

СЭМНЮЭЛ РИЧАРДСОН

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

8

Сэмюэл Ричардсон

**Clarissa Harlowe; or the history
of a young lady — Volume 8**

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Samuel Richardson

Clarissa Harlowe; or the history of a young lady — Volume 8

LETTER I

MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE YARMOUTH, ISLE OF WIGHT,
MONDAY, AUG. 7.

MY DEAREST CREATURE,

I can write but just now a few lines. I cannot tell how to bear the sound of that Mr. Belford for your executor, cogent as your reasons for that measure are: and yet I am firmly of opinion, that none of your relations should be named for the trust. But I dwell the less on this subject, as I hope (and cannot bear to apprehend the contrary) that you will still live many, many years.

Mr. Hickman, indeed, speaks very handsomely of Mr. Belford. But he, poor man! has not much penetration.—If he had, he would hardly think so well of me as he does.

I have a particular opportunity of sending this by a friend of my aunt Harman's; who is ready to set out for London, (and this occasions my hurry,) and is to return out of hand. I expect therefore, by him a large packet from you; and hope and long for news of your amended health: which Heaven grant to the prayers of

Your ever-affectionate ANNA HOWE.

LETTER II

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE FRIDAY, AUG. 11.

I will send you a large packet, as you desire and expect; since I can do it by so safe a conveyance: but not all that is come to my hand—for I must own that my friends are very severe; too severe for any body, who loves them not, to see their letters. You, my dear, would not call them my friends, you said, long ago; but my relations: indeed I cannot call them my relations, I think!—But I am ill; and therefore perhaps more peevish than I should be. It is difficult to go out of ourselves to give a judgment against ourselves; and yet, oftentimes, to pass a just judgment, we ought.

I thought I should alarm you in the choice of my executor. But the sad necessity I am reduced to must excuse me.

I shall not repeat any thing I have said before on that subject: but if your objections will not be answered to your satisfaction by the papers and letters I shall enclose, marked 1, 2, 3, 4, to 9, I must think myself in another instance unhappy; since I am engaged too far (and with my own judgment too) to recede.

As Mr. Belford has transcribed for me, in confidence, from his friend's letters, the passages which accompany this, I must insist that you suffer no soul but yourself to peruse them; and that you return them by the very first opportunity; that so no use may be made of them that may do hurt either to the original writer or to the communicator. You'll observe I am bound by promise to this care. If through my means any mischief should arise, between this humane and that inhuman libertine, I should think myself utterly inexcusable.

I subjoin a list of the papers or letters I shall enclose. You must return them all when perused.*

- * 1. A letter from Miss Montague, dated Aug. 1.
2. A copy of my answer Aug. 3.
3. Mr. Belford's Letter to me, which will show you what my request was to him, and his compliance with it; and the desired extracts from his friend's letters Aug. 3, 4.
4. A copy of my answer, with thanks; and requesting him to undertake the executorship Aug. 4.
5. Mr. Belford's acceptance of the trust . . Aug. 4.
6. Miss Montague's letter, with a generous offer from Lord M. and the Ladies of that family Aug. 7.
7. Mr. Lovelace's to me Aug. 7.
8. Copy of mine to Miss Montague, in answer to her's of the day before Aug. 8.
9. Copy of my answer to Mr. Lovelace Aug. 11.

You will see by these several Letters, written and received in so little a space of time (to say nothing of what I have received and written which I cannot show you,) how little opportunity or leisure I can have for writing my own story.

I am very much tired and fatigued—with—I don't know what—with writing, I think—but most with myself, and with a situation I cannot help aspiring to get out of, and above!

O my dear, the world we live in is a sad, a very sad world!—While under our parents' protecting wings, we know nothing at all of it. Book-learned and a scribbler, and looking at people as I saw them as visitors or visiting, I thought I knew a great deal of it. Pitiably ignorant!—Alas! I knew nothing at all!

With zealous wishes for your happiness, and the happiness of every one dear to you, I am, and will ever be,

Your gratefully-affectionate CL. HARLOWE.

LETTER III

MR. ANTONY HARLOWE, TO MISS CL. HARLOWE [IN REPLY TO HER'S TO HER UNCLE HARLOWE, OF THURSDAY, AUG. 10.] AUG. 12.

UNHAPPY GIRL!

As your uncle Harlowe chooses not to answer your pert letter to him; and as mine, written to you before,* was written as if it were in the spirit of prophecy, as you have found to your sorrow; and as you are now making yourself worse than you are in your health, and better than you are in your penitence, as we are very well assured, in order to move compassion; which you do not deserve, having had so much warning: for all these reasons, I take up my pen once more; though I had told your brother, at his going to Edinburgh, that I would not write to you, even were you to write to me, without letting him know. So indeed had we all; for he prognosticated what would happen, as to your applying to us, when you knew not how to help it.

* See Vol. I. Letter XXXII.

Brother John has hurt your niceness, it seems, by asking you a plain question, which your mother's heart is too full of grief to let her ask; and modesty will not let your sister ask; though but the consequence of your actions—and yet it must be answered, before you'll obtain from your father and mother, and us, the notice you hope for, I can tell you that.

You lived several guilty weeks with one of the vilest fellows that ever drew breath, at bed, as well as at board, no doubt, (for is not his character known?) and pray don't be ashamed to be asked after what may naturally come of such free living. This modesty indeed would have become you for eighteen years of your life—you'll be pleased to mark that—but makes no good figure compared with your behaviour since the beginning of April last. So pray don't take it up, and wipe your mouth upon it, as if nothing had happened.

But, may be, I likewise am to shocking to your niceness!—O girl, girl! your modesty had better been shown at the right time and place—Every body but you believed what the rake was: but you would believe nothing bad of him—What think you now?

Your folly has ruined all our peace. And who knows where it may yet end? —Your poor father but yesterday showed me this text: With bitter grief he showed it me, poor man! and do you lay it to your heart:

'A father waketh for his daughter, when no man knoweth; and the care for her taketh away his sleep—When she is young, lest she pass away the flower of her age—[and you know what proposals were made to you at different times.] And, being married, lest she should be hated. In her virginity, lest she should be defiled, and gotten with child in her father's house—[and I don't make the words, mind that.] And, having an husband, lest she should misbehave herself.' And what follows? 'Keep a sure watch over a shameless daughter—[yet no watch could hold you!] lest she make thee a laughing stock to thine enemies—[as you have made us all to this cursed Lovelace,] and a bye-word in the city, and a reproach among the people, and make thee ashamed before the multitude.' Ecclus. xlii. 9, 10, &c.

Now will you wish you had not written pertly. Your sister's severities! —Never, girl, say that is severe that is deserved. You know the meaning of words. No body better. Would to the Lord you had acted up but to one half of what you know! then had we not been disappointed and grieved, as we all have been: and nobody more than him who was

Your loving uncle, ANTONY HARLOWE.

This will be with you to-morrow. Perhaps you may be suffered to have some part of your estate, after you have smarted a little more.

Your pertly-answered uncle John, who is your trustee, will not have you be destitute. But we hope all is not true that we hear of you.

—Only take care, I advise you, that, bad as you have acted, you act not still worse, if it be possible to act worse. Improve upon the hint.

LETTER IV

MISS CL. HARLOWE, TO ANTONY HARLOWE, ESQ. SUNDAY, AUG. 13.
HONOURED SIR,

I am very sorry for my pert letter to my uncle Harlowe. Yet I did not intend it to be pert. People new to misfortune may be too easily moved to impatience.

The fall of a regular person, no doubt, is dreadful and inexcusable. is like the sin of apostacy. Would to Heaven, however, that I had had the circumstances of mine inquired into!

If, Sir, I make myself worse than I am in my health, and better than I am in my penitence, it is fit I should be punished for my double dissimulation: and you have the pleasure of being one of my punishers. My sincerity in both respects will, however, be best justified by the event. To that I refer. —May Heaven give you always as much comfort in reflecting upon the reprobation I have met with, as you seem to have pleasure in mortifying a young creature, extremely mortified; and that from a right sense, as she presumes to hope, of her own fault!

What you heard of me I cannot tell. When the nearest and dearest relations give up an unhappy wretch, it is not to be wondered at that those who are not related to her are ready to take up and propagate slanders against her. Yet I think I may defy calumny itself, and (excepting the fatal, though involuntary step of April 10) wrap myself in my own innocence, and be easy. I thank you, Sir, nevertheless, for your caution, mean it what it will.

As to the question required of me to answer, and which is allowed to be too shocking either for a mother to put to a daughter, or a sister to a sister; and which, however, you say I must answer; —O Sir!—And must I answer?—This then be my answer:—'A little time, a much less time than is imagined, will afford a more satisfactory answer to my whole family, and even to my brother and sister, than I can give in words.'

Nevertheless, be pleased to let it be remembered, that I did not petition for a restoration to favour. I could not hope for that. Nor yet to be put in possession of any part of my own estate. Nor even for means of necessary subsistence from the produce of that estate—but only for a blessing; for a last blessing!

And this I will farther add, because it is true, that I have no wilful crime to charge against myself: no free living at bed and at board, as you phrase it!

Why, why, Sir, were not other inquiries made of me, as well as this shocking one?—inquiries that modesty would have permitted a mother or sister to make; and which, if I may be excused to say so, would have been still less improper, and more charitable, to have been made by uncles, (were the mother forbidden, or the sister not inclined, to make them,) than those they have made.

Although my humble application has brought upon me so much severe reproach, I repent not that I have written to my mother, (although I cannot but wish that I had not written to my sister;) because I have satisfied a dutiful consciousness by it, however unanswered by the wished-for success. Nevertheless, I cannot help saying, that mine is indeed a hard fate, that I cannot beg pardon for my capital errors without doing it in such terms as shall be an aggravation of the offence.

But I had best leave off, lest, as my full mind, I find, is rising to my pen, I have other pardons to beg as I multiply lines, where none at all will be given.

God Almighty bless, preserve, and comfort my dear sorrowing and grievously offended father and mother!—and continue in honour, favour, and merit, my happy sister!—May God forgive my brother, and protect him from the violence of his own temper, as well as from the destroyer of his sister's honour!—And may you, my dear uncle, and your no less now than ever dear brother, my second papa, as he used to bid me call him, be blessed and happy in them, and in each other!—And, in order to this, may you all speedily banish from your remembrance, for ever,

The unhappy CLARISSA HARLOWE!

LETTER V

MRS. NORTON, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE MONDAY, AUG. 14.

All your friends here, my dear young lady, now seem set upon proposing to you to go to one of the plantations. This, I believe, is owing to some misrepresentations of Mr. Brand; from whom they have received a letter.

I wish, with all my heart, that you could, consistently with your own notions of honour, yield to the pressing requests of all Mr. Lovelace's family in his behalf. This, I think, would stop every mouth; and, in time, reconcile every body to you. For your own friends will not believe that he is in earnest to marry you; and the hatred between the families is such, that they will not condescend to inform themselves better; nor would believe him, if he were ever so solemnly to avow that he is.

I should be very glad to have in readiness, upon occasion, some brief particulars of your sad story under your own hand. But let me tell you, at the same time, that no misrepresentations, nor even your own confession, shall lessen my opinion either of your piety, or of your prudence in essential points; because I know it was always your humble way to make light faults heavy against yourself: and well might you, my dearest young lady, aggravate your own failings, who have ever had so few; and those few so slight, that your ingenuousness has turned most of them into excellencies.

Nevertheless, let me advise you, my dear Miss Clary, to discountenance any visits, which, with the censorious, may affect your character. As that has not hitherto suffered by your wilful default, I hope you will not, in a desponding negligence (satisfying yourself with a consciousness of your own innocence) permit it to suffer. Difficult situations, you know, my dear young lady, are the tests not only of prudence but of virtue.

I think, I must own to you, that, since Mr. Brand's letter has been received, I have a renewed prohibition to attend you. However, if you will give me leave, that shall not detain me from you. Nor would I stay for that leave, if I were not in hopes that, in this critical situation, I may be able to do you service here.

I have often had messages and inquiries after your health from the truly-reverend Dr. Lewen, who has always expressed, and still expresses, infinite concern for you. He entirely disapproves of the measures of the family with regard to you. He is too much indisposed to go abroad. But, were he in good health, he would not, as I understand, visit at Harlowe-place, having some time since been unhandsomely treated by your brother, on his offering to mediate for you with your family.

I am just now informed that your cousin Morden is arrived in England. He is at Canterbury, it seems, looking after some concerns he has there; and is soon expected in these parts. Who knows what may arise from his arrival? God be with you, my dearest Miss Clary, and be your comforter and sustainer. And never fear but He will; for I am sure, I am very sure, that you put your whole trust in Him.

And what, after all, is this world, on which we so much depend for durable good, poor creatures that we are!—When all the joys of it, and (what is a balancing comfort) all the troubles of it, are but momentary, and vanish like a morning dream!

And be this remembered, my dearest young lady, that worldly joy claims no kindred with the joys we are bid to aspire after. These latter we must be fitted for by affliction and disappointment. You are therefore in the direct road to glory, however thorny the path you are in. And I had almost said, that it depends upon yourself, by your patience, and by your resignedness to the dispensation,

(God enabling you, who never fails the true penitent, and sincere invoker,) to be an heir of a blessed immortality.

But this glory, I humbly pray, that you may not be permitted to enter into, ripe as you are so soon to be for it, till, with your gentle hand, (a pleasure I have so often, as you now, promised to myself,) you have closed the eyes of

Your maternally-affectionate JUDITH NORTON.

