

СЭМЮЭЛ РИЧАРДСОН

CLARISSA HARLOWE; OR
THE HISTORY OF A
YOUNG LADY — VOLUME
6

Сэмюэл Ричардсон

**Clarissa Harlowe; or the history
of a young lady — Volume 6**

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Samuel Richardson
Clarissa Harlowe; or the history
of a young lady — Volume 6

LETTER I
MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN
BELFORD, ESQ. SAT. MIDNIGHT

No rest, says a text that I once heard preached upon, to the wicked—and I cannot close my eyes (yet only wanted to compound for half an hour in an elbow-chair)—so must scribble on.

I parted with the Captain after another strong debate with him in relation to what is to be the fate of this lady. As the fellow has an excellent head, and would have made an eminent figure in any station of life, had not his early days been tainted with a deep crime, and he detected in it; and as he had the right side of the argument; I had a good deal of difficulty with him; and at last brought myself to promise, that if I could prevail upon her generously to forgive me, and to reinstate me in her favour, I would make it my whole endeavour to get off of my contrivances, as happily as I could; (only that Lady Betty and Charlotte must come;) and then substituting him for her uncle's proxy, take shame to myself, and marry.

But if I should, Jack, (with the strongest antipathy to the state that ever man had,) what a figure shall I make in rakish annals? And can I have taken all this pains for nothing? Or for a wife only, that, however excellent, [and any woman, do I think I could make good, because I could make any woman fear as well as love me,] might have been obtained without the plague I have been at, and much more reputably than with it? And hast thou not seen, that this haughty woman [forgive me that I call her haughty! and a woman! Yet is she not haughty?] knows not how to forgive with graciousness? Indeed has not at all forgiven me? But holds my soul in a suspense which has been so grievous to her own.

At this silent moment, I think, that if I were to pursue my former scheme, and resolve to try whether I cannot make a greater fault serve as a sponge to wipe out the less; and then be forgiven for that; I can justify myself to myself; and that, as the fair invincible would say, is all in all.

As it is my intention, in all my reflections, to avoid repeating, at least dwelling upon, what I have before written to thee, though the state of the case may not have varied; so I would have thee to re-consider the old reasonings (particularly those contained in my answer to thy last¹ expostulatory nonsense); and add the new as they fall from my pen; and then I shall think myself invincible;—at least, as arguing rake to rake.

I take the gaining of this lady to be essential to my happiness: and is it not natural for all men to aim at obtaining whatever they think will make them happy, be the object more or less considerable in the eyes of others?

As to the manner of endeavouring to obtain her, by falsification of oaths, vows, and the like—do not the poets of two thousand years and upwards tell us, that Jupiter laughs at the perjuries of lovers? And let me add, to what I have heretofore mentioned on that head, a question or two.

Do not the mothers, the aunts, the grandmothers, the governesses of the pretty innocents, always, from their very cradles to riper years, preach to them the deceitfulness of men?—That they are not to regard their oaths, vows, promises?—What a parcel of fibbers would all these reverend

¹ See Vol. V. Letter XIV.

matrons be, if there were not now and then a pretty credulous rogue taken in for a justification of their preachments, and to serve as a beacon lighted up for the benefit of the rest?

Do we not then see, that an honest prowling fellow is a necessary evil on many accounts? Do we not see that it is highly requisite that a sweet girl should be now-and-then drawn aside by him?—And the more eminent the girl, in the graces of person, mind, and fortune, is not the example likely to be the more efficacious?

If these postulata be granted me, who, I pray, can equal my charmer in all these? Who therefore so fit for an example to the rest of her sex? —At worst, I am entirely within my worthy friend Mandeville's assertion, that private vices are public benefits.

Well, then, if this sweet creature must fall, as it is called, for the benefit of all the pretty fools of the sex, she must; and there's an end of the matter. And what would there have been in it of uncommon or rare, had I not been so long about it?—And so I dismiss all further argumentation and debate upon the question: and I impose upon thee, when thou writest to me, an eternal silence on this head.

Wafer'd on, as an after-written introduction to the paragraphs which follow, marked with turned commas, [thus, ']:

Lord, Jack, what shall I do now! How one evil brings on another! Dreadful news to tell thee! While I was meditating a simple robbery, here have I (in my own defence indeed) been guilty of murder!—A bl—y murder! So I believe it will prove. At her last gasp!—Poor impertinent opposer!—Eternally resisting!—Eternally contradicting! There she lies weltering in her blood! her death's wound have I given her!—But she was a thief, an impostor, as well as a tormentor. She had stolen my pen. While I was sullenly meditating, doubting, as to my future measures, she stole it; and thus she wrote with it in a hand exactly like my own; and would have faced me down, that it was really my own hand-writing.

'But let me reflect before it is too late. On the manifold perfections of this ever-amiable creature let me reflect. The hand yet is only held up. The blow is not struck. Miss Howe's next letter may blow thee up. In policy thou shouldest be now at least honest. Thou canst not live without her. Thou wouldest rather marry her than lose her absolutely. Thou mayest undoubtedly prevail upon her, inflexible as she seems to be, for marriage. But if now she finds thee a villain, thou mayest never more engage her attention, and she perhaps will refuse and abhor thee.

'Yet already have I not gone too far? Like a repentant thief, afraid of his gang, and obliged to go on, in fear of hanging till he comes to be hanged, I am afraid of the gang of my cursed contrivances.

'As I hope to live, I am sorry, (at the present writing,) that I have been such a foolish plotter, as to put it, as I fear I have done, out of my own power to be honest. I hate compulsion in all forms; and cannot bear, even to be compelled to be the wretch my choice has made me! So now, Belford, as thou hast said, I am a machine at last, and no free agent.

'Upon my soul, Jack, it is a very foolish thing for a man of spirit to have brought himself to such a height of iniquity, that he must proceed, and cannot help himself, and yet to be next to certain, that this very victory will undo him.

'Why was such a woman as this thrown into my way, whose very fall will be her glory, and, perhaps, not only my shame but my destruction?

'What a happiness must that man know, who moves regularly to some laudable end, and has nothing to reproach himself with in his progress to do it! When, by honest means, he attains his end, how great and unmixed must be his enjoyments! What a happy man, in this particular case, had I been, had it been given me to be only what I wished to appear to be!

Thus far had my conscience written with my pen; and see what a recreant she had made of me!—I seized her by the throat—There!—There, said I, thou vile impertinent!—take that, and that!—How often have I gave thee warning!—and now, I hope, thou intruding varletess, have I done thy business!

Puling and low-voiced, rearing up thy detested head, in vain implorest thou my mercy, who, in thy day hast showed me so little!—Take that, for a rising blow!—And now will thy pain, and my pain for thee, soon be over. Lie there!—Welter on!—Had I not given thee thy death's wound, thou wouldest have robbed me of all my joys. Thou couldest not have mended me, 'tis plain. Thou couldest only have thrown me into despair. Didst thou not see, that I had gone too far to recede?—Welter on, once more I bid thee!—Gasp on!—That thy last gasp, surely!—How hard diest thou!

ADIEU!—Unhappy man! ADIEU!

'Tis kind in thee, however, to bid me, Adieu!

Adieu, Adieu, Adieu, to thee, O thou inflexible, and, till now, unconquerable bosom intruder!
—Adieu to thee for ever!

LETTER II
MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.
SUNDAY MORN. (JUNE 11). FOUR O'CLOCK

A few words to the verbal information thou sentest me last night concerning thy poor old man; and then I rise from my seat, shake myself, refresh, new-dress, and so to my charmer, whom, notwithstanding her reserves, I hope to prevail upon to walk out with me on the Heath this warm and fine morning.

The birds must have awakened her before now. They are in full song. She always gloried in accustoming herself to behold the sun rise—one of God's natural wonders, as once she called it.

Her window salutes the east. The valleys must be gilded by his rays, by the time I am with her; for already have they made the up-lands smile, and the face of nature cheerful.

How unsuitable will thou find this gay preface to a subject so gloomy as that I am now turning to! I am glad to hear thy tedious expectations are at last answered.

Thy servant tells me that thou art plaguily grieved at the old fellow's departure.

I can't say, but thou mayest look as if thou wert; harassed as thou hast been for a number of days and nights with a close attendance upon a dying man, beholding his drawing-on hour—pretending, for decency's sake, to whine over his excruciating pangs; to be in the way to answer a thousand impertinent inquiries after the health of a man thou wishedest to die—to pray by him—for so once thou wrotest to me!—To read by him—to be forced to join in consultation with a crew of solemn and parading doctors, and their officious zanies, the apothecaries, joined with the butcherly tribe of scarificators; all combined to carry on the physical farce, and to cut out thongs both from his flesh and his estate—to have the superadded apprehension of dividing thy interest in what he shall leave with a crew of eager-hoping, never-to-be-satisfied relations, legatees, and the devil knows who, of private gratifiers of passions laudable and illaudable—in these circumstances, I wonder not that thou lookest before servants, (as little grieved as thou after heirship,) as if thou indeed wert grieved; and as if the most wry-fac'd woe had befallen thee.

Then, as I have often thought, the reflection that must naturally arise from such mortifying objects, as the death of one with whom we have been familiar, must afford, when we are obliged to attend it in its slow approaches, and in its face-twisting pangs, that it will one day be our own case, goes a great way to credit the appearance of grief.

And that it is this, seriously reflected upon, may temporally give a fine air of sincerity to the wailings of lively widows, heart-exulting heirs, and residuary legatees of all denominations; since, by keeping down the inward joy, those interesting reflections must sadden the aspect, and add an appearance of real concern to the assumed sables.

Well, but, now thou art come to the reward of all thy watchings, anxieties, and close attendances, tell me what it is; tell me if it compensate thy trouble, and answer thy hope?

As to myself, thou seest, by the gravity of my style, how the subject has helped to mortify me. But the necessity I am under of committing either speedy matrimony, or a rape, has saddened over my gayer prospects, and, more than the case itself, contributed to make me sympathize with the present joyful-sorrow.

Adieu, Jack, I must be soon out of my pain; and my Clarissa shall be soon out of her's—for so does the arduousness of the case require.

LETTER III

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

I have had the honour of my charmer's company for two complete hours. We met before six in Mrs. Moore's garden. A walk on the Heath refused me.

The sedateness of her aspect and her kind compliance in this meeting gave me hopes. And all that either the Captain and I had urged yesterday to obtain a full and free pardon, that re-urged I; and I told her, besides, that Captain Tomlinson was gone down with hopes to prevail upon her uncle Harlowe to come up in person, in order to present to me the greatest blessing that man ever received.

But the utmost I could obtain was, that she would take no resolution in my favour till she received Miss Howe's next letter.

I will not repeat the arguments I used; but I will give thee the substance of what she said in answer to them.

She had considered of every thing, she told me. My whole conduct was before her. The house I carried her to must be a vile house. The people early showed what they were capable of, in the earnest attempt made to fasten Miss Partington upon her; as she doubted not, with my approbation. [Surely, thought I, she has not received a duplicate of Miss Howe's letter of detection!] They heard her cries. My insult was undoubtedly premeditated. By my whole recollected behaviour to her, previous to it, it must be so. I had the vilest of views, no question. And my treatment of her put it out of all doubt.

Soul over all, Belford! She seems sensible of liberties that my passion made me insensible of having taken, or she could not so deeply resent.

She besought me to give over all thoughts of her. Sometimes, she said, she thought herself cruelly treated by her nearest and dearest relations; at such times, a spirit of repining and even of resentment took place; and the reconciliation, at other times so desirable, was not then so much the favourite wish of her heart, as was the scheme she had formerly planned—of taking her good Norton for her directress and guide, and living upon her own estate in the manner her grandfather had intended she should live.

This scheme she doubted not that her cousin Morden, who was one of her trustees for that estate, would enable her, (and that, as she hoped, without litigation,) to pursue. And if he can, and does, what, Sir, let me ask you, said she, have I seen in your conduct, that should make me prefer to it an union of interest, where there is such a disunion in minds?

So thou seest, Jack, there is reason, as well as resentment, in the preference she makes against me!—Thou seest, that she presumes to think that she can be happy without me; and that she must be unhappy with me!

I had besought her, in the conclusion of my re-urged arguments, to write to Miss Howe before Miss Howe's answer could come, in order to lay before her the present state of things; and if she would pay a deference to her judgment, to let her have an opportunity to give it, on the full knowledge of the case—

So I would, Mr. Lovelace, was the answer, if I were in doubt myself, which I would prefer—marriage, or the scheme I have mentioned. You cannot think, Sir, but the latter must be my choice. I wish to part with you with temper—don't put me upon repeating—

Part with me, Madam! interrupted I—I cannot bear those words!—But let me beseech you, however, to write to Miss Howe. I hope, if Miss Howe is not my enemy—

She is not the enemy of your person, Sir;—as you would be convinced, if you saw her last letter² to me. But were she not an enemy to your actions, she would not be my friend, nor the friend of virtue. Why will you provoke from me, Mr. Lovelace, the harshness of expression, which, however, which, however deserved by you, I am unwilling just now to use, having suffered enough in the two past days from my own vehemence?

I bit my lip for vexation. And was silent.

Miss Howe, proceeded she, knows the full state of matters already, Sir. The answer I expect from her respects myself, not you. Her heart is too warm in the cause of friendship, to leave me in suspense one moment longer than is necessary as to what I want to know. Nor does her answer absolutely depend upon herself. She must see a person first, and that person perhaps see others.

The cursed smuggler-woman, Jack!—Miss Howe's Townsend, I doubt not— Plot, contrivance, intrigue, stratagem!—Underground-moles these women— but let the earth cover me!—let me be a mole too, thought I, if they carry their point!—and if this lady escape me now!

