

THE
CAUTIOUS LOVER.

VOL. I.

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THE
CAUTIOUS LOVER;
OR, THE
HISTORY
OF
LORD WOBURN.

By a YOUNG GENTLEMAN of OXFORD:

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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MDCCLXXII.

THE
CAUTIOUS LOVER.

LETTER I.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

AND so you tell me that I am by far too nice, and of too refined a way of thinking to be happy.—My expectations, you say, are extravagant: perhaps they are; but till I see a probability of having those expectations answered, I shall not add another fool to the herd of miserable husbands—Let them talk till their tongues are weary about heirs; I can *adopt* whenever I please; I can dispose of my fortune extremely well without having any *matrimonial* connections with that deceiver from the beginning, a woman. It is true, I cannot leave my title to my adopted son, nor insure him all my estate, but I can leave him enough to satisfy a reasonable man: besides, what care I for posterity? I am quite of the old lady's mind, who, when pressed to think about the people who were to come after her, said, "Pr'ythee be quite; I wonder when we shall see posterity do any thing for us."—The lady was probably an Hibernian, but her reply was not altogether a bad one.—I have not the least aversion to the sex; no man loves them better, from constitution or from taste. We were, undoubtedly, designed by Nature to increase each other's pleasures, but we certainly, by our political connections, contrive to multiply each other's cares.—Now, perhaps, you expect me to run on with a heap of invectives against the marriage-state; if you expect any severities from me against it, you will be mistaken.—The marriage state is, I am very willing to own with you, a heaven upon earth, when those who enter into it are suitable to each other in every respect; but the *infernal* matches which one sees in the world so much out-number the *celestial* ones, that the encouragements to an indissoluble union are fewer and fewer every day.—The women are become so intolerably corrupt, that a man must be absolutely mad who encumbers himself with a wife.—I have not yet, indeed, even ventured upon a mistress, being almost certain that a mistress, "labouring in her vocation," will endeavour to impose upon me.—You know how much I hate to be *duded*; you will not wonder at my *apprehensions* which naturally throw me upon my guard.

"By these apprehensions you punish yourself cruelly, for the most exquisite joys in life are only to be found in the arms of a fine woman." No so fast, my friend; I enjoy, I assure you, all the raptures which the finest woman in the universe can bestow—with her personal charms; but as to the transports arising from congenial souls, from the delicious satisfactions of mutual friendship, satisfactions superior to all other sensations, I give them up, firmly believing that I shall never find a female capable of such an exalted attachment.

There are a thousand women, you will tell me, who, in point of understanding, are little inferior to men of the brightest intellects, and whose minds have been cultivated in the politest style—who, by the softness of their manners, the gentleness of their dispositions, and the charming vivacity of their conversation are thoroughly qualified to be the most desirable companions—Granted—I chiefly, therefore, converse with *such*

women.—Men are too apt to degenerate into brutes when left to their own mirth, mutually excited by coarse jokes, indelicate allusions, and noisy impudence.—They are also inclined to be ill-humoured, and inhumane when they associate only among themselves.—I, therefore, always chuse a mixed company: the two sexes ever appear to most advantage when they meet together.—But must I tye myself to a woman for life, because I like her conversation?—No—certainly.—You will not, perhaps, be so violent an advocate for matrimony when you have been half a year united to your favourite Maria.

Adieu.

P.S. I am going to spend a week or two with Sir Francis Euston, at Euston-Castle.—Let your next letter be directed to that place.—There will be a large party of us, I believe.

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LETTER II.

From the same to the same.

I Thank you for so boldly taking up your pen in defence of women.—I am as much obliged to you for your panegyrics upon them, as they would be on hearing them, because they give me an opportunity to vent my heterodox principles with the greater freedom. But I shall not be contented merely to oppose *my* sentiments to yours; I shall illustrate the assertions I have thrown out by living examples—yet how idly shall I employ myself by dragging private delinquents from their retirements, and making a public exposure of them, when there are so many glaring proofs of the falsehood and incontinence of women exhibited every day before the world's broad eye, of women figuring in the highest ranks of life.—By the way, I have often observed a striking similarity between the highest and the lowest stations;—that similarity may be, perhaps, easily accounted for—the *quantum* of reputation in both is so extremely small that it is not worthy of their attention. People in the middle walks of life only are studious to keep up their characters.—How many dutchesses, countesses, &c. &c. could I name, who, instead of being desirous of concealing their *amours*—*some* too rather *plebeian*—appear to glory in their disregard of—decorum.—Go to a country fair, or to a horse race, all the girls are common; as handsome as girls of the first fashion, though not so high bred, full as false, as fickle, and as voluptuous.—The grand aim of them all, in short, is to get as many men into their power as they can, and to change them as often as a capricious king changes his favourites.—Yet, after all, Jack, girls we *must* have, but no wife; no mistress for me. I am for no tye upon earth; I live at large, and change my women as often as my cloaths.—And, to say truth, here are very handsome ones in this part of the country.—Don't mistake me; I do not mean millers wives and farmers daughters, but women of distinction, women who have some of the best blood in the kingdom dancing in their veins.—I never was fond of your fine healthy fresh-coloured blushing country girls; they are as *knowing* as the most accomplished women of quality can possibly be, but are destitute of that elegance of *manner* which is to me the *irresistible charm*.

We have a strong party here; Sir Francis loves company, literally; he loves to have a crowd about him, and my lady who chuses to live *like other people*, invites every body she knows.—I was, at first, loth to comply with their repeated invitations, but on their assuring me that I should not be teased with people, and that I should live quite as I liked, I became flexible.

You ask me whether I rank lady Euston among the number of bad women in my black catalogue, slyly insinuating that I think no woman good.—Out again; there are, undoubtedly, some less vicious than others; some are more weak than wicked: most earnestly, you may be assured, do I avoid the *latter*, and I certainly desire to have no connections with the *former*.—No, Wilmot, the woman whom I love must be elegantly handsome; her mind must be still more beautiful, if possible, than her person.—She must be *good*, but she must also be sensible, and politely accomplished; she must be gentle, modest, tender, nay, amorous; yet, at the same time, as chaste as a vestal; she must be faithful, generous, sincere, and capable of the most refined friendship for me.—In short, I should not, I believe, think a woman, truly loved me, unless she would go as far as

Prior's Emma; and yet there may be exceptions even against *that* character.—But probably you will be of lady Spilsbury's mind about me: yesterday, after I had refused a dish of tea from her coarse hand, she told me, that I did not know what I would have.

You bid me say something to divert you in the absence of your Maria.—We have got a pretty widow here, young, handsome, in appearance discreet, and seems inclined to attach herself to me more than to the rest of the men.—She was married young, by her father, to an old man who used her most horribly—No doubt she gave him sufficient provocation—but this among ourselves.—She has the finest pair of languishing black eyes you ever beheld;—she has a pretty little mouth, and can look as demure as a quaker.—Our apartments happen to lie contiguous—Strong temptation!—Heaven defend my virtue!—Should my little widow be importunate, I shall be a lost creature—as I have heard the women say.—But here is a celebrated *toast* expected here to-morrow, who has not been much seen in public, lady Charlotte Morden, daughter to the late earl of C——. On the death of the countess her mother she went into the North with her guardian and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Elliot (the former is her mother's brother) and from thence to Spa.—She returned to England, and was *presented* while I was at Paris, so that I do not remember ever to have seen her.—They tell me that she is as accomplished and as good as she is beautiful.—I smiled at the monosyllable, and replied, "All ladies are undoubtedly *good*."—"I am sure you don't think so, you wretch," cried lady Spilsbury, tapping my shoulder—"but you will be punished one time or other for—"

"For what?" answered I, "for thinking in so favourable a manner of the most lovely part of the creation."

"Oh! devil, devil!" said Miss Freely, "*you* know that *I* know you think quite otherwise."

When once a woman comes to confess herself so very knowing, Jack, I have done with her.—But I did not tell her so abruptly;—I am not ill-natured, as the women tell me; I am, indeed, vain, insolent, indifferent sometimes;—nay, I have been called *insensible*—I wish *they* were so;—however, I won't abuse them—they are, after all, necessary evils; and so I will go and take a walk with my widow in the wilderness.

Adieu.

LETTER III.

From the same to the same.

THIS lady Charlotte is come.—She is very handsome, but her pride is insupportable.—She is—faith, I can't tell how to describe her; yet I have been looking at her above an hour, on purpose to give you her portrait exactly.—She is most insufferably haughty.—Why should a woman be so cursed proud because she happens to be particularly handsome?—And yet I think her features would have a great deal of softness and sensibility in them, if she would depart a little from the unnecessary dignity of her appearance.—By keeping up a majestic air she intends, doubtless, to render herself more attractive; but a woman with the finest face in the world is not *lovely* in my eyes, if her

beauty is not accompanied with affability and good-nature—Lady Charlotte, indeed, is not either ill-bred or ill-humoured; she has a transparent complexion; the glow of health in her cheeks out-blooms all the *rouge* of Paris; but there is a delicacy discoverable in her whole frame, which shews that it would be injured with the least rough treatment.—Her eyes—no—I had better let *them* alone, for I cannot, possibly, do them any sort of justice; nor, indeed, can I inform you of what colour they are, but their glances sometimes dart into your very soul.—’Tis strange that she must be so haughty because she is so handsome;—and yet I don’t know whether she absolutely deserves that epithet neither; for there is such a dimple on each side of her rosy lips whenever she smiles, that it makes her appear like *Euphrosyne* herself;—but then she dresses her hair in a manner calculated to give her a towering aspect.—Her hair is uncommonly thick and glossy; her eyelashes are also beautiful beyond description, and she has got a trick of throwing down her eyes, on purpose, I imagine, to exhibit their *fringes* to greater advantage.—She is, actually, monstrous handsome—yet this confounded pride.—I always had a mortal aversion to a haughty woman.—My pretty widow, Mrs. Mead, though not above half so tall as lady Charlotte, and not a quarter so *high*, is the more *desirable* woman of the two: in person, to be sure, she carries all before her, but I am always, you know, scrutinizing into the hearts of the fair sex.

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LETTER IV.

From the same to the same.

HOW one may be mistaken in people! I had taken a foolish fancy into my head that lady Charlotte was capricious, insensible, nay cruel.—I cannot tell why, for she is quite another creature.—Miss Freely, lady Euston's sister, corrected *Trip* this morning with such violence for some misdemeanour which the little animal had committed—by the way a lady's dog has almost as bad a time as her lover—that lady Charlotte interposed, asked her how she could be so inhuman as to beat the poor wretch for faults he could not help, snatched the puppy from her, and began to make much of him by giving it some cream in her own saucer;—Now was not that a good-natured action?—You cannot imagine how snowy-white her hands and arms looked, in opposition to the little brute's black back, as he lay in her lap.—Yet I do not like to see women fond of dogs, monkeys, &c. &c. there is folly, there is indelicacy in such attachments.—Possibly lady Charlotte exercised her humanity just at that time, and in that manner to be taken notice of.—However, *Trip* was extremely obliged to her—But why do I write so much about one thing?

When did you hear from Maria? You tell me that she has a large addition to her fortune by the death of her uncle: I hope such an acquisition will make no change in her to your disadvantage; though certainly woman is a very mutable being.

Mrs. Mead and I are not on such good terms as we were;—she took it into her head to be jealous of me, as if I must not look at or speak to any woman except herself.—I told her that if I was less particular to her in public, my behaviour was governed by the regard I had for her reputation.

Reputation! cried she, strongly pronouncing the word—then turned upon her heel, and left me.

With all *my* heart.—Thank heaven! there is no scarcity of women; there are enough always ready;—so, my dear widow, I shall make myself altogether easy.—'Tis a pretty tender animal; but she who will yield to one man, will not be very coy to another; she will be at the service of the whole sex; there can be no dependance on such a coming dear creature; the woman who does not respect herself, cannot be respectable in *our* eyes. They may talk as they please of our being irresistible, in the language of romance, but give *me* the girl who while she is languishing with desires, warm as my own, has discretion enough to keep her inclination within bounds, and to conquer her passion when it is just ready to hurry her into the gulph of perdition.—But where is such a *rara avis* to be found, you will say?—The question is not easily to be answered; yet, indeed, Wilmot, if there were more women who knew how to value themselves, who would not make themselves cheap, both sexes would be much better, and consequently much happier.—*We* are *rogues* because *they* are *fools*, and so we both drive away to the devil together.

Lady Charlotte—I had not, indeed, intended to mention her name again.—Lady Charlotte has given me such a look of exquisite disdain—and for what?—only for taking hold of her hand, that soft hand which I had so much admired.—Oh! how I despised her—I let it drop immediately—she put herself into a very unnecessary hurry.—I hate a prude;—a prude is the most contemptible character in the universe, because she is a

hypocrite.—How much preferable to her is the flirt, who fairly lets you know at once what she would be at, so that you may leave her or take her as you please.—A woman who pretends to more virtue than she can come up to, is to me quite detestable.—I thought my fine lady looked as if she was sorry that she had been so precipitate, for I turned and kissed my widow's little finger, as if I meant actually to devour it;—lady Charlotte, blushing like an opening rose, left the room.—Blushing is of infinite service to some women, it makes them all look handsome; yet, in my life, I never saw so *improving* a blush as that which overspread lady Charlotte's face and neck, it gave her absolutely a very angelic appearance.

Your's, as usual.

W—.

P.S. Here is a Mr. Evelyns, who seems to look upon lady Charlotte as upon a divinity indeed!

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LETTER V.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

Euston Castle.

I HAVE a thousand times repented coming thither; had I not been apprehensive of affronting Sir Francis and lady Euston by a refusal, I should not have complied with their invitation.—Why will people persist in quarrelling with you, because you don't happen to think as *they* do?—Surely such people are the most unreasonable beings imaginable.—We can no more make our thoughts than our faces alike;—I will say nothing about the latter, but I will freely tell you that I should be sorry to have my sentiments correspond with those of many of my companions here, though some of them are reckoned as sensible as they are polite.

Lord Woburn is here. You have heard of him; he is, undoubtedly, one of the finest figures you ever beheld, but there is something in his *tout ensemble* that greatly detracts from the beauty of his person.—He is reckoned proud; he is certainly capricious to a prodigious degree.—Mrs. Mead, the widow of old Mead of Derbyshire, a very pretty woman, but rendered frequently less so by a dejection which hangs about her, seems to be his favourite.—She is evidently attached to *him*, but I don't think he treats *her* with the consideration which she deserves: he takes too many liberties with her, especially in public.—I am sorry to censure her conduct, but surely the freedoms which are taken with her, are in consequence of the encouragement she gives.—No man will presume to behave to a woman with an improper familiarity, unless her previous behaviour has authorised his presumption.—Lord Woburn has rather too high an opinion of his own *charms*; he really looks as if he thought every woman must *admire* him; he does not even—conceitedly conscious of his attractions—try to insinuate himself into your favour—he tyrannically demands it—without once supposing that any woman can come within the reach of his eyes, and keep her heart quiet at the same time.—Now, you must know by that sort of carriage, he appears to me in a very disadvantageous light. He has unquestionably a great deal of merit; he would have much more if he conducted himself in a different manner.—Few men have stronger intellects; the minds of few men have been more politely cultivated; he can be exceedingly entertaining in conversation, but I think he rather loves to *trifle*, especially with women, as if he disdained to converse with them upon an equal footing.—He has certainly kept company chiefly with the loose part of our sex, or with those careless creatures who, by not keeping up their importance, are treated slightly by every body.

Miss Freely, lady Euston's sister, is here. She is, apparently, one of these *insignificants*; lady Spilsbury is another: these women spend most of their hours in making themselves noticed by lord Woburn, who, did they not perpetually throw themselves in his way, would never, I believe, trouble himself about them—Yet, setting aside these errors of judgement—errors which are often attended with fatal consequences—they are sensible women.—Miss Freely is pretty; lady Spilsbury is what you call a fine shewy woman; yet they do not, either of them, suit me for intimates—nor

is lady Euston, you know, a woman with whom one can safely contract a friendship.—She is a well-bred woman—according to the fashionable meaning of that compound word.—“When you have said that,” to borrow an expression from Sir Courtly Nice, “you have said all.”—As she is my father’s relation, I don’t chuse to affront her; for a similar reason I am civil to her sister.—My lady is by much the best of the two.

Since I have been deprived of your valuable conversation, I have had a *void* in my heart which wants to be filled up, but here are none about me like *you*.—How unluckily for *me* did you return to Mr. Elliot’s just when I had left them.—Write, however, to me at this place; and pray read this to your brother and sister; it will, I think, sufficiently convince them how much I wish to revive my interviews with them.

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LETTER VI.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

I WAS right.—This Evelyn is fallen down-right in love with lady Charlotte.—He is certainly serious; he follows her like her shadow. But I pity him, poor fellow; she will, undoubtedly, use him like a dog; for though he is handsome, sensible, and well-bred, he cannot pretend to her: he has but a trifling fortune, about seven hundred a year; now, to be sure, she expects a man with twice as many thousands.—If women were really what they appear to be, their expectations, though extravagant, might be pardonable.

Lady Charlotte is, take her all together, the most beautiful figure I ever saw: She is extremely conversible too, when she happens to be in humour; and has a voice like a cherubim.—Poor Evelyn!—She is, really, exceedingly condescending to him, and treats him more like a brother or some relation than a casual acquaintance, while he looks and listens as if his existence depended upon her smiles.—She has a partiality for him, I believe;—yet I think her pride will hinder her from marrying, for she may marry a title.—Well—*he* may be the favourite notwithstanding; such events are not extraordinary in the fashionable world.—He is certainly a pretty fellow—all the women here are pleased with him—they like *him* next to *me*;—he does not seem to be sufficiently sensible of his *powers*, or he might make his own terms;—but lady Charlotte engrosses his thoughts and his time—he has no leisure, no inclination for any other woman; he seems to be formed by nature for a constant animal; he will make an incomparable dupe.—Such a fellow now, if he had but any thing of a fortune, would do well enough for a husband, that is, he is a good, healthy, handsome, convenient tool, and would do vastly well when nobody else was in the way; yet he does not want sense, he is only too easy and complying: an artful woman may do what she will with such a tractable mortal. Charlotte can *look* him into any thing; she certainly has the most bewitching pair of eyes I ever saw in my life—but I hate them, because they are sometimes directed favourably towards Evelyn—I fancy so at least—not that I trouble my head about her eyes, yet I can't bear to see men so fooled.—No woman should have such an advantage over *me*, though I were dying for her.

I have lately had several opportunities of conversing with lady Charlotte, upon various subjects; I never met with a woman who acquitted herself so well; she is possessed of a delicate sensibility, and would make a glorious mistress—but her pride, I suppose, would bring her off, should her passions be violent enough to occasion a conflict in her bosom between love and honour.—After all, a woman with strong passions is in a ticklish situation, and may, 'tis highly probable, run away with your footman, if he happens to be a handsomer fellow than you are, though, I assure you, I have known an ugly dog more successful with his lady, than the most delicate *Adonis* that ever breathed.—Evelyn, indeed, is a very fine fellow; few men are better made, few men have more insinuating manners;—some people, however, without taking any pains at all, do their business completely.

I have just been talking with lady Charlotte about her admirer. We were all three, yesterday, sitting in a temple in the garden, with Harriot Facely: lady Charlotte had a large nosegay in her bosom—she is a mighty lover of flowers—stooping to look down

the walk at a tree which stood at the bottom of it—I had purposely directed her fine eyes that way, to prevent their committing murder upon poor Evelyn—the flowers fell out of her bosom.—“You have dropped your nosegay,” said I, without stirring from my seat.

Evelyn immediately flew to gather her another, picking up the fallen flowers for himself, because *she* had worn them.—

He soon returned, and she received his *present* with so many smiles and acknowledgements, that, I dare say, he was the happier all the day for them.

Evelyn and Facely soon left us, the latter being summoned by a message from lady Euston, the former by a letter from London.—When they had both left us, though they left us, I thought, reluctantly, I said to lady Charlotte, taking her hand, “I did not imagine you had so much cruelty in your disposition.”

“What do you mean, my lord?”

“Why, are you not excessively cruel to make a man who is desperately in love with you, believe that you like him when you do not?”

“I don’t understand you,” replied she, blushing, and withdrawing her hand.

“Did you not give the utmost encouragement,” said I, seizing her hand again, “to the poor fellow for his endeavours to please you, by the flattering smiles which you bestowed upon him?”

“And why should you suppose that he did not please me? His civility, his readiness to oblige me, demanded a return of politeness; I meant nothing more, nor had he any other meaning, I believe;—if you, if any other person had fetched me the flowers, I should have behaved in the same manner.”

“I am too lazy to take so much pains,” replied I, “but if I had been so *civil*, and if you had thanked me as much as you thanked him, I should not have been so much affected by your flattering carriage, because I should have strongly suspected the sincerity of it.”

“Bless me,” cried she, “is so much sincerity necessary when we are thanking a man for giving us a few flowers? When any body endeavours to please me, I think it is highly incumbent on me to *appear* at least pleased.”

“Evelyn, then, has actually made a conquest of your heart by the excess of his solicitude? Upon my word it is cheaply gained.”

“Indeed, lord Woburn, you are very capricious to-day; but since my behaviour does not happen to be agreeable to you, I will leave you to yourself.”—Rising to go.

“Stay,” said I, still holding her hand, “if you really did not discover so much satisfaction at Evelyn’s assiduity with a view to make him still more firmly attached to you, but were only politely acknowledging his civilities, you are not so much to blame.—But are you sure, lady Charlotte, that you do not take a pleasure in giving encouragement to this poor fellow’s passion for you?—You cannot help seeing that he is extremely in love with you.—

“I don’t see any such thing,” answered she, blushing, still more deeply, “and I think a woman cannot make herself more ridiculous, than by supposing that every man who treats her with a little gallantry is in love with her.—Men are of different tempers; some are naturally inclined to be more attentive to women than others, without having any particular designs; and while such men keep within proper bounds, while they make themselves both agreeable and useful by their services, they are, I think, entitled to

politeness; a different conduct would, certainly, induce them to imagine that a woman looked upon their assiduities in a serious light, contrary to their intentions.”

What a sensible reply, Wilmot? How I admired her for it! With what unaffected modesty was it delivered!

“You have entirely convinced me,” said I, “that you meant nothing particular yourself to Evelyn; but you cannot make me believe you do not see that he is ready to hang himself for you.”

“I shall not dispute with you, my lord,” replied she, throwing down her lovely eyes, “upon a subject about which I am totally ignorant.—Let me go—I want to speak with Miss Facely.”

“You must not go till you have answered two or three queries.—In what degree of esteem does Evelyn stand with you?”

“Pooh,” said she, smiling, and striving to disengage her hands from me, “I have never once given myself leisure to think about him.”

“Nay, now, that’s affectation all over, lady Charlotte—a single spark of which I never observed in you before.”

“Indeed you wrong me,” replied she, with an abashed air, “as I never intended to look upon Mr. Evelyn in the light you hint at, I never thought seriously about him—but——”

“Aye—come—tell me every secret in that charming bosom relating to him, and I will let you go.”

“Well, then—I believe he is reckoned handsome.”

“You mean, *you* think him so.”

“Yes, I do;—but his beauty is not of the kind which pleases *me*.—He is also very good humoured, I fancy.—He may have a very good understanding, perhaps, but there seems to be nothing extraordinary in it. In short, though he may be esteemed a very agreeable man, he does not particularly strike *me*.”

“If he had a larger estate——”

“No, my lord, fortune will never influence me so far as to prefer a man merely for his money. Mr. Evelyn will never be any thing to me; and yet as I think him desirous of pleasing, and perfectly inoffensive—(inoffensive people are not always to be met with) I chuse to behave to him with good manners.”

“I dare say he lives in hopes of bringing that *good manners* to something more interesting, bye and bye.”

She was going to reply, but Sir Francis Euston joining us, put a stop to a conversation, which has convinced me that she is not so much pre-possessed in favour of Evelyn, as I had imagined her to be.—She is a lovely creature.—If women were but as good as they are beautiful!—I don’t know such another.—

Mrs. Mead can’t bear to see me take notice of lady Charlotte;—jealous.—Can she expect me to speak to no woman but herself? Ridiculous;—I love to divert myself with the whole sex; but there is an inexpressible something in lady Charlotte, which distinguishes her from all the women with whom I have hitherto conversed—so much sense, so much spirit;—yet with all her vivacity how winningly modest! I have, certainly, a prodigious high idea of her at present, but she will, doubtless, descend from her dignity in a little while, and prove herself to be one of Eve’s own daughters.—What artful devils, Wilmot, are the majority of women! They disguise themselves in so many shapes,

and appear in such very deceitful colours, that there is no venturing to have any thing to do with them for above a night at a time;—I, therefore, never think of engaging with any woman who has not a character to keep up;—a woman of this stamp is as glad to get rid of me, as I am ready to run from her.—Such has been my situation with Mrs. Mead; when we were first acquainted, she was afraid I should speak to her or even look at her in public; but since lady Charlotte's arrival, she has almost discovered herself from her jealousy on *my* account;—not that I am more particular about lady Charlotte than any body else, she happens to have more beauty and more *retenüe*, at present, than the rest of her sex, and so I take more notice of her.—But even *she* has, no doubt, some secret foible—when once that is detected—your servant, my lady;—then my widow will be in a fuss about somebody else.—However, if lady Charlotte happens to be as much attached to me as Mrs. Mead is, I shall with pleasure seize.—But take notice, Jack, I never attempt to *seduce* women.—No—no—they are all bad enough; they want none of my *instructions* to *improve* them. I am willing to take them as they are, but I do not chuse to leave them *worse* than I found them.—If I proceed I shall grow quite satyrical.

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LETTER VII.

From the same to the same.

INDEED, indeed, Wilmot, you will make me half angry.—What! in the name of common sense, have I committed to paper to make you imagine me guilty of so enormous a weakness—In love?—No—no—my friend—you will never catch me in a sighing condition.—I know the sex too well—I have not been so many years upon the town for nothing.—I chuse to converse with a sensible woman who, thanks to Nature—is also handsome—true—must I, therefore, be enamoured with her? What execrable logic is this? Positively, Jack, you know nothing of the matter.—You are an amorous puppy, and fly at every cap which comes in your way; *ergo* you set me down for a puppy like yourself:—I am extremely obliged to you for your absurd compliment.—Seriously, I have not the smallest idea of loving lady Charlotte—and yet I would gladly make her in love with me;—not for the sake of gratifying my own inclination, but from mere *charity*, as she may fall into worse hands.—Sure I am, that if I have ever any connection with her, I will try to make her wiser.—There are woman, Wilmot, who have improved surprisingly under my hands; but then they were neither handsome, haughty, nor self-sufficient.—Yet I wrong this charming woman; she is not in the least conceited—she appears less and less proud, and is as beautiful as an angel. I think I am more in her favour than I was; she will trust herself with me, alone, sing to me, read with me, and she has taken several hints with her pencil which I recommended to her.—There has been lately an affability in her carriage to me, which renders her infinitely more pleasing. I love to see women behave to us with an easy freedom; by so doing they seem, at least, to have no designs.—But there is no enjoying a tête-a tête at this place;—one is always interrupted.—The women are all ready to jump over my back;—I cannot stir for them; they all envy lady Charlotte; they study and strive to equal her, but in vain.—How many anxious hours has she occasioned among them!—It would make you laugh heartily to see how they flounce and fidget, and trick themselves out to eclipse her: but she outshines them; they are mere blanks before her, and have no admirers when she is present.—Lady Charlotte never looks solicitous about admiration, but she is, nevertheless, sure of it.—She is always neat;—you know what charms neatness has for *me*—and is

“When unadorned adorned the most.”

as your favourite *Thomson* says.—There is an elegant simplicity in her whole appearance which is inexpressible alluring, and which a slavish compliance with *the fashion* would utterly destroy.—How many women do we see in the fashionable world converting themselves into frightful figures, by barbarously dressing away the beauties which Nature in a liberal fit bestowed upon them.—Were they more attentive to the *becoming*, in every respect, they would, take my word for it, be a thousand times more successful.—Lady Charlotte never defiles her lovely auburn locks with powder—that villainous compound:—While some are combed up to shew the glossy shine upon them, others curl in ringlets upon her snowy neck;—a small cap on the top of her head has the prettiest effect imaginable.—By dressing in this manner she appears to the greatest advantage, in

my eyes; but the eyes of the women here are not constructed like mine; they are much pained by what gives me considerable pleasure.—They were so provoked the other day, that they all took upon them to condemn her taste; they were astonished at her not wearing grey powder, as nobody was fit to be seen without.

“Nature has given me tolerable good hair,” said she, “and I think it would be a pity to disguise it.”

They burst into a forced laugh at this rational reply, told her she was ridiculously singular, and that they had rather be out of the world than like nobody in it. Even Mrs. Mead was silly enough to join with them against her, though she does not use powder herself—but her motives are obvious; she is under the dominion of envy.

It diverts me to see the monstrous folly of these women; and their contemptible prejudices, which they can’t possibly keep to themselves, make me take more notice of lady Charlotte than I should, perhaps, otherwise do.—Nay, I publicly take her part against them all, sometimes on purpose to put them upon the fret.—The different shapes in which they discover their jealousy and resentment are absolutely laughable.

Harriot Facely, decorated from head to foot like a *pagoda*, declared yesterday, that she abominated dress, and called it an intolerable fatigue—“every woman of fashion is above it,” added she.—

“No woman,” replied lady Spilsbury, interrupting her, “let her rank be what it will, is above looking handsome, or indeed ought she to be”—(throwing herself affectedly into the most languishing attitude) “as beauty gives one so much power over the male creatures.”

“Let me then assure you, lady Spilsbury,” said I, “that no man worth a pinch of snuff was ever won by a lady’s drapery or diamonds; Nature ever does more execution when her operations are not impeded by the impertinent officiousness of art.”

“Odious Nature,” replied she—“charming Art!—How you talk, my lord.”

“How you act, my lady, in direct opposition to what can alone render you irresistible.”

“Oh! you monster”—tapping me upon the cheek,—“but you say this only to try us; I know you think quite otherwise.—You handsome fellows love dearly to throw out bold assertions purely to be confuted.—”

“That is, you mean, to give you an opportunity of shewing your wit by answering;—but take care, lady Spilsbury, many a woman in attempting to be a wit, has proved herself a downright fool.”

“Now, that is so like him,” said Miss Facely, “see what one gets by encouraging fellows”—darting a sarcastical glance at Mrs. Mead, who modestly looked on the floor, and took out her handkerchief to hide her blushes.—Why had not that woman strength to resist me?—She was amiable enough before I knew lady Charlotte;—but a woman who has surrendered to me, at discretion, I must despise.—’Tis ungenerous to despise her for a weakness to which I, myself, was instrumental, but—I must not think about it—Why will women so often give us reason to look upon them with contempt? Why will they not be all angels?—Life would be, indeed, a poor affair without them; but, certainly, if they were all virtuous, we might be brought to be content with *one* woman.—I, even I, should have no objection to matrimony, were I sure that my wife would be never inconstant—with a sensible, faithful, amiable friend, who would share all my joys, and alleviate all my cares, I should be supremely blest; to such a woman, Jack, willingly would I be

married to-morrow;—but while I every day see crouds of females round me enslaved by the follies of the world, and deeply tainted by its vices, how can I hope to find a woman answerable to my expectations?—A fool I hate, and my blood rises at a w——e. I like to converse with a woman of sense—true—but pry’thee do not therefore imagine that I am in love with her—Ridiculous!

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LETTER VIII.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

I DO not love to displease those who seemingly wish to give me pleasure—or I would leave this place immediately. I am surrounded with people who are by no means suitable to me. Lord Woburn is the most sensible person among us, but then he is capricious beyond expression—He will have it that Evelyn is in love with me.—I should not, I confess, have suspected him of a particular inclination, but my lord has pointed out several little attentions in his behaviour, which very much induces me to be of his lordship's opinion.—This discovery has not pleased me; I do not want people to be in love with me, unless I am inclined to be in love with them in return.—I did not, indeed, at first believe Lord Woburn was serious; I thought he was only in a rallying humour; but I begin to find he was both serious, and right in his conjectures. Yet I can never love Evelyn, and therefore I wish he would not be particular to me.—After this discovery I endeavoured to discourage him as much as I could.—My behaviour made him so uneasy that he, at last, complained of it.

“I have no right,” said he, the other day, “to expect a return to my passion from you, yet may I not hope, from the gentleness of your disposition, that you will not drive me to absolute despair; suffer me but to admire you, lady Charlotte, and I will never cease to be the most respectful of your admirers—You cannot, however, treat me as you will, hinder me from adoring you. The passion which I feel for you will not be destroyed but with my existence.”

What can one say to such a man, who really, I believe, speaks from his heart.—There are a thousand men to whom, if they speak in ever so serious a manner, I can give no sort of credit; but Evelyn's whole carriage proves his sincerity—if I ought to say so;—and I shall not be able, therefore, to bring myself to treat him with scorn, or to assume coquettish airs before him.—Coquetry is against my nature; it is also contrary to my natural disposition to behave ill to any body who wishes to see me, or make me, happy.—Now, as I can never marry Evelyn, I certainly should not feed him with hopes.—There will be required some delicacy in my conduct upon this occasion.—I think it will be more prudent to leave the Castle, as Evelyn shews no inclination to decamp.—But why must I be obliged to quit a family who have been very polite to me, and who endeavour to entertain me as much as they can?—I have done nothing to render flight necessary.—I will stay—and, for the direction of my future conduct, learn how to behave properly to a man whom I shall, however, on no account encourage in the way he desires to be distinguished by me.—

Lord Woburn, who is the most vigilant man I ever knew, rallies me now upon my great compassion for Evelyn; and, tells me, that next to him whom I chuse to favour, the happiest man is he whom I have not totally rejected.—There is no contenting him, do what I will; therefore, I won't trouble myself about him any longer.—The women here have all given him reason to believe that they admire him; they spoil him; he expects the same admiration from every body. Presuming upon the incense which he receives, he is too apt to take improper liberties, and to imagine that such liberties will be permitted.—

The men are, undoubtedly, too free, but I am afraid that the women, by conducting themselves indiscreetly, make them so.—Were you to see the encouragement which every woman at this place gives to lord Woburn, in particular, you would be more ready to condemn them than him. They not only launch out in praise of his person, in terms which would put a man of the least modesty to the blush, and indulge him in all the freedoms which their commendations naturally provoke, but actually begin first to take the most unwarrantable liberties with him, when he does not appear to be thinking about them—So that a man must be destitute of sensibility not to take notice of them; yet, to do lord Woburn justice, he behaves with more circumspection than most men would in such a situation; though he seems to be not at all indifferent to women—quite otherwise. Perhaps he, like many other people, thinks he may be disgusted at what is so freely offered him, and despite those favours which may be obtained without difficulty from our sex. There I am entirely of *his* opinion: were I a man, I should think in that respect exactly in the same manner—All the women here are indelicately forward—Mrs. Mead appeared indeed upon better terms with him, but they rather differ and dispute now. The rest of the company rally her to such a degree that she can hardly bear it.—I caught her in tears t'other night in the garden: He was, I thought, endeavouring to sooth her, though the *lover* was not discernable either in his looks or carriage—However she has, I fancy, reckoned upon him in that light, and would be glad to do so still.—Turning out of the walk that I might not seem to observe them, my lord seized my hand, and begged me to honour him with my company for a few minutes.—Mrs. Mead turned away, after having cast a glance of the strongest resentment at him—I took no notice; he mentioned her several times in the course of the conversation, yet said nothing which discovered the terms they were upon.—I had a fair opening to enquire about them, without being either unpolite or impertinent, but I did not.—Why should I wish to dive into another's secrets? If Mrs. Mead is either faulty or unfortunate, she will be very much hurt at being exposed.—Curiosity may indeed sometimes prompt the best sort of people among us, to pry into the hearts of those whose characters are suspected, but surely the indiscretions as well as the misfortunes ought to excite compassion in our bosoms; none of us are exempt from the former or from the latter; pity, therefore, should plead for both.—I always most sincerely wish to relieve every woman who is unhappy—unhappy, I fear, must every woman be who suffers herself to be improperly in the power of any of the other sex.

LETTER IX.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

THIS lady Charlotte is a charming creature.—She is, actually, beyond expressions, amiable.—She appears to be so; but I know there must be some confounded drawback to turn the scale against her excellent qualities.—I hope, at least, that there are some shades in her character, for I would not be in love with her for millions—If I discover nothing atrocious belonging to her, I shall become a mere driveller—I shall doat on her, adore her.—You cannot conceive how lovely she is.—Never did I see so much beauty with so little consciousness.—There is a mildness, a delicacy in her whole behaviour, which is ravishing.—Pray heaven she may have a thousand defects—I have discerned none yet.—If I do not find out some capital blemishes soon, I shall be undone.—Her indifference, her insensibility will bring me off.—I can never love a woman whose passions are not as tenderly alive as my own;—yet she is affected by every thing—by every thing but what relates to me.

I saw her weep t'other day at a moving tale; she absolutely melted my heart with tears;—yet when she saw Mrs. Mead leave me afflicted at my coolness, she had not the slightest curiosity to know the grounds of our division.—I gave her several openings; dumb. She expressed not the least desire to enter upon the cause of our *depit amoureux*.—But why do I find fault with her? Perhaps she is to be revered for her behaviour; perhaps she had curiosity, and only denied herself the gratification of it, through pity to Mrs. Mead.—She is, indeed, an angel, if her behaviour was regulated by compassion.—But I will not suppose her to be so much superior to her busy, inquisitive, censorious sex, who generally look out pretty sharp to catch a frail sister tripping, and then hunt her down most unmercifully.—Were she full of imperfections, my heart would never be in the least disturbed by her; but I am afraid her excellencies will enslave me.—No—her total disregard of me will save me from a fatal love-fit; besides, I shall never be able to love a woman, who has the slightest partiality for another.—She will not, I firmly believe, marry Evelyn; but she certainly has no aversion to him.—Her behaviour to him is so gentle, so condescending, so very considerate, that I sometimes don't know what to think;—yet she gave me the preference t'other night, when we had a ball here.—The men were to chuse partners; Evelyn asked the favour of lady Charlotte's hand. She directly replied, that she should not dance.—A little while afterwards, I asked the same question; she smiled, held out her hand negligently, and said, “You will have but an idle partner.”