LETTER VI

MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MRS. NORTON THURSDAY, AUG. 27.

What Mr. Brand, or any body, can have written or said to my prejudice, I cannot imagine; and yet some evil reports have gone out against me; as I find by some hints in a very severe letter written to me by my uncle Antony. Such a letter as I believe was never written to any poor creature, who, by ill health of body, as well as of mind, was before tottering on the brink of the grave. But my friends may possibly be better justified than the reporters—For who knows what they may have heard?

You give me a kind caution, which seems to imply more than you express, when you advise me against countenancing visiters that may discredit me. You have spoken quite out. Surely, I have had afflictions enow to strengthen my mind, and to enable it to bear the worst that can now happen. But I will not puzzle myself by conjectural evils; as I might perhaps do, if I had not enow that were certain. I shall hear all, when it is thought proper that I should. Mean time, let me say, for your satisfaction, that I know not that I have any thing criminal or disreputable to answer for either in word or deed, since the fatal 10th of April last.

You desire an account of what passes between me and my friends; and also particulars or brief heads of my sad story, in order to serve me as occasion shall offer. My dear good Mrs. Norton, you shall have a whole packet of papers, which I have sent to my Miss Howe, when she returns them; and you shall have likewise another packet, (and that with this letter,) which I cannot at present think of sending to that dear friend for the sake of my own relations; whom, without seeing that packet, she is but too ready to censure heavily. From these you will be able to collect a great deal of my story. But for what is previous to these papers, and which more particularly relates to what I have suffered from Mr. Lovelace, you must have patience; for at present I have neither head nor heart for such subjects. The papers I send you with this will be those mentioned in the margin.* You must restore them to me as soon as perused; and upon your honour make no use of them, or of any intelligence you have from me, but by my previous consent.

- * 1. A copy of mine to my sister, begging off my father's malediction
dated July 21.
- 2. My sister's answer dated July 27.
- 3. Copy of my second letter to my sister. dated July 29.
- 4. My sister's answer dated Aug. 3.
- 5. Copy of my Letter to my mother dated Aug. 5.
- 6. My uncle Harlowe's letter dated Aug. 7.
- 7. Copy of my answer to it dated the 10th.
- 8. Letter from my uncle Antony dated the 12th.
- 9. And lastly, the copy of my answer to it. dated the 13th.

These communications you must not, my good Mrs. Norton, look upon as appeals against my relations. On the contrary, I am heartily sorry that they have incurred the displeasure of so excellent a divine as Dr. Lewen. But you desire to have every thing before you: and I think you ought; for who knows, as you say, but you may be applied to at last to administer comfort from their conceding hearts, to one that wants it; and who sometimes, judging by what she knows of her own heart, thinks herself entitled to it?

I know that I have a most indulgent and sweet-tempered mother; but, having to deal with violent spirits, she has too often forfeited that peace of mind which she so much prefers, by her over concern to preserve it.

I am sure she would not have turned me over for an answer to a letter written with so contrite and fervent a spirit, as was mine to her, to a masculine spirit, had she been left to herself.

But, my dear Mrs. Norton, might not, think you, the revered lady have favoured me with one private line?—If not, might not you have written by her order, or connivance, one softening, one motherly line, when she saw her poor girl, whom once she dearly loved, borne so hard upon?

O no, she might not!—because her heart, to be sure, is in their measures! and if she think them right, perhaps they must be right!—at least, knowing only what they know, they must!—and yet they might know all, if they would!—and possibly, in their own good time, they think to make proper inquiry.—My application was made to them but lately.—Yet how deeply will it afflict them, if their time should be out of time!

When you have before you the letters I have sent to Miss Howe, you will see that Lord M. and the Ladies of his family, jealous as they are of the honour of their house, (to express myself in their language,) think better of me than my own relations do. You will see an instance of their generosity to me, which at the time extremely affected me, and indeed still affects me. Unhappy man! gay, inconsiderate, and cruel! what has been his gain by making unhappy a creature who hoped to make him happy! and who was determined to deserve the love of all to whom he is related! —Poor man!—but you will mistake a compassionate and placable nature for love!—he took care, great care, that I should rein-in betimes any passion that I might have had for him, had he known how to be but commonly grateful or generous!—But the Almighty knows what is best for his poor creatures.

Some of the letters in the same packet will also let you into the knowledge of a strange step which I have taken, (strange you will think it); and, at the same time, give you my reasons for taking it.*

* She means that of making Mr. Belford her executor.

It must be expected, that situations uncommonly difficult will make necessary some extraordinary steps, which, but for those situations, would be hardly excusable. It will be very happy indeed, and somewhat wonderful, if all the measures I have been driven to take should be right. A pure intention, void of all undutiful resentment, is what must be my consolation, whatever others may think of those measures, when they come to know them: which, however, will hardly be till it is out of my power to justify them, or to answer for myself.

I am glad to hear of my cousin Morden's safe arrival. I should wish to see him methinks: but I am afraid that he will sail with the stream; as it must be expected, that he will hear what they have to say first.—But what I most fear is, that he will take upon himself to avenge me. Rather than he should do so, I would have him look upon me as a creature utterly unworthy of his concern; at least of his vindictive concern.

How soothing to the wounded heart of your Clarissa, how balmy are the assurances of your continued love and favour;—love me, my dear mamma Norton, continue to love me, to the end!—I now think that I may, without presumption, promise to deserve your love to the end. And, when I am gone, cherish my memory in your worthy heart; for in so doing you will cherish the memory of one who loves and honours you more than she can express.

But when I am no more, I charge you, as soon as you can, the smarting pangs of grief that will attend a recent loss; and let all be early turned into that sweetly melancholy regard to MEMORY, which, engaging us to forget all faults, and to remember nothing but what was thought amiable, gives more pleasure than pain to survivors—especially if they can comfort themselves with the humble hope, that the Divine mercy has taken the dear departed to itself.

And what is the space of time to look backward upon, between an early departure and the longest survivance!—and what the consolation attending the sweet hope of meeting again, never more to be separated, never more to be pained, grieved, or aspersed;—but mutually blessing, and being blessed, to all eternity!

In the contemplation of this happy state, in which I hope, in God's good time, to rejoice with you, my beloved Mrs. Norton, and also with my dear relations, all reconciled to, and blessing the child against whom they are now so much incensed, I conclude myself

Your ever dutiful and affectionate CLARISSA HARLOWE.

LETTER VII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. SUNDAY, AUG. 13.

I don't know what a devil ails me; but I never was so much indisposed in my life. At first, I thought some of my blessed relations here had got a dose administered to me, in order to get the whole house to themselves. But, as I am the hopes of the family, I believe they would not be so wicked.

I must lay down my pen. I cannot write with any spirit at all. What a plague can be the matter with me!

Lord M. paid me just now a cursed gloomy visit, to ask how I do after bleeding. His sisters both drove away yesterday, God be thanked. But they asked not my leave; and hardly bid me good-bye. My Lord was more tender, and more dutiful, than I expected. Men are less unforgiving than women. I have reason to say so, I am sure. For, besides implacable Miss Harlowe, and the old Ladies, the two Montague apes han't been near me yet.

Neither eat, drink, nor sleep!—a piteous case, Jack! If I should die like a fool now, people would say Miss Harlowe had broken my heart.—That she vexes me to the heart, is certain.

Confounded squeamish! I would fain write it off. But must lay down my pen again. It won't do. Poor Lovelace!—What a devil ails thee?

Well, but now let's try for't—Hoy—Hoy—Hoy! Confound me for a gaping puppy, how I yawn!—Where shall I begin? at thy executorship—thou shalt have a double office of it: for I really think thou mayest send me a coffin and a shroud. I shall be ready for them by the time they can come down.

What a little fool is this Miss Harlowe! I warrant she'll now repent that she refused me. Such a lovely young widow—What a charming widow would she have made! how would she have adorned the weeds! to be a widow in the first twelve months is one of the greatest felicities that can befall a fine woman. Such pretty employment in new dismal, when she had hardly worn round her blazing joyfals! Such lights, and such shades! how would they set off one another, and be adorned by the wearer!—

Go to the devil!—I will write!—Can I do anything else?

They would not have me write, Belford.—I must be ill indeed, when I can't write.

But thou seemest nettled, Jack! Is it because I was stung? It is not for two friends, any more than for man and wife, to be out of patience at one time.—What must be the consequence if they are?—I am in no fighting mood just now: but as patient and passive as the chickens that are brought me in broth—for I am come to that already.

But I can tell thee, for all this, be thy own man, if thou wilt, as to the executorship, I will never suffer thee to expose my letters. They are too ingenuous by half to be seen. And I absolutely insist upon it, that, on receipt of this, thou burn them all.

I will never forgive thee that impudent and unfriendly reflection, of my cavaliering it here over half a dozen persons of distinction: remember, too, thy words poor helpless orphan—these reflections are too serious, and thou art also too serious, for me to let these things go off as jesting; notwithstanding the Roman style* is preserved; and, indeed, but just preserved. By my soul, Jack, if I had not been taken thus egregiously crowsick, I would have been up with thee, and the lady too, before now.

* For what these gentlemen mean by the Roman style, see Vol. I. Letter XXXI. in the first note.

But write on, however: and send me copies, if thou canst, of all that passes between our Charlotte and Miss Harlowe. I'll take no notice of what thou communicatest of that sort. I like not the people here the worse for their generous offer to the lady. But you see she is as proud as implacable. There's no obliging her. She'd rather sell her clothes than be beholden to any body, although she would oblige by permitting the obligation.

O Lord! O Lord!—Mortal ill!—Adieu, Jack!

I was forced to leave off, I was so ill, at this place. And what dost think! why Lord M. brought the parson of the parish to pray by me; for his chaplain is at Oxford. I was lain down in my nightgown over my waistcoat, and in a doze: and, when I opened my eyes, who should I see, but the parson kneeling on one side the bed; Lord M. on the other; Mrs. Greme, who had been sent for to tend me, as they call it, at the feet! God be thanked, my Lord, said I in an ecstasy!—Where's Miss?—for I supposed they were going to marry me.

They thought me delirious at first; and prayed louder and louder.

This roused me: off the bed I started; slid my feet into my slippers; put my hand in my waistcoat pocket, and pulled out thy letter with my beloved's meditation in it! My Lord, Dr. Wright, Mrs. Greme, you have thought me a very wicked fellow: but, see! I can read you as good as you can read me.

They stared at one another. I gaped, and read, Poor mo—or—tals the cau—o—ause of their own—their own mi—ser—ry.

It is as suitable to my case, as to the lady's, as thou'lt observe, if thou readest it again.* At the passage where it is said, That when a man is chastened for sin, his beauty consumes away, I stepped to the glass: A poor figure, by Jupiter, cried I!—And they all praised and admired me; lifted up their hands and their eyes; and the doctor said, he always thought it impossible, that a man of my sense could be so wild as the world said I was. My Lord chuckled for joy; congratulated me; and, thank my dear Miss Harlowe, I got high reputation among good, bad, and indifferent. In short, I have established myself for ever with all here. —But, O Belford, even this will not do—I must leave off again.

* See Vol. VII. Letter LXXXI.

A visit from the Montague sisters, led in by the hobbling Peer, to congratulate my amendment and reformation both in one. What a lucky event this illness with this meditation in my pocket; for we were all to pieces before! Thus, when a boy, have I joined with a crowd coming out of church, and have been thought to have been there myself.

I am incensed at the insolence of the young Levite. Thou wilt highly oblige me, if thou'lt find him out, and send me his ears in the next letter.

My beloved mistakes me, if she thinks I proposed her writing to me as an alternative that should dispense with my attendance upon her. That it shall not do, nor did I intend it should, unless she pleased me better in the contents of her letter than she has done. Bid her read again. I gave no such

hopes. I would have been with her in spite of you both, by to-morrow, at farthest, had I not been laid by the heels thus, like a helpless miscreant.

But I grow better and better every hour, I say: the doctor says not: but I am sure I know best: and I will soon be in London, depend on't. But say nothing of this to my dear, cruel, and implacable Miss Harlowe.

A—dieu—u, Ja—aack—What a gaping puppy (yaw—n! yaw—n! yaw—n!)

Thy LOVELACE.

LETTER VIII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. MONDAY, AUG. 15.

I am extremely concerned for thy illness. I should be very sorry to lose thee. Yet, if thou diest so soon, I could wish, from my soul, it had been before the beginning of last April: and this as well for thy sake, as for the sake of the most excellent woman in the world: for then thou wouldst not have had the most crying sin of thy life to answer for.

I was told on Saturday that thou wert very much out of order; and this made me forbear writing till I heard farther. Harry, on his return from thee, confirmed the bad way thou art in. But I hope Lord M. in his unmerited tenderness for thee, thinks the worst of thee. What can it be, Bob.? A violent fever, they say; but attended with odd and severe symptoms.

I will not trouble thee in the way thou art in, with what passes here with Miss Harlowe. I wish thy repentance as swift as thy illness; and as efficacious, if thou diest; for it is else to be feared, that she and you will never meet in one place.

I told her how ill you are. Poor man! said she. Dangerously ill, say you?

Dangerously indeed, Madam!—So Lord M. sends me word!

God be merciful to him, if he die!—said the admirable creature.—Then, after a pause, Poor wretch!—may he meet with the mercy he has not shown!

I send this by a special messenger: for I am impatient to hear how it goes with thee.—If I have received thy last letter, what melancholy reflections will that last, so full of shocking levity, give to

Thy true friend, JOHN BELFORD.