She frankly owned that she had once thought of embarking out of all our ways for some one of our American colonies. But now that she had been compelled to see me, (which had been her greatest dread), and which she might be happiest in the resumption of her former favourite scheme, if Miss Howe could find her a reputable and private asylum, till her cousin Morden could come.—But if he came not soon, and if she had a difficulty to get to a place of refuge, whether from her brother or from any body else, [meaning me, I suppose,] she might yet perhaps go abroad; for, to say the truth, she could not think of returning to her father's house, since her brother's rage, her sister's upbraidings, her father's anger, her mother's still-more-affecting sorrowings, and her own consciousness under them all, would be unsupportable to her.

O Jack! I am sick to death, I pine, I die, for Miss Howe's next letter! I would bind, gag, strip, rob, and do any thing but murder, to intercept it.

But, determined as she seems to be, it was evident to me, nevertheless, that she had still some tenderness for me.

She often wept as she talked, and much oftener sighed. She looked at me twice with an eye of undoubted gentleness, and three times with an eye tending to compassion and softness; but its benign rays were as often snatched back, as I may say, and her face averted, as if her sweet eyes were not to be trusted, and could not stand against my eager eyes; seeking, as they did, for a lost heart in her's, and endeavouring to penetrate to her very soul.

More than once I took her hand. She struggled not much against the freedom. I pressed it once with my lips—she was not very angry. A frown indeed—but a frown that had more distress in it than indignation.

How came the dear soul, (clothed as it is with such a silken vesture,) by all its steadiness?³ Was it necessary that the active gloom of such a tyrant of a father, should commix with such a passive sweetness of a will-less mother, to produce a constancy, an equanimity, a steadiness, in the daughter, which never woman before could boast of? If so, she is more obliged to that despotic father than I could have imagined a creature to be, who gave distinction to every one related to her beyond what the crown itself can confer.

I hoped, I said, that she would admit of the intended visit, which I had so often mentioned, of the two ladies.

She was here. She had seen me. She could not help herself at present. She even had the highest regard for the ladies of my family, because of their worthy characters. There she turned away her sweet face, and vanquished an half-risen sigh.

² The lady innocently means Mr. Lovelace's forged one. See Vol. V. Letter XXX.

³ See Vol. I. Letters IX. XIV. and XIX. for what she herself says on that steadiness which Mr. Lovelace, though a deserved sufferer by it, cannot help admiring.

I kneeled to her then. It was upon a verdant cushion; for we were upon the grass walk. I caught her hand. I besought her with an earnestness that called up, as I could feel, my heart to my eyes, to make me, by her forgiveness and example, more worthy of them, and of her own kind and generous wishes. By my soul, Madam, said I, you stab me with your goodness—your undeserved goodness! and I cannot bear it!

Why, why, thought I, as I did several times in this conversation, will she not generously forgive me? Why will she make it necessary for me to bring Lady Betty and my cousin to my assistance? Can the fortress expect the same advantageous capitulation, which yields not to the summons of a resistless conqueror, as if it gave not the trouble of bringing up and raising its heavy artillery against it?

What sensibilities, said the divine creature, withdrawing her hand, must thou have suppressed! What a dreadful, what a judicial hardness of heart must thine be! who canst be capable of such emotions, as sometimes thou hast shown; and of such sentiments, as sometimes have flowed from thy lips; yet canst have so far overcome them all as to be able to act as thou hast acted, and that from settled purpose and premeditation; and this, as it is said, throughout the whole of thy life, from infancy to this time!

I told her, that I had hoped, from the generous concern she had expressed for me, when I was so suddenly and dangerously taken ill—[the ipecacuanha experiment, Jack!]

She interrupted me—Well have you rewarded me for the concern you speak of!—However, I will frankly own, now that I am determined to think no more of you, that you might, (unsatisfied as I nevertheless was with you,) have made an interest—

She paused. I besought her to proceed.

Do you suppose, Sir, and turned away her sweet face as we walked,—Do you suppose that I had not thought of laying down a plan to govern myself by, when I found myself so unhappily overreached and cheated, as I may say, out of myself—When I found, that I could not be, and do, what I wished to be, and to do, do you imagine that I had not cast about, what was the next proper course to take?—And do you believe that this next course has not caused me some pain to be obliged to—

There again she stopt.

But let us break off discourse, resumed she. The subject grows too—She sighed—Let us break off discourse—I will go in—I will prepare for church—[The devil! thought I.] Well, as I can appear in those every-day-worn clothes—looking upon herself—I will go to church.

She then turned from me to go into the house.

Bless me, my beloved creature, bless me with the continuance of this affecting conversation.—Remorse has seized my heart!—I have been excessively wrong—give me farther cause to curse my heedless folly, by the continuance of this calm but soul-penetrating conversation.

No, no, Mr. Lovelace: I have said too much. Impatience begins to break in upon me. If you can excuse me to the ladies, it will be better for my mind's sake, and for your credit's sake, that I do not see them. Call me to them over-nice, petulant, prudish—what you please call me to them. Nobody but Miss Howe, to whom, next to the Almighty, and my own mother, I wish to stand acquitted of wilful error, shall know the whole of what has passed. Be happy, as you may!—Deserve to be happy, and happy you will be, in your own reflection at least, were you to be ever so unhappy in other respects. For myself, if I ever shall be enabled, on due reflection, to look back upon my own conduct, without the great reproach of having wilfully, and against the light of my own judgment, erred, I shall be more happy than if I had all that the world accounts desirable.

The noble creature proceeded; for I could not speak.

This self-acquittal, when spirits are lent me to dispel the darkness which at present too often over-clouds my mind, will, I hope, make me superior to all the calamities that can befall me.

Her whole person was informed by her sentiments. She seemed to be taller than before. How the God within her exalted her, not only above me, but above herself!

Divine creature! (as I thought her,) I called her. I acknowledged the superiority of her mind; and was proceeding—but she interrupted me—All human excellence, said she, is comparative only. My mind, I believe, is indeed superior to your's, debased as your's is by evil habits: but I had not known it to be so, if you had not taken pains to convince me of the inferiority of your's.

How great, how sublimely great, this creature!—By my soul I cannot forgive her for her virtues! There is no bearing the consciousness of the infinite inferiority she charged me with.—But why will she break from me, when good resolutions are taking place? The red-hot iron she refuses to strike—O why will she suffer the yielding wax to harden?

We had gone but a few paces towards the house, when we were met by the impertinent women, with notice, that breakfast was ready. I could only, with uplifted hands, beseech her to give me hope of a renewed conversation after breakfast.

No—she would go to church.

And into the house she went, and up stairs directly. Nor would she oblige me with her company at the tea-table.

I offered, by Mrs. Moore, to quit both the table and the parlour, rather than she should exclude herself, or deprive the two widows of the favour of her company.

That was not all the matter, she told Mrs. Moore. She had been struggling to keep down her temper. It had cost her some pains to do it. She was desirous to compose herself, in hopes to receive benefit by the divine worship she was going to join in.

Mrs. Moore hoped for her presence at dinner.

She had rather be excused. Yet, if she could obtain the frame of mind she hoped for, she might not be averse to show, that she had got above those sensibilities, which gave consideration to a man who deserved not to be to her what he had been.

This said, no doubt, to let Mrs. Moore know, that the garden-conversation had not been a reconciling one.

Mrs. Moore seemed to wonder that we were not upon a better foot of understanding, after so long a conference; and the more, as she believed that the lady had given in to the proposal for the repetition of the ceremony, which I had told them was insisted upon by her uncle Harlowe.— But I accounted for this, by telling both widows that she was resolved to keep on the reserve till she heard from Captain Tomlinson, whether her uncle would be present in person at the solemnity, or would name that worthy gentleman for his proxy.

Again I enjoined strict secrecy, as to this particular; which was promised by the widows, as well as for themselves, as for Miss Rawlins; of whose taciturnity they gave me such an account, as showed me, that she was secret-keeper-general to all the women of fashion at Hampstead.

The Lord, Jack! What a world of mischief, at this rate, must Miss Rawlins know!—What a Pandora's box must her bosom be!—Yet, had I nothing that was more worthy of my attention to regard, I would engage to open it, and make my uses of the discovery.

And now, Belford, thou perceivest, that all my reliance is upon the mediation of Lady Betty and Miss Montague, and upon the hope of intercepting Miss Howe's next letter.

LETTER IV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ

This fair inexorable is actually gone to church with Mrs. Moore and Mrs. Bevis; but Will. closely attends her motions; and I am in the way to receive any occasional intelligence from him.

She did not choose, [a mighty word with the sex! as if they were always to have their own wills!] that I should wait upon her. I did not much press it, that she might not apprehend that I thought I had reason to doubt her voluntary return.

I once had it in my head to have found the widow Bevis other employment. And I believe she would have been as well pleased with my company as to go to church; for she seemed irresolute when I told her that two out of a family were enough to go to church for one day. But having her things on, (as the women call every thing,) and her aunt Moore expecting her company, she thought it best to go—lest it should look oddly, you know, whispered she, to one who was above regarding how it looked.

So here am I in my dining-room; and have nothing to do but to write till they return.

And what will be my subject thinkest thou? Why, the old beaten one to be sure; self-debate—through temporary remorse: for the blow being not struck, her guardian angel is redoubling his efforts to save her.

If it be not that, [and yet what power should her guardian angel have over me?] I don't know what it is that gives a check to my revenge, whenever I meditate treason against so sovereign a virtue. Conscience is dead and gone, as I told thee; so it cannot be that. A young conscience growing up, like the phoenix, from the ashes of the old one, it cannot be, surely. But if it were, it would be hard, if I could not overlay a young conscience.

Well, then, it must be LOVE, I fancy. LOVE itself, inspiring love of an object so adorable—some little attention possibly paid likewise to thy whining arguments in her favour.

Let LOVE then be allowed to be the moving principle; and the rather, as LOVE naturally makes the lover loth to disoblige the object of its flame; and knowing, that to an offence of the meditated kind will be a mortal offence to her, cannot bear that I should think of giving it.

Let LOVE and me talk together a little on this subject—be it a young conscience, or love, or thyself, Jack, thou seest that I am for giving every whiffler audience. But this must be the last debate on this subject; for is not her fate in a manner at its crisis? And must not my next step be an irretrievable one, tend it which way it will?

And now the debate is over.

A thousand charming things, (for LOVE is gentler than CONSCIENCE,) has this little urchin suggested in her favour. He pretended to know both our hearts: and he would have it, that though my love was a prodigious strong and potent love; and though it has the merit of many months, faithful service to plead, and has had infinite difficulties to struggle with; yet that it is not THE RIGHT SORT OF LOVE.

Right sort of love!—A puppy!—But, with due regard to your deityship, said I, what merits has she with YOU, that you should be of her party? Is her's, I pray you, a right sort of love? Is it love at all? She don't pretend that it is. She owns not your sovereignty. What a d—I I moves you, to plead thus earnestly for a rebel, who despises your power?

And then he came with his If's and And's—and it would have been, and still, as he believed, would be, love, and a love of the exalted kind, if I would encourage it by the right sort of love he

talked of: and, in justification of his opinion, pleaded her own confessions, as well those of yesterday, as of this morning: and even went so far back as to my ipecacuanha illness.

I never talked so familiarly with his godship before: thou mayest think, therefore, that his dialect sounded oddly in my ears. And then he told me, how often I had thrown cold water upon the most charming flame that ever warmed a lady's bosom, while but young and rising.

I required a definition of this right sort of love, he tried at it: but made a sorry hand of it: nor could I, for the soul of me, be convinced, that what he meant to extol was LOVE.

Upon the whole, we had a noble controversy upon this subject, in which he insisted upon the unprecedented merit of the lady. Nevertheless I got the better of him; for he was struck absolutely dumb, when (waving her present perverseness, which yet was a sufficient answer to all his pleas) I asserted, and offered to prove it, by a thousand instances impromptu, that love was not governed by merit, nor could be under the dominion of prudence, or any other reasoning power: and if the lady were capable of love, it was of such a sort as he had nothing to do with, and which never before reigned in a female heart.

I asked him, what he thought of her flight from me, at a time when I was more than half overcome by the right sort of love he talked of?—And then I showed him the letter she wrote, and left behind her for me, with an intention, no doubt, absolutely to break my heart, or to provoke me to hang, drown, or shoot myself; to say nothing of a multitude of declarations from her, defying his power, and imputing all that looked like love in her behaviour to me, to the persecution and rejection of her friends; which made her think of me but as a last resort.

LOVE then gave her up. The letter, he said, deserved neither pardon nor excuse. He did not think he had been pleading for such a declared rebel. And as to the rest, he should be a betrayer of the rights of his own sovereignty, if what I had alleged were true, and he were still to plead for her.

I swore to the truth of all. And truly I swore: which perhaps I do not always do.

And now what thinkest thou must become of the lady, whom LOVE itself gives up, and CONSCIENCE cannot plead for?

LETTER V
MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD,
ESQ. SUNDAY AFTERNOON

O Belford! what a hair's-breadth escape have I had!—Such a one, that I tremble between terror and joy, at the thought of what might have happened, and did not.

What a perverse girl is this, to contend with her fate; yet has reason to think, that her very stars fight against her! I am the luckiest of me!—But my breath almost fails me, when I reflect upon what a slender thread my destiny hung.

But not to keep thee in suspense; I have, within this half-hour, obtained possession of the expected letter from Miss Howe—and by such an accident! But here, with the former, I dispatch this; thy messenger waiting.

LETTER VI

MR. LOVELACE [IN CONTINUATION.]

Thus it was—My charmer accompanied Mrs. Moore again to church this afternoon. I had been in very earnest, in the first place, to obtain her company at dinner: but in vain. According to what she had said to Mrs. Moore,⁴ I was too considerable to her to be allowed that favour. In the next place, I besought her to favour me, after dinner, with another garden-walk. But she would again go to church. And what reason have I to rejoice that she did!