Charmed with her compliance, I replied—“You will suit me to a hair, for I am the laziest of mortals.”—We, consequently, chatted more than we danced.—I am nobody in a ball-room: I was never fond of fluttering about in the air like a monkey, for the diversion of the women.—She seemed frequently weary, I thought.—I, therefore, frequently asked her to sit down—she willingly assented.—I enjoyed a luxurious evening in the sentimental way;—but we stirred up so much envy and jealousy among the rest of the company, that I don't know whether some aukward consequences may not ensue.—Evelyn, in particular, was quite unhappy; the poor fellow looked ready to burst with vexation.—Instead of triumphing over him, I actually pitied him, because I saw that my

lovely partner felt nothing but compassion for him.—She had even the good nature to make a little sort of apology to him, telling him, that when he asked her, she had determined not to dance.—“You know, Evelyn,” added she, with a heavenly smile, “that we women are changeable creatures; but, indeed, I had no design to affront you, particularly, by a refusal.”—The poor fellow trembled while she spoke, and appeared actually astonished at such uncommon condescension; a condescension which raised her in my eyes, but which drew malicious remarks upon her from almost all the women in the room.—“Flirt, coquettish air, affectation,” were the words applied to the only woman in the room who had not deserved them. I, too, was baited most cruelly for my idleness, for my singularity, and for being so extremely regardless of all that was uttered, and of much more that was only looked. I paid my court with the most successful assiduity, seemingly, to lady Charlotte, and was honoured with her smiles for the remainder of the time we spent together.—I shall absolutely go too far, if I don’t take care.—It must not be—after all I have said against the deluding sex, to be seduced at last.—What have I not to expect?—But it is not come to that yet—No, no, Jack—whatever you may think, I am not in love.

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LETTER X.

From the same to the same.

AND so your Maria, your friend, your faithful Maria has actually given you up?—Now, were I not afraid of making you angry, I would laugh at you most immoderately.—As for you—I suppose you are half ready to hang yourself.—But why flip out of the world in so sneaking a manner, Jack, when there are so many women to be had as handsome as Maria, and upon terms a thousand times more reasonable?—I suspected, indeed, that she would leave you in the lurch, as soon as I heard that she was become mistress of so large a fortune, by the sudden death of a man who, from his continual good state of health and great temperance might have lived these twenty years;—ay, as long as his fair and fickle relation.—What could induce this girl to make herself so scandalously ridiculous? Did she think she had not enough before? Are you altered because her uncle chose to leave her twenty thousand pounds?—However, you are well off;—a woman with such a mind, would, with all her beauty, have rendered you completely miserable.—Look upon this event, therefore, as a blessing.—There is no woman worth all the fuss one makes about her.—Come hither, and see if I am too hasty with my censures against the sex.—Yet, stay—Let me exclude lady Charlotte—She would just now, while the love-fit is strong upon you, encourage you to believe that you would lose nothing by substituting her in the room of Maria.—But take care, I say—a man who has been once deceived, has reason to be cautious.—I have, 'tis true, at this moment, a high opinion of this Charlotte, and think her superior to three parts of her sex; yet I would, on no account, be answerable even for her.

My little widow begins to be confounded troublesome: If I do not take care, she will expose us both—both, did I say?—What have I to fear?—The consequence of a man, in the eyes of the fair sex, always increases in proportion to the number of women whom he has seduced; the more conquests he has made, the more charming he appears.—If the widow, therefore, is blown, her reputation will be tarnished, but mine will be rather more brilliant than it is at present.—The more inconstant, the more vile I am, I shall be the more courted, the more followed.—Now, suspend your concern for a moment, Jack, and tell me if such creatures as these, ought to give one the least uneasiness about them?—Can you possibly love the woman whom you cannot esteem? And is it not absolutely impossible to esteem such characters as I have described?

“But are all women so undeserving?”

Too many.—The majority of the sex are weak.—I believe I am not much too bold in my assertion; and weakness naturally leads a woman into wickedness.

“Is the divine Charlotte one of these?”

Faith! I am afraid she is; only I have not yet found her out.—She is, at present, to all appearance, as pure as an angel, but she may be an arrant hypocrite.—If I make any discoveries to her disadvantage, I shall not think there is one woman of virtue in the universe.

You have been pleased to insinuate, that I am in love with this Charlotte; but I am able, at this moment, to prove the absurdity of your insinuation. Did you ever in your life know a man in love with a woman, without being jealous on her paying particular

civilities to his rival?—I am this very man.—Can I, therefore, be enamoured?—No, Wilmot—you may as well be violently attached to a woman whom you never saw.—But I will explain myself;—poor Evelyn has been so miserable, ever since the day on which lady Charlotte, by refusing to dance with him, gave the preference to me, that out of mere compassion, she has, from that time, behaved to him in a manner singularly obliging; and yet not in a manner to make him imagine she would ever look upon him in the light he wished.—How considerate? How engaging? How commendable is such a conduct? How few women are capable of behaving with so much propriety? How few can properly distinguish between the love and the lover?—But you see I cannot possibly be attached to her, in the way you suppose; were I so attached, I should certainly be jealous: the slightest attention to my rival would alarm me extremely.—Were I in love, I should be filled with a thousand apprehensions lest she should not actually be the amiable creature she apparently is.—I am not so far gone, as you imagine I am.—Talk to me, therefore, no more of love.—I defy the little urchin.—I have had a narrow escape, however, for, to confess the truth, I never met with a woman so entirely formed to please, to charm.—She cannot surely be so perfect a creature.—She must certainly have some horrible failings, though she has art enough to conceal them. I have been in imminent danger.—But while I thus write about Charlotte, I forget you, who are grieving for the loss of your Maria.—Take my advice at once—think no more of her.—If she has not put you out of conceit with the whole sex, take the first fine girl who falls in your way, only for a night or two, and, my life to yours, you will soon be in *statu quo* again. On the faith of an honest man, I declare to you, that I never retired with a woman in an evening, whom I did not wish to get rid of before morning; and, I think I am at least as amorous as yourself.

LETTER XI.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

MY suspicions are confirmed relating to Mrs. Mead: I am really concerned about her, as I found her the most agreeable person, in every respect, here.—There was a not unpleasing melancholy at times hanging over her features, which made me relish her company better than the society of lady Spilsbury and Miss Facely, whose mirth is by far too boisterous for me.—They depress my spirits, instead of contributing to enliven them, and I become weary of listening to the same kind of noisy nonsense. I never was one of those happy people, who can laugh at every thing, though I am very ready to acknowledge, that they are as much wiser as they are happier, because they are so much more easily pleased.—“But what is this to Mrs. Mead?”—A great deal, my dear friend, because she greatly attracted my attention by the gentleness of her manners, and I strove to make myself agreeable to her, though she never, I think, appeared to like me.—Lately she seemed not a little displeas'd with me; but as I concluded that her displeas'd arose from the discovery of some defect in me, I studiously endeavoured to divest myself of several little foibles, and flattered myself, that she would be more desirous of my friendship, when I was become more deserving of it.

Last night, having just escaped from lady Spilsbury, who had almost talked me to death, while I was enjoying one of the finest summer evenings I ever beheld, in a particularly pleasant walk in the garden, I saw Mrs. Mead cross the bottom of it. She was met by lord Woburn, who would have passed her, but she stopped him, and began to talk earnestly to him, holding him by the arm.—On his trying to break from her, she slipped a piece of paper into his hand, and left him.—Just casting his eyes over it he tore it, and scattered the fragments in the walk.—These proceedings having made me entertain sentiments very unfavourable to them both, I intended to avoid them as much as possible.—When we all came in to supper, I saw plainly that Mrs. Mead had been in tears; to make some apology for the suspicious appearance of her eyes, she complained of a cruel head-ach, which had tormented her all day.

Lord Woburn smiled contempt, while her looks were expressive of grief, and of a smothered resentment.—He must be a man very unworthy of the good opinion I had of him, by using a woman, so apparently amiable as Mrs. Mead is, in the manner he does; he discovers a bad heart.—Such a man ought to meet with all possible discouragement.—None of the people here seem to see the necessity of keeping lord Woburn at a proper distance;—I will, therefore, lead the way.—Yet, I cannot help saying, that I am both disappointed and concerned to find a man, whom I had reason, I thought, to esteem, so little deserving of my partiality in his favour.—But where shall we find a perfect character? I confess, that being *taken in* by the speciousness of his behaviour, I treated him with more consideration than I did any other man, because he seemed desirous of being distinguished by me; and really stood a chance to be preferred, by me, to his whole sex, by the deference and respect with which he ever behaved to me.—Sometimes, indeed, I own, he attempted freedoms, which I thought impertinent and improper; yet, as they were conducted with extreme delicacy, I could not, reasonably be offended at them,

without affecting the *prude*, a character I have always detested.—I can never, surely, merit the imputation of prudery, by shunning a man so very unfit to be trusted as lord Woburn certainly is—Yet, let me consider.—Have I not been too hasty? May there not be an engagement of the tenderest kind, between Mrs. Mead and lord Woburn, which they wish to conceal, for reasons with which I have nothing to do? And may they not have had, like lovers, a little quarrel, which has occasioned the contemptuous glances of the one, and the looks full of grief, full of resentment of the other?—It will, I think, be most charitable to conclude, that a *fracas* has produced the carriage on both sides, which gave birth to the above observations.—Still, however, I ought to be very reserved in my behaviour to my lord; for it is highly probable, that his little assiduities were calculated to excite jealousy in Mrs. Mead, in order to bend her to his purpose.—I will, therefore, make a total change in my carriage; I will double my attention to Mrs. Mead;—I will be quite inattentive to lord Woburn.—If I cannot forward a reconciliation, I will not widen the breach, between them.

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LETTER XII.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

YOU were but too much in the right, when you asserted that I was in love with this charming Charlotte: I fear I am so, indeed; and yet if I was absolutely certain of being in love with her, I should be half ready to hang myself.—Sure I am, that she has made a total alteration in her behaviour to me.—I am distracted.—I am wild to know the reason of it.—Now this looks devilish bad on my side;—nothing can be more suspicious.—But then, again, if she is totally indifferent to me, why does she think it worth while to alter a carriage which was not in the least censurable? Why does she think at all about me? I cannot account for this proceeding. I only know, that we were upon the most agreeably intimate footing imaginable. before this same alteration.—She would walk with me, chat with me, read with me, nay, dance with me, even after she had refused other people, and sit down with me when she had done.—She would suffer me to press her snowy hand in mine, to touch her lovely hair, and to take a thousand other liberties, which gave me infinite delight, and could not possibly do her any harm, though they might not give her the pleasure which I was so eager to communicate.—She now studiously shuns me every where, and avoids every opportunity of speaking to me alone; she pulls away her hand, in a hurry, whenever I offer to take hold of it, and starts from my touch, as if it was contagious. I cannot, for my soul, find out the meaning of all this.—I have sometimes thought—make a little allowance for vanity—that she is jealous of Mrs. Mead, who has so indiscreetly discovered a fondness for me, even before a third person, and whom I know not how to shake off.—But I must be egregiously mistaken.—In the first place, she cannot be jealous, without being in love; secondly, she is become more attached to this very Mrs. Mead, than to any other woman, who, by the way, is grown so very silly with her suspicions, and so extremely indelicate with her favours, that she is by no means a proper companion for lady Charlotte.—Coxcomb as I am! I thought lady Charlotte was purity itself; a character of the angelic kind.—Never more will I reckon upon the most favourable *expression* in the fairest face.—The whole sex are deceitful.—However, if lady Charlotte had behaved to me with her usual consideration, my doubts, with regard to female constancy would have been entirely removed; I should have tried her, you may be assured—ay, severely tried her before I——But what am I saying?—My anxiety, my distraction at this cruel change in her carriage, forces me to discover what I would desire to hide, not only from you, from myself.—I *do* love her—There—now the murder's out.—I wish I may not repent of my passion for her as long as I breathe.—Were I in my last agonies, the near approach of death would not give half so much disturbance to my mind, as the thoughts of being cozened by a woman.—No—she shall never know her power over me.—Don't laugh at me, Jack;—could I have kept this diabolical secret from you, you should never have been acquainted with it.—I am, to the last degree, ashamed of myself; and, yet, at the same time, I could give up my life for a return of that felicity which I enjoyed in her society before this cursed coolness in her behaviour to me.

LETTER XIII.

From the same to the same.

IT is not to be endured. I must speak or die; nothing can save me.—This enchanting witch still continues in the same reserved style of behaviour.—Yet, what can I say? I have no right to demand a reason for *her* carriage, without accounting for my own;—and I am determined not to explain the meaning of *my* deportment, even to lady Charlotte. I must, therefore, be silent, be blind.—Would to heaven I were deaf, dumb, any thing rather than what I am.—But why all this distress, you will say—is she lost, is she gone, has she given herself to another?—No—there I take breathe again.—She has not yet doomed me to absolute despair, by any such decisive proceeding against me: she has not even increased her civility to Evelyn; she behaves equally to us both, angel as she is;—and, yet, I am miserable, because she has deprived me of all the sweet indulgencies I enjoyed before;—indulgencies, which, if they were ever allowable, might, certainly, be now admitted, as I never, knowingly or designedly, abused them.—I am mad to come at the cause of this strange alteration in her.—I *will* speak—I *will* ask her to explain her motives.—I have made two or three attempts to gratify my pressing curiosity, but have always been interrupted, either by the breaking in of company upon us, or by her chilling coldness. She takes uncommon pains to avoid me; she is continually with Mrs. Mead.—What a strange, what an unnatural connection! Surely the widow cannot have presumed to breathe a thought against me to her.—If I had any suspicions of that nature, I would make her retract, or blow her to the devil. I must, therefore, come to an *eclaircissement*.—The sooner the better.—An intruder prevents me from going on.

LETTER XIV.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

I HAVE acted just as I told you I would; and my behaviour has had a good effect upon lord Woburn; he looks sufficiently corrected; but as to poor Mrs. Mead, I cannot make any thing of her. I am afraid, from her shyness, that she has something at heart, not quite fit to be communicated.—Be assured, my dear Mrs. Blomer, I would not encourage suspicions injurious to her, were I not almost certain, that she has put it into his lordship's power to treat her impertinently.—The fault, then, you will naturally say, is chiefly on *his* side.—It is so, I own; but what a miserable temper? What a bad heart must *he* possess, who can use a woman ill, merely, perhaps, for being too indulgent to him?—I have made several offers of my friendship to her, by mentioning lord Woburn in a favourable manner, looking, at the same time, as if, I thought, I should make her happy by so mentioning him.—After having produced only blushes, sighs, and tears, by my well-meant officiousness, I ventured to ask her, the other day, if lord Woburn, who really appeared amiable, could have possibly given occasion to so much concern?—She replied, but with an increased confusion, “that lord Woburn was nothing to her.”—She then left me, immediately, and has shunned me ever since, as much as possible, without being particular.—He pursues me every where, and, by redoubling his solicitude and attentions, endeavours to recommend himself—but to very little purpose, as I have had the good fortune, hitherto, to prevent a *tête-a-tête*, without appearing to the rest of the company to think about it.—I seem to be quite indifferent, quite easy about lord Woburn; but I am not so.—Will you not condemn me, when I tell you, that I am very much mortified at not being able to learn from Mrs. Mead, the cause of her quarrel with my lord—if they *really* have had a quarrel.—I wish to develop their conduct, with regard to each other; but as I can give not one good reason for my eagerness to be informed, of what is no way interesting to me, I must, of course, be prompted by an idle curiosity.—I wish myself, a thousand times a day, with you in Yorkshire; and, in spite of all lady Euston can say to the contrary, shall certainly think of setting out from hence, unless Mrs. Elliot should accomplish her design of coming to London a month sooner than usual.

LETTER XV.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

AT last, with the greatest difficulty, I have seized a moment to speak to lady Charlotte. She was reading, alone, in the parlour.—She rose, in order to leave the room, as soon as I entered it.—I caught her by the gown (for she hastily drew back her hand) and asked her, what I had done to make her so extremely shy of me?

“You are quite out of the question, my lord; I have just finished my book, and am going up to my own apartment.”

She turned away her face, purposely, that her features might not confirm the falsehoods which her tongue had uttered.

Supposing what you have said to be true, madam, replied I, the singularity of your behaviour, obvious to every body, during this last fortnight, by studiously avoiding me, induces me to imagine that you are either offended at something which I have inadvertently said or done, that you discovered something in me very disagreeable to you, or that you are yourself a little capricious.

“You may chuse which you will of these reasons,” said she, blushing and smiling.—“I am not obliged to declare which of them is the true one;—perhaps you have not yet guessed the true one; perhaps all you *have* mentioned do honour to your penetration.”

Did you ever hear such an answer? Had she not looked so exquisitely handsome, I will not say what I might have retorted; but I bridled my anger.

“If you leave me at liberty to chuse, madam, I shall, in order to exculpate myself from any misdemeanour, impute your present cold and reserved behaviour, to the fickleness of your own disposition, which has hurt me not a little, because I was afraid I had actually, though involuntarily, offended you.—However, I cannot absolutely condemn it, as you have been led to make so charming an apology for it.—We are, therefore, friends again,” continued I, going to press her lovely hand to my lips.

“Hold, my lord,” replied she, drawing back her hand, “as we have had no difference, no excuses are necessary on either side.—You are mistaken if you imagine that I intended to make any, nor did I expect or desire any from your lordship.”

“So very indifferent,” said I—piqued to death at her coolness. “And, pray, why did your ladyship favour me with the least degree of intimacy, if you were determined to put a stop to it without any reason at all?”

“I am not obliged, lord Woburn, to give any reasons to any body for my conduct; I am satisfied with it myself.—But to prevent your importuning me again upon this subject, *know*, that if I *did* enter into what you call an intimacy with you, I acted inadvertently; a little reflection soon convinced me of the impropriety of my behaviour, and the alteration in it naturally followed.”

“But, pray, madam, what impropriety can there be in your chatting, walking, or dancing with me?”

“There will be not the least, my lord, when your behaviour to women ceases to be exceptionable.”

“And who has charged me with any impropriety in my behaviour to women?—But, I believe, I am acquainted with the person who has endeavoured to set you against me, and she shall severely repent of her malicious accusation.—”

“Stay, my lord,” said she, interrupting me, “you are upon a subject which is of *no* importance to *me*.—Not a creature has spoken of you to me in the manner you apprehend.—What I have said arose entirely from my own observation.”

“Is this actually the truth, my dear lady Charlotte?”—replied I, pleased to find that my widow had not been tattling—“and has Mrs. Mead said nothing against me?”

“No, upon my honour.—Mrs. Mead never mentioned you to me.—But your suspicions, with regard to her, must have resulted from your consciousness of having given her room to complain of you.—Come, my lord, since we are so far engaged upon this topic—I have, indeed, no business with it, but, on her account, who is, I believe, very unhappy;—let me persuade you to look upon her in a better light, and to treat her with more consideration, as she is, I am persuaded, very sensibly touched by your neglect.”

“And can you, madam, after what you have just said to me, wish me to renew my intimacy with Mrs. Mead; you must certainly be ignorant of the nature of it; for I cannot suppose that she has prevailed on you to approve of the connection between us.”

“Indeed, my lord,” answered she, blushing, like scarlet, “I am quite ignorant of your attachment to Mrs. Mead, but finding her extremely amiable and observing—every body, indeed, makes the same remarks—that she is very unhappy on *your* account; I thought, I confess, that you behaved to her with an unbecoming negligence, rather bordering upon contempt; and, I will also own, that, supposing she could not have merited that negligence, I had a very bad opinion of you.—In consequence of that opinion, I deemed it highly necessary to shun a man capable of behaving in so cruel a manner to any woman, especially to a woman so very pleasing, both in her person and temper, as Mrs. Mead certainly is.”

Charming creature! Did you ever, Wilmot, hear one woman plead so powerfully for another?—The only one, too, who had any pretensions to be a rival to her? Her candour, her good nature, half reconcile me to the sex.—Yet there must be a confounded defect somewhere, to counter-balance these rare virtues.—Women, in general, are inveterate foes to each other;—armed with *calumny*, they are always carrying on hostilities; and the wounds, which they mutually inflict, are the more painful, as they are given in the dark.—But to return to the enchanting Charlotte.—Adoring her for having discovered so excellent a disposition, I thought it incumbent on me to make a full confession of my folly with regard to Mrs. Mead, whom I could not be said to expose, by relating the exact footing we were upon to lady Charlotte, because she had declared herself filled with sentiments in her favour, and interested in her happiness.—Besides, I wanted to open my heart to the lovely Charlotte upon this subject; I was determined, indeed, not to own that I loved *her*, but I was resolved to convince her, if possible, that I loved no other woman.

After having intreated her to hear me patiently, I, with all the succinctness in my power, and with all the delicacy which the subject required, told her the whole affair, and made her sensible, at last, that Mrs. Mead had, in effect, made overtures of the tenderest nature to me; and that her anger and resentment were kindled against me, because I had chosen to break off a connection to which I had no inclination; and, by the continuance of which, her honour would have been considerably injured.

The frankness of this confession, with the reflections I made upon it, concerning the general corruption among the fair sex, and compliments obliquely directed to her, made my peace.—Yet had you seen how sweetly she blushed, and averted her lovely eyes while I spoke to her of her favourite's frailty—you would have owned that there never was a more heavenly creature.—I did not, however, escape a chiding, for having exposed the weakness of a woman, who had only acted with indiscretion from her too great partiality for me. In reply, I told her, that I had not mentioned the affair to any body except herself, and that I would keep it an inviolable secret; adding, indeed, that I could not bear to see her cultivate an intimacy with a woman so little deserving of her esteem.—She was silent, and soon afterwards turned the conversation upon less personal topics.—We parted friends.—She now no longer flies from me; yet there is a delicate kind of reserve hanging about her, which gives an additional lustre to the charms of which she is already possessed.—What pleases me most, is her behaviour to Mrs. Mead; no creature would in the least imagine she had heard any thing towards the impeachment of her character.—She never seeks her company, 'tis true; but when they are together, accidentally, she treats her with a gentleness, and a consideration, which, while they throw a veil over *her* failings, prevent the lustre of her own merit from being too oppressive.—Never did I see so amiable a carriage.—She must have, as I said before, some capital blemishes.—I cannot yet detect them.—Beauties alone do I at present discover.—I feel my heart lighter on being restored to her favour.—She behaves almost as freely as she used to do: though she sometimes appears to be checked by her apprehensions with regard to me.—I will endeavour to remove all apprehensions by an increasing respect, naturally resulting from an increasing esteem.

Your's as usual,

W.

LETTER XVI.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

I HAVE been so astonished, by a discovery which lord Woburn had made, in relation to Mrs. Mead, that I am hardly yet in a condition to write to you. That she is culpable, is certain; but should lord Woburn have exposed her?—Let me consider.—He declared his triumph over her, purely on *my* account, that I might not be too intimate with a person, whose reputation would not stand a strict scrutiny; will not such a proceeding, on his side, plead strongly in his favour? He is more respectful, more assiduous to gain my good opinion than ever; is he not, therefore, entitled to my pardon?—Yet you cannot conceive how much I feel for this poor Mrs. Mead; she looks like the picture of despair; I can see, however, that though she discovers nothing but dejection in public, she does not want spirit when she is in private with lord Woburn; her anger, then, gets the better of her love; so it ought to do.—I only wish that she would shew her resentment, rather by a contemptuous than a furious behaviour; for rage must only tend to make her less desirable in *his* eyes, and less respectable in *her own*. In short, I think, she has nothing to do but to quit the Castle immediately, and to endeavour, by her future discretion, to retrieve her character.—Lady Spilsbury and Miss Facely, who either do not look upon her in the light I behold her, or do not imagine her behaviour to lord Woburn as criminal as it is, affect to treat her with a mortifying kind of pity to her face, and behind her back, sneer at her most intolerably, throwing out, at the same time, broad hints on the extreme impropriety of her conduct.—Their censures are severe, and their mirth immoderate, whenever she is mentioned. I wonder lord Woburn does not persuade her to go away.—What a pity it is, that women should give men such advantages over them.—He may say what he will, but he certainly was the first aggressor, by taking particular notice of this lady, who was weak enough to imagine that he was in love with her: *admire* her he did, undoubtedly, for she is exceedingly pretty; but there is a wide difference between love and admiration, especially that sort of love which is founded on esteem; and, without which, no woman should surrender her heart. Lord Woburn is rather, in my opinion, a dangerous man.—He lays all the blame, indeed, upon the shocking forwardness of our sex; but I cannot entirely exculpate him. I think it highly necessary to be upon my guard; yet I do not approve of being quite shy and reserved neither; by such an appearance, I should give him room to suppose that I suspected him of having a design upon me.—He declares he cannot put up with scorn in any woman; if I am, therefore, too scornful, I may provoke his resentment, and in a fit of resentment, he may meditate revenge.

I shall soon return to town, but cannot well leave this place till my house is ready to receive me.—Sorry am I, indeed, that you cannot, without breaking with your sister Scot, be my first guest, as you are my first friend.—However, present or absent, you will ever be entitled to, and may be ever assured of my sincerest esteem.

I am your's, unchangeably,

CHARLOTTE MORDEN.

LETTER XVII.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

MRS. Mead has, at last, taken herself away; but what of her?—Lady Charlotte is going to leave us also, I fear: she has not yet lived in a house by herself, but always with Mrs. Elliot.—Now she is of age, they have taken a house for her in St. James's Square, and are settling her household.—I intend to be a constant visitor, if she will admit me, as a friend only, not as a *lover*; you understand me.—Before I appear—if I ever appear—in *that* character, I must find out her hidden imperfections—for imperfections she, undoubtedly, has; and, as I am sure I shall not be able to discover them without a long, and possibly, a very intimate acquaintance, I must endeavour to procure leave for admittance; I must, however, conduct myself in such a manner, as not to be in the least suspected.—Evelyn, too, as he admires her as much as ever, will, I suppose, take some steps towards keeping up an acquaintance, which has given him both pleasure and pain:—I would, therefore, advise him to drop it; but lovers are not the people in the world most inclined to attend to the voice of admonition.—He may, indeed, have hopes—perhaps he may have encouragements to indulge them.—I am not able to write a long letter to-day; my spirits are bad, and I have a violent head-ach.—I must lay down my pen for the present.

LETTER XVIII.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

YOU bid me take care of lord Woburn, my dear friend; I thank you for your caution.—Were I, indeed, to believe all that I have heard about him lately, I should stand much in need of it; but I have been very slow in believing ill reports concerning any body.—You shall, however, judge yourself how far I have been right here.

Mrs. Mead left the *Castle* two days ago; she left lord Woburn, I could see plainly, with great reluctance.—She could not, indeed, publicly bid him adieu, without betraying a concern sufficient to sharpen the eye of suspicion against her.—The weakness of her mind was too evident, by the whole turn of her behaviour, which had such an effect upon lady Spilsbury and Miss Facely, that they laughed aloud.—As to Sir Francis and lady Euston, they are people who never take notice of any thing, unless it is pointed out to them.—Their insensibility, almost bordering upon stupidity, benumbs their faculties so, that their powers of comprehension are extremely feeble; they are, however, not only mighty happy in themselves, but very convenient to others.—They receive their friends and acquaintance with as little ceremony as if they kept an inn, and as if it was incumbent on them to accommodate every traveller who came by their doors: they welcome you with a hearty civility, entertain you with hospitality, and see you depart— with as little emotion as if they really had never seen you before, as if they never should behold you again.—There are many such people, I believe, in the world.—What is a lady, receiving her company on a *rout*, or an *assembly night*, but the mistress of a public-house? Her guests crowd her rooms, in order to amuse themselves with each other, while she has the toil and the trouble to make the amusements of the evening agreeable to them all.—With these sentiments you may imagine that I have an aversion to routs: I have, indeed, no relish for them.—The person whose house is filled with company, who cannot live without cards, appears in the same light to me as the proprietor of an assembly-room.—In many houses the company grouped together more than defray the expences of the night by their deposits under the candlesticks, if the owner of them has a good correspondence with her servants.—Severe animadversions could I make upon the abuses of society in general, and of the ill-consequences attending public card-playing in particular.—But to return to Mrs. Mead. As soon as she was out of the house, lady Spilsbury and Miss Facely began loudly to rally lord Woburn about his *widow*, as they styled her, and made use of so many malicious sarcasms, which sarcasms were accompanied with the grossest allusions, I blushed for them.—My lord, to do him justice, behaved in a very proper manner upon the occasion; for partly by indifference, and partly by contempt, he threw them quite out their play: he even had the grace so far to vindicate Mrs. Mead, as to speak with the highest commendation of the great decency of her manners, and the discretion, which she discovered, by not taking notice, improperly, of those indelicacies and indiscretions in her friends, which she could not have overlooked.—This defence of her did him, in my opinion, a great deal of honour.

“Decency and discretion,” said lady Spilsbury, while Miss Facely approved of what she uttered with her eyes, “are qualifications so little regarded now, that those who

have any pretension to them, receive no kind of advantage from them—and the boasting of them is certainly ridiculous;”—adding, with a strong sneer, “the widow’s very decent and discreet appearance has been of very small service to her.”

My lord replied, rather warmly, “that Mrs. Mead was superior to most of her sex.”

“Upon my word,” said lady Spilsbury, half irritated, “you pay us all, even lady Charlotte too, a high compliment, by supposing that Mrs. Mead can have any superiority over us.”

“Mrs. Mead,” replied my lord, “has good qualities, with which you seem to be unacquainted; but admitting she has no good ones, you only lessen yourself by endeavouring to expose *her*.—Lady Charlotte [bowing respectfully to *me*] has too much sense, and too much good-nature to join in calumniating any of her sex.”

With these words he left the room, and left me to hear such severe invectives against himself and Mrs. Mead, that had I not made it a rule never to believe a quarter of the scandal addressed to my ears, I should have entertained sentiments very unfavourable indeed to them both. However, not chusing to vindicate people of whose merits and demerits I was so incompetent a judge (who can always answer, in every respect, even for themselves?) nor caring to hear the same conversation continued, I quitted them abruptly, leaving them to make what comments they pleased on my silence, for which I shall probably be loaded with aspersions similar to those they so liberally bestowed upon the above-mentioned gentleman and lady.—Were it not necessary for me, on many accounts, to be very circumspect, and upon my guard, though I am persuaded that my behaviour, after all my precaution, will be grossly misrepresented, the propensities of lady Spilsbury and Miss Facely to satire, would sufficiently spur me to be watchful over my conduct.

Mr. Evelyn’s aunt, lady Jennour, is very ill.—He was sent for in a great hurry, yesterday.—As our party is lessened, I am a good deal exposed to interviews with lord Woburn.—The ladies about whom I have written so much, not being able to make him attached to *them*, begin to let him alone.—As I am not fond of being particular in any thing, and as my lord treats me with rather more than less respect, I return his civilities, but without distinguishing them from those which I receive from Sir Francis Euston, or from any accidental visiter at the Castle.

LETTER XIX.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

WHAT infernal devils are women, when they have a mind to display their diabolical accomplishments!—In my last I left off because I was not well: my disorder was but a trifling one, yet it was too painful to be concealed.—In fact, I did not pretend to be in perfect health, when I was very much indisposed; and that heavenly lady Charlotte, merely from her innate goodness of heart, discovered so much pity for my sufferings, that I began to feel myself more blest than I had ever been, without the slightest indisposition.—Her charming looks, her voice, her words, indeed, discovered nothing but compassion for me; but these infamous wretches, Spilsbury and Facely, told me, that she was deeply in love, and actually dying for me.—The bare idea of her being in love with me was so transporting, that I was almost out of my senses; but, on a little reflection, I was convinced that my informers had uttered a cursed lie, on purpose to set us at variance with each other.—Never was I so supremely happy as to see the smallest signs of love in her looks, or her behaviour to me.—There is good humour, there is compliance in her carriage, but no tenderness, no solicitude; a desire to relieve my mind, by innocently amusing it, is frequently perceptible; but there is no warmth in her manner, though I am inflamed by her most frigid efforts to give me pleasure.—I cannot, therefore, describe the indignation I felt at this intelligence; possibly, between ourselves, I was the more irritated against the intelligencers, as I was assured of its wanting authenticity.—I was, however, discreet enough only to request them not to trouble themselves about lady Charlotte and me, as we should never afford the entertainment for them which they seemed to wish for and expect.—I would not have lady Charlotte hear what these malicious toads have said about her for the world; for I dread any new alteration in that behaviour, which is at present the most enchanting imaginable.—I would not see her more cool, more reserved for the universe.—I dread her hurrying away before I have gained leave to visit her in town.—Have not I reason to curse the whole sex, except this one unoffending angel?—But *you* will take no warning I find.—You are determined to engage again.—What amazing temerity!—I scarce know whether I ought to wish you success or not.—A man who has been so abominably deceived, hardly deserves to be successful in a new adventure.

LETTER XX.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

I HAVE been excessively alarmed; shocked, indeed, to the greatest degree.—The danger, thank heaven, is not so great as I at first apprehended; yet I am so convinced of the difficulty of passing through life with an unblemished reputation, that I am almost ready to sequester myself entirely from the world.—'Tis impossible, I find, to escape the aspersions of Scandal's viperous tongue, though one really does nothing to deserve them.

I don't remember whether I told you, that lord Woburn has not been very well for several days. As he really appeared dejected, and distressed by his disorder, though it did not seem violent enough to confine him to his apartment—I employed myself, perhaps unnecessarily, (but I was prompted by a desire to divert him from attending to the violent head-ach of which he complained) to amuse him by reading, singing, drawing, and playing at cribbage with him.—Lady Spilsbury and Miss Facely thought proper to misrepresent my motives most impertinently.—I happened, luckily, to overhear a conversation between them and my lord, in which I was traduced in the *friendliest* terms imaginable. I was in the shrubbery at the same time, but concealed from them. I cannot describe what I felt at the calumnies thrown out against me, nor can I do justice to lord Woburn's very proper replies to them, which were delivered in a manner strongly expressive of his contempt, indignation, and disbelief, but not of his resentment.—Resentment, indeed, would only have rendered them more furious; would have induced them to circulate still more atrocious falsehoods about me.

After what I have written, you will, I dare say, think it high time for me to leave the Castle.—Yet I will not quit it abruptly, because I would not have them believe that they, or any other people, are able to make me uneasy.—By a precipitate departure I should only give encouragement to their suspicions.—I am pleased to see that lord Woburn, with all his faults, is not coxcomb enough to behave impertinently to me, upon a hint which would have made many men behave so, who have, in general, better characters, with regard to their carriage to women, than his lordship.—As soon as my house is ready, it will be quite necessary for me to return to town.

LETTER XXI.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

I HAVE been in a most disagreeable situation. Evelyn returned a few days ago in deep mourning for a lady who has left him all her fortune; a fortune large enough to justify his pretensions to lady Charlotte.—He spoke, and was refused.—I leave you to imagine, for I cannot describe the agitation I felt before he made his overtures, and the joy which his departure from the Castle gave me, in consequence of his being repulsed as a lover.—However, lady Charlotte and I have not yet mentioned so important an event to each other, though we are upon the most friendly terms.—She goes to London in a few days.—I seized a moment, when her setting off was mentioned—with something like regret, if she is capable of feeling any—by lady Euston, to ask her permission to see her, when her doors were open to her other friends.—She blushed, a favourable reply; but the words which accompanied her blushes were hardly intelligible.—Her behaviour to Evelyn has made me very happy;—but I am pained to think of her quitting the Castle.—How many delightful hours have I spent with her!—Such hours, perhaps, I shall never enjoy again.—I cannot, indeed, expect to be blest with such hours in London, unless we are upon another footing.—I could have whiled away my days for ever as her friend, her admirer—her lover too, but not her *declared* one.—I must know a great deal more of her before I make a declaration of love.—Nay, I don't think I shall have courage to venture, should there be nothing discoverable to deter me, after what I have seen of the sex, and after what our friend *Casey* has suffered by them.—But then I should have been happier if I had never met with this lady Charlotte.—I find new beauties in her every day—yet, what are they to me? They will never fall to my share; some unfeeling fellow, recommended to her by her guardian as a proper man in point of rank and fortune; a fellow, perhaps, who has a set of old musty principles, just strong enough to keep him from committing any enormities in the eye of the world, may have her in his power, without being able to enjoy her charms.—To think of such a heavenly creature's lying by the frozen side of insensibility!—Racks and tortures!—She *writes* too.—I would give the world to see her letters to Mrs. Blomer, Mrs. Elliot's sister, who is gone over to Ireland to be with another sister, Mrs. Scot, a widow also.—I wonder whether they are like *my* widow.—I suppose not, as lady Charlotte is so fond of them.—Yet she seemed to have a partiality for Mrs. Mead, who had not, I fancy, art enough to deceive her.

IN CONTINUATION.

Just come from a little romping-bout in the wood, lady Spilsbury and Harriot not being able to make any thing more of me, were determined to come in for a few kisses at least, before I left the Castle; for they may reasonably suppose, from the appearance of things, that I shall not stay long after Charlotte.—I had, indeed, been peeping about all the morning, expecting to find a lucky moment to take my leave of her without witnesses.—I was pursued by those two furies, and hunted up into a close corner;—one of them snatched my hat, the other seized my book—this was tossed to the right, that whirled to the left, and so I was obliged to lay hold on them both out of self-defence.—In

the very height of our play—if play it could be called—Charlotte appeared.—Never was her superior loveliness so conspicuously striking.—She was advancing, but seeing me half undrest by these wild women, my waistcoat unbuttoned, the lace partly torn off the bosom of my shirt, my hair pulled all about my ears, while they both held me fast—seeing me in this condition, she stepped back, scandalized at such riotous proceedings.—Breaking immediately from these wanton devils, I ran up to her, and told her the cause of my savage appearance, imploring her assistance, in order to conquer my tormenting adversaries.—Sweetly smiling, and walking on, she replied, “You must excuse me from interfering between you and the ladies, as I am quite ignorant of your disputes.”

“There has been no dispute,” cried Harriot, only he will sit stupidly poring over his book, and we don’t chuse to let him, as we want him to chat with us.”

“Nay, then,” said I, “silence you I must and will.”—Then throwing them down in the hay-grass, I kissed them till I was absolutely weary, though they seemed to have no notion of being fatigued with the diversion.—As lady Charlotte instantly disappeared, I hurried after her, and throwing my arm round her waist—“Now,” said I, to try her—“’tis your turn.”

“Hold, my lord!” cried she, struggling, and glowing with modesty and resentment at my familiarity—you know I told you at first that she was monstrously proud.

“Come, come, my lady,” replied I, “a single modest kiss, permitted by you, is worth a thousand solicited by these loose ones.—You cannot—shall not—must not refuse me.—You see I do not attempt to treat you like them; but I swear I will have one kiss.”—I persevered, and I succeeded.—Never, Jack, in my whole life, did I press such delicious lips.—She is, indeed, a glorious girl.—Her blushes, her confusion, her timidity, and her pretty starts of anger at my freedom, made me long to repeat my offence—a thousand times over.—I dared not, however, to make a second attempt upon her lovely lips.—Bye and bye, perhaps, we may be upon better terms.—She will not bear hurrying, I find; I must, therefore, strike to her now, that she may be induced to *surrender to me* hereafter.—Impetuous as I naturally am, I can be a *Fabius*, when I have a point of consequence in view.—But she going from hence.—No more of these enchanting opportunities to melt her to my wishes.—Why cannot we remain together here another month?—Down, down *impatience!*

LETTER XXII.

