse of the sex, proceeds from a disgust implanted in them by nature; but it arises from their communication with those, whose external beauties may attract the eye, but wanting the perfections of the mind, they cannot engage the heart. The contrast between virtue and vice is so conspicuous, that we ought to blame only our unruly desires, and not our destiny, if we pursue the steps of the latter; and disease and old age hold up the mirror of reflection, we curse ourselves, for being the very characters, for the attainment of which, we renounced the performance of every social, and religious duty.

I believe George Fenwick cannot so readily impose on himself, as on the rest of his acquaintance, that my visits to Brooklands are set down to the account of the fair Lady of the mansion; men so much in love as himself, are not easily made the dupes of appearances.

A relation of Lady Frances' who is on a visit to her, has completed our *partiquarre*, Mr. Loathby's manners are insinuating, his deportment easy and graceful, I need not inform you, that I think his judgment good, when he declared to me a few nights ago, that take my Harriot, mind and person, he never met with so many perfections united—my heart approved his decision—my tongue told him so.

I have letters from my father, wherein he tells me, he shall not abide my description of my beloved Miss Melvern, but will come over as soon as he has settled some affairs, which have detained him much longer than he expected, and which require his immediate preference—however he has written a postscript to her, full of kindness and affection; I shewed it to her;: and was rewarded with—a blush.

Adieu,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXIX.

To the same.

Fenwick Hall.

My dear friend,

OBEDIENCE to the dispensations of heaven is our unquestionable duty.

I leave England immediately, to receive the blessing of a dying parent; perhaps to close his eyes, should he survive till my arrival.

I received my summons in presence of Miss Melvern, altho' an impassion'd lover, I gave way to the feelings of a son; as I read, she watched my emotions, when I had done, I presented the letter to her, and withdrew to conceal them: as soon as I had in some measure got the better of my sensibility, I returned to company.

I beg'd my best friend would tell me what I ought to do, she said, that were I capable of hesitating, her esteem for me would be lessened from that moment; I was happy that her sentiments so exactly corresponded with my own, the time of my departure was soon settled, and now I go for the last time to bid her adieu.

Just return'd from Brooklands.

Why these agonizing sensations? why does an undiscribly horror shake every nerve? why is my bosom lacerated with anguish?

Lady Frances has promised to watch over my angel like a tender parent in my absence, which I hope will be but short.

Bothwell, her last adieu proves her mine unalienably; in my looks she read the soften'd language of my soul—After recommending her again to our common friend, Lady Frances, she stood forward with a condescension unknown before, to receive my last farewell.

My dear Mr. Belville, said she, there is a benignant power that watches over the fate of mortals; to him I commit you, and should he vouchsafe to restore a beloved parent to you, my high hopes tell me we shall meet again. Be careful of your ever valued life, and remember it is dear to me—her voice falter'd, for a moment I held her to my heart—but I can write no more.

Adieu,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXX.

EDMUND BELVILLE, Esq; to Miss MELVERN.

Holyhead.

My dearest Harriot!

BUT a few minutes, and the swoln waves will bear me from my fairest hopes—yet my every thought shall hover round you; they shall be the attending spirits to guard you from ill.

To converse with you for a long time, has been my all of happiness; since that is deny'd me, to write to you will be a felicity of no common worth.

Your kind partiality for me, gives me consequence with myself; to retain that partiality, is to follow wherever affliction, wherever duty calls.

Pity enlarges the soul, and moulds it into humanity; sensibility and delicacy give to beauty her every charm—Such is Miss Melvern; such is the dear authoress of a passion she alone could create, she alone can preserve.—Beware, my best love, lest the tender feelings of your nature should be too strong for the delicate weakness of your body.—Refined spirits are eager to claim their kindred skies.

This sometimes of me; but not to give you disquiet; and yet I would not be remember'd by the idol of my soul, as a creature remote from her affections.

Write to me, I beseech you; tell me your health is re-establish'd, and yet do not tell me you are quite free from anxiety—To know you regret my absence, were to make me too happy; to know I am still beloved, my tenderness for you only can deserve.

Think not so intensely on our separation, as to make the pleasures of society lose their charm; I would always have you be happy, but in every enjoyment I would wish one thought of Belville to occur—You hold the thread of his peace, if you once forget the delicacy of its texture—a moment may destroy, what not ages can unite.

Continue to me your regard, then shall I, whatever may be the reverses of fate, live, as I hope to die, your's most faithfully and affectionately,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXXI.

Miss AIRSBY to Miss MELVERN.

Broomhill.

SO, Belville is gone—well, peace be with him, and laughing hours attend him wherever he goes, and may the soft gales of love soon waft him back to his poor forlorn Lady.

Mercy on us! and so you really think “nature has lost all her attractions? and the greatest beauties of creation have no more charms for you than a wilderness of weeds, now he that gave life to every scene is absent.”—Why child, man is the most noisome weed that ever was softer'd in it, so very baneful is its nature that if a poor unthinking girl takes but a peep at it, her mind, which was a garden of sweets before, instantly becomes tainted; you are not happy 'till you have caught the infection, and, paradoxical as it may seem, are miserable as long as you retain it.

Report runs thus, that the Signor Leland, having surviv'd the loss of his late prize is going on another matrimonial cruize, in chase of a wealthy galleon; the ship's name to the inhabitants of Broomhill unknown, its burden fifty thousand pounds, not tons: 'tis farther added, it has been driven about by several gales, but now harbours in the port of London.

I love Lady Frances much better than you, since you are become so formally in love, and have nothing but ah's, oh's, and sighs to regale your friends with—poor food for keen appetites like those of your

S. AIRSBY.

LETTER XXXII.
Miss MELVERN, in Answer.

Brooklands.

WERE I to enumerate every line of your last whimsical epistle, I should give you the whole back again.

I will permit you to love Lady Frances, tho' not in the preference to myself, as it is the only proof you can give me your volatility has not destroy'd your sensibility.

Read the inclosed packet, and if you do not drop a tear to the thoughtless inexperience of youth, and admire the resignation of virtue, struggling under the severest calumnies, I shall change that opinion I have ever entertain'd of my Sophy's heart.

Going some days ago into Lady Frances's dressing-room, I perceiv'd her hanging over a miniature picture, and bathed in tears. She look'd at me some time full of silent woe.

I told her it was not generous she should treasure up her griefs in her bosom, whilst those of others she cherished as her own, and that I fear'd she had no confidence in my sincerity. I beg'd to see the picture; she presented it to me, (it represented the most pleasing features I ever saw, except in one face) saying, how happy young women ought to think themselves, whose confidence had not been abused by the blackest treachery under the mask of friendship.

I asked her if it were possible (looking on the picture) that perfidy could have found a shelter under so pleasing an external.—Alas! cry'd she, whatever could best dignity human nature, belong'd to the original of this picture; but I will not anticipate matter; I have been summoning resolution to make you acquainted with my story, and will take this opportunity for it. Tho' I doubt not but you will see my errors through the medium of partiality; yet I must beg you to be silent on the subject of them to Mr. Belville—as I set a value on my friend's good opinion, I would not lose her, to Miss Airsby I lay you under no restrictions. Farewell, &c.

H. MELVERN.

LETTER XXXIII.
M E M O I R S
OF
LADY FRANCES WARWICK.

THERE is but one means, my dear Miss Melvern, by which peace of mind can be obtained, and real satisfaction ensured, it is by subduing the passions ere they gain the ascendancy over our reason.

I was not formed by nature of an irascible temper, but a wrong education nourished those passions which admonitions should have subdued. I had the misfortune to be the darling of my parents, and their happiness center'd in gratifying my wishes, instead of teaching me to suppress them.

My aunt Lisbourn was the only person from whom I ever heard the voice of truth, she openly censured my conduct, and remonstrated with my parents, whose false indulgence was the cause of it; but as they supposed her void of those tender feelings which glow in the paternal breast, from having liv'd a single life, it was of no avail.

Young as I was, I had judgment enough to feel she was right, tho' I had too much pride to acknowledge it. Thus I continued to ramble farther in the wilds of error.

About the age of fifteen I become acquainted with a young Lady, the only child of a Mr. Holten, who having reduc'd a genteel competency to a very narrow stipend, was involv'd in many distresses.

The situation of his daughter first engaged my pity; but in a very short time the most romantic friendship was cemented between us; I felt for her all the warmth of affection of which an inexperienced creature is capable; she had the advantage of being several years older than myself, and possess'd a thorough knowledge of the world.

One of the most dangerous rocks to female virtue, is a female correspondent, before reason or judgment can direct the pen. Whenever we were separated, tho' for a short time, every post brought me two or three letters from her; grateful to my *pride* indeed, but destructive to my *morals*: she flatter'd my person, she complimented my wit, and whenever a civility was offer'd to herself, she artfully contrived to convince me, that I alone occasioned it.

Observation, as well as my own experience, has shewn me that more young women have been betrayed into ruin, from these misguided connections, than from their ordinary communication with the other sex.

Within a year of each other my parents died; I sincerely felt their loss, but Georgina's consolations proved a comfort to me.

I took her home to live with me as soon as I became mistress of myself and fortune: My good aunt was so offended at this step, she refused to live with me, or to have the management of my house; she retired to her seat at Harewood, telling me she should be glad to see me there, or return again to me, if ever my reason subdued my folly.

I had many lovers, my inclinations declared in favour of none, however, Lord Wilton believed I distinguished him from the group; tho a man of the world he was by no means an exceptionable character; he possess'd a vein of pleasantry, that made him an acceptable companion where ever he went; he was a perfectly good natured man, ever ready to serve a friend, and never known to distress an enemy. I could have loved him as a brother, but could never bring my heart to admit him as a lover. I told him so a thousand times; yet he could not prevail on himself to discontinue his visits.

One evening at Lady C——'s rout, Lord Wilton introduced to me a particular friend of his, an officer just returned from abroad: Captain Lennox was a man of grave aspect; he had a piercing sagacity in his looks that always commanded attention and respect; upon the conduct of women in general he was severe, yet ever ready to approve what was commendable.

Lord Wilton, when he presented his friend to me, commanded me to esteem him. Alas, my poor heart! could it have confined its feelings within the bounds of esteem, had not now been consuming itself in unavailing sorrow.

The Captain, tho' he said but little to me the whole evening, yet seem'd to consider me as an object not remote from his ideas, at least I thought so; my gaiety forsook me, Lord Wilton rallied me upon it; I blush'd at my folly, I re-assumed my sprightliness.

I was full of the idea of him, the next morning, when Lord Wilton introduced him, I felt myself embarrassed, he beg'd to know the cause; I had never learnt to disguise, therefore the reasons I have for it seem'd to gain no credit.

As we were ready for our morning's airing, the gentlemen offer'd themselves to be our escorts: the coach was at the door, we drove off together to the Park. I was mortified to death at being accosted by every *petit maitre* of my acquaintance, Lord Wilton observed to Lennox, that before he had seen all my slaves, he must behold all the young fellows about town, who had hearts to lose.

The Captain said, he thought however, by their contented looks, my humanity made their bondage easy.

No, reply'd Wilton, she is a very tyrant, her ambition is to conquer; yet the united efforts of all her subject could not take possession of the citadel of her heart. Take care of your's, Lennox, I warn'd you of the danger before I introduc'd you yesterday.

The Captain thank'd him for the caution, and said, he hoped he should never be an admirer of merit, without wishing to monopolize that which made the happiness of the millions.—Lord Wilton said, he spoke like a stranger to the tender passion.—He wished, he told him, never to experience its influence at the expence of his reason; and whilst the sex continued to exert their powers only to encrease the numbers of their admirers, he was not likely to fall a sacrifice to their ambition.

Georgina reply'd, she wish'd some beautiful Syren would try to make him her proselyte.—At that moment I perceiv'd Captain Lennox looking stedfastly upon me: the weakness of my heart communicated itself to my face—it was all in a glow. I observed it grew late, wishing to put an end to conversations wherein I thought I should cut but a ridiculous figure.

Whether at home or abroad, every day continued to introduce Captain Lennox to me, and every day more fully convinc'd me that I discovered perfections in home I had never found before; yet he never offer'd me a civility when there was a probability of avoiding it, leaving every occasion of that sort to be filled up by his friend.—His attentions to Georgina indeed were unremitted; I felt myself mortified, but I durst not complain.

One day being in an unusual flow of spirits, Lord Wilton remarked it, and ask'd the Captain if he did not think I was handsome as an Angel?

Were I to answer your Lordship in the affirmative, returned he, her Ladyship's delicacy might be offended, and my veracity suspected; when a compliment is made which excludes probability, the delicate mind will construe that as censure which was intended as a panegyric; in my opinion no simile can do justice to a beautiful woman; but if her beauty is not over ruled by the graces of the mind, I can admire her as a statue, not love her as a woman.

I told him I believed he was secure from the modern race of belles.—He bow'd, saying, the conquest of his heart was not worth the attempt, for he should never seek to make reprisals by the force of adulation, or the sacrifice of truth, without which the affections of handsome women were seldom gained.

Lord Wilton declared him an Infidel on this head, and Georgina gave an assenting amen.

The Captain continued to paint the follies of our sex in such striking colours, as fully convinc'd my reason his portraits were just. With confusion I often found my own likeness in them, and resolv'd by the alteration of my conduct, to strip it of its most glaring irregularities.

Tho' I continued to be caressed and followed every where, my ears nauseated the flattery of coxcombs, and my heart condemned their folly: I hated whatever I had most admired; I esteemed only Captain Lennox.

One morning he paid me a visit in the company of Lord Wilton, who brought me some new music, and beg'd I would play it—I comply'd.—When I had done, the extravagance of his encomiums greatly over-rated my merit.

The Captain told him he knew no man whose studies had proved of more advantage to himself, or pleasing to his friends; when the fair sex, said he, lose an admirer in Lord Wilton, they will lose the most agreeable of flatterers. I wish only to please one woman, Lenox, return'd he, catching my hand.

It never will be me then, my Lord, snatching it from him, quite provoked.

You must not be displeas'd with my friend, Madam, said Lenox, he but confessed himself ambitious of pleasing one woman—and where the merits of the object are so obvious—(bowing).

I told him I was totally indifferent as to the person, so I was left free to chuse, for when I parted with my heart, I designed it should be a voluntary gift, and not the purchase of flattery.

My Lord beg'd to know what he could do to make himself worthy of it?

I told him he had not the means in his power, if perseverance and humility were to gain it. Only put me to the trial—falling on his knees, and with great humour he pour'd forth a volley of rhapsodies, 'till Miss Holten assur'd him my heart, naturally tender, could not be proof against so much duteous submission.

In an angry tone, I said, that where the heart exacted no submission, it could owe no obligation, so I beg'd his Lordship to resume his seat, for he would not be put to the trial.

Captain Lenox told him, he ought to admire me for my generosity, a sentiment not generally to be found amongst women. I begged leave to thank him in the name of them all, saying that in those who were slow to approve, the decision was always of importance; and I wondered that a person of his refined way of thinking, did not entirely exclude the impertinent trifles from his society.

He said his censures were not general, and that there were individuals of the sex, with whom he enjoyed the happiest moments of his life, and he never could be very wretched but by being deprived of their society.

Lord Wilton told him, he wished for nothing so much as to see him seriously attached to a coquette, to punish him for his indifference.

He said he doubted it was too late in the day for him who has passed unhurt amidst the finest flowers of creation, to be at last caught by a butterfly: Which could only attract his observation, not engage his esteem; women are naturally fond of power Lady Frances.

Not so fond of power as men are of robbing them of it, Captain Lenox: of what use is victory to them, when men wear their laurels.

It was in vain I endeavoured to conquer an inclination which was daily gathering strength, the conversation of Captain Lenox, made that of every other man tactless: he condemned whatever had the least appearance of vice, and was a strenuous advocate for virtue: he never censured the foibles of his friends but in their presence; in absence he was tender of their reputation, and zealous in defence of it. Frequently would he point out to me, how much our sex in general were deceived in their road to happiness: if they want to gain the esteem of men, said he, it must not be by the love of dissipation, nor the practice of fraud; those men who are capable of setting a proper value on their virtues, are alone capable of rewarding them by an unchanged affection.

Tho' every interview with him, was so many lectures to my vanity; yet they served to increase my esteem. He was the only man who ventured to attack my foibles, for the world had not been silent to him, respecting my manner of living previous to his introduction to me. My judgment was convinced of the truth of his assertions, and I every day sought more and more to avoid that *routine* of amusements, which I had hitherto, and I may say, unsatisfactorily pursued.

I came at length to the resolution of going into the country, to endeavour at least, to conquer a weakness I trembled to have felt.

When Georgina informed Captain Lenox of my design, he told her he was much surprised that so early in the season, I could have formed such a resolution; for that she had often told him, I was never fond of the country; that there were several masquerades

expected yet, Ranelagh but just open'd, and that the Exhibitions would lose an admirer without me.

I confess I was a little piqued to hear myself treated so lightly, and told him, that as I never prescribed rules for the conduct of others, I thought no one entitled to lay down any for mine; and as I should not take Miss Holten with me, no one would be a loser by my absence.

Bowing profoundly, he asked her, if she was not engaged to the play, and offered himself for her Cicisbeo for the evening: she referred him to me, but I gave a negative, being determined to avoid all parties, where I thought there was a likelihood of his being one; for as my regard for him was founded on delicacy, I could not forfeit my own esteem, by pursuing a man, who treated me with more indifference than the rest of my acquaintance; yet he was the only one amongst them, who ever told me truth, and every silent affection of my heart, was his in exchange.

But to return—addressing me, he said, it would be selfish in him, to solicit a pleasure for himself, which must rob another, who might be infinitely more deserving, perhaps I had engaged Lord Wilton?

I said, I never made assignations, but when I did I should keep 'em. I saw Georgina's eyes exult with delight at my refusal, tho' the Captain I thought received her consent, with more *nonchalance*, than was becoming, in a man of gallantry. He said many advantageous things of Lord Wilton, that he thought him calculated to make happy the woman who should repay him with herself: and added, that so much honest perseverance, must certainly succeed with me at last.

I reply'd, It was not to-day I was first to be made acquainted with his Lordship's good qualities, tho' I thought the intention in him shew'd the height of friendship.

He look'd confused, and turning to Georgina paid her some trifling compliments upon a piece of work she was about, and soon after took his leave; having fixt on the house he was to attend her to the play.

They went—about nine Lord Wilton was announced, he was in the room before I could be denied—never was a visit so mal-a-propos—shall I tell you my weakness? I had done nothing but weep, from the time Georgina left me, and my eyes were red and swelled, I entreated him to retire, but with the true persevering obstinacy of his sex, the more I persisted; the more determined was he—he devised every friendly means to discover from when the distress arose, with which he saw me afflicted.

He again pleaded his passion, again I told him I wish'd it was in my power to do justice to the favourable sentiments he was pleased to entertain for me: adding, as my friend, and as my brother's friend, I should always be glad to see him.

He seized my hand, which he pressed to his lips; at that moment Georgina, led in by Captain Lenox, appear'd, the latter started as if designing to withdraw—he look'd stedfastly upon me, I, unable to support his gaze, look'd the very image of guilt.

Lord Wilton still detaining my hand, come hither, Lenox, said he, and try if your eloquence can sooth this afflicted Lady.

Unless we chang'd characters, my Lord, returned he, I fear I should plead without success, yet tho' I cannot redress her sorrows, I can pity them.

Unable to behave as I wished, I left the room, and sent my excuses to the company, the gentlemen quitted the house soon after; when Georgina returned to me with a countenance in which strong signs of mortification were visible.

The next day the friends paid me a morning visit, I was at my harpsichord; Lord Wilton, who is a passionate admirer of music, re-seated me at the instrument, on my rising to receive them; I was too much agitated to perform tolerably, yet Lord Wilton said I never played better, referring to his friend for his concurrence, who, without hesitation, said he thought he had never heard me execute any thing so indifferently.

Were all men like your friend, my Lord, said I, truth would not be banished from your language, whenever you make us the subject of conversation. Indiscriminately to approve what merits censure, is as glaring an instance of false taste, as it is of injustice, to condemn what is deserving approbation: were we only praised when we do well, we should very few of us, I believe, grow vain from the applause of men.

Do you speak as you think, Lady Frances? said the Captain.

Have you any reason to doubt my veracity? colouring.—The entering of a servant with a large parcel, interrupted the conversation; I was eager to know what it could be— Lord Wilton soon gratified my impatience, saying it was a trifling present he made me in his sister's name, of some curiosities to place in a grotto, which he heard me say I intended to finish this summer at Warwick Lodge.

I protested against accepting them, as they were infinitely too curious for my purpose, and beg'd they might be sent back to Lady F——, whose taste and judgment were better able to dispose of them in a manner equal to their beauty.

He said, if they had any beauty, nobody could dispose of them with so much address as her, who was mistress of all the polite arts and sciences.

The Captain employed himself some time in turning them over, and afterwards said,—Happy is he who has treasures to bestow, and knows how to dispense them with the politeness of Lord Wilton. You are wondrous civil, Lenox, reply'd he, but I know no man who does a favour with so good a grace as yourself; were you to present a Lady with a nosegay, your manner would make it more acceptable to her than if I presented her with a chain of diamonds.

The Captain said his very limited fortune never put it in his power to present offerings agreeable to his wishes, for which reason he never attempted making any; but tho' Lord Wilton had declared me mistress of all arts and sciences, he thought amongst the latter he could produce one not much studied in female seminaries, and as seldom practised out of them, the science of self-knowledge, said he, putting into my hands Mr. Mason's treatise on that subject, which he drew from his pocket.

I read the title-page, and, bowing, put it into mine.

I beg your Ladyship's pardon, I meant not to part with it, it is one of my choice reserves, when the world frowns upon me, and friends look cold; and instead of studying the cause of it in them, I refer for an explanation to this where I am sure to find it. This important science has the most astonishing influence upon the human mind, it will teach it to bear calmly "the proud man's contumely," the treachery of friends, and the loss of fortune.

A tremor affected his voice as he concluded. Whenever you establish an academy, interrupted Lord Wilson, you will not want for pupils, Lenox; won't your Ladyship be one?

I said I fear'd, at my time of life, I should never become a proficient in any art or science, and, of all others, I was well convinced I should never gain a tolerable idea of that in question.

The Captain rejoin'd, that it wanted only inclination at any time of life, and that the dissipation of the town was one of the greatest obstructions to it: He beg'd me to return his book; I told him it was ungenerous in him to solicit a return if he thought there was any thing in it which would tend to my advantage.

Would to Heaven, said he, in a low voice, you were but what you are so capable of being; he snatched my hand, whilst a deep glow overspread every feature—happy for me, his Lordship and Georgina were engaged in conversation, so as not to observe the confusion into which we were both thrown.

The Captain recovering himself, ask'd me if I continued my resolution of going out of town? I told him I did, but a circumstance had happened which made me alter my intentions, as to the place.

He made use of every argument to induce me to stay, he described with all imaginable address, the pleasure I should lose by missing such and such a diversion.

I told him I could quit with pleasure every thing in London for the charming society I should find in Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, and that I hoped not only to receive amusement, but instruction from them.

Persevere, then, my dearest Madam, said he, in those sentiments, again pressing my hands, and may all the good you—here, catching up his hat, he was out of the room before his friends perceived his intention—and left me in a state of the utmost perplexity.