My worthy friend, Mrs. Bevis, thought one sermon a day, well observed, enough; so staid at home to bear me company.

The lady and Mrs. Moore had not been gone a quarter of an hour, when a young country-fellow on horseback came to the door, and inquired for Mrs. Harriot Lucas. The widow and I (undetermined how we were to entertain each other) were in the parlour next the door; and hearing the fellow's inquiry, O my dear Mrs. Bevis, said I, I am undone, undone for ever, if you don't help me out!—Since here, in all probability, is a messenger from that implacable Miss Howe with a letter; which, if delivered to Mrs. Lovelace, may undo all we have been doing.

What, said she, would you have me do?

Call the maid in this moment, that I may give her her lesson; and if it be as I imagined, I'll tell you what you shall do.

Wid. Margaret!—Margaret! come in this minute.

Lovel. What answer, Mrs. Margaret, did you give the man, upon his asking for Mrs. Harriot Lucas?

Peggy. I only asked, What was his business, and who he came from? (for, Sir, your honour's servant had told me how things stood): and I came at your call, Madam, before he answered me.

Lovel. Well, child, if ever you wish to be happy in wedlock yourself, and would have people disappointed who want to make mischief between you and your husband, get out of him his message, or letter if he has one, and bring it to me, and say nothing to Mrs. Lovelace, when she comes in; and here is a guinea for you.

Peggy. I will do all I can to serve your honour's worship for nothing: [nevertheless, with a ready hand, taking the guinea:] for Mr. William tells me what a good gentleman you be.

Away went Peggy to the fellow at the door.

Peggy. What is your business, friend, with Mrs. Harry Lucas?

Fellow. I must speak to her her own self.

Lovel. My dearest widow, do you personate Mrs. Lovelace—for Heaven's sake do you personate Mrs. Lovelace.

Wid. I personate Mrs. Lovelace, Sir! How can I do that?—She is fair; I am brown. She is slender: I am plump—

Lovel. No matter, no matter—The fellow may be a new-come servant: he is not in livery, I see. He may not know her person. You can but be bloated and in a dropsy.

Wid. Dropsical people look not so fresh and ruddy as I do.

Lovel. True—but the clown may not know that. 'Tis but for a present deception. Peggy, Peggy, call'd I, in a female tone, softly at the door. Madam, answer'd Peggy; and came up to me to the parlour-door.

Lovel. Tell him the lady is ill; and has lain down upon the couch. And get his business from him, whatever you do.

⁴ See Letter III. of this volume.

Away went Peggy.

Lovel. Now, my dear widow, lie along the settee, and put your handkerchief over your face, that, if he will speak to you himself, he may not see your eyes and your hair.—So—that's right.—I'll step into the closet by you.

I did so.

Peggy. [Returning.] He won't deliver his business to me. He will speak to Mrs. Harriot Lucas her own self.

Lovel. [Holding the door in my hand.] Tell him that this is Mrs. Harriot Lucas; and let him come in. Whisper him (if he doubts) that she is bloated, dropsical, and not the woman she was.

Away went Margery.

Lovel. And now, my dear widow, let me see what a charming Mrs. Lovelace you'll make!—Ask if he comes from Miss Howe. Ask if he lives with her. Ask how she does. Call her, at every word, your dear Miss Howe. Offer him money—take this half-guinea for him—complain of your head, to have a pretence to hold it down; and cover your forehead and eyes with your hand, where your handkerchief hides not your face.—That's right—and dismiss the rascal—[here he comes]—as soon as you can.

In came the fellow, bowing and scraping, his hat poked out before him with both his hands.

Fellow. I am sorry, Madam, an't please you, to find you ben't well.

Widow. What is your business with me, friend?

Fellow. You are Mrs. Harriot Lucas, I suppose, Madam?

Widow. Yes. Do you come from Miss Howe?

Fellow. I do, Madam.

Widow. Dost thou know my right name, friend?

Fellow. I can give a shrewd guess. But that is none of my business.

Widow. What is thy business? I hope Miss Howe is well?

Fellow. Yes, Madam; pure well, I thank God. I wish you were so too.

Widow. I am too full of grief to be well.

Fellow. So belike I have hard to say.

Widow. My head aches so dreadfully, I cannot hold it up. I must beg of you to let me know your business.

Fellow. Nay, and that be all, my business is soon known. It is but to give this letter into your own partiklar hands—here it is.

Widow. [Taking it.] From my dear friend Miss Howe?—Ah, my head!

Fellow. Yes, Madam: but I am sorry you are so bad.

Widow. Do you live with Miss Howe?

Fellow. No, Madam: I am one of her tenants' sons. Her lady-mother must not know as how I came of this errand. But the letter, I suppose, will tell you all.

Widow. How shall I satisfy you for this kind trouble?

Fellow. No how at all. What I do is for love of Miss Howe. She will satisfy me more than enough. But, may-hap, you can send no answer, you are so ill.

Widow. Was you ordered to wait for an answer?

Fellow. No, I cannot say as that I was. But I was bidden to observe how you looked, and how you was; and if you did write a line or two, to take care of it, and give it only to our young landlady in secret.

Widow. You see I look strangely. Not so well as I used to do.

Fellow. Nay, I don't know that I ever saw you but once before; and that was at a stile, where I met you and my young landlady; but knew better than to stare a gentlewoman in the face; especially at a stile.

Widow. Will you eat, or drink, friend?

Fellow. A cup of small ale, I don't care if I do.

Widow. Margaret, take the young man down, and treat him with what the house affords.

Fellow. Your servant, Madam. But I staid to eat as I come along, just upon the Heath yonder; or else, to say the truth, I had been here sooner. [Thank my stars, thought I, thou didst.] A piece of powdered beef was upon the table, at the sign of the Castle, where I stopt to inquire for this house: and so, thoff I only intended to wet my whistle, I could not help eating. So shall only taste of your ale; for the beef was woundily corned.

Prating dog! Pox on thee! thought I.

He withdrew, bowing and scraping.

Margaret, whispered I, in a female voice [whispering out of the closet, and holding the parlour-door in my hand] get him out of the house as fast as you can, lest they come from church, and catch him here.

Peggy. Never fear, Sir.

The fellow went down, and it seems, drank a large draught of ale; and Margaret finding him very talkative, told him, she begged his pardon, but she had a sweetheart just come from sea, whom she was forced to hide in the pantry; so was sure he would excuse her from staying with him.

Ay, ay, to be sure, the clown said: for if he could not make sport, he would spoil none. But he whispered her, that one 'Squire Lovelace was a damnation rogue, if the truth might be told.

For what? said Margaret. And could have given him, she told the widow (who related to me all this) a good drowse of the chaps.

For kissing all the women he came near.

At the same time, the dog wrapped himself round Margery, and gave her a smack, that, she told Mrs. Bevis afterwards, she might have heard into the parlour.

Such, Jack, is human nature: thus does it operate in all degrees; and so does the clown, as well as his practises! Yet this sly dog knew not but the wench had a sweetheart locked up in the pantry! If the truth were known, some of the ruddy-faced dairy wenches might perhaps call him a damnation rogue, as justly as their betters of the same sex might 'Squire Lovelace.

The fellow told the maid, that, by what he discovered of the young lady's face, it looked very rosy to what he took it to be; and he thought her a good deal fatter, as she lay, and not so tall.

All women are born to intrigue, Jack; and practise it more or less, as fathers, guardians, governesses, from dear experience, can tell; and in love affairs are naturally expert, and quicker in their wits by half than men. This ready, though raw wench, gave an instance of this, and improved on the dropsical hint I had given her. The lady's seeming plumpness was owing to a dropsical disorder, and to the round posture she lay in—very likely, truly. Her appearing to him to be shorter, he might have observed, was owing to her drawing her feet up from pain, and because the couch was too short, she supposed—Adso, he did not think of that. Her rosy colour was owing to her grief and headache.—Ay, that might very well be—but he was highly pleased that he had given the letter into Mrs. Harriot's own hand, as he should tell Miss Howe.

He desired once more to see the lady at his going away, and would not be denied. The widow therefore sat up, with her handkerchief over her face, leaning her head against the wainscot.

He asked if she had any partiklar message?

No: she was so ill she could not write; which was a great grief to her.

Should he call the next day? for he was going to London, now he was so near; and should stay at a cousin's that night, who lived in a street called Fetter-Lane.

No: she would write as soon as able, and send by the post.

Well, then, if she had nothing to send by him, mayhap he might stay in town a day or two; for he had never seen the lions in the Tower, nor Bedlam, nor the tombs; and he would make a holiday or two, as he had leave to do, if she had no business or message that required his posting down next day.

She had not.

She offered him the half-guinea I had given her for him; but he refused it with great professions of disinterestedness, and love, as he called it, to Miss Howe; to serve whom, he would ride to the world's-end, or even to Jericho.

And so the shocking rascal went away: and glad at my heart was I when he was gone; for I feared nothing so much as that he would have staid till they came from church.

Thus, Jack, got I my heart's ease, the letter of Miss Howe; ad through such a train of accidents, as makes me say, that the lady's stars fight against her. But yet I must attribute a good deal to my own precaution, in having taken right measures. For had I not secured the widow by my stories, and the maid by my servant, all would have signified nothing. And so heartily were they secured, the one by a single guinea, the other by half a dozen warm kisses, and the aversion they both had to such wicked creatures as delighted in making mischief between man and wife, that they promised, that neither Mrs. Moore, Miss Rawlins, Mrs. Lovelace, nor any body living, should know any thing of the matter.

The widow rejoiced that I had got the mischief-maker's letter. I excused myself to her, and instantly withdrew with it; and, after I had read it, fell to my short-hand, to acquaint thee with my good luck: and they not returning so soon as church was done, (stepping, as it proved, into Miss Rawlins's, and tarrying there awhile, to bring that busy girl with them to drink tea,) I wrote thus far to thee, that thou mightest, when thou camest to this place, rejoice with me upon the occasion.

They are all three just come in.

I hasten to them.

LETTER VII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ

I have begun another letter to thee, in continuation of my narrative: but I believe I shall send thee this before I shall finish that. By the enclosed thou wilt see, that neither of the correspondents deserve mercy from me: and I am resolved to make the ending with one the beginning with the other.

If thou sayest that the provocations I have given to one of them will justify her freedoms; I answer, so they will, to any other person but myself. But he that is capable of giving those provocations, and has the power to punish those who abuse him for giving them, will show his resentment; and the more remorselessly, perhaps, as he has deserved the freedoms.

If thou sayest, it is, however, wrong to do so; I reply, that it is nevertheless human nature:— And wouldst thou not have me to be a man, Jack?

Here read the letter, if thou wilt. But thou art not my friend, if thou offerest to plead for either of the saucy creatures, after thou hast read it.

TO MRS. HARRIOT LUCAS,

AT MRS. MOORE'S, AT HAMPSTEAD. JUNE 10.

After the discoveries I had made of the villanous machinations of the most abandoned of men, particularized in my long letter of Wednesday⁵ last, you will believe, my dearest friend, that my surprise upon perusing your's of Thursday evening from Hampstead⁶ was not so great as my indignation. Had the villain attempted to fire a city instead of a house, I should not have wondered at it. All that I am amazed at is, that he (whose boast, as I am told, it is, that no woman shall keep him out of her bed-chamber, when he has made a resolution to be in it) did not discover his foot before. And it is as strange to me, that, having got you at such a shocking advantage, and in such a horrid house, you could, at the time, escape dishonour, and afterwards get from such a set of infernals.

I gave you, in my long letter of Wednesday and Thursday last, reasons why you ought to mistrust that specious Tomlinson. That man, my dear, must be a solemn villain. May lightning from Heaven blast the wretch, who has set him and the rest of his REMORSELESS GANG at work, to endeavour to destroy the most consummate virtue!—Heaven be praised! you have escaped from all their snares, and now are out of danger.—So I will not trouble you at present with the particulars I have further collected relating to this abominable imposture.

For the same reason, I forbear to communicate to you some new stories of the abhorred wretch himself which have come to my ears. One, in particular, of so shocking a nature!—Indeed, my dear, the man's a devil.

The whole story of Mrs. Fretchville, and her house, I have no doubt to pronounce, likewise, an absolute fiction.—Fellow!—How my soul spurns the villain!

Your thought of going abroad, and your reasons for so doing, most sensibly affect me. But be comforted, my dear; I hope you will not be under a necessity of quitting your native country. Were I sure that that must be the cruel case, I would abandon all my better prospects, and soon be with you. And I would accompany you whithersoever you went, and share fortunes with you: for it is impossible that I should be happy, if I knew that you were exposed not only to the perils of the sea, but to the attempts of other vile men; your personal graces attracting every eye; and exposing you to those hourly dangers, which others, less distinguished by the gifts of nature, might avoid.—All that I know that beauty (so greatly coveted, and so greatly admired) is good for.

⁵ See Vol. V. Letter XX.

⁶ Ibid. See Letter XXI.

O my dear, were I ever to marry, and to be the mother of a CLARISSA, [Clarissa must be the name, if promisingly lovely,] how often would my heart ache for the dear creature, as she grew up, when I reflected that a prudence and discretion, unexampled in woman, had not, in you, been a sufficient protection to that beauty, which had drawn after it as many admirers as beholders!—How little should I regret the attacks of that cruel distemper, as it is called, which frequently makes the greatest ravages in the finest faces!

SAT. AFTERNOON.

I have just parted with Mrs. Townsend.⁷ I thought you had once seen her with me; but she says she never had the honour to be personally known to you. She has a manlike spirit. She knows the world. And her two brothers being in town, she is sure she can engage them in so good a cause, and (if there should be occasion) both their ships' crews, in your service.