LETTER IX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY, AUG. 15.*

* Text error: should be Aug. 16.

Thank thee, Jack; most heartily I thank thee, for the sober conclusion of thy last!—I have a good mind, for the sake of it, to forgive thy till now absolutely unpardonable extracts.

But dost think I will lose such an angel, such a forgiving angel, as this?—By my soul, I will not!—To pray for mercy for such an ungrateful miscreant!—how she wounds me, how she cuts me to the soul, by her exalted generosity!—But SHE must have mercy upon me first!—then will she teach me a reliance for the sake of which her prayer for me will be answered.

But hasten, hasten to me particulars of her health, of her employments, of her conversation.

I am sick only of love! Oh! that I could have called her mine!—it would then have been worth while to be sick!—to have sent for her down to me from town; and to have had her, with healing in her dove-like wings, flying to my comfort; her duty and her choice to pray for me, and to bid me live for her sake!—O Jack! what an angel have I—

But I have not lost her!—I will not lose her! I am almost well; should be quite well but for these prescribing rascals, who, to do credit to their skill, will make the disease of importance.—And I will make her mine!—and be sick again, to entitle myself to her dutiful tenderness, and pious as well as personal concern!

God for ever bless her!—Hasten, hasten particulars of her!—I am sick of love!—such generous goodness!—By all that's great and good, I will not lose her!—so tell her!—She says, that she could not pity me, if she thought of being mine! This, according to Miss Howe's transcriptions to Charlotte. —But bid her hate me, and have me: and my behaviour to her shall soon turn that hate to love! for, body and mind, I will be wholly her's.

LETTER X

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. THURSDAY, AUG. 17.

I am sincerely rejoiced to hear that thou art already so much amended, as thy servant tells me thou art. Thy letter looks as if thy morals were mending with thy health. This was a letter I could show, as I did, to the lady.

She is very ill: (cursed letters received from her implacable family!) so I could not have much conversation with her, in thy favour, upon it.—But what passed will make thee more and more adore her.

She was very attentive to me, as I read it; and, when I had done, Poor man! said she; what a letter is this! He had timely instances that my temper was not ungenerous, if generosity could have obliged him! But his remorse, and that for his own sake, is all the punishment I wish him.— Yet I must be more reserved, if you write to him every thing I say!

I extolled her unbounded goodness—how could I help it, though to her face!

No goodness in it! she said—it was a frame of mind she had endeavoured after for her own sake. She suffered too much in want of mercy, not to wish it to a penitent heart. He seems to be penitent, said she; and it is not for me to judge beyond appearances.—If he be not, he deceives himself more than any body else.

She was so ill that this was all that passed on the occasion.

What a fine subject for tragedy, would the injuries of this lady, and her behaviour under them, both with regard to her implacable friends, and to her persecutor, make! With a grand objection as to the moral, nevertheless;* for here virtue is punished! Except indeed we look forward to the rewards of *HEREAFTER*, which, morally, she must be sure of, or who can? Yet, after all, I know not, so sad a fellow art thou, and so vile an husband mightest thou have made, whether her virtue is not rewarded in missing thee: for things the most grievous to human nature, when they happen, as this charming creature once observed, are often the happiest for us in the event.

* Mr. Belford's objections, That virtue ought not to suffer in a tragedy, is not well considered: Monimia in the *Orphean*, Belvidera in *Venice Preserved*, Athenais in *Theodosius*, Cordelia in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Desdemona in *Othello*, Hamlet, (to name no more,) are instances that a tragedy could hardly be justly called a tragedy, if virtue did not temporarily suffer, and vice for a while triumph. But he recovers himself in the same paragraph; and leads us to look up to the *FUTURE* for the reward of virtue, and for the punishment of guilt: and observes not amiss, when he says, He knows not but that the virtue of such a woman as Clarissa is rewarded in missing such a man as Lovelace.

I have frequently thought, in my attendance on this lady, that if Belton's admired author, Nic. Rowe, had had such a character before him, he would have drawn another sort of penitent than he has done, or given his play, which he calls *The Fair Penitent*, a fitter title. Miss Harlowe is a penitent indeed! I think, if I am not guilty of a contradiction in terms; a penitent without a fault; her parents' conduct towards her from the first considered.

The whole story of the other is a pack of d——d stuff. Lothario, 'tis true, seems such another wicked ungenerous varlet as thou knowest who: the author knew how to draw a rake; but not to paint a penitent. Calista is a desiring luscious wench, and her penitence is nothing else but rage, insolence, and scorn. Her passions are all storm and tumult; nothing of the finer passions of the sex, which, if naturally drawn, will distinguish themselves from the masculine passions, by a softness that will even shine through rage and despair. Her character is made up of deceit and disguise. She has no virtue; is all pride; and her devil is as much within her, as without her.

How then can the fall of such a one create a proper distress, when all the circumstances of it are considered? For does she not brazen out her crime, even after detection? Knowing her own guilt, she calls for Altamont's vengeance on his best friend, as if he had traduced her; yields to marry Altamont,

though criminal with another; and actually beds that whining puppy, when she had given up herself, body and soul, to Lothario; who, nevertheless, refused to marry her.

Her penitence, when begun, she justly styles the phrensy of her soul; and, as I said, after having, as long as she could, most audaciously brazened out her crime, and done all the mischief she could do, (occasioning the death of Lothario, of her father, and others,) she stabs herself.

And can this be the act of penitence?

But, indeed, our poets hardly know how to create a distress without horror, murder, and suicide; and must shock your soul, to bring tears from your eyes.

Altamont indeed, who is an amorous blockhead, a credulous cuckold, and, (though painted as a brave fellow, and a soldier,) a mere Tom. Essence, and a quarreler with his best friend, dies like a fool, (as we are led to suppose at the conclusion of the play,) without either sword or pop-gun, of mere grief and nonsense for one of the vilest of her sex: but the Fair Penitent, as she is called, perishes by her own hand; and, having no title by her past crimes to laudable pity, forfeits all claim to true penitence, and, in all probability, to future mercy.

But here is Miss CLARISSA HARLOWE, a virtuous, noble, wise, and pious young lady; who being ill used by her friends, and unhappily ensnared by a vile libertine, whom she believes to be a man of honour, is in a manner forced to throw herself upon his protection. And he, in order to obtain her confidence, never scruples the deepest and most solemn protestations of honour.

After a series of plots and contrivances, al baffled by her virtue and vigilance, he basely has recourse to the vilest of arts, and, to rob her of her honour, is forced first to rob her of her senses.

Unable to bring her, notwithstanding, to his ungenerous views of cohabitation, she over-awes him in the very entrance of a fresh act of premeditated guilt, in presence of the most abandoned of women assembled to assist his devilish purpose; triumphs over them all, by virtue only of her innocence; and escapes from the vile hands he had put her into.

She nobly, not frantically, resents: refuses to see or to marry the wretch; who, repenting his usage of so divine a creature, would fain move her to forgive his baseness, and make him her husband: and this, though persecuted by all her friends, and abandoned to the deepest distress, being obliged, from ample fortunes, to make away with her apparel for subsistence; surrounded also by strangers, and forced (in want of others) to make a friend of the friend of her seducer.

Though longing for death, and making all proper preparations for it, convinced that grief and ill usage have broken her noble heart, she abhors the impious thought of shortening her allotted period; and, as much a stranger to revenge as despair, is able to forgive the author of her ruin; wishes his repentance, and that she may be the last victim to his barbarous perfidy: and is solicitous for nothing so much in this life, as to prevent vindictive mischief to and from the man who used her so basely.

This is penitence! This is piety! And hence distress naturally arises, that must worthily effect every heart.

Whatever the ill usage of this excellent woman is from her relations, she breaks not out into excesses: she strives, on the contrary, to find reason to justify them at her own expense; and seems more concerned for their cruelty to her for their sakes hereafter, when she shall be no more, than for her own: for, as to herself, she is sure, she says, God will forgive her, though no one on earth will.

On every extraordinary provocation she has recourse to the Scriptures, and endeavours to regulate her vehemence by sacred precedents. 'Better people, she says, have been more afflicted than she, grievous as she sometimes thinks her afflictions: and shall she not bear what less faulty persons have borne?' On the very occasion I have mentioned, (some new instances of implacableness from her friends,) the enclosed meditation will show how mildly, and yet how forcibly, she complains. See if thou, in the wicked levity of thy heart, canst apply it to thy cause, as thou didst the other. If thou canst not, give way to thy conscience, and that will make the properest application.

MEDITATION

How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words!

Be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself.

To her that is afflicted, pity should be shown from her friend.

But she that is ready to slip with her feet, is as a lamp despised in the thought of them that are at ease.

There is a shame which bringeth sin, and there is a shame which bringeth glory and grace.

Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye, my friends! for the hand of God hath touched me.

If your soul were in my soul's stead, I also could speak as ye do: I could heap up words against you—

But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.

Why will ye break a leaf driven to and fro? Why will ye pursue the dry stubble? Why will ye write bitter words against me, and make me possess the iniquities of my youth?

Mercy is seasonable in the time of affliction, as clouds of rain in the time of drought.

Are not my days few? Cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little—before I go whence I shall not return; even to the land of darkness, and shadow of death!

Let me add, that the excellent lady is informed, by a letter from Mrs. Norton, that Colonel Morden is just arrived in England. He is now the only person she wishes to see.

I expressed some jealousy upon it, lest he should have place given over me in the executorship. She said, That she had no thoughts to do so now; because such a trust, were he to accept of it, (which she doubted,) might, from the nature of some of the papers which in that case would necessarily pass through his hands, occasion mischiefs between my friend and him, that would be worse than death for her to think of.

Poor Belton, I hear, is at death's door. A messenger is just come from him, who tells me he cannot die till he sees me. I hope the poor fellow will not go off yet; since neither his affairs of this world, nor for the other, are in tolerable order. I cannot avoid going to the poor man. Yet am unwilling to stir, till I have an assurance from you that you will not disturb the lady: for I know he will be very loth to part with me, when he gets me to him.

Tourville tells me how fast thou mendest: let me conjure thee not to think of molesting this incomparable woman. For thy own sake I request this, as well as for her's, and for the sake of thy given promise: for, should she die within a few weeks, as I fear she will, it will be said, and perhaps too justly, that thy visit has hastened her end.

In hopes thou wilt not, I wish thy perfect recovery: else that thou mayest relapse, and be confined to thy bed.

LETTER XI

MR. BELFORD, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE SAT. MORN. AUG. 19.
MADAM,

I think myself obliged in honour to acquaint you that I am afraid Mr. Lovelace will try his fate by an interview with you.

I wish to Heaven you could prevail upon yourself to receive his visit. All that is respectful, even to veneration, and all that is penitent, will you see in his behaviour, if you can admit of it. But as I am obliged to set out directly for Epsom, (to perform, as I apprehend, the last friendly offices for poor Mr. Belton, whom once you saw,) and as I think it more likely that Mr. Lovelace will not be prevailed upon, than that he will, I thought fit to give you this intimation, lest, if he should come, you should be too much surprised.

He flatters himself that you are not so ill as I represent you to be. When he sees you, he will be convinced that the most obliging things he can do, will be as proper to be done for the sake of his own future peace of mind, as for your health-sake; and, I dare say, in fear of hurting the latter, he will forbear the thoughts of any farther intrusion; at least while you are so much indisposed: so that one half-hour's shock, if it will be a shock to see the unhappy man, (but just got up himself from a dangerous fever,) will be all you will have occasion to stand.

I beg you will not too much hurry and discompose yourself. It is impossible he can be in town till Monday, at soonest. And if he resolve to come, I hope to be at Mr. Smith's before him.

I am, Madam, with the profoundest veneration,

Your most faithful and most obedient servant, J. BELFORD.

LETTER XII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. [IN ANSWER TO HIS OF AUG. 17. SEE LETTER X. OF THIS VOLUME.] SUNDAY, AUG. 20.

What an unmerciful fellow art thou! A man has no need of a conscience, who has such an impertinent monitor. But if Nic. Rowe wrote a play that answers not his title, am I to be reflected upon for that?—I have sinned; I repent; I would repair—she forgives my sin: she accepts my repentance: but she won't let me repair—What wouldst thou have me do?

But get thee gone to Belton, as soon as thou canst. Yet whether thou goest or not, up I must go, and see what I can do with the sweet oddity myself. The moment these prescribing varlets will let me, depend upon it, I go. Nay, Lord M. thinks she ought to permit me one interview. His opinion has great authority with me—when it squares with my own: and I have assured him, and my two cousins, that I will behave with all the decency and respect that man can behave with to the person whom he most respects. And so I will. Of this, if thou choosest not to go to Belton mean time, thou shalt be witness.

Colonel Morden, thou hast heard me say, is a man of honour and bravery:— but Colonel Morden has had his girls, as well as you or I. And indeed, either openly or secretly, who has not? The devil always baits with a pretty wench, when he angles for a man, be his age, rank, or degree, what it will.

I have often heard my beloved speak of the Colonel with great distinction and esteem. I wish he could make matters a little easier, for her mind's sake, between the rest of the implacables and herself.

Methinks I am sorry for honest Belton. But a man cannot be ill, or vapourish, but thou liftest up thy shriek-owl note, and killest him immediately. None but a fellow, who is for a drummer in death's forlorn-hope, could take so much delight, as thou dost, in beating a dead-march with thy goose-quills. Whereas, didst thou but know thine own talents, thou art formed to give mirth by thy very appearance; and wouldst make a better figure by half, leading up thy brother-bears at Hockley in the Hole, to the music of a Scot's bagpipe. Methinks I see thy clumsy sides shaking, (and shaking the sides of all beholders,) in these attitudes; thy fat head archly beating time on thy porterly shoulders, right and left by turns, as I once beheld thee practising to the horn-pipe at Preston. Thou remembrest the frolick, as I have done an hundred times; for I never before saw thee appear so much in character.