I saw him but once more before I left town; there was a kindness in his behaviour towards me I had never experienced before.

My friends and I left London soon after, and arrived at the Wells, where we stay'd not long, but continued our journey westward, thinking the sea air would be more salutary for Mr. Hamilton's complaint, and we fixt at a relation's of his in Cornwall.

We receiv'd there many visitants; amongst them was a widow Lady of fortune, of the name of Eastmont; previous to my introduction to her, I had heard her character, it was such as made me anxious to gain her esteem. This Lady, in the gay season of life, was one of the singular few who possessing the most distinguished accomplishments, repelled the inundations of flattery, which young women, rich and amiable, are ever sure to be pestere'd with; and studiously avoided the secret ambushes which pleasure spreads for those who court her smiles, and who solicit praise from the empty commendations of talking ignorance; her beneficence was the effect of humanity, not of ostentation; her piety was solid, rational, sincere; in her youth, happily for her, she had been taught to think properly, and to reason accurately: of her children she was the friend and confidante, with their amusements she blended instruction, by which means whatever became necessary for them, became agreeable to them, so that their minds, unwarped by

false indulgences, and uncontaminated by bad examples, retreated with abhorrence from whatever was likely to corrupt them.

Mrs. Eastmont and I soon conceived a partiality for each other, which I hope will end but with our lives. She gave me an invitation to spend some time with her at Roseworth, which joy I embraced; its situation was extensive and pleasingly picturesque, and if any thing could have silenced the painful recollection of past events, I had found satisfaction there.

Ah! my Harriot, how greatly do those deceive themselves who expect to stifle a hopeless passion in solitude!

The more I ranged these delightful gardens, the stronger the idea of Captain Lenox returned.

Upon a rising ground, surrounded by some tall trees, stood a little hermitage, dedicated to friendship; it was built by some very particular friends, and embellished with a very elegant inscription. In this little habitation I could indulge reflection unallay'd by observation; there was another reason which endeared this spot to me, the prospect eastward, unobstructed by hills, would carry my aching eyes nearer to London, which contained the subject of my every meditation.

Sometimes I endeavoured to divert them by fixing them on the sea which rolled westward, and observing the beams of the setting sun sport on the waves, and then suddenly disappear, as all my happiness had done.

Mrs. Eastmont having one day quitted me to fetch a book she wanted me to read to her, I drew from my pocket that book, which was the only memorial I had of Captain Lenox; after turning over a few pages, I found it contained all that true knowledge of which my heart stood most in need.

Reflection is a severe monitor; I examined myself—as my dissipated life could not stand the test, I burst into tears, and hearing Mrs. Eastmont coming, I threw my handkerchief over my face, to conceal them, not chusing to explain to her the cause of my sorrow.

She return'd, laid the book on the table, and left me—not alone, for on turning my head, I saw Captain Lenox.

Ah Heavens! exclaimed I, what brought you hither? is Miss Holten with you?—I trembled, I was ready to faint.

My dearest Lady, said he, tenderly pressing my hands and seating himself by me, you injure me to suppose other inducements were necessary, than that esteem you ever allow'd me to profess for you.

But whence this terror? this emotion? why those eyes clouded with sorrow, which were wont to enliven all around? Perhaps, taking up the book, I may learn the cause here; it tells the tale of ill-requited love.

I snatched it from him with an eagerness which surpriz'd him, but seizing me he said, a curiosity, so rais'd as his must be gratified.

I had not sufficient strength to preserve my prize, he got possession, he opened it; an unwonted softness overspread every feature, and pressing the book to his lips, he presented it to me, saying he was in error, that my affliction could not be derived from that book—if he thought so he would reclaim it.

I told him it would be ungrateful to part with that from whence we had derived the highest advantages.

And pray, my dear Madam, said he smiling, what advantage can have accru'd to you from the perusal of a work replete with truths, the most displeasing to a fine Lady's ear.

It might be, said I, but industry will conquer difficulties, which at first appear insurmountable; were we to set out upon a journey at midnight, we should naturally feel some alarming sensations; but as the broad day advanced, so would our hopes fortify; and the assurance that the rising sun will conduct us to our journey's end makes us think of obstacles no more; thus what commenced with painful reluctance, in the end procures us the utmost satisfaction.

He good-naturedly ask'd me whom I had chosen for a preceptor? I told him my own heart, and the conversation of sensible friends.

When I first saw him a secret inclination whisper'd me that I was to set down this journey to my own account; but I was undeceived, when he told Mrs. Eastmont he expected the arrival of a friend from Lisbon in one of the Falmouth packets.

Mrs. Eastmont gave him a general invitation to Roseworth, guessing, as she afterwards confessed, the design of his visits, tho' she would not pain me at the time by saying so, and that his expected friend was only a pretence to give colour to his being in that part of the world.

It was not the way to cure me of my passion, to hear from every mouth the praises of the man who had rais'd it.

I daily attended Mrs. Eastmont on her benevolent excursions, where a well-timed bounty rais'd the sick, and reliev'd the oppress'd: A parcel of decent looking children came to her one morning to crave her assistance, crying that wicked men were going to carry their poor father to a prison;—Mrs. Eastmont, ordering her housekeeper to take care of the children, and contrary to the maxim established by too many who look upon christianity as a profession, not a duty, and put off the cries of the distressed 'till their leisure makes it convenient to hear them, she set about it immediately.

I went with her, and by the way the servant inform'd us of the crimes of which the poor delinquent was accused, and for which he was likely to spend his days, lost to all his hopes, in a prison.

This honest man's industry to support his wife and ten children, had been unsuccessful; the rains had spoiled his crops, his cattle died, his eldest son had rifled him, and had disappeared with what was to have discharged his rent; he begged for time, when he hoped to do it, it was deny'd him; but alas! the flinty bosom of proud prosperity never felt the joys resulting from the sweet compassion, the delight of wiping away the tear of sorrow, or suppress the sigh of anguish; his goods, his person also was seized, by order of his landlord, whom persuasion could not soften, not misfortune melt.

A prison was the last retreat for one whom the severest censures could not condemn—his crime was poverty, and that is the only one the sons of rapine cannot pardon.

We found the poor man ready to depart for the county gaol, his wife in the agonies of death, the little children clinging about him; whilst tears—not of pusillanimity ran down the venerable man's cheeks. I stepped up to the man who detain'd him, and, said, that so honest a countenance as the farmer's did not seem at all fit for the company he was going to keep; he has not committed murder has he?

O no, said one, assuming a look of importance, he is only in debt; well but, returned I, you would not put an honest man in prison because he is poor? they had law for it, they said.

For shame, rejoined I, good christians should act according to conscience; I suppose you gentlemen would chuse to be thought christians as well as your employer,—the men star'd—this good man is my friend, let me hear the sum total of his crimes, and if those bills, putting some into their hands, which I had put into my pocket on purpose, will not rub 'em all out, let me know.

Mrs. Eastmont would have prevented my taking this affair upon myself, but I insisted upon it, and not to witness longer a scene which had a good deal affected me; I caught the least of the children in my arms, and went and sat with it under a little arbor of honeysuckles and sweetbriar by the side of the door, which happened to face the road.

At that moment Captain Lenox rode up, and seeing me in a place so unthought of, dismounted in a moment; to prevent his entrance, I asked him if he would accompany me to Roseworth.

First tell me, said he, why do I see the glistening tear trembling in your eye?

I told him that Mrs. Eastmont, who delighted in acts of beneficence, had introduc'd me to a scene of distress to which I had been unaccustom'd: He said that the share we took in the misfortunes of others, was the best indication of a right mind, and he that would not readily divide the cup of sorrow with an afflicted brother, could never enjoy the most refin'd delight of the human heart!

I reply'd I admired his sentiments, but wanted resolution to adopt them.

He look'd surpriz'd, and said he hoped not. Here Mrs. Eastmont and the farmer accosted us, the latter fell down at my feet, whilst with the tears of gratitude he bathed my hand; not all my efforts could raise the honest mortal, 'till Lenox and Mrs. Eastmont, who had been in close conference during this scene, approached us; ah, Madam! cry'd Lenox, why have you sought to deceive me?

He said no more, nor needed, his delighted looks express'd more than words could have done; I am ready to attend you, at length he added, Mrs. Eastmont will follow us soon.

I offer'd him my hand, and we walk'd directly to the cell at Roseworth, where, for some time, he continued gazing on me in an unusual manner, yet not with boldness.

I was a good deal flutter'd; he did not appear less agitated; he took my hands, and with looks wherein the softest sensibility was visible, continued surveying me,

Ah, my dearest Lady! said he breaking silence, what an ornament is the tear of humanity to the finest features!—you were never so truly lovely as at this moment, when conscious goodness adds a lustre to every charm.

Receiving a compliment from a quarter so unexpected affected me, I burst into tears—he caught me to his bosom for a moment, and then begging pardon for the freedom, entreated to know if he had unintentionally given me pain? if you knew the feelings of my heart, you would pity—not condemn—what virtue authorises—what reason cannot subdue, what in one moment makes me the most miserable and most happy of men; tell me, I conjure you, am I to place those falling tears to my own account?

I frankly told him that had my actions always been deserving of approbation, I should not have been so much affected at his; the applause of the worthy was too valuable to be received with indifference by a person of feeling.

I must not suffer myself to hear you, my dear Lady Frances—your goodness—my own honour—may I dare solicit your friendship? You shall never find me ungrateful—Lord Wilton loves you tenderly; his happiness centers in your's—you cannot resolve to make him miserable!

I was about to pronounce Lord Wilton's name, but he prevented me, said it was too much, and left me.

I quitted the cell immediately, and hurried to the house to avoid him 'till dinner; he perceived my design, and entreated my stay; I knew the weakness of my heart too well to trust it with him, and got out of sight as soon as possible.

At Roseworth I spent the happiest two months in my life; for once I acted with duplicity towards Georgina, I never told her that Captain Lenox was of our party. Mrs. Hamilton now thought of leaving the country; the Captain offer'd himself as our escort; I reminded him that the friend he had travelled so far to receive was not yet arrived—he press'd my hands, and turning from me with a sigh, made me no reply.

My credulous heart flatte'd me I was that friend, and that he entertained for me sentiments not dissimilar to mine for him. With unfeigned regret I quitted Mrs. Eastmont, and on our return home we stopt again at the Wells; there Miss Holten join'd me, visibly chagrin'd when she found who had been of our party; Captain Lenox paid her very little attention; to appearance I engrossed it all.

I made it my whole study to please him; whatever dress I heard him commend in another Lady, that I was sure to imitate; the books he most admired became my favourites; whatever amusements he disapprov'd, those I shunned; his conversation was so replete with taste and good sense as to make all other disgusting to me, and he never quitted me but I had gained some instructions.

Here Lord Wilton again obtruded himself; Captain Lenox was drinking tea with us, the afternoon he arrived; as I knew he had just quitted my brother, forgetting all former connections between us, I expressed great pleasure on seeing him; and his accounts of the welfare of my family, gave me an unusual flow of spirits; alas, I little thought the consequence of it, would prove fatal to the peace of my future days,

From that time Captain Lenox resumed all his former reserve, but continued to visit me, but his vivacity forsook him, his visits were generally made in company with his

friend; his civilities were cold and forced; Miss Holten affected a cold reserve towards him, I one day asked her the reason of it?

She told me our sentiments, of men and manners, could not always be the same; that however right we might be in forming opinions, she could not think it capricious to alter them, whenever a change of conduct in the object required it; she once thought Captain Lenox possessed of the most valuable accomplishments, and that he entertained the nicest sentiments of love, and honour, that she was now well convinced he was a very common character, and incapable of either; that in his absence she had heard much of his general disposition, that he was unsteady in his friendship and incapable of forming a real attachment—his present conduct but too well justifi'd her assertions. I made full confession to her of my weakness, binding her to the most solemn vows of secrecy.

She urged me not to resent his treatment, but to return it with indifference; I told her, I had already too severely experienced the fatal consequences of coquetry, and that if I lost his esteem, it was better it should be the effect of his caprice, than from any justifiable procedure of mine.

She then informed me, he had actually an intrigue with a young Lady then at the Wells, which was much talked of; I remembered to have met him several times with the person she described; whenever I saw him I summoned all my resolution, to conceal the anxiety his behaviour occasioned me.

I went every night into public, Lord Wilton, with several young men of fashion, were my constant attendants.

I saw Captain Lenox there; gay, easy, complaisant, I behaved with equal indifference; Miss Holten gave the highest eulogiums to my conduct: this for some time supported me, but as my heart and my conduct were at variance, I soon grew disquieted with it.

I blushed at my follies, and resolved to conceal them from the world; I determined on quitting the Wells, and spend the remaining part of the summer with my aunt at Harewood: for ever since my dream of vanity had been over, I had kept up a regular correspondence with her.

Georgina approved my design, and would have accompanied me; but I had two reasons for leaving her behind, the one was to keep up Mrs. Hamilton's spirits, whose husband grew worse; the other that she might send me what intelligence she could concerning Captain Lenox.

My aunt received me with more affection, than my former treatment of her gave me a right to expect: she welcomed me to her heart, as a lost child returned.

Here solitude strengthened my disquiet, and Georgina's letters soon confirmed it; in one of these she informed me that Captain Lenox had received orders to join his corps in Ireland; and had actually embarked with the young Lady, whom I looked upon as my rival: that his conduct was highly censured by those who had the least regard for his reputation.

This letter put a final period to my peace, its fatal contents preyed upon my health for some months, till at last my life was despaired of.

My Brother and his Lady came down to see me, if any thing could have healed the wound in my mind, their kindness would have done it. Georgina too came down, her attentions were unremitted, but to no purpose.

At length I recovered so far as to be able to leave my chamber, my brother beg'd as soon as I was in a situation to travel I would come to town: to put an end to his importunities, I promised; and as I saw my aunt detested the sight of Georgina, I beg'd she might go first to prepare every thing for my reception; tho' I had previously determined not to stir.

Lord Wilton was at the trouble of visiting me, I wish'd my heart could have done justice to his merit, the more I tried to deserve him, the more I found myself unequal to the task. I wished yet feared to ask him if he had lately heard from his friend.

Of his own accord, he drew a letter from his pocket which he had lately received from him: it was very short, and ended with wishing him a long, and perhaps a last adieu, as he was about to leave his regiment, for an employ in the East India service; for whether he breathed under the temperate, or torrid zone, was of little consequence to himself, or the world; for where peace of mind is wanting, he was indifferent as to climate.

Judge what I felt, but the presence of Lord Wilton imposed silence on me; he next informed me of the disadvantageous reports that had been raised of Captain Lenox during his stay at the Wells, for that the Lady whom he had taken to Ireland, was the daughter of a soldier, of more honour than fortune; for whose widow he had by his interest obtained a pension, and a commission for his son, the young Lady was the wife of a brother officer; whose marriage for particular reasons had been till then concealed. And Lord Wilton concluded with saying, that the report must have been the effect of female mischief; so indeed it was proved, but till it was too late, I knew not whom to accuse.

I now looked with abhorrence upon my late conduct; I hated myself, but alas I loved Captain Lenox more than ever.

Ah would my thoughtless sex, my dear Harriot, but reflect a little, on the unhappy consequences of diverging ever so little from the line of rectitude to which every virtuous mind should invariably adhere!

Relieved from the society of all the world, I could now sigh, and weep unreproved, except when my kind aunt was present; she possessed none of that frigid austerity, we generally find in people, who grow old without attachments; and her conversation was not burthened with the detail to which people in years are subject; she had all the good nature which is generally thought to belong exclusively to those of fewer years, and fairer complexions.

Her excellent conversation proved the best panacea to my distempered mind; for that she guessed was the seat of my malady. When my health would permit, in compliance with her humour, I saw some of her particular friends.

One day she introduced me to a visitor of no common form, he was still graceful tho' much emaciated—terror took possession of my soul, when I beheld Captain Lenox!

I doubted the evidence of my senses—I continued gazing upon him, whilst he spoke to me in a tone of voice, that greatly affected me, as he surveyed my altered form, he could not suppress a sigh.

I eagerly asked him what brought him to England, and particularly to Harewood?

He said he had heard of my illness and the place of my residence from Lord Wilton, that he was desirous of seeing me once more, before he went abroad.

I told him I had heard of his extended expedition, and asked him his motives for undertaking, what had proved so fatal to many?

He went less with a desire, he said, of gathering laurels than with the hope to cure a wounded mind.

My aunt said, she feared his disease must be desperate indeed, at so early an age to give up all thoughts of happiness; and hoped his present dejection arose chiefly from an ideal evil;—he shook his head, and sigh'd!

My niece, continued my aunt, had talked of you as one of her particular friends, we will unite our endeavours to inspire you with thoughts less gloomy; she added, that she hoped his conversation would not have a bad effect on my spirits, which every means hitherto had been ineffectually been tried to raise.—I blush'd—he look'd confused—he entreated my aunt to inform him of the particulars of my late illness, and asked if I took proper methods to hasten my recovery.

My aunt's answers to his interrogations, overwhelmed me with confusion; and I could feel the blood ascend from my heart to my cheeks, with a rapidity that gave the enemy no small advantage over me.

We do not apprehend, continued she, Fanny's disease to be mortal, would she but inform us where the malady is seated, the physicians say it is upon the mind; her brother and I were of the same opinion till we reflected, that she had no one to restrain her inclinations, and tho' she is my niece, I do not think her an unworthy match for any man; it cannot be Lord Wilton whom we wish; for when he came last here, she told him never to see her more, unless in the character of a friend; now perhaps you, Sir, who have been of all her parties, may be able to guess.

Here Lady Frances was interrupted in her narrative, and here I subscribe myself ever your's,

H. MELVERN.

THE
SUSPICIOUS LOVERS:

A NOVEL.

In THREE VOLUMES.

By the Author of WOODBURY.

VOL. III.

Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes;
The canker galls the infants of the Spring,
Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd;
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.

SHAKESPEARE.

LONDON:

Printed for J. WILKIE, *St. Paul's Church-Yard*; and
E. and C. DILLY, in the *Poultry*.

MDCCLXXVII.

LETTER I.

Miss MELVERN to MISS AIRSBY.

Continuation of the MEMOIRS of

LADY FRANCES WARWICK.

MY aunt, continued Lady Frances, proceeded to ask him, if he could possibly guess who had sufficient attractions to steal me from myself, without so much as giving me the most distant hope of a return?

The conduct of every delicate mind, Madam, returned Lenox, throwing down his fine eyes, is so uniformly upright, and every thought and action, so critically unguarded, that they leave not the strictest observer room to discover, to which point the affections of the heart tend; and the favourite object, through tyrant custom, receives perhaps not those civilities to which every common acquaintance is entitled—This may be Lady Frances's case, I know the delicacy of her feelings; I know her just notion of propriety; yet I thought her regard for Lord Wilton was such, as would one day make him the happiest of men: give me leave to say, I think this dear Lady's indisposition cannot be of the mind; for she who had power to command mankind, can never herself be a slave.

His looks were too piercing for me to support them, I was almost ready to faint—He staid the evening with us, and when he arose to go, he begged leave to wait upon us the next morning:—I bowed, but could not speak my assent—He was no sooner gone than my aunt was loud in his praises.

When I was alone, I began a retrospect of my past life, it afforded me no relief, but exhibited a striking lesson for the future to avoid falling into the same snares. My constant pursuit had been universal admiration; my vanity was gratified! and my heart continued free from attachments, 'till I found the only man who was ever capable of inspiring it with a serious passion, and this man was the only one who never sought to gain it by adulation; he was the first person who ever ventured to set the impropriety of my conduct before me; my reason acknowledged the force of his arguments, and my resolution helped me to carry on the work, and tho' what was praise-worthy in me, never excited his approbation, yet I was happy to reflect I was acting upon his principles. Censure from him was more grateful to me, because I knew he was right, than the homage of other men.

When he came again, I was extremely low, he seemed infected with the same disease;—my aunt, at length, introduced the subject of his voyage, and ask'd him if her friends were pleased with so hazardous an undertaking, or if he did it to gratify ambition or curiosity?

He told her, neither, but what he wanted most to avoid was himself, that his heart, unhappily for him, had received too deep an impression for time ever to wear it out, as the object was such as to preclude all hopes: in short, Madam, continued he, I am in every thing the reverse of her I love; she is rich, amiable, independent; my present fortunes bear no proportion to her's, nor can they be raised but by an event which I hope is far distant.

Thus, my pride, combating with my love, hath at length urged me to forego all thought of soliciting a blessing to which nothing but the sincerity of my passion can give me the least claim: I am determined to leave her without disclosing the secrets of my bosom, lest, offended at my presumption, she forbids me to hope. Can a man of honour wish the object of his attachment should receive a lover unworthy of her? O Madam! O Lady Frances! let the anguish of my mind engage you to pity me.

You talk, said my aunt, like a very young man; I should not think any gentleman of education, birth, family, and strict honour, beneath the acceptance of any woman of what rank soever; fortune may procure the elegancies of life, but cannot purchase the felicity of it.

Ah, Madam! turning from her with great emotion, the scruples of a delicate mind are no to be overcome; its sensations can be known only to itself—Thus, Ladies, you know my situation: if an impulsive tenderness, which overflows the faithfulest of human bosoms, can engage your pity?—if you have ever felt?—if, my dear Lady Frances, (seizing my trembling hands in his, which were not less agitated)—he could not proceed—how pathetic his silence! as if unknown to himself, his eyes glanced upon me—he checked himself—tears ran down my cheeks, which he attempted to wipe away, when withdrawing his hand, his face glowed—again he attempted it—again his agitations were renewed—again our eyes met—he took out his watch—if, said he, pressing my hands, we never meet again;—more he might have said; a giddiness seized my head, I fell back upon my seat in a fainting fit.

When I came to myself I found my aunt telling him I had been subject to these fits ever since my illness; the good soul was strangely affected—I attempted an apology for my behaviour, but could not have constructed a sentence had the world been given me.

I cannot call it an unhappiness, my dearest Ladies, said Lenox, that I see you affected at my situation; the compassion which benevolent minds feel for the distress of a friend (for as such I hope I am regarded) is too flattering not to be cherished with the warmest sentiments of gratitude; and tho' it cannot allay pain, yet the reflection will make the burden of it sometimes not intolerable; but could I, before my departure, see the dawn of returning health light up once more the countenance of my dear Lady Frances, I should feel myself less unhappy; to be honour'd with her friendship is the wish next my heart—refin'd souls alone are capable of friendship; may I hope not to be forgotten?—O promise me but that, dropping on one knee; I beg'd him if he had humanity, not to distress me, and foolishly said I would promise him any thing.

You will receive one letter from me? eagerly interrupting me; I must leave you then, and leave you at a moment when your goodness has awaken'd every tender feeling of my soul; be assured I will never abuse the kind indulgence; in return I will trust you with a secret which has hitherto never escaped me—in this case, putting one into my hand, you will find the dear resemblance of the most perfect original—contemplate its features but a moment, and whilst you wonder at my presumption, you will not refuse your pity. So may the God of Heaven preserve you to a far distant day! and may you long live to bless some happy, worthy man, who to his latest moment will be grateful as he ought, for a treasure above all price—else—else—adieu, adieu, pressing my hands to his bosom—his eyes dropt a tear upon them—then folding me in his arms a moment, he hurried out of the room, giving me a last look as he left it.

