

СЭМНЮЭЛ РИЧАРДСОН

CLARISSA HARLOWE; OR
THE HISTORY OF A
YOUNG LADY — VOLUME
7

Сэмюэл Ричардсон

**Clarissa Harlowe; or the history
of a young lady — Volume 7**

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Содержание

LETTER I	5
LETTER II	6
LETTER III	8
LETTER IV	10
LETTER V	12
LETTER VI	19
LETTER VII	23
LETTER VIII	25
LETTER IX	27
LETTER X	29
LETTER XI	30
LETTER XII	31
LETTER XIII	33
LETTER XIV	34
LETTER XV	36
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	47

Samuel Richardson

Clarissa Harlowe; or the history of a young lady — Volume 7

LETTER I

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE WED. NIGHT, JULY 12.

I write, my dearest creature, I cannot but write, to express my concern on your dejection. Let me beseech you, my charming excellence, let me beseech you, not to give way to it.

Comfort yourself, on the contrary, in the triumphs of a virtue unsullied; a will wholly faultless. Who could have withstood the trials you have surmounted?—Your cousin Morden will soon come. He will see justice done you, I make no doubt, as well with regard to what concerns your person as your estate. And many happy days may you yet see; and much good may you still do, if you will not heighten unavoidable accidents into guilty despondency.

But why, why, my dear, this pining solicitude continued after a reconciliation with relations as unworthy as implacable; whose wills are governed by an all-grasping brother, who finds his account in keeping the breach open? On this over-solicitude it is now plain to me, that the vilest of men built all his schemes. He saw that you thirsted after it beyond all reason for hope. The view, the hope, I own, extremely desirable, had your family been Christians: or even had they been Pagans who had had bowels.

I shall send this short letter [I am obliged to make it a short one] by young Rogers, as we call him; the fellow I sent to you to Hampstead; an innocent, though pragmatist rustic. Admit him, I pray you, into your presence, that he may report to me how you look, and how you are.

Mr. Hickman should attend you; but I apprehend, that all his motions, and mine own too, are watched by the execrable wretch: and indeed his are by an agent of mine; for I own, that I am so apprehensive of his plots and revenge, now I know that he has intercepted my vehement letters against him, that he is the subject of my dreams, as well as of my waking fears.

My mother, at my earnest importunity, has just given me leave to write, and to receive your letters—but fastened this condition upon the concession, that your's must be under cover to Mr. Hickman, [this is a view, I suppose, to give him consideration with me]; and upon this further consideration, that she is to see all we write.—'When girls are set upon a point,' she told one who told me again, 'it is better for a mother, if possible, to make herself of their party, than to oppose them; since there will be then hopes that she will still hold the reins in her own hands.'

Pray let me know what the people are with whom you lodge?—Shall I send Mrs. Townsend to direct you to lodgings either more safe or more convenient for you?

Be pleased to write to me by Rogers; who will wait on you for your answer, at your own time.

Adieu, my dearest creature. Comfort yourself, as you would in the like unhappy circumstances
comfort

Your own ANNA HOWE.

LETTER II

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE THURSDAY, JULY 13.

I am extremely concerned, my dear Miss Howe, for being primarily the occasion of the apprehensions you have of this wicked man's vindictive attempts. What a wide-spreading error is mine!——

If I find that he has set foot on any machination against you, or against Mr. Hickman, I do assure you I will consent to prosecute him, although I were sure I could not survive my first appearance at the bar he should be arraigned at.

I own the justice of your mother's arguments on that subject; but must say, that I think there are circumstances in my particular case, which will excuse me, although on a slighter occasion than that you are apprehensive of I should decline to appear against him. I have said, that I may one day enter more particularly into this argument.

Your messenger has now indeed seen me. I talked with him on the cheat put upon him at Hampstead: and am sorry to have reason to say, that had not the poor young man been very simple, and very self-sufficient, he had not been so grossly deluded. Mrs. Bevis has the same plea to make for herself. A good-natured, thoughtless woman; not used to converse with so vile and so specious a deceiver as him, who made his advantage of both these shallow creatures.

I think I cannot be more private than where I am. I hope I am safe. All the risque I run, is in going out, and returning from morning-prayers; which I have two or three times ventured to do; once at Lincoln's-inn chapel, at eleven; once at St. Dunstan's, Fleet-street, at seven in the morning,¹ in a chair both times; and twice, at six in the morning, at the neighbouring church in Covent-garden. The wicked wretches I have escaped from, will not, I hope, come to church to look for me; especially at so early prayers; and I have fixed upon the privatest pew in the latter church to hide myself in; and perhaps I may lay out a little matter in an ordinary gown, by way of disguise; my face half hid by my mob.—I am very careless, my dear, of my appearance now. Neat and clean takes up the whole of my attention.

The man's name at whose house I belong, is Smith—a glove maker, as well as seller. His wife is the shop-keeper. A dealer also in stockings, ribbands, snuff, and perfumes. A matron-like woman, plain-hearted, and prudent. The husband an honest, industrious man. And they live in good understanding with each other: a proof with me that their hearts are right; for where a married couple live together upon ill terms, it is a sign, I think, that each knows something amiss of the other, either with regard to temper or morals, which if the world knew as well as themselves, it would perhaps as little like them as such people like each other. Happy the marriage, where neither man nor wife has any wilful or premeditated evil in their general conduct to reproach the other with!— for even persons who have bad hearts will have a veneration for those who have good ones.

Two neat rooms, with plain, but clean furniture, on the first floor, are mine; one they call the dining-room.

There is, up another pair of stairs, a very worthy widow-lodger, Mrs. Lovick by name; who, although of low fortunes, is much respected, as Mrs. Smith assures me, by people of condition of her acquaintance, for her piety, prudence, and understanding. With her I propose to be well acquainted.

I thank you, my dear, for your kind, your seasonable advice and consolation. I hope I shall have more grace given me than to despond, in the religious sense of the word: especially as I can apply to myself the comfort you give me, that neither my will, nor my inconsiderateness, has contributed to my calamity. But, nevertheless, the irreconcilableness of my relations, whom I love with an unabated reverence; my apprehensions of fresh violences, [this wicked man, I doubt, will not let me rest]; my

¹ The seven-o'clock prayers at St. Dunstan's have been since discontinued.

being destitute of protection; my youth, my sex, my unacquaintedness with the world, subjecting me to insults; my reflections on the scandal I have given, added to the sense of the indignities I have received from a man, of whom I deserved not ill; all together will undoubtedly bring on the effect that cannot be undesirable to me.—The situation; and, as I presume to imagine, from principles which I hope will, in due time, and by due reflection, set me above the sense of all worldly disappointments.

At present, my head is much disordered. I have not indeed enjoyed it with any degree of clearness, since the violence done to that, and to my heart too, by the wicked arts of the abandoned creatures I was cast among.

I must have more conflicts. At times I find myself not subdued enough to my condition. I will welcome those conflicts as they come, as probationary ones.—But yet my father's malediction—the temporary part so strangely and so literally completed!—I cannot, however, think, when my mind is strongest—But what is the story of Isaac, and Jacob, and Esau, and of Rebekah's cheating the latter of the blessing designed for him, (in favour of Jacob,) given us for in the 27th chapter of Genesis? My father used, I remember, to enforce the doctrine deducible from it, on his children, by many arguments. At least, therefore, he must believe there is great weight in the curse he has announced; and shall I not be solicitous to get it revoked, that he may not hereafter be grieved, for my sake, that he did not revoke it?

All I will at present add, are my thanks to your mother for her indulgence to us; due compliments to Mr. Hickman; and my request, that you will believe me to be, to my last hour, and beyond it, if possible, my beloved friend, and my dearer self (for what is now myself!)

Your obliged and affectionate CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER III

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. FRIDAY, JULY 7.

I have three of thy letters at once before me to answer; in each of which thou complainest of my silence; and in one of them tallest me, that thou canst not live without I scribble to thee every day, or every other day at least.

Why, then, die, Jack, if thou wilt. What heart, thinkest thou, can I have to write, when I have lost the only subject worth writing upon?

Help me again to my angel, to my CLARISSA; and thou shalt have a letter from me, or writing at least part of a letter, every hour. All that the charmer of my heart shall say, that will I put down. Every motion, every air of her beloved person, every look, will I try to describe; and when she is silent, I will endeavour to tell thee her thoughts, either what they are, or what I would have them to be—so that, having her, I shall never want a subject. Having lost her, my whole soul is a blank: the whole creation round me, the elements above, beneath, and every thing I behold, (for nothing can I enjoy,) are a blank without her.

Oh! return, return, thou only charmer of my soul! return to thy adoring Lovelace! What is the light, what the air, what the town, what the country, what's any thing, without thee? Light, air, joy, harmony, in my notion, are but parts of thee; and could they be all expressed in one word, that word would be CLARISSA.

O my beloved CLARISSA, return thou then; once more return to bless thy LOVELACE, who now, by the loss of thee, knows the value of the jewel he has slighted; and rises every morning but to curse the sun that shines upon every body but him!

Well, but, Jack, 'tis a surprising thing to me, that the dear fugitive cannot be met with; cannot be heard of. She is so poor a plotter, (for plotting is not her talent,) that I am confident, had I been at liberty, I should have found her out before now; although the different emissaries I have employed about town, round the adjacent villages, and in Miss Howe's vicinage, have hitherto failed of success. But my Lord continues so weak and low-spirited, that there is no getting from him. I would not disoblige a man whom I think in danger still: for would his gout, now it has got him down, but give him, like a fair boxer, the rising-blow, all would be over with him. And here [pox of his fondness for me! it happens at a very bad time] he makes me sit hours together entertaining him with my rogueries: (a pretty amusement for a sick man!) and yet, whenever he has the gout, he prays night and morning with his chaplain. But what must his notions of religion be, who after he has nosed and mumbled over his responses, can give a sigh or groan of satisfaction, as if he thought he had made up with Heaven; and return with a new appetite to my stories? —encouraging them, by shaking his sides with laughing at them, and calling me a sad fellow, in such an accent as shows he takes no small delight in his kinsman.

The old peer has been a sinner in his day, and suffers for it now: a sneaking sinner, sliding, rather than rushing into vices, for fear of his reputation.—Paying for what he never had, and never daring to rise to the joy of an enterprise at first hand, which could bring him within view of a tilting, or of the honour of being considered as a principal man in a court of justice.

To see such an old Trojan as this, just dropping into the grave, which I hoped ere this would have been dug, and filled up with him; crying out with pain, and grunting with weakness; yet in the same moment crack his leathern face into an horrible laugh, and call a young sinner charming

varlet, encoreing him, as formerly he used to do to the Italian eunuchs; what a preposterous, what an unnatural adherence to old habits!

My two cousins are generally present when I entertain, as the old peer calls it. Those stories must drag horribly, that have not more hearers and applauders than relaters.

Applauders!

Ay, Belford, applauders, repeat I; for although these girls pretend to blame me sometimes for the facts, they praise my manner, my invention, my intrepidity.—Besides, what other people call blame, that call I praise: I ever did; and so I very early discharged shame, that cold-water damper to an enterprising spirit.

These are smart girls; they have life and wit; and yesterday, upon Charlotte's raving against me upon a related enterprise, I told her, that I had had in debate several times, whether she were or were not too near of kin to me: and that it was once a moot point with me, whether I could not love her dearly for a month or so: and perhaps it was well for her, that another pretty little puss started up, and diverted me, just as I was entering upon the course.

They all three held up their hands and eyes at once. But I observed that, though the girls exclaimed against me, they were not so angry at this plain speaking as I have found my beloved upon hints so dark that I have wondered at her quick apprehension.

I told Charlotte, that, grave as she pretended to be in her smiling resentments on this declaration, I was sure I should not have been put to the expense of above two or three stratagems, (for nobody admired a good invention more than she,) could I but have disentangled her conscience from the embarrasses of consanguinity.

She pretended to be highly displeased: so did her sister for her. I told her, she seemed as much in earnest as if she had thought me so; and dared the trial. Plain words, I said, in these cases, were more shocking to their sex than gradatim actions. And I bid Patty not be displeased at my distinguishing her sister; since I had a great respect for her likewise.

An Italian air, in my usual careless way, a half-struggled-for kiss from me, and a shrug of the shoulder, by way of admiration, from each pretty cousin, and sad, sad fellow, from the old peer, attended with a side-shaking laugh, made us all friends.

There, Jack!—Wilt thou, or wilt thou not, take this for a letter? there's quantity, I am sure.—How have I filled a sheet (not a short-hand one indeed) without a subject! My fellow shall take this; for he is going to town. And if thou canst think tolerably of such execrable stuff, I will send thee another.

LETTER IV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SIX, SATURDAY MORNING, JULY 8.

Have I nothing new, nothing diverting, in my whimsical way, thou askest, in one of thy three letters before me, to entertain thee with?—And thou tallest me, that, when I have least to narrate, to speak, in the Scottish phrase, I am most diverting. A pretty compliment, either to thyself, or to me. To both indeed!—a sign that thou hast as frothy a heart as I a head. But canst thou suppose that this admirable woman is not all, is not every thing with me? Yet I dread to think of her too; for detection of all my contrivances, I doubt, must come next.

The old peer is also full of Miss Harlowe: and so are my cousins. He hopes I will not be such a dog [there's a specimen of his peer-like dialect] as to think of doing dishonourably by a woman of so much merit, beauty, and fortune; and he says of so good a family. But I tell him, that this is a string he must not touch: that it is a very tender point: in short, is my sore place; and that I am afraid he would handle it too roughly, were I to put myself in the power of so ungentle an operator.