From the same to the same.

SHE has made a downright quarrel of it—that is, a dumb one, for she will not speak to me.—This must be all affectation, for I am sure she was pleased.—I saw her satisfaction in her languishing eyes, I tasted it upon her balmy lips, I felt it in her trembling hands. However, I must let her have her own way a little. I swear to you this *coying* it is of infinite service to me; it keeps up a man's appetite surprisingly.—The women who act in a contrary manner, don't know their own interest.—How fulsomely fond are Spilsbury and Facely! Nay, indeed, my little widow was a coming one. It is astonishing to me, that they don't see, that by keeping us off, they only bring us on the faster; but, in truth, the sex in general are so intolerably forward that they disgust me.—

I don't at all like lady Charlotte's parting dissatisfied with me.—I die for an opportunity to make my peace with just the fellow-kiss to that which fired my soul.—But there are no hopes.—She pretends that she has received a letter, which will oblige her to set out for Yorkshire directly.—If this is not *art*, my fine lady, I have done with you; that is, you have cut off all those hopes I had began to encourage of your being so much better than any other woman.—Whether she is as virtuous and sincere as she seems to be, I will not presume to say.—I have strong doubts; but I am sure she is lovely—and will make, as I told you before, a delicious mistress. Mad, however, as I am to possess her, charmed with her person and her manners, the one uncommonly beautiful, the other uncommonly bewitching, I shall take no great trouble to gain her.—I shall only behave to her, in such a manner, as to let her see that she is thoroughly to my taste, and that she may make a conquest of me whenever she pleases.—As to availing myself of the customary arts of seduction—I hold them in the utmost detestation; they are beneath a man of honour, or a man of sense;—they sink him lower than the lowest of his species.—We usually call a fellow who degrades himself, a brute; but too hastily.—A brute who acts only agreeably to his nature, is a nobler animal than the man who abuses his intellects, by employing them to delude the fairest, though the weakest part of the creation, out of their virtue.—No, Wilmot, if you think that I wish to take any improper advantages of any woman, you do me the greatest injustice.—So far from making them worse, I wish to see them better than they are; if, indeed, they *fall*, without *my assistance*, I don't tell you that I will not receive them with open arms.—Into my *heart* would I receive this adorable Charlotte, could I be assured—but she is going, and scarce deigns to favour me with a single look.—Now this, in my humble opinion, is carrying things too far.

LETTER XXIII.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

I HAVE just received a letter from Mr. Elliot, to inform me that Mrs. Elliot is extremely ill.—Imagine my trouble at this unwelcome news: I shall set out immediately for Elliot-Place.—How is my concern doubled when I think of your not being there! Yet, upon second thoughts, if our dear friend is indeed so ill, you will not be dreadfully pained at the sight of her in the midst of her sufferings.—My eagerness to be in Yorkshire, prevents me from taking time to write a longer letter at present.—You shall hear from me as soon as I am arrived.—In the mean while believe me to be, as usual, that is,

Your sincerest friend,

CHARLOTTE MORDEN.

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LETTER XXIV.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

SHE is gone, the dear creature is gone; nor would she suffer me to bid her adieu, in the manner I wished.—Yet I luckily seized a moment of privacy to solicit my pardon, which was granted, indeed; but she behaved, at the same time, with a coolness, with an indifference, as if she thought me not of consequence enough to engage her attention. I again intreated her permission to visit her on her return to London, but she neither rejected nor complied with my request; you may be assured, therefore, that I shall go.

“*She half consents who silently denies.*”

I have a strong suspicion that I am not in the least disagreeable to her; but she cannot bring herself to acknowledge her partiality for me.—Pride!—pride!—I have, indeed, hitherto only asked the question with my eyes;—by her extreme cautiousness about looking at me, I fancy she is afraid of making a reply too favourable to me—Time will shew.—But we may be separated a great while, and a rival may be successful.—I will hope for the best.—I shall not, however, continue here, though she corresponds with lady Euston.—I am weary of the female part of the family, who, to make themselves still more odious, begin to tease me about lady Charlotte.—Whatever I think, I shall not make them my confidantes.—I will accept of Sir George’s and my sister’s invitation to spend a month with them at Huxley-Park.—By that time, possibly, lady Charlotte may be in town.

LETTER XXV.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER, at Dublin.

I WAS happy enough, my dear friend, to find our dear Mrs. Elliot better when I arrived; but being delighted with my kind expedition, she has wearied herself with contriving amusements for me, in order to reward me, she says, for giving myself the trouble of coming down on her account.—The pleasure I felt in seeing her so much better on my arrival than I expected, from Mr. Elliot's letter, is inexpressible.

Mrs. Elliot not only procures a variety of entertainments for me, but has also found out a lover—Not being just at this time quite so well pleased with him, as he seems to be with me, I have, very formally, declared my dislike to his addresses.—There is no getting rid of some people.—The man, I believe, has a good character, as well as a large estate; yet, I confess, my dear Mrs. Blomer, I must see a mixture of the *agreeable* with the *good*, in the person who professes himself my lover, before I can consent to pass the remainder of my life with him.—You will, perhaps, look very serious at this declaration, and remind me of the old adage,—“marry first, and love will come afterwards;” but surely there is not such an absolute necessity for my being tied to a man for ever and ever—and I, certainly, shall not marry till I can love the man to whom I give my hand.

Mr. Boynton sighs at this resolution; and, probably, you will chide me for it: but I really wish he would give up all thoughts of me.—I find myself too much disposed to laugh whenever he grows serious.—I sometimes think I shall never be married, because I am unreasonable in my expectations: because I want an impossibility—perfection. I cannot think of giving encouragement to a man of bad principles; neither can I encourage the assiduities of a man who has none at all.—Boynton is so slavish a sycophant, so abject a flatterer, that he echoes my words, and never makes the slightest opposition to my sentiments, except when I throw out expressions calculated to destroy his hopes.—Yet I do not look upon myself as inclined to give pain to those who discover a particular regard for me.—Why now, only to mention Evelyn:—there was something so soft, so gentle, so pleasing in his manners, that I could not possibly allow myself to be either harsh or ill-natured to him: I find nothing but contempt rising in my mind for Boynton, which I do not, however, think he entirely merits.—He never excites my anger, for he is beneath it: and as I never feel myself disposed to be angry with him when he follows me, so neither do I ever treat him with more than a smile at the civilest things addressed to my person, &c. &c.—Those speeches, indeed, are truly diverting, because they are immensely extravagant: you would laugh to see me run to my glass, when he had delivered a high-flown panygeric, and to hear me very gratefully thank Heaven for not having formed me deserving of them.—How disgusting is the gross adulation which some coxcombs lavish upon the women, whom they pretend to admire! I have been always ready to believe, that their imaginations were more fired than their hearts.—There is frequently more meaning in a glance, a touch of the hand, a single word, than in the most elaborate speeches.—Noise and nonsense generally go together.—Besides, when a man utters so many fine things before marriage, what will he have to say

afterwards? If Boynton continues to be so profuse of his eloquent expressions, I must endeavour to teach him the *æconomy of words*. Excuse me, my dear, if my sentiments should not thoroughly correspond with yours; but as I never should think of marrying, without a view of rendering myself even happier than I am at present; so you may be assured that I shall never unite myself to a man who will not, according to all appearances, be more worthy of my affection and esteem the longer I live with him.— Boynton is not, I am certain, capable of making an improving husband.—Our ideas are so totally different, that there cannot be an alliance between them.

Pray, believe me, my dear, to be

Your ever-affectionate

CHARLOTTE MORDEN.

P.S. I shall inclose this in Mrs. Elliot's letter to lord Sundon, who will forward it in his packet to Dublin.

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LETTER XXVI.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

Huxley Park:

I AM here, in the oddest frame of mind to be conceived.—I was pretty much out of humour on my arrival; and an incident, since my arrival, has made me still more out of humour with myself.—I wish so ardently to see lady Charlotte in town, that my impatience is almost ungovernable.

Lord Sundon is, you know, Sir George Huxley's friend and neighbour. We all spent Monday evening with him.—The postman brought a packet of letters from York. There was one among them from Mrs. Elliot, and one inclosed to Mrs. Blomer.—I knew the hand, the seal, and the address.—Lady Charlotte was distinguishable in them all; her letter was to be sent to Ireland, by lord Sundon, to the care of his brother there.—Never till that moment, had I the slightest desire to open people's letters; but I was then seized with such a tormenting curiosity, that I could not conquer it.—Lord Sundon, having cast his eye over his own letter, bade the servant lay the others upon the table in his library.—A thought instantly darted into my head.—I pretended that the sight of the letters in his lordship's packet had reminded me of some dispatches which I had to send off immediately to London; accordingly, I took the liberty of desiring my lord to give me leave to write a few lines on his table, adding, "if you cannot conveniently accommodate me, I must return directly to the Park."

"By no means," replied my lord, conducting me into the very wished-for room. As soon as he had shut me in, I first devoured with my eyes the letter which had stimulated my curiosity, then opened it, and read it with an avidity not to be described. It contained a pretty full account of lady Charlotte's sentiments, with regard to love and marriage, which squared so exactly with my own, that I quite adored her.—There was also a description of a new lover, drawn up with some humour, whom, you may suppose, she has refused.—The letter pleased me, extremely, as a composition, but I should have been more pleased with it, had she discovered her opinion about me in it;—nay, had she abused me.—Not to mention me at all—that's a devilish bad sign;—yet, I think, I am the very man hinted at in it, for I, certainly, like her better and better every hour; but whether she will ever feel, in her gentle bosom, sensations similar to mine, I cannot determine.—There was a noble frankness and spirit in her letter; there was also a vein of pleasantry in it, which charmed me, though I was, at the same time, provoked at her so soon forgetting me.—Yet, am I not rightly served, for my unwarrantable curiosity?—Was I not prompted by a criminal desire, when I wished to dive into her private sentiments, which ought to have remained unviolated under the seal which was employed to guard them from the eye of impertinence.—Love must be my apologist—instigated by love, I forgot the dictates of honour.—How contemptible have I rendered myself, to myself, by so scandalous a proceeding!—After such a proceeding, can I ever deserve Charlotte?—How would she despise me—justly despise me, if she knew of this silly, ungentle, unjustifiable action!—I must conceal my folly from her with the utmost care; but I cannot conceal it from myself.—The stings of self-accusation!—Faith,

Wilmot, I feel horribly ashamed.—My confusion is the only promising symptom about me at present.—Should she really be, after all, every thing I have so long wished to find in woman—I shall not deserve her—I am afraid;—though I will make the utmost efforts in my power to merit her esteem.—I will, positively, say no more about her now;—I shall write myself into a fever if I go on.—To change the subject, therefore—here is a pretty girl just come from the farthest part of the North.—She is going to see London,—that is, *to be seen*.—Have you not been used to couple ignorance and innocence together, when you heard of a *country girl*?—No such creature now exists, my friend, as a country girl artless and unknowing.—The various avenues to the metropolis, from all parts of England, have been rendered so convenient and so pleasant by bridges and turnpikes, that you shall hardly find a girl, in the remotest corner of the kingdom, who is not as finished a flirt, by nature and education, as if she had frequented the politest assemblies in London.—Dress is their first passion, admiration their second; and, those united, give birth to a train of vices and follies, in the exhibition of which they frequently put girls bred up even in the purlieu of St. James's out of countenance, and out of humour.

Bell Forbes is, in fact, the wildest little devil you ever met with.—'Tis impossible, I believe, absolutely impossible to tame her.—She is distractedly fond of pleasure.—She was brought up in the farthest part of Cumberland, where her amusements were few and trifling; but now she can't exist a moment without flying about in search of something new: I would as soon attach myself to a whirligig.—Lord Sundon is much taken with her; she has, undoubtedly, a very fine face, and is a good figure, taken altogether; but he seems to think there never was a woman so handsome as she is.—Yet, with all her beauty, she is more silly, more trifling than a child.—Not that she wants sense—the girl has *parts*; but she foolishly expects to have the whole world adore her.—Insufferable vanity!—Lord Sundon is very liberal of his flowery and flattering speeches to her, but I let her alone.—My neglect hurts her pride.—Besides, to tell you the truth, I believe she likes me best, merely because she wants to draw me in to play the fool with her as much as he does.—If she goes on at this rate, she will be undone in a fortnight.—She is, indeed, in my opinion, ruined to all intents and purposes already; for I look upon a corrupt mind to be still worse than a contaminated person.—Many men would, I dare say, think Bell a perfect angel; but, I fancy, she will prove a *fallen* one ere long.—How widely different is she from lady Charlotte! With what sense and steadiness does lady Charlotte conduct herself in every situation! With what heavenly dignity does she command respect! With what charming gentleness does she steal away your soul!—Were I not so knowing, with regard to women, as I am;—were I not pretty well assured, that they are not what they seem, I would go and offer myself to her directly.

LETTER XXVII.

From the same to the same.

SUNDON is foolishly fallen in love with this Bell: the little saucy gipsy sees her power, and is determined to make use of it—to his cost—if he can be serious. He is absolutely a noble spirited fellow, and I should be sorry to see him throw himself away thus.—His passion for the girl has made me hate her, because it has drawn her out in her true colours.—She can make nothing of me, and she is accordingly very much provoked.—You cannot imagine to what arts the little slut has recourse to win me to her purpose.—Sundon and I were with her in the garden yesterday; he all raptures, lavish of his compliments on her beauty, and wishing, with an ecstatic sigh, that he was destined to be the possessor of her charms.

“Ay, my lord,” cried the giddy head, “but I can’t tell any thing about that; for as I am just come out of the country, I shall not like to take the first offer:—I am willing to see more of the world, before I fix—though—let me consider,” added she, with a languishing look at me, which was followed by an arch one at Sundon, “you are both very handsome: yet, I suppose, there are a thousand as fine fellows in London, whom I have not seen.”

“You give a very pretty reason,” said I, “for the natural fickleness of your temper;—and as there will be a constant succession of fine fellows in London, you will probably never think of *fixing*, while you have a new man to admire every day.”

“Delightful!” replied she, with her eyes sparkling with pleasure, “There is nothing upon earth I should like better.”

“What a happy creature will the man be,” answered I, “who has the honour to *call* you his wife—I mean only to *call* you so, child; for, I dare swear, you will not, with that rage for variety, belong to any *one* person.”

“Nay, now, you are too hard upon her,” said Sundon—who was weak enough to take all this for nothing but raillery.

“Not in the least,” replied she briskly, pushing him away on his going to seize her hand.—“If I am the object of general observation, it will be but generous in me to return the pleasure they give me, by admiring them.”

Sundon being, at that moment, sent for by a gentleman, who was come to dine with him, Bell sat down by me—(I was carelessly reclined on a garden-seat)—and told me, “she never knew two such idle wretches in her life;—adding, that she believed I would not rise from my seat to look at the handsomest woman in the world.”

I replied, “that I certainly should not give myself any trouble about women, as they were already enough to court me.”

“Indeed, my lord,” said she, “you would be vastly more agreeable, if you had less vanity.”

“There I agree with you.—But have you not precisely the same failing?—When you mend, I shall begin to reform.—Now, I am strongly inclined to think, that if my reformation depends upon your’s, I shall enjoy my vanity with great comfort to the end of my days. Besides, I love myself too well to have any attachments.—”

“Ay, you may talk, but people as stout as you have been conquered; and, I declare, the getting the better of your obstinacy would increase the consequence of the woman so much, who made the attempt, that I have a violent desire to be that woman myself.”

“You had better let me alone; for you will return from the field without a victory, perhaps without honour.”

“No—the more difficulty the more glory, my lord; and, therefore, from this moment, be upon your guard; for I will certainly leave nothing undone to obtain so important a conquest.”

“And so be ruined by it—as Semele was in the arms of Jupiter.—No, no, child, think better, and let me alone—I give you fair warning.”

A violent struggle ensued, for the cunning toad had contrived, while she sat by me, to pick my pocket of my handkerchief.—This was a challenge not to be refused, at least by any man not as cold as a *Carmelite*.—She ran—I pursued—feigning herself to be out of breath, she suffered herself to be caught, indeed, and flung herself into my arms.—Affecting to be quite insensible, she passively permitted all the freedoms which I was provoked to take, and only was careful to—recover in the prettiest confusion imaginable; and with a “fye! my lord, how can you do so? Positively you shall let me go now”—at the same time, shewing not the least desire to be released from her confinement: she rather, by her languishing eyes, and short sighs, wished to remain in the situation into which she had forced herself.—Few men, Wilmot, I believe, would have neglected such an opportunity.—I don’t pretend to be a stock, when a fine girl comes in my way, and does all she can to put my blood into a full gallop.—However, consideration—I won’t say virtue—stopped me just when I was on the point of gratifying the passion which Bell had kindled in my bosom.—I let her go.—Yet, hang me, if I don’t think we were both sorry afterwards.—She looked most confoundedly baulked, and I cursed myself for an idiot—for supposing that a girl, who could sink so quietly into my arms, could possibly have any thing of the vestal about her.—I actually wonder how I came to be so strangely, so unaccountably discreet.—Perhaps Charlotte came athwart my mind.—Had it not been for her—I could not have resisted.—Heavens! how that idea fires me, and at the same time makes me shudder! Should she be as yielding as the girl.—There’s madness in the thought!—Wild and wanton as this girl is, who would have suspected her of going such lengths?—Is there no charity in woman? Faith! I am afraid not.—I must, however, give lord Sundon a friendly hint, lest he should be seriously taken in;—and yet he may, probably, thank me for my friendship with the point of his sword.—Well then, let him take his chance.—I want not courage;—but a man who will run the risk of killing his friend, or of being killed by him, about a girl who is of so combustible a constitution, that her virtue is every moment in a dangerous way, must be extremely ridiculous, and almost destitute of common sense.—Now, tell me, Jack, am I not right in being cautious.—As I meet with such frail, such forward creatures every day, who can blame me for entertaining unfavourable suspicions against the whole sex?—If they are all alike—farewell lady Charlotte.—Yet I will not give her up till I have tried her.—By the way, I hear that she is expected in town at the beginning of the week.—I shall then leave this place for Grosvenor-Square.

LETTER XXVIII.

From the same to the same.

WILMOT, my dear Wilmot, I have seen her; I have had her in my arms.—Delightful burthen!—How different from the last female who filled them! I don't know, however, whether she loves me or not.—Then will be the trial.—A woman, not naturally loose, may easily refuse the man to whom she is indifferent; but to resist him whom she fondly loves—she must be purity itself.—Now to my tale.

The first morning after I came to town, I met this charming woman airing in Hyde-Park, attended only by her servant.—Diana, when pursued by Acteon, made not so charming a figure as she did on horseback.—How gracefully did she sit! With what an easy negligence did she turn her lovely neck to speak to me! How beautifully waved her auburn locks over her snowy forehead, as the wind blew them backwards and forwards! And, let me add, the unexpected sight of me, Wilmot, had given an uncommon freshness to her cheeks, heightening her natural rosy bloom.—Her little black hat, ornamented only with a feather of the same hue, set off her fine complexion; and while it modestly shaded her face, it increased the charms of it.—Our modern huntresses are too apt, from a propensity to look very smart about their heads, to appear with an unbecoming fierceness, and to put one out of countenance for them, by their unfeminine looks. I hate to see a woman's hat turned up before; a woman may have a bolder appearance, by dressing her front in that manner, but I never admired your brazen beauties.—However, to proceed.—Riding on, without thinking, I believe, of the time, or of the track we were in, we got into the lane which leads to Brompton.—A dog leaping over a hedge, in that lane, frightened lady Charlotte's horse, who ran away with her. I flew after the skittish beast, and just as he had thrown her off his back, received her in my arms.—She was a little terrified, but soon recovered, and, with a charming blush, thanked me for my assistance.—She then attempted to walk, though I had insisted upon her accepting of my coach (which I had ordered, like a lazy dog, to follow me when I sat out) to carry her home.—She found herself, in a very little time, obliged to comply with my request, for having endeavoured to keep her seat, when the horse first galloped away, she had twisted her foot in the stirrup and sprained it—I lifted her into the coach, seated myself by her, and offered every kind of service in my power: remembering what she had said with regard to Evelyn, that the attentions of such men ought to be acknowledged.—I conducted her into her own house, and intreated her to let a surgeon be immediately sent for to bleed her.—She at first opposed that proposal, but yielded to my repeated importunities.—I held her snowy arm while the operation was performed; and then, after having received more thanks, accompanied with more blushes, returned home, fully intending to renew my visits.—I was sufficiently authorized to repeat them; I could not, indeed, have, decently, staid away.

LETTER XXIX.

From the same to the same.

I WENT next day to lady Charlotte.—I go every day, and am always received with smiles and good humour. She has a most refined understanding, and is the most entertaining creature I ever met with.—I make very long visits, without seeming to weary her with my company.—She has, indeed, asked me to stay, and to return again.—You may be sure I was always compliant.—I may as well confess the truth, I should have gone to see her, if she had not asked me;—I am afraid, if she had forbidden me.—It is inconceivable the impression which she has made upon me—an impression at which I am prodigiously surprised—I absolutely love her to dotage; and yet I cannot reconcile myself to the new emotions which I feel, whenever I am near her;—she perceives them, no doubt—probably, every body perceives them;—she does not, however, appear displeas'd with them, for she treats me with the greatest consideration—but with a delicacy and a modesty charming in the highest degree.—If she should be quite free from those vices and follies so common to the sex, what happiness will she be capable of bestowing?—Yet, supposing her to be as perfect as I wish her to be, am I sure that I shall meet with a return of that tenderness, which I feel rushing into my soul, whenever I look upon her, or listen to her, and which I conceal from her with the utmost difficulty.—But have I not said, that her carriage is modestly encouraging.—So I thought her behaviour to Evelyn, I remember; yet I was mistaken, for she would not marry him.—How amazingly powerful are women in the arts of deceiving! They fascinate us with their looks, they steal away our senses, and, in short, do with us just what they please.—After all I have experienced, though, I must certainly be very weak, indeed, to be impos'd upon by any woman breathing. However, I am so intoxicated with lady Charlotte, that, dreading to be awak'd from my dream of felicity, I dare not proceed even to try her.—I am become quite ridiculous to myself.—If you should laugh at me, therefore, I shall neither be astonish'd—nor angry.

Your's as usual,

W——.

P.S. I am also become acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Elliot.—They are very conversible people, and appear to be extremely attached to lady Charlotte—as relations and as friends.

LETTER XXX.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

SINCE my coming to town I have renewed my acquaintance with lord Woburn.—We met by accident in Hyde-Park.—I had a fall from my horse, which gave him an opportunity to assist me.—Happily my foot was only sprained a little.—This event has occasioned a behaviour in lord Woburn, which begins to grow rather puzzling.—How sincerely do I wish you was with me, that you might, from your penetration, inform me what I ought to think of his particular assiduities—I was, you know, very much concerned to find it necessary to leave Mr. Elliot's, and should not have so readily consented to a separation from my good friends, had I not flattered myself at the time, that I should be favoured with a great deal of your amiable society.—I did not then know that poor Mrs. Scot would have had so melancholy a reason to desire you to come to her.—You could not, I am sensible, refuse to comply with her earnest request, as a sister and as a friend; but your compliance with that request, has exceedingly distressed me.—Your presence, your advice would be, at this juncture, of infinite service to me.—It is neither agreeable to me, nor safe for me, I think, to live alone; and yet the danger of meeting with an improper companion terrifies me.—I always abhorred those people, who are called Humble Friends, and who generally behave with an abject servility, disgusting beyond expression.—Besides, I chuse to converse with persons more upon an equality in every respect;—but where shall I find such, who will care to live with me, or whom I should wish to admit upon a very intimate footing. I have found, indeed, few capable of being real friends; and, situated as I am, I think myself too much exposed to the visits of lord Woburn, which are conducted with too much propriety to be prohibited, but which not a little perplex me.—His conversation leads to nothing decisive; and, yet, from the uncommon and excessive concern which he discovered for my accident, and from his continued attentions ever since—Do not, my dear Mrs. Blomer, entertain an opinion of me, which I deserve not.—I think, I hope, I am not indelicate in my *expectations*—but that is not a proper word. Why should I *expect*?—And yet, my dear friend, were I to see a man so constantly assiduous about any of my acquaintance, I should, certainly, be apt to imagine, that he had a particular design.—If lord Woburn has a particular design in his behaviour to me, why should he not inform me of it? But why should I suppose he has any design at all?—May not a man visit a woman often, merely to amuse himself?—Still—still a man who is perpetually with you at home, and who always follows you abroad, acts in a very singular manner.—He must surely be much pleased with your company.—Well—granted—I will suppose he likes to converse with me, better than with any other woman, at least on these days I see him.—But he comes every day; he stays all the day—and discovers such an extreme desire to please me, and to attract my attention, and is so insinuating with his manners, that I don't know what to make of him—Perhaps he is only diverting himself all this time, with observing the perplexity into which his behaviour frequently throws me.—I strive to conceal my embarrassments as much as I can, but they certainly cannot escape the eye of a discerning man, always rivetted on me.—I could send you a thousand particulars relating to his

carriage to me, by which you would be enabled to form a clear judgment concerning them; but I think I should employ myself foolishly, by committing to paper occurrences which ought not to be remembered by me.—Mr. and Mrs. Elliot have met lord Woburn several times here.—They give him frequent invitations to their house, and make him of our parties; yet they say nothing more of him to me, than that he is an amiable man.—Possibly they may be more explicit in their letters to you.—I wish you was with me.

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LETTER XXXI.

From the same to the same.

AS I cannot have so immediate an answer as I wish from my dear Mrs. Blomer, I continue to talk on, and upon the same subject.

We were at the opera t'other night.—Mrs. Elliot and I went by ourselves.—It was a sudden thought of her's: I had intended to stay at home that evening; lord Woburn, therefore, was ignorant of our motions.—He staid with me till I went to dress before dinner: Mrs. Elliot did not start her opera scheme till after his departure.

Scarce were we seated, when Sir William Ashton came in.—Mrs. Elliot, who thinks better of him, you know, than of many young men of fashion, made room for him between us.—I could not see the propriety of such a step; but as I had not, myself, invited him to come so near me, I had no right to drive him from her; however, I said nothing to induce him to suppose, that I was pleased with his company.

Turning my head, on a sudden, I saw lord Woburn close behind us, staring earnestly at me, and too intent with his eyes to speak.—I believe I looked a little foolish, on being thus surprised.—I felt my face glow; but, to prevent his thinking me particular, I spoke to him immediately, with my usual freedom.—He seemed to recover himself, and asked me, though, very gravely, if I had designed to be at the opera, when he left me in the morning.—I answered in the negative; adding, that Mrs. Elliot sent to me soon after his departure; and that, not being engaged, I readily attended her.

Smiles brightened up his countenance immediately.—He sat down by me, and we entered into as much conversation as we could, without rendering our taste disputable, by not listening to Zaphanini.—Sir William took no small pains to come in for his share of chat, but my lord seemed desirous, I thought, to exclude him.—When the coach was drawn up, the former offered his hand to me.—My lord, instantly seizing it, before I knew well what to do, conducted me to the carriage; then asking Mrs. Elliot if she had room, and would set him down, stepped in after us.—Our two houses, you know, are not far distant from each other.

When Mrs. Elliot went into her house, he said to me, “will you indulge me, lady Charlotte, for one half hour?” And will you believe me when I tell you, my friend, that I did not know what to say—I actually hesitated a moment.—“Is it too great a favour to ask,” continued my lord, with a more impatient tone;—“will you only tell me, then, how long you have known Sir William Ashton?”

“I have known him a great while,” replied I, “as the friend of Mr. Elliot.”

“Is he nothing more?” said he, with a kind of forced smile;—“if Mr. and Mrs. Elliot are his friends they, no doubt, recommend him strongly.”

“I confess,” replied I, smiling again, “I should never think of their recommending him to me.—Sir William has given me no reason to believe, that such a proceeding would be agreeable to him.”

“If such a proceeding was agreeable to him, then,” answered he, eagerly, “it would be so to you?”

“I do not say so, my lord.”—

“No, madam,” replied he, clapping his hand upon his forehead, and walking hastily from me, “you don’t, indeed, say so—but dear lady Charlotte,” added he, sitting down again, and taking my hand, “excuse me—I am afraid I am impertinently curious; but, if you remember, you was so obliging as to tell me, in what esteem you held poor Evelyn, before I—(hesitating)—before I had been so long favoured with your confidence.—May I not hope, then, that you will just give me your opinion of Sir William?”

“Since you so earnestly desire my opinion of Sir William, my lord, I will tell you, that, from the favourable sentiments which Mr. and Mrs. Elliot have long entertained about him, and from his general good character, I suppose him worthy of general approbation;—but as I had never expected to be questioned concerning him, I never gave myself leisure to reflect seriously about him.”

“He has not then touched your heart?”

“No, indeed, my lord,” said I, laughing, “and I am sorry you suppose my heart so easily affected with every man who comes in my way.”

“You are then not easily to be pleased,” replied he, with a very serious air.

“I don’t know—But, indeed, I have not considered subjects of this kind with attention enough, to give such particular answers as you seem to require.”—(Looking at my watch.)

He took the hint, but rose with reluctance.—Still holding my hand, “Shall you be alone to-morrow about twelve?” said he.

“I believe I shall.”

He pressed my hand to his bosom, and left me.—Before he reached the door he came back—“Can you, lady Charlotte, forgive all this impertinence?”

“I can,” replied I, still smiling.—He bowed, and quitted the room.

He came the next day before the appointed hour.—I was drawing.—He sat down by me; leaned over me; praised my performance in general, but, very judiciously, pointed out two or three faults, which I mended immediately.—He said something softly to himself, while he looked on me.—Then thanking me aloud for doing him the honour to subscribe so readily to his opinion; he asked me, if I had seen Sir William?

“What! since last night,” said I, with an accent of surprize, “how could you think so?”—Considering, however, that all disguises are mean, I added immediately, “but he called here about a quarter of an hour ago.”

“And you did not see him?”

“No—I don’t let in people when I am engaged.—Didn’t you desire I would be alone?”

“I did,” said he, with his eyes sparkling with pleasure, while he caught my hand, and pressed it to his lips, “I did, and I am charmed with your consideration for me.”

I withdrew my hand in much confusion, thinking that I had said something very improper;—and my confusion was increased, when, on looking up, I saw his eyes fixed upon my face, in a manner I cannot describe.—He perceived my embarrassment immediately, and gave me time to recover.—I again applied to my drawing.—We entered into something like a conversation upon general subjects; yet he appeared, frequently, absent and confused; rose from his seat, sat down, and seemed to be in great agitation one minute; the next he folded his arms, sighed, and looked the picture of despair.—He often opened his mouth to speak, and as often closed it again.—At last

a violent rap at the door roused him.—He started from his chair, and left me abruptly.—
Now, my dear Mrs. Blomer, is not this behaviour rather particular? Or do I only fancy
so?—Sometimes I distrust myself.—Pray send me your opinion.

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LETTER XXXII.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

I SHALL certainly betray myself;—I cannot possibly hold it much longer.—She grows upon me every hour.—Never was there a creature so perfectly amiable.—I shall discover my sentiments, in spite of all my endeavours to conceal them, and be routed horse and foot.—You cannot imagine how cursed ridiculous I have made myself.—I have been jealous also, jealous of a man whom I never saw with her but once, and then by mere accident.—How charmingly has she conducted herself, with what propriety, with what condescension did she treat me!—Surely she must have found out my weakness, and, from mere pity, behaves to me with a gentleness, not far removed to from tenderness.—I am really sometimes ready to persuade myself that she loves me;—that she prefers me to every other man, at present, is certain; but how long her partiality for me may hold, is another point.—Were I thoroughly assured of being beloved by her, I would try her immediately.—If she comes off with honour, how exquisite will be my felicity!

I have been just interrupted by a message from my brother Ned.—He was not expected home this half year; but love has, also, made a revolution in his mind.—It seems he met with the earl and countess of D———— at Aix, and was so charmed with lady Louisa, the eldest daughter, that a marriage was soon concluded.—I am going directly to welcome him and my new sister.

* * *

I am returned home, after having been received with all that warmth of friendship, so natural to him.—I found the bride, indeed, a complete beauty;—features more regularly handsome, a complexion more finely animated, I never, I think, beheld.—She is tall, and has more of what the French express by the word *embonpoint*, than one commonly sees in a modern fine lady, with her laced-up waist—Such waists are, to me, horrible and detestable.—Yet with all this luxuriance of beauty, there is something in her look and behaviour which displeases me.—I would have a woman allure you, insensibly; I would not have her openly invite you.—I hope I have mistaken the expressions in lady Louisa's eyes—doubly hope so for Ned's sake, who is one of the sincerest, honestest fellows in Great-Britain, and who loves her passionately enough to content a woman of the least delicacy.—But what have I to do with their affairs? Let me mind my own.—Lady Charlotte is made of different materials, or there is no faith at all to be placed in the countenance of a woman.—I do not, however, depend upon her looks alone;—the modesty, the propriety of her whole carriage, and the manner in which she spends her time, assure me, that she cannot resemble lady Louisa.

LETTER XXXIII.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

YOU have opened my eyes, my dear friend.—I blush, though alone, to think how I may have exposed myself—through mere inadvertence.—Yet you are a teasing creature to tell me, that because I wish to have lord Woburn particular, I really fancy he is so.—Now, my dear Mrs. Blomer, lay your hand upon your heart, and answer me sincerely, is he not particular; or am I a downright visionary?—If I thought I could possibly be mistaken about the particularity of his carriage to me, I would thank you for undeceiving me.—I am honest enough to inform you, that his fancied partiality for me, gives me a satisfaction which I never felt before, from the behaviour of any of his sex.—He told me, yesterday, of the arrival of his brother and sister from Aix.—“My brother is married to lady Louisa, and she is a very fine woman, but she wants lady Charlotte’s delicacy and *retenüe*.”—I am afraid I looked exceedingly satisfied with this compliment, for he caught my hand and kissed it.—I blushed, and drew it from him.—He changed countenance immediately; looked piqued, disappointed, and out of humour.—I smiled, and said, “Nay, now, my lord, you are capricious; were you not just now commending me for my discretion? And was not your commendation sufficient of itself to induce me to keep it up?”

“Charming creature!” replied he, seizing my hand again.

Mrs. Elliot, at that moment, came in, and asked me to go with her to make some morning visits.

I consented immediately.—“Had you been only going to take an airing in Hyde-Park,” said my lord, “I would have asked to be of your party, merely for the sake of your conversation; for though the Park is pleasant for a place so near town, I always love to be farther out of the smoke of London; and have no idea of either capering or rolling along one short road smothered with dust in dry weather, and in danger of being every minute dismounted by the crouds, which perpetually pass backwards and forwards; certainly one has very little air or exercise in those excursions.”

Mrs. Elliot laughed, and told him, “he was very severe.”—When we were in the coach by ourselves, she desired to know, with the utmost friendliness, my serious thoughts about lord Woburn; and to be informed, whether he had given me reason to believe that he had any design in his frequent visits.

I thanked her for giving me an opportunity of speaking upon a subject which began to grow, I freely confessed, interesting to me, and upon which I very much wished to have her opinion.

“My opinion is,” replied she, “that if you actually suspect him of having an inclination to spend the remainder of his life with you; and if you like no man so well, you had better accept of him.”

“Before he offers himself?” Said I, interrupting her.

“Ah! my good friend,” answered she, hastily, “that reply is a sufficient explanation of your sentiments.”

I felt my face glow—She saw my confusion, and kindly relieved me.—
“Don’t be uneasy,” added she, “I believe lord Woburn has a very good character; that is, I never heard him accused of keeping a mistress, or of running into the fashionable follies to which but too many young men of rank are strongly addicted.—Absolute perfection, my dear lady Charlotte, is not to be looked for.—Lord Woburn is a man of sense; he is a man of humanity; he, therefore, will not, I may venture to aver, use the woman ill, who is intimately connected with him, while she behaves with discretion.—Such a woman he will, undoubtedly, find in you.”

I thanked your dear sister, my amiable friend, for her favourable opinion of me.—I believe, I may honestly confess, that I thanked her also in my heart, for speaking so warmly in lord Woburn’s behalf.

Flattered as I was by what she had said of him, I had courage to remind her of his affair with Mrs. Mead—an affair which he had, indeed, represented to me to his own advantage; but how far that representation is to be credited—Well—I will think of it in the most charitable light.

“You cannot but be sensible,” replied she, “of the extreme folly of women in general.;—you cannot but know, that they are more openly dissolute, than they were in former days; and I am afraid there are few men, either able or willing to resist the advances which are made to them.—As to lord Woburn, I am inclined to think, from what you have related about the ladies at the Castle, that he has thoroughly repented of his behaviour, during his stay at it.—However, no man is without failings, as I said before; one has, therefore, nothing to do, but to chuse him who has the fewest.”

Now I must wait patiently (if I can) till he speaks.—A celebrated author, somewhere, says, “that a lover of delicacy will not make his addresses to a lady, till he is sure that she wishes for a declaration.”—I approve of these refined sentiments in a lover; but yet I think I should be sorry to discover, in myself, any eagerness to be addressed;—I should certainly be still more hurt, to have that eagerness detected by lord Woburn.—We must, therefore, take things as they happen to fall out.—I know I feel most exceedingly awkward about the affair at present.—I wish I may not betray myself.

LETTER XXXIV.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

NED has engaged me upon so many parties with him and his wife since his arrival, that I have not had leisure to spend so much time as I could have wished with my charming Charlotte.—She improves upon me, I think, every hour.—A kind of blushing timidity now seizes her whenever I approach her, which renders her infinitely lovely.—What a contrast is she to lady Louisa, a vain, wanton Hoyden? I am surprised that Ned did not see her character, and detest it.—Yet she might have, perhaps, concealed her natural disposition before marriage, and has thrown off the mask now it is too late for him to retreat.—Poor fellow! he has certainly been taken in; and will, I fear, repent of his matrimonial connection ere long.—But as I have mentioned the word Hoyden, let me tell you that the saucy flirt, Bell Forbes, is gone off with colonel Tamper, who, though he has been married these ten years, has ruined more girls than I can, at present, reckon up;—yet, in my humble opinion, he has himself been ruined by such little devils as these.—Tamper is not naturally vicious; he is good-natured, and might have lived with his wife upon as good terms as men generally do, if he could have kept the women at a tolerable distance; but with his attractions, how could he prevent their approaches?—Nay, I have seen the *douceurs* of an old ugly fellow, blasted with infamy, and battered with his debaucheries, encouraged.—Fie! fie! upon it—let me think no more of such scandalous proceedings, lest I should, in the hurry of resentment, rank my Charlotte among the forward and shameless females of the age.—My Charlotte!—Yes, I will call her my Charlotte, Jack, till I see reason to retract that appellation.—However, if she is chaste, she is, I believe, almost the only young and handsome woman who is so.—I have no opinion at all of her attendant.—How came you to know her, you will say?—As I have been so much at the house lately, she has had many opportunities to throw herself into my way, and has not overlooked them.—Mrs. Dawson is not a disagreeable figure; she has a demureness in her appearance, which lady Charlotte takes for real sanctity.—I hope she is deceived; and yet if she is, I pity her, for to lie at the mercy of a canting hypocrite is the devil.—It is actually very dangerous for a fine young creature, like Charlotte, to be in the power of such a *pious* sycophant.—She may sell her, for aught I know, to the highest bidder.—Why then may not I put in for the purchase?—No—I love her too sincerely to deceive her.—I should not gratify my passion for her, were I to possess her by such unwarrantable measures.—Never did I yet, I swear by all that's dear to me, never did I seduce an innocent heart—never did I take an advantage of a woman's weakness.—I should, therefore, find no joy in Charlotte's arms, unless she cheerfully admitted me to them; and then—O! how cordially should I despise and hate her for yielding!—Sometimes I think that I will tell lady Charlotte, that Dawson is a good for nothing hussey.—How came you to know her demerits?—I weighed her, and found her wanting.—“But why need you have troubled yourself about her? Possibly, if you had not tempted her, she might have been virtuous.”—I will not say any thing more about her, but make the best of my way with—the idol of my heart.