It is needless to tell you what this painful separation cost me: when I found there was no possibility of recalling him, I confessed to my aunt that all my hopes of happiness were departed with Captain Lenox.

But why, continued I, do I mourn his absence? I will hate him—I will forget him—he loves—another possesses his tenderness—this case, taking up that which he had given me, contains the idol of his soul—I will find some imperfection in her—she shall witness the sorrow she occasions.

I open'd it, a striking resemblance of myself was presented to my view, together with his own picture!—Ah, my friend! the tumults of my bosom at that moment were too powerful for me to bear! to lose him for ever at the moment I was convinced of his affection, and to lose him because I possessed those very advantages of which I was only proud, as they might put it in my power to confer happiness upon him! How much did I esteem his principles, tho' his persevering in them made me miserable! My aunt was not surprised I should conceive an affection for the amiable Lenox, she only blamed my secrecy. After some weeks she prevailed on me to return to town—I consented, provided I should be refused to all company, particularly to those idle morning visitors, who, desirous of murdering time themselves, are anxious also to kill that of their neighbours.

I sometimes saw Lord Wilton, but he neither talked of love or of his friend; my brother took every opportunity of strengthening his interest with me, but to no purpose; my aunt, as I had entreated her, kept my secret from him. Late one evening I heard the voice of Lord Wilton upon the stair-case; before I could have time to form my conjectures what could have brought him at so unusual an hour, he rush'd into my apartment, horror was in his looks, and some drops of blood were upon his clothes—Murder and Lenox united, were sounds too powerful for me to hear unmoved, the idea took away my senses, and prevented my hearing what he, Lord Wilton, had further to say. When I recovered, which was not for a long time, I found myself surrounded by my friends, but discovering the amiable Lenox among them, I thought I saw a vision, and that his departed spirit was return'd to chide my stay—I promis'd to follow him, but his assurances that he was living, and only distressed for my indisposition, did more towards restoring me than any thing else.

When I was a little recovered, Lord Wilton beg'd my aunt and Georgina to withdraw for a few moments, as he could not express his folly before such a number of witnesses. Captain Lenox was attempting an apology for his conduct, when his friend interrupted him, let me crave your silence a few minutes, my dear Charles, said he, I will not use it to your disadvantage. At present I will not inform Lady Frances what means you have used to preserve my life and honour; suffice it to say, they were both in your power, both you generously preserved; your happiness in some measure lies in mine, and shall I not in return attempt every means to secure it.

My love for you, Lady Frances, has been hourly encreasing since the commencement of our acquaintance; there was a time when I hoped my perseverance would have been crown'd with success; but since you became acquainted with my best friend my warmest solicitations have been rejected with the most mortifying indifference; the eye of jealousy soon pointed out to me my rival in my friend; your long illness confirmed my suspicions—I knew his situation—I read his sentiments, and I knew also that his delicacy, wounded by his limited fortunes, kept him silent. He quitted you, I admired, what I could not imitate, his fortitude.

Meeting him unexpectedly at a tavern this evening, a thought suggested itself to me, that his voyage was only a pretence, and that he secreted himself in the town the better to effect private interviews with you, as I thought nothing less could have dragged you from the country.

I left my company with whom I had dined, and beg'd him to retire with me for a few minutes; I had drank more than usual—my passions were inflamed—very little altercation pass'd between us, I reproached him for the meanness of his conduct; he attempted to vindicate himself, and declare you were unacquainted with his being in town; I doubted his veracity—I drew, desiring him to do the same; his calmness spurred my revenge—he bared his bosom to me, bidding me strike deep, but if I really loved you, not to wound you in his heart. I made a lunge at him, happily, passion, not prudence, directed the stroke, for I lost my advantage, he got possession of my sword, which he instantly return'd, telling me when next I pointed it at the breast of a friend, to remember, I should be unworthy of your esteem.

At length, overpower'd by his arguments, I caught him in my arms, I feared to look upon him, I left him for above an hour, and shut myself up in an adjoining apartment, where he beg'd leave to join me; he accosted me with that steady calmness which a consciousness of doing well inspires; I come not, my Lord, said he, with reproaches, I come to congratulate you on the most important victory of all victories, a victory gained over yourself! blush not, but glory in the triumph!—receive again my friendship, which I can only offer you on condition you keep my being here a secret; I have the strongest reasons to urge it.

My coach was waiting, I whisper'd the servant to drive us hither; the Captain as soon as he perceived my design, earnestly opposed it; I insisted on his compliance as the cement of all future harmony between us.

Thus, Madam, I have brought him here,—revere the man whom interest cannot sway, nor temptation subdue! I would not wait to be announced, I fear'd a refusal from you. You will see me no more as a lover, but if as a friend I can be the means of accelerating an union of hands, where hearts have been so long join'd, you may command me; one tear of kind compassion is all the reward I exact.—Long, long, said he, dropping on one knee, may every domestic joy smile around you; and may you, Lenox, snatching his hand, which he joined with mine, never know a disappointment, 'till this dear girl ceases to be sensible of your kindness, may there be but one heart, but one soul between you!—Instantly he flew out of the room. I was quite overcome at a behaviour as uncommon as it was unexpected. Heaven, and Lord Wilton, said Lenox, have favour'd me beyond my hopes, and when least expected, have marked out an hour for me pregnant with events; if you have open'd the box I left with you at Harewood, you are not now to learn who is the arbitress of my fate; and now I can only entreat a pardon for my presumption. Tho' Lord Wilton and I have been long united by the strictest friendship, yet 'till this evening he was never acquainted with my ambitious hopes—true love will be ever nourished in silence—to that silence, Madam, let me be indebted for your pardon, in a few days I shall leave England.

My dearest aunt unable to contain her joy at the Captain's return, hearing Lord Wilton was gone, entered, and the lively testimonies she gave him of it filled me with confusion.

He left me soon after and appeared satisfied with his reception, he beg'd leave to breakfast with us.

When he was gone, my aunt said, if my brother made the least objection to my marriage, she would settle her whole fortune upon Lenox, to make his equivalent to mine.

The next day Lenox fulfilled his engagement, but cruel necessity obliged me to break mine: I had not strength from my long illness to repel the shock of the preceding evening, it brought on a violent return of my fever; and for three weeks afterwards, I saw nothing of Captain Lenox, who came ten times a day to enquire after me: Georgina's watchfulness and attention, was one principal means of preserving me, to undergo all I have since endured.

As I recovered, I had no airs, no coquetry to play off, I was only studious to please Captain Lenox.

His voyage was easily set aside, and at the end of three months my health was so much established, that the impatient Lenox began to be anxiously solicitous for a speedy day,—a day my Harriot marked out by heaven never to arrive!

By what means I know not, I lost the affections of Captain Lenox, (here a shower of tears interrupted her narrative, after some time she proceeded). Captain Lenox grew reserved in his behaviour when present, and his frequent absences for several days

together, gave me the first indication of his growing indifference; Georgina would persuade me I had a rival, and that Lenox like many of his sex, on the like occasion, was only desirous of gaining a victory, for the glory, not for the value of the captive.

For I long time I never reproached him, but endeavoured to recall him by gentleness, not wound him by resentment.

Georgina said, he was sure of his power, and did not think it worth while to improve his advantages, that if I paid his indifference with contempt, it would be a more likely means of awakening him.

I determined at length to try the experiment: if he called of a morning I ordered the coach, and went out, leaving Georgina with him; Lord Wilton continued his visits, but seldom came unaccompanied by his friend; in this manner we went on for some time; rather worse than better; tenderly as I loved him, my pride so far got the better of my love, in an interview we had, in which his contemptuous treatment of me, roused my indignation, that I bade him never see me more, and said that as I was mistress of myself and my actions, I could yet see what company I pleased: upon which, bowing low, he quitted me; he called again and again, but I refused to admit him till he chose to justify himself; soon after he sent me the following billet; which you shall here transcribe.

* * * * *

B I L L E T.

To Lady FRANCIS WARWICK.

“Far be it Madam from the unworthy Lenox to break in upon your happuness, a happiness, which, had not a strange fatality interposed, it would have been his highest felicity to have promoted.

“That you are your own mistress, and at liberty to chuse the society most agreeable to your wishes, I am well convinced: you cannot reproach me then, for acting upon your own principles, mine I thank heaven are hitherto independent; and will not be governed by interest, or blinded by hope.—My views are circumscribed.—Love and honour are powerful combatants in the human breast; the former is a fire which blazes for a moment, and is seen no more; but honour is solid and durable.

“Doubt not then but as long as I retain my honour, your fame by me will remain uncensored, your unsteady conduct and fatal attachment to coquetry shall never be the subject of my gayer hours: your name and character shall be ever sacred. May you be as bless'd as you deserve, I have loved you long, I can never love you less, and if hereafter in some moment of reflection, a thought of Lenox should return, remember, O remember! the struggle in his breast between *love* and *honour* was powerful, the latter triumph'd, yet happiness crowned not the victory.
LENOX.”

I bore this stroke the better, fearing my brother should be made acquainted with it; he supposed our separation was occasioned by my own indiscretion, my silence convinced him he was right: had I shewn him Lenox's letter, wherein he evidently suspected my honour, the event might have been doubly fatal. My aunt and Georgina were my only confidantes; resentment kept up my spirits for some time, but I had not strength to combat it long; desirous of hiding myself from every human eye; I entreated my aunt to take me down again to Harewood. She complied.

I continued there fifteen months till her death, which was a heavy misfortune to me; Georgina dividing her time, between her father, and me. I knew not the worth of this dear good aunt till just before I lost her. Had my parents like her, mixt precept with indulgence, I might still have been happy—the love of applause would not have tainted my infant mind, had my passions been as carefully subdued, as they were studiously gratified, I should have avoided all the mortifications I have since known. My character would not have been made the sport of fools, nor would Captain Lenox at his first acquaintance with me, have shudder'd at an alliance with a coquet; tho' as he afterwards told me, he loved me in spite of my faults.

The more I reflected on my past life, the more I was convinced of the fatal consequences attending one false step at our first setting out; in me you behold an unhappy instance of it.

When I lost my lover, I lost also the friendship of Lord Wilton; and two years afterward he married a very amiable woman.

About this time a circumstance happened, that had like to have proved more fatal to my peace of mind, than all my preceding troubles; my reputation was every where calumniated, and common report declared me intriguing with a young attorney, into whose hands my affairs fell, on the death of his father: he was seen by the whole neighbourhood to leave my house at all hours; my brother was informed of it, and called upon me to account for my conduct; my most solemn asseverations could not gain credit with him. I seldom saw the young man, and then only when I had business with him: from that time my brother became a spy upon my actions, for no man had ever a nicer sense of honour.

One of his emissaries informed him, that Mr. Rawlins was known to be admitted into my house about twelve o'clock, one winter night, he posted himself in disguise, in order to observe the time of his quitting it, which was about three in the morning.

He no sooner saw the door opened, than seizing Rawlins he rushed into the house, where he found Georgina, and looking upon her as my abettor in iniquity, he locked her up with Rawlins in the first room, taking from them a light which conducted him to mine; where he found me plunged in that sweet repose, which guilt never found upon the softest pillow.

I was terrified almost to death on waking to find him there, he told me afterwards, that seeing me sleep so soundly all suspicions of my guilt vanished; and he was convinced Georgina alone was culpable.

He beg'd I would ring for my woman and get up, for that a glorious opportunity now offered for me, to regain his affection, and the world's esteem; and kissing me tenderly he went out of the room, begging me to make haste.

The whole house was soon alarmed, and so virulent were the servants against Georgina, that had I not interposed in her behalf, I believe they would hardly have left her alive.—I thought her wickedness would come to this cry'd one: she deserved to be hanged said another, 'twas she used to put the poor Captain in such a passion, and tell him your Ladyship was out, when you have often been sick in bed, said another.

The delinquents had nothing to say for themselves; my brother offer'd Rawlins his pardon on condition he married Georgina immediately, which he promised: they were packed off in a hackney coach, to the house of one of my brother's tradesmen, where they were confined for several days, till every thing was settled for their marriage: a short time after it was effected, Georgina presented her husband with a daughter.

A person I had so much loved I could not wish should suffer, I sent her a sum of money not unworthy her acceptance.

Every one now was loud in their censures of her conduct; tho' no one would venture to inform me of it before, and from many concurring circumstances I am convinced that through her treachery, I lost the affections of Captain Lenox: her love for him was so evident to all eyes but mine, that no one doubted it.

I have a particular friend by whose means I sometimes hear of the welfare, of the still too tenderly beloved Lenox, and tho' he is since come into the possession of a large fortune, he continues unmarried.

Thus, my dear Harriot, have I given you some account of a character, whose natural failings were strengthened, and increased by a female confidante, before reason enabled me to distinguish, and approve, of what was good.

Would to heaven that my story might but warn one incautious young woman, early in life to avoid those romantic connections, which so often prove fatal to our sex; and that no tender mother, would ever suffer her daughter to engage in any correspondence, which is not immediately under her own inspection; as that is the pernicious fuel which nourishes those passions, that naturally spring up in the hearts of young women.

From the moment these dangerous friendships are formed, every other duty becomes subservient to them, we look upon our parents as tyrants; our preceptors as hirelings, creatures void of every sentiment, noble or generous; who are only excited to

their duty by a view of reward, not from any real desire of improving the morals of their pupils.

With these, and many other reflections Lady Frances concluded her narrative; and here I leave you to draw such inferences from it, as you think proper.—Since I began this packet, I have received such a letter from Mr. Belville as his former tenderness to me justifies.—His father is better.

Adieu,

H. MELVERN.

Copyright Chawton House Library

LETTER I.

Miss AIRSBY to Miss MELVERN.

THIS Leland, Harriot, whom you once thought had more of a mind about him than is generally to be found amongst men, is at last wedded to a musical instrument—a mere harpsichord wife—a Miss Grosvenor, I think I have heard you mention her—so disappointed love won't kill.

Well, may only softer chords of this well-tuned instrument vibrate on his ears, (for he was captivated by her skill in musick) he is of a lively temper, and should a note be now and then a little out of tune, he will find more difficulty to harmonize it after, than before marriage; and what is worse, one discordant note will untune all the rest. They will be at the Hall soon, I am determined on paying my congratulations.

Poor dear Lady Frances—what vile creatures are these men? Ah, Harriot, how much better is it to laugh at them—than to—but as I have no idea of this very sublime passion, which never yet gave young woman peace of mind for a month together, I will only add, that I am Lady Frances's, as well as your affectionate

S. AIRSBY.

LETTER II.

Miss MELVERN, in Answer.

Bath.

WHERE a rooted disease is fixt on the mind, no change of situation can effect its cure.—
—* Your last reproaches my silence; two months, you say, and not a line to your Sophy, and two months, my friend, and not a line from Mr. Belville to your Harriot; but the cause is no secret, a prior engagement justifies him—he is to be pitied—how can he act otherwise?—but you shall hear.

Some time before I left Brooklands, a chaise stopping at the door, a young Lady in it beg'd to know if she could be permitted to see me. I gave orders for her introduction instantly, and attended her; she said her name was Hayward, she was an elegant woman, and dress'd with much taste. Whilst she beg'd me to grant her half an hour's conversation, her tears and sobs made her almost unintelligible, I beg'd her to be comforted, saying, if it anyways depended on me, she need only command me—her tears renew'd, she entreated my pity, without it she could not support her wretched existence. You know Mr. Belville, Madam; you are beloved by him; I was going to speak, but she entreated my silence a few minutes—she continued, do you remember that a few

* This letter does not appear.

weeks before he left England he left you? I Madam was the unhappy cause of his visit to Chester; at my solicitations he went a few miles to see her who had travelled hundreds in search of him.—There was a time I was tenderly beloved by him, he promised me that if fortune ever crowned his wishes—that—tears again choaked her utterance for some time; at length she proceeded——A report in Ireland prevailed of his son going to enter into other engagements; alarmed at it, I forfeited all pretensions to prudence; with only one friend I came over to England, tho' Mr. Belville had for some months dropt all correspondence with me; he offer'd me a large sum of money to return immediately to my country, before my absence became too public; and said that by so doing I should never want a friend: with these assurances he quitted me. Pardon, Madam, the uneasiness I see I have given you; Mr. Belville's love for you is sincere, I only am to be pitied.

I said very little to her, but told her I did not doubt Mr. Belville would do her justice, for that I did not think him capable of deceiving any one.

At parting she wrung her hands, again begged my pardon, and that I would not mention a word of what had passed to Mr. Belville—I promised—he no doubt is happy; so is all the world but

HARRIOT MELVERN.

LETTER IV.

To the same.

Bath.

TO alleviate distress and communicate happiness is the privilege but of few: there is but one hand can dispense it to your Harriot, and he withdraws it—she is forgotten—Miss Hayward regains her rights.

Yesterday's post brought me a letter from Kitty Fenwick, who has been some time in London, after her usual exclamatory manner, she says—"I will sooner learn wisdom from folly, and humility from pride, as put the least confidence in man: what a crocodile's heart is this Belville's! I will transcribe a passage from Sir William's letter to my father concerning him.

"I was long balancing in my mind, on the receipt of my son's letters to me, relative to his marriage; his readiness to attend me in my illness at once banishes all my scruples, and I resolved on making him happy on his own terms, and thought if the Lady had no fortune, it should not be the least impediment, as we had money enough amongst us; and that if the young folks were attached to each other, I wished but to see them happily united; for he, Cousin Fenwick, that will chuse for himself, cannot be angry with his friends for deceiving him.

"When I told my boy this, he behaved as I suppose most other young men would in his situation, he was mightily overjoyed, mighty grateful and all that. I beg'd him to write to the young Lady immediately, but this he refused, saying, as I was better, and if I did not disapprove it, he would be the messenger himself of such good news; I told him he had better write first, and as soon as I was able I would set out with him, as I wanted much to be in England; that I should like to see the Lady, before I received her as a daughter. The rogue beg'd I would not, for he was sure the moment I saw his Harriot, I should commence his rival.

"After this he began to lose his spirits, which I attributed to his long confinement with me; for no one could have shewn more affectionate attention, than he had done during my illness: at length I insisted he should take a trip to Dublin to visit his old friends there; he comply'd, leaving orders that if any letters came from England, they should be sent express after him.

"But now mark the folly of young men; he had not been gone long, before I heard from a gentleman, who was in Dublin at the time, that Edmund had been run through the arm fighting for a woman—he hinted to me that he had received a slight hurt only; if my health continues to amend, I will soon follow him."

Ah my Sophy, I but began to taste of the stream of felicity, e'er it is turned to bitterness.

Adieu,

H. MELVERN.

LETTER V.

The Rev. Mr. AIRSBY to Miss MELVERN.

Broomhill.

My dear Child!

FOR such is every daughter of affliction to me; exert your fortitude: What are the fairest prospects but beds of opening flowers, blossoming in the morning, and fading ere it is noon! If clouds obstruct your sight, and rivers of tears oppose your passage, a firm reliance on the goodness of God can dispel those clouds, dry up those tears, and in a moment open on the soul that perfection of happiness the world with all its promises can never give.

The blessings of Heaven are dispensed in proportion as the receiver has welcomed its rebukes, if they are accepted without murmuring, and endured without reproach, they will prove the greatest felicity. The Almighty enriches the reprobate with the good things of this world, but in the next, ample restitution must be made at the awful bar of justice; and whoever shall then be found with no accounts prepared, is threatened with an eternity of misery.

View well the contrast; if to suffer 'till time shall be no more, does not infinitely surpass that anguish of mind which temporary disappointments bring upon us. The vapours of the morning dissolve as the rising sun gilds the face of day: such is the religion in the bosom of affliction, it repels the murmurs of discontent, and opens the prospect of better days upon the soul, days which shall not be obscured by night.

Consider how swift our minutes fly, yet we are all concern'd in the great work of futurity, and if we sow our seed in a good ground, we shall gather the fruits of eternal blessedness. Think! O think, my child, you are journeying on to a glorious inheritance, and tho' thorns oppose your passage, faith and resignation will give you a safe convoy to that happy land "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

Your's, &c.

R. AIRSBY.

LETTER VI.

Lady FRANCE WARWICK to Miss AIRSBY.

Bath.

LA pitié (says Rouchfoucault) *est souvent un sentiment de nos propres maux, dans les maux d'autrui.*

Tho' pity is a sudden impulse of the soul, its efforts to serve are weak, yet it is soothing to the heart of the sufferer—I weep for the misfortunes of our Harriot, whilst her eyes are dry—My distress is grateful to her affliction. Not a line has yet arrived from Mr. Belville; I who have suffer'd disappointments can readily account for the imperfection of human nature.

I have introduced a physician to our friend; she affects to have no complaint, tho' I see her daily wasting away; Loathby is a kind domestic soul, and but for him I know not what would become of us—he leaves us soon.

But I must prepare to attend our friend to the Pump.

* * * * *

What a mixture of good and ill does life team withal! Our Harriot had this day look'd up and smil'd. While we were at the Pump, Loathby brought in a gentleman who was in search of us, whom Harriot, as he spoke, knew to be her brother; she almost fainted under the weight of her joy—we returned home immediately.

As I was stepping into my chair, I observed George Fenwick, he made many enquiries after our friend; I ask'd him to dinner, which he declined, as he only waited for fresh horses to leave town immediately. Oh, Lady Frances! said Harriot to me, this dear brother must thank you for all your goodness to his sister; but all shall be happiness now—and clasping her hands, she fainted away in my arms. When she recover'd, and we were alone, she entreated me not to mention a word of Mr. Belville to her brother, at least for some days; I comply'd.

After we were a little compos'd, Mr. Melvern gave us some account of his travels, and the advantageous appointment he was to receive at home, in consequence of some services he had done his country abroad; and concluded with saying, he was doubly happy to return in time, to give the best of sisters to the only man he thought worthy of her, for he had heard from their friends as he passed through London, of her past sufferings, and present prospects.

Here a sigh escaped Harriot's bosom; the feelings of nature would not be repressed—I see, Ladies, said Melvern, there is some mystery between you; I know something of mankind; my sister loves an ingrate—a violent trembling seiz'd her—he caught her in his arms—Your silence, my Harriot, confirms my sentiments; if you have been treated unworthily by any man, he shall find in me a spirit that will not support indignities unresented. I said, some little disagreements had arisen between his sister and Mr. Belville, who, I fear'd, had in his absence receiv'd from her enemies some reports unfavourable to her; she look'd her thanks that I had brought him off so lightly.

Your good papa's letter has been our Harriot's best cordial during her affliction; whenever I catch her alone, it is open before her, with a sigh she folds it up, and laying it in her bosom—says, it is hard to conquer our feelings.

Your's, &c.

F. WARWICK.

LETTER VII.

Miss MELVERN, to Miss AIRSBY.

Bath.

A Man, says Swift, “seeing a wasp creeping into a phial filled with honey, that was hung on a fruit tree, said thus, “Why thou selfish animal art thou mad to go into a phial, where thou seest so many hundreds of thy kind dying before thee.”