He shakes his crazy head. He thinks all is not as it should be between us; longs to have me present her to him as my wife; and often tells me what great things he will do, additional to his former proposals; and what presents he will make on the birth of the first child. But I hope the whole of his estate will be in my hands before such an event takes place. No harm in hoping, Jack! Lord M. says, were it not for hope, the heart would break.

Eight o'clock at Midsummer, and these lazy varletesses (in full health) not come down yet to breakfast!—What a confounded indecency in young ladies, to let a rake know that they love their beds so dearly, and, at the same time, where to have them! But I'll punish them—they shall breakfast with their old uncle, and yawn at one another as if for a wager; while I drive my phaëton to Colonel Ambroses's, who yesterday gave me an invitation both to breakfast and dine, on account of two Yorkshire nieces, celebrated toasts, who have been with him this fortnight past; and who, he says, want to see me. So, Jack, all women do not run away from me, thank Heaven!—I wish I could have leave of my heart, since the dear fugitive is so ungrateful, to drive her out of it with another beauty. But who can supplant her? Who can be admitted to a place in it after Miss Clarissa Harlowe?

At my return, if I can find a subject, I will scribble on, to oblige thee.

My phaëton's ready. My cousins send me word they are just coming down: so in spite I'll be gone.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON.

I did stay to dine with the Colonel, and his lady, and nieces: but I could not pass the afternoon with them, for the heart of me. There was enough in the persons and faces of the two young ladies to set me upon comparisons. Particular features held my attention for a few moments: but these served but to whet my impatience to find the charmer of my soul; who, for person, for air, for mind, never had any equal. My heart recoiled and sickened upon comparing minds and conversation. Pert wit, a too-studied desire to please; each in high good humour with herself; an open-mouth affectation in both, to show white teeth, as if the principal excellence; and to invite amorous familiarity, by the promise of a sweet breath; at the same time reflecting tacitly upon breaths arrogantly implied to be less pure.

Once I could have borne them.

They seemed to be disappointed that I was so soon able to leave them. Yet have I not at present so much vanity [my Clarissa has cured me of my vanity] as to attribute their disappointment so much to particular liking of me, as to their own self-admiration. They looked upon me as a connoisseur in

beauty. They would have been proud of engaging my attention, as such: but so affected, so flimsy-witted, mere skin-deep beauties!—They had looked no farther into themselves than what their glasses were flattering-glasses too; for I thought them passive-faced, and spiritless; with eyes, however, upon the hunt for conquests, and bespeaking the attention of others, in order to countenance their own. —I believe I could, with a little pains, have given them life and soul, and to every feature of their faces sparkling information—but my Clarissa!—O Belford, my Clarissa has made me eyeless and senseless to every other beauty!—Do thou find her for me, as a subject worthy of my pen, or this shall be the last from

Thy LOVELACE.

LETTER V

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SUNDAY NIGHT, JULY 9.

Now, Jack, have I a subject with a vengeance. I am in the very height of my trial for all my sins to my beloved fugitive. For here to-day, at about five o'clock, arrived Lady Sarah Sadleir and Lady Betty Lawrance, each in her chariot-and-six. Dowagers love equipage; and these cannot travel ten miles without a sett, and half a dozen horsemen.

My time had hung heavy upon my hands; and so I went to church after dinner. Why may not handsome fellows, thought I, like to be looked at, as well as handsome wenches? I fell in, when service was over, with Major Warneton; and so came not home till after six; and was surprised, at entering the court-yard here, to find it littered with equipages and servants. I was sure the owners of them came for no good to me.

Lady Sarah, I soon found, was raised to this visit by Lady Betty; who has health enough to allow her to look out to herself, and out of her own affairs, for business. Yet congratulation to Lord M. on his amendment, [spiteful devils on both accounts!] was the avowed errand. But coming in my absence, I was their principal subject; and they had opportunity to set each other's heart against me.

Simon Parsons hinted this to me, as I passed by the steward's office; for it seems they talked loud; and he was making up some accounts with old Pritchard.

However, I hastened to pay my duty to them—other people not performing theirs, is no excuse for the neglect of our own, you know.

And now I enter upon my TRIAL.

With horrible grave faces was I received. The two antiquities only bowed their tabby heads; making longer faces than ordinary; and all the old lines appearing strong in their furrowed foreheads and fallen cheeks; How do you, Cousin? And how do you, Mr. Lovelace? looking all round at one another, as who should say, do you speak first: and, do you: for they seemed resolved to lose no time.

I had nothing for it, but an air as manly, as theirs was womanly. Your servant, Madam, to Lady Betty; and, Your servant, Madam, I am glad to see you abroad, to Lady Sarah.

I took my seat. Lord M. looked horribly glum; his fingers claspt, and turning round and round, under and over, his but just disgouted thumb; his sallow face, and goggling eyes, on his two kinswomen, by turns; but not once deigning to look upon me.

Then I began to think of the laudanum, and wet cloth, I told thee of long ago; and to call myself in question for a tenderness of heart that will never do me good.

At last, Mr. Lovelace!—Cousin Lovelace!—Hem!—Hem!—I am sorry, very sorry, hesitated Lady Sarah, that there is no hope of your ever taking up—

What's the matter now, Madam?

The matter now!—Why Lady Betty has two letters from Miss Harlowe, which have told us what's the matter—Are all women alike with you?

Yes; I could have answered; 'bating the difference which pride makes.

Then they all chorus'd upon me—Such a character as Miss Harlowe's! cried one—A lady of so much generosity and good sense! Another—How charmingly she writes! the two maiden monkeys, looking at her find handwriting: her perfections my crimes. What can you expect will be the end of these things! cried Lady Sarah—d—d, d—d doings! vociferated the Peer, shaking his loose-fleshe'd wabbling chaps, which hung on his shoulders like an old cow's dewlap.

For my part, I hardly knew whether to sing or say what I had to reply to these all-at-once attacks upon me!—Fair and softly, Ladies—one at a time, I beseech you. I am not to be hunted down without being heard, I hope. Pray let me see these letters. I beg you will let me see them.

There they are:—that's the first—read it out, if you can.

I opened a letter from my charmer, dated Thursday, June 29, our wedding-day, that was to be, and written to Lady Betty Lawrance. By the contents, to my great joy, I find the dear creature is alive and well, and in charming spirits. But the direction where to send an answer to was so scratched out that I could not read it; which afflicted me much.

She puts three questions in it to Lady Betty.

1st. About a letter of her's, dated June 7, congratulating me on my nuptials, and which I was so good as to save Lady Betty the trouble of writing—A very civil thing of me, I think!

Again—'Whether she and one of her nieces Montague were to go to town, on an old chancery suit?'—And, 'Whether they actually did go to town accordingly, and to Hampstead afterwards?' and, 'Whether they brought to town from thence the young creature whom they visited?' was the subject of the second and third questions.

A little inquisitive, dear rogue! and what did she expect to be the better for these questions?—But curiosity, d——d curiosity, is the itch of the sex—yet when didst thou know it turned to their benefit?— For they seldom inquire, but what they fear—and the proverb, as my Lord has it, says, It comes with a fear. That is, I suppose, what they fear generally happens, because there is generally occasion for the fear.

Curiosity indeed she avows to be her only motive for these interrogatories: for, though she says her Ladyship may suppose the questions are not asked for good to me, yet the answer can do me no harm, nor her good, only to give her to understand, whether I have told her a parcel of d——d lyes; that's the plain English of her inquiry.

Well, Madam, said I, with as much philosophy as I could assume; and may I ask—Pray, what was your Ladyship's answer?

There's a copy of it, tossing it to me, very disrespectfully.

This answer was dated July 1. A very kind and complaisant one to the lady, but very so-so to her poor kinsman—That people can give up their own flesh and blood with so much ease!—She tells her 'how proud all our family would be of an alliance with such an excellence.' She does me justice in saying how much I adore her, as an angel of a woman; and begs of her, for I know not how many sakes, besides my soul's sake, 'that she will be so good as to have me for a husband:' and answers—thou wilt guess how—to the lady's questions.

Well, Madam; and pray, may I be favoured with the lady's other letter? I presume it is in reply to your's.

It is, said the Peer: but, Sir, let me ask you a few questions, before you read it—give me the letter, Lady Betty.

There it is, my Lord.

Then on went the spectacles, and his head moved to the lines—a charming pretty hand!—I have often heard that this lady is a genius.

And so, Jack, repeating my Lord's wise comments and questions will let thee into the contents of this merciless letter.

'Monday, July 3,' [reads my Lord.]—Let me see!—that was last Monday; no longer ago! 'Monday, July the third—Madam—I cannot excuse myself'—um, um, um, um, um, um, [humming inarticulately, and skipping.]—'I must own to you, Madam, that the honour of being related'—

Off went the spectacles—Now, tell me, Sir-r, Has not this lady lost all the friends she had in the world for your sake?

She has very implacable friends, my Lord: we all know that.

But has she not lost them all for your sake?—Tell me that.

I believe so, my Lord.

Well then!—I am glad thou art not so graceless as to deny that.

On went the spectacles again—'I must own to you, Madam, that the honour of being related to ladies as eminent for their virtue as for their descent.'—Very pretty, truly! saith my Lord, repeating, 'as eminent for their virtue as for their descent, was, at first, no small inducement with me to lend an ear to Mr. Lovelace's address.'

There is dignity, born-dignity, in this lady, cried my Lord.

Lady Sarah. She would have been a grace to our family.

Lady Betty. Indeed she would.

Lovel. To a royal family, I will venture to say.

Lord M. Then what a devil—

Lovel. Please to read on, my Lord. It cannot be her letter, if it does not make you admire her more and more as you read. Cousin Charlotte, Cousin Patty, pray attend—Read on, my Lord.

Miss Charlotte. Amazing fortitude!

Miss Patty only lifted up her dove's eyes.

Lord M. [Reading.] 'And the rather, as I was determined, had it come to effect, to do every thing in my power to deserve your favourable opinion.'

Then again they chorus'd upon me!

A blessed time of it, poor I!—I had nothing for it but impudence!

Lovel. Pray read on, my Lord—I told you how you would all admire her ——or, shall I read?

Lord M. D——d assurance! [Then reading.] 'I had another motive, which I knew would of itself give me merit with your whole family: [they were all ear:] a presumptuous one; a punishably-presumptuous one, as it has proved: in the hope that I might be an humble mean, in the hand of Providence, to reclaim a man who had, as I thought, good sense enough at bottom to be reclaimed; or at least gratitude enough to acknowledge the intended obligation, whether the generous hope were to succeed or not.' —Excellent young creature!—

Excellent young creature! echoed the Ladies, with their handkerchiefs at their eyes, attended with music.

Lovel. By my soul, Miss Patty, you weep in the wrong place: you shall never go with me to a tragedy.

Lady Betty. Hardened wretch.

His Lordship had pulled off his spectacles to wipe them. His eyes were misty; and he thought the fault in his spectacles.

I saw they were all cocked and primed—to be sure that is a very pretty sentence, said I——that is the excellency of this lady, that in every line, as she writes on, she improves upon herself. Pray, my Lord, proceed—I know her style; the next sentence will still rise upon us.

Lord M. D——d fellow! [Again saddling, and reading.] 'But I have been most egregiously mistaken in Mr. Lovelace!' [Then they all clamoured again.]—'The only man, I persuade myself'——

Lovel. Ladies may persuade themselves to any thing: but how can she answer for what other men would or would not have done in the same circumstances?

I was forced to say any thing to stifle their outcries. Pox take ye altogether, thought I; as if I had not vexation enough in losing her!

Lord M. [Reading.] 'The only man, I persuade myself, pretending to be a gentleman, in whom I could have been so much mistaken.'

They were all beginning again—Pray, my Lord, proceed!—Hear, hear—pray, Ladies, hear!—Now, my Lord, be pleased to proceed. The Ladies are silent.

So they were; lost in admiration of me, hands and eyes uplifted.

Lord M. I will, to thy confusion; for he had looked over the next sentence.

What wretches, Belford, what spiteful wretches, are poor mortals!—So rejoiced to sting one another! to see each other stung!

Lord M. [Reading.] 'For while I was endeavouring to save a drowning wretch, I have been, not accidentally, but premeditatedly, and of set purpose, drawn in after him.'—What say you to that, Sir-r?

Lady S. | Ay, Sir, what say you to this? Lady B. |

Lovel. Say! Why I say it is a very pretty metaphor, if it would but hold.—But, if you please, my Lord, read on. Let me hear what is further said, and I will speak to it all together.

Lord M. I will. 'And he has had the glory to add to the list of those he has ruined, a name that, I will be bold to say, would not have disparaged his own.'

They all looked at me, as expecting me to speak.

Lovel. Be pleased to proceed, my Lord: I will speak to this by-and-by— How came she to know I kept a list?—I will speak to this by-and-by.

Lord M. [Reading on.] 'And this, Madam, by means that would shock humanity to be made acquainted with.'

Then again, in a hurry, off went the spectacles.

This was a plaguy stroke upon me. I thought myself an oak in impudence; but, by my troth, this almost felled me.

Lord M. What say you to this, SIR-R!

Remember, Jack, to read all their Sirs in this dialogue with a double rr, Sir-r! denoting indignation rather than respect.

They all looked at me as if to see if I could blush.

Lovel. Eyes off, my Lord!—Eyes off, Ladies! [Looking bashfully, I believe.]—What say I to this, my Lord!—Why, I say, that this lady has a strong manner of expressing herself!—That's all.—There are many things that pass among lovers, which a man cannot explain himself upon before grave people.

Lady Betty. Among lovers, Sir-r! But, Mr. Lovelace, can you say that this lady behaved either like a weak, or a credulous person?—Can you say—

Lovel. I am ready to do the lady all manner of justice.—But, pray now, Ladies, if I am to be thus interrogated, let me know the contents of the rest of the letter, that I may be prepared for my defence, as you are all for my arraignment. For, to be required to answer piecemeal thus, without knowing what is to follow, is a cursed ensnaring way of proceeding.

