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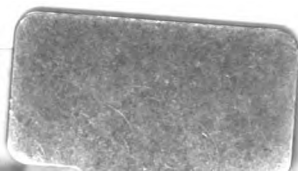
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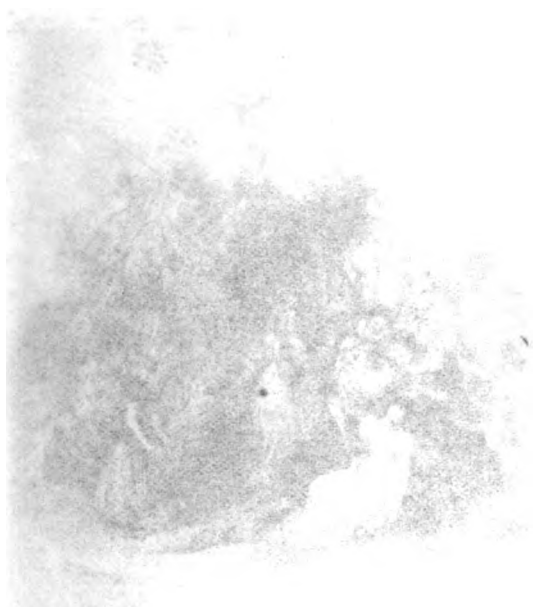
W. Harvey

C. Rolla

THE FIRST OF FEBRUARY

It was found just as I had expected, and I was glad to see it
and to hear the news. The first of the month was a
very fine day, and the weather was just what we needed.

LEONORA,
WITH LETTERS
ON SEVERAL SUBJECTS,



BY MARY W. M. M.

AND OTHER MEMOIRS

IN TWO VOLUMES.

18



LEONORA,
WITH LETTERS
ON SEVERAL SUBJECTS,
BY
MARIA EDGEWORTH.



To be had of the Author, by the Booksellers, and of the Publishers, in every part of the Kingdom.

1795.

LONDON: BALDWIN & CRADOCK, PATERNOSTERS ROW,
AND OTHER BOOKSELLERS.

1795.

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TALES AND NOVELS

BY

MARIA EDGEWORTH.

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IN EIGHTEEN VOLUMES.

VOL. XIII.

CONTAINING

LEONORA,

WITH

LETTERS ON SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

LONDON:

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LEONORA.

LETTER I.

LADY OLIVIA TO LADY LEONORA L——.

WHAT a misfortune it is to be born a woman! In vain, dear Leonora, would you reconcile me to my doom. Condemned to incessant hypocrisy, or everlasting misery, woman is the slave or the outcast of society. Confidence in our fellow-creatures, or in ourselves, alike forbidden us, to what purpose have we understandings, which we may not use? hearts, which we may not trust? To our unhappy sex genius and sensibility are the most treacherous gifts of Heaven. Why should we cultivate talents merely to gratify the caprice of tyrants? Why seek for knowledge, which can prove only that our wretchedness is irremediable? If a ray of light break in upon us, it is but to make darkness more visible; to show us the narrow limits, the Gothic structure, the impenetrable barriers of our prison. Forgive me if on this subject I cannot speak—if I cannot think—with patience. Is it not fabled, that the gods, to punish some refractory mortal of the male kind, doomed his soul to inhabit upon earth a female form? A punishment more degrading, or more difficult to

endure, could scarcely be devised by cruelty omnipotent. What dangers, what sorrows, what persecutions, what nameless evils awaits the woman who dares to rise above the prejudices of her sex!

“ Ah! happy they, the happiest of their kind!”

who, without a struggle, submit their reason to be swathed by all the absurd bandages of custom. What, though they cripple or distort their minds; are not these deformities beauties in the eyes of fashion? and are not these people the favoured nurslings of the *World*, secure of her smiles, her caresses, her fostering praise, her partial protection, through all the dangers of youth and all the dotage of age?

“ Ah! happy they, the happiest of their kind!”

who learn to speak, and think, and act by rote; who have a phrase, or a maxim, or a formula ready for every occasion; who follow—

“ All the nurse and all the priest have taught.”

And is it possible that Olivia can envy these *tideless-blooded* souls their happiness—their apathy? Is her high spirit so broken by adversity? Not such the promise of her early years, not such the language of her unsophisticated heart! Alas! I scarcely know, I scarcely recollect, that proud self, which was wont to defy the voice of opinion, and to set at nought the decrees of prejudice. The events of my life shall be related, or rather the history of my sensations; for in a life like mine sensations

become events—a metamorphosis which you will see in every page of my history. I feel an irresistible impulse to open my whole heart to you, my dear Leonora. I ought to be awed by the superiority of your understanding and of your character; yet there is an indulgence in your nature, a softness in your temper, that dissipates fear, and irresistibly attracts confidence.

You have generously refused to be prejudiced against me by busy, malignant rumour; you have resolved to judge of me for yourself. Nothing, then, shall be concealed. In such circumstances I cannot seek to extenuate any of my faults or follies. I am ready to acknowledge them all with self-humiliation more poignant than the sarcasms of my bitterest enemies. But I must pause till I have summoned courage for my confession. Dear Leonora, adieu!

OLIVIA.

LETTER II.

OLIVIA TO LEONORA.

FULL of life and spirits, with a heart formed for all the enthusiasm, for all the delicacy of love, I married early, in the fond expectation of meeting a heart suited to my own. Cruelly disappointed, I found—merely a husband. My heart recoiled upon itself; true to my own principles of virtue, I scorned dissimulation. I candidly confessed to my husband, that my love was extinguished. I proved to him,

— alas! too clearly, that we were not born for each other. The attractive moment of illusion was past—never more to return; the repulsive reality remained. The living was chained to the dead, and, by the inexorable tyranny of English laws, that chain, eternally galling to innocence, can be severed only by the desperation of vice. Divorce, according to our barbarous institutions, cannot be obtained without guilt. Appalled at the thought, I saw no hope but in submission. Yet to submit to live with the man I could not love was, to a mind like mine, impossible. My principles and my feelings equally revolted from this legal prostitution. We separated. I sought for balm to my wounded heart in foreign climes.

— To the beauties of nature I was ever feelingly alive. Amidst the sublime scenes of Switzerland, and on the consecrated borders of her classic lakes, I sometimes forgot myself to happiness. Felicity, how transient!—transient as the day-dreams that played upon my fancy in the bright morning of love. Alas! not all creation's charms could soothe me to repose. I wandered in search of that which change of place cannot afford. There was an aching void in my heart—an indescribable sadness over my spirits. Sometimes I had recourse to books; but how few were in unison with my feelings, or touched the trembling chords of my disordered mind! Commonplace morality I could not endure. History presented nothing but a mass of crimes. Metaphysics promised some relief, and I bewildered myself in their not inelegant labyrinth. But to the bold genius and exquisite pathos of some German

novelists I hold myself indebted for my largest portion of ideal bliss ; for those rapt moments, when sympathy with kindred souls transported me into better worlds, and consigned vulgar realities to oblivion.

I am well aware, my Leonora, that you approve not of these my favourite writers : but yours is the morality of one who has never known sorrow. I also would interdict such cordials to the happy. But would you forbid those to taste felicity in dreams who feel only misery when awake? Would you dash the cup of Lethe from lips to which no other beverage is salubrious or sweet?

By the use of these opiates my soul gradually settled into a sort of pleasing pensive melancholy. Has it not been said, that melancholy is a characteristic of genius? I make no pretensions to genius : but I am persuaded that melancholy is the habitual, perhaps the natural state of those who have the misfortune to feel with delicacy.

You, my dear Leonora, will class this notion amongst what you once called my refined errors. Indeed I must confess, that I see in you an exception so striking as almost to compel me to relinquish my theory. But again let me remind you, that your lot in life has been different from mine. Alas! how different! Why had not I such a friend, such a mother as yours, early to direct my uncertain steps, and to educate me to happiness? I might have been —— But no matter what I might have been —— I must tell you what I have been.

Separated from my husband, without a guide,

without a friend at the most perilous period of my life, I was left to ~~that~~ most insidious of counsellors—my own heart—my own weak heart. When I was least prepared to resist the impression, it was my misfortune to meet with a man of a soul congenial to my own. Before I felt my danger, I was entangled beyond the possibility of escape. The net was thrown over my heart; its struggles were to no purpose but to exhaust my strength. Virtue commanded me to be miserable—and I was miserable. But do I dare to expect your pity, Leonora, for such an attachment? It excites your indignation, perhaps your horror. Blame, despise, detest me; all this would I rather bear than deceive you into fancying me better than I really am.

Do not, however, think me worse. If my views had been less pure, if I had felt less reliance on the firmness of my own principles, and less repugnance to artifice, I might easily have avoided some appearances, which have injured me in the eyes of the world. With real contrition I confess, that a fatal mixture of masculine independence of spirit, and of female tenderness of heart, has betrayed me into many imprudences; but of vice, and of that meanest species of vice, hypocrisy, I thank Heaven, my conscience can acquit me. All I have now to hope is, that you, my indulgent, my generous Leonora, will not utterly condemn me. Truth and gratitude are my only claims to your friendship—to a friendship, which would be to me the first of earthly blessings, which might make me amends for all I have lost. Consider this before, unworthy as I am, you reject

me from your esteem. Counsel, guide, save me! Without vanity, but with confidence I say it, I have a heart that will repay you for affection. You will find me easily moved, easily governed by kindness. Yours has already sunk deep into my soul, and your power is unlimited over the affections and over the understanding of

Your obliged
OLIVIA.

LETTER III.

FROM LADY LEONORA L—— TO HER MOTHER, THE
DUCHESS OF ——, ENCLOSING THE PRECEDING
LETTERS.

I AM permitted to send you, my dear mother, the enclosed letters. Mixed with what you may not approve, you will, I think, find in them proofs of an affectionate heart and superior abilities. Lady Olivia is just returned to England. Scandal, imported from the continent, has had such an effect in prejudicing many of her former friends and acquaintance against her, that she is in danger of being excluded from that society of which she was once the ornament and the favourite; but I am determined to support her cause, and to do every thing in my power to counteract the effects of malignity. I cannot sufficiently express the indignation that I feel against the mischievous spirit of scandal, which destroys happiness at every breath, and which delights in the meanest of all

malignant feelings—the triumph over the errors of superior characters. Olivia has been much blamed, because she has been much envied.

Indeed, my dear mother, you have been prejudiced against her by false reports. Do not imagine that her fascinating manners have blinded my judgment: I assure you that I have discerned, or rather that she has revealed to me, all her faults: and ought not this candour to make a strong impression upon my mind in her favour? Consider how young, how beautiful she was at her first entrance into fashionable life; how much exposed to temptation, surrounded by flatterers, and without a single friend. I am persuaded that she would have escaped all censure, and would have avoided all the errors with which she now reproaches herself, if she had been blessed with a mother such as mine.

LEONORA L——.

LETTER IV.

THE DUCHESS OF —— TO HER DAUGHTER.

MY DEAREST CHILD,

I MUST answer your last before I sleep—before I can sleep in peace. I have just finished reading the rhapsody which it enclosed; and whilst my mind is full and warm upon the subject, let me write, for I can write to my own satisfaction at no other time. I admire and love you, my child, for the generous

indignation you express against those who trample upon the fallen, or who meanly triumph over the errors of superior genius; and if I seem more cold, or more severe, than you wish me to be, attribute this to my anxiety for your happiness, and to that caution which is perhaps the infirmity of age.

In the course of my long life I have, alas! seen vice and folly dressed in so many different fashions, that I can find no difficulty in detecting them under any disguise; but your unpractised eyes are almost as easily deceived as when you were five years old, and when you could not believe that your pasteboard nun was the same person in her various changes of attire.

Nothing would tempt you to associate with those who have avowed themselves regardless of right and wrong; but I must warn you against another, and a far more dangerous class, who professing the most refined delicacy of sentiment, and boasting of invulnerable virtue, exhibit themselves in the most improper and hazardous situations; and who, because they are without fear, expect to be deemed free from reproach. Either from miraculous good fortune, or from a singularity of temper, these adventurous heroines may possibly escape with what they call perfect innocence. So much the worse for society. Their example tempts others, who fall a sacrifice to their weakness and folly. I would punish the tempters in this case more than the victims, and for them the most effectual species of punishment is contempt. Neglect is death to these female lovers of notoriety. The moment they are out of fashion their power to

work mischief ceases. Those who from their character and rank have influence over public opinion are bound to consider these things in the choice of their associates. This is peculiarly necessary in days when attempts are made to level all distinctions. You have sometimes hinted to me, my dear daughter, with all proper delicacy, that I am too strict in my notions, and that, unknown to myself, my pride mixes with morality. Be it so: the pride of family, and the pride of virtue, should reciprocally support each other. Were I asked what I think the best guard to a nobility in this or in any other country, I should answer, VIRTUE. I admire that simple epitaph in Westminster Abbey on the duchess of Newcastle:—"Her name was Margaret Lucas, youngest sister to the lord Lucas of Colchester;—a noble family, for all the brothers were valiant and all the sisters virtuous."

I look to the temper of the times in forming rules for conduct. Of late years we have seen wonderful changes in female manners. I may be like the old marquis in Gil Blas, who contended that even the peaches of modern days had deteriorated; but I fear that my complaints of the degeneracy of human kind are better founded than his fears for the vegetable creation. A taste for the elegant profligacy of French gallantry was, I remember, introduced into this country before the destruction of the French monarchy. Since that time, some sentimental writers and pretended philosophers of our own and foreign countries have endeavoured to confound all our ideas of morality. To every rule of right they have found

exceptions, and on these they have fixed the public attention by adorning them with all the splendid decorations of eloquence ; so that the rule is despised or forgotten, and the exception triumphantly established in its stead. These orators seem as if they had been employed by Satan to plead the cause of vice ; and, as if possessed by the evil spirit, they speak with a vehemence which carries away their auditors, or with a subtlety which deludes their better judgment. They put extreme cases, in which virtue may become vice, or vice virtue : they exhibit criminal passions in constant connexion with the most exalted, the most amiable virtues ; thus making use of the best feelings of human nature for the worst purposes, they engage pity or admiration perpetually on the side of guilt. Eternally talking of philosophy and philanthropy, they borrow the terms only to perplex the ignorant and seduce the imagination. They have their systems and their theories, and in theory they pretend that the general good of society is their sole immutable rule of morality, and in practice they make the variable feelings of each individual the judges of this general good. Their systems disdain all the vulgar virtues, intent upon some *beau ideal* of perfection or perfectibility. They set common sense and common honesty at defiance. No matter : their doctrine, so convenient to the passions and soporific to the conscience, can never want partisans ; especially by weak and enthusiastic women it is adopted and propagated with eagerness ; then they become personages of importance, and zealots in support of their sublime opinions ; and they can

read,—and they can write,—and they can talk,—and they can *effect a revolution in public opinion!* I am afraid, indeed, that they can; for of late years we have heard more of sentiment than of principles; more of the rights of woman than of her duties. We have seen talents disgraced by the conduct of their possessors, and perverted in the vain attempt to defend what is unjustifiable.

Where must all this end? Where the abuse of reason inevitably ends—in the ultimate law of force. If in this age of reason women make a bad use of that power which they have obtained by the cultivation of their understanding, they will degrade and enslave themselves beyond redemption; they will reduce their sex to a situation worse than it ever experienced even in the ages of ignorance and superstition. If men find that the virtue of women diminishes in proportion as intellectual cultivation increases, they will connect, fatally for the freedom and happiness of our sex, the ideas of female ignorance and female innocence; they will decide that one is the effect of the other. They will not pause to distinguish between the use and the abuse of reason; they will not stand by to see further experiments tried at their expense, but they will prohibit knowledge altogether as a pernicious commodity, and will exert the superior power which nature and society place in their hands, to enforce their decrees. Opinion obtained freedom for women; by opinion they may be again enslaved. It is therefore the interest of the female world, and of society, that women should be deterred by the dread of shame from pass-

ing the bounds of discretion. No false lenity, no partiality in favour of amusing talents or agreeable manners, should admit of exceptions which become dangerous examples of impunity. The rank and superior understanding of a *delinquent* ought not to be considered in mitigation, but as aggravating circumstances. Rank makes ill conduct more conspicuous: talents make it more dangerous. Women of abilities, if they err, usually employ all their powers to justify rather than to amend their faults.

I am afraid, my dear daughter, that my general arguments are closing round your Olivia; but I must bid you a good night, for my poor eyes will serve me no longer. God bless you, my dear child.

LETTER V.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

I AGREE with you, my dear mother, that in these times especially, it is incumbent upon all persons, whose rank or reputation may influence public opinion, to be particularly careful to support the cause of female honour, of virtue, and religion. With the same object in view, we may however differ in the choice of means for its attainment. Pleasure as well as pain acts upon human creatures; and therefore, in governing them, may not reward be full as efficacious as punishment? Our sex are sufficiently apprised of the fatal consequences of ill conduct; the

advantages of well-earned reputation should be at least as great, as certain, and as permanent.

In former times, a single finger pointed at the scutcheon of a knight challenged him to defend his fame; but the defiance was open, the defence was public; and if the charge proved groundless, it injured none but the malicious accuser. In our days, female reputation, which is of a nature more delicate than the honour of any knight, may be destroyed by the finger of private malice. The whisper of secret scandal, which admits of no fair or public answer, is too often sufficient to dishonour a life of spotless fame. This is the height, not only of injustice, but of impolicy. Women will become indifferent to reputation, which it is so difficult, even by the prudence of years, to acquire, and which it is so easy to lose in a moment, by the malice or thoughtlessness of those who invent or who repeat scandal. Those who call themselves the world often judge without listening to evidence, and proceed upon suspicion with as much promptitude and severity as if they had the most convincing proofs. But because Cæsar, nearly two thousand years ago, said, that his wife ought not even to be suspected, and divorced her upon the strength of this sentiment, shall we make it a general maxim, that suspicion justifies punishment? We might as well applaud those, who when their friends are barely suspected to be tainted with the plague, drive them from all human comfort and assistance.

Even where women, from the thoughtless gaiety of youth, or the impulse of inexperienced enthusiasm,

may have given some slight cause for censure, I would not have virtue put on all her gorgon terrors, nor appear circled by the vengeful band of prudes ; her chastening hand will be more beneficially felt if she wear her more benign form. To place the imprudent in the same class with the vicious is injustice and impolicy ; were the same punishment and the same disgrace to be affixed to small and to great offences, the number of *capital* offenders would certainly increase. Those who were disposed to yield to their passions would, when they had once failed in exact decorum, see no motive, no fear to restrain them ; and there would be no pause, no interval between error and profligacy. Amongst females who have been imprudent, there are many things to be considered which ought to recommend them to mercy. The judge, when he is obliged to pronounce the immutable sentence of the law, often, with tears, wishes that it were in his power to mitigate the punishment : the decisions of opinion may and must vary with circumstances, else the degree of reprobation which they inflict cannot be proportioned to the offence, or calculated for the good of society. Among the mitigating circumstances I should be inclined to name even those which you bring in aggravation. Talents, and what is called genius, in our sex are often connected with a warmth of heart, an enthusiasm of temper, which expose to dangers from which the coldness of mediocrity is safe. In the illuminated palace of ice, the lights which render the spectacle splendid, and which raise the admira-

tion of the beholders, endanger the fabric and tend to its destruction.

But you will tell me, dear mother, that allusion is not argument—and I am almost afraid to proceed, lest you should think me an advocate for vice. I would not shut the gates of mercy, inexorably and indiscriminately, upon all those of my own sex, who have even been *more than imprudent*.

“ He taught them shame, the sudden sense of ill—
Shame, Nature’s hasty conscience, which forbids
Weak inclination ere it grows to will,
Or stays rash will before it grows to deeds.”

Whilst a woman is alive to shame, she cannot be dead to virtue. But by injudicious or incessant reproach, this principle, even where it is most exquisite, may be most easily destroyed. The mimosa, when too long exposed to each rude touch, loses its retractile sensibility. It ought surely to be the care of the wise and benevolent to cherish that principle, implanted in our nature as the guard of virtue, that principle upon which legislators rest the force of punishment, and all the grand interests of society.

My dear mother, perhaps you will be surprised at the style in which I have been writing, and you will smile at hearing your Leonora discuss the duties of legislators, and the grand interests of society. She has not done so from presumption, or from affectation. She was alarmed by your supposing that her judgment was deluded by fascinating manners, and she determined to produce *general* arguments, to

convince you that she is not actuated by particular prepossession. You see that I have at least some show of reason on *my* side. I have forborne to mention Olivia's name: but now that I have obviated, I hope by reasoning, the imputation of partiality, I may observe that all my arguments are strongly in her favour. She had been attacked by slander; *the world* has condemned her upon suspicion merely. She has been imprudent; but I repeat, in the strongest terms, that I am *convinced of her innocence*; and that I should bitterly regret that a woman with such an affectionate heart, such uncommon candour, and such superior abilities, should be lost to society.

Tell me, my dear mother, that you are no longer in anxiety about the consequences of my attachment to Olivia.

Your affectionate daughter,

LEONORA.

LETTER VI.

THE DUCHESS OF ——— TO HER DAUGHTER.

You lament, my dear child, that such an affectionate heart, such great abilities as Olivia's should be lost to society. Before I sympathise in your pity, my judgment must be convinced that it is reasonable.

What proofs has lady Olivia given of her affectionate heart? She is at variance with both her

parents; she is separated from her husband; and she leaves her child in a foreign country, to be educated by strangers. Am I to understand, that her ladyship's neglecting to perform the duties of a daughter, a wife, and a mother, are proofs of an affectionate heart? As to her superior talents, do they contribute to her own happiness, or to the happiness of others? Evidently not to her own; for by her account of herself, she is one of the most miserable wretches alive! She tells you that "*she went to foreign climes in search of halm for a wounded heart, and wandered from place to place, looking for what no place could afford.*" She talks of "*inde-scribable sadness—an aching void—an impenetrable prison—darkness visible—dead bodies chained to living ones;*" and she exhibits all the disordered furniture of a "diseased mind." But you say, that though her powers are thus insufficient to make herself happy, they may amuse or instruct the world; and of this I am to judge by the letters which you have sent me. You admire fine writing; so do I. I class eloquence high amongst the fine arts. But by eloquence I mean something more than Dr. Johnson defines it to be, "the art of speaking with fluency and elegance." This is an art which is now possessed to a certain degree by every boarding-school miss. Every scribbling young lady can now string sentences and sentiments together, and can turn a period harmoniously. Upon the strength of these accomplishments they commence heroines, and claim the privileges of the order; privileges which go to an indefinite and most alarming extent.

Every heroine may have her own code of morality for her private use, and she is to be tried by no other; she may rail as loudly as she pleases "at the barbarous institutions of society," and may deplore "*the inexorable tyranny of the English laws.*" If she find herself involved in delicate entanglements of crossing duties, she may break through any one, or all of them, to extricate herself with a noble contempt of prejudice.

I have promised to reason calmly; but I cannot repress the terror which I feel at the idea of my daughter's becoming the friend of one of these women. Olivia's letters are, I think, in the true heroine style; and they might make a brilliant figure in a certain class of novels. She begins with a bold exclamation on "the misfortune of being born a woman!—*the slave or the outcast of society, condemned to incessant hypocrisy!*" Does she mean modesty? Her manly soul feels it "*the most degrading punishment that omnipotent cruelty could devise, to be imprisoned in a female form.*" From such a masculine spirit some fortitude and magnanimity might be expected; but presently she begs to be pitied, for a broken spirit, and more than female tenderness of heart. I have observed that the ladies who wish to be men are usually those who have not sufficient strength of mind to be women.

Olivia proceeds in an ironical strain to envy, as "*the happiest of their sex, those who submit to be swathed by custom.*" These persons she stigmatizes with the epithet of *tideless-blooded*. It is the common trick of unprincipled women to affect to despise

those who conduct themselves with propriety. Prudence they term *coldness*; fortitude, *insensibility*; and regard to the rights of others, *prejudice*. By this perversion of terms they would laugh or sneer virtue out of countenance; and, by robbing her of all praise, they would deprive her of all immediate motive. Conscious of their own degradation, they would lower every thing, and every body, to their own standard: they would make you believe, that those who have not yielded to their passions are destitute of sensibility; that the love which is not blazoned forth in glaring colours is not entitled to our sympathy. The sacrifice of the strongest feelings of the human heart to a sense of duty is to be called mean, or absurd; but the shameless phrensy of passion, exposing itself to public gaze, is to be an object of admiration. These heroines talk of strength of mind; but they forget that strength of mind is to be shown in resisting their passions, not in yielding to them. Without being absolutely of an opinion, which I have heard maintained, that all virtue is sacrifice, I am convinced that the essential characteristic of virtue is to bear and forbear. These sentimentalists can do neither. They talk of sacrifices and generosity; but they are the veriest egotists—the most selfish creatures alive.

Open your eyes, my dear Leonora, and see things as they really are. Lady Olivia thinks it a sufficient excuse for abandoning her husband, to say, that she found "*his soul was not in unison with hers.*" She thinks it an adequate apology for a criminal attachment, to tell you that "*the net was thrown*

over her heart before she felt her danger : that all its struggles were to no purpose, but to exhaust her strength."

If she did not feel her danger, she prepared it. The course of reading which her ladyship followed was the certain preparation for her consequent conduct. She tells us that she could not endure "*the common-place of morality, but metaphysics promised her some relief.*" In these days a heroine need not be a moralist, but she must be a metaphysician. She must "*wander in the not inelegant labyrinth ;*" and if in the midst of it she comes unawares upon the monster vice, she must not start, though she have no clue to secure her retreat.

From metaphysics lady Olivia went on to German novels. "*For her largest portions of bliss, for those rapt moments, which consigned vulgar realities to oblivion,*" she owns herself indebted to those writers, who promise an ideal world of pleasure, which, like the *mirage* in the desert, bewilders the feverish imagination. I always suspected the imagination of these *women of feeling* to be more susceptible than their hearts. They want excitation for their morbid sensibility, and they care not at what expense it is procured. If they could make all the pleasures of life into one cordial they would swallow it at a draught in a fit of sentimental spleen. The mental intemperance that they indulge in promiscuous novel-reading destroys all vigour and clearness of judgment ; every thing dances in the varying medium of their imagination. [Sophistry passes for reasoning ; nothing appears profound but what is obscure ;

nothing sublime but what is beyond the reach of mortal comprehension. To their vitiated taste the simple pathos, which o'ersteps not the modesty of nature, appears cold, tame, and insipid ; they must have *scènes* and a *coup de théâtre* ; and ranting, and raving, and stabbing, and drowning, and poisoning ; for with them there is no love without murder. Love, in their representations, is indeed a distorted, ridiculous, horrid monster, from whom common sense, taste, decency, and nature recoil.

But I will be calm.—You say, my dear Leonora, that your judgment has not been blinded by lady Olivia's fascinating manners ; but that you are strongly influenced in her favour by that candour, — with which she has revealed to you all her faults. The value of candour in individuals should be measured by their sensibility to shame. When a woman throws off all restraint, and then desires me to admire her candour, I am astonished only at her assurance. Do not be the dupe of such candour. Lady Olivia avows a criminal passion, yet you say that you have no doubts of her innocence. The persuasion of your unsuspecting heart is no argument : when you give me any proofs in her favour, I shall pay them all due attention. In the mean time I have given you my opinion of those ladies who place themselves in the most perilous situations, and then expect you to believe them safe.