LETTER XXXV.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

MY dear, dear friend, you must not be in such a hurry.—You say, that you shall not be satisfied till lord Woburn makes a regular declaration; and, I can assure you, that you will not have that satisfaction a great while.—I see no signs of such a declaration; yet he is as assiduous as ever, nay, more so.—He was absent for a few days, after Mr. Woburn's arrival in England; but he has since scarce ever left me—he omits nothing which will, he thinks, give me any pleasure.—He has, I find, somehow ingratiated himself with Dawson.—She was rather impertinently free, both with her encomiums upon him, and her remarks, t'other day; I silenced her presently, for I never chuse to make my servants my confidantes—I was sorry Dawson obliged me to reprimand her so sharply, as I have a regard for her, and believe her to be faithful; she has certainly more sense than many women, in her station, are possessed of; yet, while lord Woburn keeps me in suspence, it is not necessary for me, I think, to be explicit with her upon such a subject.—But how can I talk thus?—My disapprobation of Dawson's behaviour has surely turned my head a little.—Why should I imagine that my lord ever entertained such a design.—He is almost continually with me, 'tis true, and not only follows me every where abroad, but distinguishes me from every other woman; and I am foolish enough to be pleased with a partiality which may, perhaps, in the end, occasion a great deal of scandal.

Mr. and Mrs. Elliot begin to be displeas'd with lord Woburn; their displeasure gives me a great deal of pain.—Mr. Elliot hinted something, t'other day, about a categorical answer; and your good sister advised me to flirt a little with Sir William Ashton, or any other man, by way of forcing his lordship to declare himself.

Forgive me, my dear Mrs. Blomer, for saying, that I detested from my heart such advice, though it came from your own sister.—I cannot descend so very low, as to angle for a husband in that shabby manner.—I have also intreated Mr. Elliot, not to take the least notice of me to my lord. If they will not listen to me, I must quit them, him, and all the world.—I cannot be brought to subscribe to such indelicate management.—What an opinion must a man have of the woman, who can have recourse to so poor an artifice, for the accomplishment of her wishes?—No—my dear Mrs. Blomer, never will I do any thing to render myself unworthy of lord Woburn's esteem.—Whether I am in his favour or not, I will endeavour to merit his approbation.—He is, I am afraid—I may venture to say to you—the only man whom I desire to please; though I would wish to have the whole world approve of my conduct, if possible.—My lord is coming up—I must conceal this letter.—There is no reason that he should see he is preferred to every body, till he makes it necessary for me to acknowledge my sentiments concerning him.—He knows them already, I fear, but too well, from a thousand little inadvertencies, which, in spite of all my circumspection, frequently escape me.

In CONTINUATION.

I took up my drawing when he came in. How swiftly the moments flew!—Two whole hours passed unperceived away, in the most delightful conversation.—I might have, perhaps, sat talking with him till now, had not Dawson appeared, and asked me, if I chose to dress before dinner.—I blushed, and looked at my watch. My lord frowned, and she instantly disappeared. I rose, however—He caught my hand; “You must not leave me,” cried he, “beauty, like your’s, wants no addition.”

“No flattery, my lord,” said I—in a little confusion.

“I cannot flatter you, my lady; but if truth offends your modesty, my tongue shall be silent—yet my eyes will speak, and my heart’s language will be responsive to theirs”—putting my hand to it.—I struggled to draw it back, telling him, at the same time, that I must wish him a good morning.

“Will nothing that I can say,” replied he, with a look inexpressibly engaging, “prevail on you to give me leave to stay and dine with you to-day—or will you not, at least, permit me to return hither immediately, after I have taken my solitary meal?”

Shall I tell you, my dear, that I knew not what answer to make to his request.—His looks, his voice, and his attitude were so tenderly supplicating, that I—hesitated.—Recollecting, at last, that he might perhaps be on the point of asking the question, the so-long delayed—the so-long expected question by you and your friends, I opened my mouth—I consented to his intreaty, and instantly closed it again, fearful of having been guilty of an indiscretion.

He saw my embarrassment, and gently clapping his hand upon my mouth—“Hold,” cried he, with an enchanting smile, “you shall say nothing to me that you do not thoroughly approve of.—Be silent; though nobody ever spoke so well—and suffer me to be found here, when you return from your dressing-room.”

I did as he desired; I hurried from him; but I did not, you may imagine, stay long at my toilette; though I thought Dawson most intolerably tedious, and uncommonly awkward about me.—She actually seemed to be in as great an agitation of spirits as I, myself, was;—possibly, however, my own emotions made me believe so to apologize for them.—I wished to look to the utmost advantage—yet I certainly did not allow myself time to put on my things in an advantageous manner.—By good luck, however, they did as well as if I had more studied the arrangement of them.—The flattering Woburn flew to meet me at my return to the drawing-room.—“Before you left me,” said he, “I thought you could not, by any art whatever, make an alteration in your dress for the better; but you certainly appear to me, at this moment, with new attractions.”

I smiled, like a simpleton, as if I was pleased; yet told him, that fewer compliments, and more conversation, would be agreeable to me.

“I stand corrected, lady Charlotte,” said he, “It is but just that I should exert all my powers to entertain you in return, for the exquisite satisfaction you have given me to-day.”

We sat down to dinner.—I was far from being at ease; I, therefore, did the honours of my table rather awkwardly. He perceived my confusion, and assisted me, with a gallantry so refined, so highly pleasing, that I was almost brought by it into humour with myself.—One part of his carriage, however, did not meet with my approbation.—

He pressed me, exceedingly, to drink more wine than I chose.—You well know that I never go beyond two glasses.—I observed, that he drank but little, himself. He might have no particular meaning in this behaviour; he seemed, I thought, much pleased when I resisted his importunities;—not so well satisfied with me, did he appear, when I three or four times withdrew from his arms, upon his pressing me to his bosom, after some lively panegyric on my person, dress, or conversation.—Sometimes, indeed, I fancied, that by doing so, I had prevented him from delivering himself upon the expected subject; but after having long waited for the moment of declaration, I began to see that I had been extremely to blame for having suffered myself to be treated with so much freedom, by a man who never entertained a serious thought about me.—And, I will confess to you, my friend, that I was greatly hurt at my disappointment.—Still more was I pained, at being so deceived.—However, though I had possibly gone too far, it was, by no means, too late to retreat.—I, therefore, collected all my scattered spirits, and very gravely told him, I had an engagement with a lady that evening, which I could not put by.—Before he was prepared to oppose me, I touched my bell, and ordered my chair.

He started, looked disconcerted, and asked me, “if I could not, possibly, break my appointment.”—Finding me inflexible, he sighed, kissed my hand, in spite of all my opposition, and left me.

Thus you see, my good Mrs. Blomer, all our expectations are vanished.—lord Woburn has been sufficiently tried; he has had very fair opportunities, and I am now certain, he never had any design but to amuse himself with me.—’Tis all over—I do not like to be trifled with;—I have, therefore, strictly charged my people to deny me, if he comes again.—Most probably he will not give himself the trouble to make me another visit.—How fortunately did I prevail on Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, not to proceed in the very hasty manner they had intended!—They would have been only thought ridiculous, but I must have been laughed at every where.—For once let me applaud my own discretion—I have little, very little else to value myself upon at present.

Your sincerest friend,

CHARLOTTE MORDEN.

LETTER XXXVI.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

I AM quite intoxicated with love and joy.—This dear creature is every thing the heart of man can wish.—She will—she shall be mine—for ever. I am sure I have made a progress in her gentle bosom.—Hear, and judge.—

I went a few mornings ago, and found her, as I have lately found her, drawing landscapes, which she executes in a fine taste;—a good quiet employment to keep her out of mischief.—We are all, Jack, both men and women, apt to feel the devil stirring within us now and then; and we can only drive him out, by some kind of business.—The ruin of half the women in England may be justly imputed to idleness.—When they can neither amuse nor employ themselves, they are always ready to run into mischief.—Besides, when the female mind is quite inactive, it generally receives wrong impressions.—How many idle girls have I seen throwing themselves into a great chair, while such expressions as these came languidly from their lips, “L—d! I don’t know what in the world to do with myself.”—Such girls hurry from place to place, merely to kill time, and put wicked thoughts out of their heads, as they will tell you; but I may venture to affirm, that they render themselves the most contemptible creatures in the universe by so doing.—Not in so ridiculous a manner does my lovely Charlotte act; never did I see her idle; her books, her drawing, her music, her needle, by turns employ her, and keep her from yielding too much to a charming tenderness of heart, of which she is, I perceive, with transport, possessed.

She received me with an unusual softness in her behaviour, and with a sort of confusion, which discovered more sensibility, than I had ever observed in her before.—We soon, however, entered into a conversation, in which she bore her part with a delicacy and spirit which charmed me, while I hung over her, like Milton’s Adam, enamoured!—While I was so engaged, the busy Dawson, impertinently, asked her, if she chose to dress.—I could not bear to part with her—I detained her hand, while my eyes and my tongue told her a thousand tender truths—which she, however, with the sweetest confusion, called flattering ones.—I would fain have kept her—she would not stay—I begged her to let me dine with her—she appeared quite surprised at my request—She paused—she blushed, and looked so delightfully disconcerted, that I, fearful of being denied the blessing I implored, ventured to put my hand upon her delicious lips; telling her, that she should find me where she left me, at her return from her toilette.—She was not long absent—I hate a woman who spends the time which should be devoted to her lover in tiffing herself out before the glass—What a trifling pleasure!—A woman of this stamp, plainly shews that she loves her own dear person better than him.

When lady Charlotte retired, I told her that I did not believe she could make any addition to her beauty by dress—I was mistaken—She came to me with only a slight alteration in her drapery; but that alteration had so happy an effect, and made her appear in a so much more advantageous light, that I could have devoured her.—Her emotions increased—she endeavoured to acquit herself with her usual ease; but she failed, from an over-anxiousness to excel.—I pitied her, and did every thing in my power to relieve her, to assist her, to entertain her as much as she had entertained me.—To double my

satisfaction, she is temperate beyond my expectations.—I could not, with all my rhetoric, make her take a third glass.—What a charm is there in the sobriety and chastity of a fine woman!—How often have I been amazed, at men being able to endure the least tendency towards a passion for strong liquors in their mistresses.—A woman in a state of intoxication, is to me a nauseous and loathsome sight.—The very breath of such a woman is almost pestilential, and not to be endured;—yet how frequently do the finest women in the kingdom render themselves disgusting by their advances to ebriety! I do not always, indeed, wonder to see women trying to plunge themselves into oblivion, by their bacchanalian proceedings; but I am extremely astonished, whenever I see men encouraging them to pursue pleasures, which must not only very soon spoil their beauty, but break their constitutions, and deprive them of their most alluring charms, their modesty and their delicacy; charms which can alone render them attractive, in the eyes of a man of the least taste and refinement.—Nor is a passion for strong liquors confined to the prostituted part of the fair sex; women who have been very regularly and soberly educated, have indulged themselves in drinking to an unpardonable excess.—I was once extremely well acquainted with a young and very fine woman, of great distinction, married to a man who adored her.—I have heard this woman, when at table with her, say to the butler, in a whisper, “whenever I call for wine and water, be sure to give me all wine.” As her order was punctually complied with, she commonly swallowed a bottle of strong old Mountain or Madeira before the cloth was removed, her usual beverage being filled out in half pint glasses.—Another lady I know, not less young and pretty—but unmarried, and like to remain so, who is exceedingly careful to have her brandy and water made of a comfortable strength, for the benefit of her poor *narves*, which, however, grow weaker and weaker, in spite of all her endeavours to brace them.—But to return to lady Charlotte.—Her dinner, and the small quantity of wine which she swallowed, decently exhilarated her.—she became less timid, and entered more cheerfully into conversation with me, than she had ever done; a conversation, which so much increased the charms of her person and behaviour, that I was insensibly led to be more free than usual: I therefore gradually threw off a great part of the restraint I had been under in her company, and began to give a loose to the transports which her beauty had inspired.—I said a thousand whimsical things, all tending to the same point. I hung over her, full of admiration, and once ventured to touch her snowy neck behind with my lips.—She started from me—I pursued her, and obtained my pardon.—I then caught her in my arms, to thank her—New offences produced new apologies, which were, after some demurring, accepted.—I grew at last too presuming—I was tempted to press her to my bosom—“Nay, now my lord, you are rude,” cried the blushing, struggling angel.—I turned from her, supposing her to be affectedly angry, and swore that nobody but the most consummate prude in nature could take offence at such innocent freedoms, adding, that I could not have believed lady Charlotte had so weak an understanding.

This speech touched her.—She was serious; she was sorry for having been obliged to chide me.—She again lifted up her charming eyes, and smiled a reconciliation.—Transported with the tenderness which languished in them, I seized her once more, and printed a thousand ardent kisses on her lovely face.—She now became absolutely incensed, but incensed in so bewitching a manner, that I adored her.—Instead of flying into a fury (by so doing, she would have thrown the finest set of features in the world into a horrid disorder) she, suddenly, appeared collected within herself, and

with great coolness and gravity, saying, she had an engagement that evening, rose and pulled her bell, before I was in the least aware of her intentions.—I doated on her, however, for her discretion; it has fixed me, immutably, her's; though I confess I was so much surprised at so unexpected a change, for she had but just seemed to reprove me reluctantly, that I suffered her to order her chair, with only making a single remonstrance against it; that remonstrance proved ineffectual, and I actually believe I appeared a dupe of my own designs.—Yet charmed to find her all that my eager heart desired, I returned again the next morning; to my astonishment, I was dismissed from the door!—In plain English, she was denied;—half-a-crown slipped into the porter's hand, drew the truth out of his mouth.—Pleased and angry, at the same time, at this prohibition, I followed her in public, only to shew my indifference; my indifference hurt her.—A few nights ago she turned as pale as death at the play, on my coming into the next box to her, without taking notice of her.—Her anxiety, strongly painted in her countenance, delighted me, and made me uneasy.—By that anxiety, I was thoroughly assured of her love, and yet I was sorry to see her suffer on my account.—My resentment subsided in a moment.—I hastened to the box in which she sat; I came in behind her, and while I asked her, in a whisper, if she was not well, tenderly pressed her snowy white hand.

She started—blushed, and hastily drew her hand back—but made no reply.

I was not at all displeas'd with this appearance of resentment, in consequence of a freedom, which ought not, indeed, to have been taken, situated as we were.—As I never had made an honourable proposal, she might, very justly, have concluded, that I never intended it.—However, I had some reason, I think, to believe, after what had passed, that if she really loved me, she would have forgiven me.—No—not all my attentions about her, my solicitude to give her pleasure, could prevail on her to enter into conversation with me.

She kept up this reserve all the evening; and when I offered my hand to conduct her to her coach, gave it to another gentleman, who happened to be near her.—I affected to take no notice of her altered behaviour—for I really thought that she looked as if she behaved in that manner, more out of prudence than inclination;—I, therefore, honoured her for her cool deportment; yet it will be absolutely necessary for me, to lure her back to love and tenderness.—I have not yet half done with her.—When once a woman truly loves—a trifling difference will not cure her of her passion.

Your's as usual,

W—.

LETTER XXXVII.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

YOU complain of my long silence, my good friend, and indeed I have so little to say, that you will find the opening of my letter scarce worth the trouble.—I have only one thing to tell you, which can be at all interesting to you—that is, I believe if they will not let me live in quiet here, I shall come and settle with you in Ireland.—Mr. and Mrs. Elliot are so disappointed in lord Woburn, and so eager to see me married, that they are every day, I may add, every hour, proposing somebody to me.—Nobody proposed by them, hitherto, has pleased me. Ought I not to be ashamed of preferring lord Woburn in my heart? But though I like the man, I cannot approve of his behaviour; and since I have been so much deceived in him, why may I not be permitted to entertain a slight opinion of the rest of his sex? Why may I not live free from any connections with man? Since the good and the agreeable are not easily to be met with—I will remain as I am.—After all, I cannot help thinking, but that lord Woburn is better than he appears to be;—yet, as appearances are very much against him, there is no venturing.—He seems to me, now to wish to be reconciled, though too proud to make any concessions;—and, perhaps, were I to pardon him, I should only give him an opportunity to offend again.—So let things remain as they are.—I will keep up my indifference to all men; and if my vexations grow insupportable, I will come, my dear Mrs. Blomer, to you.

Your sincere friend,

CHARLOTTE MORDEN.

LETTER XXXVIII.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

LADY Charlotte has not been well.—I hope the dear creature will not, by stifling her passion for me, throw herself into a fever.—Jesting apart, though I was seriously anxious about her, and began to think of a way to make it up with her, I could not meet her at any public place, after the night mentioned in my last letter.—I have called several times at her door, without being able to gain admittance.—The last time, I asked to speak with Mrs. Dawson.—She came down, and with a roguish twinkling in her eyes, told me, that her lady was indisposed, and could not see company.

“She sees every body but me, Mrs. Dawson,” said I.

“No gentlemen, my lord, but Mr. Elliot.”

“Tell her,” replied I, “that I am exceedingly unhappy to hear of her indisposition.”

I was going, but recollected myself.—“Can you inform me,” added I, “when she will be at Mr. Elliot’s, for I know she goes abroad.”

Dawson smiled, but seemed doubtful whether she should give me the desired information or not—I took out my purse, and removed her scruples in a moment.—After a small hesitation, she curtsied, and said, “I will certainly let your lordship know.”

The next day a line from Mrs. Dawson informed me, that her lady was to dine and spend the evening at Mr. Elliot’s.

I dressed—and went thither about seven.

The porter appeared in a puzzle, as if he knew not whether I was to be admitted.

While he was ballancing about this important affair, Sir William Ashton entered.—He passed me, and went up stairs.—I followed him, saying to the porter, “I see your family are at home.”

I found only Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, lady Charlotte, and a beautiful girl about fourteen or fifteen, who was, I soon found, a niece of Mrs. Elliot’s.

Lady Charlotte’s face glowed at my entrance, with pleasure I thought, but she soon checked such a presumptuous fancy, by assuming her late reserved behaviour.—The Elliots also looked exceedingly stiff in their carriage to me, though quite easy with Ashton;—so that it would have been a mere formal meeting, if Kitty Downton, the fine girl I mentioned, had not, by the agreeable *naïveté* of her behaviour, thrown us, insensibly, into some kind of familiarity.—My charming Charlotte, at last, mixed with us, though the words which she addressed to me, were delivered with the utmost caution; all picked, all chosen ones, I assure you.—At first I appeared cold and indifferent about her, but was soon converted into the tenderest, the most submissive of lovers.—This movement did the business, Jack.—I saw her dear eyes, which were heavy and languid before, filled with a kind of fluttering joy;—her hands trembled, if I accidentally touched them; her complexion became animated, and she grew more lovely, more modestly condescending than ever.—Ashton hovered a little about her at first, but finding he stood no chance near me, soon left us. You may be sure I took particular care to keep clear of those liberties, by which I had provoked her resentment.—I am not yet, indeed, authorized to take such liberties; but when I am admitted as an honourable lover, I shall expect to have no innocent freedoms denied me;—and yet, were she to grant me the *last*

favour, I would sooner perish that moment than marry her.—You tell me I am ridiculously nice.—Remember Carey—remember Carey, I say; and take heed lest you engage with women similar to those by whom he has been undone.

This pretty little Kitty is, I find, to go home with lady Charlotte; she has been bred up hitherto very discreetly.—I hope, I may venture to say, that her new friend will not spoil her.—Yet women and girls seldom do each other any good—frequently a great deal of harm.

In CONTINUATION.

I had, positively, determined to throw myself at lady Charlotte's feet at my next visit to her, and to make an honourable offer of my person and my fortune; but I am yet fearful; I know not how far I may trust a woman.

Lady Louisa, my brother's wife—curse on the word—is become so ridiculously attached to me, that I cannot tell how to get rid of her.—I have taken every method, in my power, to shake her off; she still pursues me, even into my very inmost retirement. Would you believe it, she came t'other morning before I was up, and insisted upon being suffered to make her way into my bed-chamber, pretending she had particular business; and indeed I believe she had *some* business of a very particular nature.—Upon my soul, if the women are allowed to go on at this rate, we shall hear every day of rapes committed *upon* men, and not by them.—I was absolutely quite out of countenance at her behaviour.—I actually don't know which is greatest, her beauty or her folly.—And then the dissoluteness of her carriage is insupportable.—No—if all women are of this stamp, I can never bring myself to marry.

“Why, in the name of fortune, don't you enjoy things as they fall in your way?”

Were I one of those sensualists, who can relish only the personal charms of the sex, I should, probably, act in that manner; but though there never was a more amorous mortal than myself, I feel myself incapable of being fully satisfied, with the momentary gratification of a vagrant passion.—But this indelicate sister of mine—what can be done with her? How I pity poor Ned!—What an unfortunate step has he taken, by marrying? A step of which he will, I am afraid, repent as long as he lives.—I asked him a few days ago, if lady Louisa was as much in love with him, as he was with her, before they came together?—He replied, that he had never troubled himself about her love.—

“Charmed with her person, I, upon a very short acquaintance, made proposals, which were accepted by her family; and as she, herself, offered no objections, nor discovered any kind of repugnance to the match, I thought myself the happiest of men; and I find myself so as she has not discovered the least coolness to me, the least dislike from the moment I first addressed her.”—Poor Ned!—

“No coolness?” said I.—“Surely you did not dare to attempt any thing before the ceremony was performed, inconsistent with that decency and respect, with which every man of honour should behave to the woman whom he intends to marry?”

“I don't know what you mean,” replied he, “I never had any improper design upon her; but when love presses, and opportunity invites, who can answer for what may happen?”—This, you know, was as much as to say—

“And so—what!—and could you think of marrying her afterwards?”

He looked totally disconcerted; but yet somewhat hastily answered, "I hope I shall always act like a man of honour, my lord."

"Really!—And so, my good brother, because a woman happens to part with her virtue, you must give up your senses! If you had imagined her unable to stand the trial, you should not have attacked her;—but when she had fallen, you certainly acted like a madman by marrying her.—She who will yield to one man, will to a hundred."

"I cannot be of your opinion," replied Ned.—A woman who is exceedingly fond of her lover, who is exposed to all his insinuating arts, and who believes that in a very little time, he would be authorised to take the last liberties with her, cannot be so highly culpable, if in a moment, when they are mutually enamoured, she is, by her excess of love, deprived of any resisting power."

"I find we are not likely to be of a similar way of thinking on this subject," said I, "for I am morally sure, that the woman who has not strength to refuse one man, will be as passive when another makes amorous approaches towards her. Such a woman is like a china cup; perpetually in danger of being broken, if not used with the utmost discretion; and when once flawed, never to be restored to her original value."

He did not, I thought, seem pleased with me—but I was pleased with myself, for having given him some friendly hints, with regard to his wife, and indirectly urged the necessity there was, for his taking care of her.—But who can take care of a woman who has no regard for herself, who, on the contrary, throws herself continually into dangerous situations?—After all, who, indeed, can answer for the conduct of any woman? Is there not every thing said, is there not every thing done to corrupt the sex? Are not the dissipation, the luxuries, the pleasures of the age, sufficient to debauch the mind of a vestal? Scarce half a moment in the female world is spent in a rational manner.—Lady Charlotte, it is true, employs herself like a woman of sense: but I have known very sensible women, accomplished, ingenious women extremely regardless of the moral duties—of those duties especially, which no woman of spirit—to say nothing of principle—ought to disregard.—I must therefore move with caution; I must not make overtures with precipitation.—And yet I don't think lady Charlotte will admit me much longer, if I remain thus silent from circumspection.—She will not think it decent to give me free admission to her, unless I come to the point.—Two people cannot visit each other, merely upon the footing of friendship; they must be immediately pronounced lovers.—How ridiculous, on many occasions, are the decisions of the world! Surely a man may be in love with a particular woman, and like to converse with twenty others.

"Well, but you are always at lady Charlotte's."

I am, because I am no where else so agreeably entertained.

"Aye—didn't I tell you that you was in love with her?"—Now if people don't soon find that the marriage-articles are really drawing up, they will say that lady Charlotte is—no better than she should be, and that you are—a very happy man."

I cannot bear to have lady Charlotte suspected; I must, therefore, make this horrid declaration.—When it is once out, I shall be easier.—Besides, without it, I can do nothing; for though I cannot say how long her virtue will hold out, I must, as I hope it is impregnable, proceed exactly as if I believed it to be so; by proceeding in this manner, I shall be authorised to take a thousand freedoms which will, doubtless, let me fully into her humour, and make me thoroughly acquainted with her constitution: this is a kind of knowledge which every man, who has any thoughts of being that useful animal a

husband, should endeavour to come at.—Yet I shudder at the bare idea of putting myself entirely into her power.—But hold—will she not be more in my power, till the indissoluble knot is tied?—Should she, from an inability to resist my pressing solicitations—should she prove frail—I shall have an excuse—a vile one, indeed, I grant—to be off.—*Courage*—I'll venture.

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LETTER XXXIX.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

I DON'T know, my dear friend, whether you will approve of my conduct or not; but lord Woburn has, by a very discreet change in his behaviour, brought me to admit him again to visit me.—I am afraid you will think me too easy.—However, that he may have no opportunity to renew those freedoms, which excited my disapprobation, I have desired Mrs. Elliot to let me have my little favourite, Kitty Downton, with me for a week or two.—She is come to stay with her aunt, while her mother goes to Paris to see her brother, who is thought to be dangerously out of order there.—Mrs. Downton does not chuse to take her daughter with her, because she has too great a regard for her morals, to give her a French education.—I confess, I have always thought that young women may more safely know too little than too much of the world.—I mean, that those girls who are introduced early into all sorts of company, and thrown into a life of dissipation, are frequently disqualified for being good wives, and good mothers.—Mrs. Downton made a most exemplary wife to my young friend's father, while he lived, and I believe you will think with me, that she is not a less excellent mother for supposing that her own instructions, joined to the lessons of the best masters, given under her own eye, may render her Kitty as accomplished, as if she had been bred up in the politest convent in France.—I never had that passion for French cloaths, French servants, and a French education, as many people have; and I am acquainted with several amiable women, who never set their feet out of England, nay, who cannot speak the French language, which is now looked upon so essential to heighten the lustre of a fashionable lady's conversation.—To speak and read French and Italian too, with ease and propriety, is certainly both agreeable and useful; but an English woman may, I imagine, learn them very advantageously in her native country, without galloping either to Paris or Rome; for in those cities many acquisitions may probably be made by my travelling country women, productive of unhappiness sufficient to embitter the remainder of their lives.—I speak from experience; and you have not, I dare say, forgot how much we were ashamed in our *tour* of some *travelled* ladies of our acquaintance; *frenched* not only out of their *complexions*, but their *characters*.

My sweet Kitty will, I hope, be a check upon lord Woburn, till I see whether it will be necessary to break with him entirely or not.—But tell me, my dear Mrs. Blomer, and tell me sincerely, am I not too partial? Ought I to admit a man who takes liberties.—I wish I may not be wrong; and yet, if I can trust my own judgment at all, he is—in every other respect—most deserving of my esteem.—However, I must be doubly on my guard—and if I see any more reason to be dissatisfied with his behaviour, dismiss him for ever.—Kitty has taken a great fancy to him; he distinguished her the night he first saw her at Mr. Elliot's; and young people are always flattered by being taken notice of, by those older than themselves. He has since been rather particular to her, treating her like a child indeed, but like a child one was fond of; to be sure she is an amiable girl.—After having been romping with her yesterday, very decently, to do him justice, he sent her up to fetch a translation of *Pastor Fido*, about which he had been

asking her some questions. As soon as she was gone out of the room, he said, “she has an exceeding fine face—has she had the small-pox? It would be better for her to be less handsome.”

“Why so? replied I, is beauty then of no value?”

“If it is not accompanied with discretion, it is rather a calamity than an advantage.”

“And pray how long has lord Woburn been so very discreet?”

“Ever since he has found lady Charlotte to be possessed of every requisite, in woman to fix the most volatile heart.”

Having uttered these words, he seized my hand, and looked so earnestly at me, that he threw me into confusion.—Instead of withdrawing my hand, I suffered him to hold it: I was, indeed, hardly able to breathe.—He saw my embarrassment, and he pitied it; he let go my hand, and begged me to pardon the abruptness of a declaration, which he had long wished to make.—“Long have I wished to make it,” added he, “but I always felt myself incapable of executing my design agreeably to my wishes; if, however, you will only condescend to reflect upon the situation of a man really enamoured, and unable to explain, by language, the feelings of his soul; you will, I am sure, as your good-nature is equal to your good-sense, be inclined to pity, to excuse his inability to make himself acceptable, just at the most interesting moment, and to permit him to endeavour, by a thousand animated attentions, to convince you of his extreme tenderness.”—He concluded with saying, “It is in your power alone, to make me the happiest, or the most wretched of men.—My person, my fortune, and my heart are all at your disposal.”

I will not be sure, my dear friend, that I have done my lover justice, by the repetition of his address to me; for I was so fluttered during the delivery of it, that I scarce knew what I heard, or how to believe it.—I hung my head in silence, and certainly looked more foolish than I ever did in my life.

Kitty came luckily to my relief.—Flying to him, she said, “There, my lord, is my book; but indeed I am so ashamed of my writing, that I don’t like you should see it.”

“That you may not be ashamed again, then, you must write better; but come, let us hear how you pronounce the Italian.”

Throwing his arm round her, while she stood at his knee, he fixed his eyes upon me, with so much expression in them, that I was more abashed than Kitty, who, perceiving him to be inattentive to her, looked up in his face, then on me, and read on.—My lord soon released her, with some compliments upon her pronunciation.—She then sat down to her tambour.

My lord finding Kitty not in the least inclined to leave us by ourselves, rose, and asked me, if I would permit him to see me again in the evening?”

I replied, “that I had designed to make some visits, but that I would put them off.”

He made a polite acknowledgment for my condescension, and went away seemingly contented.

As soon as he was gone, Kitty, turning to me, said, “My lord has very fine eyes, madam; but I think they never look so handsome, as when they are fixed upon your ladyship.”

I could not help blushing at the girl's remark; and I am afraid I am but too much of her opinion.—Why should I wish to conceal the feelings of my heart from my best, my faithfulest friend?

I will not conceal them, my dear Mrs. Blomer.—On the contrary, I will freely own that this confession of lord Woburn's has given me the highest satisfaction.—But as my letter is already of an immoderate length, I must postpone what I have farther to say, till another opportunity.

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LETTER XL.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

I HAVE, at last, conquered all my scruples, and, in spite of the wickedness of women, am going to be married to one of the most lovely, I hope too the most virtuous of her sex.—Going to be married, did I say? No—no—that's a mistake—not yet;—but I am in a way towards matrimony.—The dear creature has thought proper to accept of me; and if nothing happens to prevent our union, I shall be the happiest of men.—Yes, Wilmot, I shall certainly be the happiest fellow in the universe, if she is really the angel she appears to be.—The confusion with which she received my declaration is not to be described—nor can I describe the corrected joy, which she afterwards discovered at my acknowledged attachment to her.—Thus far I am transported—I would be loved, nay, doated on.—But then can a woman possibly feel a strong passion for a man, and yet be capable of refusing his every request?—She must be so, she ought to be so, or she is no wife for me.—It is too early for me to expect many familiarities.—Besides, I am so distractedly fond of her, at present, that I cannot bear to tempt her too much, lest she should yield; lest I should be obliged to give her up, before I have at all enjoyed my new situation.—And then this Kitty is always by her side.—The little chit is pretty, and as innocent as such a girl can be, yet she is devilish shrewd.—I don't think she would dislike my making love to her myself, though she is hardly out of her white frock.—But I was never fond of your green fruit: I hate mere raw girls.—Give me the companion and the friend, as well as the mistress—lady Charlotte is this woman.—I spent almost all my hours, all my happy hours, with her, and never was so sensible of the flight of time, as in her company.—She is most kindly indulgent; she sees few people, except Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, and their particular friends, on my account.

We were at Almack's t'other night.—I had the satisfaction to be preferred by her to Sir Charles Conyers, just returned from Italy.—He is one of the finest fellows I ever saw, and extremely elegant in his address.—He immediately distinguished Charlotte, and being known to Mr. Elliot, begged to be introduced to her.—Elliot told him, that he came too late, I suppose, for I saw him fix his eyes upon me, with a degree of envy.—Charlotte indeed appeared in the most lovely light; my attentions about her, added to the melting music, gave so charming a languor to her eyes, that my admiration became quite enthusiastic.—To heighten that admiration, she seemed to look, to move, to think, to breathe only for me.—I never knew what love was, till I became acquainted with her.

LETTER XLI.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

I AM just escaped from lord Woburn, to thank my kind friend for her caution; though I hope I have too great a regard for the man, who is now, I may venture to say, on the point of being my husband, not to respect myself.—Ought I not to be particularly careful, at this juncture, to conquer every foible, and to correct every error, lest, instead of rendering myself more amiable, and more deserving of his esteem than I am at present, I should be less worthy of it.—I tremble to think of the frailty of human nature.—Many women, too, too many, as virtuously inclined as I at this moment feel myself, have fallen victims to those men, who made them believe, by the most insinuating arts, that they could not give them sufficient proofs of their affection, without putting themselves, imprudently, in their power.—May heaven defend me from being guilty of so capital a weakness! Lord Woburn's behaviour to me, at present, is not in the least censurable: he is eager to oblige me, studies to prevent the declaration of my wishes, and makes no request which I may not decently comply with. But, as you rightly observe, he before discovered a propensity to take rather unwarrantable liberties.—I cannot be too much upon my guard; I cannot too vigilantly watch over my own conduct.—Men are certainly very often blameable for their ungenerous, their cruel exultation over our sex; yet those women whom they attack, too frequently bring themselves into scandalous situations, by gradually encouraging improper freedoms.—However, there have been, I doubt not, women of very virtuous dispositions, overpowered, from a constitutional tenderness, by the seducing carriage of the men who made their treacherous addresses to them.—The delinquents of this class are to be pitied; the fallen females of the other are culpable in the highest degree.—I would fain believe, that lord Woburn has not cruelly triumphed over any woman's virtue; I would willingly believe, that he has never availed himself of an unguarded moment, to render a weak, innocent creature miserable for ever.—He assures me solemnly, he never has seduced any woman; he assures me, that Mrs. Mead actually solicited him, or he never should have thought about her.—When women go such lengths, who can blame the men for exposing them, in order to deter others from being guilty of the same unpardonable indiscretions?

Lord Woburn is just returned, I am, therefore, obliged to dispatch this without any farther additions.—Were not Mr. Elliot kind enough to inclose my letters in his packet, I should be ashamed of sending you so many. Pray accept of this apology for the poorness of my invention at present, and, in return, continue your very prudent advice to one who loves the most amiable man in the world, as much as she is beloved by him.

LETTER XLII.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

I HAVE just brought my Charlotte to confess, that I am the only man who ever touched her heart, and that it is absolutely impossible for her ever to love another.—These acknowledgments, in truth, came very seasonably; for Sir Charles Conyers, though he has been told again and again that she is engaged, persists in following her about, with as much assiduity as if he had hopes of supplanting me.—Tormented with suspicions, racked with anxiety, I teased the dear creature for some striking proofs of her affection, though she had repeatedly declared, I had nothing to apprehend from Sir Charles.—However, as he appeared to me a very formidable rival, I could not be satisfied till I had obtained a full confession of her tender and strong attachment to me.—But it was no easy matter for me to gain the wished-for satisfaction, as she was always attended by her little fairy.—At last chance stood my friend.—Kitty was sent for to Mr. Elliot's.—I found my dear Charlotte by herself, dressed.

“Where are you going?” said I, “and where is Kitty?”

“She is not at home,” replied she—

“Thank heaven! I have the pleasure of seeing you without that eternal spy upon your looks, words, and actions.”

“If they are as they ought to be,” said she, “they will not be afraid of the severest scrutiny.”

“True—and therefore I am glad we are by ourselves,” answered I, throwing my arm round her, “that you may tell me, whether I am really so dear to you, as I am willing to hope I am.”

“Why should you doubt me, my lord?” said the dear girl, blushing, and casting down her charming eyes.—

“I do not doubt you,” replied I, kissing her eagerly in spite of her struggling, “but as I am delighted with every opportunity to convince you of the ardour of my affection, I cannot help earnestly wishing to hear from your sweet lips, that your affection for me is as warm and as sincere as mine is for you.”

“Hold, my lord—(breaking from me) I can easily give you the satisfaction of which you seem to be so desirous; but these violent proceedings will not procure it.”

“My poor Charlotte,” said I, laughing at her, while she appeared a thousand times more beautiful, by the high glow in her cheeks, increased by her embarrassment, began to adjust her tippet, which I had tumbled a little, “suppose I cannot be satisfied without them, what will you say?”

“Nothing my lord—(rising gravely, and going to the other end of the room) I shall leave you till you are in a more agreeable humour.”

“Let me die, if I think it possible for me to be more agreeable than I am at this very instant.—I am sure I never loved you so much in my life;—lay aside, therefore, this reserved air—return to my arms, and make me the happiest of mortals.”

A look of inconceivable disdain was immediately darted at me; and she walked towards the door.

“Hold, madam,” said I, “for your own advantage condescend to hear a few words, before you throw yourself away in a pet.—Be assured, that however lovely I think you, however tenderly I esteem you, I shall not dangle after you merely to gaze on you like a China doll upon the chimney-piece, while you are full as cold and as insensible.”

“I am neither the one nor the other, my lord,” replied she, almost melting into tears, “but I could not have imagined you would have found fault with the propriety of my conduct; I rather flattered myself, I confess, that it would have raised me in your esteem.”