They gave me the letter: I read it through to myself:—and by the repetition of what I said, thou wilt guess at the remaining contents.

You shall find, Ladies, you shall find, my Lord, that I will not spare myself. Then holding the letter in my hand, and looking upon it, as a lawyer upon his brief,

Miss Harlowe says, 'That when your Ladyship,' [turning to Lady Betty,] 'shall know, that, in the progress to her ruin, wilful falsehoods, repeated forgeries, and numberless perjuries, were not the least of my crimes, you will judge that she can have no principles that will make her worthy of an alliance with ladies of your's, and your noble sister's character, if she could not, from her soul, declare, that such an alliance can never now take place.'

Surely, Ladies, this is passion! This is not reason. If our family would not think themselves dishonoured by my marrying a person whom I had so treated; but, on the contrary, would rejoice that I did her this justice: and if she has come out pure gold from the assay; and has nothing to reproach herself with; why should it be an impeachment of her principles, to consent that such an alliance take place?

She cannot think herself the worse, justly she cannot, for what was done against her will.

Their countenances menaced a general uproar—but I proceeded.

Your Lordship read to us, that she had an hope, a presumptuous one: nay, a punishably-presumptuous one, she calls it; 'that she might be a mean, in the hand of Providence, to reclaim me; and that this, she knew, if effected, would give her a merit with you all.' But from what would she

reclaim me?—She had heard, you'll say, (but she had only heard, at the time she entertained that hope,) that, to express myself in the women's dialect, I was a very wicked fellow!—Well, and what then?—Why, truly, the very moment she was convinced, by her own experience, that the charge against me was more than hearsay; and that, of consequence, I was a fit subject for her generous endeavours to work upon; she would needs give me up. Accordingly, she flies out, and declares, that the ceremony which would repair all shall never take place!—Can this be from any other motive than female resentment?

This brought them all upon me, as I intended it should: it was as a tub to a whale; and after I had let them play with it a while, I claimed their attention, and, knowing that they always loved to hear me prate, went on.

The lady, it is plain, thought, that the reclaiming of a man from bad habits was a much easier task than, in the nature of things, it can be.

She writes, as your Lordship has read, 'That, in endeavouring to save a drowning wretch, she had been, not accidentally, but premeditatedly, and of set purpose, drawn in after him.' But how is this, Ladies?—You see by her own words, that I am still far from being out of danger myself. Had she found me, in a quagmire suppose, and I had got out of it by her means, and left her to perish in it; that would have been a crime indeed. —But is not the fact quite otherwise? Has she not, if her allegory prove what she would have it prove, got out herself, and left me floundering still deeper and deeper in?—What she should have done, had she been in earnest to save me, was, to join her hand with mine, that so we might by our united strength help one another out.—I held out my hand to her, and besought her to give me her's:—But, no truly! she was determined to get out herself as fast as she could, let me sink or swim: refusing her assistance (against her own principles) because she saw I wanted it.—You see, Ladies, you see, my Lord, how pretty tinkling words run away with ears inclined to be musical.

They were all ready to exclaim again: but I went on, proleptically, as a rhetorician would say, before their voices would break out into words.

But my fair accuser says, that, 'I have added to the list of those I have ruined, a name that would not have disparaged my own.' It is true, I have been gay and enterprising. It is in my constitution to be so. I know not how I came by such a constitution: but I was never accustomed to check or controul; that you all know. When a man finds himself hurried by passion into a slight offence, which, however slight, will not be forgiven, he may be made desperate: as a thief, who only intends a robbery, is often by resistance, and for self-preservation, drawn in to commit murder.

I was a strange, a horrid wretch, with every one. But he must be a silly fellow who has not something to say for himself, when every cause has its black and its white side.—Westminster-hall, Jack, affords every day as confident defences as mine.

But what right, proceeded I, has this lady to complain of me, when she as good as says—Here, Lovelace, you have acted the part of a villain by me! —You would repair your fault: but I won't let you, that I may have the satisfaction of exposing you; and the pride of refusing you.

But, was that the case? Was that the case? Would I pretend to say, I would now marry the lady, if she would have me?

Lovel. You find she renounces Lady Betty's mediation——

Lord M. [Interrupting me.] Words are wind; but deeds are mind: What signifies your cursed quibbling, Bob?—Say plainly, if she will have you, will you have her? Answer me, yes or no; and lead us not a wild-goose chase after your meaning.

Lovel. She knows I would. But here, my Lord, if she thus goes on to expose herself and me, she will make it a dishonour to us both to marry.

Charl. But how must she have been treated——

Lovel. [Interrupting her.] Why now, Cousin Charlotte, chucking her under the chin, would you have me tell you all that has passed between the lady and me? Would you care, had you a bold and

enterprising lover, that proclamation should be made of every little piece of amorous roguery, that he offered to you?

Charlotte reddened. They all began to exclaim. But I proceeded.

The lady says, 'She has been dishonoured' (devil take me, if I spare myself!) 'by means that would shock humanity to be made acquainted with them.' She is a very innocent lady, and may not be a judge of the means she hints at. Over-niceness may be under-niceness: Have you not such a proverb, my Lord?—tantamount to, One extreme produces another!—Such a lady as this may possibly think her case more extraordinary than it is. This I will take upon me to say, that if she has met with the only man in the world who would have treated her, as she says I have treated her, I have met in her with the only woman in the world who would have made such a rout about a case that is uncommon only from the circumstances that attend it.

This brought them all upon me; hands, eyes, voices, all lifted at once. But my Lord M. who has in his head (the last seat of retreating lewdness) as much wickedness as I have in my heart, was forced (upon the air I spoke this with, and Charlotte's and all the rest reddening) to make a mouth that was big enough to swallow up the other half of his face; crying out, to avoid laughing, Oh! Oh! —as if under the power of a gouty twinge.

Hadst thou seen how the two tabbies and the young grimalkins looked at one another, at my Lord, and at me, by turns, thou would have been ready to split thy ugly face just in the middle. Thy mouth hath already done half the work. And, after all, I found not seldom in this conversation, that my humourous undaunted airs forced a smile into my service from the prim mouths of the young ladies. They perhaps, had they met with such another intrepid fellow as myself, who had first gained upon their affections, would not have made such a rout as my beloved has done, about such an affair as that we were assembled upon. Young ladies, as I have observed on an hundred occasions, fear not half so much for themselves as their mothers do for them. But here the girls were forced to put on grave airs, and to seem angry, because the antiques made the matter of such high importance. Yet so lightly sat anger and fellow-feeling at their hearts, that they were forced to purse in their mouths, to suppress the smiles I now-and-then laid out for: while the elders having had roses (that is to say, daughters) of their own, and knowing how fond men are of a trifle, would have been very loth to have had them nipt in the bud, without saying to the mother of them, By your leave, Mrs. Rose-bush.

The next article of my indictment was for forgery; and for personating of Lady Betty and my cousin Charlotte.

Two shocking charges, thou'lt say: and so they were!—The Peer was outrageous upon the forgery charge. The Ladies vowed never to forgive the personating part.

Not a peace-maker among them. So we all turned women, and scolded.

My Lord told me, that he believed in his conscience there was not a viler fellow upon God's earth than me.—What signifies mincing the matter? said he—and that it was not the first time I had forged his hand.

To this I answered, that I supposed, when the statute of Scandalum Magnatum was framed, there were a good many in the peerage who knew they deserved hard names; and that that law therefore was rather made to privilege their qualities, than to whiten their characters.

He called upon me to explain myself, with a Sir-r, so pronounced, as to show that one of the most ignominious words in our language was in his head.

People, I said, that were fenced in by their quality, and by their years, should not take freedoms that a man of spirit could not put up with, unless he were able heartily to despise the insulter.

This set him in a violent passion. He would send for Pritchard instantly. Let Pritchard be called. He would alter his will; and all he could leave from me, he would.

Do, do, my Lord, said I: I always valued my own pleasure above your estate. But I'll let Pritchard know, that if he draws, he shall sign and seal.

Why, what would I do to Pritchard?—shaking his crazy head at me.

Only, what he, or any man else, writes with his pen, to despoil me of what I think my right, he shall seal with his ears; that's all, my Lord.

Then the two Ladies interposed.

Lady Sarah told me, that I carried things a great way; and that neither Lord M. nor any of them, deserved the treatment I gave them.

I said, I could not bear to be used ill by my Lord, for two reasons; first, because I respected his Lordship above any man living; and next, because it looked as if I were induced by selfish considerations to take that from him, which nobody else would offer to me.

And what, returned he, shall be my inducement to take what I do at your hands?—Hay, Sir?

Indeed, Cousin Lovelace, said Lady Betty, with great gravity, we do not any of us, as Lady Sarah says, deserve at your hands the treatment you give us: and let me tell you, that I don't think my character and your cousin Charlotte's ought to be prostituted, in order to ruin an innocent lady. She must have known early the good opinion we all have of her, and how much we wished her to be your wife. This good opinion of ours has been an inducement to her (you see she says so) to listen to your address. And this, with her friends' folly, has helped to throw her into your power. How you have requited her is too apparent. It becomes the character we all bear, to disclaim your actions by her. And let me tell you, that to have her abused by wicked people raised up to personate us, or any of us, makes a double call upon us to disclaim them.

Lovel. Why this is talking somewhat like. I would have you all disclaim my actions. I own I have done very vilely by this lady. One step led to another. I am curst with an enterprizing spirit. I hate to be foiled—

Foiled! interrupted Lady Sarah. What a shame to talk at this rate!—Did the lady set up a contention with you? All nobly sincere, and plain-hearted, have I heard Miss Clarissa Harlowe is: above art, above disguise; neither the coquette, nor the prude!—Poor lady! she deserved a better fare from the man for whom she took the step which she so freely blames!

This above half affected me.—Had this dispute been so handled by every one, I had been ashamed to look up. I began to be bashful.

Charlotte asked if I did not still seem inclinable to do the lady justice, if she would accept of me? It would be, she dared to say, the greatest felicity the family could know (she would answer for one) that this fine lady were of it.

They all declared to the same effect; and Lady Sarah put the matter home to me.

But my Lord Marplot would have it that I could not be serious for six minutes together.

I told his Lordship that he was mistaken; light as he thought I made of his subject, I never knew any that went so near my heart.

Miss Patty said she was glad to hear that: and her soft eyes glistened with pleasure.

Lord M. called her sweet soul, and was ready to cry.

Not from humanity neither, Jack. This Peer has no bowels; as thou mayest observe by this treatment of me. But when people's minds are weakened by a sense of their own infirmities, and when they are drawing on to their latter ends, they will be moved on the slightest occasions, whether those offer from within or without them. And this, frequently, the unpenetrating world, calls humanity; when all the time, in compassionating the miseries of human nature, they are but pitying themselves; and were they in strong health and spirits, would care as little for any body else as thou or I do.

Here broke they off my trial for this sitting. Lady Sarah was much fatigued. It was agreed to pursue the subject in the morning. They all, however, retired together, and went into private conference.

LETTER VI

MR. LOVELACE [IN CONTINUATION.]

The Ladies, instead of taking up the subject where we had laid it down, must needs touch upon passage in my fair accuser's letter, which I was in hopes they would have let rest, as we were in a tolerable way. But, truly, they must hear all they could hear of our story, and what I had to say to those passages, that they might be better enabled to mediate between us, if I were really and indeed inclined to do her the hoped-for justice.

These passages were, 1st, 'That, after I had compulsorily tricked her into the act of going off with me, I carried her to one of the worst houses in London.'

2nd, 'That I had made a wicked attempt upon her; in resentment of which she fled to Hampstead privately.'

3dly, Came the forgery, and personating charges again; and we were upon the point of renewing out quarrel, before we could get to the next charge: which was still worse.

For that (4thly) was 'That having betrayed her back to the vile house, I first robbed her of her senses, and then her honour; detaining her afterwards a prisoner there.'

Were I to tell thee the glosses I put upon these heavy charges, what would it be, but repeat many of the extenuating arguments I have used in my letters to thee?—Suffice it, therefore, to say, that I insisted much, by way of palliation, on the lady's extreme niceness: on her diffidence in my honour: on Miss Howe's contriving spirit; plots on their parts begetting plots on mine: on the high passions of the sex. I asserted, that my whole view, in gently restraining her, was to oblige her to forgive me, and to marry me; and this for the honour of both families. I boasted of my own good qualities; some of which none that knew me deny; and to which few libertines can lay claim.

They then fell into warm admirations and praises of the lady; all of them preparatory, as I knew, to the grand question: and thus it was introduced by Lady Sarah.

We have said as much as I think we can say upon these letters of the poor lady. To dwell upon the mischiefs that may ensue from the abuse of a person of her rank, if all the reparation be not made that now can be made, would perhaps be to little purpose. But you seem, Sir, still to have a just opinion of her, as well as affection for her. Her virtue is not in the least questionable. She could not resent as she does, had she any thing to reproach herself with. She is, by every body's account, a fine woman; has a good estate in her own right; is of no contemptible family; though I think, with regard to her, they have acted as imprudently as unworthily. For the excellency of her mind, for good economy, the common speech of her, as the worthy Dr. Lewen once told me, is that her prudence would enrich a poor man, and her piety reclaim a licentious one. I, who have not been abroad twice this twelvemonth, came hither purposely, so did Lady Betty, to see if justice may not be done her; and also whether we, and my Lord M. (your nearest relations, Sir,) have, or have not, any influence over you. And, for my own part, as your determination shall be in this article, such shall be mine, with regard to the disposition of all that is within my power.

Lady Betty. And mine.