Olivia's professions of regard for you are indeed enthusiastic. She tells you, that "*your power is unlimited over her heart and understanding ; that your friendship would be to her one of the greatest of*

earthly blessings." May be so—but I cannot wish you to be her friend. With whatever confidence she makes the assertion, do not believe that she has a heart capable of feeling the value of yours. These sentimental, unprincipled women make the worst friends in the world. We are often told that "poor creatures! they do nobody any harm but themselves;" but in society it is scarcely possible for a woman to do harm to herself without doing harm to others; all her connexions must be involved in the consequences of her imprudence. Besides, what confidence can you repose in them? If you should happen to be an obstacle in the way of any of their fancies, do you think that they will respect you or your interest, when they have not scrupled to sacrifice their own to the gratification of their passions? Do you think that the gossamer of sentiment will restrain those whom the strong chains of prudence could not hold?

O! my dearest child, forcibly as these arguments carry conviction to my mind, I dread lest your compassionate, generous temper, should prevent their reaching your understanding. Then let me conjure you, by all the respect which you have ever shown for your mother's opinions, by all that you hold dear or sacred, beware of forming an intimacy with an unprincipled woman. Believe me to be

Your truly affectionate mother,

LETTER VII.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

No daughter ever felt more respect for the opinions of a parent than I do for yours, my dearest mother ; but you have never, even from childhood, required from me a blind submission—you have always encouraged me to desire conviction. And now, when the happiness of another is at stake, you will forgive me if I am less disposed to yield than I should be, I hope, if my own interest or taste were alone concerned.

You ask me what proofs I have of lady Olivia's innocence. Believe me, I have such as are convincing to my unbiassed judgment, and such as would be sufficient to satisfy all your doubts, were I at liberty to lay the whole truth before you. But even to exculpate herself, Olivia will not ruin in your opinion her husband, of whom you imagine that she has no reason to complain. I, who know how anxious she is to obtain your esteem, can appreciate the sacrifice that she makes ; and in this instance, as in many others, I admire her magnanimity ; it is equal to her candour, for which she is entitled to praise even by your own principles, dear mother : since, far from having *thrown off all restraint*, she is exquisitely susceptible of shame.

As to her understanding—have no persons of great talents ever been unfortunate? Frequently we see that they have not been able, by all their efforts and all their powers, to remedy the defects in the cha-

racters and tempers of those with whom they have unhappily been connected. Olivia married very young, and was unfortunately mistaken in her choice of a husband: on that subject I can only deplore her error and its consequences: but as to her disagreements with her own family, I do not think her to blame. For the mistakes we make in the choice of lovers or friends we may be answerable, but we cannot be responsible for the faults of the relations who are given to us by nature. If we do not please them, it may be our misfortune; it is not necessarily our fault. I cannot be more explicit, without betraying lady Olivia's confidence, and implicating others in defending her.

With respect to that attachment or which you speak with so much just severity, she has given me the strongest assurances that she will do every thing in her power to conquer it. Absence, you know, is the first and the most difficult step, and this she has taken. Her course of reading displeases you: I cannot defend it: but I am persuaded that it is not a proof of her taste being vitiated. Many people read ordinary novels as others take snuff, merely from habit, from the want of petty excitation; and not, as you suppose, from the want of exorbitant or improper stimulus. Those who are unhappy have recourse to any trifling amusement that can change the course of their thoughts. I do not justify Olivia for having chosen such *comforters* as certain novels, but I pity her, and impute this choice to want of fortitude, not to depravity of taste. Before she married, a strict injunction was laid upon her not to read any book

that was called a novel: this raised in her mind a sort of perverse curiosity. By making any books or opinions contraband, the desire to read and circulate them is increased; bad principles are consequently smuggled into families, and being kept secret, can never be subject to fair examination. I think it must be advantageous to the right side of any question, that all which can be said against it should be openly heard, that it may be answered. I do not

“Hate when vice can bolt her arguments;”

for I know that virtue has a tongue to answer her. The more vice repeats her assertions, the better; because when familiarized, their boldness will not astound the understanding, and the charm of novelty will not be mistaken for the power of truth. We may observe, that the admiration for the class of writers to whom you allude, though violent in its commencement, has abated since they have been more known; and numbers, who began with rapture, have ended with disgust. Persons of vivacious imaginations, like Olivia, may be caught at first view by whatever has the appearance of grandeur or sublimity; but if time be allowed for examination, they will infallibly detect the disproportions, and these will ever afterwards shock their taste: if you will not allow leisure for comparison—if you say, do not look at such strange objects, the obedient eyes may turn aside, but the rebel imagination pictures something a thousand times more wonderful and charming than the reality. I will venture to predict, that Olivia will soon be tired of the species of

novels which she now admires, and that, once surfeited with these books, and convinced of their pernicious effects, she will never relapse into the practice of novel reading.

As to her taste for metaphysical books—Dear mother, I am very daring to differ with you in so many points; but permit me to say, that I do not agree with you in detesting metaphysics. People may lose themselves in that labyrinth; but why should they meet with vice in the midst of it? The characters of a moralist, a practical moralist, and a metaphysician, are not incompatible, as we may see in many amiable and illustrious examples. To examine human motives, and the nature of the human mind, is not to destroy the power of virtue, or to increase the influence of vice. The chemist, after analysing certain substances, and after discovering their constituent parts, can lay aside all that is heterogeneous, and recompound the substance in a purer state. From analogy we might infer, that the motives of metaphysicians ought to be purer than those of the vulgar and ignorant. To discover the art of converting base into noble passions, or to obtain a universal remedy for all mental diseases, is perhaps beyond the power of metaphysicians; but in the pursuit useful discoveries may be made.

As to Olivia's letters—I am sorry I sent them to you; for I see that they have lowered, instead of raising her in your opinion. But if you criticise letters, written in openness and confidence of heart to a private friend, as if they were set before the tribunal of the public, you are—may I say it?—not

only severe, but unjust; for you try and condemn the subjects of one country by the laws of another.

Dearest mother, be half as indulgent to Olivia as you are to me: indeed you are prejudiced against her; and because you see some faults, you think her whole character vicious. But would you cut down a fine tree because a leaf is withered, or because the canker-worm has eaten into the bud? Even if a main branch were decayed, are there not remedies which, skilfully applied, can save the tree from destruction, and perhaps restore it to its pristine beauty?

And now, having exhausted all my allusions, all my arguments, and all my little stock of eloquence, I must come to a plain matter of fact—

Before I received your letter I had invited lady Olivia to spend some time at L—— Castle. I fear that you will blame my precipitation, and I reproach myself for it, because I know it will give you pain. However, though you will think me imprudent, I am certain you would rather that I were imprudent than unjust. I have defended Olivia from what I believe to be unmerited censure; I have invited her to my house; she has accepted my proffered kindness; to withdraw it afterwards would be doing her irreparable injury: it would confirm all that the world can suspect: it would be saying to the censorious—I am convinced that you are right, and I deliver your victim up to you.

Thus I should betray the person whom I undertook to defend: her confidence in me, her having but for

a moment accepted my protection, would be her ruin. I could not act in so base a manner.

Fear nothing for me, my best, but too anxious friend. (I may do lady Olivia some good; she can do me no harm.) She may learn the principles which you have taught me; I can never catch from her any tastes or habits which you would disapprove. As to the rest, I hazard little or nothing. The hereditary credit which I enjoy in my maternal right enables me to assist others without injuring myself.

Your affectionate daughter,
LEONORA.

LETTER VIII.

THE DUCHESS OF — TO HER DAUGHTER.

MY DEAREST CHILD,

I HOPE that you are in the right, and that I am in the wrong.

Your affectionate mother,

LETTER IX.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

PREPARE yourself, my ever dear and charming Gabrielle, for all the torments of jealousy. Know,

that since I came to England I have formed a new friendship with a woman who is interesting in the extreme, who has charmed me by the simplicity of her manners and the generous sensibility of her heart. Her character is certainly too reserved: yet even this defect has perhaps increased her power over my imagination, and consequently over my affections. I know not by what magic she has obtained it, but she has already an ascendancy over me, which would quite astonish *you*, who know my wayward fancies and independent spirit.

Alas! I confess my heart is weak indeed; and I fear that all the power of friendship and philosophy combined will never strengthen it sufficiently. O, Gabrielle! how can I hope to obliterate from my soul that attachment which has marked the colour of my destiny for years? Yet such courage, such cruel courage is required of me, and of such I have boasted myself capable. Lady Leonora L——, my new friend, has, by all the English eloquence of virtue, obtained from me a promise, which, I fear, I shall not have the fortitude to keep—but I must make the attempt——Forbid R*** to write to me——Yes! I have written the words——Forbid R*** to write to me——Forbid him to think of me——I will do more—if possible I will forbid myself henceforward to think of him—to think of love—Adieu, my Gabrielle——All the illusions of life are over, and a dreary blank of future existence lies before me, terminated only by the grave. To-morrow I go to L—— Castle, with feelings which I can compare only to those of

the unfortunate la Vallière when she renounced her lover, and resolved to bury herself in a cloister.— Alas! why have not I the resource of devotion?

Your unhappy

OLIVIA.

LETTER X.

GENERAL B—— TO MR. L——.

PUBLISH my travels!—Not I, my dear friend. The world shall never have the pleasure of laughing at general B——'s trip to Paris. Before a man sets about to inform others, he should have seen, not only the surface but the bottom of things; he should have had, not only a *vue d'oiseau*, but (to use a celebrated naval commander's expression) a *vue de poisson* of his subject. By this time you must have heard enough of the Louvre and the Tuilleries, and Versailles, and la petit Trianon, and St. Cloud—and you have had enough of pictures and statues; and you know all that can be known of Bonaparté, by seeing him at a review or a levee; and the fashionable beauties and *celebrated characters* of the hour have all passed and repassed through the magic lantern. A fresh showman might make his figures a little more correct, or a little more in laughable caricature, but he could produce nothing new. Alas! there is nothing new under the sun. Nothing remains for the moderns, but to practise the oldest follies the newest ways. Would you, for the sake

of your female friends, know the fashionable dress of a Parisian *elegante*, see Seneca on the transparent vestments of the Roman ladies, who, like these modern belles, were generous in the display of their charms to the public. No doubt these French republicanists act upon the true Spartan principle of modesty: they take the most efficacious method to prevent their influence from being too great over the imaginations of men, by renouncing all that insidious reserve which alone can render even beauty permanently dangerous.

Of the cruelties of the revolution I can tell you nothing new. The public have been steeped up to the lips in blood, and have surely had their fill of horrors.

But, my dear friend, you say that I must be able to give a just view of the present state of French society, and of the best parts of it, because I have not, like some of my countrymen, hurried about Paris from one *spectacle* to another, seen the opera, and the play-houses, and the masked balls, and the gaming-houses, and the women of the Palais Royale, and the lions of all sorts; gone through the usual routine of presentation and public dinners, drunk French wine, damned French cookery, and "come home content." I have certainly endeavoured to employ my time better, and have had the good fortune to be admitted into the best *private societies* in Paris. These were composed of the remains of the French nobility, of men of letters and science, and of families, who, without interfering in politics, devote themselves to domestic duties, to literary and social pleasures. The

happy hours I have passed in this society can never be forgotten, and the kindness I have received has made its full impression upon an honest English heart. I will never disgrace the confidence of my friends, by drawing their characters for the public.

Cæsar, in all his glory, and all his despotism, could not, with impunity, force a Roman knight* to go upon the stage: but modern anecdote-mongers, more cruel and insolent than Cæsar, force their friends of all ages and sexes to appear, and speak, and act, for the amusement or derision of the public.

My dear friend, is not my resolution, never to favour the world with my tour, well grounded? I hope that I have proved to your satisfaction, that I could tell people nothing but what I do not understand, or what is not worth telling them, or what has been told them a hundred times, or what, as a gentleman, I am bound not to publish.

Yours truly,
J. B.

LETTER XI.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

L—— Castle.

FRIENDSHIP, my amiable and interesting Gabrielle, is more an affair of the heart than of the head, more the instinct of taste than the choice of reason. With me the heart is no longer touched, when the imagi-

* Laberius.

nation ceases to be charmed. Explain to me this metaphysical phenomenon of my nature, and, for your reward, I will quiet your jealousy, by confessing without compunction what now weighs on my conscience terribly. I begin to feel that I can never love this English friend as I ought. She is *too English*—far too English for one who has known the charms of French ease, vivacity, and sentiment; for one who has seen the bewitching Gabrielle's infinite variety.

Leonora has just the figure and face that you would picture to yourself for *une belle Anglaise*; and if our Milton comes into your memory, you might repeat, for the quotation is not too trite for a foreigner,

“Grace is in all her steps, heaven in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love.”

But then it is grace which says nothing, a heaven only for a husband, the dignity more of a matron than of a heroine, and love that might have suited Eve before she had seen this world. Leonora is certainly a beauty; but then a beauty who does not know her power, and who, consequently, can make no one else feel its full extent. She is not unlike your beautiful Polish princess, but she has none of the charming Anastasia's irresistible transitions from soft, silent languor, to brilliant, eloquent enthusiasm. All the gestures and attitudes of Anastasia are those of taste and sentiment, Leonora's are simply those of nature. *La belle nature*, but not *le beau idéal*. With a figure that would grace any court, or shine upon any stage, she usually enters a room without

producing, or thinking of producing, any sensation ; she moves often without seeming to have any other intention than to change her place ; and her fine eyes generally look as if they were made only to see with. At times she certainly has a most expressive and intelligent countenance. I have seen her face enlightened by the fire of genius, and shaded by the exquisite touches of sensibility ; but all this is merely called forth by the occasion, and vanishes before it is noticed by half the company. Indeed, the full radiance of her beauty or of her wit seldom shines upon any one but her husband. The audience and spectators are forgotten. Heavens ! what a difference between the effect which Leonora and Gabrielle produce ! But, to do her justice, much of this arises from the different *organization* of French and English society. In Paris the insipid details of domestic life are judiciously kept behind the scenes, and women appear as heroines upon the stage, with all the advantages of decoration, to listen to the language of love, and to receive the homage of public admiration. In England, gallantry is not yet *systematised*, and our sex look more to their families than to what is called *society* for the happiness of existence. And yet the affection of mothers for their children does not appear to be so strong in the hearts of English as of French women. In England ladies do not talk of the *sentiment of maternity* with that elegance and sensibility with which you expatiate upon it continually in conversation. They literally are *des bonnes mères de famille*, not from the impulse of sentiment, but merely from an early instilled sense of duty, for

which they deserve little credit. However, they devote their lives to their children, and those who have the misfortune to be their intimate friends are doomed to see them half the day, or all day long, go through the part of the good mother in all its diurnal monotony of lessons and caresses. All this may be vastly right—it is a pity it is so tiresome. For my part I cannot conceive how persons of superior taste and talents can submit to it, unless it be to make themselves a reputation, and that you know is done — by writing and talking on the general principles, not by submitting to the minute details of education. The great painter sketches the outline, and touches the principal features, but leaves the subordinate drudgery of filling up the parts, finishing the drapery, &c., to inferior hands.

Upon recollection, in my favourite “Sorrows of Werter,” the heroine is represented cutting bread and butter for a group of children: I admire this simplicity in Goethe; ’tis one of the secrets by which he touches the heart. Simplicity is delightful by way of variety, but always simplicity is worse than *toujours perdrix*. Children in a novel or a drama are charming little creatures: but in real life they are often insufferable plagues. What becomes of them in Paris I know not; but I am sure that they are never in the way of one’s conversations or reveries; and it would be a blessing to society if English children were as inaudible and invisible. These things strike me sensibly upon my return to England, after so long an absence. Surely, by means of the machinery of masters, and governesses, and schools,

the manufacture of education might be carried on without incommoding those who desire to see only the finished production.) Here I find the daughter of an English duke, a woman in the first bloom of youth, of the highest pretensions in point of rank, beauty, fashion, accomplishments, and talents, devoting herself to the education of two children, orphans, left to her care by an elder sister. To take charge of orphans is a good and fine action; as such it touches me sensibly; but then where is the necessity of sacrificing one's friends, and one's pleasures, day after day, and hour after hour, to mere children? Leonora can persevere only from a notion of duty. Now, in my opinion, when generosity becomes duty it ceases to be virtue. Virtue requires free-will: duty implies constraint. Virtue acts from the impulse of the moment, and never tires or is tired; duty drudges on in consequence of reflection, and, weary herself, wearies all beholders. Duty, always laborious, never can be graceful; and what is not graceful in woman cannot be amiable—can it, my amiable Gabrielle? But I reproach myself for all I have written. Leonora is my friend—besides, I am really obliged to her, and for the universe would I not hint a thought to her disadvantage. Indeed she is a most excellent, a faultless character, and it is the misfortune of your Olivia not to love perfection as she ought.

My charming and interesting Gabrielle, I am more out of humour with myself than you can conceive; for in spite of all that reason and gratitude

urge, I fear I cannot prefer the insipid virtues of Leonora to the lively graces of Gabrielle.

As to the cold husband, Mr. L——, I neither know nor wish to know any thing of him; but I live in hopes of an agreeable and interesting accession to our society to-day, from the arrival of Leonora's intimate friend, a young widow, whose husband I understand was a man of a harsh temper: she has gone through severe trials with surprising fortitude; and though I do not know her history, I am persuaded it must be interesting. Assuredly this husband could never have been the man of her choice, and of course she must have had some secret unhappy attachment, which doubtless preyed upon her spirits. Probably the object of her affection, in despair at her marriage, plighted his faith unfortunately, or possibly may have fallen a sacrifice to his constancy. I am all impatience to see her. Her husband's name was so ruggedly English, that I am sure you would never be able to pronounce it, especially if you only saw it written; therefore I shall always to you call her Helen, a name which is more pleasing to the ear, and more promising to the imagination. I have not been able to prevail upon Leonora to describe her friend to me exactly; she says only, that she loves Helen too well to overpraise her beforehand. My busy fancy has, however, bodied forth her form, and painted her in the most amiable and enchanting colours. Hark! she is just arrived. Adieu.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XII.

FROM MRS. C—— TO MISS B——.

* * * * *

HAVING now had the honour of spending nearly a week in the society of the celebrated enchantress, lady Olivia, you will naturally expect that I should be much improved in the art of love: but before I come to my improvements I must tell you, what will be rather more interesting, that Leonora is perfectly well and happy, and that I have the dear delight of exclaiming ten times an hour, “Ay, just as I thought it would be!—Just such a wife, just such a mistress of a family I knew she would make.”

“*Not to admire,*” is an art or a precept which I have not been able to practise much since I came here. Some philosophers tell us that admiration is not only a silly but a fatiguing state of mind; and I suppose that nothing could have preserved my mind from being tired to death but the quantity of bodily exercise which I have taken. I could if I pleased give you a plan and elevation of this castle. Nay, I doubt not but I could stand an examination in the catalogue of the pictures, or the inventory of the furniture.

You Helen!—you who could not remember the colour of lady N——’s *new* curtains after you had seen them at least a hundred times!

Lady N—— was indifferent to me, and how could I hang up her curtains in my memory? By what

could they hold? Do you not know, Margaret . . . all the fine things that I could say, and that quartos have said before me, about the association of ideas and sensations, &c.? Those we love impart to uninteresting objects the power of pleasing, as the magnet can communicate to inert metal its attractive influence.

Till Mr. L—— was Leonora's lover I never liked him much. I do not mean to call him inert. I always knew that he had many excellent qualities; but there was nothing in his temper peculiarly agreeable to me, and there was something in his character that I did not thoroughly understand; yet since he is become Leonora's husband I find my understanding much improved, and I dare say it will soon be so far enlarged, that I shall comprehend him perfectly.

Leonora has almost persuaded me to like lady Olivia. Not to laugh at her would be impossible. I wish you could see the way in which we go on together. Our first setting out would have diverted you. Enter lady Olivia breathless, with an air of theatric expectation—advances to embrace Helen, who is laughing with Leonora—her back turned towards the side of the stage at which Olivia enters—Olivia pauses suddenly, and measures Helen *with a long look*. What passes in lady Olivia's mind at this moment I do not know, but I guess that she was disappointed wofully by my appearance. After some time she was recovered, by Leonora's assistance, from her reverie, and presently began to admire my vivacity, and to find out that I was Clarissa's miss Howe—no, I was lady G.—no, I was Heloise's Clara :

but I, choosing to be myself, and insisting upon being an *original*, sunk again visibly and rapidly in Olivia's opinion, till I was in imminent danger of being *nobody*. Leonora again kindly interposed to save me from annihilation; and after an interval of an hour or two dedicated to letter-writing, lady Olivia returned and seated herself beside me, resolved to decide what manner of woman I was. Certain novels are the touchstones of feeling and *intellect* with certain ladies. Unluckily I was not well read in these; and in the questions put to me from these sentimental statute-books, I gave strange judgments, often for the husband or parents against the heroine. I did not even admit the plea of destiny, irresistible passion, or *entraînement*, as in all cases sufficient excuse for all errors and crimes. Moreover, I excited astonishment by calling things by obsolete names. I called a married woman's having a lover a *crime*! Then I was no judge of virtues, for I thought a wife's making an intimate friend of her husband's mistress was scandalous and mean; but this I was told is the height of delicacy and generosity. I could not perceive the propriety of a man's liking two women at the same time, or a woman's having a platonic attachment for half a dozen lovers; and I owned that I did not wish divorce could be as easily obtained in England as in France. All which proved that I have never been out of England—a great misfortune! I dare say it will soon be discovered that women as well as madeira cannot be good for any thing till they have crossed the line. But beside the obloquy of having lived only in the best company in England,

I was further disgraced by the discovery, that I am deplorably ignorant of metaphysics, and have never been enlightened by any philanthropic transcendental foreign professor of humanity. Profoundly humiliated, and not having yet taken the first step towards knowledge, the knowing that I was ignorant, I was pondering upon my sad fate, when lady Olivia, putting her hand upon my shoulder, summoned me into the court of love, there in my own proper person to answer such questions as it should please her ladyship to ask. For instance:—"Were you ever in love?—How often?—When?—Where?—And with whom?"

Never having stood a cross-examination in public upon these points, I was not quite prepared to reply; and I was accused of giving evasive answers, and convicted of blushing. Mr. L——, who was present at this examination, enjoyed, in his grave way, my astonishment and confusion, but said not one word. I rallied my spirits and my wits, and gave some answers which gained the smile of the court on my side.

From these specimens you may guess, my dear Margaret, how well this lady and I are likely to agree. I shall divert myself with her absurdities without scruple. Yet notwithstanding the flagrancy of these, Leonora persuades me to think well of Olivia; indeed I am so happy here, that it would be a difficult matter at present to make me think ill of any body. The good qualities which Leonora sees in her are not yet visible to my eyes; but Leonora's visual orb is so cleared with charity and love, that

she can discern what is not revealed to vulgar sight. Even in the very germ she discovers the minute form of the perfect flower. *The Olivia* will, I hope, in time blow out in full perfection.

Yours affectionately,

HELEN C——.

LETTER XIII.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

Monday.

O my Gabrielle! this Helen is not precisely the person that I expected. Instead of being a dejected beauty, she is all life and gaiety.

I own I should like her better if she were a little more pensive; a tinge of melancholy would, in her situation, be so becoming and natural. My imagination was quite disappointed when I beheld the quickness of her eyes and frequency of her smiles. Even her mode of showing affection to Leonora was not such as could please me. This is the first visit, I understand, that she has paid Leonora since her marriage: these friends have been separated for many months.—I was not present at their meeting; but I came into the room a few minutes after *Helen's* arrival, and I should have thought that they had seen one another but yesterday. This *dear Helen* was quite at ease and at home in a few moments, and seemed as if she had been living with us for years. I make allowance for the ease of well-bred

people. Helen has lived much in the world, and has polished manners. But the heart—the heart is superior to politeness; and even ease, in some situations, shows a want of the delicate *tact* of sentiment. In a similar situation I should have been silent, entranced, absorbed, in my sensations—overcome by them, perhaps—dissolved in tears. But in Helen there appeared no symptoms of real sensibility—nothing characteristic—nothing profound—nothing concentrated: it was all superficial, and evaporated in the common way. I was provoked to see Leonora satisfied. She assures me that Helen has uncommonly strong affections, and that her character rather exceeds than is deficient in enthusiasm. Possibly; but I am certain that Helen is in no danger of becoming romantic. Far from being abstracted, I never saw any one seem more interested and eager about every present occurrence—pleased, even to childishness, with every passing trifle. I confess that she is too much of this world for me. But I will if possible suspend my judgment, and study her a few hours longer before I give you my definitive opinion.

Thursday.

Well, my Gabrielle, my *definitive opinion* is that I can never love this friend of Leonora. I said that she had lived much in the world—but only in the English world: she has never seen any other; therefore, though quite in a different style from Leonora, she shocks me with the same nationality. All her ideas are exclusively English: she has what is called

English good sense, and English humour, and English prejudices of *all sorts*, both masculine and feminine. She takes fire in defence of her country and of her sex; nay, sometimes blushes even to awkwardness, which one would not expect in the midst of her good breeding and vivacity. What a difference between her vivacity and that of my charming Gabrielle! as great as between the enlargement of your mind and the limited nature of her understanding. I tried her on various subjects, but found her intrenched in her own contracted notions. All new, or liberal, or sublime ideas in morality or metaphysics she either cannot seize, or seizes only to place in a ridiculous point of view: a certain sign of mediocrity. Adieu, my Gabrielle. I must send you the pictures, whether engaging or forbidding, of those with whom your Olivia is destined to pass her time. When I have no events to relate, still I must write to convey to you my sentiments. Alas! how imperfectly!—for I have interdicted myself the expression of those most interesting to my heart. Leonora, calmly prudent, coolly virtuous, knows not what it costs me to be faithful to this cruel promise. Write to me, my sympathizing, my tender friend!

Your ever unhappy

OLIVIA.

LETTER XIV.

MRS. C—— TO MISS B——.

July 10th.

SOME very good people, like some very fine pictures, are best at a distance. But Leonora is not one of these: the nearer you approach the better you like her, as in arabesque-work you may admire the beauty of the design even at a distance, but you cannot appreciate the delicacy of the execution till you examine it closely, and discover that every line is formed of grains of gold almost imperceptibly fine. I am glad that the "small sweet courtesies of life" have been hailed by one sentimental writer at least. The minor virtues are not to be despised even in comparison with the most exalted. The common rose, I have often thought, need not be ashamed of itself even in company with the finest exotics in a hothouse; and I remember, that your brother, in one of his letters, observed, that the common cock makes a very respectable figure even in the grand Parisian assembly of all the stuffed birds and beasts in the universe. It is a glorious thing to have a friend who will jump into a river, or down a precipice, to save one's life: but as I do not intend to tumble down precipices, or to throw myself into the water above half a dozen times, I would rather have for my friends persons who would not reserve their kindness wholly for these grand occasions, but who could condescend to make me happy every day, and

all day long, even by actions not sufficiently sublime to be recorded in history or romance.