“Esteem, mere esteem, will never do, my dear Charlotte,” said I, advancing to make up our little difference, transported at the same time, to find her so discreet; “but if you can, with truth, assure me, that I am the only object of your tenderness, and that you feel an increasing tenderness for me, I am ready to ask your pardon, for resenting a behaviour, which I thought, I own, circumstanced as we are, too forbidding.”

“I am also ready to tell you,” replied she, “that I never *have* loved, that I never can love any man but *you*.—Now will you not be satisfied?” added she, smiling in my face.—She then turned away her own, to hide her blushes.

I caught her in my arms.—How far I might have been tempted, I cannot say.—A violent rap at the door instantly altered our situations.—She went out to make visits with lady Gadely, who came to call her.

And now—so far, so well—she has behaved hitherto like an angel—but—she was not properly melted to my purpose.—A woman who is not a downright wanton, is not always in humour.—I must first wind up her passion for me as high as it will go; and then urge her, by every insinuating art in my power, to the gratification of it.—If she has strength to resist my attacks—I shall adore her—if she yields—I shall doat on her;—but, mark me, I do not say I will *marry* her.

LETTER XLIII.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

SINCE my last attack, the enemy has been so well guarded, that I have not found a single moment to play off my grand battery against her.—Yet has she been absolutely enchanting, and less severe in her manners, on purpose, as I imagine, to keep me from making any farther attempts.—However, I may be deceived.—Her smiling looks, perhaps, only declare the pleasure which she feels from my endearments.—She loves me, I am assured, and I could devour her.—I cannot hold out long in this manner—to be tantalized thus!—intolerable!—She has, indeed, given up her hand entirely to my discretion, and a charming one it is; but by so doing, she has made me more eager to come at the rest of her.

Both she and the Elliots, I believe, think that I am in a monstrous hurry to be married—but there they are quite out.—I am well watched, however.—Besides Kitty Downton, we have got a Mrs. Staples, one of your *good pretty kind of women*.—She is tall and slim; she has a pale complection, black eyes, but no chin.—She smiles and simpers at every thing that is said.—I am amazed that a woman of Charlotte's understanding can like such a non-entity to be always near her; as I know she is above all that meanness of carrying a foil about with her;—she has indeed no sort of occasion for one, her beauty wants nothing to set it off.

I asked her, t'other day, who that lady was.

“The daughter of a particular friend of my mother's,” replied she, “who was married unfortunately.”

“She is a widow, then?”

“No—but Mr. Staples is abroad.”

If I was Mr. Staples, I should make no haste to come home to such a wife, thought I.—You often reprove me for railing against women.—Take notice, Jack, I do allow that some few may be virtuous, but those few must be, like Mrs. Staples, unable to raise envy in woman, or desire in man.—I dare affirm, that Mrs. Staples is a strong antidote to love.—I heartily wish she was a thousand miles off at present.—My Charlotte's eyes would look the tenderest things, were but this long, tall mawkin out of the way.—As to little Kitty, I have toyed and trifled with her, till the child is as innocently fond of me as of her dog or her squirrel, and is no more afraid of me than of either of those animals.—Innocence alone makes security.—Query, Whether lady Charlotte is the cherub she appears to be?—If she is apprehensive of no danger, why is she more coy, more shy of me, than the playful Kitty is? Ay—but I have alarmed her with my freedoms.—Well—and I have kissed Kitty twenty and twenty times, yet she runs to me with open arms: Charlotte, on the contrary, who really looks as if she could fly into them with as much rapture as I would receive her, starts away and appears to be afraid of trusting herself near me.—Admirable, however, is this behaviour.—She assures me sufficiently by it, that she is deeply wounded.—When once a woman who is excessively enamoured with her lover, can arm herself against his most vigorous solicitations, she is—every thing he can wish for; every thing he ought to wish for.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

THE
CAUTIOUS LOVER.
VOL. II.

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THE
CAUTIOUS LOVER;

OR, THE

HISTORY

OF

LORD WOBURN.

By a YOUNG GENTLEMAN of OXFORD:

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON,

Printed for T. DAVIES, in Russel-Street, Covent-
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MDCCLXXII.

THE
CAUTIOUS LOVER.

LETTER XLIV.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

EVERY hour, my dear friend, since you left me, have I regretted your departure;—but I am particularly affected by your absence at present.—Your apprehensions on my account, my good Mrs. Blomer, were not ill founded.—Lord Woburn is but too amiable.—Yet do not mistake me—a man so uncommonly agreeable; a man who has some reason to demand a return of affection, is rather to be feared, especially when he is, I see, too apt to be offended at my refusing liberties which, though allowable in a degree, must, at this juncture, be reckoned both indelicate and indiscreet.—To avoid, therefore, any dispute or difference with a man whom I cannot displease, without feeling very painful sensations, I would seldom receive him alone; I would never, at least, be alone with him a great while.—Happy, then, would your company make me at this time, as the awe which your appearance always inspires, would be of considerable service to me.

I have invited Mrs. Staples to come and stay with me; not only to be a check upon my lord, but upon myself—Miss Downton being looked upon by him as of little consequence.—They are, indeed, upon so familiar a footing, that she comes and goes at his bidding, and takes as much pains to please him, as if she was in love with him;—and, in truth, I believe she feels all that her young heart is capable of feeling for him.—After having left me, alone with him, t'other day, I told her, when he was gone, that I was afraid lord Woburn had made her cease to be my friend; and that I was a little jealous of the preference she gave him.

She threw her arms round my neck, and said, “No, indeed, my lady, I love you as well as ever, but my lord is so entertaining, and looks so handsome, that I cannot refuse him.”—She is a sweet insinuating girl, but too young to be talked with upon this subject; though I know not how soon such a conversation may be necessary, as the men begin to take a great deal of notice of her.—Sir Charles pays much court to her, though she is so young a girl.—Mrs. Elliot tells me, he is so attentive to her, because he knows she is my favourite.—But to what purpose can he behave in this manner, as I am engaged.—He is, I think, rather too particular to me; but as he is reckoned amiable, and as his character is unexceptionable, I shall be glad to see an alliance by and bye, between him and Miss Downton.—She has an excellent disposition; and if nothing happens to alter her temper, she will, undoubtedly, make any man happy, whom she can love.—But, as I was telling you—I have desired Mrs. Staples to spend a few weeks with me.

She is not an eligible companion, I must confess, though, I believe, a very safe one.—Lord Woburn has taken a strange dislike to her—and does not even conceal his displeasure, at having so much of her company.—Why, then, will he oblige me to have recourse to such disagreeable expedients to keep him at a proper distance?—And yet I cannot find fault with him.—I should not be pleased to see him cold and insensible neither—so he called me t'other day.—I would be tenderly loved, but I would also be loved with discretion.—Perhaps a man of lord Woburn's susceptibility, cannot love and be discreet at the same time.—It is better, therefore, for us both to be watchful over ourselves; and he ought no longer to fret about Mrs. Staples.

LETTER XLV.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

IT is actually come to an open rupture between us, and I am the most satisfied man in the world, with regard to her virtue; but I have some doubts about her tenderness.—Can any woman love as she ought, and be so intolerably prudent?—You shall hear.—I waited for that confounded Mrs. Staples's absence for several weeks, and heartily cursed her during that time.—Mrs. Elliot happening to be not very well, sent for her, to my great joy, one evening.—Kitty, at my instigation, though lady Charlotte by no means approved of her removal, took that opportunity to go into her own apartment, to write a letter to her mother.—I then seized the critical minute, and amply revenged myself upon this lovely woman, for keeping me at so cruel a distance.—She received my first caresses passively enough, and appeared to be not a little affected by the tenderness I lavished upon her, but upon my repeating them with redoubled warmth and ardour, she started from my arms, pushed me from her with a quickness and agility, for which I was not prepared, and told me, that as she could not have believed, I would have offered to insult her in that manner, she should insist upon my leaving her, till I knew how to behave with more decency and respect.

Firing at the haughtiness with which this reproof was delivered, and half mad with my disappointment, I told her, that I had for some time suspected her of having more pride than passion; and that I would sooner perish, than marry a woman divested of every tender sensation.

I was even severe enough, to impute the repulse I had met with, to an affected modesty;—adding, that I saw plainly, she had no aversion to the freedoms she complained of, though she chose to deny herself any pleasure, rather than make me happy, by the most trifling gratification.

Here I stopped the sharp effusions which my ungovernable resentment had occasioned, and was thinking of some submissions for the illiberal language she had forced from me.—At that instant, she very calmly desired me to leave her to herself, as she had for some time wished to be alone.

I was just ready to curse her provoking coolness, though I strove to stifle my anger, in hopes of bringing about a reconciliation.—She rose, and, passing by me hastily, without speaking a syllable, walked up stairs.

I stood looking after her for some moments, hardly assured whether I was awake or in a dream, yet, expecting every moment to see her return—No—her return would have been too great a condescension.—I, therefore, after having waited till I was weary, went home.

I went home, but could not close my eyes all night.—Deeply did I ruminate on Charlotte's spirited behaviour, her highly proper behaviour, and loved her the more for her resistance to the vigorous efforts which I purposely made, to put her discretion to the trial.

Yet I thought she had discovered too much pride, too much disdain, with her prudence.—Had there been more softness, mixed with her laudable opposition, I should have deemed no submissions too great, for the recovery of her favour.—But she does not, I am sure she cannot, love me.—And shall I go and fling myself away upon a woman who feels no tenderness for me, who is absolutely unmoved by my passion for her?—Shall I, who have been so extremely beloved—by all women, I may say—shall I—No!—I will perish first.—However, I humbled myself so far, as to call at her door the next morning.—Would you believe it—the insolent creature was denied—yes, she was denied.—I sent again in the evening, to know if she was at home, for I would not lay myself open to another insult, in person, from her servants.

My fellow brought me word, that she was gone out of town.

“Out of town?” cried I, storming at him—I could have pistoled him for his d—d information—“whither?”

He sneakingly replied, “that he did not know.—“D——n you, then, said I, go and ask.”

And now, Jack, I am absolutely ashamed of my passionate behaviour before my own servant.—How have I demeaned myself!—Yet I will not write to this proud *beauty*, nor will I run after her.—If she really loves me, my neglect will sting her to the quick; and she will strike upon some expedient to lure me back again.—I will be courted now—What, am I to be made a woman’s fool, because she happens to be more chaste than her neighbours?—I swear I begin to think her innocence may be disputed.—There is no great merit in refusing a dish which is not agreeable to your palate.—And yet I detest, I abhor myself for having carried matters so far.—What a precipitate dog have I been?—But since I have plunged myself into this cursed situation, I will die before I will tamely yield to her insurmountable pride.—Yield!—No—she shall be humbled in her turn.

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LETTER XLVI.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

I HAVE often said, my dear Mrs. Blomer, that I was too particular in my choice, ever to be happily married; and I find no reason to retract my frequent assertions.—I am exceedingly disappointed, with regard to lord Woburn.—I all along feared, indeed, that he was inclined to be too free with women; but though I had seen some pretty strong proofs of his free disposition, I could not have thought he would have presumed to take unbecoming liberties with me, who never gave him the least encouragement to imagine, that they would be endured.—Nor could I have thought, that he would have discovered so little inclination to make a proper apology for his unwarrantable behaviour.—But since it is so, I will stifle every sensation in his favour.—Whatever pain I may suffer in giving up a man, who, in other respects, is really very amiable—and determine to see him no more.—I have not spirits at this time, my friend, to enter into a detail of the new difference between us.—I have, however, related it very succinctly to Mrs. Elliot, who will write to you by this post, and who has been kind enough to go down with me to a house I have taken at Windsor for a few weeks, till I am better reconciled to this unexpected change in my situation.—I am not able to say any more.—I can only add, that I am, that I ever shall be, my dear Mrs. Blomer's

Most affectionate,

C.M.

LETTER XLVII.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

I AM half distracted.—I could curse myself, and all the world.—How could I be such an idiot, as to carry my suspicions so far?—Having never met with any thing like virtue in a female form, before I hastily supposed that the loveliest, the most amiable of women, was no better than those with whom I had conversed.—Yet I am, certainly, quite mistaken.—She is every thing that's good, and she loved me—beyond expression.—Fool! fool! to lose the only woman with whom I could have been happy! To lose her by my own ridiculous nonsense!—Have I not often tried her! Have I not always found her averse to my unjustifiable familiarities? Her delicacy was grossly affronted, and she has totally given me up.—She has alienated her affections from me, and will bless somebody with the possession of that heart, that valuable heart, which once owned me for its master.

Sir Charles is, I hear, gone down after her to Windsor, to which place she has chosen to retire from my impertinent persecutions.—I said I would not write, but I could not forbear.—Hearing, upon farther enquiry, that she did not intend to return, I wrote a few incoherent lines, in order to apologize for my strange conduct.—I cannot repeat them; they were not fit to be transmitted to her; but I was not capable of expressing myself in a better manner.—Had I, however, written with the pen of an angel, she would have rejected my letter, as she has rejected me.—I sent Salway with it.—The reply was, that lady Charlotte was ill.—Any thing served for an excuse not to make it up.—Yet if she ever did love me, she could not have been so violently inflamed against me, for discovering a high relish for her overpowering beauties.—No—she reserves herself for Conyers—but he shall not triumph over me.—Readily will I hazard my life for such a charming creature.—But am I sure that by the death of my adversary, I shall make her mine?—No—but if I fall, she may, perhaps, drop a tear to my memory.

LETTER XLVIII.

From the same to the same.

SHE is sick——she is dying, for ought I know.——I shall run mad.——I had believed that her illness was only counterfeited; she wanted to avoid the sight of me, I imagined.——I was mistaken——Would I were not mistaken!——I would give up any thing, every thing, to have her restored to me; but I fear I must not expect her recovery.——I send continually to know how she does, but she is too bad to hear of my enquiries.——To what a ridiculous——to what a horrid situation, indeed, have I brought myself?——And yet how could I venture to spend my life with any woman—as women go—till I had tried her?——Could I have imagined that this trial would have cost lady Charlotte her life?——Heaven forbid!——I concluded, that the liberties I had taken would occasion a slight resentment at the time; that resentment, I thought, would soon be over, and give way to returning friendship.——How am I disappointed! How wretched am I! If she sinks under her present illness, I will leave the kingdom, and never think of women again, as long as I breathe.

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LETTER XLIX.

From the same to the same.

SHE lives—she is better.—Delightful information! No message, however, has yet been delivered to her from me.—Yet I am so satisfied, so transported with her being quite out of danger, that I hardly think of myself at all.—Let her but live, and I will trust to her excellent disposition, to restore me to the place I once had in her esteem.—In the mean time I have a thousand fears, lest she should not recover.—She cannot, I think, continue to be angry with me for loving her; yet she may deem it necessary to keep up an appearance of anger in order to save her credit.

In short, I am almost sick myself, with dwelling upon this foolish business;—and yet, for the soul of me, I cannot repent of a conduct which has discovered her to be the most amiable creature in the world.

W—

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LETTER L.

From the same to the same.

I WAS distracted a few days with the terrors of losing her by death, and now I am as unhappy with the certainty of losing her, from her prepossessions against me.—You may tell me, that I am too delicate in my sentiments; that I am capricious, and do not know what I would have;—but you are out: every man should wish to marry a woman of virtue, or how can his honour be safe? How can he be sure that his children are his own? And as women are more corrupt, and more loose in their manners than ever, who can be secure but by chusing a woman of real virtue; and how the devil will you know whether she is chaste till you have tried her?—You tell me, I must have long seen by lady Charlotte's behaviour, that she was of a mild modest temper; and ask me, what I would have more? She is, indeed, modest and mild, or I should not have thought of her at all.—You tell me, also, that as I found her very averse to the improper freedoms I took, I should have proceeded no farther.—I subscribe to your first position, my friend, but not to your second.—If I had only confined myself to the liberties allowable in every man who is an accepted lover, how should I have been certain of her being able to resist unwarrantable ones?—I am now well assured that she is thoroughly displeased with my too great familiarities, though she loved me at the same time.—But though I firmly believe she did love me, I do not imagine she ever loved me with a passion adequate to my own, with that excessive ardour, which can alone render me supremely happy.

I don't think she loves me at all at present.—By refusing my visits, she gives sufficient encouragement to this disheartening conjecture.—Had she been as fondly attached to me, as I hoped she was, she could not have totally repelled my endearments.—However, whether she is so attached to me or not, she is a vestal, as women run; and, therefore, I shall be extremely ready to take her as she is.—Yet I own I am seriously piqued at her behaviour to me.—I have not been accustomed to refusals.—Besides, to be repulsed when things were in such a forwardness!—How ridiculous a man looks, so situated?—My pride never received a severer blow.—If she persists in keeping up this humour, and will not be reconciled, I cannot say to what I may be driven; “perplexed in the extreme,” I may do some action.—

I shall write to her once more; if that makes no impression, I must conclude that she avails herself of this pretence to break with me, in order to be at liberty to give her hand to Sir Charles Conyers, who, from the progress he has made in the Elliot family, gets admittance to her.—He, he is admitted.—I—I only, am denied.

LETTER LI.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

YOU press me to write to you, my dear friend, but I have neither health nor spirits; I am not satisfied with myself, nor with any body else.—Even you, my dear Mrs. Blomer, seem to have changed your sentiments about me, and urge me to accept of Sir Charles Conyers. You tell me, that you are well acquainted with him, and know him to be a man of the nicest honour.—You may be right—I have nothing to say to the contrary; and yet I find in myself not the slightest inclination for him; and I will marry no man, in whose favour I am not very strongly prepossessed indeed.—I was never very desirous of altering my situation in life.—The disappointment which I have met with, will probably prevent me from making any alteration in it.

I agree with you, that Sir Charles is very solicitous to please me; but if I am not to be pleased, I cannot help it.—You tell me that I must go more into company, and strive to conquer my melancholy.—I may see a thousand people without being made in the least chearfuller by them.—However, I have consented to oblige Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, and to return to London, though I had much rather continue here, provided Sir Charles would visit me less frequently.—Mr. and Mrs. Elliot chuse to see him, I cannot, therefore, avoid him, without confining myself to my own apartment.—To such a confinement my friends are exceedingly averse.—I should have no dislike to Sir Charles, as a common acquaintance; but his assiduities—I had almost added his impertinencies—

Kitty is here at present.—As I cannot have your company, she is my most desirable companion.—With her, with my books, with my drawings, and now and then a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, I could be content.—But it must not be; they will force me among people, in spite of all my wishes to the contrary.

LETTER LII.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

I HAD just resolved upon writing again to lady Charlotte, when a thought flew into my head, which has done the business much better.

Having taken care to inform myself of all her motions since our difference, I heard that, though she was recovered from her illness, she was in a deep melancholy, which seemed to be immovable;—that she was, with the greatest difficulty, persuaded to mix with her acquaintance, as she used to do, and that she never went to any place of public diversion.—This information was not calculated, indeed, to give me thorough satisfaction, because I could not hope to meet with her; yet I resolved not to give up the point.—At length I was informed that she was to be at Mrs. Fisher's rout.—I dressed, got there before her, and was luckily seized by Miss Batley—for the first time I found a woman's forwardness serviceable to me.—When lady Charlotte entered the room, Miss Batley had laid her hand upon my shoulder, and was talking to me with all the fluency and affected importance of a woman who thinks herself handsome.—She certainly must be allowed to be a good figure.

Lady Charlotte entered, pale, and negligently dressed; but infinitely more lovely from the affecting languor which overspread her fine features.—A faint blush tinged her cheeks when she cast her eyes on me.

I left Batley immediately, to make my very respectful compliments to her ladyship.—They were returned with a frigid politeness.

I took no notice of the extreme coldness of her carriage, but turning upon my heel, snatched Batley's hand, and kept her in a whisper for a full half hour, at the end of which, both of us burst into a loud laugh.—I led her to a chair just opposite to lady Charlotte, who had declined play, and having seated myself by her, began to act the successful lover, though my words were the most insignificant ones imaginable, and had no kind of connection with my looks and gestures.

After having several times stole a glance at my real goddess, I saw her sink down in a fainting fit.

No words can describe my agitation.—I broke abruptly from Miss Batley, who bawled out, "Look, look, my lord, what can be the matter with lady Charlotte?" and flew to the dear creature.

I raised her in my arms, and, regardless of every body present, poured out a volley of the most pathetic exclamations, all of which came from the heart.—I was really in an agony, Jack.—I had suffered, it is true, not a little, from her late illness, but I did not imagine I had loved her half so well.

It was a considerable time before she opened her eyes.—I became almost distracted; held all kinds of salts and essences to her nose, which the ladies offered me, pressed her hands, alternately, in mine, and was just going to assist Mrs. Elliot in loosening her gown, &c. when she recovered.—With a deep sigh, with a glowing blush, she raised her head from my bosom, and attempted to make some apology for the situation she had been in.—Transported to see her once more restored to me, I entreated her to be composed, and, by way of helping her to recover from her confusion into which she had been thrown, laid the blame upon the excessive heat of so crowded a room.

With a look full of gratitude, she eagerly caught at this excuse, and directly availed herself of it, in order to go home.

"Not for the world," continued I, "on no account would I have you go into the air so soon; your sudden departure may occasion a relapse.—Give me leave to assist you, my lady, in walking into the next room till you are more recovered."

She did not refuse; she rose, and even accepted of my arm. I conducted her to a parlour, to which only Mrs. Elliot and Mrs. Fisher followed—the latter withdrew as soon

as she had proposed several kinds of refreshment to lady Charlotte, who was, however, too much agitated to receive any.—I attended her with a solicitude and anxiety sufficient to convince her, how exceedingly dear she was to my heart, how absolutely necessary to my happiness; though I considered time and place so far, as to avoid every thing that could increase the confusion still visible in her countenance.—When she went home, after having returned to the company, soon afterwards, I did not follow her.—I only pressed her hand rapturously, when I put her into her chair, and begged leave to enquire after her health the next day.—She neither granted nor denied my request, but her behaviour was encouraging.—I went back immediately to the card-room, to let them see that I had not retired with her, but made a short stay.—

I scarce closed my eyes all night, so eagerly did I long to know if my scheme had succeeded. As soon as I thought she was ready to admit me, I hastened to her door.

The servants conducted me to her.

The timid and disconcerted air with which she received me, gave me the strongest assurance, that I still held a place in her dear heart.—In consequence of the great satisfaction I felt upon the occasion, I intreated her, even before I enquired after her health, in the most earnest terms, to pardon a behaviour, which had given her so much displeasure;—declaring solemnly, that the violence of my love alone had occasioned my misdemeanours, and as solemnly assuring her, that her admirable conduct having raised her so much higher than ever in my esteem, I could never think of being happy without her.

The energetic manner with which I spoke touched her, and so far threw her off her guard, that she replied, though evidently confused, “What then, my lord, am I to think of your behaviour to Miss Batley?”

“Think of it as it was, only a little stratagem, to discover if your charming bosom still felt any emotions in my favour; and may I not flatter myself that it has been successful? Though I confess I never was so much alarmed, lest it had occasioned emotions too painful in your tender breast.”

Don’t pronounce me a coxcomb, Wilmot—I should not have made so home an address to her, had I not seen that the dear creature continued in a strange flutter about me.—She, however, did every thing in her power to conceal her satisfaction; she cast down her sweetly embarrassed eyes, and averted her blushing face.—Urged now by pity, as well as love, I ventured to press her fondly to my bosom, but in so respectful a manner, that it was sufficient to banish all her apprehensions.—She withdrew herself from my arms, but with a sort of reluctance, which affected me beyond expression, and looked as if she said, “How blest could I be in that situation, were I not afraid of you!

I was not mistaken, she repeatedly importuned me to leave her, and I at last resolved to comply with her request, though never less inclined to go from her.—“Only say that you forgive me, lady Charlotte, and will see me again in the afternoon.”—“Well, well,” answered she, with the most delicious smile, “leave me now—and I will consider of it.”

I returned between seven and eight, and found the Elliots and pretty little Kitty, who appeared to be rejoiced to see me.—To my great comfort, the disgusting Mrs. Staples is quite removed; but we shall, I suppose, have some other Argus to supply her place; though Charlotte may now trust me.—No man can have a higher opinion of a woman than I have, at this moment, of Charlotte.

LETTER LIII.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

I DON'T know whether my conduct will merit your approbation, but I will honestly confess the truth.—I was not proof against lord Woburn's pretended addresses to another woman.—I could give him up, I am sure I could, if he behaved unworthily; but I fear I could not, undisturbed, see him attached to any other person.—I have exposed myself indeed, but if I am really in the full possession of his heart, it will, I hope, make me ample amends for what I have endured on his account.

Yet I have a thousand apprehensions, a thousand terrors.—Should he again take advantage of my easiness, I must give up all thoughts of him for ever—consequently all thoughts of marriage.

I have, for some time, looked upon lord Woburn as my dearest friend, my future companion, the man to be one day my husband, and have set myself to dwell on, and to admire all his amiable qualities, throwing a veil over his imperfections.—Can I, therefore, suddenly discard from my heart, the man whom I have preferred to all others, and whom, to say truth, I still think, in spite of that behaviour which kindled my resentment, very amiable.—When he solicited my forgiveness in the most humiliating terms, could I be inexorable?—However, I had fortitude enough to let him see that his conduct highly offended me; and that he might have no opportunity to repeat his offence, I ordered myself to be denied.—Accidentally, on my part, we met at a rout.

As I thought a card-room no place for the adjustment of a difference like ours, I discovered no signs of any alteration in my sentiments.—In a short time the particularity of his behaviour to another lady, made me fear that I had gone too far—and that he was quite lost to me.—This was a disappointment, for which I was in no shape prepared, and I could hardly support it: indeed I turned pale, felt myself extremely out of order, and was soon deprived of my senses.

The first object I beheld, on recovering, was lord Woburn, who held me in his arms, and gave such affecting proofs of his anxious care and tenderness, that I believe those proofs were more efficacious, than all the remedies applied towards my relief.

I cannot describe the emotions by which he seemed to be agitated, while I was indisposed, nor his apparent apprehensions lest my indisposition should return;—yet was his respect equal to his assiduity; and the manner in which he apologized for his carriage the next day, sufficiently made amends for all his former improprieties.

I felt myself more touched by the delicacy with which he treated me on that single occasion, than ever I had been with all the tender things he ever had said to me before; and I could not help earnestly wishing, that he might never again give me reason to change the opinion I then entertained of him.—I was, however, at that moment so exceedingly fearful lest he should, by relapsing into his former indiscreet freedoms, oblige me again to dismiss him, with fresh marks of my displeasure, that I hurried him away, thinking it better to defer a longer interview with him, till we were both more composed.

Yet, notwithstanding this reconciliation, so unexpected by us, I must acknowledge Mr. and Mrs. Elliot's care of me, in providing another lover.—They mean well, though their designs were unsuccessful:—every impartial person, indeed, must allow Sir Charles Conyer's to be an agreeable man.—Kitty Downton, I fancy, will console him.—Not that I believe she thinks about him, but it appears pretty plain to me, that he thinks of her.—She is, at present, too young to be serious upon these subjects.—She is, you know, naturally lively to excess;—besides, to confess the truth, lord Woburn is, I apprehend, her favourite: a thousand inadvertencies on her side, are conclusive confirmations of my conjectures.—He must have also, undoubtedly, perceived her

prepossessions in his favour, as he has a large share of penetration.—However, he treats her with all the easy, good-natured freedom of a brother.

But I must lay down my pen, or I shall grow a very tiresome correspondent.—We cannot always help dwelling too long on topics which is particularly pleasing to us; but we ought, whenever we enter upon such topics, in the epistolary way, to watch the motions of our pens, that we may not gratify ourselves at expence of the patience of our friends.

Adieu,

CHARLOTTE MORDEN.

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LETTER LIV.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

SINCE I have been assured that lady Charlotte is the dear delicate creature I always hoped to find her, I am become as light as air.—I really never was completely happy, till I was sensible of this charming woman's tenderness, and that her affection for me, was as pure as it was ardent.—Thoroughly convinced of the purity of her love, as well as the ardour of it, my mind is no longer disturbed with doubts, and tortured with suspicions. I therefore behave to her quite in another manner; in a manner which will, I hope, remove all her apprehensions concerning me, and induce her to place some confidence in me.—She is already much more easy than she was in my company, and more inclined to allow me all reasonable freedoms, as she finds that I do not abuse them.

Things are, through my care and activity, in great forwardness towards the completion of my happiness.—The settlements, &c. &c. are preparing.—I offer *carte blanche*—she modestly framed objections to such a proceeding; Mr. Elliot as her guardian and friend to us both, compromised matters between us.—Yet the dear creature tells me, I am too disinterested; but I say not.—I would never marry the woman whom I could not trust with all my fortune.—Do I not put a far greater confidence in lady Charlotte?—Is not her own honour, as well as mine, of more consequence, infinitely of more consequence than a few paltry thousands.—Without her, all the money in the universe would not give me a moment's joy; with her, and a sufficiency for her convenience, I shall be amply provided for.

Poor Ned absolutely straitens himself to find supplies adequate to lady Louisa's wants; it is a most extravagant, voluptuous little toad.—As I was obliged to be cool to her, I have lately been out of her favour—but I could not refuse Ned's importunities, who doats upon this idol, to see her dance the other day; he made a kind of ball, and as he and his wife have been to visit lady Charlotte, with my sister and Sir George, he sent cards to lady Charlotte and her friends for this entertainment; she honoured him with her presence, and Kitty Downton was of our party.

Lady Charlotte, who knows that I am not a great dancer, excused herself, by saying that she was scarcely recovered from her late illness.—Lady Louisa danced an allemand with colonel Striker; had she been my wife, she should have had her feet cut off.—Never were there more charming and inviting attitudes, consequently very improper ones for married women.—No woman, indeed, in my opinion, but a professed stage-dancer, should attempt to excel in an allemand.—She who has a design to make her fortune, and who imagines she shall carry her point, by shewing her person in an alluring light, is certainly in the right to study this dance with the nicest attention, for no dance is better calculated to promote the *tender passion* between the sexes; but a woman who has been modestly educated, and who thinks as she ought, will never wish to be admired in public, for attitudes which can serve only to excite the loosest ideas.—It would disgust me in the highest degree, to see my sister or daughter clasp a man in her arms, to whom she was an utter stranger, and be clasped by him in return.—But if my *wife* should attempt to take such monstrous liberties, or to admit of them, I believe I should go distracted.—Lady Charlotte has not discovered the least propensity that way; but Kitty Downton, after we got home, gave a lively, and not an ungraceful jump, and said she fancied she could soon learn the attitudes which she had seen.

“Fie, Kitty!” replied my dear Charlotte.

“Were I your father or guardian,” said I, “those arms should be pinioned down, and those legs tied together, to prevent your exposing yourself in that preposterous manner.”

The poor girl coloured.—I really believe she meant no harm, but spoke merely from the liveliness of her temper. After having clapped her hands to her face for a few

moments, she ran to me, and, with a pleasing *naïveté*, cried, “Pray, my lord, don’t think amiss of me—Indeed I did not intend to say any thing improper; but I always loved exercise, and I have heard you declare a hundred times, that dancing was very proper for young people.”

“Aye, child,” replied I, laughing at her simplicity, “under prudent regulations it may be very wholesome, for ought I know; but I cannot approve of all kinds of dances, nor do I think that dancing after marriage, is at all necessary for any woman.”

“I may dance then in a prudent manner a long while, for I am sure I shan’t be married?”

“Why so?” replied lady Charlotte.

“You have not made a vestal vow, surely, Kitty?” added I.

“No, my lord,” answered she, blushing, “but I shall be very nice in my man; and if it is not proper for me to dance an allemand, I should not chuse, methinks, a man who would dance one with any body else.”

“Sir Charles Conyers, my dear Kitty,” replied I, “will endeavour to make himself agreeable to you in every respect.”

“Pshaw! [turning away her face] how you love to rally me, my lord.—But you will see, that with all your sense and penetration, you may be mistaken.—Sir Charles is my superior, indeed, in point of fortune, but I would not marry a king if I did not love him.”

Noble sentiments, Jack, in a girl of fifteen.—Is she not worthy of my Charlotte’s friendship?—You see the effects of a good education—What an amiable innocent this girl is! She may be made an excellent woman.—But it is a thousand to one if she is not spoilt first.—Under my Charlotte’s tuition, it is true, she would certainly improve, yet I should not chuse to have her live with us; she would draw a train of fellows after her.—Besides, a man and his wife do better by themselves:—how many famous differences have I known to arise, merely from the interposition of a third person!—No such person should I chuse in my family.—I must look sharp after Mrs. Dawson; there is something in that woman very particular; she casts glances at me with a meaning in them, which I am in no humour to comprehend at present.—Possibly, when I have been married a little while, I may begin to grow less rigid; yet I dare believe, that if my Charlotte continues to be the amiable woman she is, I shall not bestow a thought on any other;—a woman true to her husband is so rare a creature, that though she barely does her duty, she is infinitely superior to the majority of her neighbours; and he must be an unreasonable man, indeed, who complains of his lot with such a companion.

Kitty Downton may, I firmly believe, be made a good wife, for she is an exceeding good girl at present.—She was so hurt by what I said to her about the allemand, that she came running to me the first time I happened to be alone, and begged me not to imagine she had the least desire to learn that dance, nor any other which I did not approve of.

“I, child! You know I have nothing to do with your education; your mother and Mrs. Elliot must take care of that.”

“Well, but I am sure that neither of them will desire me to learn what does not meet with your approbation, as they are both very sensible, how great a judge you are of the propriety of behaviour in women; therefore, my lord, I should be exceedingly obliged to you, if you would give them a hint upon this subject.”

Flattering little hussey!—I took her in my arms; and just as I was considering whether I should kiss her for her compliment or nor, Sir Charles Conyers came in.—

“Here, Sir Charles,” said I, resigning her to him, “is the best and most amiable of girls; take her upon my recommendation, and use her kindly as she deserves.”

Sir Charles caught her, and went to press her to his bosom; but she broke hastily from him, and with a reproachful glance at me, yet looking at the same time, as if she was loth to be angry, cried, “How could you do so, my lord?”

“Why should you be angry with lord Woburn, my charming Kitty,” said Sir Charles, “he could not have given you to a man who will love you better than I shall.”

“I am never angry with lord Woburn,” replied the pretty gipsy, bridling with resentment at him, “it is you who are to blame, for taking seriously what he meant only in jest.”

“Lord Woburn is happy, Miss Downton, in being so highly in your favour.”

Lady Charlotte at that moment came in.—I flew to her, and left them to make up their little quarrel by themselves.

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LETTER LV.

From the same to the same.

WE are all in the greatest confusion.—Poor Ned! His lady Louisa, his wife——What a devil!——has been caught in bed with her hair-dresser!——How I feel for my brother, who had not the least suspicion of such an infamous proceeding! He was ever indeed a doating fool.

While I was making some severe strictures against uxoriousness, even in the presence of my *future*, t'other day, Mrs. Elliot exclaimed, “Bless me, my lord, can a man love his wife too well?”

“Undoubtedly, madam; if he is so far blinded by his passion for her, as to suffer her to injure his honour and her own by her indiscreet conduct, he certainly loves her too well—perhaps I should rather say too much.”——But to my story.

This wanton toad, it seems, had behaved in such a manner before her servants, that they suspected her for some time; they were all attached to my brother, who was the best of masters; and Smith, who waits upon him, having an affection for Mrs. Massom, my lady's woman, was informed by her how things went.—He, therefore, immediately acquainted Ned with the disagreeable intelligence, adding, “St. Perlé, sir, is at this very instant with lady Louisa.”

My brother was at first incredulous; he was so unwilling to believe the information he had received, that, instead of going to surprise the rascal, he began to swear at Smith, for daring to mention his lady in so injurious a way, threatening to turn him into the street.

Smith, knowing how much he idolized her, waited patiently, till his fury was abated, and then told him, “that he had lived too long with him, and had been too well satisfied with his situation, to think of making him uneasy for nothing.—My lady, sir,” added he, “has given the strongest proofs of her infidelity; and I should not deserve to live with so good a master, if I concealed what I have heard and seen.”

Struck with the steady tone in which he spoke the last words, poor Ned could no longer refuse credit to what had been communicated.—“Follow me,” said he, trembling, “follow me to my wife's apartment.”

Smith followed at a distance.

Poor Ned, petrified with horror and surprise, called aloud for help.

Smith hurried into the room to the assistance of his master, but found him only sunk down upon the bed, without sense or motion.—The faithful fellow placed him in a chair, and gave him some of my lady's cordial, which always stood upon the dressing-table.—It was a good while before he came to himself.—On his recovery, he charged Smith not to say a word about the affair, but to send for me.

I hastened to him.—I found him pale, considerably agitated, and exceedingly out of order.

He made a sign with his hand for me to sit down.

With some difficulty he brought out, “My wife, my Louisa, on whom I so fondly doated, is gone; she has left me for as vile a fellow as crawls upon the face of the earth; the lowest of all rascals; the villain who dresses her hair.— I have just caught them together.—While I stood, confounded with amazement, he jumped out of the window, and she ran out of the room.”

I can hardly tell you what reply I made to the poor fellow.—I could not without deviating from truth, say that I was surprised at the very disagreeable discovery, as I never, you know, liked lady Louisa's manners; but I was actually both shocked and grieved at finding my brother duped by a designing devil.—I endeavoured to comfort him, by saying, “that I thought he was happy in having so fair an opportunity to get rid of her.”

“You talk,” replied he, shaking his head, “as if you had never loved.”
“Had I loved to madness,” answered I, “such behaviour would certainly have cured me.”

A deep sigh was the only reply he was capable of making.—But I hope he will get over his disappointment, when time has a little inured him to it.

In CONTINUATION.

My whole time is taken up between Ned and lady Charlotte.—My poor brother is almost distracted.—He talks of nothing but his Louisa, and of the tenderness she had always expressed for him—which convinced him so thoroughly of her firm attachment to him;—he says, that he took little or no notice of her conduct, indulging her in all her most extravagant desires.—His indulgence, indeed, was carried to a very imprudent height; for it made her quite wanton with her unlimited power over him, and drove her to make the most ungrateful return imaginable for it.—Ned, however, is better in health, and time may do wonders.

My Charlotte has behaved with a delicacy and tenderness to me upon this occasion, which have prodigiously endeared me to her.—How very, very different is she from the greatest part of her sex, who love to exult over a fallen sister, as if their own virtue was strengthened by the weaknesses of another.—How erroneous a way of thinking! How much more amiable are those, who, charitably allowing for the frailties of human nature—frailties from which no human creature is exempt—are more ready to pity, than insult the unhappy wanderers from the paths of discretion and virtue.

Little Kitty is wonderfully insinuating upon this occasion.—She sees me uneasy and dejected.—I must feel for Ned.—Besides, a disappointment of such a nature, is enough to set any man thinking, who is going to enter into the most solemn engagements with a woman.—I have no doubts, indeed, with regard to Charlotte—neither had Ned any concerning Louisa—but then he was foolishly in love—possibly so am I.—When a man is passionately fond of a woman, he scarce knows what he is about.—Love absolutely deprives us of our senses.—After all my precautions, Wilmot, I fear that I am no wiser than other men.