And mine, said my Lord: and valiantly he swore to it.

Lovel. Far be it from me to think slightly of favours you may any of you be glad I would deserve! but as far be it from me to enter into conditions against my own liking, with sordid views!—As to future mischiefs, let them come. I have not done with the Harlowes yet. They were the aggressors; and I should be glad they would let me hear from them, in the way they should hear from me in the like case. Perhaps I should not be sorry to be found, rather than be obliged to seek, on this occasion.

Miss Charlotte. [Reddening.] Spoke like a man of violence, rather than a man of reason! I hope you'll allow that, Cousin.

Lady Sarah. Well, but since what is done, and cannot be undone, let us think of the next best, Have you any objection against marrying Miss Harlowe, if she will have you?

Lovel. There can possibly be but one: That she is to every body, no doubt, as well as to Lady Betty, pursuing that maxim peculiar to herself, (and let me tell you so it ought to be:) that what she cannot conceal from herself, she will publish to the world.

Miss Patty. The lady, to be sure, writes this in the bitterness of her grief, and in despair.—

Lovel. And so when her grief is allayed; when her despairing fit is over—and this from you, Cousin Patty!—Sweet girl! And would you, my dear, in the like case [whispering her] have yielded to entreaty—would you have meant no more by the like exclamations?

I had a rap with her fan, and blush; and from Lord M. a reflection, That I turn'd into jest every thing they said.

I asked, if they thought the Harlowes deserved any consideration from me? And whether that family would not exult over me, were I to marry their daughter, as if I dared not to do otherwise?

Lady Sarah. Once I was angry with that family, as we all were. But now I pity them; and think, that you have but too well justified the worse treatment they gave you.

Lord M. Their family is of standing. All gentlemen of it, and rich, and reputable. Let me tell you, that many of our coronets would be glad they could derive their descents from no worse a stem than theirs.

Lovel. The Harlowes are a narrow-souled and implacable family. I hate them: and, though I revere the lady, scorn all relation to them.

Lady Betty. I wish no worse could be said of him, who is such a scorner of common failings in others.

Lord M. How would my sister Lovelace have reproached herself for all her indulgent folly to this favourite boy of her's, had she lived till now, and been present on this occasion!

Lady Sarah. Well, but, begging your Lordship's pardon, let us see if any thing can be done for this poor lady.

Miss Ch. If Mr. Lovelace has nothing to object against the lady's character, (and I presume to think he is not ashamed to do her justice, though it may make against himself,) I cannot but see her honour and generosity will compel from him all that we expect. If there be any levities, any weaknesses, to be charged upon the lady, I should not open my lips in her favour; though in private I would pity her, and deplore her hard hap. And yet, even then, there might not want arguments, from honour to gratitude, in so particular a case, to engage you, Sir, to make good the vows it is plain you have broken.

Lady Betty. My niece Charlotte has called upon you so justly, and has put the question to you so properly, that I cannot but wish you would speak to it directly, and without evasion.

All in a breath then bespoke my seriousness, and my justice: and in this manner I delivered myself, assuming an air sincerely solemn.

'I am very sensible that the performance of the task you have put me upon will leave me without excuse: but I will not have recourse either to evasion or palliation.

'As my cousin Charlotte has severely observed, I am not ashamed to do justice to Miss Harlowe's merit.

'I own to you all, and, what is more, with high regret, (if not with shame, cousin Charlotte,) that I have a great deal to answer for in my usage of this lady. The sex has not a nobler mind, nor a lovelier person of it. And, for virtue, I could not have believed (excuse me, Ladies) that there ever was a woman who gave, or could have given, such illustrious, such uniform proofs of it: for, in her whole conduct, she has shown herself to be equally above temptation and art; and, I had almost said, human frailty.

'The step she so freely blames herself for taking, was truly what she calls compulsory: for though she was provoked to think of going off with me, she intended it not, nor was provided to do

so: neither would she ever have had the thought of it, had her relations left her free, upon her offered composition to renounce the man she did not hate, in order to avoid the man she did.

'It piqued my pride, I own, that I could so little depend upon the force of those impressions which I had the vanity to hope I had made in a heart so delicate; and, in my worst devices against her, I encouraged myself that I abused no confidence; for none had she in my honour.

'The evils she has suffered, it would have been more than a miracle had she avoided. Her watchfulness rendered more plots abortive than those which contributed to her fall; and they were many and various. And all her greater trials and hardships were owing to her noble resistance and just resentment.

'I know, proceeded I, how much I condemn myself in the justice I am doing to this excellent creature. But yet I will do her justice, and cannot help it if I would. And I hope this shows that I am not so totally abandoned as I have been thought to be.

'Indeed, with me, she has done more honour to her sex in her fall, if it be to be called a fall, (in truth it ought not,) than ever any other could do in her standing.

'When, at length, I had given her watchful virtue cause of suspicion, I was then indeed obliged to make use of power and art to prevent her escaping from me. She then formed contrivances to elude mine; but all her's were such as strict truth and punctilious honour would justify. She could not stoop to deceit and falsehood, no, not to save herself. More than once justly did she tell me, fired by conscious worthiness, that her soul was my soul's superior!—Forgive me, Ladies, for saying, that till I knew her, I questioned a soul in a sex, created, as I was willing to suppose, only for temporary purposes.—It is not to be imagined into what absurdities men of free principle run in order to justify to themselves their free practices; and to make a religion to their minds: and yet, in this respect, I have not been so faulty as some others.

'No wonder that such a noble creature as this looked upon every studied artifice as a degree of baseness not to be forgiven: no wonder that she could so easily become averse to the man (though once she beheld him with an eye not wholly indifferent) whom she thought capable of premeditated guilt. Nor, give me leave, on the other hand, to say, is it to be wondered at, that the man who found it so difficult to be forgiven for the slighter offences, and who had not the grace to recede or repent, (made desperate,) should be hurried on to the commission of the greater.

'In short, Ladies, in a word, my Lord, Miss Clarissa Harlowe is an angel; if ever there was or could be one in human nature: and is, and ever was, as pure as an angel in her will: and this justice I must do her, although the question, I see by every glistening eye, is ready to be asked, What then, Lovelace, art thou?'—

Lord M. A devil!—a d——d devil! I must answer. And may the curse of God follow you in all you undertake, if you do not make her the best amends now in your power to make her!

Lovel. From you, my Lord, I could expect no other: but from the Ladies I hope for less violence from the ingenuousness of my confession.

The Ladies, elder and younger, had their handkerchiefs to their eyes, at the just testimony which I bore to the merits of this exalted creature; and which I would make no scruple to bear at the bar of a court of justice, were I to be called to it.

Lady Betty. Well, Sir, this is a noble character. If you think as you speak, surely you cannot refuse to do the lady all the justice now in your power to do her.

They all joined in this demand.

I pleaded, that I was sure she would not have me: that, when she had taken a resolution, she was not to be moved. Unpersuadableness was an Harlowe sin: that, and her name, I told them, were all she had of theirs.

All were of opinion, that she might, in her present desolate circumstances, be brought to forgive me. Lady Sarah said, that Lady Betty and she would endeavour to find out the noble sufferer, as they

justly called her; and would take her into their protection, and be guarantees of the justice that I would do her; as well after marriage as before.

It was some pleasure to me, to observe the placability of these ladies of my own family, had they, any or either of them, met with a LOVELACE. But 'twould be hard upon us honest fellows, Jack, if all women were CLARISSAS.

Here I am obliged to break off.

LETTER VII

MR. LOVELACE [IN CONTINUATION.]

It is much better, Jack, to tell your own story, when it must be known, than to have an adversary tell it for you. Conscious of this, I gave them a particular account how urgent I had been with her to fix upon the Thursday after I left her (it being her uncle Harlowe's anniversary birth-day, and named to oblige her) for the private celebration; having some days before actually procured a license, which still remained with her.

That, not being able to prevail upon her to promise any thing, while under a supposed restraint! I offered to leave her at full liberty, if she would give me the least hope for that day. But neither did this offer avail me.

That this inflexibleness making me desperate, I resolved to add to my former fault, by giving directions that she should not either go or correspond out of the house, till I returned from M. Hall; well knowing, that if she were at full liberty, I must for ever lose her.

That this constraint had so much incensed her, that although I wrote no less than four different letters, I could not procure a single word in answer; though I pressed her but for four words to signify the day and the church.

I referred to my two cousins to vouch for me the extraordinary methods I took to send messengers to town, though they knew not the occasion; which now I told them was this.

I acquainted them, that I even had wrote to you, Jack, and to another gentleman of whom I thought she had a good opinion, to attend her, in order to press for her compliance; holding myself in readiness the last day, at Salt-hill, to meet the messenger they should send, and proceed to London, if his message were favourable. But that, before they could attend her, she had found means to fly away once more: and is now, said I, perched perhaps somewhere under Lady Betty's window at Glenham-hall; and there, like the sweet Philomela, a thorn in her breast, warbles forth her melancholy complaints against her barbarous Tereus.

Lady Betty declared that she was not with her; nor did she know where she was. She should be, she added, the most welcome guest to her that she ever received.

In truth, I had a suspicion that she was already in their knowledge, and taken into their protection; for Lady Sarah I imagined incapable of being roused to this spirit by a letter only from Miss Harlowe, and that not directed to herself; she being a very indolent and melancholy woman. But her sister, I find had wrought her up to it: for Lady Betty is as officious and managing a woman as Mrs. Howe; but of a much more generous and noble disposition—she is my aunt, Jack.

I supposed, I said, that her Ladyship might have a private direction where to send to her. I spoke as I wished: I would have given the world to have heard that she was inclined to cultivate the interest of any of my family.

Lady Betty answered that she had no direction but what was in the letter; which she had scratched out, and which, it was probable, was only a temporary one, in order to avoid me: otherwise she would hardly have directed an answer to be left at an inn. And she was of opinion, that to apply to Miss Howe would be the only certain way to succeed in any application for forgiveness, would I enable that young lady to interest herself in procuring it.

Miss Charlotte. Permit me to make a proposal.—Since we are all of one mind, in relation to the justice due to Miss Harlowe, if Mr. Lovelace will oblige himself to marry her, I will make Miss Howe a visit, little as I am acquainted with her; and endeavour to engage her interest to forward the desired reconciliation. And if this can be done, I make no question but all may be happily accommodated; for every body knows the love there is between Miss Harlowe and Miss Howe.

MARRIAGE, with these women, thou seest, Jack, is an atonement for all we can do to them. A true dramatic recompense!

This motion was highly approved of; and I gave my honour, as desired, in the fullest manner they could wish.

Lady Sarah. Well then, Cousin Charlotte, begin your treaty with Miss Howe, out of hand.

Lady Betty. Pray do. And let Miss Harlowe be told, that I am ready to receive her as the most welcome of guests: and I will not have her out of my sight till the knot is tied.

Lady Sarah. Tell her from me, that she shall be my daughter, instead of my poor Betsey!— And shed a tear in remembrance of her lost daughter.

Lord M. What say you, Sir, to this?

Lovel. CONTENT, my Lord, I speak in the language of your house.

Lord M. We are not to be fooled, Nephew. No quibbling. We will have no slur put upon us.

Lovel. You shall not. And yet, I did not intend to marry, if she exceeded the appointed Thursday. But, I think (according to her own notions) that I have injured her beyond reparation, although I were to make her the best of husbands; as I am resolved to be, if she will condescend, as I will call it, to have me. And be this, Cousin Charlotte, my part of your commission to say.

This pleased them all.

Lord M. Give me thy hand, Bob!—Thou talkest like a man of honour at last. I hope we may depend upon what thou sayest!

The Ladies eyes put the same question to me.

Lovel. You may, my Lord—You may, Ladies—absolutely you may.

Then was the personal character of the lady, as well as her more extraordinary talents and endowments again expatiated upon: and Miss Patty, who had once seen her, launched out more than all the rest in her praise. These were followed by such inquiries as are never forgotten to be made in marriage-treaties, and which generally are the principal motives with the sages of a family, though the least to be mentioned by the parties themselves, and yet even by them, perhaps, the first thought of: that is to say, inquisition into the lady's fortune; into the particulars of the grandfather's estate; and what her father, and her single-souled uncles, will probably do for her, if a reconciliation be effected; as, by their means, they make no doubt but it will be between both families, if it be not my fault. The two venerables [no longer tabbies with me now] hinted at rich presents on their own parts; and my Lord declared that he would make such overtures in my behalf, as should render my marriage with Miss Harlowe the best day's work I ever made; and what, he doubted not, would be as agreeable to that family as to myself.

Thus, at present, by a single hair, hangs over my head the matrimonial sword. And thus ended my trial. And thus are we all friends, and Cousin and Cousin, and Nephew and Nephew, at every word.

Did ever comedy end more happily than this long trial?

LETTER VIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. WEDN. JULY 12.

So, Jack, they think they have gained a mighty point. But, were I to change my mind, were I to repent, I fancy I am safe.—And yet this very moment it rises to my mind, that 'tis hard trusting too; for surely there must be some embers, where there was fire so lately, that may be stirred up to give a blaze to combustibles strewed lightly upon them. Love, like some self-propagating plants, or roots, (which have taken strong hold in the earth) when once got deep into the heart, is hardly ever totally extirpated, except by matrimony indeed, which is the grave of love, because it allows of the end of love. Then these ladies, all advocates for herself, with herself, Miss Howe at their head, perhaps,—— not in favour to me—I don't expect that from Miss Howe—but perhaps in favour to herself: for Miss Howe has reason to apprehend vengeance from me, I ween. Her Hickman will be safe too, as she may think, if I marry her beloved friend: for he has been a busy fellow, and I have long wished to have a slap at him!—The lady's case desperate with her friends too; and likely to be so, while single, and her character exposed to censure.