Have I not fallen, my Sophy, into the very snare, in which I have seen so many tumbled before me? My sighs will not accelerate the return of Mr. Belville, nor will my tears ever obliterate his unkindness from my heart: 'Twas his *mind* I loved, now that is changed, he can no longer lay a claim to my regard—I may still pity him—he has been wounded, and perhaps he suffer'd in the cause of innocence. It was, they say, in defence of a woman—he is too good ever to raise his arm in a bad cause—Surely the man who has once loved virtue, can never cease to esteem her.

Ah how solitary a companion is vice? Can Belville have enlisted under her banners? it cannot be, the world is prompt to censure, and slow to approve. When I sat down to write, I had prepared another subject; I was going to talk to you of happiness, of my dear brother—but Lady Frances has told you all—I have not been well—I am better—I wonder if Mr. Belville is quite recover'd of the wound his father mentions in his letter to Mr. Fenwick? I should have told you before that my brother has enquired if his, and my Sophia, was as much improved in her person as understanding in his absence; at the reports I made him, his countenance glowed with delight; tell my good friends at Broomhill, said he, I will pay my duty to them soon.

* * * * *

My mind is in an agony—fear ices my blood, I have just overheard my brother tell Lady Frances he will go over to Ireland, and demand of Mr. Belville an explanation of his conduct. O no, no! said I, bursting in upon them, if poor Belville is guilty, he is beneath our resentment; if innocent, time will justify him—He had given me his honour to take no step without my knowledge.

I long to leave Bath; I long to be at rest—where shall I find it?—Poor Mr. Belville, I wonder if he is better—Methinks I would rather weep with him than rejoice with all the world.—Were I convinced he was out of danger, I could then subscribe myself

Your contented,

H. MELVERN.

LETTER VIII.

To the same.

Bath.

THE sources which have so long supplied my eyes, are dried—for not a tear moistened them when I saw Mr. Belville—yes, I have seen him! and who knows—for the last time perhaps.—My enraged brother—but ere this I may have no brother!—should either fall!—what a weight of guilt hangs over me—yet I am not criminal—I never sought to give pain—My power has been too circumscribed to make an individual happy—give me patience, good Heaven, to support that which human nature unassisted could not sustain!

I can write no more.

* * * * *

Shall I tell you the anguish I have known? all the evils my fears anticipate? Ah, no, it were impossible; the weakest body may endure anguish, which the best pen cannot paint—Our griefs entwine about the heart; but joy is instantaneous, and passes away.

Airing with my brother on one of the public roads near the city—our driver turning short, struck against another chaise, where was Mr. Belville and a Lady, whose face, as he put himself forwards, I could not see—It is, it is Mr. Belville, cry'd I to my brother, whose head was out of the window giving directions to the driver.

Mr. Belville heard my voice, look'd at me, bow'd low, bidding his postilions make haste. We were soon disentangled. My brother attempted to persuade me the person

I had seen was not Mr. Belville, for he would certainly have spoken to me—his silence convinc'd me I was forgotten—his infidelity I could no longer doubt.

When my brother delivered me up to Lady Frances, I had more the appearance of an inhabitant of the next world, than of this.—She express'd herself much rejoiced at the rencontre, hoping thereby that an immediate eccalaircissement would make all parties happy!—My brother said, tenderly as he loved me, I should entirely lose all claim to his esteem and affection, if I admitted again the visits of a man who openly insulted me, and only sought to gratify his vanity. To the truth of all this my reason assented, but my lips attempted to plead for him—I urged the malice of the world, and its disposition to malign the fairest characters—to which he reply'd, he fear'd that when I gave Mr. Belville my heart, I parted with my delicacy also, at least if I continued to think favourably of a man, who had acted on such principles, he should think so.

Whilst we were discussing this point, Mr. Belville sent up his name; I endeavour'd to look, what I could not speak, a denial; my brother order'd the servant to say I saw no company. An hour afterwards an unsealed billet was brought from him, requesting an interview: Lady Frances strongly pleaded for it: at that moment I thought of Miss Hayward, of the Lady I had just seen with him, and who I supposed to be her—my pride took the alarm—I sent him a verbal denial—it was no sooner sent than I bitterly repented it.

My brother, pain'd at my weakness, left me, and went to the coffee-house; he was accosted in the street by Mr. Belville, who ask'd him if he was not the person he had met with Miss Melvern on the road? My brother answering in the affirmative, Mr. Belville ask'd him to honour him with a few minutes conversation at his inn, to which he assented, promising to attend him in half an hour—he took that opportunity of stepping home to inform us of his engagement.

He is gone—ah what distracting images do my fears create!—Mr. Belville who was once so good, can he be fallen so low? Farewell,

H. MELVERN.

LETTER IX.

Lady FRANCES WARWICK to Miss AIRSBY.
In continuation.

Bath.

TRUE friendship is not confined to the happy alone, but will kindly follow the wretched through every stage of calamity—you will not now forsake our Harriot. Mr. Melvern is return'd; the interview is over, what a misfortune there was no moderator between them! how unlucky that Loathby has left us!—Two such high spirits, each jealous of his

honour;—each too impassion'd to attend to the dictates of reason—but take what pass'd in Mr. Melvern's own words.

Mr. Belville, said he, accosted me with a distant civility; and after asking me a few questions to which he did not seem anxious to gain an answer, I reply'd in a vague and unsatisfactory manner. He said he supposed my acquaintance with Miss Melvern, must have commenc'd before her coming to Bath—I told him yes, even before her good fortune had introduced her to his—and, interrupted he, I suppose that acquaintance has been improved since you came hither, to your mutual satisfaction—let me tell you, Sir, when once a woman has forfeited her engagement to one man, I would not have you surpris'd she should hereafter break her word with you.

It is rather strange Mr. Belville should reproach a Lady with a forfeiture of engagements when she has such a striking example set her! You seem well acquainted with her affairs, rejoin'd he—You acknowledge then, Sir, interrupted he, that I have some foundation for what I say. Did you intend that as an insult to me? return'd he eagerly—O torture, torture! clasping his hands in an agony, for which I should have pitied him had not my Harriot's injuries rush'd upon me. Here a silence of some minutes ensued; after which I asked him to inform me what were his commands with me. He started up like one awaken'd from a dream; who are you, Sir? said he, and then again in a soften'd tone resum'd—it is needless for me to ask who you are; to know you are the friend of Miss Melvern—he paused—I should be proud to be esteemed the friend and protector of any woman of virtue, Mr. Belville—She has enlisted you her champion then, Sir, I suppose, said he ironically—It was so much a matter of my choice, interrupted I, that I became a volunteer in her service. He did not doubt it he said; and then ask'd me if I was acquainted with the nature of her engagements with him? I told him I was, and of some part of his conduct subsequent to those engagements, but the rest I should be glad to learn from himself.

Sneeringly he ask'd me, what recompence I was promis'd for thus interesting myself in Miss Melvern's affairs—I told him nothing more, than that good opinion, with which I was sorry to say she once honour'd *him*.

Did she ever tell you I once possess'd her regard? in a tremulous voice, yes, yes my own heart tells me so, when we parted she trembled,—she look'd kindly on me—she wept. Do you think she will never see me more? does she mention my name? am I quite forgotten? you see her often sir—folding his arms and sighing heavily, his head sunk upon his breast.

Her friendship for me, and my zeal to serve her, said I, make me ever a welcome guest to her. You speak sir, shaking his head, the flowery language of prosperous love! I speak only the language of truth Mr. Belville. Then grasping my hands with a violence, that made me suspect his head was strongly affected—Then you will tell me sir, if every tender record of me, is blotted from her remembrance, or not.

Well then Mr. Belville, if you really wish her happy the sooner she forgets you, the better. Enough sir, I am satisfied; I have conquer'd my foolish passion said he, I have only farther to trouble you, to deliver into her hands a paquet, it comes from a friend whose signature she will remember. The writer of it is just escaped from a deceitful world; where fraud and malice blacken the fairest days; but I will not detain you any longer.

I told him I had no engagement, and that there was nothing he could ask of me with propriety, which I would not readily perform, provided he could prove his conduct to be such as would justify my services, particularly since he quitted England; that perhaps it was more in my power to serve him with Miss Melvern, than in any man's whatsoever.

He rejoin'd, that it was giving myself unnecessary trouble, to inform him of my importance with that lady; I said I only wish'd to be esteemed, in proportion to my usefulness; and that I should think it a peculiar happiness to serve him.

Impossible, sir, cry'd he, you love Miss Melvern? I do Mr. Belville, interrupted I, her peace of mind, her honour; are dearer to me than life. Darting on his feet and gazing on me for some moments, with a fixt attention, he left the room with so much precipitation, I could not overtake him.

After waiting his return for some time, I rang the bell and on the waiter's appearance, order'd him to enquire if the gentleman had left the house. He return'd in a few minutes with Mr. Belville's compliments, that he was sorry for having detain'd me so long, and beg'd I would call on him about nine the next morning.

Thus far Mr. Melvern—who was just going to fill his appointment with Mr. Belville, when a letter, and a paquet which were brought for his sister prevented him: I will enclose the whole account.

Mr. BELVILLE to Miss MELVERN.

Madam!

WITHIN a few hours after my arrival in England I waited on you; your thought proper to decline my visits; I then wrote to you, to entreat a moment's audience, you refuse to grant it me, without doubt you are justified in so doing. That your delicacy may feel no future alarms on my account, I write to assure you that henceforward, the peace of mind which I beg heaven to crown every hour of your future life, will meet no cruel assaults from me—may that friend who honour'd me with a visit last night, make your happiness more perfect than it would ever had been in the power of Belville to have done; tho' his days would have been spent in keeping from you if possible, all the ills of life; in preserving your tender mind from every sense of pain.

Tho' I was not born to make you happy; yet your happiness will ever be mine: my every good which heaven can send, be yours; may the friend of your heart prove ever

faithful to you; and may every hour which comes crown'd with felicity to you, enlarge your pity for

BELVILLE.

P.S. That I might not give unreasonable trouble to any friend of yours, I write this to prevent the gentleman from fulfilling his promise to me, as by the hour appointed, I shall be many miles out of town. Could you have prevail'd on yourself to have admitted me once more to your presence, I would endeavour to have elucidated some matters relative to the pacquet which accompanies this.

Should a young lady call upon you, you will find her not unworthy your regard, tho' she comes recommended by one, who feels he had forfeited every claim to it—there is a native pride in innocence which nothing else can give—there is—but no more. Adieu!

BELVILLE.

Whilst Mr. Melvern read Mr. Belville's letter, for his sister was unable, she sat like a picture of silent sorrow, she sigh'd frequently, but spoke not; I still persisted that Belville was innocent; Mr. Melvern was stagger'd; in the mean while Harriot kept her half closing eyes (for the light was painful to her) upon the pacquet. This comes at length said she from our mother, let me know the worst while I can bear it. Melvern broke the seal, amongst other things contain'd in the pacquet, was the following letter.

Mrs. KELLY to Miss MELVERN.

My Dear Child!

SHOULD this ever reach you, the unfortunate writer, will either have experienced all the rigours of a justly offended judge; or all the mercies for which a repentant sinner dares to hope. Long have I lived in a state of corruption; the time of my repentance is short, and oh may the sincerity of it prove some extenuation; who knows what a month, a day, nay what a minute may bring forth? the grave I see already opening before me; had I follow'd that which was good, I should not now wish to exchange my being with the poorest wretch who lives, provided he had not lived a life of guilt.

In that terrible moment, which disunites the soul from the body; I should then have had my beloved children clasp'd to my bosom; I should have kiss'd away their tears; with my last breath I should have bless'd them; and full of a lively hope, have peaceably resigned my spirit, into the hands of him who gave it.

But good Heaven! what a fate is mine! I die a martyr to my own crimes; I die by the hand of him for whom I sacrificed truth, and honour; to whom also I sacrificed all the happiest prospects of my child; for whom I robbed her of all, except that which alone can dignify a death bed, of its horrors—of innocence—live! live my child! be happy, the bearer of this alone, I am convinced can make you so.

Were my expressions as powerful as my gratitude I could tell you all Mr. Belville has done for me—you only can repay my debt: I would say more, but the chords of life are disuniting, I grow faint—Ah how I have wasted years, and now count moments! years for guilt, and only moments for repentance; where shall I seek redress? 'tis not from their partners in iniquity that the wicked can hope for comfort; they shun them in the days of distress, for those very evils they have brought upon them—I speak the language of truth, of a broken heart, and a wounded spirit! Should your brother ever be restored to you—tell him, that she who murdered all your fair hopes, died for it.

The inclos'd letters deliver'd as directed as soon as possible after the receipt of this, will be the only means I have left of restoring to you part of those sums, of which, in the meridian of my wickedness I defrauded you; but happily by the interposition of providence, I soon afterwards saw my conduct in its most glaring light; and by endeavouring to preserve something for my child, when a proper opportunity offer'd, I received the fatal blows which will soon make me—Heaven knows, how much worse than nothing. O pray for your truly penitent and wretched mother,

C. KELLY.

* * * * *

Those who have seen collecting storms, burst from a summer's sky, may be able to form an imperfect idea of Harriot's agitations, whilst her brother read the letter. Ah see said she, Heaven sent our unhappy mother a friend on her death bed, that friend was—— she could not proceed, a cold shivering seiz'd her and she dropt into her brother's arms.

In this situation we carried her to her apartment, where we remain'd, till we were inform'd a young lady enquired for us: I guess'd it was Mr. Belville's friend, I was right: After the introductory civilities, I told her she could not see Miss Melvern as she requested, but as the gentleman she saw was her brother, I hoped what she had to say, might be communicated to him—she seemed a good deal embarrassed, we beg'd her to be under no apprehensions; but to give us the so-much desired information; relative to what she knew of Mr. Belville: she bow'd and began.

“There is sometimes a chain of events in human life, which wisdom cannot foresee, nor prudence prevent. Some months ago I went over to Ireland with an aunt who had long been travelling in quest of health; there lodged in the same house with us, a gentleman and his wife, the gentleman was seldom at home, his lady in his absence, hardly ever quitted her apartment, a deep sorrow was impressed upon her countenance, and her sollicitude to avoid all society made the rest of the lodgers, curious to learn the reason. She would sometimes indeed sit half an hour with us, but her great reserve never permitted her to speak of her own affairs.

One day we heard the cry of murder issue from her apartment; all the lodgers flew to the door, which was shut, but a little force broke it open: we saw the unhappy lady to all appearance dead upon the floor, her husband at a bureau, filling his pockets with

papers; he utter'd a volley of oaths on our appearance, bidding us begone; one of the gentlemen told him he was his prisoner, till the lady recover'd—which she did soon, when the brutal wretch was suffered to leave the room.

At first we apprehended his wife had receiv'd a mortal blow, from the blood it occasion'd, but it only issued from her nose. I was much affected at her situation, she perceiv'd it. Tears said she grasping my hands (every body being retired but my aunt and me) should flow only for the innocent. We persuaded her to endeavour to rest; she lay down on her bed begging to see us in the afternoon; as we left her, her groans pierced our hearts. Your kindness, said she, when she saw us again, is not thrown away upon an ingrate; I am an unhappy women, and what aggravates my misery, my own faulty conduct had brought it upon me: by an indiscreet second marriage I forfeited the esteem of the world and every claim to the filial affections—my children! (here a flood of tears obliged her to pause for some time) my children I deserted, leaving them destitute of every thing, the will is at length return'd upon my own heard, the repeated blows I have receiv'd from my ungrateful husband, is a signal of divine vengeance against me; I feel it heavy at my heart—I feel I shall not survive; many months have I carried a hidden sorrow in my bosom; to the author of it I durst not complain; my ill conduct has left me without a friend.

For a short time after my coming into this country I continued to live in a stile of elegance to which I had been accustomed; but my husband was too fond of the world himself, to suffer others to enjoy the pleasures of it, if he could prevent it: his house was made a scene of riot and excess, and frequented only by people of the inferior sort.

As the greatest part of my fortune, was in my own hands, he was continually compelling me to advance fresh sums, which I did as often as I could get remittances; and when those fail'd, my plate and jewels supplied the want of them—At length I was seiz'd with a fit of illness, it brought me to the brink of the grave—it brought me also to a just sense of my crimes; during this illness my woman whom I had ever treated as my friend, left me, my husband had taken handsome lodgings for her, a few miles out of town; and I receiv'd orders from him, to quit those I was in, as soon as possible. On looking into my affairs, I found they had robbed me of every thing; I had nothing left for my support, but my expected remittances from England.

I had a reserve there of several thousand pounds: the means by which I obtain'd it, has ever since deprived me of inward satisfaction, and I determin'd, let what would be the consequence, to reserve it for the use of my child; on my refusing to give it up, words arose between us—you know what followed. Since I have been in this lodging, I have seen my husband but seldom, and that only, when he wanted fresh supplies for his extravagancies—You now know ladies, the present state of my affairs; and as the virtuous can best make allowances for the faults of other, I venture to solicit your acquaintance and friendship. We promis'd there should be nothing wanting on our part, to make her life easy and pleasant: from that moment an intimacy commenced between us.

I made frequent visits in the town, in one of this I met Mr. Belville, we had seen each other before we danc'd together at a ball, where I recollect to have seen your Ladyship (from the moment I saw Miss Moreton I had been puzzling myself to no purpose, to find out where I had seen her before) we renewed our acquaintance, continu'd she, tho' it had been of so short a date; he seem'd to have lost much of his vivacity; as we were the only persons in companies where we met, who never play'd; we had frequent opportunities of conversing together: His politeness led him to visit me—the unhappy Mrs. Kelly was sitting with us when he came, he frequently gaz'd upon her, then apologiz'd for it, saying he had a beloved friend, who bore such a lively resemblance to her, that years only seemed to have made a difference in them. I whisper'd him, his friend must be very handsome then, he reply'd she was perfection itself; my aunt addressing Mrs. Kelly by name, his surprise increas'd, and his emotion grew too visible for concealment.

If your name be Kelly, madam, said he, with quickness, may I not ask you, if you have not a friend in England? She said her friends were few; that she had a daughter there—her name Melvern? said Belville. A fit of trembling seiz'd the poor lady, she was ready to faint—I am the unhappy mother, said she, of that most exemplary child; do you know her, sir? have you lately seen her? in what situation did you find her? is she poor, and forsaken? He told her he was surpris'd she should be desirous to hear of the welfare of a child she had been so anxious to destroy. Upon this she quitted the room, he not offering to detain her; and in the utmost agitation of spirits he ask'd us how long we had known that lady, and what was the life she led? As she had not enjoin'd us to secrecy we inform'd him nearly as I have told you. Could I be convinced of the sincerity of her repentance, said he, it is in my power to serve her, and I will do it,—she has a lovely daughter—he said no more, but taking a hasty leave said he would call again the next day.

When he came, he beg'd to see Mrs. Kelly, she comply'd—he entreated her to deal candidly by him; and in return he would be equally explicit. She then gave him a fuller account of her life, than she had done to us; and concluded with saying—doubt not, sir, of my sincerity, the time approaches, when the veil of dissimulation will be drawn aside, when offended justice will assert his rights; and when, if the repentant sinner cannot find mercy—her tears would not let her proceed.

The confession of your errors, madam, said Mr. Belville, is the surest proof you can give of your contrition; and what may astonish you is, that the very errors of *your* life, may be a means of insuring the felicity of *mine*: you once possess'd a lovely flower, which you neglected, and left it expos'd to the rude blast of every pitiless wind, when my good fortune led me to the spot whereon it languish'd, after long and various attempts, I at length rais'd the tender blossom—Your Harriot, madam, is mine; Miss Moreton has inform'd you of my situation in life; I recommend myself to your friendship, your Daughter will gladly welcome a penitent to her bosom.

Mrs. Kelly's joy was too big for utterance; she would have fallen at his feet, had he not withheld her—about an hour after, he took his leave, promising to see her soon.

He kept his word, and came frequently; he attempted to administer comfort to the mother, whilst he told me he was under the utmost anxiety about the daughter, not having heard from her for a long time. Tho' Mrs. Kelly was happy to find her child had such a friend as Mr. Belville, yet her health was visibly declin'd.

One day when he call'd upon her, he found her in great disorder, her eyes swollen almost out of her head, her husband was with her; but Mr. Belville not knowing him, ask'd him if he had dared to offer an insult to that lady; upon which Mr. Kelly insolently order'd Mr. Belville to quit the room, which he refusing, words grew high—Kelly in the height of his resentment snatched up a penknife, which he aim'd at Mr. Belville's breast, but luckily he receiv'd it in his arm, the wound was not dangerous, yet is confin'd him for some time: Kelly made his escape; his wife again, inform'd us she had receiv'd repeated blows from him because she refused to make over the remaining part of her daughter's fortune (he having squander'd all she could call her own) which she had been long waiting for an opportunity to restore to Miss Melvern.

The terror Mrs. Kelly was in on Mr. Belville's account, who was obliged to run home immediately, together with the ill treatment she receiv'd from her husband, brought on a spitting of blood; and Mr. Belville recover'd but just time enough to be a witness of her last hours. When she saw him, she ask'd him if he had lately receiv'd letters from England, on his answering in the negative, she shook her head and said; you see me Mr. Belville, and you my kind friend, (to me) a striking instance of divine vengeance. I die by the hands of the very man whom I plung'd my soul in guilt to serve; should you, sir, ever behold my children again, tell 'em, that however unnatural my conduct had been to them in life, yet dying I was all the mother; that I hope conviction overtook me before it was too late—and that deep repentance clos'd a life of crimes! After this she grew delirious, and in a few hours expired.

Here Mr. Melvern was greatly affected, and I could not help paying the tribute of a tear to the memory of this unfortunate woman—Mr. Melvern, addressing himself very pathetically to Miss Moreton, beg'd her to proceed—Mr. Belville, continued she, saw the last rites perform'd over this unhappy lady, and I believe must have been himself at the whole expence attending them, as Mrs. Kelly told me before her death that he had obliged her to accept of a very handsome sum of money—Mr. Belville still continued in Dublin, but a prey to grief, nothing doubting but he had entirely lost Miss Melvern's affection; I advis'd him to go to England as the best method either to confirm or destroy his fears; but this for many reasons, he said, he could not think of doing. In order to settle some affairs for my aunt, I was obliged to return home. My passage was taken on board a ship which was to sail in two days for Bristol; I told Mr. Belville of it; he determined to accompany me without taking leave of his father; as time would not permit, he wrote his intentions to him.

We had on board several gentlemen, strangers to Mr. Belville, they were studious to divert his melancholy, which they attributed to love, telling him that if an Irish Venus had robbed him of his heart, the softer beauties of England would soon recal it, and that

Bath of all places most abounded with them; upon which Mr. Belville ask'd Mr. Price if he had lately been there; he answer'd him in the negative, telling him that he had a friend who regularly sent him a catalogue of the most distinguish'd ladies there, and that at present all beauties sicken'd at the sight of Miss Melvern, who had lately figured in all polite circles, and that her eyes had wounded wheresoever they had glanced.

Mr. Belville being too particular in his enquiries for an indifferent person, Mr. Price said, if it would any ways gratify a raised curiosity, he should think it no breach of friendship to read him a passage from his friend's letter—it was nearly thus:

“To admire beauty is to love Harriot Melvern; and to love her, is to shew you have a distinguishing taste; all the world are her adorers, and she is the very counterpart of benevolence—“to all she smiles extends.” But it was imagined that Loathby, from his happy address, would carry off the prize, 'till a veteran in the art of war pounced on his prey in the Pump-Room, and carried her off victorious——if she walks the Parades, she hangs upon his arm; if she rides, he has a place by her side; if she dreams, it must be of him.”