Give your consent, my dear; and the horrid villain shall be repaid with broken bones, at least, for all his vileness!

The misfortune is, Mrs. Townsend cannot be with you till Thursday next, or Wednesday, at soonest: Are you sure you can be safe where you are till then? I think you are too near London; and perhaps you had better be in it. If you remove, let me, the very moment, know whither.

How my heart is torn, to think of the necessity so dear a creature is driven to of hiding herself! Devilish fellow! He must have been sportive and wanton in his inventions—yet that cruel, that savage sportiveness has saved you from the sudden violence to which he has had recourse in the violation of others, of names and families not contemptible. For such the villain always gloried to spread his snares.

The vileness of this specious monster has done more, than any other consideration could do, to bring Mr. Hickman into credit with me. Mr. Hickman alone knows (from me) of your flight, and the reason of it. Had I not given him the reason, he might have thought still worse of the vile attempt. I communicated it to him by showing him your letter from Hampstead. When he had read it, [and he trembled and reddened, as he read,] he threw himself at my feet, and besought me to permit him to attend you, and to give you the protection of his house. The good-natured man had tears in his eyes, and was repeatedly earnest on this subject; proposing to take his chariot-and-four, or a set, and in person, in the face of all the world, give himself the glory of protecting such an oppressed innocent.

I could not but be pleased with him. And I let him know that I was. I hardly expected so much spirit from him. But a man's passiveness to a beloved object of our sex may not, perhaps, argue want of courage on proper occasions.

I thought I ought, in return, to have some consideration for his safety, as such an open step would draw upon him the vengeance of the most villanous enterpriser in the world, who has always a gang of fellows, such as himself, at his call, ready to support one another in the vilest outrages. But yet, as Mr. Hickman might have strengthened his hands by legal recourses, I should not have stood upon it, had I not known your delicacy, [since such a step must have made a great noise, and given occasion for scandal, as if some advantage had been gained over you,] and were there not the greatest probability that all might be more silently, and more effectually, managed, by Mrs. Townsend's means.

Mrs. Townsend will in person attend you—she hopes, on Wednesday—her brothers, and some of their people, will scatteringly, and as if they knew nothing of you, [so we have contrived,] see you safe not only to London, but to her house at Deptford.

She has a kinswoman, who will take your commands there, if she herself be obliged to leave you. And there you may stay, till the wretch's fury, on losing you, and his search, are over.

He will very soon, 'tis likely, enter upon some new villany, which may engross him: and it may be given out, that you are gone to lay claim to the protection of your cousin Morden at Florence.

Possibly, if he can be made to believe it, he will go over, in hopes to find you there.

⁷ For the account of Mrs. Townsend, &c. see Vol. IV. Letter XLII.

After a while, I can procure you a lodging in one of our neighbouring villages, where I may have the happiness to be your daily visiter. And if this Hickman be not silly and apish, and if my mother do not do unaccountable things, I may the sooner think of marrying, that I may, without controul, receive and entertain the darling of my heart.

Many, very many, happy days do I hope we shall yet see together; and as this is my hope, I expect that it will be your consolation.

As to your estate, since you are resolved not to litigate for it, we will be patient, either till Colonel Morden arrives, or till shame compels some people to be just.

Upon the whole, I cannot but think your prospects now much happier than they could have been, had you been actually married to such a man as this. I must therefore congratulate you upon your escape, not only from a horrid libertine, but from so vile a husband, as he must have made to any woman; but more especially to a person of your virtue and delicacy.

You hate him, heartily hate him, I hope, my dear—I am sure you do. It would be strange, if so much purity of life and manners were not to abhor what is so repugnant to itself.

In your letter before me, you mention one written to me for a feint.⁸ I have not received any such. Depend upon it, therefore, that he must have it. And if he has, it is a wonder that he did not likewise get my long one of the 7th. Heaven be praised that he did not; and that it came safe to your hands!

I send this by a young fellow, whose father is one of our tenants, with command to deliver it to no other hands but your's. He is to return directly, if you give him any letter. If not, he will proceed to London upon his own pleasures. He is a simple fellow; but very honest. So you may say anything to him. If you write not by him, I desire a line or two, as soon as possible.

My mother knows nothing of his going to you; nor yet of your abandoning the fellow. Forgive me! But he is not entitled to good manners.

I shall long to hear how you and Mrs. Townsend order matters. I wish she could have been with you sooner. But I have lost no time in engaging her, as you will suppose. I refer to her, what I have further to say and advise. So shall conclude with my prayers, that Heaven will direct and protect my dearest creature, and make your future days happy!

ANNA HOWE.

And now, Jack, I will suppose that thou hast read this cursed letter. Allow me to make a few observations upon some of its contents.

It is strange to Miss Howe, that having got her friend at such a shocking advantage, &c. And it is strange to me, too. If ever I have such another opportunity given to me, the cause of both our wonder, I believe, will cease.

So thou seest Tomlinson is further detected.—No such person as Mrs. Fretchville.—May lightning from Heaven—O Lord, O Lord, O Lord!—What a horrid vixen is this!—My gang, my remorseless gang, too, is brought in— and thou wilt plead for these girls again; wilt thou? heaven be praised, she says, that her friend is out of danger—Miss Howe should be sure of that, and that she herself is safe.—But for this termagant, (as I often said,) I must surely have made a better hand of it.—

New stories of me, Jack!—What can they be?—I have not found that my generosity to my Rose-bud ever did me due credit with this pair of friends. Very hard, Belford, that credits cannot be set against debits, and a balance struck in a rake's favour, as well as in that of every common man!—But he, from whom no good is expected, is not allowed the merit of the good he does.

I ought to have been a little more attentive to character than I have been. For, notwithstanding that the measures of right and wrong are said to be so manifest, let me tell thee, that character biases and runs away with all mankind. Let a man or woman once establish themselves in the world's opinion, and all that either of them do will be sanctified. Nay, in the very courts of justice, does not character acquit or condemn as often as facts, and sometimes even in spite of facts?—Yet, [impolitic that I

⁸ See Vol. V. Letters XXI. and XXII.

have been and am!] to be so careless of mine!—And now, I doubt, it is irretrievable.—But to leave moralizing.

Thou, Jack, knowest almost all my enterprises worth remembering. Can this particular story, which this girl hints at, be that of Lucy Villars? —Or can she have heard of my intrigue with the pretty gipsy, who met me in Norwood, and of the trap I caught her cruel husband in, [a fellow as gloomy and tyrannical as old Harlowe,] when he pursued a wife, who would not have deserved ill of him, if he had deserved well of her!—But he was not quite drowned. The man is alive at this day, and Miss Howe mentions the story as a very shocking one. Besides, both these are a twelve-month old, or more.

But evil fame and scandal are always new. When the offender has forgot a vile fact, it is often told to one and to another, who, having never heard of it before, trumpet it about as a novelty to others. But well said the honest corregidor at Madrid, [a saying with which I encroached Lord M.'s collection,]—Good actions are remembered but for a day: bad ones for many years after the life of the guilty. Such is the relish that the world has for scandal. In other words, such is the desire which every one has to exculpate himself by blackening his neighbour. You and I, Belford, have been very kind to the world, in furnishing it with opportunities to gratify its devil.

[Miss Howe will abandon her own better prospects, and share fortunes with her, were she to go abroad.]—Charming romancer!—I must set about this girl, Jack. I have always had hopes of a woman whose passions carry her to such altitudes.—Had I attacked Miss Howe first, her passions, (inflamed and guided as I could have managed them,) would have brought her into my lure in a fortnight.

But thinkest thou, [and yet I think thou dost,] that there is any thing in these high flights among the sex?—Verily, Jack, these vehement friendships are nothing but chaff and stubble, liable to be blown away by the very wind that raises them. Apes, mere apes of us! they think the word friendship has a pretty sound with it; and it is much talked of—a fashionable word. And so, truly, a single woman, who thinks she has a soul, and knows that she wants something, would be thought to have found a fellow-soul for it in her own sex. But I repeat, that the word is a mere word, the thing a mere name with them; a cork-bottomed shuttle-cock, which they are fond of striking to and fro, to make one another glow in the frosty weather of a single-state; but which, when a man comes in between the pretended inseparables, is given up, like their music and other maidenly amusements; which, nevertheless, may be necessary to keep the pretty rogues out of active mischief. They then, in short, having caught the fish, lay aside the net.⁹

Thou hast a mind, perhaps, to make an exception for these two ladies.— With all my heart. My Clarissa has, if woman has, a soul capable of friendship. Her flame is bright and steady. But Miss Howe's, were it not kept up by her mother's opposition, is too vehement to endure. How often have I known opposition not only cement friendship, but create love? I doubt not but poor Hickman would fare the better with this vixen, if her mother were as heartily against him, as she is for him.

Thus much, indeed, as to these two ladies, I will grant thee, that the active spirit of the one, and the meek disposition of the other, may make their friendship more durable than it would otherwise be; for this is certain, that in every friendship, whether male or female, there must be a man and a woman spirit, (that is to say, one of them must be a forbearing one,) to make it permanent.

But this I pronounce, as a truth, which all experience confirms, that friendship between women never holds to the sacrifice of capital gratifications, or to the endangering of life, limb, or estate, as it often does in our nobler sex.

Well, but next comes an indictment against poor beauty! What has beauty done that Miss Howe should be offended at it?—Miss Howe, Jack, is a charming girl. She has no reason to quarrel with

⁹ He alludes here to the story of a pope, who, (once a poor fisherman,) through every preferment he rose to, even to that of the cardinalate, hung up in view of all his guests his net, as a token of humility. But, when he arrived at the pontificate, he took it down, saying, that there was no need of the net, when he had caught the fish.

beauty!—Didst ever see her?—Too much fire and spirit in her eye, indeed, for a girl!—But that's no fault with a man that can lower that fire and spirit at pleasure; and I know I am the man that can.

For my own part, when I was first introduced to this lady, which was by my goddess when she herself was a visiter at Mrs. Howe's, I had not been half an hour with her, but I even hungered and thirsted after a romping 'bout with the lively rogue; and, in the second or third visit, was more deterred by the delicacy of her friend, than by what I apprehended from her own. This charming creature's presence, thought I, awes us both. And I wished her absence, though any other woman were present, that I might try the differences in Miss Howe's behaviour before her friend's face, or behind her back.

Delicate women make delicate women, as well as decent men. With all Miss Howe's fire and spirit, it was easy to see, by her very eye, that she watched for lessons and feared reproof from the penetrating eye of her milder dispositioned friend;¹⁰ and yet it was as easy to observe, in the candour and sweet manners of the other, that the fear which Miss Howe stood in of her, was more owing to her own generous apprehension that she fell short of her excellencies, than to Miss Harlowe's consciousness of excellence over her. I have often since I came at Miss Howe's letters, revolved this just and fine praise contained in one of them:¹¹ 'Every one saw that the preference they gave you to themselves exalted you not into any visible triumph over them; for you had always something to say, on every point you carried, that raised the yielding heart, and left every one pleased and satisfied with themselves, though they carried not off the palm.'

As I propose, in a more advanced life, to endeavour to atone for my useful freedoms with individuals of the sex, by giving cautions and instructions to the whole, I have made a memorandum to enlarge upon this doctrine;—to wit, that it is full as necessary to direct daughters in the choice of their female companions, as it is to guard them against the designs of men.

I say not this, however, to the disparagement of Miss Howe. She has from pride, what her friend has from principle. [The Lord help the sex, if they had not pride!] But yet I am confident, that Miss Howe is indebted to the conversation and correspondence of Miss Harlowe for her highest improvements. But, both these ladies out of the question, I make no scruple to aver, [and I, Jack, should know something of the matter,] that there have been more girls ruined, at least prepared for ruin, by their own sex, (taking in servants, as well as companions,) than directly by the attempts and delusions of men.

But it is time enough when I am old and joyless, to enlarge upon this topic.

As to the comparison between the two ladies, I will expatiate more on that subject, (for I like it,) when I have had them both. Which this letter of the vixen girl's, I hope thou wilt allow, warrants me to try for.

I return to the consideration of a few more of its contents, to justify my vengeance so nearly now in view.

As to Mrs. Townsend,—her manlike spirit—her two brothers—and the ships' crews—I say nothing but this to the insolent threatening—Let 'em come!—But as to her sordid menace—To repay the horrid villain, as she calls me, for all my vileness by **BROKEN BONES!**—Broken bones, Belford! — Who can bear this porterly threatening!—Broken bones, Jack!—D—n the little vulgar!—Give me a name for her—but I banish all furious resentment. If I get these two girls into my power, Heaven forbid that I should be a second Phalaris, who turned his bull upon the artist!—No bones of their's will I break—They shall come off with me upon much lighter terms!—

But these fellows are smugglers, it seems. And am not I a smuggler too? —I am—and have not the least doubt but I shall have secured my goods before Thursday, or Wednesday either.

¹⁰ Miss Howe, in Vol. III. Letter XIX. says, That she was always more afraid of Clarissa than of her mother; and, in Vol. III. Letter XLIV. That she fears her almost as much as she loves her; and in many other places, in her letters, verifies this observation of Lovelace.

¹¹ See Vol. IV. Letter XXXI.

But did I want a plot, what a charming new one does this letter of Miss Howe strike me out! I am almost sorry, that I have fixed upon one.—For here, how easy would it be for me to assemble a crew of swabbers, and to create a Mrs. Townsend (whose person, thou seest, my beloved knows not) to come on Tuesday, at Miss Howe's repeated solicitations, in order to carry my beloved to a warehouse of my own providing?

This, however, is my triumphant hope, that at the very time that these ragamuffins will be at Hampstead (looking for us) my dear Miss Harlowe and I [so the Fates I imagine have ordained] shall be fast asleep in each other's arms in town.—Lie still, villain, till the time comes.— My heart, Jack! my heart!—It is always thumping away on the remotest prospects of this nature.