Do not infer from this that I think Leonora would hesitate to make *great* sacrifices. I have had sufficient experience of her fortitude and active courage of mind in the most trying circumstances, whilst many who talked more stoutly shrunk from *committing* themselves by actions.

Some maxim-maker says, that past misfortunes are good for nothing but to be forgotten. I am not of his opinion: I think that they are good to make us know our winter from our summer friends, and to make us feel for those who have sustained us in adversity that most pleasurable sensation of the human mind—gratitude.

But I am straying unawares into the province of sentiment, where I am such a stranger that I shall inevitably lose my way, especially as I am too proud to take a guide. Lady Olivia **** may perhaps be very fond of Leonora: and as she has every possible cause to be so, it is but reasonable and charitable to suppose that she is: but I should never guess it by her manner. She speaks of her friendship sometimes in the most romantic style, but often makes observations upon *the enviable coolness and imperturbability of Leonora's disposition*, which convinces me that she does not understand it in the least. Those who do not really feel always pitch their expressions too high or too low, as deaf people bellow or speak in a whisper. But I may be mistaken in my suspicions of Olivia; for *to do the lady justice*, as Mrs. Candour would say, she is so affected that it is difficult to

know what she really feels. Those who put on rouge occasionally are suspected of wearing it constantly, and never have any credit for their natural colour; presently they become so accustomed to common rouge, that mistaking scarlet for pale pink, they persist in laying on more and more, till they are like nothing human.

Yours affectionately,
HELEN C——.

LETTER XV.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

I HAVE found it! I have found it! dear Gabrielle, rejoice with me! I have solved the metaphysical problem, which perplexed me so cruelly, and now I am once more at peace with myself. I have discovered the reason why I cannot love Leonora as she merits to be loved—she has obliged me; and the nature of obligation is such, that it supposes superiority on one side, and consequently destroys the equality, the freedom, the ease, the charm of friendship. Gratitude weighs upon one's heart in proportion to the delicacy of its feelings. To minds of an ordinary sort it may be pleasurable, for with them it is sufficiently feeble to be calm; but in souls of a superior cast, it is a poignant, painful sensation, because it is too strong ever to be tranquil. In short,

“ 'Tis bliss but to a certain bound—
Beyond, 'tis agony.”

For my own part, the very dread that I shall not be thought to express enough deprives me of the power to speak or even to feel. Fear, you know, extinguishes affection; and of all fears the dread of not being sufficiently grateful operates the most powerfully. Thus sensibility destroys itself.—Gracious Heaven! teach me to moderate mine. ✓✓

In the nature of the obligation with which Leonora has oppressed my heart, there is something peculiarly humiliating. Upon my return to this country I found the malignant genius of scandal bent upon destroying my reputation. You have no idea of the miserable force of prejudice which still prevails here. There are some women who emancipate themselves, but then unluckily they are not in sufficient numbers to keep each other in countenance in public. One would not choose to be confined to the society of people who cannot go to court, though sometimes they take the lead elsewhere. We are full half a century behind you in civilization; and your revolution has, I find, afforded all our stiffened moralists *incontrovertible* arguments against liberty of opinion or conduct in either sex.

I was thunderstruck when I saw the grave and repulsive faces of all my female acquaintance. At first I attributed every thing that was strange and disagreeable to English reserve, of which I had retained a sufficiently formidable idea: but I presently found that there was some other cause which kept all these nice consciences at a distance from my atmosphere.

Would you believe it, I saw myself upon the point

of being quite excluded from good society. Leonora saved me from this imminent danger. Voluntarily, and I must say nobly, if not gracefully, Leonora came forward in my defence. Vanquishing her natural English timidity, she braved the eyes, and tongues, and advice of all the prudes and old dowagers my enemies, amongst whom I may count the superannuated duchess her mother, the proudest dowager now living. When I appeared in public with a personage of Leonora's unblemished reputation, scandal, much against her will, was forced to be silent, and it was to be taken for granted that I was, in the language of prudery, perfectly innocent. Leonora, to be consistent in goodness, or to complete her triumph in the face of the world, invited me to accompany her to the country.—I have now been some weeks at this superb castle. Heaven is my witness that I came with a heart overflowing with affection; but the painful, the agonizing sense of humiliation mixed with my tenderest sentiments, and all became bitterness insufferable. O Gabrielle! you, and perhaps you alone upon earth, can understand my feelings. Adieu!—pity me—I must not ask you a single question about— I must not write the name for ever dear—What am I saying? where are my promises?—Adieu!—Adieu!

Your unhappy

OLIVIA.

LETTER XVI.

MRS. C—— TO MISS B——.

July 16th.

As I have never thought it my duty in this mortal life to mourn for the absurdities of my fellow-creatures, I should now enjoy the pleasure of laughing at lady Olivia, if my propensity were not checked by a serious apprehension that she will injure Leonora's happiness. From the most generous motives dear Leonora is continually anxious to soothe her mind, to persuade and reason her into common sense, to re-establish her in public opinion, and to make her happy. But I am convinced that lady Olivia never will have common sense, and consequently never can be happy. Twenty times a day I wish her at the antipodes, for I dread lest Leonora should be implicated in her affairs, and involved in her misery.

Last night this foolish woman, who unluckily is graced with all the power of words, poured forth a fine declamation in favour of divorce. In vain Leonora reasoned, expostulated, blushed. Lady Olivia cannot blush for herself; and though both Mr. L—— and I were present, she persisted with that vehemence which betrays personal interest in an argument. I suspect that she is going to try to obtain a divorce from her husband, that she may marry her lover. Consider the consequences of this for Leonora.—Leonora to be the friend of a woman who

will brave the infamy of a trial at Doctors' Commons! But Leonora says I am mistaken, and that all this is only Olivia's way of talking. I wish then, that, if she does not intend to act like a fool, she would not talk like one. I agree with the gentleman who said that a woman who begins by playing the fool, always ends by playing the devil. Even before me, though I certainly never solicit her confidence, lady Olivia talks with the most imprudent openness of her love affairs; not, I think, from ingenuousness, but from inability to restrain herself. Begin what subject of conversation I will, as far from Cupid as possible, she will bring me back again to him before I know where I am. She has no ideas but on this one subject. Leonora, dear kind-hearted Leonora, attributes this to the temporary influence of a violent passion, which she assures me Olivia will conquer, and that then all her great and good qualities will, as if freed from enchantment, re-assume their natural vigour. *Natural!*—there is nothing natural about this sophisticated lady. I wish Leonora would think more of herself and less of other people. As to lady Olivia's excessive sensibility, I have no faith in it. I do not think either the lover or the passion so much to be feared for her, as the want of a lover and the habit of thinking that it is necessary to be in love. *****

Yours affectionately,
HELEN C——.

LETTER XVII.

GENERAL B—— TO MR. L——.

MY DEAR L——,

Paris, Hôtel de Courlande.

WHEN you ask a countryman in England the way to the next town, he replies, “Where do you come from, master?” and till you have answered this question, no information can you obtain from him, You ask me what I know of lady Olivia——. What is your reason for asking? Till you have answered this question, hope for no information from me. Seriously, lady Olivia had left Paris before I arrived, therefore you cannot have my judgment of her ladyship, which I presume is all you could depend upon. If you will take hearsay evidence, and if you wish me to speak to general character, I can readily satisfy you. Common repute is loud and unanimous in favour of her talents, beauty, and fashion: there is no resisting, I am told, the fascination of her manners and conversation; *but* her opinions are fashionably liberal, and her practice as liberal as her theories. Since her separation from her husband, her lover is publicly named. Some English friends plead in her favour platonic attachment: this, like benefit of clergy, is claimed of course for a first offence: but lady Olivia’s Parisian acquaintance are not so scrupulous or so old-fashioned as to think it an offence; they call it an *arrangement*, and to this there can be no objection. As a French gentleman said to me the

other day, with an unanswerable shrug, "Tout le monde sait que R*** est son amant ; d'ailleurs, c'est la femme la plus aimable du monde."

As to lady Olivia's friend, Mad. de P——, she sees a great deal of company: her house is the resort of people of various descriptions; ministers, foreigners, coquettes, and generals; in short, of all those who wish without scandal or suspicion to intrigue either in love or politics. Her assemblies are also frequented by a few of *l'ancien régime*, who wish to be in favour with the present government. Mad. de P——, of a noble family herself, and formerly much at court, has managed matters so as to have regained all her husband's confiscated property, and to have acquired much influence with some of the leading men of the day. In her manners and conversation there is an odd mixture of frivolity and address, of the airs of coquetry and the jargon of sentiment. She has the politeness of a French countess, with *exquisite* knowledge of the world and of *les convenances*, joined to that freedom of opinion which marks the present times. In the midst of all these inconsistencies, it is difficult to guess what her real character may be. At first sight, I should pronounce her to be a silly woman, governed by vanity and the whim of the moment: but those who know her better than I do believe her to be a woman of considerable talents, inordinately fond of power, and uniformly intent upon her own interest, using coquetry only as a means to govern our sex, and frivolity as a mask for her ambition. In short, Mad. de P—— is a perfect specimen of the combination of an *intrigante* and an

élégante, a combination often found in Paris. Here women mingle politics and gallantry—men mix politics and epicurism—which is the better mixture?

I have business of importance to my country to transact to-day, *therefore* I am going to dine with the modern Apicius. Excuse me, my dear friend, if I cannot stay at present to answer your questions about divorce. I must be punctual. What sort of a negociator can he make who is too late at a minister's dinner? Five minutes might change the face of Europe.

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER XVIII.

MADAME DE P—— TO OLIVIA.

Paris.

My incomparable Olivia! your letters are absolutely divine. I am *maussade*, I *vegetate*. I cannot be said to live the days when I do not hear from you. Last Thursday I was disappointed of one of these dear letters, and *Brave-et-tendre* told me frankly that I was so little amiable he should not have known me.—As to the rest, pardon me for not writing punctually: I have been really in a chaos of business and pleasure, and I do not know which fatigues most. But I am obliged to attend the ministers every day, for the sake of my friends.

A thousand and a thousand thanks for your pictures of your English friends: sketches by a masterly

hand must be valuable, whatever the subject. I would rather have the pictures than the realities. Your Helen and your lady Leonora are too good for me, and I pity you from my soul for being shut up in that old castle. I suppose it is like an old castle in Dauphiny, where I once spent a week, and where I was nearly frightened to death by the flapping of the old tapestry behind my bed, and by the bats which flew in through the broken windows. They say, however, that our *châteaux* and yours are something different. Of this I have no clear conception.

I send you three comforters in your prison—a billet-doux, a new novel, and a pattern of my sandal: a billet-doux from R*** says every thing for itself; but I must say something for the new novel. Zenobie, which I now send you, is the declared rival of Seraphine. Parties have run high on both sides, and applications were made and inuendoes discovered, and wit and sentiment came to close combat; and, as usual, people talked till they did not understand themselves. For a fortnight, wherever one went the first words to be heard on entering every *salon* were Seraphine and Zenobie.—Peace or war.—Mlle. Georges and Mlle. Duchesnois were nothing to Seraphine and Zenobie. For Heaven's sake tell me which you prefer! But I fear they will be no more talked of before I have your answer. To say the truth, I am tired of both heroines, for a fortnight is too long to talk or think of any one thing.

I flatter myself you will like my sandals: they are my own invention, and my foot really shows them to

advantage. You know I might say, as Du P*** said of himself, "J'ai un pied dont la petitesse échappe à la vitesse de la pensée." I thought my poor friend Mad. Dumarais would have died with envy, the other day, when I appeared in them at her ball, which, by the by, was in all its decorations as absurd and in as bad taste as usual. For the most part these *nouveaux riches* lavish money, but can never purchase taste or a sense of propriety. All is gold: but that is not enough; or rather that is too much.—In spite of all that both the Indies, China, Arabia, Egypt, and even Paris can do for them, they will be ever out of place, in the midst of their magnificence: they will never even know how to ruin themselves nobly. They must live and die as they were born, ridiculous. Now I would rather not exist than feel myself ridiculous. But I believe no one living, not even le petit d'Heronville, knows himself to be an object of ridicule. There are no looking-glasses for the mind, and I question whether we should use them if there were. D'Heronville is just as you left him, and as much my amusement as he used to be yours. He goes on with an eternal galimatias of patriotism, with such a self-sufficient air and decided tone! never suspecting that he says only what other people make him say, and that he is listened to, only to find out what *some people* think. Many will say before fools what they would not hazard before wise men; not considering that fools can repeat as well as parrots. I once heard a great man remark that the only spies fit to be trusted are those who do not know themselves to be such, who

have no salary but what their vanity pays them, and who are employed without being accredited.

But *trève de politique*!—My charming Olivia, I know, abhors politics as much as I detest metaphysics, from all lips or pens but hers. Now I must tell you something of your friends here.

O—— talks nonsense as agreeably as ever, and dances as divinely. 'Tis a pity he cannot always dance, for then he would not ruin himself at play. He wants me to get him a regiment—as if I had any power!—or as if I would use it for this purpose, when I know that my interesting friend Mad. Q—— would break her poor little heart if he were to quit her.

Mon Cœur is as pretty as ever; but she is now in affliction. She has lost her dear little dog Corisonde. He died suddenly; almost in her arms! She will erect a monument to him in her charming *jardin Anglois*. This will occupy her, and then “Time, the comforter”—Inimitable Voltaire!

Our dear *Brillante* has just had a superb *hommage* from her lover the commissary—a necklace and bracelets of the finest pearls: but she cannot wear them yet: her brother having died last week, she is in deep mourning. This brother was not upon good terms with her. He never forgave the divorce. He thought it a disgrace to have a sister *une divorcée*; but he was full of prejudice, poor man, and he is dead, and we need think no more of him or of his faults.

Our *ci-devant chanoine*, who married that little Meudon, is as miserable as possible, and as ridi-

culous: for he is jealous of his young wife, and she is a *franche-coquette*. The poor man looks as if he repented sincerely of his errors. What a penitent a coquette can make of a husband! Bourdaloue and Massillon would have tried their powers on this man's heart in vain.

Did I tell you that Mad. G—— is a second time divorced? But this time it is her husband's doing, not hers. This handsome husband has spent all the immense fortune she brought him, and now procures a divorce for *incompatibility of temper*, and is going to marry another lady, richer than Mad. G——, and as great a fool. This system of divorce, though convenient, is not always advantageous to women. However, in one point of view, I wonder that the rigid moralists do not defend it, as the only means of making a man in love with his own wife. A man divorces; the law does not permit him to marry the same woman afterwards; of course this prohibition makes him fall in love with her. Of this we have many edifying examples besides Fanchette, who, though she was so beautiful, and a tolerable actress, would never have drawn all Paris to the Vaudeville if she had not been a *divorcée*, and if it had not been known that her husband, who played the lover of the piece, was dying to marry her again. Apropos, Mad. St. Germain is acting one of her own romances, in the high sublime style, and threatens to poison herself for love of her perjured inconstant—but it will not do.

Madame *la Grande* was near having a sad accident the other night: in crossing the Pont-neuf her horses

took fright; for there was a crowd and *embarras*, a man having just drowned himself—not for love, but for hunger. How many men, women, and children, do you think drowned themselves in the Seine last year? Upwards of two hundred. This is really shocking, and a stop should be put to it by authority. It absolutely makes me shudder and reflect; but *après nous le déluge* was La Pompadour's maxim, and should be ours.

Mad. Folard *se coiffe en cheveux*, and Mad. Rocroix crowns herself with roses, whilst all the world knows that either of them is old enough to be my mother. In former days a woman could not wear flowers after thirty, and was *bel esprit* or *dévoté* at forty, for it was thought bad taste to do otherwise. But now every body may be as young as they please, or as ridiculous. Women have certainly gained by the new order of things.

Our poor friend *Vermeille* *se meurt de la poitrine*—a victim to tea and late hours. She is an interesting creature, and my heart bleeds for her: she will never last till winter.

Do you know, it is said, we shall soon have no wood to burn. What can have become of all our forests? People should inquire after them. The *Venus de Medicis* has at last found her way down the Seine. It is not determined yet where to place her: but she is at Paris, and that is a great point gained for her. You complained that the *Apollo* stands with his back so near the wall, that there is no seeing half the beauties of his shoulders. If I have any influence, *Venus* shall not be so served. I

have been to see her. She is certainly divine—but not French. I do not despair of seeing her surpassed by our artists.

Adieu, my adorable Olivia. I should have finished my letter yesterday; but when I came home in the morning, expecting to have a moment sacred to you and friendship, who should I find established in an arm-chair in my cabinet but our old countess *Ci-devant*. There was no retreat for me. In the midst of my concentrated rage I was obliged to advance and embrace her, and there was an end of happiness for the day. The pitiless woman kept me till it was even too late to dress, talking over her family misfortunes; as if they were any thing to me. She wants to get her son employed, but her pride will not let her pay her court properly, and she wants me to do it for her. Not I, truly. I should shut my doors against her but for the sake of her nephew *le roué*, who is really a pretty young man. My angel, I embrace you tenderly.

GABRIELLE DE P——.

LETTER XIX.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

How melancholy to a feeling heart is the moment when illusion vanishes, whether that illusion has been created by the magic of love or of friendship! How many such moments, Gabrielle, has your unfortunate

friend been doomed to endure! Alas! when will treacherous fancy cease to throw a deceitful brilliancy upon each new object!

Perhaps I am too delicate—but R***'s note, enclosed in your last, my Gabrielle, was unlike his former letters. It was not passionate, it was only reasonable. A man who can reason is no longer in love. The manner in which he speaks of divorce shocked me beyond expression. Is it for him to talk of scruples when upon this subject I have none? I own to you that my pride and my tenderness are sensibly wounded. Is it for him to convince me that I am in the wrong? I shall not be at ease till I hear from you again, my amiable friend: for my residence here becomes insupportable. But a few short weeks are past since I fancied Leonora an angel, and now she falls below the ordinary standard of mortals. But a few short weeks are past since, in the full confidence of finding in Leonora a second self, a second Gabrielle, I eagerly developed to her my inmost soul; yet now my heart closes, I fear never more to open. The sad conviction, that we have but few ideas, and no feelings in common, stops my tongue when I attempt to speak, chills my heart when I begin to listen.

Do you know, my Gabrielle, I have discovered that Leonora is inordinately selfish? For all other faults I have charity; but selfishness, which has none to give, must expect none. O divine sensibility, defend me from this isolation of the heart! All thy nameless sorrows, all thy heart-rending tortures, would I a thousand times rather endure. Leonora's selfishness breaks out perpetually; and, alas! it is

of the most inveterate, incurable kind: every thing that is immediately or remotely connected with self she loves, and loves with the most provoking pertinacity. Her mother, her husband, she adores, because they are her own; and even her sister's children, because she considers them, she says, as her own. All and every possible portion of self she cherishes with the most sordid partiality. All that touches these relations touches her; and every thing which is theirs, or, in other words, which is hers, she deems excellent and sacred. Last night I just hazarded a word of ridicule upon some of the obsolete prejudices of that august personage, that duchess of old tapestry, her still living ancestor. I wish, Gabrielle, you had seen Leonora's countenance. Her colour rose up to her temples, her eyes lightened with indignation, and her whole person assumed a dignity, which might have killed a presumptuous lover, or, better far, might have enslaved him for life. What folly to waste all this upon such an occasion. But selfishness is ever blind to its real interests. Leonora is so bigoted to this old woman, that she is already in mind an old woman herself. She fancies that she traces a resemblance to her mother, and of course to dear self, in her infant, and she looks upon it with such dotting eyes, and talks to it with such exquisite tones of fondness, as are to me, who know the source from which they proceed, quite ridiculous and disgusting. An infant, who has no imaginable merit, and, to impartial eyes, no charms, she can love to this excess from no motive but pure *egotism*. Then her husband—but this subject I must reserve for another

letter. I am summoned to walk with him this moment.
 Adieu, charming Gabrielle.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XX.

GENERAL B—— TO MR. L——.

MY DEAR L——,

Paris, 180—.

ENCLOSED I send you, according to your earnest desire, Cambaceres' reflections upon the intended new law of divorce. Give me leave to ask why you are so violently interested upon this occasion? Do you envy France this blessing? Do you wish that English husbands and wives should have the power of divorcing each other at pleasure for *incompatibility of temper*? And have you calculated the admirable effect this would produce upon the temper both of the weaker and the stronger sex? To bear and forbear would then be no longer necessary. Every happy pair might quarrel and part at a moment's notice—at a year's notice at most. And their children? The wisdom of Solomon would be necessary to settle the just division of the children. I have this morning been attending a court of law to hear a famous trial between two husbands: the abdicated lord a *ci-devant* noble, and the reigning husband a *ci-devant* grand-vicaire, who has *reformed*. Each party claimed a right to the children by the first marriage, for the children were minors entitled to large fortunes. The *reformed* grand-vicaire pleaded his own cause with

astonishing assurance, amidst the discourteous looks, murmurs, and almost amidst the groans of disapprobation from the majority of the auditors. His powers of impudence, however, failed him at last. I sat on the bench behind him, and saw that his ears had the grace to blush. After another hearing, this cause, which had lasted four years, was decided: and the first husband and real father was permitted to have the guardianship of his own children. During the four years' litigation, the friends of the parties, from the grandmother downwards, were all at irreconcilable variance. What became of the children all this time? Their mother was represented during the trial as she deserved to be, as a wretch void of shame and gratitude. The father was universally pitied, though his rival painted him as a coward, who during the revolution had left his children to save himself by flight; and as a fool, who had left his wife to the care of a profligate grandvicaire. Divorce is not countenanced by opinion in Paris, though permitted by law. With a few exceptions in extraordinary cases, I have observed that *les divorcées* are not received into good society.

To satiate your curiosity, I send you all the papers that have been written lately on this subject, of which you will find that of Cambaceres the best. The wits say that he is an impartial judge. I presume you want these pamphlets for some foolish friend; for yourself you can never want them, blessed as you are with such a wife as lady Leonora L——. I am not surprised that profligate men should wish for freedom of divorce, because it would save them da-

images in Doctors' Commons: but you rather astonish me—if a wise man should be astonished at any thing in these days—by assuring me that you have lately heard this system eloquently defended by a female philosopher. What can women expect from it but contempt? Next to polygamy, it would prove the most certain method of destroying the domestic happiness of the sex, as well as their influence and respectability in society. But some of the dear creatures love to talk of what they do not understand, and usually show their eloquence to the greatest advantage, by taking the wrong side of a question.

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER XXI.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

L—— Castle.

FROM selfishness to jealousy there is but one step, or rather there is none; for jealousy of a certain sort is but selfishness in another form. How different this passion as I have felt it, and as I see it shown! In some characters it is the symptom of amiable and exquisite sensibility; in others of odious coldness and contraction of heart. In some of our sex it is, you know, my Gabrielle, a delicate fear, a tender anxiety, a proof of ardent passion; in others it is a mere love of power, a disgusting struggle for the property of a heart, an absurd assertion of rights and preroga-

tives. Surely no prejudice of education or institution can be more barbarous than that which teaches a wife that she has an indefeasible and exclusive right both to the affections and the fidelity of her husband. I am astonished to hear it avowed by any woman who has the slightest pretensions to delicacy of sentiment, or liberality of mind. I should expect to find this vulgar prejudice only among the downright dames, who talk of *my good man*, and lay a particular emphasis on the possessive pronoun *my*; who understand literally, and expect that their spouses should adhere punctually to every coarse article of our strange marriage vow.

In certain points of view, my Gabrielle, jealousy is undoubtedly the strongest proof of an indelicate mind. Yet, if I mistake not, the delicate, the divine Leonora, is liable to this terrestrial passion. Yesterday evening, as I was returning from a *stroll* in the park with Mr. L——, we met Leonora; and methought she looked embarrassed at meeting us. Heaven knows there was not the slightest occasion for embarrassment, and I could not avoid being surprised at such weakness, I had almost said folly, in a woman of Leonora's sense, especially as she knows how my heart is attached. In the first moments of our intimacy my confidence was unbounded, as it ever is in those I love. Aware as I was of the light in which the prejudices of her education and her country make her view such connexions, yet I scrupled not, with the utmost candour, to confess the unfortunate attachment which had ruled my destiny. After this confidence, do not suspicion

and jealousy on her part appear strange? Were Mr. L—— and I shut up for life in the same prison, were we left together upon a desert island, were we alone in the universe, I could never think of him. And Leonora does not see this! How the passions obscure and degrade the finest understandings! But perhaps I do her injustice, and she felt nothing of what her countenance expressed. It is certain, however, that she was silent for some moments after she joined us, from what cause she knows best—so was Mr. L——, I suppose from English awkwardness—so was I, from pure astonishment. At length, in pity of Leonora, I broke the silence. I had recourse to the beauties of nature.

“What a heavenly evening!” said I. “We have been listening to the song of the birds, enjoying this fresh breeze of nature’s perfumes.” Leonora said something about the superiority of nature’s perfumes to those of art; and observed, “how much more agreeable the smell of flowers appears in the open air than in confined rooms.” Whilst she spoke she looked at her husband, as she continually does, for assent and approbation. He assented, but apparently without knowing what he was saying; and only by one of his English monosyllables. I alone was at ease.

“Can any thing be more beautiful,” continued I, looking back, “than the soft mellow foliage of those woods, and the exquisite tints of their rich colouring? What delicious melancholy such an evening spreads over the heart!—what reflections!—what recollections!—O Leonora, look at the lights upon

that mountain, and the deep shadows upon the lake below. Just such scenes have I admired, by such have I been entranced in Switzerland."

Leonora put her arm within mine—she seemed to have no objection to my thoughts going back to Switzerland—I sighed—she pressed my hand affectionately—I wiped the starting tear from my eye. Mr. L—— looked at me with something like surprise whilst I repeated involuntarily,

“ I mourn, but, ye woodlands, I mourn not for you,
For morn is approaching your charms to restore,
Perfum'd with fresh fragrance, and glitt'ring with dew.”

I paused, recollecting myself, struck with *he ridicule* of repeating verses, and of indulging feelings in which no one perhaps sympathized.

“ Those are beautiful lines,” said Leonora: “ that poem has always been a favourite of mine.”

“ And of mine, also,” said Mr. L——.

“ I prefer Beattie's Hermit to all other hermits,” said Leonora.

I was not in a mood calmly to discuss with her a point of criticism—I walked on in reverie: but in this I was not allowed to indulge. Mr. L—— asked if I could not recollect some more of the Hermit—I pleaded the worst memory in the world—a memory that can never recollect any poem perfectly by rote, only the touches of genius or sensibility that strike me—and those are so few!

“ But in this poem there are so many,” said Leonora. I am sure she insisted only to please her husband, and pleaded against her real feelings pur-

posely to conceal them. He persisted in his request, with more warmth than usual. I was compelled to rouse myself from my reverie, and to call back my distant thoughts. I repeated all that I could recollect of the poem. Mr. L—— paid me a profusion of compliments upon the sweetness of my voice, and my taste in reciting. He was pleased to find that my manner and tones gave an Italian expression to English poetry, which to him was a peculiar charm. It reminded him of some signora, whom he had known at Florence. This was the first time I had learned that he had been abroad. I was going to explore the foreign field of conversation which he thus opened; but just at that moment Leonora withdrew her arm from mine, and I fancied that she coloured. This might be only my fancy, or the natural effect of her stooping to gather a flower. We were now within sight of the castle. I pointed to one of the turrets over a Gothic window, upon which the gleams of the setting sun produced a picturesque effect; my glove happened to be off, and Leonora unluckily saw that her husband's eyes were fixed upon my arm, instead of the turret to which I was pointing. 'Twas a trifle which I never should have noticed, had she not forced it upon my attention. She actually turned pale. I had the presence of mind not to put on my glove.