Mr. Belville, without making a reply, left the cabin, more dead than alive; I followed him—it is all over with me, said he—I am forgotten—I will see her—I will reproach her; hitherto my suspicions have fallen on Loathby—is it possible she neglects him too? No, not the lifted arm of her present paramour shall impede my access to her—her mind tainted with her mother's principles, could not resist the attacks of temptation.

Till our landing he continued almost in a state of distraction, he was far from well in his health—Mr. Williamson attempted to prevail on him to stay in Bristol, as he had some particular friends there, till he was better, and let him go to Bath to make what enquiries he could, he was not to be prevailed upon, and poor Williamson, so great was his affection for his master, was almost distracted.

We set off together; you know the unlucky meeting; you, Sir, are the supposed rival: Mr. Belville continued like one in a phrenzy after we met you, 'till quite exhausted of a sudden, he spoke not a word 'till he set me down at my relations. I beg'd him to take care of himself, and not to proceed rashly—he took his leave, saying I should hear from him soon; and to my utter astonishment, I have just now received an incoherent note from him, saying he was going abroad, but where he knew not; that he must blot from his memory every idea of an ungrateful woman! and concluded with requesting that I would endeavour to see your Ladyship.

Here Miss Moreton ended her narrative; my joy was so great to find Belville so fully justified, and with the fresh instances I heard of his affection for our Harriot, by his benevolence to her mother, that I could not contain myself—I kiss'd Miss Moreton; I told her that she must live with me; that the messenger of good tidings was as the angel of peace—of whom we ought never to lose sight if possible.—So! my harmless cousin Loathby, and poor Melvern, must have been the Knights whom Belville fancied had robbed him of his dulcinea.

Adieu,

F. WARWICK.

Copyright Chawton House Library

LETTER X.

Miss MELVERN to Miss AIRSBY.

THERE is, my Sophy, a luxury in grief, of which the epicure will not seek to dispossess you; you may drink the overflowing cup of sorrow, and he will not try to snatch it from you; it is all, in a precarious world, we dare call our own.—The few short days which prosperity gilds with her smiles, mankind is every ready to enjoy with you, nor will leave you a moment undisturbed by unmeaning professions; the bright scene once closed, their impetuosity subsides; then you may number your sighs without fear of impertinent intruders—you may shed tears, 'till they deluge the aching bosom, and no one will offer to lighten the burden of the afflicted.—My poor mother—yet she found a friend in her distress—but Lady Frances has told you all.

The downy pillow gives no rest to the unhappy; I have not slept for many nights.—There is but one medicine can heal a wounded spirit—there is but one retreat from care and pain—I long to embrace it—I long to be at rest—In the grave all things are forgotten.

* * * * *

My brother has been for some time in London; Sir William Belville is there also, come over in pursuit of his son; but for me he might have had his arrival welcomed by the best of sons.

Surely all the world must hate me; but not so much as I hate myself.

Farewell,

H. MELVERN.

LETTER XI.

To the same.

THE aching bosom will catch at a shadow for relief. My brother, when he left me, bid me hope to see Mr. Belville soon——Am I not, my dear Sophy, marked out by Heaven to suffer disappointments? A letter from Mr. Belville is a confirmation of it.

There was a time I thought I could not have survived his loss; alas, how little do we know ourselves!—but I have not lost his heart, I have only cast it away—he flies from me.

Ah my friend!

“Tears shew their love, but want their remedies.”

I can weep no more.

Adieu,

HARRIOT MELVERN.

LETTER XII.

Edmund BELVILLE, Esq; to Miss
MELVERN.

IF it be a relief to the bursting heart to pour out its griefs before the author of them, you will not refuse to receive mine.

Sorrows will be clamorous; and tho' a change of sentiment in you will not permit you to redress them, your humanity will not refuse to pity them—I ask no more! a generous mind will not withhold compassion from a foe;—how much stronger then is his claim, whose ambition was to be called your friend? a friend you have confess'd not worthy of you.

May your felicity be as permanent as my wishes for it are fervent.—If my affection for you is not proved in the fire of adversity, how can you judge of its force? Yes, my beloved friend, it is increased since you forbade me the sight of you.—May you never feel pangs equal to those I then endured—equal to those I now endure.

There was a time I thought myself the happiest of men; sad, yet delightful recollection!—The gloomy horrors of a fatal certainty now leave me nothing to hope. Are

the happy the only beings privileged to hope? if not, I will dare hope you will think sometimes of me; think too that I have loved you with unshaken fidelity!

To the many letters I wrote you in my absence you only condescended to acknowledge receipt of two, which painful necessity compell'd. In my letters I endeavoured to express whatever the chastest passion could dictate, where I imagined the object was purity itself.

You love still, the person only chang'd; I have seen that person, I have heard him declare his passion for you; his language was that of success.

I dare not dispute the prize with him; his advantages over me leave me nothing to hope; my fall was too effectual to suffer me to see you again. Your conduct has determined the colouring of my future life; I will not disturb your gentle heart by presenting you with the sad picture of my sufferings; tho' were you even to behold him, you would exclaim—"this is Belville's!" wiping from your blooming cheek the tear which compassion shed, and prudence could not repel.

Consistent with your present attachments, could you but have prevailed on yourself to have received my last adieu—I would not have expostulated with you—I would only on my knees have breathed my sighs for your happiness—I would have pressed that hand to my heart, which once I hoped to have called my own, and have torn myself away—for ever!—What task is so hard as to say farewell—for ever? Painful necessity compels it.—The wind blows high, conflicting billows buffet each other—adieu, I go—may the blessings of an all bounteous Providence for ever await you; and may you be happy, who only could have made happy the wretched

BELVILLE.

LETTER XIII.

Lady FRANCES WARWICK to Miss AIRSBY.

Brooklands.

Dear Madam.

THO; we have been here ten days, I have not found a moment's leisure to inform you of it. The distresses of our unhappy friend entirely engross my time; I almost repent I yielded to her entreaties to bring her hither; where every scene but serves to aggravate her sorrows: she seldom weeps, but sighs perpetually; the shocking account of her mother's death sits not less heavily on her, than the loss of Mr. Belville.

Tho' her eyes have lost their lustre, and her complexion its bloom, yet there is an awful dignity about her, which to a sentimental spectator, is superior to the most animated beauty, set off by the bloom of health; join to this, her mourning adds to the pathetic elegance of her figure; she looks like the picture of beauty, adorn'd with the drapery of despair. She patiently attends to whatever is for her advantage; but at present we promise ourselves no success from it.

Yesterday she said, throwing her arms round my neck, whilst she wept upon it: what a blessing it was that my poor mother in the last exigencies of life found a friend, she was grateful for it? she bid *me* be grateful—the ungrateful can never know peace of mind, how then can I expect to find it? I had a friend too of whose worth I was not sensible; I cast him from me;—Do good minds triumph over the fallen?—if not, Belville must pity me—but he is gone, never to return; he is not a rash man; yet he will keep his word!

* * * * *

Mr. Melvern's arrival obliged me to break off; tho' he could bring no tidings of Mr. Belville, he brought a stranger with him of a benign aspect, and agreeable person; judge of my surprise when Melvern presented Sir William Belville to me.

He express'd himself grateful for the interest I took in his son's welfare; and hoped for a speedy accommodation of matters, as soon as we could learn his address; and said that he could no longer resist the desire he had to see the person, to whom his son was so much attach'd.

Whilst we were contriving a means for his introduction to Harriot, the least likely to affect her, she enter'd the room, nothing but her movements indicated the least signs of existence—At sight of her brother she was much affected, and much more so when he presented her to Sir William—Ah this is too much said she, his reproaches join'd to those of my own heart, are too much for me, I cannot bear it—and fainted away in her brother's arms.

Sir William was greatly distress'd, and, tho' for the first time, he saw her in a state the nearest approaching to death, and divested of all those lively graces, which at once took poor Belville's heart a prisoner—yet he said his son must have been an infidel had he been insensible to such powerful attractions.

Sir William kindly made use of every soothing art to comfort her; bidding her look up to him as a father; who, tho' lately acknowledged, was not less deserving her love.—Now, now you wound me indeed said she! this is not the language of reproach; I meant no wrongs to Mr. Belville, I have been much deceived—The lurking holes of our enemies are secret.

I much entreated Sir William to take up his abode with us; but he had promised young Fenwick, who was gone to the Hall to receive him.

They came over the next morning together; George's stay was short, as I did not chuse to illumine his gloomy eyes with the sight of such a jewel as Harriot, tho' he behaved himself very respectfully.

Sir William grows hourly more enamour'd of our Harriot, and she finds a satisfaction in his kindness, which I hope will enabled her to keep up her spirits 'till we hear again from Mr. Belville. The inclos'd is a transcript of a latter from Mr. Belville to Miss Moreton, it bears no date; 'tis in vain we have endeavour'd to unravel its ambiguous meaning. Adieu,

F. WARWICK.

LETTER XIV.

Inclos'd in the preceding.

Edmund BELVILLE, Esq; to Miss
MORETON.

WHEN misfortunes overtake us, my good friend, there are but few who have resolution to help us to support their burden: You only have known me since the days from whence I date the commencement of mine; yet you have not deserted me.

'Tis not mutual pursuits after pleasure that link souls in amity; so slender are the ties that unite the vicious, that the least vibration a change of fortune may give, will dissolve them in a moment: Weak minds will anticipate evils, and presumptuous ones will hope. Notwithstanding the past, I dare look forward to an event which alone can insure my felicity.

Some unexpected circumstances since I left England, have given my soul a foretaste of tranquillity, which a few weeks ago I thought were infinitely beyond my grasp.

Tho' gold in a foreign land cannot procure us the sighs and tears of weeping friends, it can yield us every satisfaction of which a broken heart stands in need.

But why do I affect you with my melancholy? pardon me, there is a soothing satisfaction, in imparting our pains and pleasures to our friends; but you can pity with delicacy, and applaud with sincerity.

I have been ill, but am better: I should have written this post to my father, but that my worthy Williamson lies at the point of death—in my illness he discharged his duty to me with affection; in return he is entitled to my utmost regard.

Adieu, my good friend! perhaps you may hear of me soon; if not, time will convince you of the reason; and as that shall decide for me, so I wish to rise or fall in the opinion of the world, and of one whom I pray Heaven long to distinguish with its blessings.

Adieu,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XV.

Lady F. WARICK to Miss AIRSBY.

IT is not for erring morals to arraign the decrees of Heaven; 'tis our part to submit and welcome the blow, which the hand of Omnipotence strikes.

The arrows of hope are blunted as they fall, whilst those of affliction strike sure! at length they have reached the bosom of our beloved friend; to attempt to remove them now were vain.

A letter was brought express to Sir William from London—this brings good tidings I trust, said he, it has a sovereign stamp; Harriot's eyes look'd an amen to his wish: On breaking it open, and seeing it written in French, he gave it Mr. Melvern to read, saying he understood not that language.

Mr. Melvern glanced it over; as he read we survey'd him with eager attention, he look'd pale as death, arose and went to the window; I follow'd him—What will become of my sister? cry'd he; how shall I tell Sir William? Mr. Belville in his letter to Miss Moreton, said, "he began to have a foretaste of tranquillity he had not dared to hope for when he left England;" he has found it—he is at rest—he is no more!—My exclamation brought Sir William and Harriot to us, begging to know the occasion—Is my son well? said Sir William; Mr. Melvern told him the letter was not from Mr. Belville—but—he could not proceed—At length he ask'd Sir William to attend him in the next room—During their debate Harriot got hold of the letter unperceived by us—she no sooner threw her eyes over it, than she exclaimed, he's dead, he's dead! and dropt on the floor ere we had time to catch her;—it was now too late for concealment; Sir William wanted no farther explanation—such a scene of distress ensued—

As soon as Harriot became sensible of her situation, she threw herself at Sir William's feet; for a moment he rais'd her to his bosom; he could not speak—he quitted the room—Mr. Melvern attended him, whilst I remained to witness a distress which not all my friendship for the unhappy sufferer could alleviate.

I took the earliest opportunity to examine the letter, it was from the person with whom Mr. Belville lodged in Paris, signifying that he had dy'd a few days since, leaving his servant also at the point of death, of whom it was supposed he had caught the fever, by which he had been confined some weeks, and which the loss of the best of masters had greatly aggravated; that Mr. Williamson had requested him to write to inform his friends in England of the loss of his master, and to know if they had any orders to give relative to him, and to assure them that every thing that related to him should be carefully preserved for Sir William, if Williamson's life was spared.

* * * * *

In continuation.

When sorrow takes possession of the human breast, with what indifference it surveys all the busy trifles of which mankind are in arduous pursuit; the mind at ease seeks for participators in its enjoyments; but the other, like the bird of night, finds its satisfaction only in pouring forth its plaints, when the ear of curiosity is far removed.

Such is the situation of poor Miss Melvern; the sight even of her best friends is painful to her. When she talks it is very incoherently; she asks if the body is not to be brought over; and then, assuring herself that it is, she continued:—How kind it is, I will be grateful for the indulgence; I will weep over it; I will pray over it; I will watch it by day and by night; and when laid in a gloomy vault, my burning breath shall dry up the cold damps that surround it—I will strew it with flowers, and when they wither, I will sprinkle them with my tears—and when I grow faint, I will wrap my face in his winding sheet—I will—and quite exhausted, she sunk upon her seat.

I sat by her a long time, attempting to sooth her, begging her to be calm, and endeavour to moderate her grief; when clasping her hands, and fixing her eyes upon me, she reply'd;

Why tell you me of moderation?
The grief is fine, full, perfect that I taste:—
—How can I moderate it?
If I could temporise with my affection,
Or brew it to a weak and colder palate,
The like allayment I could give my grief;
My love admits no qualifying dross.

I thought it best not to oppose her, and left her with her attendants to pursue the workings of her fancy.

* * * * *

Sir William has been prevail'd upon to take an apartment here: he bears calamity like a christian. He visited Harriot this afternoon for the first time in her apartment, he was in mourning, she raised her eyes up to him, they clos'd again, and her head sunk upon his breast.

Oh could the boasted libertine, or the proud beauty, have survey'd them, to see what was so lately the pride of health, and bloom of beauty, supported on the bosom of affliction, sighing, not for the pleasures of the world, but for that peace the world can neither give, nor take away.

* * * * *

Sir William's gentleman is gone to Paris, the intelligence he will bring back, can give no real satisfaction; yet there is a soothing melancholy in tracing to their source, events, which deeply interest the heart.

George's Fenwick's attention to serve us is unremitted. I could not have thought such tender feelings could have inhabited so rough a bosom. He has seen Harriot, if he had not quitted the room immediately he would have dropt at her feet; his sobs were audible, they affected me—he ask'd me if I thought there was a possibility of her recovery? I told him, I fear'd not. Then said he, of all men, I am the most wretched, it is too late now, I have plung'd a dagger in my own breast.

Adieu,

F. WARWICK.

LETTER XVI.

Sir William BELVILLE, to Richard
FENWICK, Esq.

OUGHT I to lament a son my dear sir, whose life closed with honour? yet nature will have way, the feelings of a fond father will not subside at bidding; but I have this consolation in my distress; that the child whom I mourn, was one, whose bosom every virtue warmed; and whose life was a series of amiable and generous actions.

Tho' I lose him for ever, yet I am thankful to Heaven, that his immoralities never cost my heart a pang, nor my cheek a blush. He is fallen indeed, but to rise, more bright, and tho' his sun is set ere it had reach'd its meridian, it will rise again in a fuller day; whose effulgence will be so powerful, that the eye of guilt will not dare to glance upon it.

I should have seen you in town ere this, could I have quitted the unfortunate lady, whose attachment for my poor boy, I fear will cease but in the tomb. I have a thousand fears on her account; when I see her I forget I am unhappy—I attempt to comfort her—her sorrows bleed afresh: she seems insensible to all the joys of life, and only sighs after that sweet rest the grave alone can give.

Adieu, my good sir, and however misfortunes may oppress me, they shall not lessen my affectionate regard for you and yours, &c.

W. BELVILLE.

LETTER XVII.

Lady FRANCES WARWICK, to Miss
AIRSBY.

Brooklands.

I COULD weep my dear Miss Airsby, but how inefficacious is that grief, which cannot lighten the burden from off what it laments.

I have just quitted our Harriot's apartment, unable longer to support a scene, which filled my soul with anguish. In one of her lucid intervals, she desired a piece of painting might be brought her; with which Belville had once presented her: we fear'd to refuse her, yet the consequence of our compliance had like to have cost her her life; at sight of it, she gave a deep sigh, fell into strong convulsions, and was but recovering when I left her.—We had no doubt but the last scene of life must have clos'd here.

* * * * *

She is better since writing the above, therefore I will send off this.

Adieu,

F. WARWICK.

LETTER XVIII.

To the same.

Brooklands.

My dearest Miss AIRSBY,
WHEN the imagination is pregnant with horror, the slightest circumstance may prove fatal in its tendency.

About ten this morning, our beloved friend insisted on quitting her bed, as she has never been wholly confin'd to it, I was obliged to comply with her humour; tho' it was with reluctance; for she had had a worse night than usual. She insisted on having her mourning, saying she expected to see company; as I found it was to no purpose to oppose her, I felt her to follow the bent of her inclinations, and determin'd only to obey them.

As soon as she was dressed, she desir'd to see her brother; when he came in, she look'd sweetly smiling upon him, and ask'd him if he lov'd her? He beg'd to know what were her motives for such a question, and if his conduct had given her any reason for proposing it: she made him no reply, but soon after requested to see Sir William, and said she would go down and speak with him.

Mr. Melvern took her in his arms and carry'd her into the next apartments, where Sir William attended her. Instead of taking any notice of him at first, she sat for a long time with her arms folded, her head sunk upon her bosom, and sigh'd frequently; at length she raised it, and on seeing Sir William she clasp'd her hands, and continued gazing upon him, till she fell back on her seat quite senseless: on recovering, she sprung forward, and threw herself into his arms, entreating him not to kill her, with his tears that fell for Belville!

She then began to relate every scene attending her mother's death, and concluded with describing the friend, from whom she had receiv'd the last worldly consolation, that friend she said was Belville; whom her ingratitude had murdered; and yet she did not sigh, nor shed a tear, at what affected all the world besides!

Sir William, in broken accents, attempted to turn her thought into a new channel; but she paid not the least attention to him. How cold, cry'd she, interrupting him, guilt makes the bosom; when I was innocent, I could shed tears for the unhappy; I could weep for poor Belville!—but he is lost, and cannot be found; tho' I know where he is—I stole him from the wicked ones, and grief hath dug his grave in my heart, laying her hand upon it—how cold it is—who froze up the purple current, which once warm'd it? The spirits of peace whisper'd me, I told 'em of my coming, yet I fear'd to go—have I not kill'd my mother's friend?—yet you will not let me die—no, nor weep; nor tell my aching head, to admit no thought but of Belville—Indeed I will not—no never, never!

Here quite exhausted, she continued silent for some time, Mr. Melvern's grief was agonizing, Sir William was unable to support his, and I was incapable of giving them that consolation I wanted myself.

At length Melvern attempted to withdraw his sister from Sir William's arms; it terrified her, she screamed aloud for help, saying she would not go; that she had a friend here, throwing her arms round Sir William's neck, whose sorrows she must sooth, and whose tears she must dry up; and that she must tell Lady Frances, that she who kill'd poor Belville was sorry for it, and beg'd her forgiveness—and my poor Sophy too shall know, that her Harriot did a dreadful deed, unknowing what she did; and the evil fell on Belville,—yet he forgave her,—and smil'd upon her—but she could not bear his kindness!—And so the wind blew high!—and the black tempest threaten'd—and my poor head grew dizzy with the fright!—and again Belville call'd,—but I have promised (looking wildly upon us)—Will our enemies, think you, torment us in the grave?—no, no, they will not; they will not there find food for their malice.—Do you think God will bless me?

Again she grew exceedingly faint; I took this opportunity to present her with some medicine, which she drank with great eagerness, and after sometime seem'd much revived, talk'd with more consistency, and appear'd to be sensible to all surrounding objects. Her cheeks were alternately red, and pale; and cold sweats stood upon her face; she beg'd to be removed to the window for the benefit of the air, as the sash was thrown up; her eyes continued wandering about for some time, over the country (for the prospect is extensive) when, ah my good Miss Airsby, she spied a hearse driving down the great road, which leads to the Church, her infeebl'd imagination, concluding it Belville's, her eyes follow'd it, till it was out of sight, then turning them upon us, gave each a distinct look, whilst her lips in vain attempted to form sounds: then with a heavy sigh she fell back on the breast of Sir William, and in a few minutes, she who was once the beloved of every heart, COMMENC'D AN ANGEL!

F. WARWICK.

LETTER XIX.

To the same in Continuation.

I Dispatch this by a special messenger, the reason will be obvious when you have perus'd it. I must now weave the thread of my story, as well as the agitation of my spirits will permit me.

After we had survey'd for some time, the lovely flower, which the cruel scythe of death had cut down, ere it obtain'd its full perfection; she was laid upon her bed; in attempting to take a last look, my senses were confus'd, I fainted away: when I recover'd, I sent you off that incoherent scroll, which, tho' it but imperfectly express'd *my feelings*, yet I fear gave a mortal pang to *your's*.

Going afterwards in the Drawing-Room, George Fenwick I found had been there some time, waiting my coming; he said he fear'd from my disorder'd looks to enquire after Miss Melvern, yet he hoped she was better——She who is become a companion for Saints and Angels, said I, must be well.

Great God! exclaim'd he, then vengeance has done its worst, and fell into an agony, for which I pitied him; as I thought him incapable of tasting a delicate sorrow; at sight of Sir William he burst into tears, attempting to take his hand he stagger'd some paces back, and fell against the hangings. Our attention was soon call'd off from him, by the entrance of an object, which iced every vein with wonder—Mr. Belville rush'd into the room!—For a while he saw no object there but Fenwick; he seiz'd him by the throat; and said he need go no farther to find the blackest villain that ever disgrac'd human nature; in a moment Fenwick disappear'd, when Belville's attention reverted to us, he beheld his father dropt upon his knees, silently giving thanks to that power, who alone can dispense the blessings of life to his creatures.

They flew into each other's arms; my father!—my dear boy!—was all that pass'd—when he afterwards address'd me; I was almost dead with terror, he perceiv'd it, he look'd at me, then at Sir William—Gracious Heaven! cry'd he, to what am I to attribute this grief, this silence? say but my Harriot is well, and let me guess the rest: We could neither of us make him a reply—again he ask'd for his Harriot, and again our silence increas'd his fears!—At length, my dear son, said Sir William, taking his hands, his eyes swimming with tender benevolence, let not Christians arraign the dispensations of Providence——Enough, enough! cry'd Belville, fate then has done its worst; tell me all, I can bear any thing——but alas! his resolution did not justify his words; he sat fixed as one deprived of his sense and motion; he waved his hand several times, and as often laid it on his breast, and then on his forehead; the entrance of Mr. Melvern whom he little imagined to find there, rous'd him, he grasp'd his hand, and continu'd surveying him from head to foot—You are Sir, said he—you are—but no matter, 'tis too late now——Are the dear saint's ashes to mix with common dust? shew me her grave that I may—He arose, and Melvern was obliged to make use of force to detain him, but unable himself to support the tide of grief that rush'd upon him, and not to heighten Mr. Belville's he left the room. Nothing would now satisfy Mr. Belville but a particular relation of her death, and with the utmost difficulty we gave him a few sketches of the scene which we had just witness'd—Now I am happy, said he, when we had done; in this house say you; and I shall again embrace my Harriot; and again hold her to this heart—You Lady Frances, who were ever my best friend, will lead me to her?—you loved my Angel; and is she gone, gone for ever? O torture! torture!