A husband is a charming cloke, a fig-leaved apron for a wife: and for a lady to be protected in liberties, in diversions, which her heart pants after—and all her faults, even the most criminal, were she to be detected, to be thrown upon the husband, and the ridicule too; a charming privilege for a wife!

But I shall have one comfort, if I marry, which pleases me not a little. If a man's wife has a dear friend of her sex, a hundred liberties may be taken with that friend, which could not be taken, if the single lady (knowing what a title to freedoms marriage had given him with her friend) was not less scrupulous with him than she ought to be as to herself. Then there are broad freedoms (shall I call them?) that may be taken by the husband with his wife, that may not be quite shocking, which, if the wife bears before her friends, will serve for a lesson to that friend; and if that friend bears to be present at them without check or bashfulness, will show a sagacious fellow that she can bear as much herself, at proper time and place.

Chastity, Jack, like piety, is an uniform thing. If in look, if in speech, a girl give way to undue levity, depend upon it the devil has got one of his cloven feet in her heart already—so, Hickman, take care of thyself, I advise thee, whether I marry or not.

Thus, Jack, have I at once reconciled myself to all my relations—and if the lady refuses me, thrown the fault upon her. This, I knew, would be in my power to do at any time: and I was the more arrogant to them, in order to heighten the merit of my compliance.

But, after all, it would be very whimsical, would it not, if all my plots and contrivances should end in wedlock? What a punishment should this come out to be, upon myself too, that all this while I have been plundering my own treasury?

And then, can there be so much harm done, if it can be so easily repaired by a few magical words; as I Robert take thee, Clarissa; and I Clarissa take thee, Robert, with the rest of the for-better and for-worse legerdemain, which will hocus pocus all the wrongs, the crying wrongs, that I have done to Miss Harlowe, into acts of kindness and benevolence to Mrs. Lovelace?

But, Jack, two things I must insist upon with thee, if this is to be the case.—Having put secrets of so high a nature between me and my spouse into thy power, I must, for my own honour, and for the honour of my wife and illustrious progeny, first oblige thee to give up the letters I have so profusely scribbled to thee; and in the next place, do by thee, as I have heard whispered in France was done by the true father of a certain monarch; that is to say, cut thy throat, to prevent thy telling of tales.

I have found means to heighten the kind opinion my friends here have begun to have of me, by communicating to them the contents of the four last letters which I wrote to press my elected spouse

to solemnize. My Lord repeated one of his phrases in my favour, that he hopes it will come out, that the devil is not quite so black as he is painted.

Now pr'ythee, dear Jack, since so many good consequences are to flow from these our nuptials, (one of which to thyself; since the sooner thou diest, the less thou wilt have to answer for); and that I now-and-then am apt to believe there may be something in the old fellow's notion, who once told us, that he who kills a man, has all that man's sins to answer for, as well as his own, because he gave him not the time to repent of them that Heaven designed to allow him, [a fine thing for thee, if thou consentest to be knocked of the head; but a cursed one for the manslayer!] and since there may be room to fear that Miss Howe will not give us her help; I pr'ythee now exert thyself to find out my Clarissa Harlowe, that I may make a LOVELACE of her. Set all the city bellmen, and the country criers, for ten miles round the metropolis, at work, with their 'Oye's! and if any man, woman, or child can give tale or tidings.' —Advertise her in all the news-papers; and let her know, 'That if she will repair to Lady Betty Lawrance, or to Miss Charlotte Montague, she may hear of something greatly to her advantage.'

My two cousins Montague are actually to set out to-morrow to Mrs. Howe's, to engage her vixen daughter's interest with her friend. They will flaunt it away in a chariot-and-six, for the greater state and significance.

Confounded mortification to be reduced this low!—My pride hardly knows how to brook it.

Lord M. has engaged the two venerables to stay here to attend the issue: and I, standing very high at present in their good graces, am to gallant them to Oxford, to Blenheim, and to several other places.

LETTER IX

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE THURSDAY NIGHT, JULY 13.

Collins sets not out to-morrow. Some domestic occasion hinders him. Rogers is but now returned from you, and cannot be well spared. Mr. Hickman is gone upon an affair of my mother's, and has taken both his servants with him, to do credit to his employer: so I am forced to venture this by post, directed by your assumed name.

I am to acquaint you, that I have been favoured with a visit from Miss Montague and her sister, in Lord M.'s chariot-and-six. My Lord's gentleman rode here yesterday, with a request that I would receive a visit from the two young ladies, on a very particular occasion; the greater favour if it might be the next day.

As I had so little personal knowledge of either, I doubted not but it must be in relation to the interests of my dear friend; and so consulting with my mother, I sent them an invitation to favour me (because of the distance) with their company at dinner; which they kindly accepted.

I hope, my dear, since things have been so very bad, that their errand to me will be as agreeable to you, as any thing that can now happen. They came in the name of Lord M. and Lady Sarah and Lady Betty his two sisters, to desire my interest to engage you to put yourself into the protection of Lady Betty; who will not part with you till she sees all the justice done you that now can be done.

Lady Sarah had not stirred out for a twelve-month before; never since she lost her agreeable daughter whom you and I saw at Mrs. Benson's: but was induced to take this journey by Lady Betty, purely to procure you reparation, if possible. And their joint strength, united with Lord M.'s, has so far succeeded, that the wretch has bound himself to them, and to these young ladies, in the solemnest manner, to wed you in their presence, if they can prevail upon you to give him your hand.

This consolation you may take to yourself, that all this honourable family have a due (that is, the highest) sense of your merit, and greatly admire you. The horrid creature has not spared himself in doing justice to your virtue; and the young ladies gave us such an account of his confessions, and self-condemnation, that my mother was quite charmed with you; and we all four shed tears of joy, that there is one of our sex [I, that that one is my dearest friend,] who has done so much honour to it, as to deserve the exalted praises given you by a wretch so self-conceited; though pity for the excellent creature mixed with our joy.

He promises by them to make the best of husbands; and my Lord, and Lady Sarah, and Lady Betty, are all three to be guarantees that he will be so. Noble settlements, noble presents, they talked of: they say, they left Lord M. and his two sisters talking of nothing else but of those presents and settlements, how most to do you honour, the greater in proportion for the indignities you have suffered; and of changing of names by act of parliament, preparative to the interest they will all join to make to get the titles to go where the bulk of the estate must go, at my Lord's death, which they apprehend to be nearer than they wish. Nor doubt they of a thorough reformation in his morals, from your example and influence over him.

I made a great many objections for you—all, I believe, that you could have made yourself, had you been present. But I have no doubt to advise you, my dear, (and so does my mother,) instantly to put yourself into Lady Betty's protection, with a resolution to take the wretch for your husband. All his future grandeur [he wants not pride] depends upon his sincerity to you; and the young ladies vouch for the depth of his concern for the wrongs he has done you.

All his apprehension is, in your readiness to communicate to every one, as he fears, the evils you have suffered; which he thinks will expose you both. But had you not revealed them to Lady Betty, you had not had so warm a friend; since it is owing to two letters you wrote to her, that all this good, as I hope it will prove, was brought about. But I advise you to be more sparing in exposing what is past, whether you have thoughts of accepting him or not: for what, my dear, can that avail

now, but to give a handle to vile wretches to triumph over your friends; since every one will not know how much to your honour your very sufferings have been?

Your melancholy letter brought by Rogers,² with his account of your indifferent health, confirmed to him by the woman of the house, as well as by your looks and by your faintness while you talked with him, would have given me inexpressible affliction, had I not been cheered by this agreeable visit from the young ladies. I hope you will be equally so on my imparting the subject of it to you.

Indeed, my dear, you must not hesitate. You must oblige them. The alliance is splendid and honourable. Very few will know any thing of his brutal baseness to you. All must end, in a little while, in a general reconciliation; and you will be able to resume your course of doing the good to every deserving object, which procured you blessings wherever you set your foot.

I am concerned to find, that your father's inhuman curse affects you so much as it does. Yet you are a noble creature to put it, as you put it— I hope you are indeed more solicitous to get it revoked for their sakes than for your own. It is for them to be penitent, who hurried you into evils you could not well avoid. You are apt to judge by the unhappy event, rather than upon the true merits of your case. Upon my honour, I think you faultless almost in every step you have taken. What has not that vilely-insolent and ambitious, yet stupid, brother of your's to answer for?—that spiteful thing your sister too!

But come, since what is past cannot be helped, let us look forward. You have now happy prospects opening to you: a family, already noble, prepared to receive you with open arms and joyful heart; and who, by their love to you, will teach another family (who know not what an excellence they have confederated to persecute) how to value you. Your prudence, your piety, will crown all. You will reclaim a wretch that, for an hundred sakes more than for his own, one would wish to be reclaimed.

Like a traveller, who has been put out of his way, by the overflowing of some rapid stream, you have only had the fore-right path you were in overwhelmed. A few miles about, a day or two only lost, as I may say, and you are in a way to recover it; and, by quickening your speed, will get up the lost time. The hurry upon your spirits, mean time, will be all your inconvenience; for it was not your fault you were stopped in your progress.

Think of this, my dear; and improve upon the allegory, as you know how. If you can, without impeding your progress, be the means of assuaging the inundation, of bounding the waters within their natural channel, and thereby of recovering the overwhelmed path for the sake of future passengers who travel the same way, what a merit will your's be!

I shall impatiently expect your next letter. The young ladies proposed that you should put yourself, if in town, or near it, into the Reading stage-coach, which inns somewhere in Fleet-street: and, if you give notice of the day, you will be met on the road, and that pretty early in your journey, by some of both sexes; one of whom you won't be sorry to see.

Mr. Hickman shall attend you at Slough; and Lady Betty herself, and one of the Miss Montagues, with proper equipages, will be at Reading to receive you; and carry you directly to the seat of the former: for I have expressly stipulated, that the wretch himself shall not come into your presence till your nuptials are to be solemnized, unless you give leave.

Adieu, my dearest friend. Be happy: and hundreds will then be happy of consequence. Inexpressibly so, I am sure, will then be

Your ever affectionate ANNA HOWE.

² See Letter II. of this volume.

LETTER X

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE SUNDAY NIGHT, JULY 16.
MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Why should you permit a mind, so much devoted to your service, to labour under such an impatience as you must know it would labour under, for want of an answer to a letter of such consequence to you, and therefore to me, as was mine of Thursday night?—Rogers told me, on Thursday, you were so ill; your letter sent by him was so melancholy!—Yet you must be ill indeed, if you could not write something to such a letter; were it but a line, to say you would write as soon as you could. Sure you have received it. The master of your nearest post-office will pawn his reputation that it went safe: I gave him particular charge of it.

God send me good news of your health, of your ability to write; and then I will chide you—indeed I will—as I never yet did chide you.

I suppose your excuse will be, that the subject required consideration— Lord! my dear, so it might; but you have so right a mind, and the matter in question is so obvious, that you could not want half an hour to determine.—Then you intended, probably, to wait Collins's call for your letter as on to-morrow!—Suppose something were to happen, as it did on Friday, that he should not be able to go to town to-morrow?—How, child, could you serve me so!—I know not how to leave off scolding you!

Dear, honest Collins, make haste: he will: he will. He sets out, and travels all night: for I have told him, that the dearest friend I have in the world has it in her own choice to be happy, and to make me so; and that the letter he will bring from her will assure it to me.

I have ordered him to go directly (without stopping at the Saracen's-head-inn) to you at your lodgings. Matters are now in so good a way, that he safely may.

Your expected letter is ready written I hope: if it can be not, he will call for it at your hour.

You can't be so happy as you deserve to be: but I doubt not that you will be as happy as you can; that is, that you will choose to put yourself instantly into Lady Betty's protection. If you would not have the wretch for your own sake; have him you must, for mine, for your family's, for your honour's, sake!—Dear, honest Collins, make haste! make haste! and relieve the impatient heart of my beloved's

Ever faithful, ever affectionate, ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XI

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CHARLOTTE MONTAGUE TUESDAY MORN. JULY 18.
MADAM,

I take the liberty to write to you, by this special messenger. In the phrensy of my soul I write to you, to demand of you, and of any of your family who can tell news of my beloved friend, who, I doubt, has been spirited away by the base arts of one of the blackest—O help me to a name black enough to call him by! Her piety is proof against self-attempts. It must, it must be he, the only wretch, who could injure such an innocent; and now—who knows what he has done with her!

If I have patience, I will give you the occasion of this distracted vehemence.

I wrote to her the very moment you and your sister left me. But being unable to procure a special messenger, as I intended, was forced to send by the post. I urged her, [you know I promised that I would: I urged her,] with earnestness, to comply with the desires of all your family. Having no answer, I wrote again on Sunday night; and sent it by a particular hand, who travelled all night; chiding her for keeping a heart so impatient as mine in such cruel suspense, upon a matter of so much importance to her, and therefore to me. And very angry I was with her in my mind.

But, judge my astonishment, my distraction, when last night, the messenger, returning post-haste, brought me word, that she had not been heard of since Friday morning! and that a letter lay for her at her lodgings, which came by the post; and must be mine!

She went out about six that morning; only intending, as they believe, to go to morning-prayers at Covent-Garden church, just by her lodgings, as she had done divers times before—Went on foot!—Left word she should be back in an hour!—Very poorly in health!

Lord, have mercy upon me! What shall I do!—I was a distracted creature all last night!

O Madam! you know not how I love her!—My own soul is not dearer to me, than my Clarissa Harlowe!—Nay! she is my soul—for I now have none—only a miserable one, however—for she was the joy, the stay, the prop of my life. Never woman loved woman as we love one another. It is impossible to tell you half her excellencies. It was my glory and my pride, that I was capable of so fervent a love of so pure and matchless a creature.— But now—who knows, whether the dear injured has not all her woes, her undeserved woes, completed in death; or is not reserved for a worse fate!—This I leave to your inquiry—for—your—[shall I call the man—— your?] relation I understand is still with you.