But I know what I shall get by this—only that notable observation repeated, That thy outside is the worst of thee, and mine the best of me. And so let it be. Nothing thou writest of this sort can I take amiss.

But I shall call thee seriously to account, when I see thee, for the extracts thou hast given the lady from my letters, notwithstanding what I said in my last; especially if she continue to refuse me. An hundred times have I myself known a woman deny, yet comply at last: but, by these extracts, thou hast, I doubt, made her bar up the door of her heart, as she used to do her chamber-door, against me.—This therefore is a disloyalty that friendship cannot bear, nor honour allow me to forgive.

LETTER XIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. LONDON, AUG. 21, MONDAY.

I believe I am bound to curse thee, Jack. Nevertheless I won't anticipate, but proceed to write thee a longer letter than thou hast had from me for some time past. So here goes.

That thou mightest have as little notice as possible of the time I was resolved to be in town, I set out in my Lord's chariot-and-six yesterday, as soon as I had dispatched my letter to thee, and arrived in town last night: for I knew I could have no dependence on thy friendship where Miss Harlowe's humour was concerned.

I had no other place so ready, and so was forced to go to my old lodgings, where also my wardrobe is; and there I poured out millions of curses upon the whole crew, and refused to see either Sally or Polly; and this not only for suffering the lady to escape, but for the villanous arrest, and for their detestable insolence to her at the officer's house.

I dressed myself in a never-worn suit, which I had intended for one of my wedding-suits; and liked myself so well, that I began to think, with thee, that my outside was the best of me:

I took a chair to Smith's, my heart bounding in almost audible thumps to my throat, with the assured expectations of seeing my beloved. I clasped my fingers, as I was danced along: I charged my eyes to languish and sparkle by turns: I talked to my knees, telling them how they must bend; and, in the language of a charming describer, acted my part in fancy, as well as spoke it to myself.

Tenderly kneeling, thus will I complain:
Thus court her pity; and thus plead my pain:
Thus sigh for fancy'd frowns, if frowns should rise;
And thus meet favour in her soft'ning eyes.

In this manner entertained I myself till I arrived at Smith's; and there the fellows set down their gay burden. Off went their hats; Will. ready at hand in a new livery; up went the head; out rushed my honour; the woman behind the counter all in flutters, respect and fear giving due solemnity to her features, and her knees, I doubt not, knocking against the inside of her wainscot-fence.

Your servant, Madam—Will. let the fellows move to some distance, and wait.

You have a young lady lodges here; Miss Harlowe, Madam: Is she above?

Sir, Sir, and please your Honour: [the woman is struck with my figure, thought I:] Miss Harlowe, Sir! There is, indeed, such a young lady lodges here—But, but—

But, what, Madam?—I must see her.—One pair of stairs; is it not?— Don't trouble yourself—I shall find her apartment. And was making towards the stairs.

Sir, Sir, the lady, the lady is not at home—she is abroad—she is in the country—

In the country! Not at home!—Impossible! You will not pass this story upon me, good woman. I must see her. I have business of life and death with her.

Indeed, Sir, the lady is not at home! Indeed, Sir, she is abroad!—

She then rung a bell: John, cried she, pray step down!—Indeed, Sir, the lady is not at home.

Down came John, the good man of the house, when I expected one of his journeymen, by her saucy familiarity.

My dear, said she, the gentleman will not believe Miss Harlowe is abroad.

John bowed to my fine clothes: Your servant, Sir,—indeed the lady is abroad. She went out of town this morning by six o'clock—into the country—by the doctor's advice.

Still I would not believe either John or his wife. I am sure, said I, she cannot be abroad. I heard she was very ill—she is not able to go out in a coach. Do you know Mr. Belford, friend?

Yes, Sir; I have the honour to know 'Squire Belford. He is gone into the country to visit a sick friend. He went on Saturday, Sir.

This had also been told from thy lodgings to Will. whom I sent to desire to see thee on my first coming to town.

Well, and Mr. Belford wrote me word that she was exceeding ill. How then can she be gone out? O Sir, she is very ill; very ill, indeed—she could hardly walk to the coach.

Belford, thought I, himself knew nothing of the time of my coming; neither can he have received my letter of yesterday: and so ill, 'tis impossible she would go out.

Where is her servant? Call her servant to me.

Her servant, Sir, is her nurse: she has no other. And she is gone with her.

Well, friend, I must not believe you. You'll excuse me; but I must go up stairs myself. And was stepping up.

John hereupon put on a serious, and a less respectful face—Sir, this house is mine; and—

And what, friend? not doubting then but she was above.—I must and will see her. I have authority for it. I am a justice of the peace. I have a search warrant.

And up I went; they following me, muttering, and in a plaguy flutter.

The first door I came to was locked. I tapped at it.

The lady, Sir, has the key of her own apartment.

On the inside, I question not, my honest friend; tapping again. And being assured, if she heard my voice, that her timorous and soft temper would make her betray herself, by some flutters, to my listning ear, I said aloud, I am confident Miss Harlowe is here: dearest Madam, open the door: admit me but for one moment to your presence.

But neither answer nor fluttering saluted my ear; and, the people being very quiet, I led on to the next apartment; and, the key being on the outside, I opened it, and looked all around it, and into the closet.

The mans said he never saw so uncivil a gentleman in his life.

Hark thee, friend, said I; let me advise thee to be a little decent; or I shall teach thee a lesson thou never learnedst in all thy life.

Sir, said he, 'tis not like a gentleman, to affront a man in his own house.

Then prythee, man, replied I, don't crow upon thine own dunghil.

I stept back to the locked door: My dear Miss Harlowe, I beg of you to open the door, or I'll break it open;—pushing hard against it, that it cracked again.

The man looked pale: and, trembling with his fright, made a plaguy long face; and called to one of his bodice-makers above, Joseph, come down quickly.

Joseph came down: a lion's-face grinning fellow; thick, and short, and bushy-headed, like an old oak-pollard. Then did master John put on a sturdier look. But I only hummed a tune, traversed all the other apartments, sounded the passages with my knuckles, to find whether there were private doors, and walked up the next pair of stairs, singing all the way; John and Joseph, and Mrs. Smith, following me up, trembling.

I looked round me there, and went into two open-door bed-chambers; searched the closets, and the passages, and peeped through the key-hole of another: no Miss Harlowe, by Jupiter! What shall I do!—what shall I do! as the girls say.—Now will she be grieved that she is out of the way.

I said this on purpose to find out whether these people knew the lady's story; and had the answer I expected from Mrs. Smith—I believe not, Sir.

Why so, Mrs. Smith? Do you know who I am?

I can guess, Sir.

Whom do you guess me to be?

Your name is Mr. Lovelace, Sir, I make no doubt.

The very same. But how came you to guess so well, dame Smith! You never saw me before, did you?

Here, Jack, I laid out for a compliment, and missed it.

'Tis easy to guess, Sir; for there cannot be two such gentlemen as you.

Well said, dame Smith—but mean you good or bad?—Handsome was the least I thought she would have said.

I leave you to guess, Sir.

Condemned, thought I, by myself, on this appeal.

Why, father Smith, thy wife is a wit, man!—Didst thou ever find that out before?—But where is widow Lovick, dame Smith? My cousin John Belford says she is a very good woman. Is she within? or is she gone with Miss Harlowe too?

She will be within by-and-by, Sir. She is not with the lady.

Well, but my good dear Mrs. Smith, where is the lady gone? and when will she return?

I can't tell, Sir.

Don't tell fibs, dame Smith; don't tell fibs, chucking her under the chin: which made John's upper-lip, with chin shortened, rise to his nose. —I am sure you know!—But here's another pair of stairs: let us see: Who lives up there?—but hold, here's another room locked up, tapping at the door—Who's at home? cried I.

That's Mrs. Lovick's apartment. She is gone out, and has the key with her.

Widow Lovick! rapping again, I believe you are at home: pray open the door.

John and Joseph muttered and whispered together.

No whispering, honest friends: 'tis not manners to whisper. Joseph, what said John to thee?

JOHN! Sir, disdainfully repeated the good woman.

I beg pardon, Mrs. Smith: but you see the force of example. Had you showed your honest man more respect, I should. Let me give you a piece of advice—women who treat their husbands irreverently, teach strangers to use them with contempt. There, honest master John; why dost not pull off thy hat to me?—Oh! so thou wouldst, if thou hadst it on: but thou never wearest thy hat in thy wife's presence, I believe; dost thou?

None of your fleers and your jeers, Sir, cried John. I wish every married pair lived as happily as we do.

I wish so too, honest friend. But I'll be hanged if thou hast any children.

Why so, Sir?

Hast thou?—Answer me, man: Hast thou, or not?

Perhaps not, Sir. But what of that?

What of that?—Why I'll tell thee: The man who has no children by his wife must put up with plain John. Hadst thou a child or two, thou'dst be called Mr. Smith, with a courtesy, or a smile at least, at every word.

You are very pleasant, Sir, replied my dame. I fancy, if either my husband or I had as much to answer for as I know whom, we should not be so merry.

Why then, dame Smith, so much the worse for those who were obliged to keep you company. But I am not merry—I am sad!—Hey-ho!—Where shall I find my dear Miss Harlowe?

My beloved Miss Harlowe! [calling at the foot of the third pair of stairs,] if you are above, for Heaven's sake answer me. I am coming up.

Sir, said the good man, I wish you'd walk down. The servants' rooms, and the working-rooms, are up those stairs, and another pair; and nobody's there that you want.

Shall I go up, and see if Miss Harlowe be there, Mrs. Smith?

You may, Sir, if you please.

Then I won't; for, if she was, you would not be so obliging.

I am ashamed to give you all this attendance: you are the politest traders I ever knew. Honest Joseph, slapping him upon the shoulders on a sudden, which made him jump, didst ever grin for a wager, man?—for the rascal seemed not displeased with me; and, cracking his flat face from ear to ear, with a distended mouth, showed his teeth, as broad and as black as his thumb-nails.—But don't I hinder thee? What canst earn a-day, man?

Half-a-crown I can earn a-day; with an air of pride and petulance, at being startled.

There then is a day's wages for thee. But thou needest not attend me farther.

Come, Mrs. Smith, come John, (Master Smith I should say,) let's walk down, and give me an account where the lady is gone, and when she will return.

So down stairs led I. John and Joseph (thought I had discharged the latter,) and my dame, following me, to show their complaisance to a stranger.

I re-entered one of the first-floor rooms. I have a great mind to be your lodger: for I never saw such obliging folks in my life. What rooms have you to let?

None at all, Sir.

I am sorry for that. But whose is this?

Mine, Sir, chuffily said John.

Thine, man! why then I will take it of thee. This, and a bed-chamber, and a garret for one servant, will content me. I will give thee thine own price, and half a guinea a day over, for those conveniencies.

For ten guineas a day, Sir—

Hold, John! (Master Smith I should say)—Before thou speakest, consider— I won't be affronted, man.

Sir, I wish you'd walk down, said the good woman. Really, Sir, you take—

Great liberties I hope you would not say, Mrs. Smith?

Indeed, Sir, I was going to say something like it.

Well, then, I am glad I prevented you; for such words better become my mouth than yours. But I must lodge with you till the lady returns. I believe I must. However, you may be wanted in the shop; so we'll talk that over there.

Down I went, they paying diligent attendance on my steps.

When I came into the shop, seeing no chair or stool, I went behind the compter, and sat down under an arched kind of canopy of carved work, which these proud traders, emulating the royal niche-fillers, often give themselves, while a joint-stool, perhaps, serves those by whom they get their bread: such is the dignity of trade in this mercantile nation!

I looked about me, and above me; and told them I was very proud of my seat; asking, if John were ever permitted to fill this superb niche?

Perhaps he was, he said, very surlily.

That is it that makes thee looks so like a statue, man.

John looked plaguy glum upon me. But his man Joseph and my man Will. turned round with their backs to us, to hide their grinning, with each his fist in his mouth.

I asked, what it was they sold?

Powder, and wash-balls, and snuff, they said; and gloves and stockings.

O come, I'll be your customer. Will. do I want wash-balls?

Yes, and please your Honour, you can dispense with one or two.

Give him half a dozen, dame Smith.

She told me she must come where I was, to serve them. Pray, Sir, walk from behind the compter.

Indeed but I won't. The shop shall be mine. Where are they, if a customer shall come in?

She pointed over my head, with a purse mouth, as if she would not have simpered, could she have helped it. I reached down the glass, and gave Will. six. There—put 'em up, Sirrah.

He did, grinning with his teeth out before; which touching my conscience, as the loss of them was owing to me, Joseph, said I, come hither. Come hither, man, when I bid thee.

He stalked towards me, his hands behind him, half willing, and half unwilling.

I suddenly wrapt my arm round his neck. Will. thy penknife, this moment. D——n the fellow, where's thy penknife?

O Lord! said the pollard-headed dog, struggling to get his head loose from under my arm, while my other hand was muzzling about his cursed chaps, as if I would take his teeth out.

I will pay thee a good price, man: don't struggle thus? The penknife, Will.!

O Lord, cried Joseph, struggling still more and more: and out comes Will.'s pruning-knife; for the rascal is a gardener in the country. I have only this, Sir.