I must observe more accurately; I must decide whether this angelic Leonora is or is not susceptible of the mortal passion ycleped jealousy. I confess my curiosity is awakened.

Adieu, my ever amiable Gabrielle. OLIVIA.

LETTER XXII.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

WHEN the passions are asleep we are apt to fancy they are dead. I verily thought that curiosity was dead within me, it had lain so long dormant while stronger and tenderer sentiments waked in full activity; but now that absence and distance from their object lull them to temporary repose, the vulgar subordinate passions are roused, and take their turn to reign. My curiosity was so strongly excited upon the subject of Leonora's jealousy, that I could not rest, without attempting to obtain satisfaction. Blame me not, dearest Gabrielle, for in my situation you would inevitably have done the same, only that you would have done it with more address; with that peculiar, inimitable address, which I envy above all your accomplishments. But address is a delicate native of France, and though it may now and then exist as a stranger, I doubt whether it can ever be naturalized in our rude climate. All the attempts I have made are, however, encouraging enough—you shall judge. My object was, to ascertain the existence or non-existence of Leonora's jealousy. I set about it with a tolerably careless assurance, and followed up the hint, which accident had thrown out for my ingenuity to work upon. You remember, or at least I remember, that Leonora withdrew her arm from mine, and stooped to gather a flower at the moment when her husband mentioned Florence, and

the resemblance of my voice to that of some Italian charmer. The next day I happened to play some of my sweetest Italian airs, and to accompany them with my voice. The music-room opens into the great hall: Leonora and her husband were in the hall, talking to some visitors. The voices were soon hushed, as I expected, by the magic sounds, but, what I did not expect, Leonora was the first who led the way into the music-room. Was this affectation? These *simple* characters sometimes baffle all the art of the decipherer. I should have been clear that it was affectation, had Leonora been prodigal of compliments on my performance; but she seemed only to listen for her own pleasure, and left it to Mr. L—— to applaud. Whilst I was preparing to play over again the air which pleased him most, the two little nephews came running to beg Leonora would follow them to look at some trifle, some coloured shadow, upon the garden-wall, I think they said: she let them lead her off, leaving *us* together. This did not seem like jealousy. I was more at a loss than ever, and determined to make fresh and more decisive experiments. Curiosity, you know, is heightened by doubt. To cure myself of curiosity it is necessary therefore to put my mind out of doubt. Admire the practical application of metaphysics! But metaphysics always make you yawn. Adieu for to-day.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XXIII.

MRS. C—— TO MISS B——.

L—— Castle.

DEAR Margaret, an uncle of mine, who ever since I can remember seemed to me cut out for an old bachelor, writes me word that he is just going to be married, and that I must grace his nuptials. I cannot refuse, for he has always been very kind to me, and we have no right to cut people out for old bachelors. That I am sorry to leave Leonora it is superfluous to tell you; but this is the melancholy part of the business, on which I make it a principle to dwell as little as possible.

Lady Olivia must be heartily glad that I am going, for I have been terribly troublesome to her by my gaiety and my *simplicity*. I shall lose all the pleasure I had promised myself in seeing the *dénouement* of the comedy of *The Sentimental Coquette*, or, *The Heroine unmasked*.

I made Leonora almost angry with me this morning, by a hint or two I gave upon this subject. She looked so very grave, that I was afraid of my own thoughts, and I dared not explain myself farther. Intimate as I am with her, there are points on which I am sure that she would never make me her confidante. I think that she has not been in her usual good spirits lately; and though she treats Olivia with uniform kindness, and betrays not, even to my watchful eyes, the slightest symptom of jealousy,

yet I suspect that she sees what is going forward, and she suffers in secret. Now if she would let me explain myself, I could set her heart at ease, by the assurance that Mr. L—— is only acting a part. If her affection for her husband did not almost blind her, she would have as much penetration as I have—which you will allow, my dear Margaret, is saying a great deal.

Yours affectionately,
HELEN C——.

LETTER XXIV.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

L—— Castle.

CONGRATULATE me, my charming Gabrielle, upon being delivered from the unfeeling gaiety of that friend of Leonora, that Helen of whom I formerly sent you a too flattering portrait. Her departure relieves me from many painful sensations. Dissonance to a musical ear is not more horrid than want of harmony between characters to the soul of sensibility. Between Helen and me there was a perpetual discord of ideas and sentiments, which fatigued me inexpressibly. Besides, I began to consider her as a spy upon my actions. But there, I believe, I did her injustice, for she was too much occupied with her own trifling thoughts to have any alarming powers of observation.

Since her departure we have been very gay. Yes-

terday we had a large company at dinner ; some of the neighbouring families, whom I expected to find mere country visitors, that were come a dozen miles to show their antediluvian finery, retire half an hour after dinner, spoil coffee with cream, say nothing, but at their appointed hours rise, ring for their superb carriages, and go home by moonlight. However, to my astonishment, I found myself in a society of well-bred, well-informed persons ; the women ready to converse, and the men, even after dinner, not impatient to get rid of them. Two or three of the company had travelled, and I was glad to talk to them of Italy, Switzerland, and France. Mr. L—— I knew would join in this conversation. I discovered that he came to Florence just as I was leaving it. I was to have been at our ambassador's one evening when he was there ; but a head-ache prevented me. These little coincidences, you know, my Gabrielle, draw people closer together. I remember to have heard of a Mr. L—— at Florence, who was a passionate admirer of our sex. He was then unmarried. I little thought that this was the same person. Beneath a cold exterior these Englishmen often conceal a wondrous quantity of enthusiasm—volcanoes under snow. Curiosity, dear indefatigable curiosity, supported me through the labour of clearing away the snow, and I came to indubitable traces of unextinguished and unextinguishable fire. The character of L—— is quite different from what I had imagined it to be. It is *an excellent study*. We had a long and interesting conversation upon national manners, especially upon

those of the females of all nations. He concluded by quoting the words of your friend M. le vicomte de Segur, "If I were permitted to choose, I should prefer a French woman for my friend, an English woman for my wife, and a Polish lady for my mistress."

From this, it seems, that I am mistaken about the Italian signora, or else Mr. L—— has an enlarged charity for the graces of all nations.—More subject for curiosity.

In the evening, before the company separated, we were standing on the steps of the great hall, looking at a fine effect of moonlight, and I pointed out the shadow of the arches of a bridge. From moonlight we went on to lamplight, and many pretty things were said about art and nature. A gentleman, who had just returned from Paris, talked of the reflection of the lamps in the Seine, which one sees in crossing the Pont-Royal, and which, as he said, appear like a colonnade of fire. As soon as he had finished *prosing* about his colonnade, I turned to Mr. L——, and asked if he remembered the account which Coxe the traveller gives of the Polish princess Czartoryski's charming *fête champêtre* and the illuminated rustic bridge of one arch, the reflection of which in the water was so strong as to deceive the eye, and to give the whole the appearance of a brilliant circle suspended in the air. Mr. L—— seemed enchanted with my description, and eagerly said that he would some night have a bridge in his improvements illuminated, that *we* (half-gallant Englishman!) might see the effect. I carelessly replied, that probably it

would have a good effect: I would then have talked on other subjects to the lady next me: but an Englishman cannot suddenly change the course of his conversation. Mr. L—— still persisted in asking a variety of questions about this Polish fête. I excused myself; for if you satisfy curiosity you are no longer sublime; besides it is so pedantic to remember *accurately* anything one meets with in books. I assured him that I had forgotten the particulars.

My countrymen are wondrous persevering, when once roused. This morning, when I came down to breakfast, I found Mr. L—— with a volume of Coxe's travels in his hand. He read aloud to Leonora the whole description of the illuminated gardens, and of a Turkish tent of curious workmanship, and of a pavilion supported by pillars ornamented with wreaths of flowers. Leonora's birthday is some time in the next month; and her husband, probably to prevent any disagreeable little feelings, proposed that the *fête champêtre* he designed to give should be on that day. She seemed rather to discourage the thing. Now to what should this indifference be attributed? To jealousy I should positively decide, but that two reasons oppose this idea, and keep me in doubt. She was not within hearing at the moonlight conference, and knew nothing of my having mentioned the Polish fête, or of her husband's having proposed to illuminate the bridge for me. Besides, I remember, the other day when she was reading the new French novel you sent me, she expressed great dislike to the sentimental fêtes which the lover prepares for his mis-

tress. I would give more than I dare tell you, my dear Gabrielle, to be able to decide whether she is jealous of me or not. But where was I?—Mr. L——, who had set his heart upon the *fête champêtre*, persisted, and combatted her antipathy by reason. Foolish man! he should have tried compliments, or caresses—if I had not been present.

“ My dear Leonora,” said he, “ I think you carry your dislike to these things too far. They are more according to the French than to the English taste, I know; but we should not be influenced by national prejudice. I detest the ostentation and the affectation of sentiment as much as you can; but where the real feeling exists, every mode of showing kindness is agreeable. You must let us have this little *fête* on your birthday. Besides the pleasure it will give me, I really think it is useful to mix ideas of affection with amusement.”

She smiled most graciously, and replied, that she would with pleasure accept of kindness in any form from him. In short, she was willing to have the *fête*, when it was clearly explained that she was to be the object of it. Is not this proof positive of jealousy? And yet my curiosity is not thoroughly satisfied. I must go on; for Leonora’s sake I must go on. When I have been assured of the truth, I shall know how to conduct myself; and you, who know my heart, will do me the justice to believe, that when I am convinced of my friend’s weakness, I shall spare it with the most delicate caution: but till I am convinced, I am in perpetual danger of blundering by my careless, inadvertent innocence. You smile, Ga-

brielle; dear malicious Gabrielle, even in your malice you are charming! Adieu! Pray for the speedy extinction of my curiosity.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XXV.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

YOU say, my dearest mother, that of late my letters have been more constrained and less cheerful than usual, and you conjure me not conceal from you anything which may concern my happiness. I have ever found you my best and most indulgent friend, and there is not a thought or feeling of my mind, however weak or foolish, that I desire to conceal from you. No one in this world is more—is so much interested in my happiness; and in every doubtful situation I have always been accustomed to apply to your unerring judgment for assistance. Your strength of mind, your enlightened affection, would support and direct me, would at once show me how I ought to act, and inspire me with courage and fortitude sufficient to be worthy of your esteem, and of my own. At no period of my life, not even when my heart first felt the confused sensations of a passion that was new to it, did I ever want or wish for a friend so much as at this instant: and yet I hesitate whether I ought to ask even your advice, whether I ought to indulge myself in speaking of my feelings even to my mother. I refrained from giving the

slightest intimation of them to my dear Helen, though she often led to this subject, and seemed vexed by my reserve. I thought it not right to accept of her sympathy. From her kindness I had every consolation to expect, but no assistance from her counsels, because she does not understand Mr. L——'s character, and I could plainly perceive that she had an erroneous idea so fixed in her fancy, as to prevent her seeing things in their true light. I am afraid of imputing blame where I most wish to avoid it: I fear to excite unjust suspicions; I dread that if I say the whole you will imagine that I mean much more than I say.

I have not been quite well lately, and my mind probably is more apt to be alarmed than it would be if my health were stronger. All that I apprehend may exist merely in my own distempered imagination. Do not then suppose others are to blame, when perhaps I only am in fault. I have for some time past been dissatisfied with myself, and have had reason to be so: I do not say this from any false humility; I despise that affectation; but I say it with a sincere desire, that you may assist me to cure myself of a weakness, which, if it were to grow upon, my mind, must render me miserable, and might destroy the happiness of the person I love best upon earth. You know that I am not naturally or habitually of a suspicious temper, but I am conscious of having lately felt a disposition to jealousy. I have been spoiled by the excessive attention which my husband paid to me in the first year of our marriage.

You warned me not to fancy that he could con-

tinue always a lover. I did not, at least I tried not to expect such an impossibility. I was prepared for the change, at least I thought I was: yet now the time, the inevitable time is come, and I have not the fortitude to bear it as I ought. If I had never known what it was to possess his love, I might perhaps be content with his friendship. If I could feel only friendship for him, I should now, possibly, be happy. I know that I have the first place in his esteem: I do believe—I should be miserable indeed if I did not believe—that I have the first place in his affection. But this affection is certainly different from what it once was. I wish I could forget the difference. No: I retract that wish; however painful the comparison, the recollection of times that are past is delightful to my heart. Yet, my dear mother, if such times are never to return, it would be better for me to forget that they have ever been. It would be wiser not to let my imagination recur to the past, which could then tend only to render me discontented with the present and with the future. The FUTURE! how melancholy that word sounds to me! What a dreary length of prospect it brings to my view! How young I am, how many years may I have to live, and how little motive have I left in life! Those which used to act most forcibly upon me, have now scarcely power to move my mind. The sense of duty, it is true, raises me to some degree of exertion; I hope that I do not neglect the education of the two children whom my poor sister bequeathed to my care. When my mind was at ease, they were my delight; but now I feel that I am

rather interrupted than interested by their childish gaiety and amusements.

I am afraid that I am growing selfish, and I am sure that I have become shamefully indolent. I go on with certain occupations every day from habit, not from choice ; my mind is not in them. I used to flatter myself that I did many things, from a sense of duty and of general benevolence, which I am convinced were done merely from a particular wish to please, and to make myself more and more beloved by the object of my fondest affection. Disappointed in this hope, I sink into indolence, from which the desire to entertain my friends is not sufficient to rouse me. Helen has been summoned away ; but I believe I told you that Mr. and Mrs. F**, whose company is peculiarly agreeable to my taste, and lady M***** and her amiable daughters, and your witty friend *****, are with us. In such society I am ashamed of being stupid ; yet I cannot contribute to the amusement of the company, and I feel surprised at their animation and sprightliness. It seems as if I was looking on at dances without hearing any music. Sometimes I fear that my silence should be observed, and then I begin to talk without well knowing what I am saying. I confine myself to the most common-place subjects, and hesitate, from the dread of saying something quite foreign to the purpose. What must Mr. L—— think of my stupidity ? But he does not, I believe, perceive it: he is so much occupied with—with other objects. I am glad that he does not see all that passes in my mind, for he might despise me if he knew that I am so miser-

able. I did not mean to use so strong an expression ; but now it is written, I will not blot it out, lest you should fancy something worse than the reality. I am not, however, yet so weak as to be seriously *miserable* when I have no real cause to be so. The truth is ————. Now you know this phrase is a tacit confession that all that has been said before is false. The real truth is ————. By my pre-facing so long you may be sure that I have reason to be ashamed of this real truth's coming out. The real truth is, that I have been so long accustomed to be the first and *only* object of Mr. L——'s thoughts, that I cannot bear to see him think of anything else. Yes, *things* I can bear, but not *persons*—female persons ; and there is one person here who is so much more agreeable and entertaining than I am, that she engrosses very naturally almost all his attention. I am not *envious*, I am sure ; for I could once admire all lady Olivia's talents and accomplishments, and no one could be more charmed than I was with her fascinating manners and irresistible powers of pleasing ; but when those irresistible powers may rob me of the heart of my beloved husband—of the whole happiness of my life—how can I admire them ? All I can promise is to preserve my mind from the meanness of suspicion. I can do my rival justice. I can believe, and entreat you to believe, that she does not wish to be my rival : that she is perfectly innocent of all design to injure me, and that she is not aware of the impression she has made. I, who know every change of Mr. L——'s countenance, every inflexion of his voice, every turn

of his mind, can see too plainly what she cannot discern. I should indeed have thought, that no woman, whom he distinguished or preferred in any degree, could avoid perceiving it, his manner is so expressive, so flattering; but perhaps this appears so only to me—a woman who does not love him may see things very differently. Lady Olivia can be in no danger, because her heart, fortunately for me, is prepossessed in favour of another; and a woman whose heart is occupied by one object is absolutely blind, as I well know, to all others. With this security I ought to be satisfied; for I believe no one inspires a lasting passion without sharing it.

I am summoned to give my opinion about certain illuminations and decoration for a *fête champêtre* which Mr. L—— is so kind as to give in honour of my birthday—just at the time I am complaining of his neglect!—No, dear mother, I hope I have not complained of *him*, but of *myself*:—and it is your business to teach your daughter to be more reasonable. Write soon and fully to

Your affectionate

LEONORA.

LETTER XXVI.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

THIS fine *fête champêtre* is over.—Expect no description of it from me, Gabrielle, for I am horribly out of humour. The whole pleasure of the

evening was destroyed by the most foolish circumstance imaginable. Leonora's jealousy is now evident to more eyes than mine. No farther doubt upon the subject can remain. My curiosity is satisfied; but I am now left to reproach myself for having gone so far to ascertain what I ought to have taken for granted. All these good English wives are jealous; so jealous, that no one, who has any pretensions to beauty, wit, or *amiability*, can live with them. They can have no *society* in our sense of the word; of course they must live shut up in their own dismal houses with their own stupid families, the faithful husband and wife sitting opposite to each other in their own chimney corners, yawning models of constancy. And this they call virtue! How the meanest vices usurp the name of virtue! Leonora's is a jealousy of the most illiberal and degrading species; a jealousy of the temper, not of the heart. She is too cold to feel the passion of love.—She never could be in love; of that I am certain. She is too reasonable, too prudish. Besides, to imagine that she could be in love with her own husband, and after eighteen months' marriage—the thing is absurd! the thing is impossible! No, she deceives herself or him, or both, if she pretends that her jealousy arises from love, from what you and I, Gabrielle, understand by the word. Passion, and passion only, can plead a just excuse for its own excesses. Were Leonora in love, I could pardon her jealousy. But now I despise it. Yes, with all her high reputation, and *imposing* qualities, I must think of her with contempt. And now that I have given vent to my feelings with that freedom in which I ever indulge myself in writing to

you, my amiable Gabrielle, chosen friend of my heart, I will compose myself, and give you a rational account of things.

You know that I am said to have some taste. Leonora makes no pretensions to any. Wishing, I suppose, that her fête should be as elegant as possible, she consulted me about all the arrangements and decorations. It was I that did every thing. My skill and taste were admired by the whole company, and especially by Mr. L——. He was in remarkably good spirits at the commencement of the evening; quite gay and gallant: he certainly paid me a great deal of attention, and it was natural he should; for besides being his guest, I was undoubtedly the most elegant woman present. My fame had gone abroad; I found that I was the object of general attention. To this I have been tolerably well accustomed all my life; enough at least to prevent me from giving any visible sign of being moved by admiration in whatever form it comes; whether in the polite foreign glance, or the broad English stare. The starers enjoyed their pleasure, and I mine: I moved and talked, I smiled or was pensive, as though I saw them not; nevertheless the homage of their gaze was not lost upon me. You know, my charming Gabrielle, one likes to observe the *sensation* one produces amongst new people. The incense that I perceived in the surrounding atmosphere was just powerful enough to affect my nerves agreeably: that languor which you have so often reproached me for indulging in the company of what we call *indifferents* gradually dissipated; and, as poor R*** used to say of me, I came from behind my cloud like the sun in all its

glory. I was such as you have seen me, Gabrielle, in my best days, in my best moments, in my very best style. I wonder what would excite me to such a waste of powers. L—— seemed inspired too: he really was quite agreeable, and showed me off almost as well as R*** himself could have done. I had no idea that he had this species of talent. You will never know of what my countrymen are capable, for you are out of patience with the statues the first half hour: now it takes an amazing time to animate them; but they can be waked into life, and I have a pride in conquering difficulties.—There were more men this night in proportion to the women than one usually sees in English company, consequently it was more agreeable. I was surrounded by an admiring audience, and my conversation of course was sufficiently general to please all, and sufficiently particular to distinguish the man whom I wished to animate. In all this you will say there was nothing to put one out of humour, nothing very mortifying:—but stay, my fair philosopher, do not judge of the day till you see its end.—Leonora was so hid from my view by the crowd of adorers, that I really did not discern her, or suspect her jealousy. I was quite natural; I thought only of myself; I declined all invitations to dance, declaring that it was so long since I had tried an English country dance, that I dared not expose my awkwardness. French country dances were mentioned, but I preferred conversation. At last L—— persecuted me to try a Polish dance with him,—a multitude of voices overpowered me. I have not the talent which some of my countrywomen pos-

ness in such perfection, of being obstinate about trifles. When I can refuse with grace, 'tis well ; but when that is no longer possible, it is my principle, or my weakness, to yield. I was surprised to find that L—— danced admirably. I became animated. You know how dancing animates me, when I have a partner who *can* dance—a thing not very common in this country. We ended by *waltzing*, first in the Polish, and afterwards in the Parisian manner. I certainly surpassed myself—I flew, I was borne upon the wings of the wind, I floated on the notes of the music. Animated or languid in every gradation of grace and sentiment, I abandoned myself to the inspiration of the moment ; I was all soul, and the spectators were all admiration. To you, my Gabrielle, I may speak thus of myself without vanity : you know the sensation I was accustomed to produce at Paris ; you may guess then what the effect must be here, where such a style of dancing has all the captivation of novelty. Had I doubted that my *success* was complete, I should have been assured of it by the faces of some prudes amongst the matrons, who affected to think that the waltz was *too much*. As L—— was leading, or rather supporting me to my seat, for I was quite exhausted, I overheard a gentleman, who was at no great distance from the place where Leonora was standing, whisper to his neighbour, “Le Valse extrême est la volupté permise.” I fancy Leonora overheard these words, as well as myself, for my eyes met hers at this instant, and she coloured, and directly looked another way. L—— neither heard nor saw any thing of all this: he was

intent upon procuring me a seat; and an Englishman can never see or think of two things at a time. A few minutes afterwards, whilst he was fanning me, a young awkward peasant girl, quite a stranger in this country, came up to me, and dropping her novice curtsy, said, "Here's a ring, my lady, I found on the grass; they tell me it is yours, my lady!"

"No, my good girl, it is not mine," said I.

"It is Lady Leonora's," said Mr. L——.

At the sound of her name Leonora came forward.

The girl looked alternately at us.

"Can you doubt," cried colonel A——, "which of these ladies is Mr. L——'s wife?"

"O no, sir; this is she, *to be sure*," said the girl, pointing to me.

What there was in the girl's accent, or in L——'s look, when she pronounced the words, or in mine, or in all three together, I cannot exactly describe; but Leonora felt it. She turned as pale as death. I looked as unconscious as I could. L—— went on, fanning me, without seeing his wife's change of countenance. Leonora—would you believe it?—sank upon a bench behind us, and fainted. How her husband started, when he felt her catch by his arm as she fell! He threw down the fan, left me, ran for water—"O, lady Leonora! lady Leonora is ill!" exclaimed every voice. The consternation was wonderful. They carried her ladyship to a spot where she could have free air. I was absolutely in an instant left alone, and seemingly as much forgotten as if I had never existed! I was indeed so much astonished, that I could not stir from the place where

I stood ; till recollecting myself, I pushed my way through the crowd, and came in view of Leonora just as she opened her eyes. As soon as she came to herself, she made an effort to stand, saying that she was quite well again, but that she would go into the house and repose herself for a few minutes. As she rose, a hundred arms were offered at once to her assistance. She stepped forward ; and to my surprise, and I believe to the surprise of every body else, took mine, made a sign to her husband not to follow us, and walked quickly towards the house. Her woman, with a face of terror, met us, as we were going into lady Leonora's apartment, with salts and hartshorn, and I know not what in her hands.

“ I am quite well, quite well again ; I do not want any thing ; I do not want any thing. I do not want you, Mason,” said Leonora. “ Lady Olivia is so good as to assist me. I am come in only to rest for a few minutes.”

The woman gave me an evil look, and left the room. Never did I wish any thing more than that she should have staid. I was absolutely so embarrassed, so distressed, when I found myself alone with Leonora, that I knew not what to say. I believe I began with a sentence about the night air, that was very little to the purpose. The sight of some baby-linen which the maid had been making suggested to me something which I thought more appropriate.

“ My dear creature !” said I, “ why will you fatigue yourself so terribly, and stand so much and so long in your situation ?”

Leonora neither accepted nor rejected my interpretation of what had passed. She made no reply; but fixed her eyes upon me as if she would have read my very soul. Never did I see or feel eyes so expressive or so powerful as hers were at this moment. Mine absolutely fell beneath them. What deprived me of presence of mind I know not; but I was utterly without common sense. I am sure I changed colour, and Leonora must have seen it through my rouge, for I had only the slightest tinge upon my cheeks. The consciousness that she saw me blush disconcerted me beyond recovery; it is really quite unaccountable: I trembled all over as I stood before her; I was forced to have recourse to the hartshorn and water, which stood upon the table. Leonora rose and threw open the window to give me fresh air. She pressed my hand, but rather with an air of forgiveness than of affection; I was mortified and vexed; but my pride revived me.

“We had better return to the company as soon as possible, I believe,” said she, looking down at the moving crowd below.

“I am ready to attend you, my dear,” said I, coldly, “whenever you feel yourself sufficiently rested and composed.”

She left the room, and I followed. You have no idea of the solicitude with which the people hoped she was *better*—and *well*—and *quite well*, &c. What amazing importance a fainting fit can sometimes bestow! Her husband seemed no longer to have any eyes or soul but for her. At supper, and during the rest of the night, she occupied the whole attention of

every body present. Can you conceive any thing so provoking? But L—— must be an absolute fool!— Did he never see a woman faint before?—He cannot pretend to be in love with his wife—I do not understand it.—But this I know, that he has been totally different in his manner towards me these three days past.

And now that my curiosity is satisfied about Leonora's jealousy, I shall absolutely perish with ennui in this stupid place. Adieu, dearest Gabrielle! How I envy you! The void of my heart is insupportable. I must have some passion to keep me alive. Forward any letters from poor R***, if he has written under cover to you.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XXVII.

THE DUCHESS OF —— TO HER DAUGHTER.

TAKE courage, my beloved daughter; take courage. Have a just confidence in yourself and in your husband. For a moment he may be fascinated by the arts of an unprincipled woman; for a moment she may triumph over his senses, and his imagination; but of his esteem, his affection, his heart, she cannot rob you. These have been, ought to be, will be yours. Trust to your mother's prophecy, my child. You may trust to it securely: for, well as she loves you—and no mother ever loved a daughter better—she does

not soothe you with mere words of doting fondness; she speaks to you the language of reason and of truth.

I know what such a man as Mr. L—— must esteem and love; I know of what such a woman as my daughter is capable, when her whole happiness, and the happiness of all that is dear to her, are at stake. The loss of temporary admiration and power, the transient preference shown to a despicable rival, will not provoke you to imprudent reproach, nor sink you to helpless despair. The arts of an Olivia might continue to deceive your husband, if he were a fool; or to please him, if he were a libertine: but he has a heart formed for love, he cannot therefore be a libertine: he is a man of superior abilities, and knows women too well to be a dupe. With a penetrating and discriminative judgment of character, he is a nice observer of female manners; his taste is delicate even to excess; under a cold exterior he has a vivid imagination and strong sensibility; he has little vanity, but a superabundance of pride; he wishes to be ardently loved, but this he conceals; it is difficult to convince him that he is beloved, and scarcely possible to satisfy him by any common proofs of attachment. A coquette will never attach Mr. L——. The admiration which others might express for her charms and accomplishments would never pique him to competition: far from seeking “to win her praise whom all admire,” he would disdain to enter the lists with the vulgar multitude: a heart in which he had a probability of holding only divided empire would not appear to him worth the winning. As a coquette

whatever may be her talents, graces, accomplishments, and address, you have nothing seriously to fear from lady Olivia.