LETTER LVI.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

I HAVE been exceedingly distressed upon lord Woburn's account, my dear friend; he has suffered so much for his brother, that I have pitied him extremely.

Mr. Woburn has had a fever.—His mind has been greatly disturbed by some domestic affairs, which have hurt his health, and required all the consolation his friends could administer to him.—You cannot think how much lord Woburn's anxiety about his brother, and concern for him, has raised him in my esteem.—By that concern, and that anxiety, he discovers an excellent heart, and induces me to believe, that I shall run no sort of risk by venturing my happiness in his hands.—I always imagined that a good son, a good brother, and a good friend, would most probably make a good husband to the woman of his choice, and I dare say I shall not be mistaken.—Never did lord Woburn appear so amiable in my eyes; never did my heart feel so sincere an affection for him.—The woman who could deceive him, must be abandoned indeed.—Kitty Downton is, in my opinion, a sweet girl!—She certainly loves him.—She looks on with so much compassion, and fetches such sighs, that I sometimes fear he will read what passes in her little heart.

A few days ago we were all three sitting together.—I was trying to divert my lord, that he might not reflect too deeply upon what would only increase his disquiet.—He was leaning on the back of my chair listening to me.—Poor Kitty's eyes, after having rambled from one to t'other, at last fixed on him.—A heavy sigh burst from her, which roused my lord.—He threw himself forward, looked in her face, and cried, "What's the matter, Kitty?"

"I can't tell," replied she, not a little confused, "but I am so low spirited to-day, that I am fit for nothing."

"I am sorry to hear you say so," answered my lord, "but you must not indulge your vapourish humour, child.—Get up quickly, and go to your needle, your book, or your harpsichord."

"Indeed I would, replied she, in a plaintive tone, "but I am incapable of either playing, or working, as I should do; and I have taken up my book, and thrown it down again twenty times to-day."

Poor girl," cried my lord, smiling, catching a racket that lay on the table.—"You are idle I am afraid; come, a little exercise will do you good."

Away flew the shuttle-cock and Kitty's vapours together.

Sir Charles Conyers, who certainly comes after her, soon afterwards entered the room.—Taking up another racket, he proposed to me to make a party.—

Before I could get out a refusal, lord Woburn hastily sitting down by me, said, "No, Sir Charles, if you are inclined to divert yourself, I resign Miss Downton."

Kitty, offended at this speech, turned away her face, and burst into tears.

"Heyday! what's the matter, now," cried my lord, while Sir Charles endeavoured, in the gentlest terms, to soothe her;—but his efforts were unsuccessful. She retired to her own apartment.

"Surely," said lord Woburn to me, "I have not mentioned any thing to make her uneasy? Purposely, I am certain, I have not.—She is a good-natured amiable girl, and I should be sorry to have her suppose I had any intention to disconcert her."

Sir Charles looked exceedingly serious.—I wanted to bring Kitty to herself, but had no mind to leave the two gentlemen together; however, as I could not suppose that they had the least reason to be offended with each other, I ventured up stairs, and gave a hint to poor Kitty, whom I found still weeping, that a construction might be put upon her behaviour, different from what she had thought of, if she did not appear with her usual

cheerfulness; adding, to give a turn to her sorrow, that lord Woburn had expressed some concern, lest he should have said any thing to offend her.

“Has he?” replied she, “I will go then and assure him to the contrary; I would not have him displeased with me for the world.”

“Well,” answered, I, “and are you not equally solicitous about Sir Charles’s good opinion? He is a very pretty gentleman.”

“Ah! my lady,” said she, with an arch look, and a half smile, “would you change the one for the other? No, no—you know better.”

I made no answer, but leading her into the parlour, said, “Here, gentlemen, I have brought this lady to receive your acknowledgements for what you did to displease her.”

“I am afraid,” replied Sir Charles, “that I am frequently so unhappy as to give offence, when I really wish to be particularly pleasing; but if any thing I can say,” added he, approaching to Kitty with a respectful tenderness, which seemed to astonish her beyond expression, “will procure my pardon, Miss Downton, I am ready to make the best attempt in my power for the obtaining of it.”

Kitty looked quite abashed——To relieve her, I said, “Come, my dear, Sir Charles’s apology is sufficient.”

“It is all over, now,” cried she, holding out her hand to lord Woburn, who had not indeed uttered a syllable to her.—He took her hand, but immediately presented it to Sir Charles.—Sir Charles kissed it with transport.—She drew it back, and fixed her eyes on my lord.—“What’s the matter, Kitty,” said he, advancing with a smile, “Are we not friends?”

“I hope so,” replied she, sighing, “but—but—

“But what?” answered my lord, hastily, taking her hand with a look full of pity, drawing her nearer to him at the same time, and giving her a modest kiss—“there now, are you satisfied with me?”

“Nay,” interrupted Sir Charles, “if nothing less will ensure the lady’s pardon to you, my lord, may not I hope for the same indulgence?” following my lord’s example.

Poor Kitty’s face glowed.—She went to the other end of the room, and sat down.

Sir Charles soon went after her, and so assiduously tried to render himself agreeable, that she began, I thought, to look on him with more cheerfulness.—There is really something winning in his manner; I wish he may succeed.—I don’t know a young person who has a better heart than Miss Downton, or who is more capable of making a good wife; and I sincerely hope, that she will not be spoiled, when she becomes more acquainted with the world, no advantageous school for handsome girls.—I have been praising Kitty, highly, to my lord; and he, in return, has lavished so many fine panegyrics on me, that, to tell you the truth, I begin to fear he has a better opinion of me than I deserve.—I wish, indeed, to be the very creature he describes, my dear friend.—If he should, after all, be disappointed, what will become of me?——My love for him is, I feel, much stronger than I imagined it was.

Your’s, unchangeably.

CHARLOTTE MORDEN.

LETTER LVII.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

HOW distracted is my situation!—I take up my pen to tell you my feelings, but I know not how to describe them.—However, as you are the only friend I have in the world, I will try to inform you of an event, which has made me supremely wretched.

You well know to what a degree of dotage I loved lady Charlotte.—I could not exist without seeing, hearing, touching her.—I cannot at this present moment, though I am banished—justly banished from her sight for ever.—It is impossible to go on.—That reflection unmans me.—Oh! Wilmot, Wilmot, never was I so happy as yesterday.—I had been with her from the morning; many little matters were to be adjusted preparatory to the happy day—A day I shall now never see.—Yet I will not give her up—No—I have her promise, and she *shall* be mine.—But where was I?—I recollect.—How blest was I from the morning to the evening! How delicately tender was her behaviour to me! Never had she looked so very lovely, never had she been so indulgent.—Yet I had a tormenting head-ach, which every now and then cruelly damped the satisfaction I felt in her company.—Sometimes, from excess of pain, I looked serious, and, I suppose, ill, for the dear creature asked me so many questions, expressed so much tender concern, when I acquainted her with my complaint, and offered so many remedies—(nay when we were by ourselves after dinner, she permitted me to rest my weary head upon her shoulder) that I grew giddy with delight, and recovered my health, purely, I believe, from the flow of spirits which her kindness gave me.—Yet I never once offered to take any improper advantage of her pity—her love, let me say.—Sure of her heart, and convinced that she would undoubtedly resent any indiscreet freedoms, I contended myself with those alone, which her modesty allowed me.—While I was thus happy in her dear society, a note was brought to me from your brother, informing me of his arrival in England.—He desired to see me immediately.—Glad to hear he was come, I sent word that I would be with him in an hour.—The hour arrived—but I could not tear myself from my Charlotte—though she now and then repulsed me in the midst of my endearments, with a charming smile, crying, “You have forgot your friend, my lord.”

I had, indeed, forgot him, and you, and all the world.—I, therefore, spent the time, in which I had promised to meet Harry with my mistress, my friend, my all.

At supper I was not yet recovered enough to eat—but sat by her while she supped, and had the high felicity of being tempted by her to taste every thing which she thought particularly excellent.—At last she urged me so earnestly to go to my friend, that I rose, believing she wished to retire, pressed her soft hand to my lips, and left her—reluctantly.

I met your brother at the Star and Garter.—He rallied me for being only three hours after my time.—I apologized for having been so tardy, by telling him fairly the truth; and having my heart and head full of love, talked away till Harry was, I plainly saw, almost tired of me.—I then proposed to separate for the night.—It was between one and two.—We walked together to his lodgings, which were just by.

Just at that instant I was seized with an unaccountable propensity to step into St. James’s Square, though I had but so lately left it.—I could not hinder my feet from carrying me to the very spot which inclosed all that my eyes delighted to gaze on, all my soul held dear.—While I stood with folded arms, looking up at her window, I put up an ardent prayer for her protection and safety.—Just as I was, with unwilling lingering steps, turning homeward.—I heard lady Charlotte’s door unlock, and saw a woman’s head out at the window.—She appeared to be Dawson, and instantly a man who, by the light of the lamps, seemed genteel and well-dressed, came up and went in.—The door was going to be closed after him—I then, roused by jealousy, and agitated with a thousand horrid ideas, rushed in after him.—Dawson, confounded with guilt and astonishment, was struck dumb.—The man stared at me—I stared at him.—Impatient

to know the meaning of this strange affair, I asked his business there.—Dawson, full of confusion, shook with apprehension, and said, “He is my brother, my lord, whom I have not seen a great while.—Do,” continued she to him, with a beseeching tone, “do leave me now.”——He made no reply, but with a surly air flung out of the house.

As soon as I had got rid of my gentleman—for a gentleman he really was—shocked to death at this woman’s proceedings, which were certainly infamous—(you may remember I always suspected her, and detested the impudent sneer on her face.)—I asked her how long she had made a practice of letting in fellows, after her lady was retired to rest, and turning the house into a brothel;—“but I am happy in having found you out, Mrs. Dawson, added I, and you may be assured, I shall set this affair in a right light to lady Charlotte.”——She stood a moment with her eyes on the ground, as if revolving what had just past; then looking up to me, as if she had an affair of the utmost consequence to communicate.—“Why then,” replied she, “it must out; and indeed it will be but acting an honest part by your lordship, though I am sorry to speak amiss of my lady, but—”

“How! what!” interrupted I——shamefully taken in by her artful behaviour—“What do you mean?”

“I say, my lord,” continued she, malicious fiend, “that I am not to blame; if my lady will see gentlemen in private, I dare not disobey her orders.”

“What orders!” exclaimed I, full of astonishment and horror—“What men! does lady Charlotte admit men privately of a night! By h——n ’tis a lie, an infamous lie.”

“To be sure, my lord,” replied the artful devil, “she will not own it to your lordship; and I hope you won’t think of mentioning it to her; I shall be ruined and undone, lose my place, my character, every thing, if you do,” pretending to squeeze out a few tears.

“Your character must be infamous, and your place to the last degree scandalous, if what you mention is true.—But I can’t believe you.—You have certainly invented an abominable lie to excuse yourself, and shall be exposed to your lady to-morrow.—She is too good to be thus deceived, and her reputation may be injured by this vile behaviour of yours.”

“It is very well, my lord,” replied she, “you may think as you please; my ruin is certain, be it which way it will;—but you will find, when too late, that had my lady been as innocent as I am, you would be too happy.”

“’Sdeath woman,” cried I, tortured with madness, “mention not your lady again, as you value your safety—I know she is chaste.”——

“You may then believe me so too, for we are both the same; and I beg your lordship will go, and take no notice of what has past.”

“Not take any notice!” cried I, “do you imagine that I shall be silent upon such a transaction as this?—No, believe me, I will come to the truth of it, or perish.”

“You will never know any more than what you do already:” said she, “can you suppose that my lady will confess to your lordship, that she prefers another man to you—she knows better—No, my lord, she will lay the blame on me, and I shall be turned out—and you will make it up with her ladyship.”

“I will go to the devil first,” cried I, transported with fury, “but where is your lady?”

“In her bed, my lord——Where should she be?”

“Shew me to her immediately,” cried I, with an impatience which discovered how little capable I was of making use of my reason.—“Shew me to her—If she admits other men, she may as well receive me.”

She hesitated a moment; she looked terrified and full of perplexity, while I continued raving like a lunatic,—“Shew me to her this instant.”

“On one condition, my lord; swear to me, that you will not name me in this affair.—I know your lordship’s honour, and may depend upon it.”

“Honour!” replied I, “is there any honour in keeping a promise with such wretches as you.—Conduct me to her, or by all that’s sacred (laying my hand upon my sword) I will not answer for the consequences.”

She made no reply, but went up stairs.—I followed.—You may guess in what an agitation of spirits.—But I cannot write any more at present.—My head turns round, my—my pen drops from my hand.”

IN CONTINUATION.

I followed this cursed devil up stairs.—She took a key out of her pocket, opened a door which led to her lady’s dressing-room—a room I well knew;—and putting the candle into my hand, instantly disappeared.

With hasty trembling steps I pursued my way to another door, which led, I naturally imagined, to her bed-chamber.—I was not mistaken.—But, good h—n! how shall I describe what I felt at the sight of her.—She was the very image of purity.—Her whole appearance was perfectly elegant—and delicate.—However, to proceed—if I can.—The lovely creature was half raised in her bed, and with a look, which declared both astonishment and fear, cried, “Who’s there?”

Perceiving plainly that I was the intruder, by the light in my hand, as well as by a lamp in the chimney, she coloured, and exclaimed—“Lord Woburn, heaven defend me!”—Then, in softer accents—“What’s the matter? How came you here?”

“No matter how I came here,” replied I, setting down the candle upon the table, advancing to the bedside, and going to clasp her in my arms, “here I am, my charming Charlotte, and I will give you no reason to repent of your disappointment.”

“Gracious G—d!” cried the dear innocent creature, starting from my arms all trembling with terror, “what is the reason of this? O leave me, leave me! or I will alarm the house, and call for those who will oblige you to go.”

“As to that, my sweet creature,” said I, gazing on her charming neck and bosom uncovered, while she was beautifully disordered, “Nobody will hear you: compose yourself, therefore, a little, for I am come to talk with you.”

“Is this a time and place to talk with me?” cried she, frightened even to tears, which stood trembling in her lovely eyes, “How could lord Woburn, who should be my friend and protector, the guardian of my person and character, think of endangering both, by breaking into my apartment at this hour of the night?—Oh! leave me, leave me, I conjure you,” added she, pushing away my hands, which had seized her’s, “I will not talk to you, I will not listen to you now; you cannot expect I should.”

“Yes,” replied I, sitting down in a chair by her bed-side, “I do insist upon your hearing me now. Dawson, your woman, is an infamous devil;—but she has not only her own incontinence to answer for, she has accused you of receiving men into your chamber at night. One of them I just now saw let in by her, who came either to her or to you.”

“And can you give credit to so scandalous and so false a charge, my lord!” replied the dear angel, still in a violent terror, “but be it as it will—leave me now.—I will vindicate myself sufficiently to-morrow.—O what a dreadful, what a groundless accusation is this!” continued she, rising up, trembling, and looking about for the tassel of her bell, which I had, upon my first letting go her hand, twisted in such a manner about the back of the chair, that she could hardly reach it.—

I am now sensible how wrong my behaviour was.—I deserve to be punished;—yet not quite so rigorously, I think, Wilmot.—Why did she look so beautifully tempting?—I caught her again fast in my arms, and ravished a thousand melting kisses.—This was going too far, I confess;—but I became too much intoxicated to be checked by reflection.—She then screamed with such violence, that one of the men-servants very soon came hurrying down stairs, and called at the door to know what was the matter?

Oh! John—open the door—break open the door.—Call Dawson, Martha, Susan.”

“Heavens! madam,” cried I, half restored to my reason, “be silent, or you will expose us both.”

“I will raise the dead, before I will suffer such insolence.”

I was struck with those words;—I could not determine what to say or do; full of embarrassment, and uncertain who was in the right, she or her woman.—I concluded, indeed, the latter must be a jade; yet was hurt by what I had seen, and still more pained by my own impetuous behaviour, of which I instantly repented.—I was also horribly ashamed of being thus exposed to the servants, who, undoubtedly, believed, that I was on the point of committing a rape upon their mistress.—But by her dear self I swear, I never harboured so vile a design.—

Distracted, abashed, embarrassed to the greatest degree—I hung my head, and began to stammer out something about Dawson, by way of apology, while the servants stood staring at me, and as much surprised, I believe, at the sight of me, as I was displeased at their appearance.—My angel continued to insist upon my leaving the house.

Thoroughly convinced of her unsullied virtue, by her every look, word, or action, I threw myself on my knees by the side of her bed, related all that had passed between me and Dawson, and called heaven and earth to witness, that I had no sinister intentions whatever.

She seemed to listen to me eagerly, yet with a visible impatience to have me leave her.

Just when I was going to finish my relation, “Well, sir,” said she, interrupting me, “and after my woman had delivered these falsehoods about me, what inducement could you possibly have to break into my apartment!—If you thought me guilty, you could not imagine me to be in the least worthy of your notice; and, if innocent, you acted cruelly to alarm me in this boisterous manner.”

No satisfactory reply could I make to this address to me, while she was surrounded by her people.—Yet I still defended the purity of my intentions—adding, “I will no longer disturb you, madam—but I will write every particular of an event which has given me the sharpest anxiety I ever knew, for your perusal.—An event which will render me wretched for life, unless you will condescend to pardon me.—I have been shamefully indiscreet, I have been hardly in my senses.”

She returned no answer, but seemed anxiously desirous to have me remove myself from the sight of those beauties, which had so much inflamed me.

I went home, and wrote a more particular account than I could verbally communicate of my rencontre with Dawson, freely owning that the suspicions which she had infused into my mind, made me eager to see with my own eyes, whether there was a sufficient foundation for them.—I concluded with assuring her, in the strongest terms, that I very sincerely repented the rash behaviour, which the most violent and most unreasonable jealousy had occasioned; and that I never should be able to exist without her.

I cannot go on.—I am far from being well.—Harry is kind enough to come and sit with me often.—But what is society? What are friends? I have madly deprived myself of the friendship of—O! Wilmot, pity me.

LETTER LVIII.

From the same to the same.

I RECEIVED no answer to my letter, nor to many others which I dispatched to the same purpose.

I waited on Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, and told them all that I had written to lady Charlotte;—I intreated them also, in the most pressing terms, to intercede for me.—They received me civilly; but informed me, that my behaviour could not be possibly defended.—I could not expect much to be said in my behalf, yet I persisted in begging them to persuade their amiable friend, to try me once more; and as I could not think of giving up all my hopes of spending my life with the most valuable woman I know—to pardon—to receive me.

They gave me no encouragement.—“Dawson,” said Mrs. Elliot, “though very culpable, has confessed her own guilt.—She has declared that the man, whom you followed into the house, was a lover of her’s, whom she had let in every night for some time; but that being certain you would inform her lady of what you had discovered, she had, in her first fright and confusion, thought of accusing her lady to save herself; adding, that as she believed a breach would most probably be made between you, by complying with your request, to be conducted to her lady’s chamber, she delivered up the key of the passage which led to her dressing-room, through which she always went into her chamber in a morning—Her chamber door opening on the stair-case, she every night fastened herself.”

Thus have I rendered myself completely miserable by my own folly; and yet, Wilmot, I do think that any man circumstanced as I was, and as thoroughly acquainted with the wickedness of women as I have been, would have felt a strong desire to satisfy his curiosity in the manner I did.—I have a thousand arguments to urge in favour of a conduct to which I was irresistibly impelled.—But I sincerely wish that I had behaved in a very different way upon the occasion.—I find myself much indisposed.—I have a violent pain in my head.—I fancy I am going to be extremely ill.—No matter if I die.—Life without Charlotte is not in the least desirable.

LETTER LIX.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

YOU have received, my dear friend, from Mrs. Elliot, a particular account of the strange and shocking behaviour of lord Woburn.—I was not capable of writing at that time.—I have been, indeed, disordered ever since.—No wonder—I am rather surprised that I have been able to get over it so well—but my astonishment and indignation prevented me from sinking into my former tenderness for this unworthy man.—My thorough detestation of such a behaviour, so unjustifiable a behaviour, has hitherto saved me, and I hope will still save me.—It is a thousand pities that a man so valuable in every other respect, should behave so improperly to women!

Poor Kitty Downton cries, and says that Dawson, and nobody but Dawson, is to blame.—One cannot, however, enter into a conversation upon this subject with such a girl.—Dawson is, undoubtedly, highly culpable, and I immediately dismissed her. I also carefully examined all the other servants; and having great reason to suspect one of the house-maids of being in the secret, turned her away.—How miserably has Dawson acted for herself! How very much, how irreparably, perhaps, has she injured me!—And yet, I ought, it may be, rather to rejoice at my situation, than lament it.—A man of lord Woburn's principles could never make me happy;—have I not, therefore, had a narrow escape from him?

I have nothing to do now, but to sit down for the remainder of my life out of the reach of man, if possible.—As this shocking adventure is public—and there was no concealing it—I shall certainly be sufficiently tormented with proposals; but were I not absolutely determined to listen to no overtures whatever, lord Woburn cannot soon be forgotten.—He will be remembered—but remembered he must be only with—regret.—Why, why was such a man, my dear Mrs. Blomer, so lost to honour—but I must try to forget him.—Will you not be ready, after the perusal of this to pity your unfortunate friend?—I am, indeed, at this moment, truly unhappy,

CHARLOTTE MORDEN.

P.S. I have not returned answers to any of the letters which I have received from lord Woburn.—They only contain apologies, with very little variation, repeated.—He has been with Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, to prevail on me to pardon him; at least to see him, to hear him—but I believe you know me too well.—They said nothing to bias me one way or the other.—There is no talking, indeed, upon such a subject.—

LETTER LX.

From the same to the same.

I AM very much dissatisfied, even with your sister, my dear Mrs. Blomer; she will fancy that I am melancholy, and teases me so much to go into company, by way of amusement, that she distresses me.—I can receive no pleasure from being the object of general observation.—Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, indeed, both tell me, that the more I appear in public, the less will any scandalous tales, circulated by the baseness of Dawson about me, be credited.—But am I not secure in my own innocence?—Besides, is not my lord's earnestness to be forgiven, to be received upon the former footing, an indisputable proof of my innocence?—Had my conduct been criminal, would he have continued so restless to be reconciled? So eager to fulfil his engagements? His eagerness to fulfil them, has affected him to such a degree, that he is at this time very ill of a fever; not so bad, however, as to be hindered from writing.

He wrote yesterday to Mrs. Elliot, to desire her to persuade me only to pardon him, as his recovery was uncertain.—I hope he will not die, my friend; he has not so deeply offended me, as to wish for his death; the amendment of his conduct will sufficiently atone for the affront which I have received from him.—Let him live, but let him ever live at a distance from me.

My hand trembles so, that I fear this will not be legible.—It has never been steady, I think, since my fright; nor, in truth, do I ever go to bed absolutely free from apprehensions, though I lock and bolt both my chamber-doors.—I hope I have now only honest people about me; but indeed I always thought Dawson so; she had, however, the art to impose upon me.—How very cautious ought people to be whom they trust, and what servants they take, since the very best are so little to be depended upon! We should at least, never put ourselves too much in their power.—Yet how uncomfortable is existence, if we must be always slaves to suspicion!—To have nobody near us whom we can trust, nobody on whom we can rely—What a miserable state! I declare to you, my dear friend, that I look upon the disposition and corruption among our domestics, to be serious evils, and greatly detrimental to society.—We must all, in some shape, depend upon each other, for the comforts and conveniencies of life; nor can the highest enjoy themselves—they cannot indeed subsist—without the labour and attendance of the lowest.—For my part, I don't know any thing which could have affected me more (the loss of my nearest relations and intimate friends excepted) than this discovery of Dawson's treacherous behaviour, as she was one of whom I had ever a very high opinion; but I suppose she, like many of her thoughtless sex in much superior situations, was weak enough to listen to the tales of a man who, in order to gratify his own licentious inclinations, made her believe that he was violently in love with her.—Poor creature! I am afraid she will suffer extremely for her credulity.—Yet, as much as she has injured me, I cannot see her rendered more unhappy, than she must necessarily be, from the nature of her offence.—I can never recommend her, indeed, to another family, because I cannot answer for her integrity; but I will take care that she shall not perish through absolute want.—I will relieve her before it comes to that, though she shall not be acquainted with the hand which raises her from infamy and indigence, to competence and peace.—I have employed a person to offer her a retreat in the country, far from the temptations which she is every day liable to meet with in town.—This is all I can do to save her from misery who has destroyed my happiness for ever.

LETTER LXI.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

I HAVE just got strength to hold my pen;—thanks to this divine Charlotte, who will, nevertheless, doom me to endless misery; but I must explain myself—if I can.

Scarce had I finished my last letter to you, when I was obliged to be put to bed, as I was in a high fever.—In a very few days I was judged to be in imminent danger.—I retained my senses all the time, and cannot say that I felt much disquietude at the sentence pronounced by my physicians very seriously, though they imagined I did not hear it, to my brother and sister.—I had, indeed, no concern about my health, but for them who grieved for me immoderately.—Their complaints pierced my heart, yet I was happy to have it in my power to seize that opportunity to make my peace with lady Charlotte.—Your brother, Harry, saw me every day, and acted the part of a real friend.—Him, therefore, I commissioned to wait upon her, and to tell her, that as I had, possibly, but a few hours to live, her pardon would be the greatest, the only satisfaction I was capable of receiving in this life.—Harry most readily undertook this business, and related his success in the following words.—But neither my hand nor my heart is steady enough to go on—I must resume my pen bye and bye.

In CONTINUATION.

I am a little recovered, so will proceed.—

“When I arrived in St. James’s-Square”, said Harry, “I refused to send in my name, though the servant asked me more than once, that he might tell his lady who wanted to speak with her. Let her know,” replied I, “that a gentleman wishes to see her upon particular business, but has not the honour to be acquainted with her.—From her extreme caution, I was afraid that I should not get at the sight of her.—At last, however, she came down into the parlour, accompanied by one of the finest girls I ever beheld.—Lady Charlotte, with a mingled dignity, and sweetness of aspect, desired to know my business.—I replied, rather too abruptly, I believe, (though it was only with a view to serve you, my lord) that I came from a dying friend, lord Woburn, who waited only for her pardon to quit the world, which, from the loss of her esteem, was grown odious to him, in peace.—When I began to speak, she was advancing towards a chair, after having desired me to be seated.—But she stopped short, while I was speaking, changed colour, and said, “Sir?” I saw that what I had said operated—I, therefore doubled the dose.—“I say, madam,” continued I, “that my dear friend, lord Woburn, however culpable he may have appeared, or really is in his conduct, now lies at the point of death—possibly, he may not live to hear your determination about him; he may not live to hear whether you will or will not pardon a behaviour of which nothing but his ardent love for you could have made him guilty.”—I was going on in the pathetic strain.—The blood instantly forsook her lovely face; she trembled all over, and sunk to the floor.—I flew to raise her, to support her, assisted by that charming girl, who continued weeping from the moment I imparted my mournful intelligence.—She called aloud for help.—The servants entered.—I carried lady Charlotte to a sofa.—After numberless applications, she recovered.—I then made a great many excuses for having so abruptly declared, what I might have imagined would affect her greatly.—She made no reply.—In a few moments, rising from the sofa, she took her young friend by the arm, and walked up stairs, without saying a single syllable, though I made more than one effort to obtain an answer.—I sent up to know if she grew better, before I would leave the house.—No reply came from herself; yet I am sure she was half killed with the news of your danger.—She is, indeed, a most lovely creature.”

Here Harry finished his narrative, and I was convinced, from his description of her disorder, that I was still dear to her.—I therefore began to conceive hopes—consequently to breathe more freely.—By the way, I could not have been in the danger declared by the doctors.—Harry, indeed, never thought me so.—What raised my spirits still more, was an enquiry from the dear angel in about half an hour; a cordial superior to all the medicines I had swallowed.—The same enquiry was every half hour repeated, till I was able to quit my bed.—I have been up these two days, but am, nevertheless, very indifferent.—Never shall I be well, I believe, if she does not forgive what is past.—Since my growing better, her enquiries have ceased; I fear she will not be reconciled, as she has refused to see Harry again, who has called twice, at my request, to try to move her in my favour.—I am so weary that I must break off.—You cannot think how weak and spiritless I am grown.—Lady Huxley wants me to try the air of Huxley Park, but I cannot bear the thoughts of quitting London, while this dear injured woman stays in it.

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LETTER LXII.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

HOW excessively have I been surprised, my dear friend!—But, indeed, though I am become accustomed to sudden changes, I do not bear them well.—My fainting away on being told that lord Woburn was dying, is a strong proof, I imagine, of this assertion.—I cannot help being affected, on his account, at this moment, though they assure me, that he has been out of danger for some time.—I do not pretend to be insensible, nor can I forget the hopes I once entertained of spending the remainder of my life with a man— Yet, why should I complain? Why should I repine? Ought I not rather to thank heaven for saving me from the misery of passing my days with a man of principles so opposite to my own?—Yet there is no reason why I should be in any shape accessory to his death, because our sentiments do not happen to be the same.—I could not, I confess, hear of his dangerous situation, related by a friend, whom he sent to me to solicit my forgiveness, without shuddering; yet, tho' I lost my senses, from surprize and concern, I was not, on my recovery, weak enough to enter into a conversation with Mr. Wilmot (that I think was his name) upon a subject that could not but be distressing to me.

Poor Kitty was with me, and almost wept out her eyes.—She never let's me rest a moment; she says, perpetually says, that she is sure he did not design to behave amiss, as he loved me too well to vex me.—Poor dear girl! she is ignorant, happily ignorant, of the arts of designing men.—May she never suffer by their insinuating manners, and iniquitous proceedings!

I also thank heaven that lord Woburn is better.—I should never have enjoyed a moment's ease, if I had only fancied I had been any way instrumental to his death.

I will, from this time, keep myself quite free from any connections with men.—I never knew sorrow till I knew lord Woburn;—and yet they teaze me about Sir Charles Conyers.—I was in hopes that he had been fixed upon for Kitty; but I find he only thought of her, on a supposition that I was engaged.—However, he shall not serve my little friend so.—I will never take him from her, though she discovers a remarkable dislike and shyness.—Lord Woburn was her favourite.—Poor girl!—Yet if he should marry her, he will, I dare say, behave well to so sweet a young creature, about whom he cannot be suspicious.—But he is not likely to recover.—People, indeed, who have seen him, tell me he is amazingly altered.—I wish for his recovery, but I wish also, never to remember what I have suffered on his account.

LETTER LXIII.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

HOW much am I indebted to your brother! Had he not stood my friend, I must have sunk ere now, under the weight of a disappointment which will, I believe, make an end of me.—So much the better—My whole soul is wrapped up in lady Charlotte, and she cannot forgive me.—Perhaps she may in time be prompted by her excellent disposition to pardon me—but her delicacy will never, I fear, permit her to receive me in the manner which can, alone, render me happy.—To happiness, therefore, I must forever bid adieu.—And what is life without happiness?

I am sorry to see poor lady Huxley grieve so for me;—few sisters have so tender a regard for their brothers.—I was always her favourite, though I am sure she pities Ned, who has seen nothing of his wife;—but he has heard from several people, that she is gone to France.—I cannot, however, attend to his affairs at present; it was the looseness of his wife, which confirmed the bad opinion I had long entertained of women; and made me more desirous of trying my angel, who, conscious of her own innocence, must, undoubtedly, behold me in the most disadvantageous light.—Lady Huxley imagines that she still loves me.—Possibly, my sister says this only to feed me with hope, and to make me tolerably easy.—She means well, but her consolation is ineffectual.—She also advises me, to take the same method I pursued before, upon a little amorous quarrel, which I have related to you; that is, to follow her in public, to throw myself in her way, and to endeavour to move her pity, by my appearance and address.—But I am really so much afraid of alarming her, of giving her any new vexation, by appearing in her sight, that I have not courage enough to act agreeably to my sister's advice.—I would not give her a moment's uneasiness for the world; I would rather die, than displease her again—designedly.

Oh! Wilmot! Wilmot! how my heart doated on her! How it still doats on her!—To think of losing her by my own folly.—It is too much, for me, to bear.

My good sister tells me, that she will make her a visit, and talk calmly with her, and persuade her to pity, and accept of the man who is dying for her.—But I know her visit will produce no consequences in my favour.—I had better, therefore, get out of the way, as fast as I can.—May the dear, lovely Charlotte, meet with a man who loves her as well as I do.—May she also meet with a man who will never venture, in any shape, to incur her displeasure.

Adieu,

W—.

LETTER LXIV.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

HOW are you, my dear Mrs. Blomer? Have you succeeded? Have you made Mrs. Scot less uneasy by your affectionate consolations? I have a longing desire to see you, and have more than once schemed a visit to Dublin.—Every thing here is dull or disagreeable. Sir Charles follows me every where, tho' I have assured him, positively, that I will not marry.—Sir William Ashton has intreated Mr. and Mrs. Elliot to speak for him, as I am at liberty, he says.—I would not, upon any account, receive him.—I will not, indeed, marry lord Woburn, yet I will never marry any body else.—I dare not venture to make any farther declaration towards the restoration of his tranquillity, of which, they tell me, I have for ever deprived him.—Gracious G—d! did I do or say any thing to vex him, or to disturb him? On the contrary, was he not infinitely dear to me? And had he given me no reason to disapprove of his conduct, we might, at this moment, have been happy.—He, he alone, has occasioned all this distress.—I am extremely wretched.—They say he is declining very fast.—Kitty weeps from morning to night.—The poor girl distracts me with her sorrow.—Mr. Wilmot, my lord's friend, who follows me about in all places, tells her, that she is more lovely in her tears, than the most blooming beauty nature ever made.—To say truth, I think Kitty seems more inclined to listen to this gentleman, than to Sir Charles, but that will never do.—Wilmot is only a younger brother, though, to all appearance, an agreeable man.—Sir Charles is full as agreeable, and has a large estate.—I am interrupted.

In CONTINUATION.

Lady Huxley is just gone.—She has left nothing unsaid to vindicate her brother, and to prevail on me to pardon him; to pardon him, if I will not accept of him.—I begged to be excused talking of, or listening to a subject which gives me but too much disturbance.

“Only tell me that you forgive him, lady Charlotte,” said she, at last, “you need not be apprehensive of his taking advantage of such a favour,” added she, sobbing while she spoke, “my poor Charles will not live to offend you again.”

Will you condemn me, my dear Blomer, if I assure you that my tears flowed as fast as her's.—The man whom I loved with the greatest sincerity, lies at the point of death, on my account—so they would persuade me to believe.—Can I be unaffected at such horrid intelligence!

“If that is the case, then, my lady,” replied I, “any thing I can say, will have no effect upon him.—Cease then, in pity to me, to mention a man, whose deviation from the path of honour I must ever lament.”

With these words I left her abruptly.—I could not, any longer, support a conversation, which tore my heart in pieces.—It has made me completely miserable.—Sir Charles Conyers, and this Wilmot too, exert themselves, perpetually, to entertain, to amuse me at least, and to drive away the sadness with which I am overwhelmed.

Kitty, also, who most tenderly sympathized with me, now ventures to upbraid me for my cruelty, as she calls it, to such a man; but should such a conduct as that, which I resented, be ever forgotten? Besides, I am not really the cause of lord Woburn's present illness.—It was the shame, the remorse he felt after having acted in a manner not to be justified by his own conscience, in the calm moments of recollection, which brought his fever on him;—and yet they will impute his illness to my inflexibility.—Pray examine both sides of this unfortunate affair with attention.—You will then, I flatter myself be of my opinion.

LETTER LXV.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

I THANK you for your solicitude about my recovery.—My recovery is still far off.—I believe, indeed, that my stay in this world will be short.—I can make no impression on the dear obstinate; and am, therefore, very indifferent about myself.

Harry is indefatigable in my service; he is in love, indeed, I believe, with my cruel Charlotte, and consequently finds double satisfaction in running after her.—However, I don't mention this to undervalue his friendship—Harry is really turned out a very artful fellow.—He is master of all her movements; he has even made his way, some how, into the Elliot family, and will, I doubt not, soon get a footing at lady Charlotte's.—But heaven knows whether he will be successful.—I can hope for no success.—He will certainly admire her; but I have not the least reason to imagine, that he will endeavour to supplant me.—Neither can I suppose that she will, immediately, listen to another lover.—I have given her an antidote against love, I think, for the present, at least.—Yet, I am sometimes inclined to hope, that she has not absolutely lost all the tenderness which she once, undoubtedly, felt for me.—She has by no means recovered her former cheerfulness.— She looks pale; she sighs frequently: yet Harry tells me, she never looked more beautiful.—The poor fellow is quite gone—deeply touched with a passion which will only plunge him into unspeakable distress, as he must necessarily be in a hopeless situation.—Yet why should he be in such a situation? He is young, he is well made, he has an elegant countenance, a soft insinuating manner, and a delicacy in his carriage, which is very attractive. In short, there are few women, in my opinion, unengaged, who could resist Harry's advances to them.—I told him so t'other day.—He gravely replied, that neither his present fortune, nor future expectations, would permit him to entertain any thoughts of marriage, especially with the object to which his inclination led him—that is with lady Charlotte, unquestionably.—But has not the dear creature a fortune sufficient to raise the man, whom her affection prompts her to distinguish, and a heart, and a person to elevate him almost above mortality!—Well—if it must be so—may she be happy.—I shall in a little while be no more.—Yet I will write to her once again, and make her acquainted with all the motives by which I was actuated, when I behaved to her in so strange a manner. I am the more determined, from what she let drop to Wilmot, a few days ago.—Harry, in truth, is a very honest fellow, and a sincere friend;—whenever I am foolish enough to harbour any suspicions about him, I do not do him justice.—

I am not at all right—Where was I?—He told me, t'other day, that he had found a moment to attempt the vindication of my conduct once more, and that the dear creature replied, “Your friend, lord Woburn, sir, had no reason to imagine, that I should suffer the freedoms he was pleased to take, because he well knew I had always discovered a particular dislike to them.”

I will open my heart to her upon paper.—She shall see my whole soul—though I can say nothing to apologize for my going farther, than I at first intended.—But I must take time—neither my head nor my hand will suffer me to write in the manner I wish.

LETTER LXVI.

Lord WOBURN to Lady CHARLOTTE
MORDEN.

AFTER all that I have offered in my own defence, to no purpose; after all the fruitless solicitations of my friends, why should I disturb you, lady Charlotte, by putting you in mind of a man, who has rendered himself so very exceptionable, and who will not exist long enough to give you much more trouble? However, as your good opinion of me is absolutely necessary to my peace, I cannot readily give up all pretensions to it.—I cannot help wishing to recover that inestimable blessing, which I lately—I fully believe, enjoyed.—Fool!—Madman! to forfeit it by a behaviour, for which there is so poor an apology to be made.