Surely, my good Ladies, you were well authorized in the proposals you made in presence of my mother!—Surely he dare not abuse your confidence, and the confidence of your noble relations! I make no apology for giving you this trouble, nor for desiring you to favour with a line, by this messenger,

Your almost distracted ANNA HOWE.

LETTER XII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. M. HALL, SAT. NIGHT, JUNE 15.

All undone, undone, by Jupiter!—Zounds, Jack, what shall I do now! a curse upon all my plots and contrivances!—But I have it——in the very heart and soul of me I have it!

Thou toldest me, that my punishments were but beginning—Canst thou, O fatal prognosticator, cans thou tell me, where they will end?

Thy assistance I bespeak. The moment thou receivest this, I bespeak thy assistance. This messenger rides for life and death—and I hope he'll find you at your town-lodgings; if he meet not with you at Edgware; where, being Sunday, he will call first.

This cursed, cursed woman, on Friday dispatched man and horse with the joyful news (as she thought it would be to me) in an exulting letter from Sally Martin, that she had found out my angel as on Wednesday last; and on Friday morning, after she had been at prayers at Covent-Garden church — praying for my reformation perhaps—got her arrested by two sheriff's officers, as she was returning to her lodgings, who (villains!) put her into a chair they had in readiness, and carried her to one of the cursed fellow's houses.

She has arrested her for 150£. pretendedly due for board and lodging: a sum (besides the low villany of the proceeding) which the dear soul could not possibly raise: all her clothes and effects, except what she had on and with her when she went away, being at the old devil's.

And here, for an aggravation, has the dear creature lain already two days; for I must be gallanting my two aunts and my two cousins, and giving Lord M. an airing after his lying-in—pox upon the whole family of us! and returned not till within this hour: and now returned to my distraction, on receiving the cursed tidings, and the exulting letter.

Hasten, hasten, dear Jack; for the love of God, hasten to the injured charmer! my heart bleeds for her!—she deserved not this!—I dare not stir. It will be thought done by my contrivance—and if I am absent from this place, that will confirm the suspicion.

Damnation seize quick this accursed woman!—Yet she thinks she has made no small merit with me. Unhappy, thrice unhappy circumstances!—At a time too, when better prospects were opening for the sweet creature!

Hasten to her!—Clear me of this cursed job. Most sincerely, by all that's sacred, I swear you may!—Yet have I been such a villanous plotter, that the charming sufferer will hardly believe it: although the proceeding be so dirtily low.

Set her free the moment you see her: without conditioning, free!—On your knees, for me, beg her pardon: and assure her, that, wherever she goes, I will not molest her: no, nor come near her without her leave: and be sure allow not any of the d——d crew to go near her—only let her permit you to receive her commands from time to time.—You have always been her friend and advocate. What would I now give, had I permitted you to have been a successful one!

Let her have all her clothes and effects sent her instantly, as a small proof of my sincerity. And force upon the dear creature, who must be moneyless, what sums you can get her to take. Let me know how she has been treated. If roughly, woe be to the guilty!

Take thy watch in thy hand, after thou hast freed her, and d—n the whole brood, dragon and serpents, by the hour, till thou'rt tired; and tell them, I bid thee do so for their cursed officiousness.

They had nothing to do when they had found her, but to wait my orders how to proceed.

The great devil fly away with them all, one by one, through the roof of their own cursed house, and dash them to pieces against the tops of chimneys as he flies; and let the lesser devils collect the scattered scraps, and bag them up, in order to put them together again in their allotted place, in the element of fire, with cements of molten lead.

A line! a line! a kingdom for a line! with tolerable news, the first moment thou canst write!
—This fellow waits to bring it.

LETTER XIII

MISS CHARLOTTE MONTAGUE, TO MISS HOWE M. HALL, TUESDAY
AFTERNOON.

DEAR MISS HOWE,

Your letter has infinitely disturbed us all.

This wretched man has been half distracted ever since Saturday night.

We knew not what ailed him, till your letter was brought.

Vile wretch, as he is, he is however innocent of this new evil.

Indeed he is, he must be; as I shall more at large acquaint you.

But will not now detain your messenger.

Only to satisfy your just impatience, by telling you, that the dear young lady is safe, and we hope well.

A horrid mistake of his general orders has subjected her to the terror and disgrace of an arrest.

Poor dear Miss Harlowe!—Her sufferings have endeared her to us, almost as much as her excellencies can have endeared her to you.

But she must now be quite at liberty.

He has been a distracted man, ever since the news was brought him; and we knew not what ailed him.

But that I said before.

My Lord M. my lady Sarah Sadleir, and my Lady Betty Lawrance, will all write to you this very afternoon.

And so will the wretch himself.

And send it by a servant of their own, not to detain your's.

I know not what I write.

But you shall have all the particulars, just, and true, and fair, from

Dear Madam, Your most faithful and obedient servant, CH. MONTAGUE.

LETTER XIV

MISS MONTAGUE, TO MISS HOWE M. HALL, JULY 18.

DEAR MADAM,

In pursuance of my promise, I will minutely inform you of every thing we know relating to this shocking transaction.

When we returned from you on Thursday night, and made our report of the kind reception both we and our message met with, in that you had been so good as to promise to use your interest with your dear friend, it put us all into such good humour with one another, and with my cousin Lovelace, that we resolved upon a little tour of two days, the Friday and Saturday, in order to give an airing to my Lord, and Lady Sarah, both having been long confined, one by illness, the other by melancholy. My Lord, Lady Sarah, Lady Betty, and myself, were in the coach; and all our talk was of dear Miss Harlowe, and of our future happiness with her: Mr. Lovelace and my sister (who is his favourite, as he is her's) were in his phaëton: and, whenever we joined company, that was still the subject.

As to him, never man praised woman as he did her: Never man gave greater hopes, and made better resolutions. He is none of those that are governed by interest. He is too proud for that. But most sincerely delighted was he in talking of her; and of his hopes of her returning favour. He said, however, more than once, that he feared she would not forgive him; for, from his heart, he must say, he deserved not her forgiveness: and often and often, that there was not such a woman in the world.

This I mention to show you, Madam, that he could not at this time be privy to such a barbarous and disgraceful treatment of her.

We returned not till Saturday night, all in as good humour with one another as we went out. We never had such pleasure in his company before. If he would be good, and as he ought to be, no man would be better beloved by relations than he. But never was there a greater alteration in man when he came home, and received a letter from a messenger, who, it seems, had been flattering himself in hopes of a reward, and had been waiting for his return from the night before. In such a fury!—The man fared but badly. He instantly shut himself up to write, and ordered man and horse to be ready to set out before day-light the next morning, to carry the letter to a friend in London.

He would not see us all that night; neither breakfast nor dine with us next day. He ought, he said, never to see the light; and bid my sister, whom he called an innocent, (and who was very desirous to know the occasion of all this,) shun him, saying, he was a wretch, and made so by his own inventions, and the consequences of them.

None of us could get out of him what so disturbed him. We should too soon hear, he said, to the utter dissipation of all his hopes, and of all ours.

We could easily suppose that all was not right with regard to the worthy young lady and him.

He went out each day; and said he wanted to run away from himself.

Late on Monday night he received a letter from Mr. Belford, his most favoured friend, by his own messenger; who came back in a foam, man and horse. Whatever were the contents, he was not easier, but like a madman rather: but still would not let us know the occasion. But to my sister he said, nobody, my dear Patsey, who can think but of half the plagues that pursue an intriguing spirit, would ever quit the fore-right path.

He was out when your messenger came: but soon came in; and bad enough was his reception from us all. And he said, that his own torments were greater than ours, than Miss Harlowe's, or your's, Madam, all put together. He would see your letter. He always carries every thing before him: and said, when he had read it, that he thanked God, he was not such a villain, as you, with too great an appearance of reason, thought him.

Thus, then, he owned the matter to be.

He had left general instructions to the people of the lodgings the dear lady went from, to find out where she was gone to, if possible, that he might have an opportunity to importune her to be his, before their difference was public. The wicked people (officious at least, if not wicked) discovered where she was on Wednesday; and, for fear she should remove before they could have his orders, they put her under a gentle restraint, as they call it; and dispatched away a messenger to acquaint him with it; and to take his orders.

This messenger arrived Friday afternoon; and staid here till we returned on Saturday night:—and, when he read the letter he brought—I have told you, Madam, what a fury he was in.

The letter he retired to write, and which he dispatched away so early on Sunday morning, was to conjure his friend, Mr. Belford, on receipt of it, to fly to the lady, and set her free; and to order all her things to be sent to her; and to clear him of so black and villanous a fact, as he justly called it.

And by this time he doubts not that all is happily over; and the beloved of his soul (as he calls her at ever word) in an easier and happier way than she was before the horrid fact. And now he owns that the reason why Mr. Belford's letter set him into stronger ravings was, because of his keeping him wilfully (and on purpose to torment him) in suspense; and reflecting very heavily upon him, (for Mr. Belford, he says, was ever the lady's friend and advocate); and only mentioning, that he had waited upon her; referring to his next for further particulars; which Mr. Belford could have told him at the time.

He declares, and we can vouch for him, that he has been, ever since last Saturday night, the most miserable of men.

He forbore going up himself, that it might not be imagined he was guilty of so black a contrivance; and that he went up to complete any base views in consequence of it.

Believe us all, dear Miss Howe, under the deepest concern at this unhappy accident; which will, we fear, exasperate the charming sufferer; not too much for the occasion, but too much for our hopes.

O what wretches are these free-living men, who love to tread in intricate paths; and, when once they err, know not how far out of the way their headstrong course may lead them!

My sister joins her thanks with mine to your good mother and self, for the favours you heaped upon us last Thursday. We beseech your continued interest as to the subject of our visit. It shall be all our studies to oblige and recompense the dear lady to the utmost of our power, and for what she has suffered from the unhappy man.

We are, dear Madam,

Your obliged and faithful servants,

CHARLOTTE | MONTAGUE. MARTHA | *** DEAR MISS HOWE,

We join in the above request of Miss Charlotte and Miss Patty Montague, for your favour and interest; being convinced that the accident was an accident, and no plot or contrivance of a wretch too full of them. We are, Madam,

Your most obedient humble servants,

M. SARAH SADLEIR. ELIZ. LAWRENCE.

*** DEAR MISS HOWE,

After what is written above, by names and characters of unquestionable honour, I might have been excused signing a name almost as hateful to myself, as I KNOW it is to you. But the above will have it so. Since, therefore, I must write, it shall be the truth; which is, that if I may be once more admitted to pay my duty to the most deserving and most injured of her sex, I will be content to do it with a halter about my neck; and, attended by a parson on my right hand, and the hangman on my left, be doomed, at her will, either to the church or the gallows.

Your most humble servant, ROBERT LOVELACE.

TUESDAY, JULY 18.

LETTER XV

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. SUNDAY NIGHT, JULY 16.

What a cursed piece of work hast thou made of it, with the most excellent of women! Thou mayest be in earnest, or in jest, as thou wilt; but the poor lady will not be long either thy sport, or the sport of fortune!

I will give thee an account of a scene that wants but her affecting pen to represent it justly; and it would wring all the black blood out of thy callous heart.

Thou only, who art the author of her calamities, shouldst have attended her in her prison. I am unequal to such a task: nor know I any other man but would.

This last act, however unintended by thee, yet a consequence of thy general orders, and too likely to be thought agreeable to thee, by those who know thy other villainies by her, has finished thy barbarous work. And I advise thee to trumpet forth every where, how much in earnest thou art to marry her, whether true or not.

Thou mayest safely do it. She will not live to put thee to the trial; and it will a little palliate for thy enormous usage of her, and be a mean to make mankind, who know not what I know of the matter, herd a little longer with thee, and forbear to hunt thee to thy fellow-savages in the Lybian wilds and desarts.

Your messenger found me at Edgware expecting to dinner with me several friends, whom I had invited three days before. I sent apologies to them, as in a case of life and death; and speeded to town to the woman's: for how knew I but shocking attempts might be made upon her by the cursed wretches: perhaps by your connivance, in order to mortify her into your measures?

Little knows the public what villainies are committed by vile wretches, in these abominable houses upon innocent creatures drawn into their snares.

Finding the lady not there, I posted away to the officer's, although Sally told me that she had but just come from thence; and that she had refused to see her, or (as she sent down word) any body else; being resolved to have the remainder of that Sunday to herself, as it might, perhaps, be the last she should ever see.

I had the same thing told me, when I got thither.

I sent up to let her know, that I came with a commission to set her at liberty. I was afraid of sending up the name of a man known to be your friend. She absolutely refused to see any man, however, for that day, or to answer further to any thing said from me.

Having therefore informed myself of all that the officer, and his wife, and servant, could acquaint me with, as well in relation to the horrid arrest, as to her behaviour, and the women's to her; and her ill state of health; I went back to Sinclair's, as I will still call her, and heard the three women's story. From all which I am enabled to give you the following shocking particulars: which may serve till I can see the unhappy lady herself to-morrow, if then I gain admittance to her. You will find that I have been very minute in my inquiries.

Your villain it was that set the poor lady, and had the impudence to appear, and abet the sheriff's officers in the cursed transaction. He thought, no doubt, that he was doing the most acceptable service to his blessed master. They had got a chair; the head ready up, as soon as service was over. And as she came out of the church, at the door fronting Bedford-street, the officers, stepping up to her, whispered that they had an action against her.

She was terrified, trembled, and turned pale.

Action, said she! What is that!—I have committed no bad action!— Lord bless me! men, what mean you?