But, my dear, Mr. L——'s mind may be in a situation to require amusement. That species of apathy which succeeds to passion is not, as the inexperienced imagine, the death of love, but the necessary and salutary repose from which it awakens refreshed and revived. Mr. L——'s passion for you has been not only tender, but violent, and the calm which inevitably succeeds should not alarm you.

↓ When a man feels that his fondness for a wife is suspended, he is uneasy in her company, not only from the sense of decreased pleasure, but from the fear of her observation and detection. If she reproach him, affairs become worse; he blames himself, he fears to give pain whenever he is in her presence: if he attempt to conceal his feelings, and to appear what he is no longer—a lover, his attempts are awkward; he becomes more and more dissatisfied with himself; and the person who compels him to this hypocrisy, who thus degrades him in his own eyes, must certainly be in danger of becoming an object of aversion. A wife, who has sense enough to abstain from all reproaches, direct or indirect, by word or look, may reclaim her husband's affections: the bird escapes from his cage, but returns to his nest.

I am glad that you have agreeable company at your house; they will amuse Mr. L——, and relieve you from the necessity of taking a share in any conversation that you dislike. Our witty friend ***** will supply your share of conversation; and as to

your silence, remember that witty people are always content with those who *act audience*.

I rejoice that you persist in your daily occupations. To a mind like yours, the sense of performing your duty will, next to religion, be the firmest support upon which you can rely.

Perhaps, my dear, even when you read this, you will still be inclined to justify lady Olivia, and to conceal from your heart the suspicions which her conduct excites. I am not surprised that you should find it difficult to believe that one to whom you have behaved so generously should treat you with treachery and ingratitude. I am not surprised, that you who feel what it is to love, should think that a woman whose heart is occupied by attachment to one object must be incapable of thinking of any other. But love in such a heart as yours is totally different from what it is in the fancy of these heroines. In their imagination the objects are as fleeting as the pictures in the clouds chased by the wind.

From lady Olivia expect nothing: depend only on yourself. When you become, as you soon must, completely convinced that the woman in whom your unsuspecting soul confided is utterly unworthy of your esteem, refrain from all imprudent expressions of indignation. I despise—you will soon hate—your rival; but in the moment of detection think of what is due to yourself, and act as calmly as if you had never loved her. She will suffer no pain from the loss of your friendship: she has not a heart that can value it. Probably she is envious of you. All these women desire to mortify those whom they

cannot degrade to their own level: and I am inclined to suspect that this malevolent feeling, joined to the want of occupation, may be the cause of her present conduct. Her manœuvres will not ultimately succeed. She will be deserted by Mr. L——, disappointed and disgraced, and your husband will be more yours than ever. When this happy moment comes, my Leonora; when your husband returns, preferring yours to all other society, then will be the time to exert all your talents, all your charms, to prove your superiority in every thing, but most in love. The soothing of female tenderness, in certain situations, have power not only to calm the feelings of self-reproach, but to diffuse delight over the soul of man. The oil, which the skilful mariner throws upon the sea, not only smooths the waves in the storm, but when the sun shines, spreads the most beautiful colours over the surface of the waters.

My dear daughter, though your mother writes seemingly at her ease, you must not fancy that she does not feel for you. Do not imagine, that in the coldness of extinguished passions, and in the pride of counselling age, your mother expects to charm agony with words. No, my child, I am not so absurd, so cruel. Your letter forced tears from eyes, which are not used like sentimental eyes to weep upon every trifling occasion. My first wish was to set out immediately to see you; but whatever consolation or pleasure my company might afford, I believe it might be disadvantageous to you in your present circumstances. I could not be an hour in the room with this lady Olivia, without showing some portion of the

indignation and contempt that I feel for her conduct. This warmth of mine might injure you in your husband's opinion. Though you would have too strong a sense of propriety, and too much dignity of mind, to make complaints of your husband to me, or to any one living; yet it might be supposed that your mother was your confidante in secret, and your partisan in public: this might destroy your domestic happiness. No husband can or ought to endure the idea of his wife's caballing against him. I admire and shall respect your dignified silence.

And now fare you well, my dearest child. May God bless you! If a mother's prayers could avail, you would be the happiest of human beings. I do, without partiality, believe you to be one of the best and most amiable of women.

LETTER XXVIII.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

HAD your letter, my dearest mother, reached me a few hours sooner, I should not have exposed myself as I have done.

Yesterday, at our *fête champêtre*, you would have been ashamed of me. I am ashamed of myself. I did the very reverse of what I ought, of what I would have done, if I had been fortified by your counsel. Instead of being calm and dignified, I was agitated

beyond all power of control. I lost all presence of mind, all common sense, all recollection.

I know your contempt for swooning heroines. What will you say, when you hear that your daughter fainted—fainted in public? I believe, however, that, as soon as I recovered, I had sufficient command over myself to prevent the accident from being attributed to—to—to the real cause, and I hope that the very moment I came to my recollection, my manner towards lady Olivia was such as to preclude all possibility of her being blamed or even suspected. From living much abroad, she has acquired a certain freedom of manner, and latitude of thinking, which expose her to suspicion; but of all serious intention to injure me, or to pass the bounds of propriety, I totally acquit her. She is not to blame for the admiration she excites, nor is she to be the sufferer for my weakness of mind or of health.

Great and unreasonable folly I am sure I showed—but I shall do so no more.

The particular circumstances I need not explain: you may be assured, that wherever I think it right to be silent, nothing shall tempt me to speak: but I understood, by the conclusion of your letter, that you expect me to preserve an absolute silence upon this subject in future: this I will not promise. I cannot conceive that I, who do not mean to injure any human being, ought, because I am unhappy, and when I am most in want of a friend, to be precluded from the indulgence of speaking of what is nearest my heart to that dear, safe, most enlightened, and honourable of friends, who has loved, guided, instructed, and

encouraged me in every thing that is right from my infancy. Why should I be refused all claim to sympathy? why must my thoughts and feelings be shut up in my own breast? and why must I be an isolated being, prescribed from commerce with my own family, with my beloved mother, to whom I have been accustomed to tell every feeling and idea as they rose? No; to all that is honourable I will strictly conform; but by the superstition of prudence I do not hold myself bound.

Nothing could be kinder than my husband's conduct to me the evening after I was taken ill. He left home early this morning; he is gone to meet his friend, general B——, who has just returned from abroad. I hope that Mr. L—— will be absent only a few days; for it would be fatal to my happiness if he should find amusement at a distance from home. His home at all events shall never be made a cage to him; when he returns I will exert myself to the utmost to make it agreeable. This I hope can be done without obtruding my company upon him, or putting myself in competition with any person. I could wish that some fortunate accident might induce lady Olivia to leave us before Mr. L——'s return. Had I the same high opinion of her generosity that I once formed, had I the same perfect confidence in her integrity and in her friendship for me, I would go this moment and tell her all that passes in my heart: no humiliation of my vanity would cost me any thing if it could serve the interests of my love; no mean pride could stand in my mind against the force of affection. But there is a species of pride

which I cannot, will not renounce—believing, as I do, that it is the companion, the friend, the support of virtue. This pride, I trust, will never desert me: it has grown with my growth; it was implanted in my character by the education which my dear mother gave me; and now, even by her it cannot be eradicated. Surely I have misunderstood one passage in your letter: you cannot advise your daughter to restrain just indignation against vice from any motive of policy or personal interest. You say to me, “In the moment of detection think of what is due to yourself, and act as calmly as if you had never loved her.” If I *could*, I would not do this. Contempt shown by virtue is the just punishment of vice, a punishment which no selfish consideration should mitigate. If I were convinced that lady Olivia were guilty, would you have me behave to her as if I believed her to be innocent? My countenance, my voice, my principles, would revolt from such mean and pernicious hypocrisy, degrading to the individual, and destructive to society.

May I never more see the smile of love on the lips of my husband, nor its expression in his eyes, if I do so degrade myself in my own opinion and in his! Yes, in his; for would not he, would not any man of sense or delicacy, recur to that idea so common with his sex, and so just, that if a woman will sacrifice her sense of honour to her passions in one instance, she may in another? Would he not argue, “If she will do this for me because she is in love with me, why not for a new favourite, if time or accident should make me less an object of passion?”

No; I may lose his love—this ~~could~~ be my misfortune: but to forfeit his esteem would be my fault; and, under the remorse which I should then have to endure, I am persuaded that no power of art or nature could sustain my existence.

So much for myself. As to the general good of society, that, I confess is not at this moment the uppermost consideration in my mind; but I will add a few words on that subject, lest you should imagine me to be hurried away by my own feelings. Public justice and reason are, I think, on my side. What would become of the good order of society or the decency of families, if every politic wife were to receive or invite, or permit her husband's mistress to reside in her house? What would become of conjugal virtue in either sex, if the wife were in this manner not only to connive at the infidelity of her husband, but to encourage and provide for his inconsistency? If she enters into bonds of amity and articles of partnership with her rival, with that person by whom she has been most injured, instead of being the dignified sufferer, she becomes an object of contempt.

My dearest mother, my most respected friend, my sentiments on this subject cannot essentially differ from yours. I must have mistaken your meaning. Pray write quickly, and tell me so; and forgive, if you cannot approve of, the warmth with which I have spoken.

I am your truly affectionate

And grateful daughter,

LEONORA L——.

LETTER XXIX.

OLIVIA TO MADAME P——.

My amiable Gabrielle, I must be faithful to my promise of writing to you every week, though this place affords nothing new either in events or sentiment. Mr. L——'s absence made this castle insupportably dull. A few days ago he returned home, and met me with an easy kind of indifference, provoking enough to a woman who has been accustomed to excite some sensation. However, I was rejoiced at this upon Leonora's account. She was evidently delighted, and her spirits and affections seemed to overflow involuntarily upon all around her; even to me her manner became quite frank and cordial, almost caressing. She is really handsome when she is animated, and her conversation this evening quite surprised me. I saw something of that playfulness, those light touches, that versatility of expression, those words that mean more than meet the ear; every thing, in short, that could charm in the most polished foreign society. Leonora seemed to be inspired with all the art of conversation by the simple instinct of affection. What astonished me most was the grace with which she introduced some profound philosophical remarks. "Such pearls," said Mr. L——, "come from the deep."

With all these talents, what might not Leonora be in proper hands! But now she is nothing except to her husband and a few intimate friends. How-

ever, this is not my affair. Let me go on to what concerns myself. You may believe, my dear Gabrielle, that I piqued myself upon showing at least as much easy indifference as was shown to me: freedom encourages freedom. As there was no danger of my being too amiable, I did not think myself bound in honour or sentiment to keep myself in the shade; but I could not be as brilliant as you have seen me at your *soirées*: the magic circle of adorers, the inspiring power of numbers, the éclat of public *representation*, were wanting. I retired to my own apartment at night, quite out of humour with myself; and Josephine, as she undressed me, put me still further out of patience by an ill-timed history of a dispute she has had with Leonora's Swiss servant. The Swiss and Josephine, it seems, came to high words in defence of their mistresses' charms. Josephine provoked the Swiss by saying, that his lady might possibly be handsome if she were dressed in the French taste; *mais qu'elle étoit bien Angloise*, and would be quite another thing if she had been at Paris. The Swiss retorted by observing, that Josephine's lady had indeed learnt in perfection at Paris *the art of making herself up*, which was quite necessary to a beauty *un peu passée*. The words were not more agreeable to me than they had been to Josephine. I wonder at her assurance in repeating them—"Un peu passée!" Many a woman in England, ten, fifteen years older than I am, has inspired a violent passion; and it has been observed, that power is retained by these mature charmers longer than conquest can be preserved by inexperienced beauties. There are

women who have learnt to combine, for their own advantage, and for that of their captives, all the pleasure and *conveniences* of society, all that a thorough knowledge of the world can give—women who have a sufficient attention to appearances, joined to a real contempt of all prejudices, especially that of constancy—women who possess that knowledge of the human heart, which well compensates transient bloom; who add the expression of sentiment to beautiful features, and who employ

“ Gay smiles to comfort, April showers to move,
And all the nature, all the art of Love.”

—“ *Un peu passée!*” The Swiss is impertinent, and knows nothing of the matter. His master knows but little more. He would, however, know infinitely more if I could take the trouble to instruct him; to which I am almost tempted for want of something better to do. Adieu, my Gabrielle. R***’s silence is perfectly incomprehensible.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XXX.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

So, my amiable Gabrielle, you are really interested in my letters, *through written during my English exile*, and you are curious to know whether any of my *potent spells* can wake into life this man of marble. I candidly confess you would inspire me

with an ambition to raise my poor countrymen in your opinion, if I were not restrained by the sacred sentiment of friendship, which forbids me to rival Leonora *even* in a husband's opinion.

However, Josephine, who feels herself a party concerned ever since her battle with the Swiss, has piqued herself upon dressing me with exquisite taste. I am every day *mise à ravir*!—and with such perfection of art, that no art appears—all is negligent simplicity. I let Josephine please herself; for you know I am not bound to be frightful because I have a friend whose husband may chance to turn his eye upon my figure, when he is tired of admiring hers. I rallied L—— the other day upon his having no eyes or ears but for his wife. Be assured I did it in such a manner, that he could not be angry. Then I went on to a comparison between the *facility* of French and English society. He admitted that there was some truth and more wit in my observations. I was satisfied. With these reasonable men, the grand point for a woman is to amuse them—they can have logic from their own sex. But, my Gabrielle, I am summoned to the *salon*, and must finish my letter another day.

Heaven! can it be a fortnight since I wrote a line to my Gabrielle!—Where was I?—“With these reasonable men the grand point for a woman is to amuse them.” True—most true! L——, believing himself only amused with my lively nonsense, in-

dulged himself with it continually. I was to believe only what he believed. Presently he could not do without my conversation for more than two hours together. What was I to do, my Gabrielle? I walked out to avoid him. He found me in the woods—rallied me on my taste for solitude, and quoted Voltaire.

This led to a metaphysical conversation, half playful, half serious:—the distinction which a man sometimes makes to his conscience between thinking a woman entertaining, and feeling her interesting, vanishes more easily, and more rapidly, than he is aware of—at least in certain situations. This was not an observation I could make to my companion in the woods, and he certainly did not make it for himself. It would have been vanity in me to have broken off our conversation, lest he should fall in love with me—it would have been blindness not to have seen that he was in some danger. I thought of Leonora—and sighed—and did all that was in my power to put him upon his guard. By way of preservative, I frankly made him a confession of my attachment to R***. This I imagined would put things upon a right footing for ever; but, on the contrary, by convincing him of my innocence, and of my having no designs on his heart, this candour has, I fear, endangered him still more; yet I know not what to think—his manner is so variable towards me—I must be convinced of what his sentiments are before I can decide what my conduct ought to be. Adieu, my amiable Gabrielle; I wait for something decisive with an inexpressible degree of anxiety—I will not now call it

curiosity.—Apropos; does R*** wish that I should forget that he exists? What is this business that detains him? But why do I condescend to inquire?

OLIVIA.

LETTER XXXI.

GENERAL B—— TO MR. L——.

MY DEAR L——,

London.

I SEND you the horse to which you took a fancy. He has killed one of his grooms, and lamed two; but you will be his master, and I hope he will know it.

I have a word to say to you on a more serious subject. Pardon me if I tell you that I think you are a happy man, and excuse me if I add, that if you do not keep yourself so I shall not think you a wise one. A good wife is better than a good-for-nothing mistress.—A self-evident proposition!—A stupid truism! Yes; but if every man who knows a self-evident proposition when he sees it on paper always acted as if he knew it, this would be a very wise and a very happy world; and I should not have occasion to write this letter.

You say that you are only amusing yourself at the expense of a finished coquette; take care that she does not presently divert herself at yours.—“*You are proof against French coquetry and German sentiment.*”——Granted—but a fine woman?—and your

own vanity?—But you have no vanity.—You call it pride then, I suppose. I will not quarrel with you for a name. Pride, properly managed, will do your business as well as vanity. And no doubt lady Olivia knows this as well as I do. I hope you may never know it better.

I am, my dear friend,

Truly yours,

J. B.

LETTER XXXII.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

L—— Castle.

ADVISE me, dearest Gabrielle ; I am in a delicate situation ; and on your judgment and purity of heart I have the most perfect reliance. Know, then, that I begin to believe that Leonora's jealousy was not so absolutely absurd as I at first supposed. She understood her husband better than I did. I begin to fear that I have made a serious impression whilst I meant only to amuse myself. Heaven is my witness, I simply intended to satisfy my curiosity, and that once gratified, it was my determination to respect the weakness I discovered. To love Leonora, as once I imagined I could, is out of my power ; but to disturb her peace, to destroy her happiness, to make use of the confidence she has reposed in me, the kindness she has shown by making me an inmate of

her house—my soul shudders at these ideas. No—if her husband really loves me I will fly. Leonora shall see that Olivia is incapable of treachery—that Olivia has a soul generous and delicate as her own, though free from the prejudices by which she is fettered. To Leonora a husband is a lover—I shall consider him as such; and respect her *property*. You are so little used, my dear Gabrielle, to consider a husband in this point of view, that you will scarcely enter into my feelings: but put yourself in my situation, allow for nationality of principle, and I am persuaded you would act as I shall. Spare me your raillery; seriously, if Leonora's husband is in love with me, would you not advise me, my dearest friend, to fly him, “far as pole from pole?” Write to me, I conjure you, my Gabrielle—write instantly, and tell me whether R*** is now at Paris. I will return thither immediately if you advise it. My mind is in such confusion, I have no power to decide; I will be guided by your advice.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XXXIII.

MADAME DE P—— TO OLIVIA.

Paris.

ADVICE! my charming Olivia! do you ask me for advice? I never gave or took advice in my life, except for *les vapeurs noirs*. And your understanding is so far superior to mine, and you comprehend the

characters of these English so much better than I do, that I cannot pretend to counsel you. This lady Leonora is inconceivable with her passion for her own husband ; but how ridiculous to let it be suspected ! If her heart is so tender, cannot she, with all her charms, find a lover on whom to bestow it, without tormenting that poor Mr. L——. Evidently he is tired of her : and I am sure I should be worn to death were I in his place. Nothing so tiresome as love without mystery and without obstacles. And this must ever be the case with conjugal love. Eighteen months married, I think you say, and lady Leonora expects her husband to be still at her feet ! And she wishes it ! Truly she is the most unreasonable woman upon earth—and the most extraordinary ; but I am tired of thinking of what I cannot comprehend.

Let us pass on to Mr. L——. By your last letters I should judge that he might be an agreeable man if his wife were out of the question. Matrimonial jealousy is a new idea to me ; I can judge of it only by analogy. In affairs of gallantry I have sometimes seen one of the parties continue to love when the other has become indifferent, and then they go on tormenting one another and being miserable, because they have not the sense to see that a fire cannot be made of ashes. Sometimes I have found romantic young people persuade themselves that they can love no more because they can love one another no longer ; but if they had sufficient courage to say—I am tired—and I cannot help it—they would come to a right understanding immediately,

and part on the best terms possible ; each eager to make a new choice, and to be again in love and happy. All this to be done with decency, of course. And if there be no scandal, where is the harm? Can it signify to the universe whether Mons. Untel likes Mad. Une-telle or Mad. Une-autre? Provided there is love enough, all the world is in good humour, and that is the essential point ; for without good humour, what becomes of the pleasures of society? As to the rest, I think of inconstancy, or *infidelity* as it is called, much as our good la Fontaine did—"Quand on le sait c'est peu de chose—quand on ne le sait pas ce n'est rien."

To promise to love one person eternally ! What a terrible engagement ! It freezes my heart even to think of it. I am persuaded, that if I were bound to love him for life, I should detest the most amiable man upon earth in ten minutes—a husband more especially. Good heavens ! how I should abhor M. de P—— if I saw him in this point of view. On the contrary, now I love him infinitely—that is to say, as one loves a husband. I have his interest at heart, and his glory. When I thought he was going to prison I was in despair. I was at home to no one but *Brave-et-Tendre*, and to him only to consult on the means of obtaining my husband's pardon. M. de P—— is sensible of this, and on my part I have no reason to complain of his liberality. We are perfectly happy, though we meet perhaps but for a few minutes in the day ; and is not this better than tiring one another for four-and-twenty hours? When I grow old—if ever I do—he will be my best

friend. In the mean time I support his credit with all my influence. This very morning I concluded an affair for him, which never could have succeeded, if the intimate friend of the minister had not been also my lover. Now, why cannot your lady Leonora and her Mr. L—— live on the same sort of terms? But if English manners will not permit of this, I have nothing more to say. Above all things a woman must respect opinion, else she cannot be well received in the world. I conclude this is the secret of lady Leonora's conduct. But then jealousy!—no woman, I suppose, is bound, even in England, to be jealous in order to show her love for her husband. I lose myself again in trying to understand what is incomprehensible.

As to you, my dear Olivia, you also amaze me by talking of *crimes* and *horror*, and *flying from pole to pole* to avoid a man because you have made him at last find out that he has a heart! You have done him the greatest possible service: it may preserve him perhaps from hanging himself next November—that month in which, according to Voltaire's philosophical calendar, Englishmen always hang themselves, because the atmosphere is so thick and their ennui so heavy. Lady Leonora, if she really loves her husband, ought to be infinitely obliged to you for averting this danger. As to the rest, your heart is not concerned, so you can have nothing to fear; and as for a platonic attachment on the part of Mr. L——, his wife, even according to her own rigid principles, cannot blame you.

Adieu, my charming friend! Instead of laughing

at your fit of prudery, I ought to encourage your scruples, that I might profit by them. If they should bring you to Paris immediately, with what joy should I embrace my Olivia, and how much gratitude should I owe to the jealousy of lady Leonora L——!

R*** is not yet returned. When I have any news to give you of him, depend upon it you shall hear from me again. Accept, my interesting Olivia, the vows of my most tender and eternal friendship.

GABRIELLE DE P——.

LETTER XXXIV.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

L—— Castle, Tuesday.

YOUR charming letter, my Gabrielle, has at once revived my spirits and dissipated all my scruples; you mistake, however, in supposing that Leonora is in love with her husband: more and more reason have I every hour to be convinced that Leonora has never known the passion of love; consequently her jealousy was, as I at first pronounced it to be, the selfish jealousy of matrimonial power and property. Else why does it subside, why does it vanish, when, if it were a jealousy of the heart, it has now more provocation, infinitely more than when it appeared in full force? Leonora could see that her husband

distinguished me at a *fête champêtre* ; she could see what the eyes of others showed her ; she could hear what envy whispered, or what scandal hinted ; she was mortified, she was alarmed even to fainting by a public preference, by a silly country girl's mistaking me for *the wife*, and doing homage to me as to the lady of the manor ; but Leonora cannot perceive in the object of her affection the symptoms that mark the rise and progress of *a real love*. Leonora feels not the little strokes, which would be fatal blows to the peace of a truly delicate mind ; she heeds not " the trifles light as air," which would be confirmation strong to a soul of genuine sensibility. My influence over the mind of L—— increases rapidly, and I shall let it rise to its acmè before I seem to notice it. Leonora, re-assured, I suppose, by a few flattering words, and more perhaps by an exalted opinion of her own merit, has lately appeared quite at her ease, and blind to all that passes before her eyes. It is not for me to dissipate this illusion prematurely—it is not for me to weaken this confidence in her husband. To an English wife this would be death. Let her foolish security then last as long as possible. After all, how much anguish of heart, how many pangs of conscience, how much of the torture of pity, am I spared by this callous temper in my friend ! I may indulge in a little harmless coquetry without danger to her peace, and without scruple enjoy the dear possession of power.

“ Say, for you know,” charming Gabrielle, what is the delight of obtaining power over the human heart? . Let the lords of the creation boast of their power to govern all things; to charm these governors be ours. Let the logicians of the earth boast their power to regulate the world by reason; be it ours, Gabrielle, to intoxicate and humble proud reason to the dust beneath our feet.—And who shall blame in us this ardour for universal dominion? If they are men, I call them tyrants—if they are women, I call them hypocrites—and the two vices which I most detest are tyranny and hypocrisy. Frankly I confess, that I feel in all its restless activity the passion for general admiration. I cannot conceive—can you, Gabrielle?—a pleasure more transporting than the perception of extended and extending dominion. The struggle of the rebel heart for freedom makes the war more tempting, the victory more glorious, the triumph more splendid. Secure of your sympathy, ma belle Gabrielle, I shall not fear to tire you by my commentaries.

Male coquetry justifies female retaliation to any imaginable extent. Upon this principle, on which I have seen you act so often, and so successfully, I shall now intrepidly proceed. This man makes a show of resistance; be it at his own peril: he thinks that he is gaining power over my heart, whilst I am preparing torments for his; he fancies that he is throwing chains round me, whilst I am rivetting fetters from which he will in vain attempt to escape.

He is proud, and has the insanity of desiring to be exclusively beloved, yet affects to set no value upon the preference that is shown to him; appears satisfied with his own approbation, and stoically all-sufficient to his own happiness. Leonora does not know how to manage his temper, but I do. The suspense, however, in which he keeps me is tantalizing: he shall pay for it hereafter: I had no idea, till lately, that he had so much self-command. At times he has actually made me doubt my own power. At certain moments I have been half tempted to believe that I had made no serious impression, that he had been only amusing himself at my expense, and for Leonora's gratification: but upon careful and cool observation I am convinced that his indifference is affected, that all his stoicism will prove vain. The arrow is lodged in his heart, and he must fall, whether he turns upon the enemy in anger, or flies in dismay.

My pride is exasperated. I am not accustomed to such obstinate resistance. I really almost hate this invincible man, and—strange inconsistency of the human heart!—almost love him. Heaven and pride preserve me from such a weakness! But there is certainly something that piques and stimulates one's feelings in this species of male coquetry. L— understands the business better than I thought he could. One moment my knowledge of the arts of his sex puts me on my guard; the next my sensibility exposes me in the most terrible manner. Ex-

perience ought to protect me, but it only shows me the peril and my inability to escape. Ah! Gabrielle, without a heart how safe we should be, how dangerous to our lovers! But cursed with sensibility, we must, alas! submit to our fate. The habit of loving, *le besoin d'aimer*, is more powerful than all sense of the folly and the danger. Nor is the tempest of the passions so dreadful as the dead calm of the soul. Why did R*** suffer my soul to sink into this ominous calm? The fault is his; let him abide the consequence. Why did he not follow me to England? Why did he not write to me? or when he did write, why were his letters so cold, so spiritless? When I spoke of divorce, why did he hesitate? Why did he reason when he should have only felt? Tell him, my tender, my delicate friend, these are questions which the heart asks, and which the heart only can answer. Adieu.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XXXV.

MADAME DE P—— TO OLIVIA.

Paris.