You told Mr. Wilmot, the other day, madam, “that I could not possibly have any inducement to behave in the manner I did, knowing that you would be offended with it.”—It is true, I did imagine, and sincerely hope, indeed, that you would be angry with me, as I had, till this last unfortunate event, no apprehensions but about your too hastily yielding to my wishes;—not from any observed impropriety in your conduct, but from my having found all the women with whom I ever had any connections, and all those to whom my friends were attached, incapable of resisting the importunities of their lovers. And though I had tried you, and found you quite averse to improper freedoms, I was, I own, staggered, when your servant positively declared, that she admitted men by your order.—Still you will say, that after having had reason to believe my suspicions groundless, I should have left you in consequence of your repeated requests.—To have barely suspected you was, you will justly add, sufficiently provoking.—I confess, I have been exceedingly in the wrong; but where is the man who can, at all times, command his passions, especially when excited by an object so temptingly beautiful?—In spite of all I have suffered, in spite of all I still suffer, I am yet to thank you for being proof against my attempts;—for had you fallen, I should have been every way more wretched, if possible, than I am at present.—Abandoned as I appear to you, lady Charlotte, I never seduced any woman; and could not, I am certain, have supported the distress she would, necessarily, have felt in such a situation, with any composure, even though I had, at the same time, despised her for her folly.—A woman without virtue is, in my eyes, the most pitiable, as well as the most contemptible character—She is scorned, she is detested by the whole world, and particularly by him who deluded her into a state of infamy.—Such a woman is not only so unfortunate as to find nobody her friend, she finds every body her enemy; is not such a woman, therefore, highly deserving of compassion?—Thank heaven! lady Charlotte will never become such a character;—But because she is so eminently excellent, must I be uncommonly miserable?—How peculiarly hard is my fate, madam, that what raises you to a degree of angelic purity, should render me the unhappiest of human beings! I am, at this moment, most cruelly suffering for having, by the temerity of my behaviour, made you appear in a still more illustrious light than you did before.—Consider, then, that you owe me something for having discovered virtues which might for ever have lain dormant in your breast.—Intoxicated with love, love to an excess, I forced you to shew yourself the most exemplary, as well as the most lovely of women.—After what I have said, you cannot imagine it possible for me to live without you.

I intended, when I began this, to give you the history of a friend of mine, who was made wretched by a woman, in appearance, almost as amiable as yourself.—Struck with his unhappy condition, I dreaded the thoughts of meeting with a fair one, who would plunge me, perhaps, into the same.—My strength fails.—I am not equal to the task at present which I had imposed upon myself.—I must, therefore, wait till I am more able to write.—What I have already written, is so very puerile, and falls so short of my first

intentions, that I could, with pleasure, tear it in pieces; but my head is too confused, to permit me to explain myself better.—Yet, deprived of the only felicity in life, arising from your dear society, I must, while life remains, employ it in thus conversing with you; though, I am afraid, you will not indulge me with answers to my letters.—Perhaps you will not deign to read what I sent to you.—However, as you are absolutely mistress of all which is left of me, to you I must, while I can hold a pen, address every thought of my heart.

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LETTER LXVII.

From the same to the same.

AS Mr. Wilmot, madam, has promised me to use his most earnest endeavours, to prevail on you to read what you will not condescend to hear from me, I will attempt to relate the misfortunes of my friend; misfortunes which have made but too deep an impression upon me for my peace, as they were, in a great measure, productive of those insults from me, of which you so justly complain; insults which have for ever destroyed all my hopes of happiness.—

Mr. CAREY was born to the inheritance of a large fortune, and educated, in every respect, like a young man of fashion; yet, though he kept very spirited company in his rank and sphere of life, he never gave a loose to any criminal passions; never distinguished himself in an infamous light, never availed himself of his accomplishments, natural and acquired, to seduce the innocent from the paths of virtue.—With a heart equally alive to taste and sentiment, he determined to look out for a companion, possessed of the same inclinations as himself, and found Mira Boswell, one of the most beautiful girls in the world, the very girl he wanted.—Mira, as soon as she perceived herself Carey's favourite, thought herself the happiest creature imaginable.—Her birth and fortune were suitable to his, her family approved of the alliance, and he was permitted to visit her as a lover.—Miss Boswell received him with the highest satisfaction.—For some time things went on in the most desirable manner; and the preparations which were making for the approaching marriage, at proper intervals, filled up the hours, which were not dedicated to tenderness: but when the cloaths, house, equipage, &c. &c. were ready, and when poor Carey began to grow impatient to become possesst of his bride, the lawyers had not finished the writings, so that a delay was occasioned, which was very disagreeable to him;—it also proved fatal.—As Mr. Carey had conducted himself with great delicacy in all his most private interviews with Miss Boswell, she had no reason to suspect his having any improper designs upon her; nor, indeed, had he, himself, felt the slightest desire to deviate from the strict propriety of his carriage to her; neither was he in the least encouraged to suppose, that an improper behaviour, on his side, would be suffered.—However, being young, naturally amorous, and exceedingly fond of his mistress, he was one evening, when they were by themselves, tempted, by a particular charm in her look and manner, to be more free of his caresses than usual.—The lady, too much affected by his tenderness, received his endearments so meltingly, that he was animated to be still more lavish of them.—Carey, on finding himself but feebly resisted, began to think of pushing his good fortune as far as it would go.—He proceeded with redoubled vigour, but met with an opposition which surprised him.—So unexpected a disappointment, just when he imagined he was arrived at the summit of his wishes, was not to be endured.—He became out of temper and soured; and discovered, from that time, so much indifference, so much disgust, indeed, that Miss Boswell, in whose bosom his caresses had raised very tender emotions, was disappointed in her turn.—The negligence of her lover chagrined her extremely; but as she believed that his cold, unkind behaviour, was occasioned by the opposition she had made to his desires, and fearing he should quit her entirely in a pet, she strove to soothe him, by a thousand winning blandishments;—those blandishments succeeded, as they brought back, with a return of love, all that enervating tenderness which had, at first, occasioned the little difference between them.—The lady, in short, being apprehensive of provoking her lover a second time, fell a sacrifice to her own soft sensations, and to his pressing advances; advances to which he was more than ever stimulated by an ardent desire, not to be repulsed again.—Urged, violently, by passion and by pride, his attacks were successful; but no sooner was the victory gained, than he had, as well as the lady, all the reason in the world to repent of his impetuosity.—The

anxiety and distress in which she appeared, and her repeated importunities to hasten their marriage, opened his eyes, and made him see the very great impropriety of a conduct, on which he had not given himself time to reflect, till it was too late.—Then, and not till then, Carey began to think, that a woman who could so easily part with her virtue (though merely, as she would have it believed, to gratify the man whom it was her interest to oblige, as she was to pass the rest of her life with him) would be always ready to yield to any man.

Just when every thing was ready for their marriage, Carey was half distracted; he knew not what to do.—Her perpetual upbraidings, her intreaties, and her tears, equally distressed him, and rendered him unable to come to a determination.—Still he was in love with her person, though her conduct had been so exceptionable.—Finding that nothing she could say could reconcile him to what was past, and beginning to fear some disagreeable consequences, from her having too easily surrendered to him, Miss Boswell, at length, fretted herself sick, and was, in a very short time, thought to be in imminent danger.—This hurt him extremely, as he looked upon himself to be in a great measure the cause of her illness; and as he was, from the nature of his engagement with her, permitted to see her, he, in order to administer consolation, assured her, that though he could not bring himself to marry her, after what had passed, he would, upon her recovery, if she would consent to live with him, take her abroad, and be as strictly true to her, as if they were really married.—These assurances, instead of alleviating the anguish of her mind, threw her into a kind of frenzy; but time, youth, and a naturally good constitution, all operating in her favour, her health was restored, and with returning health, she felt her mind much less disturbed. Carey, who never had found her in the least censurable, but for her inability to repel his seducing approaches, renewed his offer of carrying her to France.—She, at last, consented, for several reasons.—She had still a tender affection, which his ungenerous behaviour had not been able to extirpate; but she was reduced to comply with reiterated requests, chiefly by her pregnancy.—Not knowing how to extricate herself from so shameful a situation, without being exposed to her family, and the whole world, she eloped with her lover, as soon as she was in a condition to travel with him; and they determined to settle in the south of France.

There he treated her with all the affectionate care which the best of wives could have desired, and in no shape did his behaviour to her differ from that of the fondest, and most indulgent husbands.—But they had been there only a short time, when her beauty made a deep impression on a young French nobleman, who spared no pains to convince her of the power of her charms.—For a while she held out against his every artful expedient to win her to his purpose.—At last, however, upon his telling her how scandalously Carey had deluded and deceived her (his valet had wormed out of Carey's domestics, by his order, secrets which should never have been divulged) and how much more worthy of her he himself was, who had never attempted to impose upon her, by an offer of marriage; she began to listen to him; from listening to him, she found herself inclined to enter into conversation with him.—(when a woman comes to parley, it is all over with her) In short she soon yielded, merely, as she at first believed, from resentment against Carey, though, in fact, she loved him, and him alone, at the very time she threw herself into the arms of this Frenchman.

But I shall fatigue you too much, lady Charlotte, in sending you such a long letter.—I will therefore take another opportunity, to transmit the remainder of Mr. Carey's history.—I have only to wish, that the perusal of it may prompt you to pardon a behaviour, which I do not presume to defend, because I well know that it is indefensible.—I can never forgive myself; how, then, can I expect to be pardoned by you?

LETTER LXVIII.

From the same to the same.

I AM going to continue my narrative, madam, and without any apology, because you, I imagine, desire to read the continuation of it, without being interrupted by any impertinent preface to it.

My friend, Carey, soon found that Miss Boswell was as faithless, as she was fair; and that he had no reason to expect fidelity from a woman who had not been faithful to herself.—In the first transports of his anger, he turned her out of his house, and bade her go to the man whom she preferred to him.

Shocked at having been discovered, and stung to the soul at being so cavalierly treated by the man to whom she had sacrificed every thing—she left him, as she believed, quite cured of the slightest regard for him; as he had behaved to her in so infamous a manner.—However, after a very short residence with her new lover, who was the most volatile and fickle creature breathing, she found that she still loved Carey, and that her tenderness for him was not to be extinguished.—Yet, being too proud to make the smallest submissions, and conscious of having been grossly abused, she remained, for some time, in a state of wretchedness, not to be described.

Her relations and friends in England had totally abandoned her, upon her first going off in so indiscreet a manner; and her father divided the fortune he was to have given with her, to Carey, between her two younger sisters, who were, in consequence of that division, married.—Without that addition to the fortunes intended for them before, they might never have received any honourable overtures, for the indiscretion of one daughter in a family is frequently detrimental to her sisters.

As Miss Boswell was deserted thus, and neglected by those to whom she was most nearly related, with whom she was most intimately connected, Carey reflected with pleasure on his not having married a woman of so loose a disposition, of so infamous a character: he even began to think himself less culpable, for having tempted her to deviate from virtue.—Her incontinence, however, made the sex in general, appear to him in so unfavourable a light, that he chose to avoid any connections with them, for fear of meeting with a second Mira Boswell.—After having spent some years in different parts of France and Italy, during which I became intimate with him, as he saved me more than once from being drawn into the greatest hazard of my life, by the licentious behaviour of the women in both those countries—he returned to England; and, from that time, we continued on the most friendly footing.

One day passing by the house, in which he had spent many, many happy hours with Mira, he started, turned pale, and, laying his hand on my shoulder, cried, “I am always affected at the sight of a place once dear to me, but which is now remember with a kind of horror.”

At that instant, one of the prettiest little boys I had ever seen, very plainly, but neatly dressed, pulled him by the coat, and begged him to give him a penny.

My friend, whose head was turned from him, bade him begone, in an angry tone, without looking at him; called him a little rascal; and told him, it was a shame to see such a young beggar about.

Struck with the figure of the child, I put my hand in my pocket, and gave him sixpence.

“Thank ye, sir,” cried the boy, with his innocent eyes full of tears, “I will carry it to my poor mamma, who is dying.”

The child’s tenderness, added to his uncommon beauty, touched me in a singular manner, and I could not help saying, “Who is your mother, my dear?”

“Mira Boswell,” replied the child.

“Gracious G—d!” exclaimed Carey, starting, and looking at the boy, “he has her features, her complexion, by h—n! Oh! Woburn,” added he, supporting himself upon my shoulder, “this child, this boy must be mine.”

For my part, as I believed nothing at all of the matter, and looked upon his exclamation as the wild effusion of a disordered brain, I would have persuaded him to go home; but though I did not imagine, that the boy was his son, the little rogue affected me too much, to let me off so.—I, therefore, asked him, where his mother lived?

“Here, in the next street,” answered he, “She is almost starved to death with cold and hunger.”

“Oh! G—d! my poor Mira!” cried Carey, catching up the little boy in his arms, and violently caressing him.

“Pr’ythee, Carey,” said I, “don’t distract yourself for nothing; how can you suppose, that an unknown child, accidentally appearing to you in the street, should be either your’s or Mira’s?”

“I know he is,” replied he, still holding the boy, “I am sure he is mine.—Lead me, child, lead me to your mother.”

The poor little fellow obeyed, and led the way to Vine-Street, which was within a few yards of us.—In a shabby apartment, pale, sick, and emaciated, was the once beautiful, once blooming Mira, discovered.

She raised herself up in her bed, screamed at the sight of Carey, though she had been, every day, hoping to see him (as we were afterwards told)—and sunk down again upon her pillow.—He was scarce able to support himself at the appearance of her, so totally unexpected.—However, he flew to her.—She opened her arms to receive him.—They could only weep, they could only embrace, for some moments; and the pretty little boy had his share of their endearments.

When they began to recover a little, for great were the emotions into which they had been thrown, by so unlooked for an interview, Miss Boswell, who was in the last stage of a consumption, brought upon her by irregularities, grief, and remorse, informed her lover, that as she was certain she had a very short time to live, she could not die in peace, without seeing him, and asking his forgiveness for all she had done amiss, from the very beginning of their acquaintance.—She then reproached herself, in the strongest and severest terms, for having yielded to his solicitations; and asked him, at the same time, in the most pathetic accents, why he had endeavoured to tempt her from her duty, “Why, O! why,” added she, (tears streaming from her eyes) “did you urge me to part with all that could really make me valuable, with all that ought to have rendered me so to you? Indeed, my Carey, you was too hard upon me—Loving as I did, how could I bear to see you miserable, on my account? You should have considered my tenderness, my more than woman’s weakness.—”

Here, overpowered by her emotions, she sunk down upon her pillow.—My friend, who had been excessively shocked and affected at the first sight of her, believing that she was gone for ever, called aloud for help, and seemed, indeed, not in much better condition than his mistress was.

I assisted her nurse and servant to recover them.—Then, thinking that they might chuse to be by themselves, I was going to quit the room.

“Don’t go, sir,” said Mira, with a low, inward voice, “I have nothing to say but what Mr. Carey’s friends may hear;—my deviation from virtue was made public by my elopement with him who had no right to convey me from my relations and acquaintance.—My abandoned way of life has, also, since been but too publick; and, therefore, it is fit that my penitence, too, too long delayed, should be so.—I am truly shocked at the review of my past life.—I have suffered a great deal for my indiscretions; would to God that my contrition—I have been very guilty, but I—”

Here she fainted.—On her recovery, she thus proceeded;—“May all those, my Carey, whose passions are ungovernable, take warning from us.—Our examples may, perhaps, be serviceable to some people of both sexes.—When I had scandalously left

you, my Carey," continued she, "I was led, from necessity and distress, into a life of prostitution—that life has brought me to the condition in which you now see me—to the brink of the grave.—But I will not give you the pain of listening to a detail of the miseries I have endured since we separated.—You will, I dare believe, be melted by the recital of them.—Worn out at last with my sufferings, and destitute of friends and money, to procure many of the necessaries of life; distracted at my past conduct, and still more—O! nature, nature—for the fate of that poor dear boy (who, by all that's sacred, I swear, is your's) and longing more than ever to make peace with heaven and you, for want of proper necessaries, my situation became too dreadful to bear.—I, therefore, employed people to make a strict enquiry after you: hearing that you were but lately come to England, and lived not far off, I made my servant, with whom I have always kept up a correspondence, and who knew you perfectly, to take the child out every day into the streets, through which, I thought, you would pass, and to send him to you, as soon as she saw you.—I ordered her to send him to you, with a tale most likely to attract your attention, to excite your pity, and to bring you hither, that I might once more bless my eyes with a sight of you, the first object which they loved; that I might implore your pardon, recommend my poor innocent boy to your protection, and die—if possible—in peace."——

Here she ceased to speak—and sunk down in her bed, almost senseless.—Soon afterwards, grasping my friend's hand, she expired.

The agonies in which he beheld her, while she related her melancholy story, and the natural fondness of a father for his new-found child, had so melted his heart, that he wished to make her some amends for the wretchedness which she had endured, though she had, in a great measure, brought that wretchedness upon herself.—But she was not permitted to live, and to be benefited by those tender sensation, which she had raised in his distressed bosom.

I removed my friend, immediately, from the mournful spot.—He was, indeed, entirely incapable of acting for himself.—I, therefore, conducted him to a chair which, in consequence of my order, had been called.—When he got home he was so ill, that it was absolutely necessary for him to be put to bed.—He was put to bed, and a physician was sent for—I had imagined, that the suddenness of the interview, between my friend and his Mira, with the melancholy event to which he had been unexpectedly a witness, had only affected his spirits for the present, and that time and rest would restore him.—But I was mistaken.—He was seized with a raging fever; he became delirious in a few hours, and in four days afterwards, died, without being able to make the least provision for his child.—He seemed to be chiefly disturbed on his account; day and night did he talk, in a rambling way, of what he intended to do for him, but he was never in a condition to execute his intentions.

I sent for the child the moment he first mentioned him, hoping that the sight of the little fellow, during an interval of reason, however short, might be satisfactory to him; but he was always too wild and irrational, to attend to any thing which could be offered towards his recovery.

In this manner was one of the most amiable men in the world lost, merely from having persuaded a woman, whom he fondly loved, to sacrifice every thing to his passion for her.—Had she been able to resist him, they might have been both happy.—But with a woman who can be weak enough to yield, even to the man to whom she expects every day to be legally united, no felicity can be rationally expected.—Her weakness must perpetually render her liable to be dangerously seduced, and, consequently, keep her husband in a state of continual anxiety.—Can I, then, madam, be deemed so highly culpable, for having wished to try the lady whom I intended to marry? And must I be doomed to eternal wretchedness, because I found her superior in virtue and goodness to all her sex?—Reflect a moment, lady Charlotte, before you condemn to everlasting despair, the man who placed all his happiness in your sweet society; and who discovered you, on repeated trials, the very woman for whom his soul had long sighed.

I can add no more——my ill state of health will not permit me, at present, to give you any further trouble.——I am wasting very fast.——My life will soon come to a period; yet shall I, with my latest breath, call down blessings on you.—And I shall leave the world supremely satisfied, in having found out the most virtuous woman in it.

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LETTER LXIX.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

AT the repeated intercession of Mr. Wilmot, I have read three affecting letters (received from his hands) from lord Woburn.—I have transcribed them for your perusal.—The melancholy tale related in two of them is a true one, as Mr. Wilmot assures me.—Mr. Carey, it seems, dying without being capable of making a provision for his son, lord Woburn, from friendship to the father, and compassion to the child, immediately settled five thousand pounds upon him, and put him to school; from which time he has treated him like his own son.—There is something very great in this behaviour, something extremely humane.—There always, indeed, appeared to me more greatness and goodness in lord Woburn, than in any man I ever knew.—Yet, admitting, that he has acted wrong, upon a right principle, how can I extenuate his late conduct, with regard to me?—Had he not sufficiently tried me before?—There can be no apology for his conduct.—He declared, indeed, in these letters which he sent immediately to me, after his strange behaviour, that his jealousy, roused by Dawson's information, and his passion, increased by seeing me alone, and undressed, had rendered him no longer master of himself.—He did, it is true, behave in a manner entirely inconsistent with the regard he owed a woman who was so soon to place her whole happiness in his power.—No apology, therefore, as I said before, can be made for his conduct;—It is impossible to advance any thing in his favour, without supposing him to have been divested of reason, when he acted so much in opposition to discretion;—and who would put herself into the hands of a madman?

However, I beg you will read over the inclosed letters carefully, and give me your opinion.—In the mean time, I will be honest enough to confess, that I have been, and am now, exceedingly affected by lord Woburn's complaints and illness.—I sincerely wish that I had never been acquainted with him.—Connections with men are, I see, both disagreeable and dangerous.—I will not, therefore, enter into any for the future.

Mr. Wilmot, the friend of my lord's, is most assiduous about me; but he has, hitherto, conducted himself with a respectfulness, and deference, almost beyond conception.—His looks and his manner convey more meaning than I chuse to understand; and the fine things he says to me, to my friends, are more than I can possibly merit.—Yet all this submission and admiration, added to the agreeableness of his person, cannot make me behold him in the light I have regarded lord Woburn.—Kitty, now deprived of the sight of the latter, thinks the former a very charming man;—I fancy so, from my remarks on her behaviour; for she has not declared her partiality in his behalf.

LETTER LX.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

I HAVE sent, as I told you I would, the history of poor Carey, at different times, to lady Charlotte.—Wilmot kindly undertook to prevail on her to read it; and I have had the satisfaction to know, that it affected her extremely.—Yet is she immoveable with regard to me.—When Wilmot pressed her to pity and to pardon me, as my behaviour to her, which had been so highly resented, had not arisen from want of respect to her, or suspicion of her virtue, but from a sudden fit of jealousy, furious and uncontrollable.—She replied, “No, no, Mr. Wilmot, you are mistaken; had my lord Woburn found me destitute of honour, he would soon have given me up, as I should have well deserved his desertion.”

“And so,” answered Wilmot, “because you believe that he would have acted with the greatest propriety and prudence, you will punish him with the utmost severity; and even injure yourself, by declining a connection with the only man in the world, capable of making you happy.”

She blushed, he said, and hung her head, as if she felt the truth of his assertion, though she would not, verbally, subscribe to it.—He tells me, that he is sure she loves me; but he tells me so with ten thousand sighs.—“You are happy,” says he, “happy in being still dear to the most amiable of women.”—But to what purpose am I dear to her, if she persists, constantly, in refusing to see me, or to hear me? She has condescended, indeed, to read my letters; but to what purpose has she read them, as they have not in the least softened her heart in my favour? I cannot long support myself under this torturing certainty of her inflexibility.—I have more than once told Harry, that when I die, I will leave her as a legacy to him; and since he is happy in never having, even in thought, offended her, I dare affirm that she will not reject him.—They are, undoubtedly, formed for each other’s happiness.—I shall soon be no more.—I grow, hourly, weaker and weaker.—I neither eat nor sleep.—My mind is perpetually disquieted; I am tortured by a thousand corroding passions.—I am worn to a mere shadow.—Your brother persuades me to throw myself in her way, and thinks she cannot withstand the striking change in my person.—But I don’t imagine I should succeed by following his advice.—However, I cannot be worse than I am.—That’s impossible.

LETTER LXXI.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

I THANK you for your opinion, and am glad that we think alike, with regard to lord Woburn; but I cannot agree with you, that it is quite necessary for me, to accept of the first man who offers himself.—Besides, neither Sir William Ashton, nor Sir Charles Conyers have, I am persuaded, the least affection for me.—They, undoubtedly, have no dislike to my fortune and connections.—How very different is their behaviour from that in of lord Woburn, when he was first accepted? How different, indeed, are they in their manners, from Mr. Wilmot, whose whole attention to please is extreme.—He has, entirely by making himself agreeable, induced Mr. and Mrs. Elliot to treat him with particular politeness; their behaviour to him is, I think, the more extraordinary, as they cannot, I am sure, entertain any thoughts of him either for me or Kitty.—In short, we are rather a little at cross purposes, if I may be permitted to say so; for Mr. Wilmot, though he treats every body with the most becoming propriety, evidently distinguishes me.—I do

not speak out of vanity; believe me. I cannot be mistaken.—Indeed, I am not the only person who has taken notice of his solicitude about me;—he seems, however, to endeavour to conceal his feelings in my favour.—He frequently flies to assist me, to entertain me, to please me, but often draws back, as if he checked himself for his forwardness to oblige me.—When a man discovers a strong desire to make himself agreeable, and behaves, at the same time, with an uncommon modesty, ought he not to be distinguished? Yet, do not fancy, my dear Mrs. Blomer, that I can ever look upon Mr. Wilmot in the light I beheld lord Woburn.—I look upon him only as my lord's friend.—Poor Kitty is not so indifferent.—While he sits with his eyes now and then lifted up, and now and then cast down, with half suppressed sighs, she sighs too, and says some good-natured thing to divert his thoughts, and to turn them into another channel.—I really think these agreeable people may sigh themselves into a passion for each other in a little while; that is, I am sure she likes him, and, I imagine, that the discovery of her inclination by him, may produce similar emotions in his breast.—Sir Charles Conyers fluctuates between Kitty and me; but were I to give him encouragement, he would not, I am certain, think about her, because my fortune is the largest.—Would you advise me, my dear friend, to marry such a man?

Your's, sincerely,

CHARLOTTE MORDEN.

LETTER LXXII.

From the same to the same.

SOON after I dispatched my last letter to you, I had a long conversation with Mr. Wilmot.—He pleaded with such earnestness for his friend, and discovered so much sensibility, that I could hardly bear it.—I, therefore, desired him not to mention lord Woburn again, if he had the least regard for me, “As I have long taken my final resolution upon the subject,” added I, “let me intreat you, sir, to spare my listening to arguments, which only fill me with concern, on his lordship’s account.—I cannot but be concerned, I own, to think of his having put it entirely out of my power to grant his request.—Has he not already induced me, by Mr. Carey’s story, to believe, that two people cannot expect to be happily connected, when they have proceeded, on both sides, to improper freedoms?”

“You do not state the case fairly, I apprehend, madam,” replied he, “Mr. Carey was rendered miserable, from the want of discretion in his mistress; and would you make lord Woburn singularly unhappy, by having found so much?”

“I am sure,” said I, “it will be discreet in me to put an end to this conversation; and so I shall leave you to Miss Downton.”

I then went up stairs.

Kitty soon came to tell me, that she had been endeavouring to console Mr. Wilmot for my cruelty, but that she had spent her time in vain, as he was not to be comforted: adding, “he has told me in confidence, that lord Woburn is in a very declining state; and, that he firmly believes, nothing but a change in you can save his life.”

I heard all this, but made no answer; imagining that Wilmot had only talked in this strain to Kitty, to move me to compassion.—That my lord is concerned at our separation, I can easily conceive; and I suppose he is not thoroughly recovered from his fever, which has been, probably, increased by his reproaching reflections.—He may now, perhaps, be ashamed of his imprudent conduct, and sorry for having acted with such glaring impropriety; but his shame and his sorrow will wear off by degrees, and he will, possibly, forget all his past misdemeanours.—I sincerely wish him well.—I can say no more.

LETTER LXIII.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

I SHALL soon be obliged, my friend, by the irresistible hand of fate, to put an end to a correspondence which has been so long and so amicably carried on between us—I wish only to live to enjoy your friendship, and to hear of lady Charlotte's forgiveness—Of the former I am sure, but not all the eloquence of our dear Harry can procure me the latter.—I must submit.

I am, through weakness, or I know not what, obliged to lay down my pen.—I shall soon lay it down, never to take it up again.—

I have made my will; but have left lady Charlotte nothing, because I believed it would pain her extremely, to receive any thing that had been mine.—While I had hopes of pardon, I looked above every thing; but as I now find, that her pardon is not to be obtained, I most readily give up all I held dear.—Had I, indeed, the least interest with her, I would recommend Harry to her; but my recommendation, as matters are circumstanced might, perhaps, deprive him of her delightful society.—I think he would make her happy; he loves her with a kind of idolatry, and has acted with the noblest, the most disinterested friendship towards me.—It is time for me to be out of the world, as I only disturb or disgust every body whom I love and esteem in it.

Lady Huxley has just been here.—Her concern affects me; yet I cannot yield to her intreaties to try the south of France, which the impertinent doctors declare absolutely necessary for me.—But supposing I was willing to leave England, what relief could a different climate give to a wounded mind? Nothing but the dear cause of my disorder can effectually cure it; and as she fears to put herself into my power, why should I torment her? It is better for me to die, than for us both to be miserable.—Let me only add, that women in general might, by behaving in a different manner, save themselves, and many an honest fellow, from that kind of distraction under which I now labour.—The majority of both sexes, indeed, suffer by discovering each other's infamous proceedings; but I am now hastening to my last moments, for having found lady Charlotte possessed of more virtues than could have existed, I believed, in a female form.—Great, I confess, has been my folly, and while I am enduring inexpressible anguish for it, I can scarce blame the dear creature for keeping up a proper spirit, and resenting an insult which deserved the severest chastisement.—She has severely chastised me, and I kiss her correcting hand.

I have left Carey's boy, who promises to be as amiable as his father.—May he, by associating only with women of real virtue, escape his father's fate!—I have left him ten thousand pounds, and appointed you and your brother his trustees.—You and he will, I doubt not, take care to see him well educated.—I owe him this mark of my regard, in return for all the proofs I received of his father's friendship.—Bring him up with a thorough detestation of every kind of vice.—Be particularly careful to warn him against the seduction of women.—They are bad enough of themselves—they want no provocatives to mischief.

Let his father's fate be frequently displayed to him in the most lively colours, that he may be deterred from availing himself of the tenderness of the woman whom he intends to make his wife; and let my jealousy and resentment, causeless jealousy and rash resentment, be strongly pointed out to him, that he may not be hurried to suspect the woman whom he honourably addresses, without the most alarming reasons.—Above all, let him be taught never to deviate so far from the respect due to virtue, as to offer to take any improper freedoms.

How sincerely do I now condemn myself for having, with so ridiculous a precipitation, attempted to try lady Charlotte's discretion!—How nobly did she repel all my attacks And how cruelly—may I not say cruelly!—does she for ever reject a man, who cannot but find his tenderness increase for a woman, whom he has discovered to be

so exemplary a character?—Freely do I acknowledge, that I was highly culpable in going such unjustifiable lengths, when I had all the reason in the world to believe that my suspicions were groundless;—but yet my contrition, my remorse, and even the principles which led me to believe, that no woman could make me happy except herself, whom I distinguished for the purity of her sentiments, and her excellent manners, ought, I think, to have some weight with her.—A man who is fearful of meeting with women of a loose disposition, and desirous of associating only with the most virtuous of the sex, must be so totally different from the libertine in his governing sentiments, that a woman of the nicest honour need not be afraid of his behaving improperly to her, when she has consented to take him for her husband.—But my rash behaviour, for which I can, it seems, make no atonement, has steeled lady Charlotte's heart against me.

I am too ill to write any more at present.—I have but one card more to play—then farewell for ever.

Adieu,

W—.

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LETTER LXXIV.

From the same to the same.

I HAVE done as I said I would.—have had an interview.—Such an interview!—Oh! Wilmot, I am beloved to an extravagance of tenderness.—Yet will the dear, dear creature, be still perverse; still obstinately refuse to make me completely happy.

Harry had long persuaded me to let her see me, but I could not think of any place in which I could exhibit myself in a manner the most likely to touch her; at least, in which such an interview could be unobserved by any persons but those who were interested in it.—Her own house seemed to be the properest place.—And though she had declared to Harry several times, that she never would receive a visit from me, I was not, by any means sure that her servants had orders to deny her to me; I, therefore, threw myself into my chair, after having given Hind his instructions.

At an hour of the day when I thought she would, most probably, be at home, and by herself, I set out.—I bore the motion of the chair with difficulty.—I could hardly support myself, till I reached the room in which she sat.

The porter gave me admittance, without the slightest hesitation, but one of her fellows was flying up stairs to inform his lady who was coming.—I caught him by the arm, and clapping a couple of guineas into his hand, told him I should want his assistance.—The fellow seemed better bred than many of his fraternity; and, by silent respectful signs, discovered the compassion which he felt at the sight of me, so totally changed in my person since he last saw me.

When we arrived at the door of the dressing-room, I bade him leave me.—I had just strength to crawl to her feet.—I then sunk down unable to speak or move.—I can only remember that she started at the sight of me, and exclaimed, “Lord Woburn!” Her agitation increased mine—I was overcome.—When I first opened my eyes, I felt sensations which I cannot, possibly, describe.—I found myself on the floor.—My head rested on the lap of this dear woman, who was on the ground by me. Tears streamed from her eyes, her voice faltered, and she, sobbing, asked me, why I would come and terrify her with the sight of me, in so dreadful a condition?

At first I had not sufficiently recovered my senses to comprehend her.—Before I could make a reply, your brother Harry entered the room, lifting up his hands and eyes at the scene presented to him.—“Come, Mr. Wilmot, come,” cried the weeping angel, “and assist me in raising your friend, and then call for proper people to conduct him home.”

“Never will I go home,” said I, to her, “never will I leave you, till you promise to be less severe, till you promise to pardon me, and to see me while I linger in this world of misery.”

“Do not talk of dying,” replied she, wringing her hands, “I cannot—cannot bear it.—Raise him, Mr. Wilmot, and place him on this sofa.—He has almost deprived me of my senses by this sudden appearance;—by such an appearance too—Merciful G—d! what have I done that I must see him die?”

Here a fresh shower of tears put a stop to her utterance; while I, exceedingly loth to leave so soft, so sweet a place of rest, raised my languid head from her lap, seized one of her dear hands, and assured her, that if she would be condescending enough to pardon what was past, and give me but the slightest hopes of being ever restored to her former favour, I might, I believed, recover.

She returned no answer.—She only looked at Wilmot, who assisted me to get to the sofa; with some difficulty I was conducted to it.—Soon, however, I attempted to rise from it, in order to plead my cause.—She made a sign with her hand for me to sit still.—Wilmot, who seemed actually to tremble for her, led her to a chair.

She sat a little while, then rose, and walked, with agitation, towards the door.

I followed her as fast as my feeble limbs would carry me, and catching her by her gown, fell a second time at her feet, crying, "Oh! stay and hear me.—I cannot let you go—by h——n! I cannot."—

Turning her head towards me, and fetching a deep sigh, she replied, "Save me, Mr. Wilmot!"—Then broke from me, and left the room.

I became half frantic at this behaviour, and called after her, but to no purpose.—I cursed Harry, myself, and all the world; and when my amiable friend offered to assist me, in getting to my chair, in a threatening tone, charged him with having supplanted me.

"How unjust is your accusation!" said he, in his usual mild and gentle manner.—Have I ever received such proofs of her tenderness as you have? Have I ever been supported on her knees, like you? Has she ever thrown herself on the floor in an agony of grief, on my account?—And yet I love her as well as you do, my lord.—Recover your reason, therefore, and let me conduct you home."

"I will not stir," said I, "till I have succeeded; till I have bent this stubborn heart to compassion."

At length, however, after a number of persuasions, and partly, indeed, by compulsion, Harry got me out of the house, though I quarrelled with him till he saw me shut up in my chair.—He walked by the side of it.

When I got home I was so fatigued, so spent, that they could hardly keep life in me.—Your brother ordered them to put me to bed, and then made use of so many arguments to convince me, that lady Charlotte loved me no less than I loved her, that I began to be pacified.—I even intreated him to return to her, and to tell her, that I had been too much shocked by the last cruel proof of her unforgiving disposition to expect a recovery.

He smiled, and left me, after having strongly recommended patience to me.

In about two hours, which I thought almost two years, he came back.—I was so eager with my enquiries, that I hardly gave him time to speak.—At last, he informed me, that lady Charlotte had received him pale, trembling, and scarce recovered from the surprize and terror into which I had thrown her.—"She gently reprimanded me," continued he, "for suffering you to endanger your life, by coming out in such a state.—I told her, that as you had very often declared you must die, if deprived of the sight of her, I had, indeed, persuaded you to make an attempt to see her once more.—I also told her, that I knew not of your having set out in order to visit her in so abrupt a manner; but that, on calling at your house, and hearing whither you was gone, I hastened to give you all the assistance which could, I knew, be necessary.—I concluded with letting her know, that I believed you never would appear abroad again, so deeply had her coldness affected you."—"My coldness!—Gracious G—d!" exclaimed she, while tears trickled down her sweet face, "can he complain of my coldness, after he had almost deprived me of my life, by the condition in which I beheld him? Did I not do every thing in my power to restore his senses?—He knows not—he knows not how much I suffered by the sight of him in so deplorable a situation."—"You can this moment, then, my lady," replied I, "restore him at once to health and peace, by consenting to his wishes.—It is in your power, and in your's alone, to raise him from misery to happiness, from death to life."—She was silent a few moments, seemed to be very much agitated, and then said, "If nothing but a behaviour on my side, directly opposite to my opinion, can save lord Woburn, what am I to do?"—"Change that opinion, madam, and yield a little, to have your kind condescension repaid by the restored health, by the sincere and perpetual gratitude, and by the most ardent tenderness of a man who truly deserves whatever you can possibly feel in his favour, though he unfortunately, for a few moments, forgot the respect he owed you; dazzled by that beauty, which would have tempted any man in his situation to have been off his guard; many men, I believe, so situated, would have been far, far more indiscreet."—Here her lovely face was in the most beautiful glow I ever beheld, and she appeared a radiant object to my enchanted eyes.—Rising hastily, she said, "Excuse me now, Mr. Wilmot, I must retire; I cannot talk any more upon this

subject.”——Thinking it cruel to disturb her any longer, and to drive her from the apartment we were in, I bowed and left her.——”

Thus ends your brother’s narrative.—and now, Jack, what am I to think of all this?—Are there any hopes, or not?——But my constitution is so miserably shattered by this affair, that I don’t much think I shall ever recover the shock it has received.

You know not at how many different times I have written this letter.——My strength is quite exhausted.—All I have to wish for now is, that, if I must die, I may expire on her dear lap, on which I felt the most ecstatic joy I was ever yet sensible of.

Your’s as usual,

W——.

P.S. Lady Huxley continues to tease me about going to Montpelier; but I cannot think of it.——No—I would not, on any account, die at a distance from lady Charlotte.—To be only within a few yards of her, in my last agonies, would give me, even in those agonies, no small satisfaction.——

Adieu.

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LETTER LXXV.

Lady CHARLOTTE MORDEN to
Mrs. BLOMER.