The best in the world to launch a gum. D——n the fellow, why dost struggle thus?

Master and Mistress Smith being afraid, I suppose, that I had a design upon Joseph's throat, because he was their champion, (and this, indeed, made me take the more notice of him,) coming towards me with countenances tragic-comical, I let him go.

I only wanted, said I, to take out two or three of this rascal's broad teeth, to put them into my servant's jaws—and I would have paid him his price for them.—I would by my soul, Joseph.

Joseph shook his ears; and with both hands stroked down, smooth as it would lie, his bushy hair; and looked at me as if he knew not whether he should laugh or be angry: but, after a stupid stare or two, stalked off to the other end of the shop, nodding his head at me as he went, still stroking down his hair; and took his stand by his master, facing about and muttering, that I was plaguy strong in the arms, and he thought would have throttled him. Then folding his arms, and shaking his bristled head, added, 'twas well I was a gentleman, or he would not have taken such an affront.

I demanded where their rappee was? the good woman pointed to the place; and I took up a scollop-shell of it, refusing to let her weight it, and filled my box. And now, Mrs. Smith, said I, where are your gloves?

She showed me; and I chose four pair of them, and set Joseph, who looked as if he wanted to be taken notice of again, to open the fingers.

A female customer, who had been gaping at the door, came in for some Scots sniff; and I would serve her. The wench was plaguy homely; and I told her so; or else, I said, I would have treated her. She, in anger, [no woman is homely in her own opinion,] threw down her penny; and I put it in my pocket.

Just then, turning my eye to the door, I saw a pretty, genteel lady, with a footman after her, peeping in with a What's the matter, good folks? to the starers; and I ran to her from behind the compter, and, as she was making off, took her hand, and drew her into the shop; begging that she would be my customer; for that I had but just begun trade.

What do you sell, Sir? said she, smiling; but a little surprised.

Tapes, ribbands, silk laces, pins, and needles; for I am a pedlar: powder, patches, wash-balls, stockings, garters, snuffs, and pin cushions—Don't we, goody Smith?

So in I gently drew her to the compter, running behind it myself, with an air of great diligence and obligingness. I have excellent gloves and wash-balls, Madam: rappee, Scots, Portugal, and all sorts of snuff.

Well, said she, in a very good humour, I'll encourage a young beginner for once. Here, Andrew, [to her footman,] you want a pair of gloves, don't you?

I took down a parcel of gloves, which Mrs. Smith pointed to, and came round to the fellow to fit them on myself.

No matter for opening them, said I: thy fingers, friend, are as stiff as drum-sticks. Push!—Thou'rt an awkward dog! I wonder such a pretty lady will be followed by such a clumsy varlet.

The fellow had no strength for laughing: and Joseph was mightily pleased, in hopes, I suppose, I would borrow a few of Andrew's teeth, to keep him in countenance: and, father and mother Smith, like all the world, as the jest was turned from themselves, seemed diverted with the humour.

The fellow said the gloves were too little.

Thrust, and be d——d to thee, said I: why, fellow, thou hast not the strength of a cat.

Sir, Sir, said he, laughing, I shall hurt your Honour's side.

D——n thee, thrust I say.

He did; and burst out the sides of the glove.

Will. said I, where's thy pruning-knife? By my soul, friend, I had a good mind to pare thy cursed paws. But come, here's a larger pair: try them, when thou gettest home; and let thy sweetheart, if thou hast one, mend the other, so take both.

The lady laughed at the humour; as did my fellow, and Mrs. Smith, and Joseph: even John laughed, though he seemed by the force put upon his countenance to be but half pleased with me neither.

Madam, said I, and stepped behind the compter, bowing over it, now I hope you will buy something for yourself. Nobody shall use you better, nor sell you cheaper.

Come, said she, give me six-penny worth of Portugal snuff.

They showed me where it was, and I served her; and said, when she would have paid me, I took nothing at my opening.

If I treated her footman, she told me, I should not treat her.

Well, with all my heart, said I: 'tis not for us tradesmen to be saucy— Is it, Mrs. Smith?

I put her sixpence in my pocket; and, seizing her hand, took notice to her of the crowd that had gathered about the door, and besought her to walk into the back-shop with me.

She struggled her hand out of mine, and would stay no longer.

So I bowed, and bid her kindly welcome, and thanked her, and hoped I should have her custom another time.

She went away smiling; and Andrew after her; who made me a fine bow.

I began to be out of countenance at the crowd, which thickened apace; and bid Will. order the chair to the door.

Well, Mrs. Smith, with a grave air, I am heartily sorry Miss Harlowe is abroad. You don't tell me where she is?

Indeed, Sir, I cannot.

You will not, you mean.—She could have no notion of my coming. I came to town but last night. I have been very ill. She has almost broken my heart by her cruelty. You know my story, I doubt not. Tell her, I must go out of town to-morrow morning. But I will send my servant, to know if she will favour me with one half-hour's conversation; for, as soon as I get down, I shall set out for Dover, in my way to France, if I have not a countermand from her, who has the sole disposal of my fate.

And so flinging down a Portugal six-and-thirty, I took Mr. Smith by the hand, telling him, I was sorry we had not more time to be better acquainted; and bidding farewell to honest Joseph, (who pursed up his mouth as I passed by him, as if he thought his teeth still in jeopardy,) and Mrs. Smith adieu, and to recommend me to her fair lodger, hummed an air, and, the chair being come, whipt into it; the people about the door seeming to be in good humour with me; one crying, a pleasant gentleman, I warrant him! and away I was carried to White's, according to direction.

As soon as I came thither, I ordered Will. to go and change his clothes, and to disguise himself by putting on his black wig, and keeping his mouth shut; and then to dodge about Smith's, to inform himself of the lady's motions.

I give thee this impudent account of myself, that thou mayest rave at me, and call me hardened, and what thou wilt. For, in the first place, I, who had been so lately ill, was glad I was alive; and then I was so balked by my charmer's unexpected absence, and so ruffled by that, and by the bluff treatment of father John, that I had no other way to avoid being out of humour with all I met with. Moreover I was rejoiced to find, by the lady's absence, and by her going out at six in the morning, that it was impossible she should be so ill as thou representest her to be; and this gave me still higher spirits. Then I know the sex always love cheerful and humourous fellows. The dear creature herself used to be pleased with my gay temper and lively manner; and had she been told that I was blubbering for her in the back-shop, she would have despised me still more than she does.

Furthermore, I was sensible that the people of the house must needs have a terrible notion of me, as a savage, bloody-minded, obdurate fellow; a perfect woman-eater; and, no doubt, expected to see me with the claws of a lion, and the fangs of a tiger; and it was but policy to show them what a harmless pleasant fellow I am, in order to familiarize the Johns and the Josephs to me. For it was evident to me, by the good woman's calling them down, that she thought me a dangerous man. Whereas now, John and I have shaken hands together, and dame Smith having seen that I have the face, and hands, and looks of a man, and walk upright, and prate, and laugh, and joke, like other people; and Joseph, that I can talk of taking his teeth out of his head, without doing him the least hurt; they will all, at my next visit, be much more easy and pleasant to me than Andrew's gloves were to him; and we shall be as thoroughly acquainted, as if we had known one another a twelvemonth.

When I returned to our mother's, I again cursed her and all her nymphs together; and still refused to see either Sally or Polly! I raved at the horrid arrest; and told the old dragon that it was owing to her and her's that the fairest virtue in the world was ruined; my reputation for ever blasted; and that I was not married and perfectly happy in the love of the most excellent of her sex.

She, to pacify me, said she would show me a new face that would please me; since I would not see my Sally, who was dying with grief.

Where is this new face? cried I: let me see her, though I shall never see any face with pleasure but Miss Harlowe's.

She won't come down, replied she. She will not be at the word of command yet. She is but just in the trammels; and must be waited upon, I'll assure you; and courted much besides.

Ay! said I, that looks well. Lead me to her this instant.

I followed her up: and who should she be, but that little toad Sally!

O curse you, said I, for a devil! Is it you? is your's the new face?

O my dear, dear Mr. Lovelace! cried she, I am glad any thing will bring you to me!—and so the little beast threw herself about my neck, and there clung like a cat. Come, said she, what will you give me, and I'll be as virtuous for a quarter of an hour, and mimic your Clarissa to the life?

I was Belforded all over. I could not bear such an insult upon the dear creature, (for I have a soft and generous nature in the main, whatever thou thinkest;) and cursed her most devoutly, for taking my beloved's name in her mouth in such a way. But the little devil was not to be balked; but fell a crying, sobbing, praying, begging, exclaiming, fainting, that I never saw my lovely girl so well aped. Indeed I was almost taken in; for I could have fancied I had her before me once more.

O this sex! this artful sex! there's no minding them. At first, indeed, their grief and their concern may be real: but, give way to the hurricane, and it will soon die away in soft murmurs, thrilling upon your ears like the notes of a well-tuned viol. And, by Sally, one sees that art will generally so well supply the place of nature, that you shall not easily know the difference. Miss Clarisa Harlowe, indeed, is the only woman in the world I believe that can say, in the words of her favourite Job, (for I can quote a text as well as she,) But it is not so with me.

They were very inquisitive about my fair-one. They told me that you seldom came near them; that, when you did, you put on plaguy grave airs; would hardly stay five minutes; and did nothing but praise Miss Harlowe, and lament her hard fate. In short, that you despised them; was full of sentences; and they doubted not, in a little while, would be a lost man, and marry.

A pretty character for thee, is it not? thou art in a blessed way; yet hast nothing to do but to go on in it: and then what work hast thou to go through! If thou turnest back, these sorceresses will be like the czar's cossacks, [at Pultowa, I think it was,] who were planted with ready primed and cocked pieces behind the regulars, in order to shoot them dead, if they did not push on and conquer; and then wilt thou be most lamentably despised by every harlot thou hast made—and, O Jack, how formidable, in that case, will be the number of thy enemies!

I intend to regulate my motions by Will.'s intelligence; for see this dear creature I must and will. Yet I have promised Lord M. to be down in two or three days at farthest; for he is grown plaguy fond of me since I was ill.

I am in hopes that the word I left, that I am to go out of town to-morrow morning, will soon bring the lady back again.

Mean time, I thought I would write to divert thee, while thou art of such importance about the dying; and as thy servant, it seems, comes backward and forward every day, perhaps I may send thee another letter to-morrow, with the particulars of the interview between the dear creature and me; after which my soul thirsteth.

LETTER XIV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. TUESDAY, AUG. 22.

I must write on, to divert myself: for I can get no rest; no refreshing rest. I awaked just now in a cursed fright. How a man may be affected by dreams!

'Methought I had an interview with my beloved. I found her all goodness, condescension, and forgiveness. She suffered herself to be overcome in my favour by the joint intercessions of Lord M., Lady Sarah, Lady Betty, and my two cousins Montague, who waited upon her in deep mourning; the ladies in long trains sweeping after them; Lord M. in a long black mantle trailing after him. They told her they came in these robes to express their sorrow for my sins against her, and to implore her to forgive me.

'I myself, I thought, was upon my knees, with a sword in my hand, offering either to put it up in the scabbard, or to thrust it into my heart, as she should command the one or the other.

'At that moment her cousin Morden, I thought, all of a sudden, flashed in through a window, with his drawn sword—Die, Lovelace! said he; this instant die, and be d——d, if in earnest thou repairest not by marriage my cousin's wrongs!

'I was rising to resent this insult, I thought, when Lord M. ran between us with his great black mantle, and threw it over my face: and instantly my charmer, with that sweet voice which has so often played upon my ravished ears, wrapped her arms around me, muffled as I was in my Lord's mantle: O spare, spare my Lovelace! and spare, O Lovelace, my beloved cousin Morden! Let me not have my mistresses augmented by the fall of either or both of those who are so dear to me!

'At this, charmed with her sweet mediation, I thought I would have clasped her in my arms: when immediately the most angelic form I had ever beheld, all clad in transparent white, descended in a cloud, which, opening, discovered a firmament above it, crowded with golden cherubs and glittering seraphs, all addressing her with Welcome, welcome, welcome! and, encircling my charmer, ascended with her to the region of seraphims; and instantly, the opened cloud closing, I lost sight of her, and of the bright form together, and found wrapt in my arms her azure robe (all stuck thick with stars of embossed silver) which I had caught hold of in hopes of detaining her; but was all that was left me of my beloved Clarissa. And then, (horrid to relate!) the floor sinking under me, as the firmament had opened for her, I dropt into a hole more frightful than that of Elden; and, tumbling over and over down it, without view of a bottom, I awaked in a panic; and was as effectually disordered for half an hour, as if my dream had been a reality.'

Wilt thou forgive my troubling thee with such visionary stuff? Thou wilt see by it only that, sleeping or waking, my Clarissa is always present with me.

But here this moment is Will. come running hither to tell me that his lady actually returned to her lodgings last night between eleven and twelve; and is now there, though very ill.

I hasten to her. But, that I may not add to her indisposition, by any rough or boisterous behaviour, I will be as soft and gentle as the dove herself in my addresses to her.

That I do love her, I all ye host of Heaven,
Be witness.—That she is dear to me!
Dearer than day, to one whom sight must leave;
Dearer than life, to one who fears to die!

The chair is come. I fly to my beloved.

LETTER XV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

Curse upon my stars!—Disappointed again! It was about eight when I arrived at Smith's.—The woman was in the shop.

So, old acquaintance, how do you now? I know my love is above.—Let her be acquainted that I am here, waiting for admission to her presence, and can take no denial. Tell her, that I will approach her with the most respectful duty, and in whose company she pleases; and I will not touch the hem of her garment, without her leave.