But it seems that the vileness of this specious monster [meaning me, Jack!] has brought Hickman into credit with her. So I have done some good! But to whom I cannot tell: for this poor fellow, should I permit him to have this termagant, will be punished, as many times we all are, by the enjoyment of his own wishes—nor can she be happy, as I take it, with him, were he to govern himself by her will, and have none of his own; since never was there a directing wife who knew where to stop: power makes such a one wanton—she despises the man she can govern. Like Alexander, who wept, that he had no more worlds to conquer, she will be looking out for new exercises for her power, till she grow uneasy to herself, a discredit to her husband, and a plague to all about her.

But this honest fellow, it seems, with tears in his eyes, and with humble prostration, besought the vixen to permit him to set out in his chariot-and-four, in order to give himself the glory of protecting such an oppressed innocent, in the face of the whole world. Nay, he reddened, it seems: and trembled too! as he read the fair complainant's letter.—How valiant is all this!—Women love brave men; and no wonder that his tears, his trembling, and his prostration, gave him high reputation with the meek Miss Howe.

But dost think, Jack, that I in the like case (and equally affected with the distress) should have acted thus? Dost think, that I should not first have rescued the lady, and then, if needful, have asked excuse for it, the lady in my hand?—Wouldst not thou have done thus, as well as I?

But, 'tis best as it is. Honest Hickman may now sleep in a whole skin. And yet that is more perhaps than he would have done (the lady's deliverance unattempted) had I come at this requested permission of his any other way than by a letter that it must not be known that I have intercepted.

Miss Howe thinks I may be diverted from pursuing my charmer, by some new-started villany. Villany is a word that she is extremely fond of. But I can tell her, that it is impossible I should, till the end of this villany be obtained. Difficulty is a stimulus with such a spirit as mine. I thought Miss Howe knew me better. Were she to offer herself, person for person, in the romancing zeal of her friendship, to save her friend, it should not do, while the dear creature is on this side the moon.

She thanks Heaven, that her friend has received her letter of the 7th. We are all glad of it. She ought to thank me too. But I will not at present claim her thanks.

But when she rejoices that the letter went safe, does she not, in effect, call out for vengeance, and expect it!—All in good time, Miss Howe. When settest thou out for the Isle of Wight, love?

I will close at this time with desiring thee to make a list of the virulent terms with which the enclosed letter abounds: and then, if thou supposest that I have made such another, and have added to it all the flowers of the same blow, in the former letters of the same saucy creature, and those in that of Miss Harlowe, which she left for me on her elopement, thou wilt certainly think, that I have provocations sufficient to justify me in all that I shall do to either.

Return the enclosed the moment thou hast perused it.

LETTER VIII

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ.

SUNDAY NIGHT—MONDAY MORNING

I went down with revenge in my heart, the contents of Miss Howe's letter almost engrossing me, the moment that Miss Harlowe and Mrs. Moore (accompanied by Miss Rawlins) came in: but in my countenance all the gentle, the placid, the serene, that the glass could teach; and in my behaviour all the polite, that such an unpolite creature, as she has often told me I am, could put on.

Miss Rawlins was sent for home almost as soon as she came in, to entertain an unexpected visiter; to her great regret, as well as to the disappointment of my fair-one, as I could perceive from the looks of both: for they had agreed, it seems, if I went to town, as I said I intended to do, to take a walk upon the Heath, at least in Mrs. Moore's garden; and who knows, what might have been the issue, had the spirit of curiosity in the one met with the spirit of communication in the other?

Miss Rawlins promised to return, if possible: but sent to excuse herself: her visiter intending to stay with her all night.

I rejoiced in my heart at her message; and, after much supplication, obtained the favour of my beloved's company for another walk in the garden, having, as I told her, abundance of things to say, to propose, and to be informed of, in order ultimately to govern myself in my future steps.

She had vouchsafed, I should have told thee, with eyes turned from me, and in a half-aside attitude, to sip two dishes of tea in my company—Dear soul!—How anger unpolishes the most polite! for I never saw Miss Harlowe behave so awkwardly. I imagined she knew not how to be awkward.

When we were in the garden, I poured my whole soul into her attentive ear; and besought her returning favour.

She told me, that she had formed her scheme for her future life: that, vile as the treatment was which she had received from me, that was not all the reason she had for rejecting my suit: but that, on the maturest deliberation, she was convinced that she could neither be happy with me, nor make me happy; and she enjoined me, for both our sakes, to think no more of her.

The Captain, I told her, was rid down post, in a manner, to forward my wishes with her uncle.—Lady Betty and Miss Montague were undoubtedly arrived in town by this time. I would set out early in the morning to attend them. They adored her. They longed to see her. They would see her.—They would not be denied her company in Oxfordshire. Whither could she better go, to be free from her brother's insults?—Whither, to be absolutely made unapprehensive of any body else?—Might I have any hopes of her returning favour, if Miss Howe could be prevailed upon to intercede for me?

Miss Howe prevailed upon to intercede for you! repeated she, with a scornful bridle, but a very pretty one.—And there she stopt.

I repeated the concern it would be to me to be under a necessity of mentioning the misunderstanding to Lady Betty and my cousin, as a misunderstanding still to be made up; and as if I were of very little consequence to a dear creature who was of so much to me; urging, that these circumstances would extremely lower me not only in my own opinion, but in that of my relations.

But still she referred to Miss Howe's next letter; and all the concession I could bring her to in this whole conference, was, that she would wait the arrival and visit of the two ladies, if they came in a day or two, or before she received the expected letter from Miss Howe.

Thank Heaven for this! thought I. And now may I go to town with hopes at my return to find thee, dearest, where I shall leave thee.

But yet, as she may find reasons to change her mind in my absence, I shall not entirely trust to this. My fellow, therefore, who is in the house, and who, by Mrs. Bevis's kind intelligence, will know every step she can take, shall have Andrew and a horse ready, to give me immediate notice

of her motions; and moreover, go whither she will, he shall be one of her retinue, though unknown to herself, if possible.

This was all I could make of the fair inexorable. Should I be glad of it, or sorry for it?—

Glad I believe: and yet my pride is confoundedly abated, to think that I had so little hold in the affections of this daughter of the Harlowes.

Don't tell me that virtue and principle are her guides on this occasion! —'Tis pride, a greater pride than my own, that governs her. Love, she has none, thou seest; nor ever had; at least not in a superior degree. Love, that deserves the name, never was under the dominion of prudence, or of any reasoning power. She cannot bear to be thought a woman, I warrant! And if, in the last attempt, I find her not one, what will she be the worse for the trial?—No one is to blame for suffering an evil he cannot shun or avoid.

Were a general to be overpowered, and robbed by a highwayman, would he be less fit for the command of an army on that account?—If indeed the general, pretending great valour, and having boasted that he never would be robbed, were to make but faint resistance when he was brought to the test, and to yield his purse when he was master of his own sword, then indeed will the highwayman who robs him be thought the braver man.

But from these last conferences am I furnished with one argument in defence of my favourite purpose, which I never yet pleaded.

O Jack! what a difficulty must a man be allowed to have to conquer a predominant passion, be it what it will, when the gratifying of it is in his power, however wrong he knows it to be to resolve to gratify it! Reflect upon this; and then wilt thou be able to account for, if not to excuse, a projected crime, which has habit to plead for it, in a breast as stormy as uncontrollable!

This that follows is my new argument—

Should she fail in the trial; should I succeed; and should she refuse to go on with me; and even resolve not to marry me (of which I can have no notion); and should she disdain to be obliged to me for the handsome provision I should be proud to make for her, even to the half of my estate; yet cannot she be altogether unhappy—Is she not entitled to an independent fortune? Will not Col. Morden, as her trustee, put her in possession of it? And did she not in our former conference point out the way of life, that she always preferred to the married life—to wit, 'To take her good Norton for her directress and guide, and to live upon her own estate in the manner her grandfather desired she should live?'¹²

It is moreover to be considered that she cannot, according to her own notions, recover above one half of her fame, were we not to intermarry; so much does she think she has suffered by her going off with me. And will she not be always repining and mourning for the loss of the other half?—And if she must live a life of such uneasiness and regret for half, may she not as well repine and mourn for the whole?

Nor, let me tell thee, will her own scheme or penitence, in this case, be half so perfect, if she do not fall, as if she does: for what a foolish penitent will she make, who has nothing to repent of!—She piques herself, thou knowest, and makes it matter of reproach to me, that she went not off with me by her own consent; but was tricked out of herself.

Nor upbraid thou me upon the meditated breach of vows so repeatedly made. She will not, thou seest, permit me to fulfil them. And if she would, this I have to say, that, at the time I made the most solemn of them, I was fully determined to keep them. But what prince thinks himself obliged any longer to observe the articles of treaties, the most sacredly sworn to, than suits with his interest or inclination; although the consequence of the infraction must be, as he knows, the destruction of thousands.

Is not this then the result of all, that Miss Clarissa Harlowe, if it be not her own fault, may be as virtuous after she has lost her honour, as it is called, as she was before? She may be a more eminent

¹² See Letter III. of this volume.

example to her sex; and if she yield (a little yield) in the trial, may be a completer penitent. Nor can she, but by her own wilfulness, be reduced to low fortunes.

And thus may her old nurse and she; an old coachman; and a pair of old coach-horses; and two or three old maid-servants, and perhaps a very old footman or two, (for every thing will be old and penitential about her,) live very comfortably together; reading old sermons, and old prayer-books; and relieving old men and old women; and giving old lessons, and old warnings, upon new subjects, as well as old ones, to the young ladies of her neighbourhood; and so pass on to a good old age, doing a great deal of good both by precept and example in her generation.

And is a woman who can live thus prettily without controul; who ever did prefer, and who still prefers, the single to the married life; and who will be enabled to do every thing that the plan she had formed will direct her to do; to be said to be ruined, undone, and such sort of stuff?—I have no patience with the pretty fools, who use those strong words, to describe a transitory evil; an evil which a mere church-form makes none?

At this rate of romancing, how many flourishing ruins dost thou, as well as I, know? Let us but look about us, and we shall see some of the haughtiest and most censorious spirits among our acquaintance of that sex now passing for chaste wives, of whom strange stories might be told; and others, whose husbands' hearts have been made to ache for their gaieties, both before and after marriage; and yet know not half so much of them, as some of us honest fellows could tell them.

But, having thus satisfied myself in relation to the worst that can happen to this charming creature; and that it will be her own fault, if she be unhappy; I have not at all reflected upon what is likely to be my own lot.

This has always been my notion, though Miss Howe grudges us rakes the best of the sex, and says, that the worst is too good for us, that the wife of a libertine ought to be pure, spotless, uncontaminated. To what purpose has such a one lived a free life, but to know the world, and to make his advantages of it!—And, to be very serious, it would be a misfortune to the public for two persons, heads of a family, to be both bad; since, between two such, a race of varlets might be propagated (Lovelaces and Belfords, if thou wilt) who might do great mischief in the world.

Thou seest at bottom that I am not an abandoned fellow; and that there is a mixture of gravity in me. This, as I grow older, may increase; and when my active capacity begins to abate, I may sit down with the preacher, and resolve all my past life into vanity and vexation of spirit.

This is certain, that I shall never find a woman so well suited to my taste as Miss Clarissa Harlowe. I only wish that I may have such a lady as her to comfort and adorn my setting sun. I have often thought it very unhappy for us both, that so excellent a creature sprang up a little too late for my setting out, and a little too early in my progress, before I can think of returning. And yet, as I have picked up the sweet traveller in my way, I cannot help wishing that she would bear me company in the rest of my journey, although she were stepping out of her own path to oblige me. And then, perhaps, we could put up in the evening at the same inn; and be very happy in each other's conversation; recounting the difficulties and dangers we had passed in our way to it.

I imagine that thou wilt be apt to suspect that some passages in this letter were written in town. Why, Jack, I cannot but say that the Westminster air is a little grosser than that at Hampstead; and the conversation of Mrs. Sinclair and the nymphs less innocent than Mrs. Moore's and Miss Rawlins's. And I think in my heart I can say and write those things at one place which I cannot at the other, nor indeed any where else.

I came to town about seven this morning—all necessary directions and precautions remembered to be given.

I besought the favour of an audience before I set out. I was desirous to see which of her lovely faces she was pleased to put on, after another night had passed. But she was resolved, I found, to leave our quarrel open. She would not give me an opportunity so much as to entreat her again to close it, before the arrival of Lady Betty and my cousin.

I had notice from my proctor, by a few lines brought by a man and horse, just before I set out, that all difficulties had been for two days past surmounted; and that I might have the license for fetching.

I sent up the letter to my beloved, by Mrs. Bevis, with a repeated request for admittance to her presence upon it; but neither did this stand me in stead. I suppose she thought it would be allowing of the consequences that were naturally to be expected to follow the obtaining of this instrument, if she had consented to see me on the contents of this letter, having refused me that honour before I sent it up to her.— No surprising her.—No advantage to be taken of her inattention to the nicest circumstances.

And now, Belford, I set out upon business.

LETTER IX

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. MONDAY, JUNE 12

Durst ever see a license, Jack?