JE suis excédée! mon cœur. Alive, and but just alive, after such a day of fatigues! All morning from one minister to another! then home to my toilette! then a great dinner with a number of foreigners, each to be distinguished—then au Fey-deau, where I was obliged to go to support poor

S——'s play. It would be really insupportable, if it were not for the finest music in the world, which, after all, the French music certainly is. There was a violent party against the piece; and we were so late, that it was just on the point of perishing. My ears have not yet recovered from the horrid noise. In the midst of the tumult I happily, by a master-stroke, turned the fortune of the night. I spied the shawl of an English woman hanging over the box. This, you know, like scarlet to the bull, is sufficient to enrage the Parisian pit. To the shawl I directed the fury of the mob of critics. Luckily for us, the lady was attended only by an Englishman, who of course chose to assert his right not to understand the customs of any country, or submit to any will but his own. He would not permit the shawl to be stirred. A *bas! à bas!*: resounded from below. The uproar was inconceivable. You would have thought that the house must have come down. In the mean time the piece went on, and the shawl covered all its defects. Admire my generalship. T—— tells me I was born for a general; yet I rather think my forte is negotiation.

But I have not yet come to your affairs, for which alone I could undergo the fatigue of writing at this moment. Guess, my Olivia, what apparition I met at the door of my box to-night. But the enclosed note will save you the trouble of guessing. I could not avoid permitting him to slide his *billet doux* into my hand as he put on my shawl. Adieu. I must refuse myself the pleasure of conversing longer with my sweet friend. Fresh toils await me. Mad. la

Grande will never forgive me if I do not appear for a moment at her soirée : and la petite Q—— will be jealous beyond recovery if I do not give her a moment: and it is Mad. R——'s night. There I must be ; for all the ambassadors, as usual, will be there ; and as some of them, I have reason to believe, go on purpose to meet me, I cannot disappoint their excellencies. My friends would never forgive it. I am positively quite weary of this life of eternal bustle ; but once in the eddy, one is carried round and round ; there is no stopping. Adieu, adieu. I write under the hands of Victoire. O that she had your taste to guide her, and to decide my too vacillating judgment : we should then have no occasion to dread even the elegant simplicity of Mad. R——'s toilette.

GABRIELLE DE P——.

LETTER XXXVI.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

My Gabrielle, I have read R***'s note enclosed in your charming sprightly letter. What a contrast! So cold! so formal! A thousand times rather would I not have heard from him, than have received a letter so little in unison with my feelings. He talks to me of business. Business! What business ought to detain a man a moment from the woman he loves? The interests of his ambition are nothing to me.

What are all these to love? Is he so mean as to hesitate between them? then I despise him! and Olivia can never love the being she despises!

Does R*** flatter himself that his power over my heart is omnipotent? Does he imagine that Olivia is to be slighted with impunity? Does R*** think that a woman who has even nominally the honour to reign over his heart cannot meditate new conquests? O credulous vanity of man! He fancies perhaps that he is secure of the maturer age of one who fondly devoted to him her inexperienced youth. "Security is the curse of fools." Does he in his wisdom deem a woman's age a sufficient pledge for her constancy? He might every day see examples enough to convince him of his error. In fact, the age of women has nothing to do with the number of their years. Possibly, however, the gallant gentleman may be of opinion with Leonora's Swiss, that lady Olivia is *un peu passée*. Adieu, my dear friend; you, who always understand and sympathize in my feelings, you will express them for me in the best manner possible. I shall not write to R***. You will see him; and Olivia commits to you what to a woman of delicacy is more dear than her love—her just resentment.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XXXVII.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

L—— Castle.

PITY me, dearest Gabrielle, for I am in need of all the pity which your susceptible heart can bestow. Never was woman in such a terrible situation! Yes, Gabrielle, this provoking, this incomprehensible, this too amiable man, has entangled your poor friend past recovery. Her sentiments and sensations must henceforward be in eternal opposition to each other. Friendship, gratitude, honour, virtue, all in tremendous array, forbid her to think of love; but love, imperious love, will not be so defied: he seizes upon his victim, and now, as in all the past, will be the ruler, the tyrant of Olivia's destiny. Never was confusion, amazement, terror, remorse, equal to mine, Gabrielle, when I first discovered that I loved him. Who could have foreseen, who could have imagined it? I meant but to satisfy an innocent curiosity, to indulge harmless coquetry, to gratify the natural love of admiration, and to enjoy the possession of power. Alas! I felt not that whilst I was acquiring ascendancy over the heart of another I was beguiled of all command over my own. I flattered myself that when honour should bid me stop, I could pause without hesitation, without effort: I promised myself, that the moment I should discover that I was loved by the husband of my friend I should fly from him for ever. Alas! it is no longer time—to fly

from him is no longer in my power. O Gabrielle! I love him: he knows that I love him. Never did woman suffer more than I have done since I wrote to you last. The conflict was too violent for my feeble frame. I have been ill—very ill: a nervous fever brought me nearly to the grave. Why did I not die? I should have escaped the deep humiliation, the endless self-reproach to which my future existence is doomed.—Leonora!—Why do I start at that name? Oh! there is horror in the sound! Even now perhaps she knows and triumphs in my weakness. Even now perhaps her calm insensible soul blesses itself for not being made like mine. Even now perhaps her husband doubts whether he shall accept Olivia's love, or sacrifice your wretched friend to Leonora's pride. O Gabrielle, no words can describe what I suffer! But I must be calm, and explain the progress of this fatal passion. Explain—Heavens! how shall I explain what I cannot recollect without heart-rending anguish and confusion! O Gabrielle! pity

Your distracted

OLIVIA.

LETTER XXXVIII.

MADAME DE P—— TO OLIVIA.

Monday.

My dear romantic Olivia! you must have a furious passion for tormenting yourself, when you can find

matter for despair in your present situation. In your place I should rejoice to find that in the moment an old passion had consumed itself, a new one, fresh and vigorous, springs from its ashes. My charming friend, understand your own interests, and do not be the dupe of those fine phrases that we are obliged to employ to deceive others. Rail at Cupid as much as you please to the men in public, *par façon*; but always remember for your private use, that love is essential to our existence in society. What is a woman when she neither loves nor is loved? a mere *personage muet* in the drama of life. Is it not from our lovers that we derive our consequence? Even a beauty without lovers is but a queen without subjects. A woman who renounces love is an abdicated sovereign, always longing to resume her empire when it is too late; continually forgetting herself, like the pseudo-philosophic Christina, talking and acting as though she had still the power of life and death in her hands; a tyrant without guards or slaves; a most awkward, pitiable, and ridiculous personage. No, my fair Olivia, let us never abjure love: even when the reign of beauty passes away, that of grace and sentiment remains. As much delicacy as you please: without delicacy there is no grace, and without a veil beauty loses her most captivating charms. I pity you, my dear, for having let your veil be blown aside *malheureusement*. But such accidents will happen. Who can control the passions or the winds? After all, *l'erreur d'un moment* is not irretrievable, and you reproach yourself too bitterly, my sweet friend, for your involuntary injustice to lady Leonora.

Assuredly it could not be your intention to sacrifice your repose to Mr. L——. You loved him against your will, did you not? And it is, you know, by the intention that we must judge of actions: the positive harm done to the world in general is in all cases the only just measure of criminality. Now what harm is done to the universe, and what injury can accrue to any individual, provided you keep your own counsel? As long as your friend is deceived, she is happy; it therefore becomes your duty, your virtue, to dissemble. I am no great casuist, but all this appears to me self-evident; and these I always thought were your principles of philosophy. My dear Olivia, I have drawn out my whole store of metaphysics with some difficulty for your service; I flatter myself I have set your poor distracted head to rights. One word more—for I like to go to the bottom of a subject, when I can do so in two minutes: virtue is desirable because it makes us happy; consequently, to make ourselves happy is to be truly virtuous. Methinks this is sound logic.

To tell you the truth, my dear Olivia, I do not well conceive how you have contrived to fall in love with this half-frozen Englishman. 'Tis done, however—there is no arguing against facts; and this is only one proof more of what I have always maintained, that destiny is inevitable and love irresistible. Voltaire's charming inscription on the statue of Cupid is worth all the volumes of reasoning and morality that ever were or ever will be written. Banish melancholy thoughts, my dear friend; they serve no manner of purpose but to increase your

passion. Repentance softens the heart; and every body knows, that what softens the heart disposes it more to love: for which reason I never abandon myself to this dangerous luxury of repentance. Mon Dieu! why will people never profit by experience? And to what purpose do they read history? Was not La Valliere ever penitent and ever transgressing? ever in transports or in tears? You, at all events, my Olivia, can never become a Carmelite or a Magdalen. You have emancipated yourself from superstition: but whilst you ridicule all religious orders, do not inflict upon yourself their penances. The habit of some of the orders has been thought becoming. The modest costume of a nun is indeed one of the prettiest dresses one can wear at a masquerade ball, and it might even be worn without a mask, if it were fashionable: but nothing that is not fashionable can be becoming.

Adieu, my adorable Olivia: I will send you by the first opportunity your Lyons gown, which is really charming.

GABRIELLE DE P——.

LETTER XXXIX.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

Nov. 30th, —

YOUR truly philosophical letter, my infinitely various Gabrielle, infused a portion of its charming

spirit into my soul. My mind was fortified and elevated by your eloquence. Who could think that a woman of such a lively genius could be so profound? and who could expect from a woman, who has passed her life in the world, such original and deep reflections? You see you were mistaken when you thought that you had no genius for philosophic subjects.

After all that has been said by metaphysicians about the existence and seat of the moral sense, I think I can solve every difficulty by a new theory. You know some philosophers suppose the moral sense to be intuitive and inherent in man: others who deny the doctrine of innate ideas, treat this notion of innate sentiments as equally absurd. There they certainly are wrong, for sentiments are widely different from ideas, and I have that within me which convinces my understanding that sentiments must be innate, and proportioned to the delicacy of our sensibility; no person of common sense or feeling can doubt this. But there are other points which I own puzzled me till yesterday: some metaphysicians would seat the moral sense inherently in the heart, others would place it intuitively in the brain, all would confine it to the soul; now in my opinion it resides primarily and principally in the nerves, and varies with their variations. Hence the difficulty of making the moral sense a universal guide of action, since it not only differs in many individuals, but in the same persons, at different periods of their existence, or (as I have often experienced) at different hours of the day. All this must depend upon the

mobility of the nervous system: upon this may hinge the great difficulties which have puzzled metaphysicians respecting consciousness, identity, &c. If they had attended less to the nature of the soul, and more to the system of the nerves, they would have avoided innumerable errors, and probably would have made incalculably important discoveries. Nothing is wanting but some great German genius to bring this idea of a moral sense in the nerves into fashion. Indeed, if our friend Mad. *** would mention it in the notes to her new novel, it would introduce it in the most satisfactory manner possible to all the fashionable world abroad; and we take our notions in this country implicitly from the continent. As⁷ for you, my dear Gabrielle, I know you cut the gordian knot at once, by referring, with your favourite moralist, every principle of human nature to self-love. This does not quite accord with my ideas; there is something harsh in it, that is repugnant to my sensibility; but you have a stronger mind than I have, and perhaps your theory is right.

“You tell me I contradict myself continually,” says the acute and witty duke de la Rochefoucault: “No, but the human heart, of which I treat, is in perpetual contradiction to itself.” Permit me to avail myself of this answer, dear Gabrielle, if you should accuse me of contradicting in this letter all that I said to you in my last. A few hours after I had despatched it the state of my nerves changed; I saw things of course in a new light, and repented having exposed myself to your raillery by writing in such a Magdalen strain. My nerves were more in

fault than I. When one's mind or one's nerves grow weak, the early associations and old prejudices of the nursery recur, and tyrannize over one's reason: from this evil your liberal education and enviable temperament have preserved you; but have charity for my feminine weakness of frame, which too often counteracts the masculine strength of my soul. Now that I have deprecated your ridicule for my last nervous nonsense, I will go on in a more rational manner. However my better judgment might have been clouded for a moment, I have recovered strength of mind enough to see that I am in no way to blame for any thing that has happened. If a man is amiable, and if I have taste and sensibility, I must see and feel it. "To love," as I remember your friend G***** once finely observed to you, "to love is a crime only in the eyes of demons, or of priests, who resemble demons." This is a general proposition, to which none but the prejudiced can refuse their assent: and what is true in general must be true in particular. The *accident*, I use the term philosophically, not popularly, the accident of a man's being married, or, in other words, having entered imprudently into a barbarous and absurd civil contract, cannot alter the nature of things. The essence of truth cannot be affected by the variation of external circumstances. Now the proper application of metaphysics frees the mind from vulgar prejudices, and dissipates the baby terrors of an ill-educated conscience. To fall in love with a married man, and the husband of your intimate friend! How dreadful the sounds to some ears! even mine were startled at

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first, till I called reason to my assistance. Then I had another difficulty to combat—to own, and own unasked, a passion to the object of it, would shock the false delicacy of those who are governed by common forms, and who are slaves to vulgar prejudices: but a little philosophy liberates our sex from the tyranny of custom, teaches us to disdain hypocrisy, and to glory in the simplicity of truth.

Josephine had been perfuming my hair, and I was sitting reading at my toilette; the door of my dressing-room happened to be half open; L—— was crossing the gallery, and as he passed I suppose his eye was caught by my hair, or perhaps he paused a moment, I am not certain how it was—my eyes were on my book.

“Ah! vous avez raison, monsieur, c’est la plus belle chevelure! Mais entrez donc, monsieur,” cried Josephine, whom I can never teach to comprehend or respect English customs, “Eh! entrez, entrez, monsieur; madame est à sa toilette.”

As I looked up I could not forbear smiling at the extreme ease and decision of Josephine’s manner, and the excessive doubt and anxiety in the gentleman’s appearance. My smile, which, Heaven knows, meant no encouragement, decided him; timidity instantly gave way to joy; he entered. What was to be done? I could not turn him out again; I was not answerable for any foolish conclusions he might draw from what he ought in politeness to have considered as a thing of course. All I could do was to blame Josephine for being a French woman. To defend her, and flatter me, was the gentleman’s

part ; and, for an Englishman, he really acquitted himself with tolerable grace. Josephine at least was pleased, and she found such a perpetual employment for monsieur, and his advice was so necessary, that there was no chance of his departure : so we talked of French *toilettes*, &c. &c. in French for Josephine's edification : L—— paid me some compliments upon the recovery of my looks after my illness—I thought I looked terribly languid—but he assured me that this languor, in his eyes, was an additional grace ; I could not understand this : he fancied that must be because he did not express himself well in French ; he explained himself more clearly in English, which Josephine, you know, does not understand, so that she was now forced to be silent, and I was compelled to take my share in the conversation. L—— made me comprehend, that languor indicating sensibility of heart was to him the most touching of female charms ; I sighed, and took up the book I had been reading ; it was the new novel which you sent me, dear Gabrielle ; I talked of it, in hopes of changing the course of the conversation ; alas ! this led to one far more dangerous : he looked at the passage I had been reading. This brought us back to sensibility again—to sentiments and descriptions so terribly apposite ! we found such a similarity in our tastes ! Yet L—— spoke only in general, and he preserved a command over himself, which provoked me, though I knew it to be coquetry ; I saw the struggle in his mind, and was determined to force him to be candid, and to enjoy my triumph. With these views I went far-

ther than I had intended. The charm of sensibility he had told me was to him irresistible. Alas! I let him perceive all the weakness of my heart.—Sensibility is the worst time-keeper in the world. We were neither of us aware of its progressive motion. The Swiss—my evil genius—the Swiss knocked at the door to let me know dinner was served. Dinner! on what vulgar incidents the happiness of life depends! Dinner came between the discovery of my sentiments and that declaration of passion which I now must hear—or die.

“Le diner! mon Dieu!” cried Josephine. “Mais —finissons donc—la toilette de madame.”

I heard the impertinent Swiss at the other end of the gallery at his master’s door, wondering in broken English where his master could be, and conjecturing forty absurdities about his boots, and his being out riding, &c. &c. To sally forth in conscious innocence upon the enemy’s spies, and to terminate the adventure as it was begun, *à la Française*, was my resolution. L—— and Josephine understood me perfectly.

“Eh! monsieur de Vaud,” said Josephine to the Swiss, whom we met on the landing-place of the stairs, “madame n’est elle pas coëffée à ravir aujourd’hui? C’est que monsieur vient d’assister à la toilette de madame.” The Swiss bowed, and said nothing. The bow was to his master, not to me, and it was a bow of duty, not of inclination. I never saw a man look so like a machine; he did not even raise his eyes upon me or my *coëffure* as we passed.

Bah! cried Josephine, with an inexpressible accent of mingled indignation and contempt. She ran down stairs, leaving the Swiss to his stupidity. I was more afraid of his penetration. But I entered the dining-room as if nothing extraordinary had happened; and after all, you know, my dear Gabrielle, nothing extraordinary had befallen us. A gentleman had assisted at a lady's toilette. Nothing more simple, nothing more proper in the meridian of Paris; and does propriety change with meridians? There was company at dinner, and the conversation was general and uninteresting; L— endeavoured to support his part with vivacity; but he had fits of absence and silence, which might have alarmed Leonora, if she had any suspicion. But she is now perfectly secure, and absolutely blind: therefore you see there can be no danger for her happiness in my remaining where I am. For no earthly consideration would I disturb her peace of mind; there is no sacrifice I would hesitate for a moment to make to friendship or virtue, but I cannot surely be called upon to *plant a dagger in my own heart* to destroy, for ever to destroy my own felicity without advantage to my friend. My attachment to L—, as you say, is involuntary, and my love as pure as it is fervent. I have reason to believe that his sentiments are the same for me; but of this I am not yet certain. There is the danger, and the only real danger for Leonora's happiness; for whilst this uncertainty and his consequent fits of absence and imprudence last, there is hazard every moment of her being alarmed. But when L— once decides,

every thing arranges itself, you know, Gabrielle, and prudence becomes a duty to ourselves and to Leonora. No word, or look, or coquetry could then escape us; we should be unpardonable if we did not conduct ourselves with the most scrupulous delicacy and attention to her feelings. I am amazed that L——, who has really a good understanding, does not make these reflections, and is not determined by this calculation. For his, for my own, but most for Leonora's sake, I wish that this cruel suspense were at an end. Adieu, dear and amiable Gabrielle.—These things are managed better in France.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XL.

MRS. C—— TO MISS B——.

DEAR MARGARET,

L—— Castle.

I ARRIVED here late yesterday evening in high spirits, and high hopes of surprising and delighting all the world by my unexpected appearance; but my pride was checked, and my tone changed the moment I saw Leonora. Never was any human being so altered in her looks in so short a time. I had just, and but just presence of mind enough not to say so. I am astonished that it does not strike Mr. L——. As soon as she left the room, I asked him if lady Leonora had been ill? No; perfectly well! perfectly well!—Did not he perceive that she looked extremely ill? No; she might be paler than usual: that was

all that Mr. L—— had observed. Lady Olivia, after a pause, added, that Leonora certainly had not appeared well lately, but this was nothing extraordinary in her *situation*. *Situation!* nonsense! Lady Olivia went on with sentimental hypocrisy of look and tone, saying fine things, to which I paid little attention. Virtue in words, and vice in actions! thought I. People of certain pretensions in the court of sentiment think that they can pass false virtues upon the world for real, as some ladies, entitled by their rank to wear jewels, appear in false stones, believing that it will be taken for granted they would wear nothing but diamonds. Not one eye in a hundred detects the difference at first, but in time the hundredth eye comes, and then they must for ever hide their diminished rays. Beware! lady Olivia, beware!

Leonora is ill, or unhappy, or both; but she will not allow that she is either. On one subject she is impenetrable: a hundred, a thousand different ways within these four-and-twenty-hours have I led to it, with all the ingenuity and all the delicacy of which I am mistress; but all to no purpose. Neither by provocation, persuasion, laughing, teasing, questioning, cross, or round about, pushing, squeezing, encompassing, taking for granted, wondering, or blundering, could I gain my point. Every look guarded—every syllable measured—yet unequivocal—

“She said no more than just the thing she ought.”

Because I could find no fault I was half angry. I

respect the motive of this reserve ; but towards me it is misplaced, and ill-judged, and it must not exist. I have often declared that I would never condescend to play the part of a confidante to any princess or heroine upon earth. But Leonora is neither princess nor heroine, and I would be her confidante, but she will not let me. Now I am punished for my pride. If she would only trust me, if she would only tell me what has passed since I went, and all that now weighs upon her mind, I could certainly be of some use. I could and would say every thing that she might scruple to hint to lady Olivia, and I will answer for it I would make her raise the siege. But I cannot believe Mr. L—— to be such a madman as to think of attaching himself seriously to a woman like Olivia, when he has such a wife as Leonora. That he was amusing himself with Olivia I saw, or thought I saw, some time ago, and I rather wondered that Leonora was uneasy : for all husbands will flirt, and all wives must bear it, thought I. When such a coquette as this fell in his way, and made advances, he would have been more than man if he had receded. Of course, I thought, he must despise and laugh at her all the time he was flattering and gallanting her ladyship. This would have been fair play, and comic ; but the comedy should have ended by this time. I am now really afraid it will turn into a tragedy. I, even I ! am alarmed. I must prevail upon Leonora to speak to me without reserve. I see her suffer, and I must share her grief. Have not I always done so from the time we were children ? and now, when she most wants a friend, am not I worthy

to share her confidence? Can she mistake friendship for impertinent curiosity? Does not she know that I would not be burthened with the secrets of any body whom I did not love? If she thinks otherwise, she does me injustice, and I will tell her so before I sleep. She does not know how well I love her.

My dear Margaret, Leonora and I have had a quarrel—the first serious quarrel we ever had in our lives; and the end of it is, that she is an angel, and I am a fool. Just as I laid down my pen after writing to you, though it was long past midnight, I marched into Leonora's apartment, resolved to surprise or to force her confidence. I found her awake, as I expected, and up and dressed, as I did not expect, sitting in her dressing-room, her head leaning upon her hand. I knew what she was thinking of; she had a heap of Mr. L——'s old letters beside her. She denied that she was in tears, and I will not swear to the tears, but I think I saw signs of them notwithstanding. I spoke out;—but in vain—all in vain. At last I flew into a passion, and reproached her bitterly. She answered me with that air of dignified tenderness which is peculiar to her—"If you believe me to be unhappy, my dear Helen, is this a time to reproach me unjustly?" I was brought to reason and to tears, and after asking pardon, like a foolish naughty child, was kissed and forgiven, upon a promise never to do so any more; a promise, which I hope Heaven will grant me grace and strength of mind enough to keep. I was certainly wrong to

attempt to force her secret from her. Leonora's confidence is always given, never yielded; and in her, openness is a virtue, not a weakness. But I wish she would not contrive to be always in the right. In all our quarrels, in all the variations of my humour, I am obliged to end by doing homage to her reason, as the Chinese mariners, in every change of weather, burn incense before the needle.

Your affectionate

HELEN C——.

LETTER XLI.

MR. L—— TO GENERAL B——.

MY DEAR GENERAL,

L—— Castle, Friday.

I HOPED that you would have favoured us with a passing visit in your way from town, but I know you will tell me that friendship must not interfere with the interests of the service. I have reason to curse those interests; they are for ever at variance with mine. I had a particular desire to speak to you upon a subject, on which it is not agreeable to me to write. Lady Leonora also wished extremely and disinterestedly for your company. She does not know how much she is obliged to you. The laconic advice you gave me some time ago influenced my conduct longer than counsel which is in opposition to our passions usually does, and it has haunted my imagination perpetually:—"My dear L——, do not end by being the dupe of a *Frenchified* coquette."

My dear friend, of that there is no danger. No man upon earth despises or detests coquettes more than I do, be they French or English. I think, however, that a foreign-born, or foreign-bred coquette, has more of the ease of *practice*, and less of the awkwardness of conscience, than a home-bred flirt, and is in reality less blamable, for she breaks no restraints of custom or education; she does only what she has seen her mother do before her, and what is authorized by the example of most of the fashionable ladies of her acquaintance. But let us put flirts and coquettes quite out of the question. My dear general, you know that I am used to women, and take it upon my word, that the lady to whom I allude is more tender and passionate than vain. Every woman has, or has had, a tincture of vanity; but there are a few, and those are to me the most amiable of the sex, who

“ Feel every vanity in fondness lost.”

You know that I am delicate, even fastidious, in my taste for female manners. Nothing can in my opinion make amends for any offence against propriety, except it be sensibility—genuine, generous sensibility. This can, in my mind, cover a multitude of faults. There is so much of selfishness, of hypocrisy, of coldness, in what is usually called female virtue, that I often turn with distaste from those to whom I am compelled to do homage for the sake of the general good of society. I am not *charlatan* enough to pretend upon all occasions to prefer the public advantage to my own. I confess, that let a woman be ever so fair, or good, or wise:

“ Be she with that goodness blest
Which may merit name of best,
If she be not such to me,
What care I how good she be ? ”

And I will further acknowledge, that I am not easily satisfied with the manner in which a woman is kind to me: if it be duty-work kindness, I would not give thanks for it: it is done for her reputation, not for me, and let the world thank her. *To the best of wives* I should make the worst of husbands. No—I should, I hope, pay her in her own coin, with all due observances, attentions, and respect, but without one grain of love. Love is only to be had for love; and without it, nothing a woman can give appears to me worth having. I do not desire to be loved well enough to satisfy fathers and mothers, and uncles and aunts; well enough to decide a woman to marry me rather than disoblige her friends, or run the chance of having *many a worse offer*, and living perhaps to be an old maid. I do not desire to be loved well enough to keep a woman true and faithful to me “ *till death us do part:* ” in short, I do not desire to be loved well enough for a husband; I desire to be loved sufficiently for a lover; not only above all other persons, but above all other things, all other considerations—to be the first and last object in the heart of the woman to whom I am attached: I wish to feel that I sustain and fill the whole of her heart. I must be certain that I am every thing to her, as she is every thing to me; that there is no imaginable situation in which she would not live with me, in which she would not be happy to live with me; no possible sacrifice that

she would not make for me; or rather, that nothing she could do should appear a sacrifice. Are these exorbitant expectations? I am capable of all this, and more, for a woman I love; and it is my pride or my misfortune to be able to love upon no other terms. Such proofs of attachment it may be difficult to obtain, and even to give; more difficult, I am sensible, for a wife than for a mistress. A young lady who is married *secundum artem*, with licence and consent of friends, can give no extraordinary instances of affection. I should not consider it as an indisputable proof of love, that she does me the honour to give me her hand in a church, or that she condescends to bespeak my liveries, or to be handed into her own coach with all the blushing honours of a bride; all the paraphernalia of a wife secured, all the prudent and necessary provision made both for matrimonial love and hatred, dower, pin-money, and separate maintenance on the one hand, and on the other, lands, tenements, and hereditaments for the future son and heir, and sums without end for younger children to the tenth and twentieth possibility, *as the case may be, nothing herein contained to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding*. Such a jargon Cupid does not understand. A woman may love this most convenient personage, her lawful husband; but I should think it difficult for the delicacy of female passion to survive the cool preparations for hymeneal felicity. At all events, you will allow the lady makes no sacrifice, she shows no great generosity, and she may, or she may not, be touched at the altar by the divine flame. My good general, when you are a husband

you will feel these things as I do; till then, it is very easy to talk as you do, and to admire other men's wives, and to wish Heaven had blessed you with such a treasure. For my part, the single idea, that a woman thinks it her duty to be fond of me, would deprive me of all pleasure in her love. No man can be more sensible than I am of the amiable and estimable qualities of lady Leonora L——; I should be a brute and a liar if I hesitated to give the fullest testimony in her praise; but such is the infirmity of my nature, that I could pardon some faults more easily than I could like some virtues. The virtues which leave me in doubt of a woman's love I can esteem, but that is all. Lady Leonora is calm, serene, perfectly sweet-tempered, without jealousy and without suspicion; in one word, without love. If she loved me, she never could have been the wife she has been for some months past. You will laugh at my being angry with a wife for not being jealous. But so it is. Certain defects of temper I could bear, if I considered them as symptoms of strong affection. When I for a moment believed that Leonora suffered, when I attributed her fainting at our fête champêtre to jealousy, I was so much alarmed and touched, that I absolutely forgot her rival. I did more; to prevent her feeling uneasiness, to destroy the suspicions which I imagined had been awakened in her mind, I hesitated not to sacrifice all the pleasure and all the vanity which a man of my age might reasonably be supposed to feel in the prospect of a new and not inglorious conquest; I left home immediately, and went to meet you, my dear friend, on your return from abroad.