Indeed, Sir, you are mistaken. The lady is not in this house, nor near it.

I'll see that.—Will! beckoning him to me, and whispering, see if thou canst any way find out (without losing sight of the door, lest she should be below stairs) if she be in the neighbourhood, if not within.

Will. bowed, and went off. Up went I, without further ceremony; attended now only by the good woman.

I went into each apartment, except that which was locked before, and was now also locked: and I called to my Clarissa in the voice of love; but, by the still silence, was convinced she was not there. Yet, on the strength of my intelligence, I doubted not but she was in the house.

I then went up two pairs of stairs, and looked round the first room: but no Miss Harlowe.

And who, pray, is in this room? stopping at the door of another.

A widow gentlewoman, Sir.—Mrs. Lovick.

O my dear Mrs. Lovick! said I.—I am intimately acquainted with Mrs. Lovick's character, from my cousin John Belford. I must see Mrs. Lovick by all means.—Good Mrs. Lovick, open the door. She did.

Your servant, Madam. Be so good as to excuse me.—You have heard my story. You are an admirer of the most excellent woman in the world. Dear Mrs. Lovick, tell me what is become of her?

The poor lady, Sir, went out yesterday, on purpose to avoid you.

How so? she knew not that I would be here.

She was afraid you would come, when she heard you were recovered from your illness. Ah! Sir, what pity it is that so fine a gentleman should make such ill returns for God's goodness to him!

You are an excellent woman, Mrs. Lovick: I know that, by my cousin John Belford's account of you: and Miss Clarissa Harlowe is an angel.

Miss Harlowe is indeed an angel, replied she; and soon will be company for angels.

No jesting with such a woman as this, Jack.

Tell me of a truth, good Mrs. Lovick, where I may see this dear lady. Upon my soul, I will neither fright for offend her. I will only beg of her to hear me speak for one half-quarter of an hour; and, if she will have it so, I will never trouble her more.

Sir, said the widow, it would be death for her to see you. She was at home last night; I'll tell you truth: but fitter to be in bed all day. She came home, she said, to die; and, if she could not avoid your visit, she was unable to fly from you; and believed she should die in your presence.

And yet go out again this morning early? How can that be, widow?

Why, Sir, she rested not two hours, for fear of you. Her fear gave her strength, which she'll suffer for, when that fear is over. And finding herself, the more she thought of your visit, the less able to stay to receive it, she took chair, and is gone nobody knows whither. But, I believe, she intended to be carried to the waterside, in order to take boat; for she cannot bear a coach. It extremely incommoded her yesterday.

But before we talk any further, said I, if she be gone abroad, you can have no objection to my looking into every apartment above and below; because I am told she is actually in the house.

Indeed, Sir, she is not. You may satisfy yourself, if you please: but Mrs. Smith and I waited on her to her chair. We were forced to support her, she was so weak. She said, Whither can I go, Mrs. Lovick? whither can I go, Mrs. Smith?—Cruel, cruel man!—tell him I called him so, if he come again!—God give him that peace which he denies me!

Sweet creature! cried I; and looked down, and took out my handkerchief.

The widow wept. I wish, said she, I had never known so excellent a lady, and so great a sufferer! I love her as my own child!

Mrs. Smith wept.

I then gave over the hope of seeing her for this time, I was extremely chagrined at my disappointment, and at the account they gave of her ill health.

Would to Heaven, said I, she would put it in my power to repair her wrongs! I have been an ungrateful wretch to her. I need not tell you, Mrs. Lovick, how much I have injured her, nor how much she suffers by her relations' implacableness, Mrs. Smith, that cuts her to the heart. Her family is the most implacable family on earth; and the dear creature, in refusing to see me, and to be reconciled to me, shows her relation to them a little too plainly.

O Sir, said the widow, not one syllable of what you say belongs to this lady. I never saw so sweet a temper! she is always accusing herself, and excusing her relations. And, as to you, Sir, she forgives you: she wishes you well; and happier than you will let her die in peace? 'tis all she wishes for. You don't look like a hard-hearted gentleman!—How can you thus hunt and persecute a poor lady, whom none of her relations will look upon? It makes my heart bleed for her.

And then she wept again. Mrs. Smith wept also. My seat grew uneasy to me. I shifted to another several times; and what Mrs. Lovick farther said, and showed me, made me still more uneasy.

Bad as the poor lady was last night, said she, she transcribed into her book a meditation on your persecuting her thus. I have a copy of it. If I thought it would have any effect, I would read it to you.

Let me read it myself, Mrs. Lovick.

She gave it to me. It has an Harlowe-spirited title: and, from a forgiving spirit, intolerable. I desired to take it with me. She consented, on condition that I showed it to 'Squire Belford. So here, Mr. 'Squire Belford, thou mayest read it, if thou wilt.

ON BEING HUNTED AFTER BY THE ENEMY OF MY SOUL. MONDAY, AUG. 21.

Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man.

Preserve me from the violent man.

Who imagines mischief in his heart.

He hath sharpened his tongue like a serpent. Adders' poison is under his lips.

Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked. Preserve me from the violent man, who hath purposed to overthrow my goings.

He hath hid a snare for me. He hath spread a net by the way-side. He hath set gins for me in the way wherein I walked.

Keep me from the snares which he hath laid for me, and the gins of this worker of iniquity.

The enemy hath persecuted my soul. He hath smitten my life down to the ground. He hath made me dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.

Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me. My heart within me is desolate.

Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble.

For my days are consumed like smoke: and my bones are burnt as the hearth.

My heart is smitten and withered like grass: so that I forget to eat my bread.

By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin.

I am like a pelican of the wilderness. I am like an owl of the desert.

I watch; and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top.

I have eaten ashes like bread; and mingled my drink with weeping:

Because of thine indignation, and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.

My days are like a shadow that declineth, and I am withered like grass.

Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked: further not his devices, lest he exalt himself.

Why now, Mrs. Lovick, said I, when I had read this meditation, as she called it, I think I am very severely treated by the lady, if she mean me in all this. For how is it that I am the enemy of her soul, when I love her both soul and body?

She says, that I am a violent man, and a wicked man.—That I have been so, I own: but I repent, and only wish to have it in my power to repair the injuries I have done her.

The gin, the snare, the net, mean matrimony, I suppose—But is it a crime in me to wish to marry her? Would any other woman think it so? and choose to become a pelican in the wilderness, or a lonely sparrow on the house-top, rather than have a mate that would chirp about her all day and all night?

She says, she has eaten ashes like bread—A sad mistake to be sure!—And mingled her drink with weeping—Sweet maudlin soul! should I say of any body confessing this, but Miss Harlowe.

She concludes with praying, that the desires of the wicked (meaning poor me, I doubt) may not be granted; that my devices may not be furthered, lest I exalt myself. I should undoubtedly exalt myself, and with reason, could I have the honour and the blessing of such a wife. And if my desires have so honourable an end, I know not why I should be called wicked, and why I should not be allowed to hope, that my honest devices may be furthered, that I MAY exalt myself.

But here, Mrs. Lovick, let me ask, as something is undoubtedly meant by the lonely sparrow on the house-top, is not the dear creature at this very instant (tell me truly) concealed in Mrs. Smith's cockloft?—What say you, Mrs. Lovick? What say you, Mrs. Smith, to this?

They assured me to the contrary; and that shew as actually abroad, and they knew not where.

Thou seest, Jack, that I would fain have diverted the chagrin given me not only by the women's talk, but by this collection of Scripture-texts drawn up in array against me. Several other whimsical and light things I said [all I had for it!] with the same view. But the widow would not let me come off so. She stuck to me; and gave me, as I told thee, a good deal of uneasiness, by her sensible and serious expostulations. Mrs. Smith put in now-and-then; and the two Jack-pudding fellows, John and Joseph, not being present, I had no provocation to turn the conversation into a farce; and, at last, they both joined warmly to endeavour to prevail upon me to give up all thoughts of seeing the lady. But I could not hear of that. On the contrary, I besought Mrs. Smith to let me have one of her rooms but till I could see her; and were it but for one, two, or three days, I would pay a year's rent for it; and quit it the moment the interview was over. But they desired to be excused; and were sure the lady would not come to the house till I was gone, were it for a month.

This pleased me; for I found they did not think her so very ill as they would have me believe her to be; but I took no notice of the slip, because I would not guard them against more of the like.

In short, I told them, I must and would see her: but that it should be with all the respect and veneration that heart could pay to excellence like her's: and that I would go round to all the churches in London and Westminster, where there were prayers or service, from sun-rise to sun-set, and haunt their house like a ghost, till I had the opportunity my soul panted after.

This I bid them tell her. And thus ended our serious conversation.

I took leave of them; and went down; and, stepping into my chair, caused myself to be carried to Lincoln's-Inn; and walked in the gardens till the chapel was opened; and then I went in, and staid prayers, in hopes of seeing the dear creature enter: but to no purpose; and yet I prayed most devoutly that she might be conducted thither, either by my good angel, or her own. And indeed I burn more than ever with impatience to be once more permitted to kneel at the feet of this adorable woman. And had I met her, or espied her in the chapel, it is my firm belief that I should not have been able (though it had been in the midst of the sacred office, and in the presence of thousands) to have forborne prostration to her, and even clamorous supplication for her forgiveness: a christian act; the exercise of it therefore worthy of the place.

After service was over, I stept into my chair again, and once more was carried to Smith's, in hopes I might have surprised her there: but no such happiness for thy friend. I staid in the back-shop an hour and an half, by my watch; and again underwent a good deal of preachment from the women. John was mainly civil to me now; won over a little by my serious talk, and the honour I professed for the lady. They all three wished matters could be made up between us: but still insisted that she could never get over her illness; and that her heart was broken. A cue, I suppose, they had from you.

While I was there a letter was brought by a particular hand. They seemed very solicitous to hide it from me; which made me suspect it was for her. I desired to be suffered to cast an eye upon the seal, and the superscription; promising to give it back to them unopened.

Looking upon it, I told them I knew the hand and seal. It was from her sister.* And I hoped it would bring her news that she would be pleased with.

* See Letter XXVI. of this volume.

They joined most heartily in the same hope: and, giving the letter to them again, I civilly took leave, and went away.

But I will be there again presently; for I fancy my courteous behaviour to these women will, on their report of it, procure me the favour I so earnestly covet. And so I will leave my letter unsealed, to tell thee the event of my next visit at Smith's.

Thy servant just calling, I sent thee this: and will soon follow it by another. Mean time, I long to hear how poor Belton is: to whom my best wishes.

LETTER XVI

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. TUESDAY, AUG. 22.

I have been under such concern for the poor man, whose exit I almost hourly expect, and at the shocking scenes his illness and his agonies exhibit, that I have been only able to make memoranda of the melancholy passages, from which to draw up a more perfect account, for the instruction of us all, when the writing appetite shall return.

It is returned! Indignation has revived it, on receipt of thy letters of Sunday and yesterday; by which I have reason to reproach thee in very serious terms, that thou hast not kept thy honour with me: and if thy breach of it be attended with such effects as I fear it will be, I shall let thee know more of my mind on this head.

If thou wouldst be thought in earnest in thy wishes to move the poor lady in thy favour, thy ludicrous behaviour at Smith's, when it comes to be represented to her, will have a very consistent appearance; will it not?—I will, indeed, confirm in her opinion, that the grave is more to be wished-for, by one of her serious and pious turn, than a husband incapable either of reflection or remorse; just recovered, as thou art, from a dangerous, at least a sharp turn.

I am extremely concerned for the poor unprotected lady. She was so excessively low and weak on Saturday, that I could not be admitted to her speech: and to be driven out of her lodgings, when it was fitter for her to be in bed, is such a piece of cruelty, as he only could be guilty of who could act as thou hast done by such an angel.

Canst thou thyself say, on reflection, that it has not the look of a wicked and hardened sportiveness, in thee, for the sake of a wanton humour only, (since it can answer no end that thou proposest to thyself, but the direct contrary,) to hunt from place to place a poor lady, who, like a harmless deer, that has already a barbed shaft in her breast, seeks only a refuge from thee in the shades of death.

But I will leave this matter upon thy own conscience, to paint thee such a scene from my memoranda, as thou perhaps wilt be moved by more effectually than by any other: because it is such a one as thou thyself must one day be a principal actor in, and, as I thought, hadst very lately in apprehension: and is the last scene of one of thy more intimate friends, who has been for the four past days labouring in the agonies of death. For, Lovelace, let this truth, this undoubted truth, be engraved on thy memory, in all thy gaities, That the life we are so fond of is hardly life; a mere breathing space only; and that, at the end of its longest date,

Thou must die, as well as Belton.

Thou knowest, by Tourville, what we had done as to the poor man's worldly affairs; and that we had got his unhappy sister to come and live with him (little did we think him so very near to his end): and so I will proceed to tell thee, that when I arrived at his house on Saturday night, I found him excessively ill: but just raised, and in his elbow-chair, held up by his nurse and Mowbray (the roughest and most untouched creature that ever entered a sick man's chamber); while the maid-servants were trying to make that bed easier for him which he was to return to; his mind ten times uneasier than that could be, and the true cause that the down was no softer to him.

He had so much longed to see me, as I was told by his sister, (whom I sent for down to inquire how he was,) that they all rejoiced when I entered: Here, said Mowbray, here, Tommy, is honest Jack Belford!

Where, where? said the poor man.

I hear his voice, cried Mowbray: he is coming up stairs.