That you are our prisoner, Madam.

Prisoner, Sirs!—What—How—Why—What have I done?

You must go with us. Be pleased, Madam, to step into this chair.

With you!—With men! Must go with men!—I am not used to go with strange men!—Indeed you must excuse me!

We can't excuse you. We are sheriff's officers, We have a writ against you. You must go with us, and you shall know at whose suit.

Suit! said the charming innocent; I don't know what you mean. Pray, men, don't lay hands upon me; (they offering to put her into the chair.) I am not used to be thus treated—I have done nothing to deserve it.

She then spied thy villain—O thou wretch, said she, where is thy vile master?—Am I again to be his prisoner? Help, good people!

A crowd had begun to gather.

My master is in the country, Madam, many miles off. If you please to go with these men, they will treat you civilly.

The people were most of them struck with compassion. A fine young creature!—A thousand pities cried some. While some few threw out vile and shocking reflections! But a gentleman interposed, and demanded to see the fellow's authority.

They showed it. Is your name Clarissa Harlowe, Madam? said he.

Yes, yes, indeed, ready to sink, my name was Clarissa Harlowe:—but it is now Wretchedness! —Lord be merciful to me, what is to come next?

You must go with these men, Madam, said the gentleman: they have authority for what they do.

He pitied her, and retired.

Indeed you must, said one chairman.

Indeed you must, said the other.

Can nobody, joined in another gentleman, be applied to, who will see that so fine a creature is not ill used?

Thy villain answered, orders were given particularly for that. She had rich relations. She need but ask and have. She would only be carried to the officer's house till matters could be made up. The people she had lodged with loved her:—but she had left her lodgings privately.

Oh! had she those tricks already? cried one or two.

She heard not this—but said—Well, if I must go, I must—I cannot resist—but I will not be carried to the woman's! I will rather die at your feet, than be carried to the woman's.

You won't be carried there, Madam, cried thy fellow.

Only to my house, Madam, said one of the officers.

Where is that?

In High-Holborn, Madam.

I know not where High-Holborn is: but any where, except to the woman's. —But am I to go with men only?

Looking about her, and seeing the three passages, to wit, that leading to Henrietta-street, that to King-street, and the fore-right one, to Bedford-street, crowded, she started—Any where—any where, said she, but to the woman's! And stepping into the chair, threw herself on the seat, in the utmost distress and confusion—Carry me, carry me out of sight—cover me—cover me up—for ever—were her words.

Thy villain drew the curtain: she had not power: and they went away with her through a vast crowd of people.

Here I must rest. I can write no more at present.

Only, Lovelace, remember, all this was to a Clarissa.

The unhappy lady fainted away when she was taken out of the chair at the officer's house.

Several people followed the chair to the very house, which is in a wretched court. Sally was there; and satisfied some of the inquirers, that the young gentlewoman would be exceedingly well used: and they soon dispersed.

Dorcas was also there; but came not in her sight. Sally, as a favour, offered to carry her to her former lodgings: but she declared they should carry her thither a corpse, if they did.

Very gentle usage the women boast of: so would a vulture, could it speak, with the entrails of its prey upon its rapacious talons. Of this you'll judge from what I have to recite.

She asked, what was meant by this usage of her? People told me, said she, that I must go with the men: that they had authority to take me: so I submitted. But now, what is to be the end of this disgraceful violence?

The end, said the vile Sally Martin, is, for honest people to come at their own.

Bless me! have I taken away any thing that belongs to those who have obtained the power over me?—I have left very valuable things behind me; but have taken away that is not my own.

And who do you think, Miss Harlowe; for I understand, said the cursed creature, you are not married; who do you think is to pay for your board and your lodgings! such handsome lodgings! for so long a time as you were at Mrs. Sinclair's?

Lord have mercy upon me!—Miss Martin, (I think you are Miss Martin!)— And is this the cause of such a disgraceful insult upon me in the open streets?

And cause enough, Miss Harlowe! (fond of gratifying her jealous revenge, by calling her Miss,) —One hundred and fifty guineas, or pounds, is no small sum to lose—and by a young creature who would have bilked her lodgings.

You amaze me, Miss Martin!—What language do you talk in?—Bilk my lodgings?—What is that?

She stood astonished and silent for a few moments.

But recovering herself, and turning from her to the window, she wrung her hands [the cursed Sally showed me how!] and lifting them up—Now, Lovelace: now indeed do I think I ought to forgive thee!—But who shall forgive Clarissa Harlowe!—O my sister!—O my brother!—Tender mercies were your cruelties to this!

After a pause, her handkerchief drying up her falling tears, she turned to Sally: Now, have I noting to do but acquiesce—only let me say, that if this aunt of your's, this Mrs. Sinclair, or this man, this Mr. Lovelace, come near me; or if I am carried to the horrid house; (for that, I suppose, is the design of this new outrage;) God be merciful to the poor Clarissa Harlowe!—Look to the consequence!—Look, I charge you, to the consequence!

The vile wretch told her, it was not designed to carry her any where against her will: but, if it were, they should take care not to be frightened again by a penknife.

She cast up her eyes to Heaven, and was silent—and went to the farthest corner of the room, and, sitting down, threw her handkerchief over her face.

Sally asked her several questions; but not answering her, she told her, she would wait upon her by-and-by, when she had found her speech.

She ordered the people to press her to eat and drink. She must be fasting—nothing but her prayers and tears, poor thing!—were the merciless devil's words, as she owned to me.—Dost think I did not curse her?

She went away; and, after her own dinner, returned.

The unhappy lady, by this devil's account of her, then seemed either mortified into meekness, or to have made a resolution not to be provoked by the insults of this cursed creature.

Sally inquired, in her presence, whether she had eat or drank any thing; and being told by the woman, that she could not prevail upon her to taste a morsel, or drink a drop, she said, this is wrong, Miss Harlowe! Very wrong!—Your religion, I think, should teach you, that starving yourself is self-murder.

She answered not.

The wretch owned she was resolved to make her speak.

She asked if Mabell should attend her, till it were seen what her friends would do for her in discharge of the debt? Mabell, said she, had not yet earned the clothes you were so good as to give her.

Am I not worthy an answer, Miss Harlowe?

I would answer you (said the sweet sufferer, without any emotion) if I knew how.

I have ordered pen, ink, and paper, to be brought you, Miss Harlowe. There they are. I know you love writing. You may write to whom you please. Your friend, Miss Howe, will expect to hear from you.

I have no friend, said she, I deserve none.

Rowland, for that's the officer's name, told her, she had friends enow to pay the debt, if she would write.

She would trouble nobody; she had no friends; was all they could get from her, while Sally staid: but yet spoken with a patience of spirit, as if she enjoyed her griefs.

The insolent creature went away, ordering them, in the lady's hearing, to be very civil to her, and to let her want for nothing. Now had she, she owned, the triumph of her heart over this haughty beauty, who kept them all at such a distance in their own house!

What thinkest thou, Lovelace, of this!—This wretch's triumph was over a Clarissa!

About six in the evening, Rowland's wife pressed her to drink tea. She said, she had rather have a glass of water; for her tongue was ready to cleave to the roof of her mouth.

The woman brought her a glass, and some bread and butter. She tried to taste the latter; but could not swallow it: but eagerly drank the water; lifting up her eyes in thankfulness for that!!!

The divine Clarissa, Lovelace,—reduced to rejoice for a cup of cold water!—By whom reduced?

About nine o'clock she asked if any body were to be her bedfellow.

Their maid, if she pleased; or, as she was so weak and ill, the girl should sit up with her, if she chose she should.

She chose to be alone both night and day, she said. But might she not be trusted with the key of the room where she was to lie down; for she should not put off her clothes!

That, they told her, could not be.

She was afraid not, she said.—But indeed she would not get away, if she could.

They told me, that they had but one bed, besides that they lay in themselves, (which they would fain have had her accept of,) and besides that their maid lay in, in a garret, which they called a hole of a garret: and that that one bed was the prisoner's bed; which they made several apologies to me about. I suppose it is shocking enough.

But the lady would not lie in theirs. Was she not a prisoner? she said —let her have the prisoner's room.

Yet they owned that she started, when she was conducted thither. But recovering herself, Very well, said she—why should not all be of a piece?—Why should not my wretchedness be complete?

She found fault, that all the fastenings were on the outside, and none within; and said, she could not trust herself in a room where others could come in at their pleasure, and she not go out. She had not been used to it!!!

Dear, dear soul!—My tears flow as I write!—Indeed, Lovelace, she had not been used to such treatment.

They assured her, that it was as much their duty to protect her from other persons' insults, as from escaping herself.

Then they were people of more honour, she said, than she had been of late used to.

She asked if they knew Mr. Lovelace?

No, was their answer.

Have you heard of him?

No.

Well, then, you may be good sort of folks in your way.

Pause here for a moment, Lovelace!—and reflect—I must.

Again they asked her if they should send any word to her lodgings?

These are my lodgings now; are they not?—was all her answer.

She sat up in a chair all night, the back against the door; having, it seems, thrust a piece of a poker through the staples where a bolt had been on the inside.

Next morning Sally and Polly both went to visit her.

She had begged of Sally, the day before, that she might not see Mrs. Sinclair, nor Dorcas, nor the broken-toothed servant, called William.

Polly would have ingratiated herself with her; and pretended to be concerned for her misfortunes. But she took no more notice of her than of the other.

They asked if she had any commands?—If she had, she only need to mention what they were, and she should be obeyed.

None at all, she said.

How did she like the people of the house? Were they civil to her?

Pretty well, considering she had no money to give them.

Would she accept of any money? they could put it to her account.

She would contract no debts.

Had she any money about her?

She meekly put her hand in her pocket, and pulled out half a guinea, and a little silver. Yes, I have a little.—But here should be fees paid, I believe. Should there not? I have heard of entrance-money to compound for not being stript. But these people are very civil people, I fancy; for they have not offered to take away my clothes.

They have orders to be civil to you.

It is very kind.

But we two will bail you, Miss, if you will go back with us to Mrs. Sinclair's.

Not for the world!

Her's are very handsome apartments.

The fitter for those who own them!

These are very sad ones.

The fitter for me!

You may be happy yet, Miss, if you will.

I hope I shall.

If you refuse to eat or drink, we will give bail, and take you with us.

Then I will try to eat and drink. Any thing but go with you.

Will you not send to your new lodgings; the people will be frightened.

So they will, if I send. So they will, if they know where I am.

But have you no things to send for from thence?

There is what will pay for their lodgings and trouble: I shall not lessen their security.

But perhaps letters or messages may be left for you there.

I have very few friends; and to those I have I will spare the mortification of knowing what has befallen me.

We are surprised at your indifference, Miss Harlowe! Will you not write to any of your friends?

No.

Why, you don't think of tarrying here always?

I shall not live always.

Do you think you are to stay here as long as you live?

That's as it shall please God, and those who have brought me hither.

Should you like to be at liberty?

I am miserable!—What is liberty to the miserable, but to be more miserable.

How miserable, Miss?—You may make yourself as happy as you please.

I hope you are both happy.

We are.

May you be more and more happy!

But we wish you to be so too.

I shall never be of your opinion, I believe, as to what happiness is.

What do you take our opinion of happiness to be?

To live at Mrs. Sinclair's.

Perhaps, said Sally, we were once as squeamish and narrow-minded as you.

How came it over with you?

Because we saw the ridiculousness of prudery.

Do you come hither to persuade me to hate prudery, as you call it, as much as you do?

We came to offer our service to you.

It is out of your power to serve me.

Perhaps not.

It is not in my inclination to trouble you.

You may be worse offered.

Perhaps I may.

You are mighty short, Miss.

As I wish your visit to be, Ladies.

They owned to me, that they cracked their fans, and laughed.

Adieu, perverse beauty!

Your servant, Ladies.

Adieu, haughty airs!

You see me humbled—

As you deserve, Miss Harlowe. Pride will have a fall.

Better fall, with what you call pride, than stand with meanness.

Who does?

I had once a better opinion of you, Miss Horton!—Indeed you should not insult the miserable.

Neither should the miserable, said Sally, insult people for their civility.

I should be sorry if I did.

Mrs. Sinclair shall attend you by-and-by, to know if you have any commands for her.

I have no wish for any liberty, but that of refusing to see her, and one more person.

What we came for, was to know if you had any proposals to make for your enlargement.

Then, it seems, the officer put in. You have very good friends, Madam, I understand. Is it not better that you make it up? Charges will run high. A hundred and fifty guineas are easier paid than two hundred. Let these ladies bail you, and go along with them; or write to your friends to make it up.

Sally said, There is a gentleman who saw you taken, and was so much moved for you, Miss Harlowe, that he would gladly advance the money for you, and leave you to pay it when you can.

See, Lovelace, what cursed devils these are! This is the way, we know, that many an innocent heart is thrown upon keeping, and then upon the town. But for these wretches thus to go to work with such an angel as this!—How glad would have been the devilish Sally, to have had the least handle to report to thee a listening ear, or patient spirit, upon this hint!

Sir, said she, with high indignation, to the officer, did not you say, last night, that it was as much your business to protect me from the insults of others, as from escaping?—Cannot I be permitted to see whom I please? and to refuse admittance to those I like not?

Your creditors, Madam, will expect to see you.

Not if I declare I will not treat with them.

Then, Madam, you will be sent to prison.

Prison, friend!—What dost thou call thy house?

Not a prison, Madam.

Why these iron-barred windows, then? Why these double locks and bolts all on the outside, none on the in?

And down she dropt into her chair, and they could not get another word from her. She threw her handkerchief over her face, as one before, which was soon wet with tears; and grievously, they own, she sobbed.

Gentle treatment, Lovelace!—Perhaps thou, as well as these wretches, will think it so!