'Edmund, by divine permission, Lord Bishop of London, to our well-beloved in Christ, Robert Lovelace, [your servant, my good Lord! What have I done to merit so much goodness, who never saw your Lordship in my life?] of the parish of St. Martin's in the Fields, bachelor, and Clarissa Harlowe, of the same parish, spinster, sendeth greeting.—WHEREAS ye are, as is alleged, determined to enter into the holy state of Matrimony [this is only alleged, thou observest] by and with the consent of, &c. &c. &c. and are very desirous of obtaining your marriage to be solemnized in the face of the church: We are willing that your honest desires [honest desires, Jack!] may more speedily have their due effect: and therefore, that ye may be able to procure such Marriage to be freely and lawfully solemnized in the parish church of St. Martin's in the Fields, or St. Giles's in the Fields, in the county of Middlesex, by the Rector, Vicar, or Curate thereof, at any time of the year, [at ANY time of the year, Jack!] without publication of bans: Provided, that by reason of any pre-contract, [I verily think that I have had three or four pre-contracts in my time; but the good girls have not claimed upon them of a long while,] consanguinity, affinity, or any other lawful cause whatsoever, there be no lawful impediment on this behalf; and that there be not at this time any action, suit, plaint, quarrel, or demand, moved or depending before any judge ecclesiastical or temporal, for or concerning any marriage contracted by or with either of you; and that the said marriage be openly solemnized in the church above-mentioned, between the hours of eight and twelve in the forenoon; and without prejudice to the minister of the place where the said woman is a parishioner: We do hereby, for good causes, [it cost me—let me see, Jack—what did it cost me?] give and grant our License, as well to you as to the parties contracting, as to the Rector, Vicar, or Curate of the said church, where the said marriage is intended to be solemnized, to solemnize the same, in manner and form above specified, according to the rites and ceremonies prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer in that behalf published by authority of Parliament. Provided always, that if hereafter any fraud shall appear to have been committed, at the time of granting this License, either by false suggestions, or concealment of the truth, [now this, Belford, is a little hard upon us; for I cannot say that every one of our suggestions is literally true:—so, in good conscience, I ought not to marry under this License;] the License shall be void to all intents and purposes, as if the same had not been granted. And in that case we do inhibit all ministers whatsoever, if any thing of the premises shall come to their knowledge, from proceeding to the celebration of the said Marriage; without first consulting Us, or our Vicar-general. Given,' &c.

Then follow the register's name, and a large pendent seal, with these words round it—SEAL OF THE VICAR-GENERAL AND OFFICIAL PRINCIPAL OF THE DIOCESE OF LONDON.

A good whimsical instrument, take it altogether! But what, thinkest thou, are the arms to this matrimonial harbinger?—Why, in the first place, two crossed swords; to show that marriage is a state of offence as well as defence; three lions; to denote that those who enter into the state ought to have a triple proportion of courage. And [couldst thou have imagined that these priestly fellows, in so solemn a case, would cut their jokes upon poor souls who came to have their honest desires put in a way to be gratified;] there are three crooked horns, smartly top-knotted with ribands; which being the ladies' wear, seem to indicate that they may very probably adorn, as well as bestow, the bull's feather.

To describe it according to heraldry art, if I am not mistaken—gules, two swords, saltire-wise, or; second coat, a chevron sable between three bugle-horns, OR [so it ought to be]: on a chief of the second, three lions rampant of the first—but the devil take them for their hieroglyphics, should I say, if I were determined in good earnest to marry!

And determined to marry I would be, were it not for this consideration, that once married, and I am married for life.

That's the plague of it!—Could a man do as the birds do, change every Valentine's day, [a natural appointment! for birds have not the sense, forsooth, to fetter themselves, as we wiseacre men take great and solemn pains to do,] there would be nothing at all in it. And what a glorious time would the lawyers have, on the one hand, with their noverini universi's, and suits commenceable on restitution of goods and chattels; and the parsons, on the other, with their indulgencies [renewable annually, as other licenses] to the honest desires of their clients?

Then, were a stated mullet, according to rank or fortune, to be paid on every change, towards the exigencies of the state [but none on renewals with the old lives, for the sake of encouraging constancy, especially among the minores] the change would be made sufficiently difficult, and the whole public would be the better for it; while those children, which the parents could not agree about maintaining, might be considered as the children of the public, and provided for like the children of the antient Spartans; who were (as ours would in this case be) a nation of heroes. How, Jack, could I have improved upon Lycurgus's institutions had I been a lawgiver!

Did I never show thee a scheme which I drew up on such a notion as this? —In which I demonstrated the conveniencies, and obviated the inconveniencies, of changing the present mode to this? I believe I never did.

I remember I proved to a demonstration, that such a change would be a mean of annihilating, absolutely annihilating, four or five very atrocious and capital sins.—Rapes, vulgarly so called; adultery, and fornication; nor would polygamy be panted after. Frequently would it prevent murders and duelling; hardly any such thing as jealousy (the cause of shocking violences) would be heard of: and hypocrisy between man and wife be banished the bosoms of each. Nor, probably, would the reproach of barrenness rest, as it now too often does, where it is least deserved.—Nor would there possibly be such a person as a barren woman.

Moreover, what a multitude of domestic quarrels would be avoided, where such a scheme carried into execution? Since both sexes would bear with each other, in the view that they could help themselves in a few months.

And then what a charming subject for conversation would be the gallant and generous last partings between man and wife! Each, perhaps, a new mate in eye, and rejoicing secretly in the manumission, could afford to be complaisantly sorrowful in appearance. 'He presented her with this jewel, it will be said by the reporter, for example sake: she him with that. How he wept! How she sobb'd! How they looked after one another!' Yet, that's the jest of it, neither of them wishing to stand another twelvemonth's trial.

And if giddy fellows, or giddy girls, misbehave in a first marriage, whether from noviceship, having expected to find more in the matter than can be found; or from perverseness on her part, or positiveness on his, each being mistaken in the other [a mighty difference, Jack, in the same person, an inmate or a visiter]; what a fine opportunity will each have, by this scheme, of recovering a lost character, and of setting all right in the next adventure?

And, O Jack! with what joy, with what rapture, would the changelings (or changeables, if thou like that word better) number the weeks, the days, the hours, as the annual obligation approached to its desirable period!

As for the spleen or vapours, no such malady would be known or heard of. The physical tribe would, indeed, be the sufferers, and the only sufferers; since fresh health and fresh spirits, the consequences of sweet blood and sweet humours (the mind and body continually pleased with each other) would perpetually flow in; and the joys of expectation, the highest of all our joys, would invigorate and keep all alive.

But, that no body of men might suffer, the physicians, I thought, might turn parsons, as there would be a great demand for parsons. Besides, as they would be partakers in the general benefit, they must be sorry fellows indeed if they preferred themselves to the public.

Every one would be married a dozen times at least. Both men and women would be careful of their characters and polite in their behaviour, as well as delicate in their persons, and elegant in their dress, [a great matter each of these, let me tell thee, to keep passion alive,] either to induce a renewal with the old love, or to recommend themselves to a new. While the newspapers would be crowded with paragraphs; all the world their readers, as all the world would be concerned to see who and who's together—

'Yesterday, for instance, entered into the holy state of matrimony,' [we should all speak reverently of matrimony, then,] 'the right Honourable Robert Earl Lovelace' [I shall be an earl by that time,] 'with her Grace the Duchess Dowager of Fifty-manors; his Lordship's one-and-thirtieth wife.'—I shall then be contented, perhaps, to take up, as it is called, with a widow. But she must not have had more than one husband neither. Thou knowest that I am nice in these particulars.

I know, Jack, that thou for thy part, wilt approve of my scheme.

As Lord M. and I, between us, have three or four boroughs at command, I think I will get into parliament, in order to bring in a bill for this good purpose.

Neither will the house of parliament, nor the houses of convocation, have reason to object it. And all the courts, whether spiritual or sensual, civil or uncivil, will find their account in it when passed into a law.

By my soul, Jack, I should be apprehensive of a general insurrection, and that incited by the women, were such a bill to be thrown out.—For here is the excellency of the scheme: the women will have equal reason with the men to be pleased with it.

Dost think, that old prerogative Harlowe, for example, must not, if such a law were in being, have pulled in his horns?—So excellent a wife as he has, would never else have renewed with such a gloomy tyrant: who, as well as all other married tyrants, must have been upon good behaviour from year to year.

A termagant wife, if such a law were to pass, would be a phoenix.

The churches would be the only market-place for the fair sex; and domestic excellence the capital recommendation.

Nor would there be an old maid in Great Britain, and all its territories. For what an odd soul must she be who could not have her twelvemonth's trial?

In short, a total alteration for the better, in the morals and way of life in both sexes, must, in a very few years, be the consequence of such a salutary law.

Who would have expected such a one from me! I wish the devil owe me not a spite for it.

There would not the distinction be very pretty, Jack? as in flowers;—such a gentleman, or such a lady, is an ANNUAL—such a one is a PERENNIAL.

One difficulty, however, as I remember, occurred to me, upon the probability that a wife might be enceinte, as the lawyers call it. But thus I obviated it—

That no man should be allowed to marry another woman without his then wife's consent, till she were brought-to-bed, and he had defrayed all incident charges; and till it was agreed upon between them whether the child should be his, her's, or the public's. The women in this case to have what I call the coercive option; for I would not have it in the man's power to be a dog neither.

And, indeed, I gave the turn of the scale in every part of my scheme in the women's favour: for dearly do I love the sweet rogues.

How infinitely more preferable this my scheme to the polygamy one of the old patriarchs; who had wives and concubines without number!—I believe David and Solomon had their hundreds at a time. Had they not, Jack?

Let me add, that annual parliaments, and annual marriages, are the projects next my heart. How could I expatiate upon the benefits that would arise from both!

LETTER X

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ

Well, but now my plots thicken; and my employment of writing to thee on this subject will soon come to a conclusion. For now, having got the license; and Mrs. Townsend with her tars, being to come to Hampstead next Wednesday or Thursday; and another letter possibly, or message from Miss Howe, to inquire how Miss Harlowe does, upon the rustic's report of her ill health, and to express her wonder that she has not heard from her in answer to her's on her escape; I must soon blow up the lady, or be blown up myself. And so I am preparing, with Lady Betty and my cousin Montague, to wait upon my beloved with a coach-and-four, or a sett; for Lady Betty will not stir out with a pair for the world; though but for two or three miles. And this is a well-known part of her character.

But as to the arms and crest upon the coach and trappings?

Dost thou not know that a Blunt's must supply her, while her own is new lining and repairing? An opportunity she is willing to take now she is in town. Nothing of this kind can be done to her mind in the country. Liveries nearly Lady Betty's.

Thou hast seen Lady Betty Lawrance several times—hast thou not, Belford?

No, never in my life.

But thou hast—and lain with her too; or fame does thee more credit than thou deservest—Why, Jack, knowest thou not Lady Betty's other name?

Other name!—Has she two?

She has. And what thinkest thou of Lady Bab. Wallis?

O the devil!

Now thou hast it. Lady Barbara thou knowest, lifted up in circumstances, and by pride, never appears or produces herself, but on occasions special—to pass to men of quality or price, for a duchess, or countess, at least. She has always been admired for a grandeur in her air, that few women of quality can come up to; and never was supposed to be other than what she passed for; though often and often a paramour for lords.

And who, thinkest thou, is my cousin Montague?

Nay, how should I know?

How indeed! Why, my little Johanetta Golding, a lively, yet modest-looking girl, is my cousin Montague.

There, Belford, is an aunt!—There's a cousin!—Both have wit at will. Both are accustomed to ape quality.—Both are genteelly descended. Mistresses of themselves, and well educated—yet past pity.—True Spartan dames; ashamed of nothing but detection—always, therefore, upon their guard against that. And in their own conceit, when assuming top parts, the very quality they ape.

And how dost think I dress them out?—I'll tell thee.

Lady Betty in a rich gold tissue, adorned with jewels of high price.

My cousin Montague in a pale pink, standing on end with silver flowers of her own working. Charlotte as well as my beloved is admirable at her needle. Not quite so richly jewell'd out as Lady Betty; but ear-rings and solitaire very valuable, and infinitely becoming.

Johanetta, thou knowest, has a good complexion, a fine neck, and ears remarkably fine—so has Charlotte. She is nearly of Charlotte's stature too.

Laces both, the richest that could be procured.

Thou canst not imagine what a sum the loan of the jewels cost me, though but for three days.

This sweet girl will half ruin me. But seest thou not, by this time, that her reign is short!—It must be so. And Mrs. Sinclair has already prepared every thing for her reception once more.

Here come the ladies—attended by Susan Morrison, a tenant-farmer's daughter, as Lady Betty's woman; with her hands before her, and thoroughly instructed.

How dress advantages women!—especially those who have naturally a genteel air and turn, and have had education.

Hadst thou seen how they paraded it—Cousin, and Cousin, and Nephew, at every word; Lady Betty bridling and looking haughtily-condescending.—Charlotte galanting her fan, and swimming over the floor without touching it.

How I long to see my niece-elect! cries one—for they are told that we are not married; and are pleased that I have not put the slight upon them that they had apprehended from me.

How I long to see my dear cousin that is to be, the other!

Your La'ship, and your La'ship, and an awkward courtesy at every address —prim Susan Morrison.

Top your parts, ye villains!—You know how nicely I distinguish. There will be no passion in this case to blind the judgment, and to help on meditated delusion, as when you engage with titled sinners. My charmer is as cool and as distinguishing, though not quite so learned in her own sex, as I am. Your commonly-assumed dignity won't do for me now. Airs of superiority, as if born to rank.—But no over-do!—Doubting nothing. Let not your faces arraign your hearts.

Easy and unaffected!—Your very dresses will give you pride enough.

A little graver, Lady Betty.—More significance, less bridling in your dignity.

That's the air! Charmingly hit—Again—You have it.

Devil take you!—Less arrogance. You are got into airs of young quality. Be less sensible of your new condition. People born to dignity command respect without needing to require it.

Now for your part, Cousin Charlotte!—

Pretty well. But a little too frolicky that air.—Yet have I prepared my beloved to expect in you both great vivacity and quality-freedom.

Curse those eyes!—Those glancings will never do. A down-cast bashful turn, if you can command it. Look upon me. Suppose me now to be my beloved.