I HAVE been almost deprived of my senses by the sight of lord Woburn, expiring, as I believed, at my feet: I have since been almost reasoned out of them by his insinuating friend.—I cannot relate the particulars.—I wish, indeed, to forget them.—I only know, that while I was sitting in my dressing-room, lord Woburn entered, but so pale and emaciated, so entirely changed in his person, that had not his image been deeply—too deeply—engraven on my memory, I should hardly have recollected him.—He approached me, however, weak as he was.—I was so shocked, and so frightened, that I could not get away from him.—He fell at my feet—I knew not then what I did.—I became almost frantic—I called—I stamped—nobody came near me.—Perhaps I had not strength to make myself sufficiently heard.—I felt my heart die within me, at the sight of him lifeless on the floor.—I threw myself down by him.—I heard him groan, at least I thought so.—I was ready to expire by his side.—All the soft, the tender sensations which had, alternately, given me so much pleasure, and so much pain, returned with double violence.—I was moved in a manner not to be described.—I should have been struck with horror, I should have been melted with compassion, if I had seen any man dying at my feet; but to see lord Woburn die—Oh! Mrs. Blomer, it was too much to bear.—Trembling with terror, and scarce knowing what I was about, my heart strongly prompted me to assist the man whom I could have saved, with the loss of my own life.—Surely, my dear friend, there is nothing indelicate, nothing criminal, in giving assistance to a fellow-creature sinking in the arms of death.—I raised his poor languid head upon my lap, and applied a bottle of eau de luce to his nose; though my hand shook so, I could hardly hold it.

At that instant, happily for me, Mr. Wilmot came in.

I called to him, immediately, to assist me.—I cannot proceed.—I can only say, that I am extremely miserable.—Why, why would lord Woburn behave in such a manner as to render me absolutely incapable of acting agreeably to the dictates of my heart?

Say something, my good friend, by way of consolation, if you can.—I can say nothing for myself.—I am agitated—I am tortured beyond expression.—Love, honour, and discretion, stir up a tempest in my breast, and the violent opposition made by those passions to each other, almost deprive me of my reason.—I am really not able to determine what is right, what is wrong.

This man, during this state of racking uncertainty, is dying.—What will become of me?—My fears, my apprehensions, unspeakably alarming, will drive me to distraction.—I will fly to you as soon as I can persuade Mr. and Mrs. Elliot not to make resistance to my wishes.

Kitty is nearly as wretched as myself.—She certainly loves Wilmot.—Sir Charles Conyers, having no hopes of me, attaches himself to her, but to very little purpose.

Earnestly wishing to hear from you soon, for your letters are ever most welcome to me,—I remain your very sincere, but very unhappy friend,

CHARLOTTE MORDEN.

LETTER LXXVI.

From the same to the same.

MY dear, dear friend, why don't you write to me?—I cannot hold out much longer.—Lady Huxley has been with me again.—She fell on her knees, and with streaming eyes conjured me to spare her brother; but I was not shaken by her arguments, nor softened by her persuasions.—Yet I was conquered. You shall hear.—

She assured me over and over, that lord Woburn's entrance into my chamber, was not in consequence of his having intended to take any improper freedoms, but of his seeing a man let into my house, in a manner sufficient to create suspicions.—She allowed, however, that he ought not, by any means, to have acted as he did.—“Yet, my dear lady Charlotte,” added this artful advocate, “only consider a little;—put yourself in my brother's place for a moment—consider how ardently he loves you—consider how much reason he had to believe, that he was on the point of being your husband;—and then consider your own beauty.—It was irresistible.—He could not help snatching those endearments which were, perhaps, the more alarming to you, as you was, at that time, surprised and terrified to a great degree.—And is the man, whose character you approved of, and which is, indeed, unexceptionable, whose person and manners sufficiently induced you to admit him, as the man whom you designed to marry; is he to be discarded—nay, to be actually murdered? For you, by your obstinate and obdurate carriage, doom him as effectually to destruction, as if you were to plunge a dagger in his heart.—You would, indeed, discover less cruelty, by dispatching him with a single blow, than by suffering him to linger in torments inexpressible.—Reflect, therefore, a little more seriously than you have yet done, upon lord Woburn's distressful and most pitiable situation;—and do not—do not ungenerously—I would not willingly add inhumanly—steel your breast against the man whom you once loved well enough to chuse him, from all his sex, for your husband; and whose death you will, I am certain, pathetically, though with unavailing sorrow, lament.—”

My tears confirmed the concluding words of her well-meant, and earnestly delivered speech.—Her voice, her person, her manner, brought her brother so strongly to my view, that I began to be very much affected, by what she had said to me.—However, I begged her to excuse my talking upon a subject, at that time, for which I was wholly unprepared.—Yet I could not entirely silence her.—She would enter into a minute detail of lord Woburn's illness; she would tell me how much his spirits were depressed, how much he was weakened, how much he was wasted; adding, “that nothing was so likely to restore him, as the air of Montpelier; but that all the world could not prevail on him to set out, before he had obtained my promise to pardon him, and to be united to him at his return.”

After having been much worried in this manner, I, at last, replied, “Nobody more sincerely wishes lord Woburn health than myself; and if my pardon will make him consent to take proper steps for the restoration of it, I beg your ladyship to tell him, that I forgive him, and desire him to set out immediately; for as he is at present situated, no time should be lost.”

She left me, after having forced this declaration from me; and I returned to my dressing-room, endeavouring to compose my mind, which had been very much disturbed indeed.

Soon afterwards they informed me, that Mrs. Downton was coming up.—Kitty had been carried to meet her mother the very day my lord surprised me.—They now entered the room together.

When our first compliments were exchanged, Mrs. Downton asked me, very particularly, after Sir Charles Conyers; throwing out a hint, at the same time, with regard to his attachment to her daughter.

Kitty coloured, while I spoke of Sir Charles in terms which I thought he merited.—She then, kneeling to her mother, and kissing her hands, intreated her, with tears in her eyes, not to sacrifice her to a man whom she could not love.

“My dear girl,” replied her mother, “methinks it is too early for you to be in love; if Sir Charles is a man of a good understanding, as lady Charlotte assures me he is, and is good-tempered; if he has a sufficient fortune, and is not disagreeable in his person, I would not desire to see you better married; such a man must, necessarily, engage your affections;—therefore, get up, my dear; you know, Kitty, you have always been brought up to esteem every amiable character of either sex; you must, consequently, love Sir Charles, when you are married to him, as much as you ought to do for the attainment of happiness with him.”

Poor Kitty coloured again, looked extremely disconcerted, and soon afterwards left the room, to give vent, I suppose, to her disquiet.

I seized that moment to persuade Mrs. Downton not to be too hard upon her daughter.—“We cannot love or hate just as our friends please to direct us.” said I, “Kitty is of a most amiable disposition, and I sincerely wish she was married to the man she could like.”

“And why should not she like Sir Charles, lady Charlotte? He has an agreeable person, and many good qualities.”

“True;—but it is impossible for us to help preferring one man to another sometimes, though the man we chuse may not be approved of by our relations.”

“How!—Has Kitty encouraged any particular person, lady Charlotte?”

“I don’t know that she has;—but I am sure if Mr. Wilmot was to attach himself to her, and if his fortune was equal to Sir Charles’s, he would be the man;—or lord Woburn, were he also disposed to prefer her.”

“Lord Woburn and Mr. Wilmot? Why, they are both in love with your ladyship.—What can the girl mean by thinking of them?”

“I am not acquainted with her intentions, madam; but as my lord and Mr. Wilmot are, both of them, generally allowed to be agreeable men; and as she never sees them, but when they are endeavouring to set themselves off to the greatest advantage, I am not at all surprised at her prepossessions in their favour.”

“And has not Sir Charles Conyers been in the very same situation; may we not, therefore, reasonably suppose her to be as well pleased with him?”

“I do not think so; for he teases her for proofs of her approbation, while they steal into her heart, by imperceptible advances.—You will allow, I imagine, that we are always more ready to bestow our charity upon people who do not solicit us, than on those by whom we are pressingly importuned.”

“It may be so.—And you, lady Charlotte, are of an age, and at liberty to act as you please, with regard to these things; but, certainly, such a girl as Kitty is not capable of knowing what is for her future benefit.—She has given me sufficient reason to call her judgment in question, by preferring two gentlemen, whose inclinations are already engaged, to a man who is, by what I can learn, every way equal to them in point of merit, though she is silly enough to make exceptions to him.—She must, therefore, be cured of this folly.—Nay, it is, in my opinion, highly indelicate in her, to think seriously of a man, who does not pretend to any inclination for her.—It is the folly and the forwardness of women, my dear lady Charlotte, which makes so many bad men.”

“Bless me!” replied I, “you talk like lord Woburn.—”

“You will not like me the worse for that,” answered she, smiling; but, indeed, I cannot help attributing the ruin of the generality of young women, intirely to their romantic notions; they fill their heads with a thousand idle fancies about love, which they ought never to encourage.—Let them but take care to marry men of sense and character, and they need not be afraid of proper treatment.—If a woman is not happy with a man who is worthy of her esteem, she deserves not to be so.—To fall in love with a man, merely because he has a pretty set of features, and dresses well, and says a great many

fine things—Ridiculous stuff! Take my word for it, lady Charlotte, a passion kindled by such trifling attractions, will be of a very short duration.—Half the girls of this reading age, absolutely turn their heads by reading a pack of improbable stories, calculated only to crowd the mind with wrong ideas, and to make the heart flutter with pernicious emotions.—By reading such books, they work themselves up to a belief, that they are in love with every man they see; and, indeed, that every man whom they meet with, is in love with them.—I never suffered Kitty to spend her time in this manner; her acquaintance have been chiefly people who are instructive, as well as entertaining, and her books have been altogether of the moral kind, though written in an amusing way.—Young folks will not bear perpetual reproofs; they are too often rendered desperate by them: they should, therefore, be lured from vice and folly by examples of self-denial, chastity, gratitude, generosity, filial affection, and delicacy of sentiment.—Examples not to be often found in the living world, as one would wish, I own; but those examples in books may be of no small service to the young readers, if properly attended to.—Books full of such examples, and professedly written on the side of virtue, I take care to put into Kitty's hands, and no other.”

Don't you admire Mrs. Downton's just sentiments, with regard to the education of a daughter, my dear Mrs. Blomer?—Much has Kitty been benefited by the tuition of such a mother; seldom do we meet with a young person of her birth and connections, with such an excellent heart, with manners so amiable from the simplicity of them;—and, yet, my dear friend, has not this charming *naiveté*, this purity of heart, rendered the lovely girl too keenly affected with the extreme sensibility of two of the most insinuating, pleasing men in the world?—But let me stop here.—While I thus plead for Kitty, am I not, at the same time, endeavouring to exculpate myself.

Write to me immediately, or you will be punished—with a still longer letter

From your ever affectionate

CHARLOTTE MORDEN.

LETTER LXXVII.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

WILMOT, my dear Wilmot, I am as happy as a man can possibly be in my condition; and if I live, I shall, I hope, be exquisitely so; but it is now a moot point, whether the extravagance of my joy will not kill me.

Yesterday, my excellent sister, lady Huxley, came, with all the eagerness of sincere affection, to tell me, that she had procured my pardon from lady Charlotte, who wished me to take all necessary steps towards my recovery; and was particularly desirous to have me go, in consequence of the advice of my physicians, to the south of France.

I made Caroline tell me minutely what had passed between them.—The dear creature's behaviour was charming; but I have no leisure to acquaint you with it now.—I must hasten to a still more important event.

Having thanked my sister for her affectionate carriage—I told her, that I must desire her to give me one more proof of her friendship, by meeting me at lady Charlotte's, as I was determined to be carried to her house that afternoon; adding, that I wished she would go first to Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, secure them in my interest, and bring them with her.—I made that addition to my request, because I imagined that the Elliots, who had never discovered any dislike to me, but in compliance with their charming niece's humour, would readily make their appearance in my favour.

Lady Huxley left me, as soon as I had communicated my wishes to her.—I sent for Harry immediately, told him my intentions, and solicited his concurrence with them.—He cheerfully consented, on condition that I left the execution of some part of my design to him.—We, accordingly, set out for St. James's Square, in the same manner we had left it a few days ago.

When my chair was opened in the hall, I sat in it a little while, to recover my breath and spirits, while Harry went up and told lady Charlotte, who had only Kitty with her, that I was come to thank her for my pardon, and see her before I set out for France.

"Is he then going!" cried the dear creature, starting with surprise, while concern flushed her lovely cheek.—"But I cannot see him, sir," continued she, "pray tell him, that I wish him well," (rising with emotion).

"You will not refuse to see him, I am sure," said Harry; "perhaps—most probably, you will never see him again; it is impossible for him to outlive the fatigue of such a journey, weak, dying, as he is.—"

"Good h——n!" exclaimed she, trembling, and red and pale by turns, "Why will he go then?"

"He goes in obedience to your ladyship's commands, madam."

"My commands, Mr. Wilmot!—I have no right to command him, sir; lady Huxley told me, that my lord's physicians advised such a tour, as highly necessary for the re-establishment of his health.—I have no commands," added she, bursting into tears, and covering her face with her handkerchief.—

"Condescend to see him, then, my lady; to admit him up stairs, and to honour him with your sentiments."

"I—I—." Here she faltered, and appeared to be violently agitated.—"I have nothing to say, sir.—I cannot talk."—(Rising).

"You shall not be desired to talk, madam," said Harry, taking her hand and re-seating her—"you shall only hear.—"

"Do, my dear, dear lady Charlotte," added the weeping Kitty, "do but hear him—hear him but this once."

"Do not distress me thus, Kitty;—why this importunity?—I have done what my lord, what lady Huxley desired.—I must leave you, Mr. Wilmot.—"

At that moment I was led into the room by Sir George Huxley and Mr. Elliot (the two ladies following) who conducted me to the feet of my angel.

She lifted up her hands and eyes, but said nothing.

“Now, my sweet lady Charlotte,” said lady Huxley, seating herself on one side of her, while Mrs. Elliot took the other, “look upon this poor dying creature; and let pity, for once, supply the place of a softer passion.—Remember that mercy is the darling attribute of heaven.”—“Come, lady Charlotte,” added Mrs. Elliot, taking her hand, “lord Woburn has suffered enough for his foibles; let my petitions, joined to lady Huxley’s, prevail on you to pardon him.—”

“I have—I have pardoned him,” replied she, hastily, turning away her charming face.

“Complete, then, my felicity, my adored Charlotte,” cried I, “by giving me this dear hand,”—(gently seizing it).

“Well—well,” answered she, “I will—when you return.”

“I shall never return alive,” said I, “I cannot, indeed, go, without my Charlotte’s consent to be mine, now every thing is ready; and then, if I should die, you will not have my death to answer for.”—

“Oh! do not talk so,” cried she, “do not tear my heart in pieces, (laying her head upon Mrs. Elliot’s shoulder.)—What a distress is this?”—

“You may easily remove it, my dear lady Charlotte,” said Mrs. Elliot, “lord Woburn’s friends, and your friends, think it high time for you to discover less severity in your behaviour, to a man who has been brought by it to the very brink of the grave.—Nothing but your immediate consent can now save him.—Possibly your consent may come too late.”—“Yet, when you have done all you can,” added lady Huxley, “his death will not be charged to your account.”

“Is my existence, then, so little to be desired?” said I.—

“Cruel!” replied she, quite overcome.—Then, looking at the Elliots, “Do with me,” continued she, “what you please.”

Every thing had been provided for our marriage.—A special licence was ready, and Dr. Dolby attended.

Poor Harry (I felt for him) assisted Sir George in supporting me—a most eligible bridegroom to be sure, while Mr. Elliot gave me his niece’s invaluable hand.—She was just on the point of fainting.—I pitied her from my soul; yet I was unable to relieve her, almost fainting myself—so ecstatic were my sensations.—After having clasped her, with all the strength I had left, to my throbbing heart, we sat down.

Mrs. Elliot, seeing how incapable my angel was of giving orders, took care of every thing.—Coffee, tea, jellies, &c. were brought up.—Soon afterwards all our company left us, except Mrs. Elliot and Kitty.—I then became so exceedingly ill, from the sudden alteration of my affairs, and from the weakness of my condition, that I could no longer support myself.—My dear Charlotte saw and felt my uneasiness.—Sitting down by me, she took my hand, and pressed it in the tenderest manner imaginable.—“You will not send me from you?” said I to her—“Never,” replied she.—I could not proceed—They carried me to that very apartment, in which I had so heavily offended—no other bed being prepared.—

When the servants retired, my dear Charlotte approached me, and with accents heavenly sweet, while her lovely face was crimsoned with blushes, said, “I have ordered a bed to be brought into my dressing-room, that I may be ready to give you any thing you want in the night.”

“No, my love,” replied I, pressing her hand to my lips, “I cannot bear this.”—But I was not able to divert her from her purpose.—Her woman, whom she has taken in the room of Dawson, and who is older and fitter for the business, sat up with me, and gave me something warm whenever I wanted any refreshment.—In the morning my wife, delightful word!—breakfasted by my bed-side.—I am still weak and languid, but feel an ease in my mind, which prognosticates the restoration of my health.

My angel has begged me not to sit too long at my writing-table.—You may imagine that I have written this at different times.—I shall be ever most willing to obey her who has saved my life, for whom only I wish to live.

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LETTER LXXVIII.

Lady WOBURN to Mrs. BLOMER.

WHAT a sudden! what an unexpected change, my dear friend! I have not leisure to send you the particulars; but I am certainly married to lord Woburn.—If my union with him, if my perpetual solicitude and tenderness can save him, I shall be completely happy.—If I have acted indiscreetly in this affair, you must not blame me;—your brother and sister, Sir George, lady Huxley, Mr. Wilmot, every creature of my acquaintance, for whom I have a value (excepting yourself) insisted upon my compliance.—My dear lord, himself, was almost killed with fatigue, and with the suddenness of the event; but I think he is better—I hope so.—All my prayers are for his recovery; all my wishes, all my cares are to promote it.—May heaven restore him!—Do not condemn me, my dear Mrs. Blomer;—hear all first, from Mrs. Elliot, and let me have your sentiments upon this unlooked for and surprising revolution—a revolution astonishing, even to myself.—I am, however, and ever shall be,

Your very affectionate

CHARLOTTE WOBURN.

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LETTER LXXIX.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

WHAT a charming creature have I married! How undeserving am I of all her care and tenderness! I actually wonder at my assurance, in daring to make only a nurse, at present, of the finest woman in the world.—Yet such a nurse, Wilmot, you never saw, nor heard of!—She has saved my life, and she will make it a most blessed one to me, indeed.

We have been preparing to set out for France; but, I believe, a visit to the Continent will not be necessary.—I recover strength hourly, and do not desire to hear of any thing likely to disturb the tranquillity I at present enjoy, with my Charlotte ever by my side.—I cannot think of being happier, or better in one place than another.

You can hardly imagine, by how many winning ways the endeavours to amuse me, to entertain me, and to convince me of her sincere affection for me.—She is in hopes that a journey to France will prove beneficial to me, and is, therefore, eager to set out.

“Was you not going to France, my dear lord?” said she, “before we were married.”

“Yes, my life,” replied I,—“they told me, there was a necessity for trying the air of Montpellier; and as I was determined never to go thither without you, I took those hasty steps which you condemned at the time; but as I am now happy by having taken them, and as you, also, are now happy, you will not, I hope, my dear Charlotte, disapprove of them.”

“I will not,” replied she, with an enchanting smile.—However, she still urges me to adopt every prudent measure to forward my recovery.

The doctors have made a movement, which will fix me in England.—They recommended the air of some salutary spot near town.—I mentioned Windsor, because I always liked that place; and because we can have the very house to which my Charlotte retired, when I drove her, by my rash behaviour, from her own.—I will go thither as soon as it is ready.—We shall take Kitty and Harry with us, on whom we have a small design—a very friendly one you may be sure; I will not affront your understanding by naming it.

LETTER LXXX.

Lady WOBURN to Mrs. BLOMER.

Windsor.

HOW happy am I, my good friend, in receiving your approbation; how supremely so, in being the wife of the most amiable of men!

We are, agreeably to the advice of the physicians, at Windsor, as my lord was unwilling to go to France, when the doctors informed him, that there was not an absolute necessity for his departure from England.—To tell you the truth, I believe the Montpelier scheme was formed, in order to draw me in with the greater facility.—I told my lord so—he smiled, and assured me I was mistaken; but added, that as he could not think of going to France without me, he had some small hopes, that I would rather accompany him, than let him die, by staying behind.—I chid him for entertaining any doubts, concerning my behaviour, upon so interesting an occasion.—He kissed me, and told me, he was extremely happy in finding that I loved him better than he imagined I did.

We have Mr. Wilmot and Miss Downton with us; the former talks of going abroad, and, by so talking, makes the latter look rather melancholy; and her spirits are not at all mended, by her mother's urging her to receive Sir Charles, as soon as he returns from the North, whither he was obliged to go, to take possession of an estate lately fallen to him.—Mrs. Downton was not very willing, knowing our party, to let her daughter accompany us; but as I positively declared, that I could not do without her, she could not well refuse me.—It was aukward to have no lady with me; and I could not think of any, as you were at such a distance, half so agreeable to my lord, who was the person to be first considered, as Kitty.—The dear girl was exceedingly rejoiced, to find that I succeeded with her mother; and being sensible how nice my lord is in his opinion about women, it was paying her a great compliment, to select her from the rest of our acquaintance; and she expressed a modest acknowledgement for this preference, which still more and more recommended her to my lord.—Mr. Wilmot behaves with the utmost politeness to her, and even seems desirous of amusing her; but Kitty, I believe, sees nothing of the lover in him.—As my lord chuses to be much with me alone, they also are frequently left by themselves, yet does she always return to us, with a seriousness and anxiety in her countenance, which induce me to fear, that she is dissatisfied.—Were I quite sure that Wilmot was the cause of her anxiety and seriousness, I would send her home.—Time, absence, and another lover might cure her.—I sometimes mention our leaving this place; but she never hears of our departure from hence, without weeping, because she knows that her mother will not invite Mr. Wilmot to her house; nor would he go, I believe, if she did.—Kitty, however, notwithstanding her partiality for Wilmot, behaves to him with a delicate reserve, which is extremely proper.—He must, certainly, have a good opinion of her; and when a man esteems such a girl as her, he may be soon brought to love her.—But then he has only a small fortune.—How must we settle that with Mrs. Downton? How will he, indeed, who has the most generous and disinterested heart, be able to think of offering it to a lady, with nothing more considerable tacked to it, than his very moderate income?

Lord Woburn, unknown to me, made a considerable addition to the jointure which had been before agreed upon between him and Mr. Elliot for me, with an additional five hundred a-year to my pin-money; which that gentleman thought unnecessary.

I asked my lord the other day, if he began to grow tired of me?"

"Why that question, my dear Charlotte?" said he, a little surprised.

"Because you seem, by your generosity, to lay a greater stress on money than love.—Now, as I am extremely happy in being so loved by you at present, I want the less to be enriched; a much smaller sum would be fully sufficient to enable me to appear with

you; and while you are so obliging as to give me your company, I shall not run about from place to place, merely to shew my cloaths and my jewels.”

He laughed; called me an excellent creature; and said, he had not made that supplement to my income to bribe my fondness, but to shew that he placed the highest confidence in me; being assured, that I had a heart not to be corrupted by money or the world.

I thanked him for so striking a proof of his esteem, but told him, that as he had a larger fortune than he knew what to do with, I thought I could put him in a way to enjoy it in a luxurious manner.

“Speak, my life,” cried he, “whatever you propose must merit my approbation.”

I then ventured to hint, that if he could do any thing for Wilmot, so as to make him acceptable to Mrs. Downton, her daughter would, I believed, be quite happy; adding, however, that Kitty had not dropped a syllable relative to her inclination for Wilmot, and that her prudent behaviour had very much increased my esteem for her.

“I do not think,” replied he, smiling significantly at me, “that Harry can so readily change the object of his affection; but I will talk to him.”

Poor Kitty looked at me this morning, with her eyes full of tears, and told me, that I was the happiest woman in the world.

“I freely confess I am, my dear; I hope you don’t envy me.”

“No, indeed,” replied the blushing girl, “I think you deserve such a charming man as my lord; but as you can have nobody else, now, it is a pity that any man who knows you should be unhappy, because he cannot be in my lord’s place.”

“I am quite of your mind,” said I, smiling, “but I cannot suppose that any man should be so, because he is not.”

“All the men I ever knew,” replied she, “prefer you, in their hearts, to all other women.”

“How is this, Kitty!” said my lord, who overheard her, while he was coming into the room, “if that’s the case, I must begin to be jealous; among so many rivals, one, surely, may stand a chance of succeeding in my Charlotte’s favour.”

“Kitty, my lord, is, from the excess of her friendship, too partial to me; she, therefore, hastily imagines, that all men see me with her eyes.”

“They all see you with the eyes of admiration, most certainly:” replied my lord, “have I not then, an intolerable share of vanity, to believe myself preferred by you, my love, to all other men?” I will not tell you what answer I made; it would make you think, perhaps, that I am too fond of him; and yet, certainly, I cannot possibly be too fond of him, as he almost adores me.—He can scarce bear me out of his sight a single moment; he gratifies every wish of my heart, and even watches to read my very thoughts, that he may fly to prevent my desires.—

But I will not add any more, lest I should weary you, so as to make you repent of having encouraged a correspondence with

Your affectionate friend,

CHARLOTTE WOBURN.

LETTER LXXXI.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

MY health, my spirits, are in a great measure restored;—my lovely Charlotte deserves to be mentioned as the chief cause of my recovery.—To her I am indebted for my present existence, and for every blessing I enjoy. I cannot say half enough in her

praise—I never could have believed it possible for any woman to be so excellent—She not only studiously endeavours, with the utmost solicitude, to make me happy, but to confer all the felicity in her power upon my friends. In consequence of this most laudable propensity of her's, I have formed a scheme to settle our dear Harry, I hope, to his satisfaction—You will laugh, I am sure, to hear that I, after having so long entertained a vile opinion of woman, should turn match-maker—I do not by any means like the *character*; but when I see two people whom I think capable of making each happy, if they were but set in the right way, I cannot help wishing to assist them.—With this design I have attacked your brother about Kitty—“She is a lovely girl, Harry, said I—but I shall not expatiate upon her person, her disposition is amiable, and she has a very good heart—how, indeed, can she have a bad one, as she has been from her infancy taught to love and revere my Charlotte?—Such a girl *must* prove a good wife, and I now experience what I always believed to be an undoubted truth, that an honourable connection with a gentle, tender creature, who yet wants not strength of understanding to make her a useful companion, is worth a thousand of your male friendships.”—“I believe you, my lord,” cried Harry; “but as your lordship has got the only woman in the world who can be such a companion, nobody else can venture to encourage any very flattering expectations.”

“Kitty is the next best,” replied I, “you love lady Woburn, I know.”

“Fie, my lord,” said he, actually looking abashed, to find that I saw he had not conquered his passion.

“Kitty loves you, Harry, though she modestly does all she can to conceal it;—and does not a man stand infinitely a better chance to be happy with a woman who has an affection for him, than by marrying a woman whom he himself loves, but who perhaps likes somebody better.”

“Well, I believe you may be right;” answered he, after a little hesitation, “but I cannot pretend to Miss Downton, my lord—my fortune is nothing.”

“If that is your only objection, lady Woburn and I can instantly remove it.—She makes Kitty a present of ten thousand pounds, and Kitty will give herself, with that fortune, to nobody but Harry Wilmot.”

“Oh! my lord, this must not be—you quite oppress me with such unmerited generosity—I cannot deserve it.”

“You do deserve it—you shall make lady Woburn and me happy, by marrying Kitty.—Pity the poor sighing girl, who is as innocent as she is lovely, and who, I may truly compare to Shakespear's *Viola*, who “never told her love, but let concealment, like a worm in the bud, feed on her damask cheek.”—Can there be a more inviting image in nature?”

He owned there could not—yet hung his head, and sighed.

I left him (we were in the garden) and going in search of my own angel, met Kitty.

“Hasten, my dear girl, to Harry,” said I, “who is taken extremely ill.”

“Oh! where, where?” cried she, all in a flutter.

Away she flew, and I followed her; but just before they met, I slipped behind a hedge, unobserved.

“Bless me, Mr. Wilmot,” exclaimed the tender girl, quite out of breath, “what's the matter? My lord tells me, you are very ill; where is your pain?” added she, looking up in his face with a sweet anxiety.

Poor Harry, who was walking with folded arms and down-cast eyes, raised the latter to look on the pretty enquirer—reading in her eyes all that I had told him, and more, I suppose, he took her hand, and said, “Where is your pain, my dear Miss Downton, for you seem much disordered?”

“Who, I?” replied she, “No, indeed, I should have been very well, if my lord had not frightened me so.”

“With what?” said Harry.

“With telling me you were sick, Mr. Wilmot.”

As soon as those words escaped her, the poor girl was ready to expire with shame.—A blush, like scarlet, covered her face and neck.—She could hardly support herself; her limbs trembled.

He saw her confusion, and by his change of countenance, and behaviour was, I dare believe, more touched by it, than by any thing he had ever observed in her.—He caught her instantly in his arms, clasped her to his bosom with real tenderness, and thanked her for her kind concern.

She broke hastily from him, and covering her face, ran to my wife's dressing-room.—There she remained all day, telling Charlotte how improperly she had behaved, and that she was quite ashamed to see Mr. Wilmot.

My dear Charlotte, who was not less pleased with her delicacy than myself, endeavoured to prevail on her to conquer her timidity upon the occasion—but to no purpose.—When she appeared the next day, she was so much disconcerted, and in such a violent tremor, that she could hardly speak or look up.

This behaviour of her's made more impression upon Harry, to his honour be it mentioned, than either her youth, beauty, fortune, or connections.—I was pleased with her becoming terrors, I was still more satisfied with the very proper manner in which she conducted herself.—He treated her with an uncommon respect, mixed with a kind of tenderness, which I had never, till then, perceived in him—but the more he distinguished her, the more she avoided him; and though she received his attentions about her with politeness, and with equal politeness returned them, she took care to throw a dignity into her carriage at the same time, which sufficiently informed him, that she would not be thought too easy and yielding.—I actually admired the discretion of a girl so young, and so very much in love—for I am sure she is very much in love with Harry.

After having complimented my Charlotte upon her young friend's discreet reserve, I told Harry, that he might look round the world for a wife, and never find such another.

He acquiesced, and now pays his court to Miss Downton, with the most respectful assiduity, who, though her little heart is ready to burst with joy, has command enough over herself to hide her transports; by so doing, she has made Harry quite enamoured with her.—But what is all this to my Charlotte, who improves upon me every hour?—A few days ago, she came running to me, and with a countenance, in which love and good-humour, in which every virtue, every grace were strongly painted, said, "My dear lord, among our friends, there is one we have forgot—your little charge, Mr. Carey's son—may I not see him?—You told me, he was an amiable child.—"

How I loved her for this excellence of heart! I strained her to my bosom, and replied, "You shall be this moment gratified."—

I sent for the boy directly.—He has been so caressed by my wife and Kitty, that I suppose there will be no parting them.—Many and many a time will young Boswell think of them, I dare say, when he is at school.—He is a fine lad; and if the women don't spoil him—take notice, Jack, I don't mean lady Woburn, he may do very well.—Charlotte is, indeed, become so fond of him, that I am sure she loves children, and will shine no less in the character of a mother than a wife.

Tell me how you approve of Harry's attachment, and of the prospect of a new sister.—Our next business will be to reconcile Mrs. Downton to the match.

Your's as usual,

W—.

LETTER LXXXII.

Lady WOBURN to Mrs. BLOMER.

MY lord has chid me for nothing, since I have been his, but my delaying to bring him acquainted with you, whom he calls, and justly calls, my dearest friend.—I told him, that if you were not known to him, he was to you, and had been a long time.—I then took him to my cabinet, and spread all your letters before him, with the particular passages relating to him, in those I had sent to you, which I chose to transcribe.—He told me, I had given him a high treat; it afforded me, indeed, no small satisfaction to observe the variations in his face, while he perused the papers, though I ran the risk of being well nigh smothered with his caresses.—“You will make but a poor return,” said I, to him, laughing, “for all the love I have so long felt for you, by taking away my breath.”—He almost smothered me, notwithstanding all my remonstrances against the impetuous proofs of his fondness for me.—He admires your style and sentiments, my dear Mrs. Blomer, so much, and is so envious of my regard for you, that he told me, the other day, he should be very jealous, unless I permitted him to have a share in the correspondence between us.—Do you consent?—Indeed you must—for I have sworn to obey, and my inclination is stronger than my duty.

Kitty is, I hope, in a fair way to be as happy, as her little heart can wish to be—and as, I may with truth add, she deserves to be; for she has conducted herself with a delicacy and propriety really astonishing both to my lord and me.—In a tête-a tête, yesterday, I told her how charmingly she had behaved.—“I hope,” continued I, “that Mr. Wilmot has behaved entirely to your satisfaction, as I have observed an agreeable change in his manners.”

“I have not a single fault to find with Mr. Wilmot,” replied she, with a sigh, “his behaviour is too flattering to such a girl as I am; but my mother will never approve of any man except Sir Charles Conyers; I cannot think as she does, yet I love her too well to disoblige her.”

A shower of tears followed these few words.—I begged her to be comforted; and assured her, that both my lord and myself would do every thing in our power to forward Mr. Wilmot’s interest.

She thanked me, but I believe she has small hopes of success.—Poor girl! when I reflect on what I have suffered for my lord, I feel most sensibly for this amiable young creature.

My lord, at my desire, has let me have little Boswell, Mr. Carey’s son; he is quite a little cherubim.—I have kissed him so much, that my lord threatens to take him from me, and never to let me see him again.

I am sent for to Mr. Wilmot, who is suddenly indisposed—must, therefore, conclude.—

LETTER LXXXIII.

Lord WOBURN to Mr. WILMOT.

DON'T be too much alarmed at the express which I dispatched to you. Our Harry is better; but his illness has cost Kitty Downton showers of tears; to her concern and attentions, his recovery may be, in a great measure, I believe, attributed.—He told me, as soon as he became better, that he had been exceedingly fluttered about my dangerous situation, sudden marriage, &c. &c. &c. (he might have added, his passion for my wife, though he very prudently suppressed that addition) but that the uncommon discretion of Miss Downton, and the sweetness of her temper, together with the great esteem and anxiety she had discovered for him, had quite gained his affection; that he was afraid, however, there would be some difficulty in bringing her family to approve of a younger brother.

I bade him hope for every thing from my Charlotte's friendly offices joined to mine.

He pressed my hand, and thanked me.

Imagining that my wife had confined herself too much during Harry's illness, because she was willing to see him properly attended, and because she was unwilling to leave Kitty by herself, I made them both get into the coach, as soon as he grew better, to take the air.—We went to Cliefden.

When we were within a mile of that beautiful spot, we passed a post-chaise which was overturned.—There were two ladies in it who, by their out-cries, were certainly frightened, and, perhaps, hurt.

My dear Charlotte, whose ears are ever open to the sounds of distress, stopped the coach, and desired that we might offer our assistance——We both got out directly.

On my advancing to intreat the ladies, who were just disengaged from their carriage by their servants, to accept of places in mine, I immediately recognized one of them—and started back.—“It is Mrs. Mead,” said I, in a whisper to my Charlotte, “shall we return home, and only send the servants to take care of them?”

“By no means,” replied she, with a benevolent smile, which made her look most angelically: “Were I in such a situation, my lord, should I not be pained to find Mrs. Mead able, but unwilling to assist me?”

“Charming creature!” replied I, and then walked again to the ladies.—My wife, in the most obliging manner, expressed her concern for them, and desired to know if she could accommodate them, at least till they had recovered their fright.

Mrs. Mead, more shocked at the sight of us than at the overturn of the carriage, changed colour, and thanked lady Woburn, but was going to decline our offer, when her companion interposed, saying, that she with pleasure recollected lady Woburn, having spent several days with her at Euston-Castle, and that she should be happy in having the honour of renewing her acquaintance with her.

My Charlotte remembered her, as she had seen her at the Castle the summer before we met in ——shire.—I had, therefore, an opportunity, after having made room for the ladies, and after having found them more frightened than hurt, to ask about Sir Francis and lady Euston, from whom I had not heard since they mentioned their intended Bath journey.—“They are there now,” returned the lady, whom I had never seen till then; “I have this morning had a letter from lady Euston.—She is in the greatest distress at her sister Harriot's being just married to a half pay officer, who has already had, it is imagined, two wives.—It is also said that he was kept for some time by lady Spilsbury; but that, on his growing clamorous for a larger allowance out of her jointure, she threw him in the way of her intimate friend, Miss Facely, who was married to him yesterday morning at the Abbey, without informing her family of her design.”

You may imagine how we all looked at each other on this piece of intelligence; it amused us a little for a few hours, but as our intelligencer being rather of too communicative a disposition for my wife to desire an intimacy with her, we set her down with Mrs. Mead, at the house of the latter, who lived, we found, in a very elegant little house about two miles from Cliefden. Mrs. Butler gave us several invitations to her dwelling near her friend's, but Mrs. Mead modestly and prudently was silent upon that head.—I hope, therefore, she is changed for the better.

At our return we found Harry walking about his chamber.—Mrs. Downton was in the parlour, come to fetch her daughter.—The remainder in my next.

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LETTER LXXXIV.

From the same to the same.

AS soon as I had welcomed Mrs. Downton, who is a very agreeable woman, I carried her up into your brother's room with her daughter and my wife, telling her that we had been but too long absent from our patient.

Harry received her with great respect.—Kitty trembled all over.—Soon afterwards, on her mother's addressing lady Woburn, and saying she was come to fetch her daughter, as she expected Sir Charles Conyers in town the next day, Kitty fainted away, unable to sustain so severe a shock.

Harry, forgetting his own indisposition, flew to assist the lovely girl, and, raising her tenderly in his arms, recalled her to life by a thousand affectionate pressures to his fond bosom.

Kitty, opening her eyes, looked satisfaction at the excessive kindness of his behaviour; but all at once, shrinking from his arms, with a deep sigh, turned to Mrs. Downton, who had been very much alarmed at her fainting, and exclaimed, "My mother!—I cannot bear to displease my dear mother, Mr. Wilmot."—

The discovery of this modest tenderness for Harry, and her still greater affection for Mrs. Downton, who had been an excellent mother, touched lady Charlotte and me most sensibly, and we both endeavoured to prevail on Mrs. Downton to receive your brother as her son.

I cannot describe Kitty's joy.—The sly girl, in order to conceal it, made a frivolous excuse to go into her own apartment; but Harry found means to make her promise to return in a few minutes.—Every thing will, I hope, be soon settled to their and your satisfaction.—Mrs. Downton has generously refused my Charlotte's present; but we are absolute.

Thus you see my angel, as a mistress, friend, and wife, shines superior to the greatest part of her sex; and I can most sincerely add, that she renders me the happiest of men.—If women, in general, would copy so exemplary a character, they would not find men so unwilling to enter into the marriage-state:—it is certainly very much in their power to make that state a state of wretchedness or felicity:—the exemplary wife, therefore, is a character which cannot be sufficiently admired; it is justly to be revered.

FINIS.