In a transport of joy, he would have raised himself at my entrance, but had like to have pitched out of the chair: and when recovered, called me his best friend! his kindest friend! but burst into a flood of tears: O Jack! O Belford! said he, see the way I am in! See how weak! So much, and so soon reduced! Do you know me? Do you know your poor friend Belton?

You are not so much altered, my dear Belton, as you think you are. But I see you are weak; very weak—and I am sorry for it.

Weak, weak, indeed, my dearest Belford, said he, and weaker in mind, if possible, than in body; and wept bitterly—or I should not thus unman myself. I, who never feared any thing, to be forced to show myself such a nursling!—I am quite ashamed of myself!—But don't despise me; dear Belford, don't despise me, I beseech thee.

I ever honoured a man that could weep for the distresses of others; and ever shall, said I; and such a one cannot be insensible of his own.

However, I could not help being visibly moved at the poor fellow's emotion.

Now, said the brutal Mowbray, do I think thee insufferable, Jack. Our poor friend is already a peg too low; and here thou art letting him down lower and lower still. This soothing of him in his dejected moments, and joining thy womanish tears with his, is not the way; I am sure it is not. If our Lovelace were here, he'd tell thee so.

Thou art an impenetrable creature, replied I; unfit to be present at a scene, the terrors of which thou wilt not be able to feel till thou feelest them in thyself; and then, if thou hadst time for feeling, my life for thine, thou behavest as pitifully as those thou thinkest most pitiful.

Then turning to the poor sick man, Tears, my dear Belton, are no signs of an unmanly, but, contrarily of a humane nature; they ease the over-charged heart, which would burst but for that kindly and natural relief.

Give sorrow words (says Shakspeare)

—The grief that does not speak,

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

I know, my dear Belton, thou usedst to take pleasure in repetitions from the poets; but thou must be tasteless of their beauties now: yet be not discountenanced by this uncouth and unreflecting Mowbray, for, as Juvenal says, Tears are the prerogative of manhood.

'Tis at least seasonably said, my dear Belford. It is kind to keep me in countenance for this womanish weakness, as Mowbray has been upbraidingly calling it, ever since he has been with me: and in so doing, (whatever I might have thought in such high health as he enjoys,) has convinced me, that bottle-friends feel nothing but what moves in that little circle.

Well, well, proceed in your own way, Jack. I love my friend Belton as well as you can do; yet for the blood of me, I cannot but think, that soothing a man's weakness is increasing it.

If it be a weakness, to be touched at great and concerning events, in which our humanity is concerned, said I, thou mayest be right.

I have seen many a man, said the rough creature, going up Holborn-hill, that has behaved more like a man than either of you.

Ay, but, Mowbray, replied the poor man, those wretches have not had their minds enervated by such infirmities of body as I have long laboured under. Thou art a shocking fellow, and ever wert. —But to be able to remember nothing in these moments but what reproaches me, and to know that

I cannot hold it long, and what may then be my lot, if—but interrupting himself, and turning to me, Give me thy pity, Jack; 'tis balm to my wounded soul; and let Mowbray sit indifferent enough to the pangs of a dying friend, to laugh at us both.

The hardened fellow then retired, with the air of a Lovelace; only more stupid; yawning and stretching, instead of humming a tune as thou didst at Smith's.

I assisted to get the poor man into bed. He was so weak and low, that he could not bear the fatigue, and fainted away; and I verily thought was quite gone. But recovering, and his doctor coming, and advising to keep him quiet, I retired, and joined Mowbray in the garden; who took more delight to talk of the living Lovelace and levities, than of the dying Belton and his repentance.

I just saw him again on Saturday night before I went to bed; which I did early; for I was surfeited with Mowbray's frothy insensibility, and could not bear him.

It is such a horrid thing to think of, that a man who had lived in such strict terms of—what shall I call it? with another; the proof does not come out so, as to say, friendship; who had pretended so much love for him; could not bear to be out of his company; would ride an hundred miles on end to enjoy it; and would fight for him, be the cause right or wrong: yet now, could be so little moved to see him in such misery of body and mind, as to be able to rebuke him, and rather ridicule than pity him, because he was more affected by what he felt, than he had seen a malefactor, (hardened perhaps by liquor, and not softened by previous sickness,) on his going to execution.

This put me strongly in mind of what the divine Miss HARLOWE once said to me, talking of friendship, and what my friendship to you required of me: 'Depend upon it, Mr. Belford,' said she, 'that one day you will be convinced, that what you call friendship, is chaff and stubble; and that nothing is worthy of that sacred name,

'That has not virtue for its base.'

Sunday morning, I was called up at six o'clock, at the poor man's earnest request, and found him in a terrible agony. O Jack! Jack! said he, looking wildly, as if he had seen a spectre—Come nearer me!—Dear, dear Belford, save me! Then clasping my arm with both his hands, and rearing up his head towards me, his eyes strangely rolling, Save me! dear Belford, save me! repeated he.

I put my other arm about him—Save you from what, my dear Belton! said I; save you from what? Nothing shall hurt you. What must I save you from?

Recovering from his terror, he sunk down again, O save me from myself! said he; save me from my own reflections. O dear Jack! what a thing it is to die; and not to have one comfortable reflection to revolve! What would I give for one year of my past life?—only one year—and to have the same sense of things that I now have?

I tried to comfort him as well as I could: but free-livers to free-livers are sorry death-bed comforters. And he broke in upon me: O my dear Belford, said he, I am told, (and I have heard you ridiculed for it,) that the excellent Miss Harlowe has wrought a conversion in you. May it be so! You are a man of sense: O may it be so! Now is your time! Now, that you are in full vigour of mind and body!—But your poor Belton, alas! your poor Belton kept his vices, till they left him—and see the miserable effects in debility of mind and despondency! Were Mowbray here, and were he to laugh at me, I would own that this is the cause of my despair—that God's justice cannot let his mercy operate for my comfort: for, Oh! I have been very, very wicked; and have despised the offers of his grace, till he has withdrawn it from me for ever.

I used all the arguments I could think of to give him consolation: and what I said had such an effect upon him, as to quiet his mind for the greatest part of the day; and in a lucid hour his memory served him to repeat these lines of Dryden, grasping my hand, and looking wistfully upon me:

O that I less could fear to lose this being,

Which, like a snow-ball, in my coward hand,
The more 'tis grasped, the faster melts away!

In the afternoon of Sunday, he was inquisitive after you, and your present behaviour to Miss Harlowe. I told him how you had been, and how light you made of it. Mowbray was pleased with your impenetrable hardness of heart, and said, Bob. Lovelace was a good edge-tool, and steel to the back: and such coarse but hearty praises he gave you, as an abandoned man might give, and only an abandoned man could wish to deserve.

But hadst thou heard what the poor dying Belton said on this occasion, perhaps it would have made thee serious an hour or two, at least.

'When poor Lovelace is brought,' said he, 'to a sick-bed, as I am now, and his mind forebodes that it is impossible he should recover, (which he could not do in his late illness: if it had, he could not have behaved so lightly in it;) when he revolves his past mis-spent life; his actions of offence to helpless innocents; in Miss Harlowe's case particularly; what then will he think of himself, or of his past actions? his mind debilitated; his strength turned into weakness; unable to stir or to move without help; not one ray of hope darting in upon his benighted soul; his conscience standing in the place of a thousand witnesses; his pains excruciating; weary of the poor remnant of life he drags, yet dreading, that, in a few short hours, his bad will be changed to worse, nay, to worst of all; and that worst of all, to last beyond time and to all eternity; O Jack! what will he then think of the poor transitory gratifications of sense, which now engage all his attention? Tell him, dear Belford, tell him, how happy he is if he know his own dying happiness; how happy, compared to his poor dying friend, that he has recovered from his illness, and has still an opportunity lent him, for which I would give a thousand worlds, had I them to give!'

I approved exceedingly of his reflections, as suited to his present circumstances; and inferred consolations to him from a mind so properly touched.

He proceeded in the like penitent strain. I have lived a very wicked life; so have we all. We have never made a conscience of doing whatever mischief either force or fraud enabled us to do. We have laid snares for the innocent heart; and have not scrupled by the too-ready sword to extend, as occasions offered, the wrongs we did to the persons whom we had before injured in their dearest relations. But yet, I flatter myself, sometimes, that I have less to answer for than either Lovelace or Mowbray; for I, by taking to myself that accursed deceiver from whom thou hast freed me, (and who, for years, unknown to me, was retaliating upon my own head some of the evils I had brought upon others,) and retiring, and living with her as a wife, was not party to half the mischiefs, that I doubt they, and Tourville, and even you, Belford, committed. As to the ungrateful Thomasine, I hope I have met with my punishment in her. But notwithstanding this, dost thou not think, that such an action—and such an action—and such an action; [and then he recapitulated several enormities, in the perpetration of which (led on by false bravery, and the heat of youth and wine) we have all been concerned;] dost thou not think that these villanies, (let me call them now by their proper name,) joined to the wilful and gloried-in neglect of every duty that our better sense and education gave us to know were required of us as men and christians, are not enough to weigh down my soul into despondency?— Indeed, indeed, they are! and now to hope for mercy; and to depend upon the efficacy of that gracious attribute, when that no less shining one of justice forbids me to hope; how can I!—I, who have despised all warnings, and taken no advantage of the benefit I might have reaped from the lingering consumptive illness I have laboured under, but left all to the last stake; hoping for recovery against hope, and driving off repentance, till that grace is denied me; for, oh! my dear Belford! I can now neither repent, nor pray, as I ought; my heart is hardened, and I can do nothing but despair!—

More he would have said; but, overwhelmed with grief and infirmity, he bowed his head upon his pangful bosom, endeavouring to hide from the sight of the hardened Mowbray, who just then entered the room, those tears which he could not restrain.

Prefaced by a phlegmatic hem; sad, very sad, truly! cried Mowbray; who sat himself down on one side of the bed, as I sat on the other: his eyes half closed, and his lips pouting out to his turned-up nose, his chin curdled [to use one of thy descriptions]; leaving one at a loss to know whether stupid drowsiness or intense contemplation had got most hold of him.

An excellent, however uneasy lesson, Mowbray! said I.—By my faith it is! It may one day, who knows how soon? be our own case!

I thought of thy yawning-fit, as described in thy letter of Aug. 13. For up started Mowbray, writhing and shaking himself as in an ague-fit; his hands stretched over his head—with thy hoy! hoy! hoy! yawning. And then recovering himself, with another stretch and a shake, What's o'clock? cried he; pulling out his watch—and stalking by long tip-toe strides through the room, down stairs he went; and meeting the maid in the passage, I heard him say—Betty, bring me a bumper of claret; thy poor master, and this d——d Belford, are enough to throw a Hercules into the vapours.

Mowbray, after this, assuming himself in our friend's library, which is, as thou knowest, chiefly classical and dramatical, found out a passage in Lee's Oedipus, which he would needs have to be extremely apt; and in he came full fraught with the notion of the courage it would give the dying man, and read it to him. 'Tis poetical and pretty. This is it:

When the sun sets, shadows that show'd at noon
But small, appear most long and terrible:
So when we think fate hovers o'er our heads,
Our apprehensions shoot beyond all bounds:
Owls, ravens, crickets, seem the watch of death;
Nature's worst vermin scare her godlike sons:
Echoes, the very leavings of a voice,
Grow babbling ghosts, and call us to our graves.
Each mole-hill thought swells to a huge Olympus;
While we, fantastic dreamers, heave and puff,
And sweat with our imagination's weight.

He expected praises for finding this out. But Belton turning his head from him, Ah, Dick! (said he,) these are not the reflections of a dying man!—What thou wilt one day feel, if it be what I now feel, will convince thee that the evils before thee, and with thee, are more than the effects of imagination.

I was called twice on Sunday night to him; for the poor fellow, when his reflections on his past life annoy him most, is afraid of being left with the women; and his eyes, they tell me, hunt and roll about for me. Where's Mr. Belford?—But I shall tire him out, cries he—yet beg of him to step to me—yet don't—yet do; were once the doubting and changeful orders he gave: and they called me accordingly.

But, alas! What could Belford do for him? Belford, who had been but too often the companion of his guilty hours; who wants mercy as much as he does; and is unable to promise it to himself, though 'tis all he can bid his poor friend rely upon!

What miscreants are we! What figures shall we make in these terrible hours!

If Miss HARLOWE'S glorious example, on one hand, and the terrors of this poor man's last scene on the other, affect me not, I must be abandoned to perdition; as I fear thou wilt be, if thou benefittest not thyself from both.

Among the consolatory things I urged, when I was called up the last time on Sunday night, I told him, that he must not absolutely give himself up to despair: that many of the apprehensions he was under, were such as the best men must have, on the dreadful uncertainty of what was to succeed to this life. 'Tis well observed, said I, by a poetical divine, who was an excellent christian,* That

Death could not a more sad retinue find,
Sickness and pain before, and darkness all behind.

* The Rev Mr. Norris, of Bremerton.