With painful reluctance I was oblig'd to comply. As we mov'd towards the chamber door, his agitations increas'd, and when it open'd, he drop'd on a seat in the lobby; his eyes darting a wild kind of phrenzy, roll'd on all sides; and on hearing some footsteps at a distance he darted on his feet, stood fixt in thought a moment, and then with the utmost seeming resolution, enter'd the chamber, where he beheld his heart's best treasure in the situation we left her, my two women sitting by her. The mournful

solemnity of her dress, for I told you she was in black, added distress to a scene which wanted no imagery to heighten it, her sack hung loosely about her, her fine hair had stray'd from under her cap, and waved upon her face and neck, which form'd a contrast to her faded features, and made the picture still more striking. The distracted Belville stood for some minutes, contemplating the sleeping Angel, for such she appear'd to be.— He sigh'd profoundly several times, 'till quite unable to support himself, he dropt upon his knees by her, his face sunk upon her hand.

I did not attempt to rouse him; I was hardly able to support myself; the servants were also greatly affected, and kept rubbing the lips and temples of our poor friend, with essences, wishing to be doing something: as I took it for an effect of their humanity I did not countermand them. In this situation Doctor Warren, for whom I had sent three expresses, found us; his eyes, tho' accustom'd to scenes of distress, yet dropt a tear at that before him.

The sound of his voice, seem'd to renew Mr. Belville's agonies; but he never look'd up. The Doctor sat himself down on the opposite side of the bed; and took hold of Harriot's hand, surprise instantly shot across his countenance, it was that of joy; he entreated Mr. Belville to quit the room, but he paid not the least attention to him; finding he could not prevail he took a lancet from his pocket and with the assistance of my woman breath'd a vein, to my astonishment several drops of blood issued from it. Poor Belville was as totally inattentive to the operation, as tho' no such thing had been performed; at length she gave some indications of life, the Doctor whispering to me to take no notice of it, I did not, but by bursting into tears of joy which I could not restrain: in a short time she gave evident signs of returning life, and attempted to withdraw the hand which poor Belville held to his heart; upon which he raised his head; her eyes open'd, and she fix'd them upon him.

The pang is dear, cry'd he, looking upon her, that we feel for departed love; never, never shall it quit this bosom—Ah my God, why does she fix her eyes upon me? 'Tis I my love—'tis Belville, again my mad'ning fancy deceives me, she smiles upon me, no never can I be again deceived, and after catching her to his bosom, he bade her farewell for ever, and rush'd out of the room. I order'd Lacy to desire Mr. Melvern to attend him, but not to say a word of our present hopes, lest they should prove delusive; in about half an hour she came to herself, and talk'd rationally with me. I sent to beg the favour of Mrs. Cambridge's company, our good Rector's wife, to stay with us, as I cou'd better rely on her discretion and management of our poor friend, than on my own.

Is it not amazing our terrors should have had such an effect upon us, that at once we should have concluded our Harriot dead; because we fear'd to lose her? The servants, from the moment we quitted her, having more experience, were perswaded she was only in a fainting fit, and Doctor Warren on a moment's examination was convin'd of it.

I flew to Melvern, to acquaint him of the happy tidings; 'twas with the utmost difficulty I could prevail on him to credit my report.

Sir William's language, when he spoke, was that of praise, at such a wonderful succession of events; when he was silent, that of grateful thanksgiving.

It was two hours, before we thought proper to inform Belville of this amazing turn of providence in his favour, lest a relapse in Harriot should have added double weight to his affliction; in the mean time he never spoke a sentence to any body; but yielded himself a prey to the bitterest anguish, that ever devour'd a human breast.

Sir William entreated me to be the messenger of such good news to his son: I did not accept of the task with reluctance, yet I trembled for the consequences; not knowing what an effect such an unhop'd for joy might have upon his reason.

After talking with Mr. Belville for some time, tho' he made me no reply: I told him that as I had seen him suffer the extremest misery, with some degree of fortitude; I hop'd the time was not far off, when I should see him support the extremes of joy, with moderation.—Henceforth, return'd he, sighing, all joys are dead to this aching bosom.

I said, I hop'd not, that our love and fears had magnified her malady, and what was but a fainting fit, we unluckily had constru'd into a fatal circumstance—Our Harriot is better. Yes, return'd he, in becoming a pure spirit, she is better, but never, never will her reviving beauties again dawn upon my soul. I was oblig'd to be very particular in my accounts before he could give the least credit to my relation—but his joy was too powerful for my feeble pen to describe. Before he could make me any reply, he continu'd for a long time with his eyes fixt on Heaven, and in broken periods address'd that power, whose dispensation, in the depth of misery he never arraign'd, and whose goodness in the first dawns of felicity was entitl'd to all his gratitude—Here Sir William join'd us. My, my Harriot, cry'd Belville, embracing him, how bountiful is Heaven in its mercies to me! and she lives to tell me how I dear I was to her heart; she believ'd me dead; she could not support my loss; and yet you tell me to bear my happiness with moderation—Oh it is too much! it overwhelms my soul, and for the first time he burst into tears. It was thought most prudent he should not see her that night, but to satisfy him that she was really alive, I plac'd him at a distance from her, whilst I talk'd with her; but finding he was unable to restrain himself, he prudently retreated; again he made another effort, but his discretion, again forsook him, and he again retired.

Thus my dear Miss Airsby having brought things to so favourable a crisis, I will dispatch my messenger, to put you out of pain; my next will be, I hope, to put you out of doubt.

Your's,

F. WARWICK.

LETTER XX.

To the same.

Brooklands.

THE sudden impulses of nature, are not to be subdued by the admonitions of reason: the morning after I sent off my letter, we were assembled together to contrive a means for Mr. Belville's introduction to his Harriot, the least likely to affect her; when to our astonishment she darted into the room—crying, he is here—he is here and you will hide him from me—when instantly she fixt her eyes on Mr. Belville; he sprang forward to meet her, she dropt into his arms, a pale, lifeless corpse. For a long time we despair'd of her recovery; at length life and reason returning together, convinc'd her the distracted Belville was no phantom, as she in her frenzy had fancied.

Never did a scene exhibit such a mixture of pain and pleasure; the agitations our poor friend had undergone this day, have reduced her to the extremest weakness, but her reason is not in the least affected, except when she is recovering from her fainting fits, which are very frequent.

The cause of her surprising us in the manner I related above was natural: she insisted on being dress'd as the preceding day, and whilst her woman was assisting her, she overheard two servants who were employ'd in the next room, mention their surprise at Mr. Belville's return, after every body believ'd him dead; she flew out of Mrs. Lacy's hands, as tho' nothing had ail'd her, nor could she overtake her, 'till she was in the room.

Adieu, the impatient Belville calls me, he has been so long accustom'd to disappointments, that he fears to give a loose to his feelings, lest they should again crush the ardency of his hopes.

Your's,

F. WARWICK.

LETTER XXI.

Edmund Belville, Esq; to Mr.
BOTHWELL.

Brooklands.

BOTHWELL what is it to be happy? is it to have known the depths of misery as I have done? it is to behold the idol of ones tenderest affections—cold—lifeless—laid on the bed of death?—ah no!

The goodness of Heaven is not so circumscribed as my bounded views; that invisible hand, which to appearance had cut off all my fair hopes, yet, that same reviving hand my Bothwell, hath once more given my Harriot to my fond doating heart—she lives—she smiles upon me—she will be well—this—this is happiness; and this incapacitates me to say more at present, than that I am ever thine,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXII.

To the same.

WHITHER the extremes of joy or sorrow reign in our bosoms, it equally put it out of man's power to act on the sober principles of reason. I had ten thousand things to say, but the idea of my Harriot's being so much better, absorbs every other; this day which is the tenth since my being here, she quitted her apartment for an hour, that hour was all my own!

What did I not endure?—emotions 'till then unknown, emotions not to be suppress'd! emotions never to be forgotten. If you have found out the secret, by which a grateful heart can express obligations, receiv'd from the great, and delicate minds; teach me to thank Lady Frances, but to thank her would be looking like an acquittal of my obligations to her which is impossible; then I will not attempt it; I will treasure them up in my bosom; and whenever the tide of joy flows round my heart, I will say that under Heaven 'twas she that caus'd it. Were you my dear Charles but with us, all I most love I should behold on one dear spot. Melvern doats on his sister; my father's affection for my best love can be exceeded only by my own. But Lady Frances tells me men are incapable of loving!

Adieu,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXIII.

To the same.

MY Harriot continues so much better, that it has given me spirits, at length to send you the so much desired eclaircissement, of which hitherto you have receiv'd but imperfect accounts. You know my servant Williamson, whom I have ever distinguish'd for his fidelity, and attachment to me. For some months I have discover'd a gloom, and discontent about him, which made me conclude he was dissatisfy'd with his situation.

I ask'd him if I was right in my conjectures:—as he express'd himself well I then concluded, as I saw no alteration in his conduct, it must be on some other account.

Soon after my arrival on the Continent the anxieties of my mind threw me into a dangerous illness; his kindness to me was unremitted: as I grew better he was taken ill of a fever, which gave me little hopes of his recovery;—however, contrary to my expectations, he grew better; I advised him to pay the utmost attention to his recovery, and every instance of regard I shew'd him he repaid with floods of tears. One day he was so much affected with my kindness that I threw him into agonies little short of those which rend the soul from the body—he complain'd of his cruel fate—I bid him place before him my own disappointments, that he might not think himself the only person under affliction.—If you have enemies, said I, you can only be revenged of them by forgiving them; for my part, tho' I have some secret ones who have destroyed all my hopes, I would rather be the injured than the injurer.

Ah, my God! cry'd the poor wretch, falling on his knees before me—I am too wicked for mercy ever to reach me, the power of the Devil has prevail'd over me, ever since the first great sin I committed, and the daylight of my mind has been quite shut out.—I have ruin'd you, my dear master, for ever. You have been abus'd, Miss Melvern is an Angel:—something not less acute than an electrical shock darted through my whole frame. I could only assure him of my pardon, provided he told me the truth—he promised, and proceeded as follows:

“But for Mr. George Fenwick, continued he, I had been faithful to you, and just towards all men; he promis'd Sir, to settle a very considerable estate upon me, could I find a means to separate you and Miss Melvern; he said that he had long loved her, and was well convinc'd he should gain her heart, if once he could bring her to believe you were faithless. I had great struggles in my mind before he could make me promise—but at length he so well pleaded the D—l's cause I could not refuse him, nor have I since known a moment's peace. I soon repented, and told him so; upon which he said he would ruin my character, and hang me into the bargain, if I offer'd to betray him, now I had accepted his presents. On the first intimation he received of your being married to Miss Melvern, he contriv'd that Miss Hayward (whom he kept 'till Mr. Langly took her) should write you a letter from Chester, knowing your former friendship to Langly, to acquaint you of his present misfortunes, which her extravagancies had in a great measure brought upon him, and to beg to see you once more, as his last hope for comfort in this world. (In a former letter I inform'd you, Bothwell, of my visit to poor Langly, whom I found, through his imprudences, in a deplorable situation, and of my uneasiness to quit Miss Melvern as we were not then on the best terms.)

“In your absence, pursued he, Mr. Fenwick found means to acquaint Miss Melvern that it was occasion'd by a scheme of gallantry, and that his servant had seen you at Chester with a woman of doubtful character——You may remember after your bounty had made Mr. Langly happy, you acquainted him with your situation, and the pleasing prospects that lay before you—This in confidence he afterwards told the vile Hayward, which she as faithfully communicated to Mr. Fenwick, and this paved the way

to all the misery that has since happened. We were no sooner gone to Ireland than Miss Hayward found excuses to quit Langly, and went to Brooklands, where she beg'd to see Miss Melvern, and after making her a thousand excuses for her behaviour, weeping like a crocodile, and wringing her hands, she told her, you and she had been long acquainted, that you had professed the tenderest love for her, and had promised her marriage, and after repeating all your own words to Langly, Miss Melvern could not longer doubt the truth of her information: Miss Melvern wrote to you on the subject, but I detain'd the letter, as I did every other which pass'd between you that could lead to any discovery of our wickedness. You, Sir, attributed her silence for some time to her growing attachment to Mr. Loathby, as she did your's to your returning regard for Miss Hayward. There was a gentleman in Dublin, a Mr. Price, a man of great cunning and small fortune; he was made a principal agent in the affair, and I acted under his directions. We thought our grand master, Satan, had forsook us when you declared so suddenly for going to England; you may remember the efforts I made to dissuade you from it. The letter which Mr. Price read to you on board the ship, was written by Mr. Fenwick, and was to have been thrown in your way by some other means if this had not presented itself: The gentleman he mentioned in it to whom Miss Melvern gave such public testimonies of her affection, was her brother; it was he you met with her on the road, and it was with him you held the conversation at the Bear, whom you all the while concluded to be a new lover. (Bothwell, of what a load of anguish was my mind here relieved!) During the little time we staid at Bath, continued he, I wrote to Mr. Fenwick to inform him I could no longer support the weight of misery I carried about me. On our arrival in France I wrote to him again, to beg him to put an end to your persecutions, that you were dangerously ill, and myself almost distracted; his answer too much terrify'd me to let me alter my conduct without his leave; he said he would never employ me but in one piece of business more that should be disagreeable; that done, I should quit your service, and take possession of the promised estate: This was to counterfeit a letter as from the master of the house where we lodge, to inform Sir William you were dead, and that I was given over in a fever, which prevented my acquainting him with the shocking particulars, as he said Miss Melvern continued to treat him with insolence, he was determined she should be punished for it, for he found less and less probability of bringing her to any compliance; and before the deception could be found out, hoped he should contrive, with the assistance of Mr. Price, to carry Miss Melvern out of the kingdom, and to keep her concealed 'till she would consent to return his love. Heaven has been pleased hitherto to prevent the execution of so diabolical a design! but the former part of his instructions I too fully executed, and it has pleased God to punish me severely for the fraud; and now I have only to entreat you Sir, to pity the wretch who could not withstand temptation; if you would wish to preserve the life of the dear deceived Lady, set off for England immediately; she is at Brooklands, your father is also there with her, their tears for your supposed death can only be dried up by your appearance."

Here poor Williamson concluded his narrative—I left France immediately; I arrived after repeated disappointments at Brooklands, with a heart bounding to meet the happiness I hoped awaited me there. I saw the beloved of my heart—torturing recollection! I saw her lovely form to appearance bound in the icy fetters of death, and clad in all the solemnity of woe; the remembrance of it still fills me with horror!

Adieu,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXIV.

Edmund BELVILLE, Esq; to G. FEN-
WICK, Esq.

SIR,

I Sincerely wish you had as cautiously avoided the practice of evil, as you do the man whom you have made to feel its fatal consequences. Innocence and integrity are the best weapons with which we can meet an enemy; arm'd with these alone I would have met you; they are better guardians of a man's honour than the libertine's sword, which is only drawn in defence of vice, nor sheathed 'till the wearer is sated with revenge. A truly brave man, Mr. Fenwick, thirsts not for the blood of enemies, but will endeavour to subdue them by the force of good example. Of all situations the hypocrite's is the most deplorable, for he never enjoys that contentment of which he seeks to dispossess others; his mind is perpetually involved in a chaos of doubts, the offsprings of his own machinations. Doubtless you call yourself a man of honour; what are your great achievements? you have fought hard indeed to deceive the innocent, and to draw aside from their duty, with paltry bribes, those who were most faithful to me—You last great work was truly worthy of its author, but wickedness is ever sure to defeat its end: You propagated the report of my death, to sate your thirst with the tears of a woman, because you knew her heart entertain'd the tenderest regard for me; you overwhelmed with sorrow a father's bosom, whom age hath rendered venerable; and whose well known benevolence justly entitles him to the esteem of the worthy. Remember, Sir, he who considers virtue as the daylight of the soul, and takes it for his guide, will never be lost in the inexplicable maze of error, and ere this you must be convinc'd of the imperfection of that happiness which is founded on the disruption of another's.

The man who reviews past crimes, and trembles at the sight, and who will firmly resolve in future to pursue that course, which honour and justice mark out; that man, whatever may have been his past conduct, I shall look on with forgiveness; with compassion—Thus Sir, I leave it to your decision, whither I shall ever have an opportunity of subscribing myself—your friend—

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXV.

George FENWICK, Esq; to Mr. PRICE.

OF what avail is repentance, when the evil is without remedy? I look into the world for comfort; the vicious will ridicule me, and men of honour will not associate with me:—by forfeiting my claim to truth and justice, my guides to future happiness are lost: I felt all the horrors of my guilt, before detection came upon me: I had not courage to triumph over the miseries I caus'd—Could Belville have felt my torments when he rush'd upon me, he would have pity'd the wretch, whom his nature must abhor—He appoints an interview with me; Gracious Powers, can I meet the man whose name I shudder to think of?—I am preparing to go abroad; tho' it will not stifle the gnawings of conscience, it will shield me from the piercing eyes of observation: my agent in iniquity, Williamson, has already paid the debt to nature: could I believe that in the grave, our crimes were forgotten, my rash hand is ready to execute—my brain is on fire! accurs'd be the hour when yielding to the suggestions of the devil I fell into a course of vice—Oh Bob! too late I find 'twas not the road to happiness—Farewell.

FENWICK.

LETTER XXVI.

Miss MELVERN to Miss AIRSBY.

Brooklands.

HOW may sad weeks have pass'd since I last address'd my dear friends at Broom-Hill; but Lady Frances has told you all; Oh may my heart ever be grateful to Heaven for the abundance of its mercies! if the use of pen and ink were not forbidden me, I would tell you—Oh no! that were impossible, Mr. Belville's sufferings, and tenderness to me—I hear him coming, I dare not give him pain by scribbling against prohibition—Adieu then, and continue to love your

HARRIOT MELVERN.

LETTER XXVII.

Edmund BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr.
BOTHWELL.

Brooklands.

YOU will believe I tell you truth Charles, when I tell you, I have neither recollection of the past, nor a thought of what the future may be; the present moment is so replete with delight!—I see my Angel every hour; I talk to her of my love without reserve, I tell her of my happiness—she hears me with delight—and then a silent tear drops to the memory of past sorrows—she is all gentleness and compliance, to forward the recovery of her health, as she knows my happiness depends upon it. As soon as she is able to be remov'd, the Doctor purposes change of air, as the surest means of re-establishing it. Yes, I have thought of a retreat, where my watchfulness shall guard her, from every harm.

Her apprehensions, lest I should meet George Fenwick, have greatly retarded her recovery; there is little to be fear'd from that: I have appointed several meetings with him, but the receipt of my letter has not been acknowledged. We are all united in a scheme against the only creature, who is incapable of defending herself from the least violence, the effects of it you shall know hereafter.

My father has just told the unsuspecting Angel, that as circumstances have lately fallen out, 'tis necessary that either himself, or I should go to London for a short time, but which of us should go, he left to her decision—Her blushes spoke her confusion. I see, said Sir William, I am to be the banish'd man, but as you, Edmund, will find sufficient employment for your time here; with the precious trust I shall leave under your protection, I shall repine the less—he wanted not an oath to confirm my promise, but it was ratified with my lips on the trembling hand of my love, telling her she should be guarantee, for my conduct; and if I proved negligent of my trust, I beg'd she would punish me, with what I dreaded more than any thing in life, her censures. Mr. Melvern's amiable conduct improves upon me every hour: he is to accompany my father, 'till their return, you will hardly hear again from

Your affectionate

BELVILLE.

P.S. I have just been telling Lady Frances, I know but one man in the world, I think worthy of her—I mention'd you. To tell you the truth, her sentiments of you, are no ways flattering to your vanity; I told her the more the diamond was view'd—but she reply'd; if the eye wanted judgment to distinguish, it might be as well satisfied with the most superficial bauble, as with the richest jewel—and her eyes swam in tears as she spoke. It shall be the study of my life to make her happy, whose kind care has made me so. I know she has loved with sincerity, if a villain has abused that confidence; tho' he

were my brother, I would do her justice on him. Why Bothwell will you congratulate me on my happiness and refuse to be a witness of it?

LETTER XXVIII.

Miss C. FENWICK to Miss MELVERN.

London.

TRUE it is my dear madam, that in all ages, the poor have suffered from the quarrels of the great; this will be my case, if thro' my vile brother's treachery (God knows where he is gone to hide his guilt) I must lose the esteem of those I most love and honour. Inclos'd is a *Carte Blanche*, for you and Belville to sign your own terms, I will readily subscribe to any, but those of being forbid to love you. My mother hates me since the crimes of her darling are come to light; there was high work amongst us on Sir William's arrival; he threw the fault entirely where it was due, on my mother; he always told her, that her false indulgence to her son, would one day prove the destruction of his morals, as well as of his happiness.

Sir William flatters me with the hope that I may be again permitted to subscribe myself your affectionate

C. FENWICK.

LETTER XXIX.

Miss MELVERN in Answer.

Brooklands.

YOU wrong my tenderness my dear friend, to suppose you should have fallen a moment in my esteem, because I have suffer'd, from those who were united to you. Mr. Belville loves you, and whatever he esteems my heart approves.—I shew'd him your letter; in return he petition'd for a favour; it was, that I would request of you to grant him the pleasure of your company for a few months at Mount Belville, to meet a particular friend of yours; whom he expects to carry thither as soon as her health will permit, but at present, she is so extremely weak, it makes the time very uncertain. Mr. Belville and I have had a violent quarrel, soon after Sir William and my brother left us; it was as follows. Pray Mr. Belville, said I, what are your notions of propriety? don't you think every delicate mind, should invariably adhere to its laws. If, return'd he, I knew your motives for proposing such a question, it would the better enable me to give you a reply;—In the main he did think it right he said, but that he often saw propriety of conduct, act as a substitute for the most essential virtues—that he knew some characters,

who had never deviated from any of the externals of propriety; who were strict observers of forms to the world; but had no innate principles of honour.

Well, but interrupted I, suppose we take a character, of the strictest honour; what would you say, if such a one, knowing he was acting with impropriety, should persist in the error? Certainly, rejoin'd he, good characters ought to be doubly watchful, over their conduct, for the vicious are always catching at the slightest imperfection, to bring them nearer to their own level:

You will think I over rate the character rejoin'd I, when you know I allude to myself; now if I have the least claim to delicacy or propriety, you will not be surpris'd I should beg you to leave Brooklands this evening—Lady Frances will urge perhaps, that you are her guest, but as your visit is so evidently design'd, to another, that other, thinks she has a right to request your absence.