Devil take that leer. Too significantly arch!—Once I knew you the girl I would now have you to be.

Sprightly, but not confident, cousin Charlotte!—Be sure forget not to look down, or aside, when looked at. When eyes meet eyes, be your's the retreating ones. Your face will bear examination.

O Lord! Lord! that so young a creature can so soon forget the innocent appearance she first charmed by; and which I thought born with you all!—Five years to ruin what twenty had been building up! How natural the latter lesson! How difficult to regain the former!

A stranger, as I hope to be saved, to the principal arts of your sex!—Once more, what a devil has your heart to do in your eyes?

Have I not told you, that my beloved is a great observer of the eyes? She once quoted upon me a text,¹³ which showed me how she came by her knowledge—Dorcas's were found guilty of treason the first moment she saw her.

Once more, suppose me to be my charmer.—Now you are to encounter my examining eye, and my doubting heart—

That's my dear!

Study that air in the pier-glass!—

¹³ Eccles. xxvi. The whoredom of a woman may be known in her haughty looks and eye-lids. Watch over an impudent eye, and marvel not if it trespass against thee.

Charmingly!—Perfectly right!

Your honours, now, devils!—

Pretty well, Cousin Charlotte, for a young country lady! Till form yields to familiarity, you may courtesy low. You must not be supposed to have forgot your boarding-school airs.

But too low, too low Lady Betty, for your years and your quality. The common fault of your sex will be your danger: aiming to be young too long!—The devil's in you all, when you judge of yourselves by your wishes, and by your vanity! Fifty, in that case, is never more than fifteen.

Graceful ease, conscious dignity, like that of my charmer, Oh! how hard to hit!

Both together now—

Charming!—That's the air, Lady Betty!—That's the cue, Cousin Charlotte, suited to the character of each!—But, once more, be sure to have a guard upon your eyes.

Never fear, Nephew!—

Never fear, Cousin.

A dram of Barbadoes each—

And now we are gone—

LETTER XI

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. AT MRS. SINCLAIR'S, MONDAY AFTERNOON

All's right, as heart can wish!—In spite of all objection—in spite of a reluctance next to faintings—in spite of all foresight, vigilance, suspicion—once more is the charmer of my soul in her old lodgings!

Now throbs away every pulse! Now thump, thump, thumps my bounding heart for something! But I have not time for the particulars of our management.

My beloved is now directing some of her clothes to be packed up—never more to enter this house! Nor ever more will she, I dare say, when once again out of it!

Yet not so much as a condition of forgiveness!—The Harlowe-spirited fair-one will not deserve my mercy!—She will wait for Miss Howe's next letter; and then, if she find a difficulty in her new schemes, [Thank her for nothing,]—will—will what? Why even then will take time to consider, whether I am to be forgiven, or for ever rejected. An indifference that revives in my heart the remembrance of a thousand of the like nature.—And yet Lady Betty and Miss Montague, [a man would be tempted to think, Jack, that they wish her to provoke my vengeance,] declare, that I ought to be satisfied with such a proud suspension!

They are entirely attached to her. Whatever she says, is, must be, gospel! They are guarantees for her return to Hampstead this night. They are to go back with her. A supper bespoken by Lady Betty at Mrs. Moore's. All the vacant apartments there, by my permission, (for I had engaged them for a month certain,) to be filled with them and their attendants, for a week at least, or till they can prevail upon the dear perverse, as they hope they shall, to restore me to her favour, and to accompany Lady Betty to Oxfordshire.

The dear creature has thus far condescended—that she will write to Miss Howe and acquaint her with the present situation of things.

If she write, I shall see what she writes. But I believe she will have other employment soon.

Lady Betty is sure, she tells her, that she shall prevail upon her to forgive me; though she dares say, that I deserve not forgiveness. Lady Betty is too delicate to inquire strictly into the nature of my offence. But it must be an offence against herself, against Miss Montague, against the virtuous of the whole sex, or it could not be so highly resented. Yet she will not leave her till she forgive me, and till she see our nuptials privately celebrated. Mean time, as she approves of her uncle's expedient, she will address her as already my wife before strangers.

Stedman, her solicitor, may attend her for orders in relation to her chancery affair, at Hampstead. Not one hour they can be favoured with, will they lose from the company and conversation of so dear, so charming a new relation.

Hard then if she had not obliged them with her company in their coach-and-four, to and from their cousin Leeson's, who longed, (as they themselves had done,) to see a lady so justly celebrated.

'How will Lord M. be raptured when he sees her, and can salute her as his niece!

'How will Lady Sarah bless herself!—She will now think her loss of the dear daughter she mourns for happily supplied!"

Miss Montague dwells upon every word that falls from her lips. She perfectly adores her new cousin—'For her cousin she must be. And her cousin will she call her! She answers for equal admiration in her sister Patty.

'Ay, cry I, (whispering loud enough for her to hear,) how will my cousin Patty's dove's eyes glisten and run over, on the very first interview!— So gracious, so noble, so unaffected a dear creature!"

'What a happy family,' chorus we all, 'will our's be!'

These and such like congratulatory admirations every hour repeated. Her modesty hurt by the ecstatic praises:—'Her graces are too natural to herself for her to be proud of them: but she must be content to be punished for excellencies that cast a shade upon the most excellent!'

In short, we are here, as at Hampstead, all joy and rapture—all of us except my beloved; in whose sweet face, [her almost fainting reluctance to re-enter these doors not overcome,] reigns a kind of anxious serenity! —But how will even that be changed in a few hours!

Methinks I begin to pity the half-apprehensive beauty!—But avaunt, thou unseasonably-intruding pity! Thou hast more than once already well nigh undone me! And, adieu, reflection! Begone, consideration! and commiseration! I dismiss ye all, for at least a week to come!—But remembered her broken word! Her flight, when my fond soul was meditating mercy to her!—Be remembered her treatment of me in her letter on her escape to Hampstead! Her Hampstead virulence! What is it she ought not to expect from an unchained Beelzebub, and a plotting villain?

Be her preference of the single life to me also remembered!—That she despises me!—That she even refuses to be my WIFE!—A proud Lovelace to be denied a wife!—To be more proudly rejected by a daughter of the Harlowes!—The ladies of my own family, [she thinks them the ladies of my family,] supplicating in vain for her returning favour to their despised kinsman, and taking laws from her still prouder punctilio!

Be the execrations of her vixen friend likewise remembered, poured out upon me from her representations, and thereby made her own execrations!

Be remembered still more particularly the Townsend plot, set on foot between them, and now, in a day or two, ready to break out; and the sordid threatening thrown out against me by that little fury!

Is not this the crisis for which I have been long waiting? Shall Tomlinson, shall these women be engaged; shall so many engines be set at work, at an immense expense, with infinite contrivance; and all to no purpose?

Is not this the hour of her trial—and in her, of the trial of the virtue of her whole sex, so long premeditated, so long threatened?—Whether her frost be frost indeed? Whether her virtue be principle? Whether, if once subdued, she will not be always subdued? And will she not want the crown of her glory, the proof of her till now all-surpassing excellence, if I stop short of the ultimate trial?

Now is the end of purposes long over-awed, often suspended, at hand. And need I go throw the sins of her cursed family into the too-weighty scale?

[Abhorred be force!—be the thoughts of force!—There's no triumph over the will in force!] This I know I have said.¹⁴ But would I not have avoided it, if I could? Have I not tried every other method? And have I any other resource left me? Can she resent the last outrage more than she has resented a fainter effort?—And if her resentments run ever so high, cannot I repair by matrimony?—She will not refuse me, I know, Jack: the haughty beauty will not refuse me, when her pride of being corporally inviolate is brought down; when she can tell no tales, but when, (be her resistance what it will,) even her own sex will suspect a yielding in resistance; and when that modesty, which may fill her bosom with resentment, will lock up her speech.

But how know I, that I have not made my own difficulties? Is she not a woman! What redress lies for a perpetuated evil? Must she not live? Her piety will secure her life.—And will not time be my friend! What, in a word, will be her behaviour afterwards?—She cannot fly me!—She must forgive me—and as I have often said, once forgiven, will be for ever forgiven.

Why then should this enervating pity unsteel my foolish heart?

It shall not. All these things will I remember; and think of nothing else, in order to keep up a resolution, which the women about me will have it I shall be still unable to hold.

¹⁴ Vol. IV. Letter XLVIII.

I'll teach the dear, charming creature to emulate me in contrivance; I'll teach her to weave webs and plots against her conqueror! I'll show her, that in her smuggling schemes she is but a spider compared to me, and that she has all this time been spinning only a cobweb!

What shall we do now! we are immersed in the depth of grief and apprehension! How ill do women bear disappointment!—Set upon going to Hampstead, and upon quitting for ever a house she re-entered with infinite reluctance; what things she intended to take with her ready packed up, herself on tiptoe to be gone, and I prepared to attend her thither; she begins to be afraid that she shall not go this night; and in grief and despair has flung herself into her old apartment; locked herself in; and through the key-hole Dorcas sees her on her knees, praying, I suppose, for a safe deliverance.

And from what? and wherefore these agonizing apprehensions?

Why, here, this unkind Lady Betty, with the dear creature's knowledge, though to her concern, and this mad-headed cousin Montague without it, while she was employed in directing her package, have hurried away in the coach to their own lodgings, [only, indeed, to put up some night-clothes, and so forth, in order to attend their sweet cousin to Hampstead;] and, no less to my surprise than her's, are not yet returned.

I have sent to know the meaning of it.

In a great hurry of spirits, she would have had me to go myself. Hardly any pacifying her! The girl, God bless her! is wild with her own idle apprehensions! What is she afraid of?

I curse them both for their delay. My tardy villain, how he stays! Devil fetch them! let them send their coach, and we'll go without them. In her hearing I bid the fellow tell them so. Perhaps he stays to bring the coach, if any thing happens to hinder the ladies from attending my beloved this night.

Devil take them, again say I! They promised too they would not stay, because it was but two nights ago that a chariot was robbed at the foot of Hampstead-hill, which alarmed my fair-one when told of it!

Oh! here's Lady Betty's servant, with a billet.

TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. MONDAY NIGHT.

Excuse us, my dear Nephew, I beseech you, to my dearest kinswoman. One night cannot break squares: for here Miss Montague has been taken violently ill with three fainting fits, one after another. The hurry of her joy, I believe, to find your dear lady so much surpass all expectations, [never did family love, you know, reign so strong as among us,] and the too eager desire she had to attend her, have occasioned it! For she has but weak spirits, poor girl! well as she looks.

If she be better, we will certainly go with you tomorrow morning, after we have breakfasted with her, at your lodgings. But whether she be, or not, I will do myself the pleasure to attend your lady to Hampstead; and will be with you for that purpose about nine in the morning. With due compliments to your most worthily beloved, I am

Your's affectionately, ELIZAB. LAWRENCE.

Faith and troth, Jack, I know not what to do with myself; for here, just now having sent in the above note by Dorcas, out came my beloved with it in her hand, in a fit of phrensy!—true, by my soul! She had indeed complained of her head all the evening.

Dorcas ran to me, out of breath, to tell me, that her lady was coming in some strange way; but she followed her so quick, that the frightened wench had not time to say in what way.

It seems, when she read the billet—Now indeed, said she, am I a lost creature! O the poor Clarissa Harlowe!

She tore off her head-clothes; inquired where I was; and in she came, her shining tresses flowing about her neck; her ruffles torn, and hanging in tatters about her snowy hands, with her arms spread out—her eyes wildly turned, as if starting from their orbits—down sunk she at my feet, as soon as she approached me; her charming bosom heaving to her uplifted face; and clasping her arms about my knees, Dear Lovelace, said she, if ever—if ever—if ever—and, unable to speak another word, quitting her clasping hold—down—prostrate on the floor sunk she, neither in a fit nor out of one.

I was quite astonished.—All my purposes suspended for a few moments, I knew neither what to say, nor what to do. But, recollecting myself, am I again, thought I, in a way to be overcome, and made a fool of!—If I now recede, I am gone for ever.

I raised her; but down she sunk, as if quite disjointed—her limbs failing her—yet not in a fit neither. I never heard of or saw such a dear unaccountable; almost lifeless, and speechless too for a few moments; what must her apprehensions be at that moment?—And for what?—An high-notioned dear soul!—Pretty ignorance!—thought I.

Never having met with so sincere, so unquestionable a repugnance, I was staggered—I was confounded—yet how should I know that it would be so till I tried?—And how, having proceeded thus far, could I stop, were I not to have had the women to goad me on, and to make light of circumstances, which they pretended to be better judges of than I?

I lifted her, however, into a chair, and in words of disordered passion, told her, all her fears were needless—wondered at them—begged of her to be pacified—besought her reliance on my faith and honour—and revowed all my old vows, and poured forth new ones.

At last, with a heart-breaking sob, I see, I see, Mr. Lovelace, in broken sentences she spoke—I see, I see—that at last—I am ruined!—Ruined, if your pity—let me implore your pity!—and down on her bosom, like a half-broken-stalked lily top-heavy with the overcharging dews of the morning, sunk her head, with a sigh that went to my heart.

All I could think of to re-assure her, when a little recovered, I said.

Why did I not send for their coach, as I had intimated? It might return in the morning for the ladies.

I had actually done so, I told her, on seeing her strange uneasiness. But it was then gone to fetch a doctor for Miss Montague, lest his chariot should not be so ready.

Ah! Lovelace! said she, with a doubting face; anguish in her imploring eye.

Lady Betty would think it very strange, I told her, if she were to know it was so disagreeable to her to stay one night for her company in the house where she had passed so many.

She called me names upon this—she had called me names before.—I was patient.

Let her go to Lady Betty's lodgings then; directly go; if the person I called Lady Betty was really Lady Betty.

If, my dear! Good Heaven! What a villain does that IF show you believe me to be!