Sally then ordered a dinner, and said, They would soon be back a gain, and see that she eat and drank, as a good christian should, comporting herself to her condition, and making the best of it.

What has not this charming creature suffered, what has she not gone through, in these last three months, that I know of!—Who would think such a delicately-framed person could have sustained what she has sustained! We sometimes talk of bravery, of courage, of fortitude!—Here they are in perfection!—Such bravoës as thou and I should never have been able to support ourselves under half the persecutions, the disappointments, and contumelies, that she has met with; but, like cowards, should have slid out of the world, basely, by some back-door; that is to say, by a sword, by a pistol, by a halter, or knife;—but here is a fine-principled woman, who, by dint of this noble consideration, as I imagine, [What else can support her?] that she has not deserved the evils she contends with; and that this world is designed but as a transitory state of the probation; and that she is travelling to another and better; puts up with all the hardships of the journey; and is not to be diverted from her course by the attacks of thieves and robbers, or any other terrors and difficulties; being assured of an ample reward at the end of it.

If thou thinkest this reflection uncharacteristic from a companion and friend of thine, imaginest thou, that I profited nothing by my long attendance on my uncle in his dying state; and from the pious reflections of the good clergyman, who, day by day, at the poor man's own request, visited and prayed by him?—And could I have another such instance, as this, to bring all these reflections home to me?

Then who can write of good persons, and of good subjects, and be capable of admiring them, and not be made serious for the time? And hence may we gather what a benefit to the morals of men the keeping of good company must be; while those who keep only bad, must necessarily more and more harden, and be hardened.

'Tis twelve of the clock, Sunday night—I can think of nothing but this excellent creature. Her distresses fill my head and my heart. I was drowsy for a quarter of an hour; but the fit is gone off. And I will continue the melancholy subject from the information of these wretches. Enough, I dare say, will arise in the visit I shall make, if admitted to-morrow, to send by thy servant, as to the way I am likely to find her in.

After the women had left her, she complained of her head and her heart; and seemed terrified with apprehensions of being carried once more to Sinclair's.

Refusing any thing for breakfast, Mrs. Rowland came up to her, and told her, (as these wretches owned they had ordered her, for fear she should starve herself,) that she must and should have tea, and bread and butter: and that, as she had friends who could support her, if she wrote to them, it was a wrong thing, both for herself and them, to starve herself thus.

If it be for your own sakes, said she, that is another thing: let coffee, or tea, or chocolate, or what you will, be got: and put down a chicken to my account every day, if you please, and eat it yourselves. I will taste it, if I can. I would do nothing to hinder you. I have friends will pay you liberally, when they know I am gone.

They wondered, they told her, at her strange composure in such distresses.

They were nothing, she said, to what she had suffered already from the vilest of all men. The disgrace of seizing her in the street; multitudes of people about her; shocking imputations wounding her ears; had indeed been very affecting to her. But that was over.—Every thing soon would! —And she should be still more composed, were it not for the apprehensions of seeing one man, and one woman; and being tricked or forced back to the vilest house in the world.

Then were it not better to give way to the two gentlewoman's offer to bail her?—They could tell her, it was a very kind proffer; and what was not to be met every day.

She believed so.

The ladies might, possibly, dispense with her going back to the house to which she had such an antipathy. Then the compassionate gentleman, who was inclined to make it up with her creditors on her own bond—it was very strange to them she hearkened not to so generous a proposal.

Did the two ladies tell you who the gentleman was?—Or, did they say any more on the subject?

Yes, they did! and hinted to me, said the woman, that you had nothing to do but to receive a visit from the gentleman, and the money, they believed, would be laid down on your own bond or note.

She was startled.

I charge you, said she, as you will answer it one day to my friends, I charge you don't. If you do, you know not what may be the consequence.

They apprehended no bad consequence, they said, in doing their duty: and if she knew not her own good, her friends would thank them for taking any innocent steps to serve her, though against her will.

Don't push me upon extremities, man!—Don't make me desperate, woman!—I have no small difficulty, notwithstanding the seeming composure you just now took notice of, to bear, as I ought to bear, the evils I suffer. But if you bring a man or men to me, be the pretence what it will——

She stopt there, and looked so earnestly, and so wildly, they said, that they did not know but she would do some harm to herself, if they disobeyed her; and that would be a sad thing in their house, and might be their ruin. They therefore promised, that no man should be brought to her but by her own consent.

Mrs. Rowland prevailed on her to drink a dish of tea, and taste some bread and butter, about eleven on Saturday morning: which she probably did to have an excuse not to dine with the women when they returned.

But she would not quit her prison-room, as she called it, to go into their parlour.

'Unbarred windows, and a lightsomer apartment,' she said, 'had too cheerful an appearance for her mind.'

A shower falling, as she spoke, 'What,' said she, looking up, 'do the elements weep for me?'

At another time, 'The light of the sun was irksome to her. The sun seemed to shine in to mock her woes.'

'Methought,' added she, 'the sun darting in, and gilding these iron bars, plays upon me like the two women, who came to insult my haggard looks, by the word beauty; and my dejected heart, by the word haughty airs!'

Sally came again at dinner-time, to see how she fared, as she told her; and that she did not starve herself: and, as she wanted to have some talk with her, if she gave her leave, she would dine with her.

I cannot eat.

You must try, Miss Harlowe.

And, dinner being ready just then, she offered her hand, and desired her to walk down.

No; she would not stir out of her prison-room.

These sullen airs won't do, Miss Harlowe: indeed they won't.

She was silent.

You will have harder usage than any you have ever yet known, I can tell you, if you come not into some humour to make matters up.

She was still silent.

Come, Miss, walk down to dinner. Let me entreat you, do. Miss Horton is below: she was once your favourite.

She waited for an answer: but received none.

We came to make some proposals to you, for your good; though you affronted us so lately. And we would not let Mrs. Sinclair come in person, because we thought to oblige you.

This is indeed obliging.

Come, give me your hand. Miss Harlowe: you are obliged to me, I can tell you that: and let us go down to Miss Horton.

Excuse me: I will not stir out of this room.

Would you have me and Miss Horton dine in this filthy bed-room?

It is not a bed-room to me. I have not been in bed; nor will, while I am here.

And yet you care not, as I see, to leave the house.—And so, you won't go down, Miss Harlowe?

I won't, except I am forced to it.

Well, well, let it alone. I sha'n't ask Miss Horton to dine in this room, I assure you. I will send up a plate.

And away the little saucy toad fluttered down.

When they had dined, up they came together.

Well, Miss, you would not eat any thing, it seems?—Very pretty sullen airs these!—No wonder the honest gentleman had such a hand with you.

She only held up her hands and eyes; the tears trickling down her cheeks.

Insolent devils!—how much more cruel and insulting are bad women even than bad men!

Methinks, Miss, said Sally, you are a little soily, to what we have seen you. Pity such a nice lady should not have changes of apparel! Why won't you send to your lodgings for linen, at least?

I am not nice now.

Miss looks well and clean in any thing, said Polly. But, dear Madam, why won't you send to your lodgings? Were it but in kindness to the people? They must have a concern about you. And your Miss Howe will wonder what's become of you; for, no doubt, you correspond.

She turned from them, and, to herself, said, Too much! Too much!—She tossed her handkerchief, wet before with her tears, from her, and held her apron to her eyes.

Don't weep, Miss! said the vile Polly.

Yet do, cried the viler Sally, it will be a relief. Nothing, as Mr. Lovelace once told me, dries sooner than tears. For once I too wept mightily.

I could not bear the recital of this with patience. Yet I cursed them not so much as I should have done, had I not had a mind to get from them all the particulars of their gentle treatment: and this for two reasons; the one, that I might stab thee to the heart with the repetition; and the other, that I might know upon what terms I am likely to see the unhappy lady to-morrow.

Well, but, Miss Harlowe, cried Sally, do you think these forlorn airs pretty? You are a good christian, child. Mrs. Rowland tells me, she has got you a Bible-book.—O there it lies!—I make no doubt but you have doubled down the useful places, as honest Matt. Prior says.

Then rising, and taking it up.—Ay, so you have.—The Book of Job! One opens naturally here, I see—My mamma made me a fine Bible-scholar.—You see, Miss Horton, I know something of the book.

They proposed once more to bail her, and to go home with them. A motion which she received with the same indignation as before.

Sally told her, That she had written in a very favourable manner, in her behalf, to you; and that she every hour expected an answer; and made no doubt, that you would come up with a messenger, and generously pay the whole debt, and ask her pardon for neglecting it.

This disturbed her so much, that they feared she would have fallen into fits. She could not bear your name, she said. She hoped she should never see you more: and, were you to intrude yourself, dreadful consequences might follow.

Surely, they said, she would be glad to be released from her confinement.

Indeed she should, now they had begun to alarm her with his name, who was the author of all her woes: and who, she now saw plainly, gave way to this new outrage, in order to bring her to his own infamous terms.

Why then, they asked, would she not write to her friends, to pay Mrs. Sinclair's demand?

Because she hoped she should not trouble any body; and because she knew that the payment of the money if she should be able to pay it, was not what was aimed at.

Sally owned that she told her, That, truly, she had thought herself as well descended, and as well educated, as herself, though not entitled to such considerable fortunes. And had the impudence to insist upon it to me to be truth.

She had the insolence to add, to the lady, That she had as much reason as she to expect Mr. Lovelace would marry her; he having contracted to do so before he knew Miss Clarissa Harlowe: and that she had it under his hand and seal too—or else he had not obtained his end: therefore it was not likely she should be so officious as to do his work against herself, if she thought Mr. Lovelace had designs upon her, like what she presumed to hint at: that, for her part, her only view was, to procure liberty to a young gentlewoman, who made those things grievous to her which would not be made such a rout about by any body else—and to procure the payment of a just debt to her friend Mrs. Sinclair.

She besought them to leave her. She wanted not these instances, she said, to convince her of the company she was in; and told them, that, to get rid of such visiters, and of the still worse she was apprehensive of, she would write to one friend to raise the money for her; though it would be death for her to do so; because that friend could not do it without her mother, in whose eye it would give a selfish appearance to a friendship that was above all sordid alloys.

They advised her to write out of hand.

But how much must I write for? What is the sum? Should I not have had a bill delivered me? God knows, I took not your lodgings. But he that could treat me as he has done, could do this!

Don't speak against Mr. Lovelace, Miss Harlowe. He is a man I greatly esteem. [Cursed toad!] And, 'bating that he will take his advantage, where he can, of US silly credulous women, he is a man of honour.

She lifted up her hands and eyes, instead of speaking: and well she might! For any words she could have used could not have expressed the anguish she must feel on being comprehended in the US.

She must write for one hundred and fifty guineas, at least: two hundred, if she were short of more money, might well be written for.

Mrs. Sinclair, she said, had all her clothes. Let them be sold, fairly sold, and the money go as far as it would go. She had also a few other valuables; but no money, (none at all,) but the poor half guinea, and the little silver they had seen. She would give bond to pay all that her apparel, and the other matters she had, would fall short of. She had great effects belonging to her of right. Her bond would, and must be paid, were it for a thousand pounds. But her clothes she should never want. She believed, if not too much undervalued, those, and her few valuables, would answer every thing. She wished for no surplus but to discharge the last expenses; and forty shillings would do as well for those as forty pounds. 'Let my ruin, said she, lifting up her eyes, be LARGE! Let it be COMPLETE, in this life!—For a composition, let it be COMPLETE.'—And there she stopped.

The wretches could not help wishing to me for the opportunity of making such a purchase for their own wear. How I cursed them! and, in my heart, thee!—But too probable, thought I, that this vile Sally Martin may hope, [though thou art incapable of it,] that her Lovelace, as she has the assurance, behind thy back, to call thee, may present her with some of the poor lady's spoils!

Will not Mrs. Sinclair, proceeded she, think my clothes a security, till they can be sold? They are very good clothes. A suit or two but just put on, as it were; never worn. They cost much more than it demanded of me. My father loved to see me fine.—All shall go. But let me have the particulars of her demand. I suppose I must pay for my destroyer [that was her well-adapted word!] and his servants, as well as for myself. I am content to do so—I am above wishing that any body, who could thus act, should be so much as expostulated with, as to the justice and equity of this payment. If I have but enough to pay the demand, I shall be satisfied; and will leave the baseness of such an action as this, as an aggravation of a guilt which I thought could not be aggravated.

I own, Lovelace, I have malice in this particularity, in order to sting thee on the heart. And, let me ask thee, what now thou can'st think of thy barbarity, thy unprecedented barbarity, in having reduced a person of her rank, fortune, talents, and virtue, so low?

The wretched women, it must be owned, act but in their profession: a profession thou hast been the principal means of reducing these two to act in. And they know what thy designs have been, and how far prosecuted. It is, in their opinions, using her gently, that they have forborne to bring her to the woman so justly odious to her: and that they have not threatened her with the introducing to her strange men: nor yet brought into her company their spirit-breakers, and humbling-drones, (fellows not allowed to carry stings,) to trace and force her back to their detested house; and, when there, into all their measures.

Till I came, they thought thou wouldst not be displeased at any thing she suffered, that could help to mortify her into a state of shame and disgrace; and bring her to comply with thy views, when thou shouldst come to release her from these wretches, as from a greater evil than cohabiting with thee.

When thou considerest these things, thou wilt make no difficulty of believing, that this their own account of their behaviour to this admirable woman has been far short of their insults: and the less, when I tell thee, that, all together, their usage had such effect upon her, that they left her in violent hysterics; ordering an apothecary to be sent for, if she should continue in them, and be worse; and particularly (as they had done from the first) that they kept out of her way any edged or pointed instrument; especially a pen-knife; which, pretending to mend a pen, they said, she might ask for.

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