A very high altercation here ensu'd; and the foe was carried off by Mrs. Cambridge, from whom, since my illness, I have receiv'd a tenderness truly maternal—At parting he vow'd revenge—but it soon subsided, for the next morning when he appear'd again; he was all gentle submission. There is some mystery which I cannot fathom carrying on between Lady Frances, Sir William, Mr. Belville, and my Brother—Letters are daily passing between them, of the contents of which I am totally ignorant.

Extreme weakness, not inclination, obliges me here to subscribe myself ever your's.

H. MELVERN.

LETTER XXX.

Miss AIRSBY, to Miss MELVERN.

Broomhill.

THAT a mind ever visionary as your Sophy's, should be misled by an illusion, you will not deny.—Sitting lately like Margaret “in my bowery green,” I was revolving in my mind, the uncertainty of all human events, and thinking of the roses and thorns with which fate hath strew'd the path of erring mortals, and of all the wild briars my poor Harriot had scrambled over, before she could get the blossoms of comfort within her grasp. When a form, pretty much resembling the human, stood erect before me, whilst in speechless terror I gazed upon it; it caught me in its arms—saying, thus friends long parted ever meet: My father and mother hail'd its approach with tears of joy—Three little days it hover'd round us—At the pressing call of business it disappear'd—Did you not miss a brother for about that time?

Adieu,

S. AIRSBY.

LETTER XXXI.

To the same.

ALL is not illusion round us, for then poor Leland would not look upon his domestic broils, as real evils: I have long been wanting a proper opportunity to speak to you, of these birds of Paradise, namely Leland, and his helpmate; who both as ardently sigh to escape the elysium of matrimony, as your Belville, and a friend of his do, to get into it.

I have been a frequent visitor at the park since the new married pair arrived, each as heartily tired of the other, as the most fashionable pair about St. James's—Mrs. Leland hates all government, is a true republican, whilst her monarch's aim is despotism—She looks upon every request of his as availing himself of his prerogative; he upon her's, as tending to subvert government. Before marriage he was enamour'd of her musical powers; and she was flatter'd with his approbation of them—She had a great fortune, he could make great settlements—they married—now mark what follow'd: At present, of all mankind, his approbation she is least solicitous to gain—and she of all women in the world is the least capable of entertaining him.

For this past month, the house has been the receptacle of all the fiddlers and singers, in London, who were not already engaged, at exorbitant sums, to help *fine* ladies and *fine* gentlemen, to spend their fortunes with eclat, and Mrs. Leland is more grateful

for a compliment paid to her talents, from these idle sons of the string, than she would be, for the tenderest expressions of regard from her husband, were he inclin'd to give them.—Leland you know if not an ill natured man; tho' I have been his severest censurer, yet I cannot help pitying him.

The other night he was in a good humour, and in his most obliging manner, beg'd his lady to perform a favourite piece of music, as she had been at her Harpsichord all the afternoon to amuse herself; his request did not seem at all an unreasonable one; yet she gave him a look of inestimable contempt, telling him when a woman of the world knew not better how to dispose of her time, she might throw it away with her husband, but she could employ her's to more advantage; then rising from the instrument, she order'd the coach for an airing, and quitted the room. This behaviour made poor Leland look like a very simpleton; I arose in all confusion to go in search of his father: he caught hold of my hand, saying he was very unhappy; I said I was rather surpris'd to hear him say so, as he had married the woman of his choice who had a *large fortune*, and was so highly accomplish'd:

Ah said he sighing, what are all the accomplishments in the world with a wife, if there are not of the social kind; and as to Mrs. Leland's her's are the only ones, a domestic husband could dispense with—she has no idea of rational conversation—and as for her fortune, unless a miracle is wrought, it will not be sufficient to gratify half her caprices; and for her being the chosen of my heart, it never was touch'd but by the perfections of one woman! Harriot Melvern ever was, and ever will be the idol of my soul; I told him then his passion was doubly criminal, for besides his infidelity to Mrs. Leland; it was coveting another man's wife——Gracious Powers, cry'd he, clasping his hands, what a treasure have I lost! tell her the injustice I did her, is amply repaid on myself, and that I have not one self approving thought, to comfort me, my repentance for my cursed *prudence* comes too late; and he struck his bosom with a violence that made me start—Here we were interrupted, I left the house soon after, and poor Leland to his penitentials:—Tell Belville I shall think him a tardy wooer if I have not one of his bride favours to adorn my person, the next time I visit Leland Park.

Adieu,

S. AIRSBY.

LETTER XXXII.

Edmund BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr.
BOTHWELL.

Brooklands.

IN a former letter I told you Charles, that my father and Melvern were gone to town, but I did not tell you the purport of their journey, was to prepare every thing necessary for our approaching nuptials.

I beg'd my dear Harriot might be consulted on every article, which they all disapprov'd for prudent motives, fearing the least agitation of spirits might retard her recovery—I yielded to their persuasions, and 'till Sir William's and Mr. Melvern's return, hoped I had nothing to do, but to devote my hours to her, to whom every tender affection of my soul was devoted.

But mark, Charles, the caprice of women, the gentlemen were no sooner gone, than this perverse girl, said she could not be happy but by banishing me from Brooklands. She enter'd the field of disputation, with the generals Propriety, and Delicacy, at the head of her forces: unprepared for the assault, and with no assistance but the pleadings of my heart, I was vanquish'd, a retreat was sounded, and I was glad to make my head quarters at the vicarage; the governor of it being a man of hospitality, and my particular friend. I inwardly vow'd not to let the affront pass off with impunity—time hath at length effected my purpose.

My father and Mr. Melvern arriv'd a few hours ago, my saucy charmer receiv'd them with such marks of joy, that I took umbrage at it—and complain'd to her, that joy neither illumin'd her presence at my approach; nor inquietude clouded her brow at my absence: When people, interrupted she sweetly smiling, will presume too much on their own merits, it subjects their vanity to repeated humiliations But rejoin'd I, when a miser's treasure is confin'd in one fair casket, can you wonder he should think every man a robber, who even steals a look at it? Here my father told her, he wish'd to hear her sentiments, on a particular subject; tho' he was already determin'd to abide by her decision. I have some time, continued he, had a very important concern on my mind, and as a few minutes would adjust the affair amicably between the parties; is not my indolence criminal, to withhold that happiness, which it is in my power to dispense?

Dear Sir, return'd she, had your question been propos'd by any other, I would not have believed Sir William Belville, could have deny'd himself the pleasure of doing good when in his power. To bestow happiness on a fellow creature, is to perform the work of Heaven! Thank you, thank you, my dear madam, taking her hand and joining it with mine; you say to confer happiness is the work of Heaven! you only can dispense it to my son; as your health is so much better, trifle not with his expectations, but let to-morrow lay him and me under obligations to you, that can end but with our lives; your brother and

I have settled every thing previous to it, and now only wait for your approbation of our intentions. Her confusion would not permit her to speak, and he continued; take her my dear son, and may all possible happiness be yours, a happiness which virtuous bosoms alone can feel; and which is still more exquisitely felt by those, who have struggled hard with affliction—He left the room.

Pressing her hand to my lips, I urged every reason I could possibly suggest, that she would permit me to date the next day the first of my happiness; Lady Frances and her brother strongly supported my entreaties. The lovely trembler beg'd we would not unite to distress her; and said she loved us all too tenderly, to disappoint our hopes, without feeling pain; that it was not possible she could fulfil those we had rais'd of to-morrow: your goodness for me Mr. Belville, said she, blinds your judgment—you know not half my faults.

I told her if she had no stronger plea to advance for the only time in my life I must be peremptory. She rejoin'd, that she had very great reasons for not complying; which she would impart to Lady Frances and her brother, would I retire—bowing upon her hand I withdrew. She immediately began accusing them of having plotted against her, they pleaded guilty to the charge, alledging their crime to be venial, as the intention was good. When a favour, said she, is extorted, it invalidates the obligation; and when I give my hand to Mr. Belville, it shall be a voluntary offering. Then interrupted Melvern, you do intend to give it, only a strong opposition shall first enhance the value of it; I have half a mind to convince you of the contrary, 'tis a contemptible mind which can feast on its own consequence.

I was call'd in, henceforward said Mr. Melvern, presenting her to me, my sister promises to know no will but your's, and as a proof of it, she consents that to-morrow—Here every lovely feature took the alarm—she reproach'd him; but our solicitations at length overpower'd her—she consented, judge of my gratitude—my tenderness—my joy.

* * * * *

Thursday, 11 o'Clock.

Borne on the wings of affection, I flew to my Harriot, by nine this morning. I met her, rich in virtue—lovely as innocence: and adorn'd by the hand of the graces. From her brother, I receiv'd her hand at the altar, I gave her my heart and soul in exchange.

The carriages are at the door, which are to carry us to Mount Belville:—and there my dear friend if Heaven continue the blessing of health to my beloved wife, I dare aspire to hope I shall enjoy that refin'd felicity the libertine never tasted, tho' each revolving hour came fraught with some new, and untasted pleasure!

Adieu,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXXIII.

Charles BOTHWELL, Esq; to Mr.
BELVILLE.

DEAR as your felicity is to me, yet for the world I would not become a spectator of it, at Mount Belville: tho' I love you, tho' my heart reverences the virtues of your beloved Harriot, tho' no man can more admire the ten thousand excellencies which ever did, which ever will distinguish the life of the amiable Lady Frances, tho' I respect whatever is dear to you, yet my wayward feelings will not suffer me to share for one hour, the satisfactions of life with you; my weakness will not permit me to behold the happiness of my friend, without my bosom's bleeding at the sad recollection of a bliss I once enjoy'd; it was too perfect to be lasting—it dissolves in a moment, anguish unutterable assumed its place; the sad reverse has imbitter'd all my days; it is connected with my existence; it can only cease with the being of your

BOTHWELL.

Continue to write to me, continue to tell me that—a thought occurs, I will try to conquer my feelings—I will take a farewell look at you at Mount Belville.

Copyright Chawton House Library

LETTER XXXIV.

Edmund BELVILLE, Esq; to Mr.
BOTHWELL.

I Will fulfil your request my dear Charles, I will write to you, but on what unequal terms do we write! every tender thought, every secret of my soul I lay before you, whilst you keep yours envelop'd in an impenetrable security—is it generous;—is it just?—however, whilst my pen has a theme so agreeable, it shall not want for employment.

Fulfil the promise you have made to visit us, and I will not press you farther. Our days pass on, in an uninterrupted state of tranquillity, my father is enamoured of his daughter, and she makes his passion all the return he could wish. I would revenge the insult, so early offer'd to my tenderness, by paying my douceurs to Lady Frances, had not a more experienced officer taken the field before me. One without any domestic entanglements, who I suspect has already laid siege to the ramparts of her Ladyship's affection, he is yclep'd Harry Melvern; I have hinted my suspicions to his sister, and the pleasure it would give me, to see a treaty of marriage sign'd by the Belligerent powers—She tells me her Ladyship has already been the dupe of one base man; and will not easily enter into second engagements; notwithstanding this I have attack'd her wily Ladyship on the subject, and her confusion confirm'd those suspicions the other's denial could not remove.

Oh never let a man of fortune complain that time hangs heavy on his hands, who has so many indispensable duties to fulfil,—never let him say his hours move on, in a tasteless insipidity, who has a friend to soothe, the unfortunate to relieve—and a *God* to praise.

Adieu, with my wife's love, I subscribe myself ever thine.

BELVILLE.

LETTER XXXV.

Mrs. BELVILLE to Miss AIRSBY.

I Hope my brother's next visit to Broom-hill, which will be shortly paid, will suppress a little of that saucy levity with which you treat your friends. Mr. Belville got possession of your last * letter, and read it to the circle, and declares you far advanc'd in the passion you treat with so much playfulness, my brother look'd confus'd, what could be the meaning? Ah Sophy, must I refer to you for an explanation of his emotion. We all propose making you a visit shortly.

* This letter does not appear.

What a striking instance am I my dear friend, of the uncertainty of all human events; I have known the depths of misery; I now feel a contentment of heart, beyond which human felicity cannot soar—I pray for a grateful mind, that I may ever share in the sufferings of virtue, and rejoice in the dispensations of its rewards.—I tell Mr. Belville his affection for me is certainly a criminal one, if I look paler than usual, he is fearful I am going to be ill; if from any gentle exercise, my cheeks glow, he think it foretells a fever; if I walk he thinks it will be too much for my strength, (which is far from being establish'd) and when I do not take exercise, he fears I shall be ill for want of it. If I go airing in the morning, he thinks the heat will affect me; if in the evening, the damps are unwholesome.

I smile away his fears; I bid him trust in Providence; he calls upon me, I come my dearest Sir, I come, adieu, in my next I will tell you of his generosity to my good Mrs. Barnes.

Your's ever,

H. BELVILLE.

LETTER XXXVI.

Lady FRANCES WARWICK, to Miss
AIRSBY.

THO' our personal acquaintance, my amiable friend, has been of so short a date, yet the humane affections of your heart have been long known to me: why, my dear, could no entreaties prevail on you longer to enliven, with your sprightly conversation, the friendly association at Mount Belville? was it that the Lord and Lady of the mansion did not welcome you with that tender regard which feelings as lively as your's were entitled to expect? or was it because Harry Melvern's unremitting attentions ever kept them on the alarm? Ah, my dear girl, the ingenuous mind knows not the art of concealment—I discover'd your secret ere you knew it yourself—I will keep it—I will give you one in exchange, in a short time—I shall quit this charming place; I shall quit England too; my friends shall know nothing of my intention 'till I arrive on the Continent; lest their persuasions should stagger resolutions which have cost me dear to make!—Yet I must go—Belville himself drives me from hence—What have I said? but more of this hereafter, as I have ample matter to fill up my letter.

About ten days ago Mr. Belville propos'd to our little party to make an excursion for a few days, which was readily accepted by all. Sir William and Melvern were desirous of our going to the Races at B——, which Belville first oppos'd, lest the bustle and riot which such a diversion must indispensably make should be too fatiguing for his Harriot.

But by one of her engaging smiles she express'd how agreeable such an undertaking would be to her, which the happy Belville ever eager to anticipate her wishes

received with delight. Mrs. Belville and I insisted that when we got to B—— the gentlemen should mount their horses, and enter into the amusements of the place, for upon no other conditions would we consent to accompany them; for is it not, my dear, the height of selfishness to deprive others of a pleasure, because we are not capable of enjoying it ourselves. We drove as near the scene of confusion as possible without mixing in it? Harriot's eye always ranging after one beloved object, who was so much attach'd to her charming self, that he seldom quitted us for more than ten minutes together.

Two ladies in a very superb phaeton drawn by six cream coloud' horses, and attended by servants in very elegant liveries, frequently drew our notice; by some means or other, their horses took fright, and notwithstanding all the skill of their postillions, they were in great danger of being overset; Mr. Belville coming up at the instant, seiz'd on one of the horses, his servants inspirited by his example, secured the rest; Belville then flew to the assistance of the ladies, soon extricated them from their carriage, and brought them to ours, (very luckily we went in the coach, not chusing to make an amazonian appearance, in a place so little calculated for our sex,) when he had seated the ladies, he stepped in himself, advising for the present, that we should return to our Inn, and leave a servant behind to inform those of the ladies where to attend them.

During our short journey, our new companions were not enough recover'd from their terror, to be very communicative, we could only learn that the gentlemen of their party, had quitted them in the same manner ours had done: the lady to whom the carriage belong'd, was at first really affected at the danger, from which she had so happily escap'd, but when she found a more convenient opportunity to display her airs, and graces, she exhibited the finest hysterical scene imaginable, the fallacy of which, Belville and I easily discover'd, and smil'd at the folly of it (by the bye I sometimes tell him, I hate him for his great knowledge of our sex's foibles, in answer he says, I ought rather to blame them for the frequent hints they give him to study by). But to return, when the lady thought it fit to recover, in very polite terms she respectively thank'd us for our great care of her, but when she address'd Belville it was with such an affected tenderness, that with difficulty I commanded the natural risibility of my muscles.

I now insisted on Belville's returning to the field, promising to stand forth the Ladies' champion in his absence, but I should not have succeeded had not a more persuasive advocate join'd her entreaties with mine; he was about to leave us, when the Lady's fits return'd with redoubled force, and as Belville supported her, her appearance was strikingly elegant—she was young, and her beauty, if not *piquante*, was such as would ever claim admiration from common observers; her dress was of white lutestring, cover'd with silver flowers, and made after the French manner: Belville at length grew impatient at her folly, advis'd we should ring for the mistress of the house, that she might be laid on a bed, and kept quiet; this prescription had a more sudden effect on the patient, than all our volatile inundations: at length, by *prudent* degrees, she recovered, and to mortify her, I absolutely drove Belville out of the room, telling him not to return on pain of my displeasure, 'till he could inform me I had won all the bets I had laid with him.

When he was gone, the Lady frequently threw looks at me that were more grateful to my malice, than flattering to my vanity: to her friend (who seem'd to be a person rather created to fill up a vacuum in nature, than to perform any active good in it) her reproaches against her husband were severe, his want of kindness, she said, was always exposing her to danger. Here that husband made his appearance, but guess Harriot's confusion, when rising to receive him, she beheld her quondam lover, Leland; the shock, however, was mutual, he stood confounded and speechless before her, 'till the tears and reproaches of his wife rous'd him from his stupor; so, with only bowing to Harriot, he approached his angry dear; she told him all that had happened, and interlarded her narrative with so many invectives against his negligence, and described the gallant behaviour of her deliverer in such colours, as the feelings of a very fond husband might have thought too glowing; but this was not the case with her's, he took very little notice of her, so entirely did the presence of Mrs. Belville absorb his attention: at length he venture'd to address her as an old acquaintance, and beg'd to know to whom of her friends he was indebted for Mrs. Leland's safety, that he might take the earliest opportunity of expressing his obligations for it: Rosy red blush'd Harriot when she told him Mr. Belville's happiness was always enlarged, as opportunities presented themselves to exercise the benevolence of his heart.

Heavens, Madam! interrupted he—is it possible?—to Mr. Belville?—but it is my fate to—here prudence, and the want of articulation, suggested to him 'twas better to break off abruptly. I sincerely pitied his situation, I never saw a man so distress'd, Mrs. Leland seem'd to express both surprise and pleasure to find she was got amongst her husband's friends, which I fancy she would not have done had not Belville been of the number. We continued in a very awkward situation 'till the return of the gentlemen; hearing their voices I stepped out to inform them what a *Comedy of errors* we were likely to make of it within.

As Melvern and Leland had not met since the return of the former to England, the interview was friendly, tho' embarrassing, occasion'd by past actions and present remembrances, when Mr. Leland presented his Lady to Belville, had she been my wife, I should have thought she received his salutation with more readiness than would have been consistent with my philosophy; but heroines, you know, cannot be so grateful to their deliverers: in return, Belville presented his Harriot to Leland, whose extreme agitation would not permit him to avail himself of those advantages for which I am sure he inwardly sigh'd.

Belville was all gaiety and complaisance to his guests, and kindly insisted, if they had no pre-engagement, they should spend the day with us; I saw Harriot look'd rather uneasy at the request, and told him of it, he drew her aside, and whilst he press'd her hands to his bosom, said, he could no way so well express his confidence in her attachment to him, as by shewing every act of kindness to those whom she once had most valued, and that of all mankind he held himself most indebted to Leland—but for the only error of his life, my sweet love, continued he, where had been the mutual satisfaction we now enjoy? a satisfaction no worldly circumstance can increase—farther proofs of your tenderness I cannot receive, and time only can convince you of the ardour and sincerity of mine.

Mrs. Belville thus assured, behaved with that ease which inspires confidence, and that politeness which must ever acquire esteem. Before we parted it was settled that we should spend the next day together, during which poor Leland was the only person present on whose brow could be traced the lines of discontent: the vain, silly conduct of his wife, was sufficiently distracting to his peace, had it not been wounded by the presence of the still too tenderly beloved Harriot.

Mrs. Leland is quite a modern fine lady, who resting her consequence on her riches, exacts from the world that respect, which people well educated, will only pay to real merit. In order to give us an idea of her importance, on all occasions, she drew forth her husband, as a proper mark for her satire, and the indifference with which he receiv'd it, did not blunt, but rather added to its poignancy, while there was preparing for her, a mortification, which her vanity drew on itself.

During the conversation, an occasion presented itself to Belville, to make some delicate compliment to his wife, upon which Mrs. Leland observed, he could not lately have had much commerce with the world, if he continued to treat his wife with as much politeness, as he would a common acquaintance: and addressing her husband, she wished he would copy after so good an original: he told her, that when she welcom'd his civilities, with that affectionate warmth with which Mrs. Belville receiv'd whatever came from her husband, it would be some encouragement to him to offer them; that it was very dispiriting for a man to pursue any undertaking which he knew at setting out, was never likely to be crown'd with success.—She return'd him a glance of ineffable contempt, and told Mrs. Belville, she was convinc'd from the very tender regard which subsisted between herself and Mr. Belville, that the affection to each other, had not been weaken'd by prior attachments, that unhappily was not *her* case, for it was well known, that Mr. Leland has been long attach'd to a girl, who had neither beauty, birth, or fortune, to recommend her, that by her artful conduct she drew him into a promise of marriage, but luckily, the well tim'd persuasions of his friends broke it off: and that his love she believ'd at this hour, was as much rivitted to her as ever, as was evident by his conduct towards her.

This ill-natur'd Sally threw us all into the utmost confusion, I absolutely lost the powers of respiration, the paleness of Harriot's cheek could be only exceeded by Leland's; Belville was the only one, whose presence of mind did not forsake him—he arose, and seating himself by her, took her hand, and after respectfully bowing upon it, said, that the amiable weakness of a female mind frequently endear'd the possessed to a truly delicate one; that the little insinuations she sometimes threw out against Mr. Leland were intended to conceal a regard for him, which her timidity would not suffer her to acknowledge; that however he might have been attach'd, previous to his paying his addresses to her, it was certain she now possess'd his regard entirely; and that it was a compliment both to Mr. Leland's taste, and judgement; that he had been capable of distinguishing two ladies, so highly endow'd with the gifts of nature, that he (Mr. Belville) was acquainted with the young lady with whom Mr. Leland was formerly connected, that she was deserving her regard, and he himself would solicit it for her, it

was with pleasure he perceiv'd she began to entertain sentiments not unfavourable of Mrs. Belville, and he hoped she would be able to remove all her prejudices against the lady, to whom she suspected Mr. Leland to be attach'd, as they were one and the same person.

Overwhelm'd with shame and confusion, as soon as she recover'd breath, she attempted to apologize for her conduct, but Belville, with all the adroitness imaginable set Mr. Leland's behaviour before her in such an amiable light, that he brought her to acknowledge, that her petulances (by which she meant not the least harm) might sometimes give rise to that conduct, against which she so loudly exclaim'd, then added he, with a smile, let you and I, dear madam, endeavour to secure their love by kindness, not wound it by neglect.

This conduct had an admirable effect upon her, her haughty airs at once subdued, she became quite a rational companion, and Leland, when freed from her impertinence, appear'd to great advantage, in so much that I was not at all surpris'd that Harriot should have conceiv'd sentiments for him, to which his agreeable person, and engaging manners might justly entitle him. But certain it is, that the canker of disappointed love, still feeds upon his peace, and all his philosophy I fear cannot totally subdue it.