I cannot help it—I beseech you once more, let me go to Mrs. Leeson's, if that IF ought not to be said.

Then assuming a more resolute spirit—I will go! I will inquire my way! —I will go by myself! —and would have rushed by me.

I folded my arms about her to detain her; pleading the bad way I heard poor Charlotte was in; and what a farther concern her impatience, if she went, would give to poor Charlotte.

She would believe nothing I said, unless I would instantly order a coach, (since she was not to have Lady Betty's, nor was permitted to go to Mrs. Leeson's,) and let her go in it to Hampstead, late as it was, and all alone, so much the better; for in the house of people of whom Lady Betty, upon

inquiry, had heard a bad character, [Dropt foolishly this, by my prating new relation, in order to do credit to herself, by depreciating others,] every thing, and every face, looking with so much meaning vileness, as well as my own, [thou art still too sensible, thought I, my charmer!] she was resolved not to stay another night.

Dreading what might happen as to her intellects, and being very apprehensive that she might possibly go through a great deal before morning, (though more violent she could not well be with the worst she dreaded,) I humoured her, and ordered Will. to endeavour to get a coach directly, to carry us to Hampstead; I cared not at what price.

Robbers, with whom I would have terrified her, she feared not—I was all her fear, I found; and this house her terror: for I saw plainly that she now believed that Lady Betty and Miss Montague were both impostors.

But her mistrust is a little of the latest to do her service!

And, O Jack, the rage of love, the rage of revenge is upon me! by turns they tear me! The progress already made—the women's instigations—the power I shall have to try her to the utmost, and still to marry her, if she be not to be brought to cohabitation—let me perish, Belford, if she escape me now!

Will. is not yet come back. Near eleven.

Will. is this moment returned. No coach to be got, either for love or money.

Once more she urges—to Mrs. Leeson's, let me go, Lovelace! Good Lovelace, let me go to Mrs. Leeson's? What is Miss Montague's illness to my terror?—For the Almighty's sake, Mr. Lovelace!—her hands clasped.

O my angel! What a wildness is this! Do you know, do you see, my dearest life, what appearances your causeless apprehensions have given you?—Do you know it is past eleven o'clock?

Twelve, one, two, three, four—any hour, I care not—If you mean me honourably, let me go out of this hated house!

Thou'lt observe, Belford, that though this was written afterwards, yet, (as in other places,) I write it as it was spoken and happened, as if I had retired to put down every sentence spoken. I know thou likest this lively present-tense manner, as it is one of my peculiars.

Just as she had repeated the last words, If you mean me honourably, let me go out of this hated house, in came Mrs. Sinclair, in a great ferment —And what, pray, Madam, has this house done to you? Mr. Lovelace, you have known me some time; and, if I have not the niceness of this lady, I hope I do not deserve to be treated thus!

She set her huge arms akimbo: Hoh! Madam, let me tell you that I am amazed at your freedoms with my character! And, Mr. Lovelace, [holding up, and violently shaking her head,] if you are a gentleman, and a man of honour——

Having never before seen any thing but obsequiousness in this woman, little as she liked her, she was frightened at her masculine air, and fierce look—God help me! cried she—what will become of me now! Then, turning her head hither and thither, in a wild kind of amaze. Whom have I for a protector! What will become of me now!

I will be your protector, my dearest love!—But indeed you are uncharitably severe upon poor Mrs. Sinclair! Indeed you are!—She is a gentlewoman born, and the relict of a man of honour; and though left in such circumstance as to oblige her to let lodgings, yet would she scorn to be guilty of a wilful baseness.

I hope so—it may be so—I may be mistaken—but—but there is no crime, I presume, no treason, to say I don't like her house.

The old dragon straddled up to her, with her arms kemboed again—her eye-brows erect, like the bristles upon a hog's back, and, scouling over her shortened nose, more than half-hid her ferret eyes. Her mouth was distorted. She pouted out her blubber-lips, as if to bellows up wind and sputter into her horse-nostrils; and her chin was curdled, and more than usually prominent with passion.

With two Hoh-Madams she accosted the frightened fair-one; who, terrified, caught hold of my sleeve.

I feared she would fall into fits; and, with a look of indignation, told Mrs. Sinclair that these apartments were mine; and I could not imagine what she meant, either by listening to what passed between me and my spouse, or to come in uninvited; and still more I wondered at her giving herself these strange liberties.

I may be to blame, Jack, for suffering this wretch to give herself these airs; but her coming in was without my orders.

The old beldam, throwing herself into a chair, fell a blubbering and exclaiming. And the pacifying of her, and endeavouring to reconcile the lady to her, took up till near one o'clock.

And thus, between terror, and the late hour, and what followed, she was diverted from the thoughts of getting out of the house to Mrs. Leeson's, or any where else.

LETTER XII
MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD,
ESQ. TUESDAY MORNING, JUNE 13

And now, Belford, I can go no farther. The affair is over. Clarissa lives. And I am Your humble servant, R. LOVELACE.

[The whole of this black transaction is given by the injured lady to Miss Howe, in her subsequent letters, dated Thursday, July 6. See Letters LXVII. LXVIII. LXIX.]

LETTER XIII

MR. BELFORD, TO ROBERT LOVELACE, ESQ. WATFORD, WEDN. JAN. 14

O thou savage-hearted monster! What work hast thou made in one guilty hour, for a whole age of repentance!

I am inexpressibly concerned at the fate of this matchless lady! She could not have fallen into the hands of any other man breathing, and suffered as she has done with thee.

I had written a great part of another long letter to try to soften thy flinty heart in her favour; for I thought it but too likely that thou shouldst succeed in getting her back again to the accursed woman's. But I find it would have been too late, had I finished it, and sent it away. Yet cannot I forbear writing, to urge thee to make the only amends thou now canst make her, by a proper use of the license thou hast obtained.

Poor, poor lady! It is a pain to me that I ever saw her. Such an adorer of virtue to be sacrificed to the vilest of her sex; and thou their implement in the devil's hand, for a purpose so base, so ungenerous, so inhumane!—Pride thyself, O cruellest of men! in this reflection; and that thy triumph over a woman, who for thy sake was abandoned of every friend she had in the world, was effected; not by advantages taken of her weakness and credulity; but by the blackest artifice; after a long course of studied deceits had been tried to no purpose.

I can tell thee, it is well either for thee or for me, that I am not the brother of the lady. Had I been her brother, her violation must have been followed by the blood of one of us.

Excuse me, Lovelace; and let not the lady fare the worse for my concern for her. And yet I have but one other motive to ask thy excuse; and that is, because I owe to thy own communicative pen the knowledge I have of thy barbarous villany, since thou mightest, if thou wouldst, have passed it upon me for a common seduction.

CLARISSA LIVES, thou sayest. That she does is my wonder: and these words show that thou thyself (though thou couldst, nevertheless, proceed) hardly expectedst she would have survived the outrage. What must have been the poor lady's distress (watchful as she had been over her honour) when dreadful certainty took place of cruel apprehension!—And yet a man may guess what must have been, by that which thou paintest, when she suspected herself tricked, deserted, and betrayed, by the pretended ladies.

That thou couldst behold her phrensy on this occasion, and her half-speechless, half-fainting prostration at thy feet, and yet retain thy evil purposes, will hardly be thought credible, even by those who know thee, if they have seen her.

Poor, poor lady! With such noble qualities as would have adorned the most exalted married life, to fall into the hands of the only man in the world, who could have treated her as thou hast treated her!—And to let loose the old dragon, as thou properly callest her, upon the before-affrighted innocent, what a barbarity was that! What a poor piece of barbarity! in order to obtain by terror, what thou dispairedst to gain by love, though supported by stratagems the most insidious!

O LOVELACE! LOVELACE! had I doubted it before, I should now be convinced, that there must be a WORLD AFTER THIS, to do justice to injured merit, and to punish barbarous perfidy! Could the divine SOCRATES, and the divine CLARISSA, otherwise have suffered?

But let me, if possible, for one moment, try to forget this villanous outrage on the most excellent of women.

I have business here which will hold me yet a few days; and then perhaps I shall quit this house for ever.

I have had a solemn and tedious time of it. I should never have known that I had half the respect I really find I had for the old gentleman, had I not so closely, at his earnest desire, attended him, and been a witness of the tortures he underwent.

This melancholy occasion may possibly have contributed to humanize me: but surely I never could have been so remorseless a caitiff as thou hast been, to a woman of half this lady's excellence.

But pr'ythee, dear Lovelace, if thou'rt a man, and not a devil, resolve, out of hand, to repair thy sin of ingratitude, by conferring upon thyself the highest honour thou canst receive, in making her lawfully thine.

But if thou canst not prevail upon thyself to do her this justice, I think I should not scruple a tilt with thee, [an everlasting rupture at least must follow] if thou sacrificest her to the accursed women.

Thou art desirous to know what advantage I reap by my uncle's demise. I do not certainly know; for I have not been so greedily solicitous on this subject as some of the kindred have been, who ought to have shown more decency, as I have told them, and suffered the corpse to have been cold before they had begun their hungry inquiries. But, by what I gathered from the poor man's talk to me, who oftener than I wished touched upon the subject, I deem it will be upwards of 5000£. in cash, and in the funds, after all legacies paid, besides the real estate, which is a clear 1000£. a-year.

I wish, from my heart, thou wert a money-lover! Were the estate to be of double the value, thou shouldst have it every shilling; only upon one condition [for my circumstances before were as easy as I wish them to be while I am single]—that thou wouldst permit me the honour of being this fatherless lady's father, as it is called, at the altar.

Think of this! my dear Lovelace! be honest: and let me present thee with the brightest jewel that man ever possessed; and then, body and soul, wilt thou bind to thee for ever thy

BELFORD.

LETTER XIV

MR. LOVELACE, TO JOHN BELFORD, ESQ. THURSDAY, JUNE 15

Let me alone, you great dog, you!—let me alone!—have I heard a lesser boy, his coward arms held over his head and face, say to a bigger, who was pommeling him, for having run away with his apple, his orange, or his ginger-bread.

So say I to thee, on occasion of thy severity to thy poor friend, who, as thou ownest, has furnished thee (ungenerous as thou art!) with the weapons thou brandishest so fearfully against him.—And to what purpose, when the mischief is done? when, of consequence, the affair is irretrievable? and when a CLARISSA could not move me?

Well, but, after all, I must own, that there is something very singular in this lady's case: and, at times, I cannot help regretting that ever I attempted her; since not one power either of body or soul could be moved in my favour; and since, to use the expression of the philosopher, on a much graver occasion, there is no difference to be found between the skull of King Philip and that of another man.

But people's extravagant notions of things alter not facts, Belford: and, when all's done, Miss Clarissa Harlowe has but run the fate of a thousand others of her sex—only that they did not set such a romantic value upon what they call their honour; that's all.

And yet I will allow thee this—that if a person sets a high value upon any thing, be it ever such a trifle in itself, or in the eye of others, the robbing of that person of it is not a trifle to him. Take the matter in this light, I own I have done wrong, great wrong, to this admirable creature.

But have I not known twenty and twenty of the sex, who have seemed to carry their notions of virtue high; yet, when brought to the test, have abated of their severity? And how should we be convinced that any of them are proof till they are tried?

A thousand times have I said, that I never yet met with such a woman as this. If I had, I hardly ever should have attempted Miss Clarissa Harlowe. Hitherto she is all angel: and was not that the point which at setting out I proposed to try?¹⁵ And was not cohabitation ever my darling view? And am I not now, at last, in the high road to it?—It is true, that I have nothing to boast of as to her will. The very contrary. But now are we come to the test, whether she cannot be brought to make the best of an irreparable evil. If she exclaim, [she has reason to exclaim, and I will sit down with patience by the hour together to hear her exclamations, till she is tired of them,] she will then descend to expostulation perhaps: expostulation will give me hope: expostulation will show that she hates me not. And, if she hate me not, she will forgive: and, if she now forgive, then will all be over; and she will be mine upon my own terms: and it shall then be the whole study of my future life to make her happy.

So, Belford, thou seest that I have journeyed on to this stage [indeed, through infinite mazes, and as infinite remorse] with one determined point in view from the first. To thy urgent supplication then, that I will do her grateful justice by marriage, let me answer in Matt. Prior's two lines on his hoped-for auditorship; as put into the mouths of his St. John and Harley;

—Let that be done, which Matt. doth say.

YEA, quoth the Earl—BUT NOT TO-DAY.

Thou seest, Jack, that I make no resolutions, however, against doing her, one time or other, the wished-for justice, even were I to succeed in my principal view, cohabitation. And of this I do assure thee, that, if I ever marry, it must, it shall be Miss Clarissa Harlowe.—Nor is her honour at all

¹⁵ See Vol. III. Letter XVIII.

impaired with me, by what she has so far suffered: but the contrary. She must only take care that, if she be at last brought to forgive me, she show me that her Lovelace is the only man on earth whom she could have forgiven on the like occasion.

But ah, Jack! what, in the mean time, shall I do with this admirable creature? At present—[I am loth to say it—but, at present] she is quite stupified.

I had rather, methinks, she should have retained all her active powers, though I had suffered by her nails and her teeth, than that she should be sunk into such a state of absolute—insensibility (shall I call it?) as she has been in every since Tuesday morning. Yet, as she begins a little to revive, and now-and-then to call names, and to exclaim, I dread almost to engage with the anguish of a spirit that owes its extraordinary agitations to a niceness that has no example either in ancient or modern story. For, after all, what is there in her case that should stupify such a glowing, such a blooming charmer?—Excess of grief, excess of terror, have made a person's hair stand on end, and even (as we have read) changed the colour of it. But that it should so stupify, as to make a person, at times, insensible to those imaginary wrongs, which would raise others from stupifaction, is very surprising!

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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