About eight o'clock yesterday (Monday) morning, I found him a little calmer. He asked me who was the author of the two lines I had repeated to him; and made me speak them over again. A sad retinue, indeed! said the poor man. And then expressing his hopelessness of life, and his terrors at the thoughts of dying; and drawing from thence terrible conclusions with regard to his future state; There is, said I, such a natural aversion to death in human nature, that you are not to imagine, that you, my dear Belton, are singular in the fear of it, and in the apprehensions that fill the thoughtful mind upon its approach; but you ought, as much as possible, to separate those natural fears which all men must have on so solemn an occasion, from those particular ones which your justly-apprehended unfitness fills you with. Mr. Pomfret, in his Prospect of Death, which I dipped into last night from a collection in your closet, which I put into my pocket, says, [and I turned to the place]

Merely to die, no man of reason fears;
For certainly we must,
As we are born, return to dust;
'Tis the last point of many ling-ring years;
But whither then we go,
Whither, we fain would know;
But human understanding cannot show.
This makes US tremble——

Mr. Pomfret, therefore, proceeded I, had such apprehensions of this dark state as you have: and the excellent divine I hinted at last night, who had very little else but human frailties to reproach himself with, and whose miscellanies fell into my hands among my uncle's books in my attendance upon him in his last hours, says,

It must be done, my soul: but 'tis a strange,
A dismal, and mysterious change,
When thou shalt leave this tenement of clay,
And to an unknown—somewhere—wing away;
When time shall be eternity, and thou
Shalt be—thou know'st not what—and live—
thou know'st not how!
Amazing state! no wonder that we dread
To think of death, or view the dead;
Thou'rt all wrapt up in clouds, as if to thee
Our very knowledge had antipathy.

Then follows, what I repeated,

Death could not a more sad retinue find,
Sickness and pain before, and darkness all behind.

Alas! my dear Belford [inferred the unhappy deep-thinker] what poor creatures does this convince me we mortals are at best!—But what then must be the case of such a profligate as I, who by a past wicked life have added greater force to these natural terrors? If death be so repugnant a

thing to human nature, that good men will be startled at it, what must it be to one who has lived a life of sense and appetite; nor ever reflected upon the end which I now am within view of?

What could I say to an inference so fairly drawn? Mercy, mercy, unbounded mercy, was still my plea, though his repeated opposition of justice to it, in a manner silenced that plea: and what would I have given to have had rise in my mind, one good, eminently good action to have remembered him of, in order to combat his fears with it?

I believe, Lovelace, I shall tire thee, and that more with the subject of my letter, than even with the length of it. But really, I think thy spirits are so offensively up since thy recovery, that I ought, as the melancholy subjects offer, to endeavour to reduce thee to the standard of humanity, by expatiating upon them. And then thou canst not but be curious to know every thing that concerns the poor man, for whom thou hast always expressed a great regard. I will therefore proceed as I have begun. If thou likest not to read it now, lay it by, if thou wilt, till the like circumstances befall thee, till like reflections from those circumstances seize thee; and then take it up, and compare the two cases together.

At his earnest request, I sat up with him last night; and, poor man! it is impossible to tell thee, how easy and safe he thought himself in my company, for the first part of the night: A drowning man will catch at a straw, the proverb well says: and a straw was I, with respect to any real help I could give him. He often awaked in terrors; and once calling out for me, Dear Belford, said he, Where are you! —Oh! There you are!—Give me your friendly hand!—Then grasping it, and putting his clammy, half-cold lips to it—How kind! I fear every thing when you are absent. But the presence of a friend, a sympathising friend—Oh! how comfortable!

But, about four in the morning, he frightened me much: he waked with three terrible groans; and endeavoured to speak, but could not presently—and when he did,—Jack, Jack, Jack, five or six times repeated he as quick as thought, now, now, now, save me, save me, save me—I am going—going indeed!

I threw my arms about him, and raised him upon his pillow, as he was sinking (as if to hide himself) in the bed-clothes—And staring wildly, Where am I? said he, a little recovering. Did you not see him? turning his head this way and that; horror in his countenance; Did you not see him?

See whom, see what, my dear Belton!

O lay me upon the bed again, cried he!—Let me not die upon the floor!— Lay me down gently; and stand by me!—Leave me not!—All, all will soon be over!

You are already, my dear Belton, upon the bed. You have not been upon the floor. This is a strong delirium; you are faint for want of refreshment [for he had refused several times to take any thing]: let me persuade you to take some of this cordial julap. I will leave you, if you will not oblige me.

He then readily took it; but said he could have sworn that Tom. Metcalfe had been in the room, and had drawn him out of bed by the throat, upbraiding him with the injuries he had first done his sister, and then him, in the duel to which he owed that fever which cost him his life.

Thou knowest the story, Lovelace, too well, to need my repeating it: but, mercy on us, if in these terrible moments all the evils we do rise to our frightened imaginations!—If so, what shocking scenes have I, but still what more shocking ones hast thou, to go through, if, as the noble poet says,

If any sense at that sad time remains!

The doctor ordered him an opiate this morning early, which operated so well, that he dosed and slept several hours more quietly than he had done for the two past days and nights, though he

had sleeping-draughts given him before. But it is more and more evident every hour that nature is almost worn out in him.

Mowbray, quite tired with this house of mourning, intends to set out in the morning to find you. He was not a little rejoiced to hear you were in town; I believe to have a pretence to leave us.

He has just taken leave of his poor friend, intending to go away early: an everlasting leave, I may venture to say; for I think he will hardly live till to-morrow night.

I believe the poor man would not have been sorry had he left him when I arrived; for 'tis a shocking creature, and enjoys too strong health to know how to pity the sick. Then (to borrow an observation from thee) he has, by nature, strong bodily organs, which those of his soul are not likely to whet out; and he, as well as the wicked friend he is going to, may last a great while from the strength of their constitutions, though so greatly different in their talents, if neither the sword nor the halter interpose.

I must repeat, That I cannot but be very uneasy for the poor lady whom you so cruelly persecute; and that I do not think that you have kept your honour with me. I was apprehensive, indeed, that you would attempt to see her, as soon as you got well enough to come up; and I told her as much, making use of it as an argument to prepare her for your visit, and to induce her to stand it. But she could not, it is plain, bear the shock of it: and indeed she told me that she would not see you, though but for one half-hour, for the world.

Could she have prevailed upon herself, I know that the sight of her would have been as affecting to you, as your visit could have been to her; when you had seen to what a lovely skeleton (for she is really lovely still, nor can she, with such a form and features, be otherwise) you have, in a few weeks, reduced one of the most charming women in the world; and that in the full bloom of her youth and beauty.

Mowbray undertakes to carry this, that he may be more welcome to you, he says. Were it to be sent unsealed, the characters we write in would be Hebrew to the dunce. I desire you to return it; and I'll give you a copy of it upon demand; for I intend to keep it by me, as a guard against the infection of your company, which might otherwise, perhaps, some time hence, be apt to weaken the impressions I always desire to have of the awful scene before me. God convert us both!

LETTER XVII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. WEDNESDAY MORN. 11 O'CLOCK.

I believe no man has two such servants as I have. Because I treat them with kindness, and do not lord it over my inferiors, and d—n and curse them by looks and words like Mowbray; or beat their teeth out like Lovelace; but cry, Pr'ythee, Harry, do this, and, Pr'ythee, Jonathan, do that; the fellows pursue their own devices, and regard nothing I say, but what falls in with these.

Here, this vile Harry, who might have brought your letter of yesterday in good time, came not in with it till past eleven at night (drunk, I suppose); and concluding that I was in bed, as he pretends (because he was told I sat up the preceding night) brought it not to me; and having overslept himself, just as I had sealed up my letter, in comes the villain with the forgotten one, shaking his ears, and looking as if he himself did not believe the excuses he was going to make. I questioned him about it, and heard his pitiful pleas; and though I never think it becomes a gentleman to treat people insolently who by their stations are humbled beneath his feet, yet could I not forbear to Lovelace and Mowbray him most cordially.

And this detaining Mowbray (who was ready to set out to you before) while I write a few lines upon it, the fierce fellow, who is impatient to exchange the company of a dying Belton for that of a too-lively Lovelace, affixed a supplement of curses upon the staring fellow, that was larger than my book—nor did I offer to take off the bear from such a mongrel, since, on this occasion, he deserved not of me the protection which every master owes to a good servant.

He has not done cursing him yet; for stalking about the court-yard with his boots on, (the poor fellow dressing his horse, and unable to get from him,) he is at him without mercy; and I will heighten his impatience, (since being just under the window where I am writing, he will not let me attend to my pen,) by telling you how he fills my ears as well as the fellow's, with his—Hay, Sir! And G—d d—n ye, Sir! And were ye my servant, ye dog ye! And must I stay here till the mid-day sun scorches me to a parchment, for such a mangy dog's drunken neglect?—Ye lie, Sirrah!—Ye lie, I tell you—[I hear the fellow's voice in an humble excusatory tone, though not articulately] Ye lie, ye dog!—I'd a good mind to thrust my whip down your drunken throat: d—n me, if I would not flay the skin from the back of such a rascal, if thou wert mine, and have dog's-skin gloves made of it, for thy brother scoundrels to wear in remembrance of thy abuses of such a master.

The poor horse suffers for this, I doubt not; for, What now! and, Stand still, and be d—d to ye, cries the fellow, with a kick, I suppose, which he better deserves himself; for these varlets, where they can, are Mowbrays and Lovelaces to man or beast; and not daring to answer him, is flaying the poor horse.

I hear the fellow is just escaped, the horse, (better curried than ordinary, I suppose, in half the usual time,) by his clanking shoes, and Mowbray's silence, letting me know, that I may now write on: and so, I will tell thee that, in the first place, (little as I, as well as you, regard dreams,) I would have thee lay thine to heart; for I could give thee such an interpretation of it, as would shock thee, perhaps; and if thou askest me for it, I will.

Mowbray calls to me from the court-yard, that 'tis a cursed hot day, and he shall be fried by riding in the noon of it: and that poor Belton longs to see me. So I will only add my earnest desire, that you will give over all thoughts of seeing the lady, if, when this comes to your hand, you have not seen her: and, that it would be kind, if you'd come, and, for the last time you will ever see your poor friend, share my concern for him; and, in him, see what, in a little time, will be your fate and mine, and that of Mowbray, Tourville, and the rest of us—For what are ten, fifteen, twenty, or thirty years, to look back to; in the longest of which periods forward we shall all perhaps be mingled with the dust from which we sprung?

LETTER XVIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. WEDNESDAY MORN. AUG. 23.

All alive, dear Jack, and in ecstasy!—Likely to be once more a happy man! For I have received a letter from my beloved Miss HARLOWE; in consequence, I suppose, of that which I mentioned in my last to be left for her from her sister. And I am setting out for Berks directly, to show the contents to my Lord M. and to receive the congratulations of all my kindred upon it.

I went, last night, as I intended, to Smith's: but the dear creature was not returned at near ten o'clock. And, lighting upon Tourville, I took him home with me, and made him sing me out of my megrims. I went to bed tolerably easy at two; had bright and pleasant dreams; (not such of a frightful one as that I gave thee an account of;) and at eight this morning, as I was dressing, to be in readiness against the return of my fellow, whom I had sent to inquire after the lady, I had the following letter brought to me by a chairman:

TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. TUESDAY NIGHT, 11 O'CLOCK (AUG. 22.)

SIR,

I have good news to tell you. I am setting out with all diligence for my father's house, I am bid to hope that he will receive his poor penitent with a goodness peculiar to himself; for I am overjoyed with the assurance of a thorough reconciliation, through the interposition of a dear, blessed friend, whom I always loved and honoured. I am so taken up with my preparation for this joyful and long-wished-for journey, that I cannot spare one moment for any other business, having several matters of the last importance to settle first. So, pray, Sir, don't disturb or interrupt me—I beseech you don't. You may possibly in time see me at my father's; at least if it be not your own fault.

I will write a letter, which shall be sent you when I am got thither and received: till when, I am, &c.

CLARISSA HARLOWE. ***

I dispatched instantly a letter to the dear creature, assuring her, with the most thankful joy, 'That I would directly set out for Berks, and wait the issue of the happy reconciliation, and the charming hopes she had filled me with. I poured out upon her a thousand blessings. I declared that it should be the study of my whole life to merit such transcendent goodness: and that there was nothing which her father or friends should require at my hands, that I would not for her sake comply with, in order to promote and complete so desirable a reconciliation.'

I hurried it away without taking a copy of it; and I have ordered the chariot-and-six to be got ready; and hey for M. Hall! Let me but know how Belton does. I hope a letter from thee is on the road. And if the poor fellow can spare thee, make haste, I command thee, to attend this truly divine lady. Thou mayest not else see her of months perhaps; at least, not while she is Miss HARLOWE. And oblige me, if possible, with one letter before she sets out, confirming to me and accounting for this generous change.

But what accounting for it is necessary? The dear creature cannot receive consolation herself but she must communicate it to others. How noble! She would not see me in her adversity; but no sooner does the sun of prosperity begin to shine upon her than she forgives me.

I know to whose mediation all this is owing. It is to Colonel Morden's. She always, as she says, loved and honoured him! And he loved her above all his relations.

I shall now be convinced that there is something in dreams. The opening cloud is the reconciliation in view. The bright form, lifting up my charmer through it to a firmament stuck round with golden cherubims and seraphims, indicates the charming little boys and girls, that will be the fruits of this happy reconciliation. The welcomes, thrice repeated, are those of her family, now no more to be deemed implacable. Yet are they family, too, that my soul cannot mingle with.

But then what is my tumbling over and over through the floor into a frightful hole, descending as she ascends? Ho! only this! it alludes to my disrelish to matrimony: Which is a bottomless pit, a gulph, and I know not what. And I suppose, had I not awoke in such a plaguy fright, I had been soused into some river at the bottom of the hole, and then been carried (mundified or purified from my past iniquities,) by the same bright form (waiting for me upon the mossy banks,) to my beloved girl; and we should have gone on cherubiming of it and caroling to the end of the chapter.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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