This visit I do not set down to your account, but to that of honour—foolish, unnecessary honour. You half-persuaded me, that your hearsay Parisian evidence was more to be trusted than my own judgment, and I returned home with the resolution not to be the dupe of a coquette. Leonora's reception of me was delightful; I never saw her in such spirits, or so amiable. But I could not help wishing to ascertain whether I had attributed her fainting to the real cause. This proof I tempted to my cost. Instead of showing any tender alarm at the renewal of my obvious attentions to her rival, she was perfectly calm and collected, went on with her usual occupations, fulfilled all her duties, never reproached me by word or look, never for one moment betrayed impatience, ill-humour, suspicion, or jealousy; in short, I found that I had been fool enough to attribute to excess of affection an accident which proceeded merely from the situation of her health. If anxiety of mind had been the cause of her fainting at the fête champêtre, she would since have felt and shown agitation on a thousand occasions, where she has been perfectly tranquil. Her friend Mrs. C——, who returned here a few days ago, seems to imagine that Leonora looks ill; but I shall not again be led to mistake bodily indisposition for mental suffering. Leonora's conduct argues great insensibility of soul, or great command; great insensibility, I think: for I cannot imagine such command of temper possible to any but
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[a woman who feels indifference for the offender. Yet, even now that I have steeled myself with this conviction, I am scarcely bold enough to hazard the

chance of giving her pain. Absurd weakness! It has been clearly proved to my understanding, that my irresolution, my scruples of conscience, my combats between love and esteem, are more likely to betray the real state of my mind than any decision that I could make. I decide, then—I determine to be happy with a woman who has a soul capable of feeling, not merely what is called conjugal affection, but the passion of love; who is capable of sacrificing every thing to love; who has given me proofs of candour and greatness of mind, which I value far above all her wit, grace, and beauty. My dear general, I know all that you can tell, all that you can hint concerning her history abroad. I know it from her own lips. It was told to me in a manner that made her my admiration. It was told to me as a preservative against the danger of loving her. It was told to me with the generous design of protecting Leonora's happiness; and all this at the moment when I was beloved, tenderly beloved. She is above dissimulation: she scorns the arts, the fears of her sex. She knows you are her enemy, and yet she esteems you; she urged me to speak to you with the utmost openness: "Let me never," said she, "be the cause of your feeling less confidence or less affection for the best of friends."

R*** is sacrificed to me; that R***, with whose cursed name you tormented me. My dear friend, she will force your admiration, as she has won my love.

Yours sincerely,

F. L——.

LETTER XLII.

MRS. C—— TO MISS B——.

L—— Castle.

As I am not trusted with the secret, I may, my dear Margaret, use my own eyes and ears as I please to find it out; and I know Leonora's countenance so well, that I see every thing that passes in her mind just as clearly as if she had told it to me in words.

It grieves me more than I can express, to see her suffering as she does. I am now convinced that she has reason to be unhappy; and, what is worse, I do not see what course she can follow to recover her happiness. All her forbearance, all her patience, all her sweet temper, I perceive, are useless, or worse than useless, injurious to her in her strange husband's opinion. I never liked him thoroughly, and now I detest him. He thinks her cold, insensible! She insensible!—Brute! Idiot! Every thing that she says or does displeases him. The merest trifles excite the most cruel suspicions. He totally misunderstands her character, and sees every thing about her in a false light. In short, he is under the dominion of an artful fiend, who works as she — pleases upon his passions—upon his pride, which is his ruling passion.

This evening lady Olivia began confessing that she had too much sensibility, that she was of an excessively susceptible temper, and that she should be terribly jealous of the affections of any person she

loved. She did not know how love *could* exist without jealousy. Mr. L—— was present, and listening eagerly. Leonora's lips were silent; not so her countenance. I was in hopes Mr. L—— would have remarked its beautiful touching expression; but his eyes were fixed upon Olivia. I could have but let me go on. Lady Olivia had the malice suddenly to appeal to Leonora, and asked, whether she was never jealous of her husband? Leonora, astonished by her assurance, paused for an instant, and then replied, "It would be difficult to convince me that I had any reason to be jealous of Mr. L——, I esteem him so much."—"I wish to Heaven!" exclaimed lady Olivia, her eyes turned upwards with a fine St. Cecilia expression, whilst Mr. L——'s attention was fixed upon her, "Would to Heaven I was blessed with such a *reasonable* temper!"—"When you are wishing to Heaven, lady Olivia," said I, "had not you better ask for *all you want* at once; not only such a reasonable temper, but such a feeling heart?"

Some of the company smiled. Lady Olivia, practised as she is, looked disconcerted; Mr. L—— grave and impenetrable; Leonora, blushing, turned away to the piano-forte. Mr. L—— remained talking with lady Olivia, and he neither saw nor heard her. If Leonora had sung like an angel, it would have made no impression. She turned over the leaves of her music quickly, to a lively air, and played it immediately, to prevent my perceiving how much she felt. Poor Leonora! you are but a bad dissembler, and it is in vain to try to conceal yourself from me.

↓ I was so sorry for her, and so incensed with Olivia this night, that I could not restrain myself, and I made matters worse. At supper I came almost to open war with her ladyship. I cannot remember exactly what I said, but I know that I threw out the most severe inuendoes which politeness could permit: and what *was* the consequence? Mr. L—— pitied Olivia and hated me; Leonora was in misery the whole time; and her husband probably thought that she was the instigator, though she was perfectly innocent. My dear Margaret, where will all this end? and how much more mischief shall I do with the best intentions possible?

Yours affectionately,

HELEN C——.

LETTER XLIII.

GENERAL B—— TO MR. L——.

YOUR letter has travelled after me God knows where, my dear L——, and has caught me at last with my foot in the stirrup. I have just had time to look it over. I find, in short, that you are in love. I give you joy! But be in love like a madman, not like a fool. Call a demirep an angel, and welcome; but remember that such angels are to be had any day in the year; and such a wife as yours is not to be had for the mines of Golconda. Coin your heart, and drop your blood for it, and you will never be loved

by any other woman so well as you are by lady
Leonora L——.

As to your jealous hypochondriacism, more of that
when I have more leisure. In the mean time I wish
it well cured. I am, my dear friend,

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER XLIV.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

L—— Castle.

I TRIUMPH! dear Gabrielle, give me joy! Never
was triumph more complete. L—— loves me! That
I knew long ago; but I have at last forced from his
proud heart the avowal of his passion. Love and
Olivia are victorious over scruples, prejudice, pride,
and superstition!

Leonora feels not—sees not: she requires, she ex-
cites no pity. Long may her delusion last! But
even were it this moment to dissipate, what cause
have I for remorse? “Who is most to blame, he
who ceases to love, or she who ceases to please?”
Leonora perhaps thinks that she loves her husband;
and no doubt she does so in a conjugal sort of a way:
he *has* loved his wife; but be it mine to prove that
his heart is suited to far other raptures; and if Olivia
be called upon for sacrifices, *Olivia* can make them.

“Let wealth, let honour wait the wedded dame,
August her deed, and sacred be her fame;
Before true passion all those views remove,
Fame, wealth, and honour, what are you to love?”

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These lines, though quoted perpetually by the tender and passionate, can never become stale and vulgar ; they will always recur in certain situations to persons of delicate sensibility, for they at once express all that can be said, and justify all that can be felt. My amiable Gabrielle, adieu. Pardon me if to-day I have no soul even for friendship. This day is all for love.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XLV.

GENERAL B—— TO MR. L——.

WHAT the devil would you have of your wife, my dear L——? You would be loved above all earthly considerations ; honour, duty, virtue and religion inclusive, would you? and you would have a wife with her head in the clouds, would you? I wish you were married to one of the all-for-love heroines, who would treat you with bowl and dagger every day of your life. In your opinion sensibility covers a multitude of faults—you would have said *sins*: so it had need, for it produces a multitude. Pray what brings hundreds and thousands of women to the Piazzas of Covent Garden but sensibility? What does the colonel's, and the captain's, and the ensign's mistress talk of but *sensibility*? And are you, my dear friend, to be duped by this hackneyed word? And should you really think it an indisputable proof of a lady's love, that she would jump out of a two

pair of stairs window into your arms? Now I should think myself sure of such a woman's love only just whilst I held her, and scarcely then; for I, who in my own way am jealous as well as yourself, should in this case be jealous of wickedness, and should strongly suspect that she would love the first devil that she saw better than me.

You are always raving about sacrifices. Your Cupid must be a very vindictive little god. Mine is a good-humoured, rosy little fellow, who desires no better than to see me laugh and be happy. But to every man his own Cupid. If you cannot believe in love without sacrifices, you must have them, to be sure. And now, in sober sadness, what do you think your heroine would sacrifice for you? Her reputation? that, pardon me, is out of her power. Her virtue? I have no doubt she would. But before I can estimate the value of this sacrifice, I must know whether she makes it to you or to her pleasure. Would she give up in any instance her pleasure for your happiness? This is not an easy matter to ascertain with respect to a mistress: but your wife has put it beyond a doubt, that she prefers your happiness not only to her pleasure, but to her pride, and to every thing that the sex usually prefer to a husband. You have been wounded by a poisoned arrow; but you have a faithful wife who can extract the poison. Lady Leonora's affection is not a mere fit of goodness and generosity, such as I have seen in many women, but it is a steadiness of attachment in the hour of trial, which I have seen in few. For several months past you have, by your own account, put her

temper and her love to the most severe tests, yet she has never failed for one moment, never reproached you by word or look.—But may be she has no feeling.—No feeling! you can have none, if you say so: no penetration, if you think so. Would not you think me a tyrant if I put a poor fellow on the picket, and told you, when he bore it without a groan, that it was because he could not feel? You do worse, you torture the soul of the woman who loves you; she endures, she is calm, she smiles upon you even in agony; and you tell me she cannot feel! she cannot feel like an Olivia! No; and so much the better for her husband, for she will then have only feeling enough for him, she will not extend her charity to all his sex. But Olivia has such candour and magnanimity, that I must admire her! I humbly thank her for offering to make me her confidant, for offering to tell me what I know already, and what she is certain that I know. These were good moves, but I understand the game as well as her ladyship does. As to her making a friend of me; if she means an enemy to lady Leonora L——, I would sooner see her—in heaven: but if she would do me the favour to think no more of your heart, which is too good for her, and to accept of my—my—what shall I say?—my devoirs, I am at her command. She shall drive my curricule, &c. &c. She would suit me vastly well for a month or two, and by that time poor R*** would make his appearance, or somebody in his stead: at the worst, I should have a chance of some blessed metaphysical quirk, which would prove that inconsistency was a virtue, or that a new love is better than

an old one. When it came to that, I should make my best bow, put on my most disconsolate face, and retire.

You will read all this in a very different spirit from that in which it is written. If you are angry —no matter : I am cool. I tell you beforehand that I will not fight you for any thing I have said in this letter, or that I ever may say about your Olivia. Therefore, my dear L——, save yourself the trouble of challenging me. I thank God I have reputation enough to be able to dispense with the glory of blowing out your brains.

Yours truly,
J. B.

LETTER XLVI.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

WE have been very gay here the last few days : the gallant and accomplished prince —— has been here. H****, the witty H****, who is his favourite companion, introduced him ; and he seems so much charmed with the old castle, its towers and battlements, and with its *cynosure*, that I know not when he will be able to prevail upon himself to depart. To-morrow, he says ; but so he has said these ten days : he cannot resist the entreaties of his kind host and hostess to stay another day. The soft accent of the beautiful Leonora will certainly detain him *one day more*, and her gracious smile will bereave him of rest for months to come. He has evidently fallen

desperately in love with her. Now we shall see virtue in danger.

I have always been of opinion with St. Evremond and Ninon de l'Enclos, that no female virtue can stand every species of test; fortunately it is not always exposed to trial. Reputation may be preserved by certain persons in certain situations, upon very easy terms. Leonora, for instance, is armed so strong in character, that no common mortal will venture to attack her. It would be presumption little short of high treason to imagine the fall of the lady Leonora L——, the daughter of the duchess of ***, who, with a long line of immaculate baronesses in their own right, each in her armour of stiff stays, stands frowning defiance upon the adventurous knights. More alarming still to the modern seducer appears a judge in his long wig, and a jury with their long faces, ready to bring in their verdict, and to award damages proportionate to the rank and fortune of the parties. Then the former reputation of the lady is talked of, and the irreparable injury sustained by the disconsolate husband from the loss of the solace and affection of this paragon of wives. And it is proved that she lived in the most perfect harmony with him till the vile seducer appeared; who, in aggravation of damages, was a confidential friend of the husband's, &c. &c. &c. &c. &c.

Brave, indeed, and desperately in love must be the man, who could dare all these to deserve the fair. But princes are, it is said, naturally brave, and ambitious of conquering difficulties,

I have insinuated these reflections in a general

way to L——, who applies them so as to plague himself sufficiently. Heaven is my witness, that I mean no injury to lady Leonora; yet I fear that there are moments, when my respect for her superiority, joined to the consciousness of my own weakness, overpowers me, and I almost envy her the right she retains to the esteem of the man I love. This is a blamable weakness—I know it—I reproach myself bitterly; but all I can do is to confess it candidly. L—— sees my conflicts, and knows how to value the sensibility of my fond heart. Adieu, my Gabrielle. When shall I be happy? since even love has its torments, and I am thus doomed to be ever a victim to the tenderness of my soul.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XLVII.

MRS. C—— TO MISS B——.

I DO not know whether I pity, love, or admire Leonora most. Just when her mind was deeply wounded by her husband's neglect, and when her jealousy was worked to the highest pitch by his passion for her dangerous rival, the prince —— arrives here, and struck by Leonora's charms of mind and person, falls passionately in love with her. Probably his highness's friend H—— had given him a hint of the existing circumstances, and he thought a more propitious moment could scarcely be found for making an impression upon a female mind. He

judged of Leonora by other women. And I, like a simpleton, judged of her by myself. With shame I confess to you, my dear Margaret, that notwithstanding all my past experience, I did expect that she would have done as I am afraid I should have done in her situation. I think that I could not have resisted the temptation of coquetting a little—a very little—just to revive the passion of the man whom I really loved. This expedient succeeds so often with that wise sex, who never rightly know the value of a heart, except when they have just won it, or at the moment when they are on the point of losing it. In Leonora's place and in such an emergency, I should certainly have employed that frightful monster jealousy to waken sleeping love; since he, and only he, can do it expeditiously and effectually. This I have hinted to Leonora, talking always *in generals*; for, since my total overthrow, I have never dared to come to particulars: but by putting cases and *confessing myself*, I contrived to make my thoughts understood. I then boasted of the extreme facility of the means I would adopt to recover a heart. Leonora answered in the words of a celebrated great man:—
“ C'est facile de se servir de pareils moyens; c'est difficile de s'y résoudre.”

“ But if no other means would succeed,” said I, “ would not you sacrifice your pride to your love?”

“ My pride, willingly; but not my sense of what is right,” said she, with an indescribable mixture of tenderness and firmness in her manner.

“ Can a little coquetry in a good cause be such a heinous offence?” persisted I. I knew that I was

wrong all the time ; but I delighted in seeing how right she was.

No—she would not allow her mind to be cheated by female sophistry ; nor yet by the male casuistry of, “ The end sanctifies the means.”

“ If you had the misfortune to lose the affections of the man you love, and if you were quite certain of regaining them by following my recipe ? ” said I.

Never shall I forget the look with which Leonora left me, and the accent with which she said, “ My dear Helen, if it were ever to be my misfortune to lose my husband’s love, I would not, even if I were certain of success, attempt to regain it by any unworthy arts. How could I wish to regain his love at the hazard of losing his esteem, and the certainty of forfeiting my own ! ”

I said no more—I had nothing more to say: I saw that I had given pain, and I have never touched upon the subject since. But her practice is even beyond her theory. Never, by deed, or look, or word, or thought (for I see all her thoughts in her eloquent countenance), has she swerved from her principles. No prudery—no coquetry—no mock-humility—no triumph. Never for an instant did she, by a proud air, say to her husband—See what others think of me ! Never did a resentful look say to him—Inconstant !—revenge is in my power ! Never even did a reproachful sigh express—I am injured, yet I do not retaliate.

Mr. L— is blind ; he is infatuated ; he is absolutely bereaved of judgment by a perfidious, ungrateful, and cruel wretch. Let me vent my indig-

nation to you, dear Margaret, or it will explode, perhaps, when it may do Leonora mischief.

Yours affectionately,

HELEN C——.

LETTER XLVIII.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

L—— Castle.

THIS lady Leonora, in her simplicity, never dreamed of love till the prince's passion was too visible and audible to be misunderstood: and then she changed her tone, and checked her simplicity, and was so reserved, and so dignified, and so *proper*, it was quite edifying, especially to a poor sinner of a coquette like me; nothing *piquante*; nothing *agaçante*; nothing *demi-voilée*; no retiring to be pursued; not a single manœuvre of coquetry did she practise. This convinces me that she cares not in the least for her husband; because, if she really loved him, and wished to reclaim his heart, what so natural or so simple as to excite his jealousy, and thus revive his love? After neglecting this golden opportunity, she can never convince me that she is really anxious about her husband's heart. This I hinted to L——, and his own susceptibility had hinted it to him efficaciously before I spoke.

Though Leonora has been so correct hitherto, and so cold to the prince in her husband's presence, I

have my suspicions, that if in his absence proper means were taken, if her pride were roused by apt suggestions, if it were delicately pointed out to her that she is shamefully neglected, that she is a cipher in her own house, that her husband presumes too much upon her sweetness of temper, that his inconstancy is wondered at by all who have eyes, and that a little retaliation might become her ladyship, I would not answer for her forbearance, that is to say, if all this were done by a dexterous man, a lover, and a prince! I shall take care my opinions shall be known; for I cannot endure to have the esteem of the man I love monopolized. Exposed to temptation as I have been, and with as ardent affections, Leonora, or I am much mistaken, would not have been more estimable. Adieu, my dearest Gabrielle. Nous verrons! nous verrons!

OLIVIA.

Sunday evening.

P.S. I open my letter to tell you that the prince is actually gone. Doubtless he will return at a more auspicious moment.

Lady M—— and all the troop of friends are to depart on Monday; all but *the* bosom friend, *l'amie intime*, that insupportable Helen, who is ever at daggers-drawing with me. So much the better! L—— sees her cabals with his wife; she is a partisan without the art to be so to any purpose, and her manœuvres tend only to increase his partiality for his Olivia.

LETTER XLIX.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

L—— Castle.

* * * * *

* * * * * In short,
 Leonora has discovered all that she might have seen
 months ago between her husband and me. What
 will be the consequence? I long, yet almost fear,
 to meet her again. She is now in her own apart-
 ment, writing, I presume, to her mother for advice.

LETTER L.

LEONORA TO OLIVIA.

[Left on lady Olivia's dressing-table.]

O YOU, whom no kindness can touch, whom no
 honour can bind, whom no faith can hold, enjoy the
 torments you have inflicted on me! enjoy the triumph
 of having betrayed a confiding friend! Friend no
 more—affect, presume no longer to call me friend!
 I am under no necessity to dissemble, and dissimu-
 lation is foreign to my habits, and abhorrent to my
 nature! I know you to be my enemy, and I say so—
 my most cruel enemy; one who could, without re-
 luctance or temptation, rob me of all I hold most
 dear. Yes, without temptation; for you do not love

my husband, Olivia. On this point I cannot be mistaken ; I know too well what it is to love him. Had you been struck by his great or good and amiable qualities, charmed by his engaging manners, or seduced by the violence of his passion ; and had I seen you honourably endeavour to repress that passion ; had I seen in you the slightest disposition to sacrifice your pleasure or your vanity to friendship or to duty, I think I could have forgiven, I am sure I should have pitied you. But you felt no pity for me, no shame for yourself ; you made no attempt to avoid, you invited the danger. Mr. L—— was not the deceiver, but the deceived. By every art and every charm in your power—and you have many—you won upon his senses and worked upon his imagination ; you saw, and made it your pride to conquer the scruples of that affection he once felt for his wife, and that wife was your friend. By passing bounds, which he could not conceive that any woman could pass, except in the delirium of passion, you made him believe that your love for him exceeds all that I feel. How he will find himself deceived ! If you had loved him as I do, you could not so easily have forfeited all claim to his esteem. Had you loved him so much, you would have loved honour more.

It is possible that Mr. L—— may taste some pleasure with you whilst his delusion lasts, whilst his imagination paints you, as mine once did, in false colours, possessed of generous virtues, and the victim of excessive sensibility : but when he sees you such

as you are, he will recoil from you with aversion, he will reject you with contempt.

Knowing my opinion of you, lady Olivia, you will not choose to remain in this house; nor can I desire for my guest one whom I can no longer, in private or in public, make my companion. Adieu.

LEONORA L——.

LETTER LI.

OLIVIA TO MR. L——.

L—— Castle, Midnight.

FAREWELL for ever!—It must be so—Farewell for ever! Would to Heaven I had summoned courage sooner to pronounce these fatal, necessary, irrevocable words: then had I parted from you without remorse, without the obloquy to which I am now exposed. Oh, my dearest L——! Mine, do I still dare to call you? Yes, mine for the last time, I must call you, mine I must fancy you, though for the impious thought the Furies themselves were to haunt me to madness. My dearest L——, never more must we meet in this world! Think not that my weak voice alone forbids it: no, a stronger voice than mine is heard—an injured wife reclaims you. What a letter have I just received……!—from…… Leonora! She tells me that she no longer desires for her guest one whom she cannot, in public or

private, make her companion—O Leonora, it was sufficient to banish me from your heart! She tells me not only that I have for ever forfeited her confidence, her esteem, her affection; but that I shall soon be your aversion and contempt. O cruel, cruel words! But I submit—I have deserved it all—I have robbed her of a heart above all price. Leonora, why did you not reproach me more bitterly? I desire, I implore to be crushed, to be annihilated by your vengeance! Most admirable, most virtuous, most estimable of women, best of wives, I have with sacrilegious love profaned a soul consecrated to you and conjugal virtue. I acknowledge my crime; trample upon me as you will, I am humbled in the dust. More than all your bitterest reproaches do I feel the remorse of having for a moment interrupted such serenity of happiness.

Oh, why did you persuade me, L——, and why did I believe that Leonora was calm and free from all suspicion? How could I believe that any woman whom you had ever loved, could remain blind to your inconstancy, or feel secure indifference? Happy woman! in you to love is not a crime; you may glory in your passion, whilst I must hide mine from every human eye, drop in shameful secrecy the burning tear, stifle the struggling sigh, blush at the conflicts of virtue and sensibility, and carry shame and remorse with me to the grave. Happy Leonora! happy even when most injured, you have a right to complain to him you love;—he is yours—you are his wife—his esteem, his affection are yours. On Olivia he has betowed but a transient thought, and eternal

ignominy must be her portion. So let it be—so I wish it to be. Would to Heaven I may thus atone for the past, and secure your future felicity. Fly to her, my dearest L——, I conjure you! throw yourself at her feet, entreat, implore, obtain her forgiveness. She cannot refuse it to your tears, to your caresses. To withstand them she must be more or less than woman. No, she cannot resist your voice when it speaks words of peace and love; she will press you with transport to her heart, and Olivia, poor Olivia, will be for ever forgotten; yet she will rejoice in your felicity; absolved perhaps in the eye of Heaven, though banished from your society, she will die content.

Full well am I aware of the consequences of quitting thus precipitately the house of lady Leonora L——; but nothing that concerns myself alone can for a moment make me hesitate to do that which the sentiment of virtue dictates, and which is yet more strongly urged by regard for the happiness of one, who once allowed me to call her friend. I know my reputation is irrecoverably sacrificed; but it is to one for whom I would lay down my life. Can a woman who feels as I do deem any earthly good a sacrifice for him she loves? Dear L——, adieu for ever!

OLIVIA.

LETTER LII.

LEONORA TO THE DUCHESS OF —.

DEAREST MOTHER,

IT is all over—my husband is gone—gone perhaps for ever—all is in vain—all is lost!

Without saying more to you than I ought, I may tell you, that in consequence of an indignant letter which I wrote last night to lady Olivia, she left my house this morning early, before any of the family were up. Mr. L—— heard of her departure before I did. He has, I will not say followed her, for of that I am not certain; but he has quitted home, and without giving me one kind look at parting, without even noticing a letter which I left last night upon his table. At what slight things we catch to save us from despair! How obstinate, how vain is hope! I fondly hoped, even to the last moment, that this letter, this foolish letter, would work a sudden change in my husband's heart, would operate miracles, would restore me to happiness. I fancied, absurdly fancied, that laying open my whole soul to him would have an effect upon his mind. Alas! has not my whole soul been always open to him? Could this letter tell him any thing but what he knows already or what he will never know—how well I love him! I was weak to expect so much from it; yet as it expressed without complaint the anguish of disappointed affection, it deserved at least some acknowledgment. Could

not he have said, "My dear Leonora, I thank you for your letter?"—or more coldly still—"Leonora, I have received your letter?" Even that would have been some relief to me: but now all is despair. I saw him just when he was going away, but for a moment; till the last instant he was not to be seen; then, in spite of all his command of countenance, I discerned strong marks of agitation; but towards me an air of resentment, more than any disposition to kinder thoughts. I fancy that he scarcely knew what he said, nor, I am sure, did I. He talked, I remember, of having immediate business in town, and I endeavoured to believe him. Contrary to his usual composed manner, he was in such haste to be gone, that I was obliged to send his watch and purse after him, which he had left on his dressing-table. How melancholy his room looked to me! His clothes just as he had left them—a rose which lady Olivia gave him yesterday was in water on his table. My letter was not there; so he has it, probably unread. He will read it some time or other, perhaps—and some time or other, perhaps, when I am dead and gone, he will believe I loved him. Could he have known what I felt at the moment when he turned from me, he would have pitied me; for his nature, his character, cannot be quite altered in a few months, though he has ceased to love Leonora. From the window of his own room I watched for the last glimpse of him—heard him call to the postilions, and bid them "drive fast—faster." This was the last sound I heard of his voice. When shall I hear that voice again? I think that I shall certainly hear

from him the day after to-morrow—and I wish to-day and to-morrow were gone.