How one wrong action at our setting out in life, will serve to imbitter the rest of our days! of this truth you cannot find a greater instance than in

Your affectionate,

F. WARWICK.

LETTER XXXVII.

Mrs. BELVILLE to Miss AIRSBY.

I Broke off my last abruptly, I met my dear Mr. Belville on the stair case: pleasure illumin'd his countenance without informing me from what cause it proceeded, he led me to the drawing-room and presented me to a graceful stranger, saying, behold, my Bothwell, my heart's dearest treasure, my wife, my Harriot! Mr. Bothwell, for it was he, receiv'd me with every token of friendship and politeness: Now said my Belville, I thank Heaven for placing within my own circle, all I most value upon earth: but where are my friends my dear, that they may witness my felicity?

At the moment we saw Lady Frances and my brother, arm in arm, walking towards the house: O yonder, Bothwell, cry'd Mr. Belville, comes the woman, who, next my Harriot, is dearest to my heart, how is it possible you could have known her virtues, and have kept your heart untouch'd by them?—He made him no reply, I said, I thought it fortunate for him, as I had heard Mr. Belville say, they had been acquainted, that his heart had not been susceptible of her Ladyship's merits, her tenderness having been abused by one man it was not, nor ever would be in the power of another to gain it.—Here we were interrupted by their entrance!

Mrs. Belville, said her Ladyship, your brother and I have been disputing, whether the passion of love, has the strongest influence over the male, or female heart: I told her I was no casuist and referred her to Mr. Belville. He took her hand, and kissing it led her to Mr. Bothwell, who to my surprise was still sitting, instead of advancing to meet her; from the moment I saw him I thought he appear'd under great agitation, but Mr. Belville's joy to see him did not permit him to disclose it:

My dear Bothwell, said he, if your regard for my happiness is sincere, behold in Lady Frances Warwick—She started back—he arose to meet her; and all pale and trembling dropt at her feet—begging her to vouchsafe her pity to the most miserable of men, if he was not totally banish'd from her remembrance—If you are Mr. Bothwell, said she, you are indeed the last person I would wish to welcome here? and sighing heavily she threw her arms round my neck, and in a faint voice exclaim'd, Ah my Harriot, Lenox and Bothwell are one!

Impossible, said I, Lenox is a villain; his misfortunes madam, said he, have subjected him to cruel misrepresentations, the hour is at length arriv'd which enables him to vindicate himself, and if you have receiv'd prejudices against the unfortunate Lenox, let the sincerity of Bothwell's sufferings urge you to plead for him here, taking her Ladyship's hand, which with indignation she drew from him—saying she wanted no justification of his conduct; once she said it would have been a satisfaction to her, but time had rendered her totally indifferent.

My dear friends, interrupted Belville, either convince me I am not delirious, or tell me you have enter'd into a combination to puzzle me: I have frequently Lady Frances, heard you and my friend mention each other, and I knew that the affections of both, had been deeply wounded, from disappointed love; but that this vile inconstant man, and this very coquettish woman should prove to be the two best friends I have in the world, I cannot comprehend; can you, my Harriot, solve the riddle? I told him, as I had done before, that her Ladyship had inform'd me of every circumstance of her life, except that his friend and Lenox were the same. I afterwards learnt he took the name of Bothwell on coming into possession of a very large estate—the reason you see is evident, why her Ladyship so strongly enjoin'd me to keep her story a secret from Mr. Belville, who by accident she found was the friend of her lover, just before he set out for Ireland, and as during her long acquaintance with Mr. Belville, Mr. Bothwell had not inform'd him of the connection there had been between them; she was well convinc'd his silence on that head would continue.

Bothwell still continued at the feet of Lady Frances, entreating her to hear his justification, which she as strenuously oppos'd: tho' I had not a very favourable opinion of Mr. Bothwell's principles respecting her Ladyship, yet I join'd my entreaties with Mr. Belville, that he might be heard: we were afterwards going to withdraw; but she absolutely oppos'd it; assuring us that Bothwell could have nothing to say to her that all the world might not hear; or in which she was the least interested! Then are my fears confirm'd, said he, I am forgotten; and why, interrupted she, would you wish to be remembered, but that I should retain a keener sense of the cruel usage I have receiv'd from you?—but you see Sir, I am callous, for I have surviv'd the loss of reputation as well as the loss of you!—yet a few partial friends continue to think me not unworthy their esteem. Oh, interrupted he, if ever I was dear to your heart, in pity to my distraction spare your reproaches, the man who reproaches himself needs no accuser;—In years of painful absence, to think of you has been my only comfort, and to reflect on our cruel separation, my only cause of anguish—vouchsafe to hear me then most beloved, and most abused of women,—the ardour of my affection could not bear a rival, I was deceived.

She entreated him again not to disturb a tranquillity which had cost her such trouble to attain,—I confess, said she, I have been a weak woman, you, Sir, easily discover'd my foible; and wisely took advantage of it, to direct it for my good. At this distance of time, and in presence of our friends, I am not ashamed to tell you, how much your behaviour had won upon the affections of my heart—you knew it—you rejected so poor a prize, and soon taught me to despise myself: when you quitted me, the loss of your esteem was a sufficient punishment for me; had not your letter afterwards wounded my bosom with reproaches which the firmest virtue could but ill support:—cease then, Sir, to persecute a woman whom you once said, honour bid you shun; and whom an unaccountable caprice now urges you to torment. Your reproofs have had their desired effect; they have sufficiently humbled my mind, and as my heart acquits me of all intentional guilt towards you, I am not desirous to know by what motives you have been actuated—I am happy—long may you continue so—here she left the room no one having resolution to detain her.

'Tis impossible to tell you how greatly Mr. Bothwell was affected: Mr. Belville united his efforts to mine, to calm his agitations, but without effect: he made us no reply, but starting up of a sudden, bid us farewell.—Sir William and my brother detain'd him by force; I left them to try what effect my persuasions would have upon her Ladyship: I found her in violent hysterics, occasion'd no doubt by the suppression of her feelings before her lover. As soon as she grew better, Mr. Belville joined us, and told her, his friend had just given him some imperfect sketches of their connection, that Mr. Bothwell's tenderness had been much abused, and that he, Mr. Belville, hoped to be the happy means of reconciling them; put it in my power dearest Lady, said he, to return if possible, part of the obligations I owe you; the only opportunity now offers itself—consider, madam, your tender care has rais'd and nourish'd, all my fond hopes; and filled my soul with delight, let me now be the instrument of equal happiness to you; your sufferings, your noble perseverance have made you dearer than ever to the heart of my friend; his love for you has known no abatement; tho' cruel misrepresentations have kept you long asunder; look upon his crime as the consequence, of an easy credulity, and not the effect of premeditation,—you must hear his defence. She told him her determination was fixt, and that on no pretence whatever, would she ever have another interview with him, if it was in her power to avoid it.

Finding we could not succeed, we gave up our point for that night: the next morning Mr. Bothwell sent her Ladyship the inclos'd, you will also find her answer.

Adieu,

H. BELVILLE.

P.S. Lady Frances had inform'd me of her having intended going abroad on Mr. Belville's acquainting her that Mr. Bothwell propos'd a visit to him this summer, and that her party was made with whom she was to have gone—but she has given me her word to take no step without my knowledge.

LETTER XXXVIII.

Charles BOTHWELL, Esq; to Lady
FRANCES WARWICK.

Madam,

UNCERTAIN whither you will condescend to peruse this scroll from the most miserable of men, yet thinks it his duty at least to hazard it. I will endeavour to make my narrative as concise as possible—O let my misfortunes engage your compassion, tho' they cannot entitle me to your esteem. The goodness of Lady Frances Warwick, I hope will acknowledge, that the bosom which is the least capable of artifice, is the most liable to suffer from its effects in others; and severely has the credulity of mine been punish'd. What you know of Miss Holten, now Mrs. Rawlins, must convince you, that the strictest prudence could not guard against her deep laid machinations! To give you a full eclairsissement of my conduct, it is necessary, I should take up my story, some weeks previous to our intended marriage. She began by gradually hinting at indiscretions in your conduct, before we became acquainted, often asking me what charms I had used, totally to change the very disposition of a woman, so passionately enamoured of public life, and so much given to intrigue; such violent passions ceasing of a sudden, made her fear they were only smother'd, not extinguish'd; these hints were thrown out with the greatest seeming reluctance: your returning again to those pleasures, which, too late, I find was at her instigation, began to alarm me; and the indifference, with which you treated me, to confirm my suspicions. When I visited you, I was frequently dismiss'd, on pretence that you were abroad; tho' I knew at the same time, Lord Wilton was with you—I complain'd to Georgina of it; the means she took to console me, serv'd only to increase my disquiet. She said that however you might be pleas'd with Lord Wilton as a friend; yet I was the person you would prefer as a husband; being of a disposition more easy to govern. I then began to reflect in my mind, whether there had ever been a real attachment between you, and what could be his motive for presenting me to you, in the character of a lover—and your's for encouraging my hopes. As I was well convinc'd of his regard for you; I next thought that so disinterested an act could not have been effected, without some promise of advantage to himself; otherwise his behaviour was so superior to my own, that I envied his greatness; loving you as I did, I could not have resign'd you to any man living. Frequently I had the honour of being admitted to your presence, to all around, you were gay, easy, polite; I only was the object of your neglect. Often when I attempted to remonstrate with you upon it—you told me my censures were premature; that necessity might compel you to endure them from a husband, yet as a lover I had no right to urge them;—and addressing Lord Wilton your good humour immediately return'd. Many of your acquaintance who were close observers of your conduct, grew loud in their censures; and attack'd me upon it in a manner, as painful to my feelings, as injurious to my honour: wondering how I could persevere in my attachment for a woman, who if ever she design'd to marry me, intended only to make me an instrument, to facilitate her gallantries with others.

Georgina, as your best friend, was the only person to whom I ventur'd to disclose my thoughts; her pity was grateful to me. At her instigations I try'd to awaken your love, by affecting an attachment to other women; even to dissemble infidelity filled my soul with bitterness, I could not succeed; and your indifference for me became more visible than ever: The last time I ever waited on you, fully determined to come to an explanation; with an air of killing coldness, you bade me never see you more. I quitted you with a heart bursting with anguish; unable to seek redress, or to leave your house, I went into a room below stairs, where no one could witness my distress, and gave free vent to it. In about a quarter of an hour Georgina made her appearance; she seem'd affected at my situation, and burst into tears! At length she said, if ruin came upon her, she could not conceal from me the only thing which could console me for the loss of my hopes. Immediately she endeavoured to retract what she had said, this served only to excite my curiosity; and at length, heated by passion, I solemnly swore I would instantly bring you both together, either to remove or confirm my suspicions. She talked of your many amiable virtues, it calm'd my resentment; again I entreated to be made acquainted with the nature of her suspicions, her evasions encreased my difficulties; she was quitting the room, when I caught her in my arms, and not knowing what I did, I half drew my sword, vowing I would sheath it in my breast if she did not instantly tell me all she knew respecting your conduct towards me without the least prevarication, and bound myself by the most solemn oath, that however she might have been assisting in my ruin, provided she told me the truth, I would forgive her. She wept bitterly, and said, happy was the woman who had never been ensnared by the artifices of Lord Wilton; but for them Lady Frances had been virtuous, and you, Lenox, happy!

Ah! pardon, my dearest Lady, my weakness, or rather let me call it excess of love: And here let me spare your delicacy the confusion to hear the subsequent part of our dialogue; suffice it to say that Georgina acquainted me you fell a sacrifice to Lord Wilton's perfidy, previous to my introduction to you, and that he had been long seeking a means to get you married, tho' his passion for you encreased daily. I wrote to you the next day, bidding you a last adieu! Were I to tell you what I endured for many months after this cruel separation,—if you have ceas'd to pity me, you would doubt my veracity. Mr Belville can inform you of the wretched life I led in Italy, where I first became acquainted with him. Not all his friendship for me could ever draw the secret from my breast. I left the Continent to take possession of my uncle's fortune, for which you must know I exchange'd my name. I enquir'd after you on my return, and to my surprize, found you were still unmarried, and lived in a very retired manner. I thought could I get a sight to you I should be happier; I went privately to Harewood; I secreted myself in the garden; I saw you enter it, sadness clouded your brow, and sickness seem'd to have faded your cheek; your motion was slow and pensive; you took a letter from your bosom, and after having shed tears upon it, restored it to its sacred repository, and return'd to the house. This circumstance had like to have cost me my life; I determined again on leaving England, and every place wherein it was likely my mind would receive fresh torments from being haunted by your idea; but in this at length my intentions were foil'd. My friend Belville's letters were but so many panegyrics on your virtues, and all my former tenderness returned with redoubled force: I sometimes thought of throwing myself upon your mercy, but I wanted fortitude for the undertaking, and had too much delicacy to

reproach you for crimes of which I now blush to reflect you were accused. This, Madam, made me pursue my rambling scheme ; I was setting out on a fresh tour when an accident detain'd me at York, where I met Lord Wilton, whom I had not seen for many years. We embraced—but instantly the idea of my imagined wrongs rush'd upon me, and I look'd upon him with horror! He ask'd me if I still continued a bachelor, and said he would give any thing to know what fit of delicate caprice had broke off my former attachment.

I told him if he was really surprized at it, he must seek the cause in his own breast: In short, after a little conversation, I accus'd him of being the person who had blasted all my fairest hopes. His astonishment is not to be equalled, and it was to me the strongest testimony of his innocence. He concluded with saying the whole must have been the invention of Georgina, whom I had been so unfortunate as to inspire with sentiments I had never thought of returning—He said, the luckiest method in the world now presented itself of having his honour justified to me; that Georgina's husband lived but in the next street; that he had seen her a few days ago, and found her to be in extreme poverty; and, on enquiry, had heard her character was too bad to be countenanced by people of reputation.

Mrs. Rawlins was very ready to wait on his Lordship at his lodgings: whilst she underwent her examination, which he managed with the utmost prudence, I secreted myself so as to be within hearing. After having talked over many past scenes, in which we were all equally interested, in a casual manner his Lordship said he would give a good deal to know what were her motives for causing a separation between your Ladyship and me; she gave him vague and general answers, till she found he was too much a master of his subject to be longer deceived. At length he grew positive, and told her if she offer'd at the least evasion he would have her committed to prison; on the contrary, if she made an honest confession of the truth, her candour might be rewarded with a handsome gratuity.—She then confessed her baseness, nearly as I have related, and concluded with saying, that her intention was only to encrease my love, when she should inform me of your innocence, not having the least idea I should carry my resentment so far. Wilton told her he was well convinc'd she must have been actuated by some other principle, He strongly urged her on his head, 'till he brought her to a full confession; after which I made my appearance. Struck with horror she dropt at my feet, beseeching me not to punish her; I told her the guilty needed no accuser, and beg'd she would turn her prayers towards Heaven for forgiveness, and for grace to enable her to resist future temptations:—We soon after dismissed the wretched criminal, and advised together what was to be done. I proposed writing to you, and told him of your being at Mount Belville - he then, Madam, advised a personal interview with you!—I have had it, it has convinced me my credulity is not to be forgiven— I hate, I despise myself : that were sufficient torment for me, were it not heightened by your contempt.

Best of women, the richer *your* mind is adorned with virtue, the more you must despise the contemptible littleness of *mine*: yes! the man who preferr'd you to all the world, dared to entertain suspicions derogatory to your fair fame; with confusion, with shame he confesses it; let the miseries they have brought upon him, claim your pity; and let that pity awaken in your soul, the idea that I was happy in your esteem.

Ah no! I dare not hope it; Mr. Melvern now claims a privilege, that my rash folly has deny'd me: I dare not solicit your returning favour, he who has not abused it, now possesses it: it is too late—I lose you for ever!—yet my heart shall ever remain faithful to its early affections, you first engaged them, for you only shall they be reserv'd; 'till overpower'd with pain and grief, the hand of death shall erase them for ever.

When you pronounce my sentence, let me conjure you to compassionate the pangs you give; we are not at all times alike capable to bear disappointment—Think of the hours of exquisite felicity, we have known together, and let it excite your tender commiseration towards the wretched.

BOTHWELL.

Copyright Chawton House Library

LETTER XXXIX.

From Lady FRANCES WARWICK,
in Answer.

NOT to be anxious to stand well in the opinion of every man of honour, to whom I am known, would be unworthy the character of a woman, who retains any principles of delicacy and truth. To have my conduct justified by you, is to me a happiness of no common worth, it was the only circumstance wanting to compleat it. Yet pardon me Sir, to consent to share it with you, is what I never can. The misfortunes of my life, have circumscrib'd my views; they have taught me not to depend on any satisfaction, which my own reflections cannot procure me. I have been imprudent, severely have I suffer'd for the consequences. At an early age I became mistress of myself, my rank, and fortune, every where procured me flatterers; I had but one friend who would venture to expostulate with me on the impropriety of my conduct—it was yourself; tho' sensible — your remonstrances were for my advantage; I was too proud to acknowledge I felt the truth of them 'till it was too late.

The joys and sorrows of my life, I confided to a treacherous friend; the heart of Georgina, too late I find, was not to be soften'd by friendship, not enlarged by gratitude—Tho' she bore about her the specious mark of every virtue; her art was sufficient to engage your confidence; is it to be wonder'd at then if I was deceiv'd:—she proved too subtil for us both—we were both the dupes of her wickedness; can I then blame your conduct? no Sir, so far from it, I shall ever respect you for acting on the principles you did; nor do I blush to tell you, that of all mankind I think you most calculated to make a woman of sentiment happy. But that woman, Sir, never can be myself—many years have elapsed, since our separation; I am not what I was; yet I still retain a sprightliness of disposition, that at times might rouse the dragon of suspicion in his breast, who has long been accustomed to suspect me: the same idea must always recur to you, when ever pleasure enliven'd my features, or good humour animated my conversation.

Habits long contracted are not easily forgotten, at least I find it so: I have long accustom'd myself to think of you as of a man, in whom I have no longer any interest; how then can I ever look upon you, in the light of a husband? believe me sincere when I tell you, I never can. I should despise myself were I to keep you one moment in suspense respecting Mr. Melvern: I never can consider him but as Mrs. Belville's brother: I never saw but one man to whom I ever form'd a wish to be united; he abused my tenderness; you know the reason which seperated me from him.

Oh Mr. Bothwell, never can I consent to give my hand to the man who could wrong my honour, even by suspecting it: I beseech Heaven to continue its blessings to

you? but must entreat all farther solicitations from you, may end here; if you really wish happiness to

FRANCES WARWICK.

Copyright Chawton House Library

LETTER XL

CHARLES BOTHWELL, Esq. to Lord WILTON

YOU will agree with me my Lord, that there is a refinement in the souls of sensible women, not to be found elsewhere; my lovely Frances' motives for rejecting me, (*of which my last informed you) serv'd if possible to rivet my affections more closely to her: I waited several days expecting when she would join the company—I wrote to her frequently, I receiv'd from her answers, in which she endeavour'd to convince me, that the only means by which I could ever obtain her friendship was to leave her unmolested, to pursue the dictates of her own inclinations: She sometimes saw Mr. and Mrs. Belville, in her apartment; they both exerted their best endeavours to serve me; the former pain'd at her steady refusal to admit again of my addresses; told her, that I was determin'd to pursue the only means to humble a woman, vain of her power; by putting an end to solicitations which were repuls'd with the more steadiness, in proportion to the sincerity with which they were prefer'd: he added that I had determin'd to quit Mount Belville and never again to make my happiness depend on female caprice; she told him if her good wishes would any way contribute to it, I might ever command them. This was but cold kindness, to nourish feelings so animated as mine: It threw me into an extreme dejection; my friend ridiculed my fears, and said, that he had too much knowledge of the human heart to think it could for ever forego its favourite inclinations; when nature pleaded—when virtue authoris'd—and when a beloved object sued. A secret monitor whisper'd me, that could I see her, when she was unprepared with arguments of repulsion, my tender pleadings would melt the icy coldness of her heart, and fix my empire there, before reflection and pride should have time to operate; an opportunity soon presented itself.

I gently stole unbidden on her meditations; she perceived not my entrance, I stood some time apart, to observe her actions before I approach'd her—she sigh'd frequently, one hand supported her head, the other held a handkerchief, that she often apply'd to her eyes, which were fixt on a miniature which lay on her lap.

At this sight I was equally instigated by curiosity and resentment; an involuntary motion made me spring forward, I threw myself at her feet; I got possession of her treasure! She was terrified almost to the loss of breath—she severely reprov'd my temerity—she entreated me to restore, what I had so unjustly taken from her: my lips promis'd, what my heart was determin'd not to fulfil; but first I beg'd to know, if the prize of which I was in possession, was highly valued by her? and if so, let the consequence be ever so great, I would never part with it, but with life! that I would know no satisfaction but in contemplating what was dear to her; tho' it should prove to be the image of my rival!

Hesitating and blushing she declared she never could pardon me, if I did not instantly return her picture, and return it without so much as glancing at it.—She said it

had ever been the faithful witness of her troubles from the hour they commenc'd:—here I drew it from my bosom, where I had conceal'd it: judge my Lord of my transports when I beheld a faithful copy of myself, which I had once presented her; the dear trembler endeavour'd to escape from me; first entreating me to deliver up the picture: I swore never to part with it, unless she accepted of the original also! Her agitation prevented the refusal her tongue was about to declare—I took advantage of her silence—I pronounced my own pardon—recovering herself, she would have convinc'd me of my error—I would not be convinc'd—again she re-urged me to restore the picture—again I re-urged the propos'd condition!

Oh Mr. Bothwell said she at length, did you but know the force of your own arguments, you would not persecute me thus; I no longer doubt your honour, or your regard for me, I fear only the imperfection of human nature; you have been long accusom'd to think ill of me, I have lost all those attractions which once gain'd me your esteem, they have long been devour'd by inward grief, my disposition is entirely chang'd: your imagination still recurring to the lively Frances, will soon be sensible of the change; the heart which hath once deeply felt will ever be susceptible: disappointed in your expectations, you may transfer that tenderness to another, which I had not merit to retain; I could not bear your unkindness! She burst into tears, I wanted not those tender witnesses of her feelings to awaken mine—I entreated she would not suffer the fears of anticipation to destroy for ever a felicity, which hung upon the present moment, and added, that I should think myself unworthy of her love, were I to endeavour now to convince her of mine, by professions which could but ill express my regard. Shall I farther add my Lord, that if I did not entirely conquer her scruples, I so far remov'd them, as to make her confess, she wish'd to have no interest; no happiness separate from mine: my joy was too exquisite to be endured, my gratitude too powerful to be express'd!—her consenting voice has dispers'd every cloud that hover'd over this delightful spot!

Thus after an uncommon series of distressing events, my friend Belville, and myself, are arriv'd at that period of felicity, which can be only tasted by those, who have experience'd the severest visitations of affliction!—and let the treacherous deceiver and the base calumniator, learn from us, that integrity of heart however severely proved, will one day rise superior to the utmost stretch of inventive malice; and that the arrows of guilt never strike so deep a wound in the breast to which they are directed, as in that, from which they proceed——For

——“Even handed justice Returns th' ingredients of our poison'd Chalice To our own lips.” ——

Your's, &c.

C. BOTHWELL.

FINIS

Copyright Chawton House Library