I am afraid that you will think me very weak ; but, my dear mother, I have no motive for fortitude now ; and perhaps it might have been better for me, if I had not exerted so much. I begin to fear that all my fortitude is mistaken for indifference. Something Mr. L—— said the other day about sensibility and sacrifices gave me this idea. Sensibility! —It has been my hard task for some months past to repress mine, that it might not give pain or disgust. I have done all that my reason and my dearest mother counselled ; surely I cannot have done wrong. How apt we are to mistake the opinion or the taste of the man we love for the rule of right! Sacrifices! ✓ What sacrifices can I make?—All that I have, is it not his?—My whole heart, is it not his?—Myself, all that I am, all that I *can* be? Have I not lived with him of late, without recalling to his mind the idea that I suffer by his neglect? Have I not left his heart at liberty, and can I make a greater sacrifice? I really do not understand what he means by sacrifices. A woman who loves her husband is part of him ; whatever she does for him is for herself. I wish he would explain to me what he can mean by sacrifices—but when will he ever again explain his thoughts and feelings to me?

My dearest mother, it has been a relief to my mind to write all this to you ; if there is no sense in it, you will forgive and encourage me by your affection and strength of mind, which, in all situations, have such power to soothe and support your daughter.

The prince ——, who spent a fortnight here, paid me particular attention.

The prince talked of soon paying us another visit. If he should, I will not receive him in Mr. L——'s absence. This may seem like vanity or prudery; but no matter what it appears, if it is right.

Well might you, my best friend, bid me beware of forming an intimacy with an unprincipled woman. I have suffered severely for neglecting your counsels; how much I have still to endure is yet to be tried: but I can never be entirely miserable whilst I possess, and whilst I hope that I deserve, the affection of such a mother.

LEONORA L——.

LETTER LIII.

THE DUCHESS OF —— TO HER DAUGHTER.

IF my approbation and affection can sustain you in this trying situation, your fortitude will not forsake you, my beloved daughter. Great minds rise in adversity; they are always equal to the trial, and superior to injustice: betrayed and deserted, they feel their own force, and they rely upon themselves. Be yourself, my Leonora! Persevere as you have begun, and, trust me, you will be happy. I abide by my first opinion, I repeat my prophecy—your husband's esteem, affection, love, will be permanently yours. Change of circumstances, however alarming,

cannot shake the fixed judgment of my understanding. Character, as you justly observe, cannot utterly change in a few months. Your husband is deceived, he is now as one in the delirium of a fever: he will recover his senses, and see lady Olivia and you such as you are.

You do not explain, and I take it for granted you have good reasons for not explaining to me more fully, the immediate cause of your letter to lady Olivia. I am sorry that any cause should have thrown her upon the protection of Mr. L——; for a man of honour and generosity feels himself bound to treat with tenderness a woman who appears to sacrifice every thing for his sake. Consider this in another point of view, and it will afford you subject of consolation; for it is always a consolation to good minds to think those whom they love less to blame than they appear to be. You will be more calm and patient when you reflect that your husband's absence may be prolonged by a mistaken sense of honour. From the nature of his connexion with lady Olivia it cannot last long. Had she saved appearances, and engaged him in a sentimental affair, it might have been far more dangerous to your happiness.

I entirely approve of your conduct with respect to the prince: it is worthy of my child, and just what I should have expected from her. The artifices of coquettes, and all the *art* of love is beneath her; she has far other powers and resources, and need not strive to maintain her dignity by vengeance. I admire your magnanimity, and I still more admire your good sense; for high spirit is more common in our

sex than good sense. Few know how and when they should sacrifice small considerations to great ones. You say that you will not receive the prince in your husband's absence, though this may be attributed to prudery or vanity, &c. &c. You are quite right. How many silly women sacrifice the happiness of their lives to the idea of what women or men, as silly as themselves, will say or think of their motives. How many absurd heroines of romance, and of those who imitate them in real life, do we see, who can never act with common sense or presence of mind: if a man's carriage breaks down, or his horse is tired at the end of their avenues, or for some such ridiculous reason, they must do the very reverse of all they know to be prudent. Perpetually exposed, by a fatal concurrence of circumstances, to excite the jealousy of their lovers and husbands, they create the necessity to which they fall a victim. I rejoice that I cannot feel any apprehension of my daughter's conducting herself like one of these novel-bred ladies.

I am sorry, my dear, that lady M—— and your friends have left you: yet even in this there may be good. Your affairs will be made less public, and you will be less the subject of impertinent curiosity. I advise you, however, to mix as much as usual with your neighbours in the country: your presence, and the dignity of your manners, will impose silence upon idle tongues. No wife of real spirit solicits the world for compassion: she who does not court popularity ensures respect.

Adieu, my dearest child: the time will come when your husband will feel the full merit of your forti-

tude; when he will know how to distinguish between true and false sensibility; between the love of an Olivia and of a Leonora.

LETTER LIV.

MRS. C—— TO MISS B——.

MY DEAR MARGARET,

Jan. 26.

I SHALL never forgive myself. I fear I have done Leonora irreparable injury; and, dear magnanimous sufferer, she has never reproached me! In a fit of indignation and imprudent zeal I made a discovery, which has produced a total breach between Leonora and lady Olivia, and in consequence of this Mr. L—— has gone off with her ladyship

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 * * * * *
 * * * * *

We have heard nothing from Mr. L—— since his departure, and Leonora is more unhappy than ever, and my imprudence is the cause of this. Yet she continues to love me. She is an angel! I have promised her not to mention her affairs in future even in any of my letters to you, dear Margaret. Pray quiet any reports you may hear, and stop idle tongues.

Yours affectionately,

HELEN C——.

LETTER LV.

MR. L—— TO GENERAL B——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Richmond.

I DO not think I could have borne with temper from any other man breathing the last letter which I received from you. I am sensible that it was written with the best intentions for my happiness; but I must now inform you, that the lady in question has accepted of my protection, and consequently no man who esteems me can treat her with disrespect.

It is no longer a question, what she will sacrifice for me; she has shown the greatest generosity and tenderness of soul; and I should despise myself, if I did not exert every power to make her happy.—We are at Richmond; but if you write, direct to me at my house in town.

Yours sincerely,
F. L——.

LETTER LVI.

GENERAL B—— TO MR. L——.

DREAM your dream out, my dear L——. Since you are angry with me, as Solander was with sir Joseph Banks for awakening him, I shall not take the liberty of shaking you any more. I believe I

shook you rather too roughly: but I assure you it was for your good, as people always tell their friends when they do the most disagreeable things imaginable. Forgive me, and I will let you dream in peace. You will however allow me to watch by you whilst you sleep; and, my dear somnambulist, I may just take care that you do not knock your head against a post, or fall into a well.

I hope you will not have any objection to my paying my respects to lady Olivia when I come to town, which, I flatter myself, I shall be able to do shortly. The fortifications here are almost completed.

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER LVII.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

Richmond, ——.

HAPPY!—No, my dear Gabrielle, nor shall I ever be happy, whilst I have not exclusive possession of the heart of the man I love. I have sacrificed every thing to him; I have a right to expect that he should sacrifice at least a wife for me—a wife whom he only esteems. But L—— has not sufficient strength of mind to liberate himself from the cobwebs which restrain those who talk of conscience, and who, in fact, are only superstitious. I see with indignation, that his soul is continually struggling between passion for me and a something, I know not what to call

it, that he feels for this wife. His thoughts are turning towards home. I believe that to an Englishman's ears there is some magic in the words *home* and *wife*. I used to think foreigners ridiculous for associating the ideas of milord Anglois with roast beef and pudding; but I begin to see that they are quite right, and that an Englishman has a certain set of inveterate *homely* prejudices, which are necessary to his well-being, and almost to his existence. You may entice him into the land of sentiment, and for a time keep him there; but refine and polish and enlighten him as you will, he recurs to his own plain sense, as he terms it, on the first convenient opportunity. In short, it is lost labour to civilize him, for sooner or later he will *hottentot* again. Pray introduce that term, Gabrielle—you can translate it. For my part, I can introduce nothing here; my *manière d'être* is really insupportable; my talents are lost; I, who am accustomed to shine in society, see nobody; I might, as Josephine every day observes, as well be buried alive. Retirement and love are charming; but then it must be perfect love—not the equivocating sort that L—— feels for me, which keeps the word of promise only to the ear. I bear every sort of *désagrément* for him; I make myself a figure for the finger of scorn to point at, and he insults me with esteem for a wife. Can you conceive this, my amiable Gabrielle?—No, there are ridiculous points in the characters of my countrymen which you will never be able to comprehend. And what is still more incomprehensible, it is my fate to love this man; yes, passionately to love him!—But he must

give me proof of reciprocal passion. I have too much spirit to sacrifice every thing for him, who will sacrifice nothing for me. Besides, I have another motive. To you, my faithful Gabrielle, I open my whole heart.—Pride inspires me as well as love. I am resolved that Leonora, the haughty Leonora, shall live to repent of having insulted and exasperated Olivia. In some situations contempt can be answered only by vengeance; and when the malice of a contracted and illiberal mind provokes it, revenge is virtue. Leonora has called me her enemy, and consequently has made me such. 'Tis she has declared the war! 'tis for me to decide the victory!

L—, I know, has the offer of an embassy to Petersburg.—He shall accept it.—I will accompany him thither. Lady Leonora may, in his absence, console herself with her august counsellor and mother:—that proudest of earthly paragons is yet to be taught the extent of Olivia's power. Adieu, my charming Gabrielle! I will carry your tenderest remembrances to our brilliant Russian princess. She has often invited me, you know, to pay her a visit, and this will be the ostensible object of my journey. A horrible journey, to be sure!!!—But what will not love undertake and accomplish, especially when goaded by pride, and inspirited by great revenge?

OLIVIA.

LETTER LVIII.

OLIVIA TO MR. L——.

VICTIM to the delusions of passion, too well I know my danger, and now, even now foresee my miserable fate. Too well I know, that the delicious poison which spreads through my frame exalts, enrances, but to destroy. Too well I know that the meteor fire, which shines so bright on my path, entices me forward but to plunge me in the depths of infamy. The long warnings of recorded time teach me, that perjured man triumphs, disdains, and abandons. Too well, alas! I know these fatal truths; too well I feel my approaching doom. Yet, infatuated as I am, prescience avails not; the voice of prudence warns, the hand of Heaven beckons me in vain.

My friend! my more than friend, my lover! beloved beyond expression! you to whom I immolate myself, you for whom I sacrifice more than life, O whisper words of peace! for you, and you alone can tranquillize this agitated bosom. Assure me, L——, if with truth you can assure me, that I have no rival in your affections. O tell me that the name of wife does not invalidate the claims of love! Repeat for me, a thousand times repeat, that I am sole possessor of your heart!

The moment you quit me I am overpowered with melancholy forebodings. Scarcely are you out of my sight, before I dread that I should never see you more, or that some fatality should deprive me of your love.

When shall the sails of love waft us from this dangerous shore? O! when shall I dare to call you mine? Heavens! how many things may intervene. Let nothing detain you from Richmond this evening; but come not at all—come no more, unless to reassure my trembling heart, and to convince me that love and Olivia have banished every other image.

OLIVIA.

LETTER LIX.

MR. L—— TO GENERAL B——.

MY DEAR GENERAL,

I AM come to a resolution to accept of that embassy to Russia which I lately refused. My mind has been in such constant anxiety for some time past, that my health has suffered, and change of air and place are necessary to me. You will say, that the climate of Russia is a strange choice for an invalid: I could indeed have wished for a milder; but in this world we must be content with the least of two evils. I wish to have some ostensible reason for going abroad, and this embassy is the only one that presents itself in an unquestionable shape. Any thing is better than staying where I am, and *as* I am. My motives are not so entirely personal and selfish as I have stated them. A man who has a grain of feeling cannot endure to see the woman whom he loves, whose only failing is her love, living in a state of dereliction, exposed to the silent scorn of her equals and inferiors, if not to

open insult. All her fine talents, every advantage of nature and education sacrificed, and her sensibility to shame a perpetual source of misery. A man must be a brute if he do not feel for a woman whose affection for him has reduced her to this situation. My delicacy as to female manners, and the high value I set upon public opinion in all that concerns the sex, make me peculiarly susceptible and wretched in my present circumstances. To raise the drooping spirits, and support the self-approbation of a woman, who is conscious that she has forfeited her claim to respect—to make love supply the place of all she has sacrificed to love, is a difficult and exquisitely painful task. My feelings render hers more acute, and the very precautions which I take, however delicate, alarm and wound her pride, by reminding her of all she wishes to forget. In this country no woman, who is not lost to shame, can bear to live without reputation.—I pass over a great many intermediate ideas, my dear general; your sense and feeling will supply them. You see the expediency, the necessity of my accepting this embassy. Olivia urges, how can I refuse it? She wishes to accompany me. She made this offer with such decision of spirit, with such passionate tenderness, as touched me to the very soul. A woman who really loves absolutely devotes herself, and becomes insensible to every difficulty and danger; to her all parts of the world are like; all she fears is to be separated from the object of her affections.

But the very excess of certain passions proves them to be genuine. Even whilst we blame the rashness of those who act from the enthusiasm of their natures,

whilst we foresee all the perils to which they seem blind, we tremble at their danger, we grow more and more interested for them every moment, we admire their courage, we long to snatch them from their fate, we are irresistibly hurried along with them down the precipice.

But why do I say all this to you, my dear general? To no man upon earth could it be more ineffectually addressed. Let me see you, however, before we leave England. It would be painful to me to quit this country without taking leave of you, notwithstanding all that you have lately done to thwart my inclinations, and notwithstanding all I may expect you to say when we meet. Probably I shall be detained here some weeks, as I must wait for instructions from our court. I write this day to lady Leonora, to inform her that I am appointed ambassador to Russia. She shall have all the honours of war; she shall be treated with all the respect to which she is so well entitled. I suppose she will wish to reside with her mother during my absence. She cannot do better: she will then be in the most eligible situation, and I shall be relieved from all anxiety upon her account. She will be perfectly happy with her mother. I have often thought that she was much happier before she married me than she has been since our union.

I have some curiosity to know whether she will see the prince when I am gone. Do not mistake me; I am not jealous: I have too little love, and too much esteem for Leonora, to feel the slightest jealousy. I have no doubt, that if I were to stay in Russia for ten years, and if all the princes and potentates in

Europe were to be at her feet, my wife would conduct herself with the most edifying propriety : but I am a little curious to know how far vanity or pride can console a virtuous woman for the absence of love.

Yours truly,

F. L.

LETTER LX.

MADAME DE P—— TO OLIVIA.

Paris.

You are really decided then to go to Russia, my amiable friend, and you will absolutely undertake this horrible voyage ! And you are not intimidated by the idea of the immense distance between Petersburg and Paris ! Alas ! I had hoped soon to see you again. The journey from my convent to Paris was the longest and most formidable that I ever undertook, and at this moment it appears to me terrible ; you may conceive therefore my admiration of your courage and strength of mind, my dear Olivia, who are going to brave the ocean, turning your back on Paris, and every moment receding from our polished centre of attraction, to perish perhaps among mountains of ice. Mon Dieu ! it makes me shudder to think of it. But if it pleases Heaven that you should once arrive at Petersburg, you will crown your tresses with diamonds, you will envelop yourself with those superb furs of the north, and smiling at all the dangers you have passed, you will be yourself a thousand times more dangerous than they.

You, who have lived so long at Paris, who speak our language in all its shades of elegance ; you, who have divined all our secrets of pleasing, who have caught our very air,

“ Et la grace, encore plus belle que la beauté ; ”

you, who are absolutely a French woman, and a Parisian, what a sensation you will produce at Petersburg !—Quels succès vous attendent !—Quels hommages !

You will have the goodness to offer my tenderest sentiments, and the assurances of my perfect respect, to our dear princess ; you will also find the proper moment to remind her of the promise she made to send me specimens of the fine ermines and sables of her country. For my part, I used to be, I confess, in a great error with respect to furs : I always acknowledged them to be rich, but avoided them as heavy ; I considered them as fitter for the stiff magnificence of an empress of all the Russias than for the light elegance of a Parisian beauty ; but our charming princess convinced me that this is a heresy in taste. When I beheld the grace with which she wore her ermine, and the art with which she knew how to vary its serpent folds as she moved, or as she spoke, the variety it gave to her costume and attitudes ; the development it afforded to a fine hand and arm, the resource in the pauses of conversation, and that soft and attractive air which it seemed to impart even to the play of her wit, I could no longer refuse my homage to ermine. Such is the despotism of beauty over all the objects of taste and fashion ; and so it is, that a woman of sense, address, and

sentiment, let her be born or thrown by fate where she may, will always know how to avail herself of every possible advantage of nature and art. Nothing will be too trifling or too vast for her genius.

I must make you understand me, my dear Olivia; your Gabrielle is not so frivolous as simpletons imagine. Frivolity is an excellent, because an unsuspected mask, under which serious and important designs may be safely concealed. I would explain myself further, but must now go to the opera to see the new ballet. Let me know, my interesting, my sublime Olivia, when you are positively determined on your voyage to Petersburg; and then you shall become acquainted with your friend as a politician. Her friendship for you will not be confined to a mere intercourse of sentiment, but will, if you have courage to second her views, give you a secret yet decisive weight and consequence, of which you have hitherto never dreamed.—Adieu.—These gentlemen are so impatient, I must go. Burn the last page of this letter, and the whole of my next as soon as you have read it, I conjure you, my dear.

GABRIELLE DE P——.

LETTER LXI.

GENERAL B—— TO MR. L——.

DEAR L——,

I HAVE time but to write one line to satisfy that philosophical curiosity, which, according to your in-

junctions, I will not denominate jealousy—except when I talk to myself.

You have a philosophical curiosity to know whether your wife will see the prince in your absence. I saw his favourite yesterday, who complained to me, that his highness had been absolutely refused admittance at your castle, notwithstanding he had made many ingenious and some bold attempts to see lady Leonora L—— in the absence of her faithless husband.

As to your scheme of going to Russia, you will be obliged, luckily, to wait for some time for instruction, and in the interval, it is to be hoped you will recover your senses. I shall see you as soon as possible.

Yours truly,
J. B.

LETTER LXII.

MADAME DE P—— TO LADY OLIVIA.

Paris.

As our vanity always endeavours to establish a balance between our own perfections and those of our friends, I must flatter myself, my dear Olivia, that in compensation for that courage and ardent imagination in which you are so much my superior, I possess some little advantages over you in my scientific, hereditary knowledge of court intrigue, and of the arts of representation; all which will be

necessary to you in your character of ambassadress : you will in fact deserve this title, for of course you will govern the English ambassador, whom you honour with your love. And of course you will appear with splendour, and you will be particularly careful to have your *traineau* well appointed. Pray remember that one of your horses must gallop, whilst the other trots, or you are nobody. It will also be absolutely necessary to have a numerous retinue of servants, because this suits the Russian idea of magnificence. You must have, as the Russian nobles always had in Paris, four servants constantly to attend your equipage ; one to carry the flambeau, another to open the door, and a couple to carry you into and out of your carriage. I beseech you to bear in mind perpetually, that you are to be as helpless as possible. A Frenchman of my acquaintance, who spent nine years in Russia, told me, that in his first setting out at Petersburg, he was put on his guard in this particular by a speech of his Russian valet de chambre :—“ Sir, the Englishman you visited to-day cannot be worthy of your acquaintance ; he cannot be a gentleman. Son valet me dit qu’il se déshabille seul !!! ”

I suppose you take Josephine with you ; she will be an inestimable treasure ; and I shall make it my business to send you the first advices of Paris fashions, which her talents will not fail to comprehend and execute. My charming Olivia ! you will be the model of taste and elegance ! Do not suspect that dress is carrying me away from politics. I assure you I know what I am about, and am going

straight to my object. The art of attending to trifles is the art of governing the world, as all historians know, who have gone to the bottom of affairs. Was not the face of Europe changed by a dish of tea thrown on Mrs. Masham's gown, as Voltaire with penetrating genius remarks? Women, without a doubt, understand the importance of trifles better than men do, and consequently always move in secret the slight springs of that vast machine, the civilized world. Is not your ambition roused, my Olivia? You must, however, lay aside a little of your romance, and not approach the political machine whilst you are intoxicated with love, else you will blunder infallibly, and do infinite and irreparable mischief to yourself and your friends.

Permit me to tell you, that you have been a little spoiled by sentimental novels, which are good only to talk of when one must show sensibility, but destructive as rules of action. By the false lights, which these writers, who know nothing of the world, have thrown upon objects, you have been deluded; you have been led to mistake the means for the end. Love has been with you the sole end of love; whereas it ought to be the beginning of power. No matter for the past: the future is yours: at our age this future must be dexterously managed. A woman of spirit, and, what is better, of sense, must always take care that in her heart the age of love is not prolonged beyond the age of being beloved. In these times a woman has no choice at a certain period but politics, or *bel esprit*; for devotion, which used to be a resource, is no longer in fashion. We must all

take a part, my dear; I assure you I have taken mine decidedly, and I predict that you will take yours with brilliant success. How often must one cry in the ears of lovers—Love must die! must die! must die! But you, my dear Olivia, will not be deaf to the warning voice of common sense. Your own experience has on former occasions convinced you, that passion cannot be eternal; and at present, if I mistake not, there is in your love a certain mixture of other feelings, a certain alloy, which will make it happily ductile and manageable. When your triumph over the wife is complete, passion for the husband will insensibly decay; and this will be fortunate for you, because assuredly your ambassador would not choose to remain all the rest of his days in love and in exile at Petersburg. All these English are afflicted with the *maladie du pays*; and, as you observe so well, the words home and wife have ridiculous but unconquerable power over their minds. What will become of you, my friend, when this Mr. L—— chooses to return to England to his castle, &c.? You could not accompany him. You must provide in time against this catastrophe, or you will be a deserted, disgraced, undone woman, my dear friend.

No one should begin to act a romance who has not well considered the *dénouement*. It is a charming thing to mount with a friend in a balloon, amid crowds of spectators, who admire the fine spectacle, and applaud the courage of the *aërostats*; the losing sight of this earth, and the being in or above the clouds, must also be delightful: but the moment

will come when the travellers descend, and then begins the danger ; then they differ about throwing out the ballast, the balloon is rent in the quarrel, it sinks with frightful rapidity, and they run the hazard, like the poor marquis d'Arlande, of being spitted upon the spire of the Invalides, or of being entangled among woods and briers—at last, alighting upon the earth, our adventurers, fatigued and bruised, and disappointed, come out of their shattered triumphal car, exposed to the derision of the changeable multitude.

Every thing in this world is judged of by success. Your voyage to Petersburg, my dear Olivia, must not be a mere adventure of romance ; as a party of pleasure it would be ridiculous ; we must make something more of it. Enclosed is a letter to a Russian nobleman, an old lover of mine, who I understand is in favour. He will certainly be at your command. He is a man possessed by the desire of having reputation among foreigners, vain of the preference of our sex, generous even to prodigality. By his means you will be immediately placed on an easy footing with all the leading persons of the Russian court. You will go on from one step to another, till you are at the height which I have in view. Now for my grand object.—No, not now—for I have forty little notes about nothings to write this morning. Great things hang upon these nothings, so they should not be neglected. I must leave you, my amiable Olivia, and defer my grand object till to-morrow.

GABRIELLE DE P——.

LETTER LXIII.

LEONORA TO THE DUCHESS OF ———.

DEAR MOTHER,

THIS moment I have received a letter from Mr. L——. He has accepted of an embassy to Petersburg. I cannot guess by the few lines he has written, whether or not he wishes that I should accompany him. Most ardently I wish it; but if my offer should be refused, or if it should be accepted only because it could not be well refused; if I should be a burthen, a restraint upon him, I should wish myself dead.

Perhaps he accepts of this embassy on purpose that he may leave me and take another person with him: or perhaps, dearest mother (I hardly dare to hope it)—perhaps he wishes to break off that connexion, and goes to Russia to leave temptation behind him. I know that this embassy was offered to him some weeks ago, and he had then no thoughts of accepting it.—O that I could see into his heart—that heart which used to be always open to me! If I could discover what his wishes are, I should know what mine ought to be. I have thoughts of going to town immediately to see him; at least I may take leave of him. Do you approve of it? Write the moment you receive this: but I need not say that, for I am sure you will do so. Dearest mother, you

have prophesied that his heart will return to me, and on this hope I live.

Your ever affectionate daughter,
LEONORA L——.

LETTER LXIV.

THE DUCHESS OF —— TO LEONORA.

YES, my dear, I advise you by all means to go to town, and to see your husband. Your desire to accompany him to Russia he will know before you see him, for I have just written and despatched an express to him with your last letter, and with all those which I have received from you within these last six months. Leave Mr. L—— time to read them before he sees you; and do not hurry or fatigue yourself unnecessarily. You know that an embassy cannot be arranged in two days; therefore travel by easy journeys: you cannot do otherwise without hazard. Your courage in offering to undertake this long voyage with your husband is worthy of you, my beloved daughter. God bless and preserve you! If you go to Petersburg, let me know in time, that I may see you before you leave England. I will be at any moment at any place you appoint.

Your affectionate mother,
——.

LETTER LXV.

THE DUCHESS OF ——— TO MR. L——.

PERHAPS this letter may find you at the feet of your mistress. Spare me, sir, a few moments from your pleasures. You may perhaps expect reproaches from the mother of your wife; but let me assure you, that you have none to apprehend. For my daughter's sake, if not for yours, I would forbear. Never was departing love recalled by the voice of reproach; you shall not hear it from me, you have not heard it from Leonora. But mistake not the cause of her forbearance; let it not be attributed to pusillanimity of temper, or insensibility of heart.

Enclosed I send you all the letters which my daughter has written to me from the first day of her acquaintance with lady Olivia to this hour. From these you will be enabled to judge of what she has felt for some months past, and of the actual state of her heart; you will see all the tenderness and all the strength of her soul.

It has ever been my fixed opinion, that a wife who loves her husband, and who has possessed his affections, may reclaim them from the lure of the most artful of her sex, by persevering kindness, temper, and good sense, unless indeed her husband be a fool or a libertine. I have prophesied that my daughter will regain your heart; and upon this prophecy, to use her own expression, she lives. And even now,

when its accomplishment is far removed, I am so steady in my opinion of her and of you; so convinced of the uniform result of certain conduct upon the human mind, that undismayed I repeat my prophecy.

Were you to remain in this kingdom, I should leave things to their natural course; I should not interfere so far even as to send you Leonora's letters: but as you may be separated for years, I think it necessary now to put into your hands incontrovertible proofs of what she is, and what she has been. Do not imagine that I am so weak as to expect that the perusal of these letters will work a sudden change: but it is fit, that before you leave England, you should know that Leonora is not a cold, sullen, or offended wife; but one who loves you most tenderly, most generously; who, concealing the agony of her heart, waits with resignation for the time when she will be your refuge, and the permanent blessing of your life.

LETTER LXVI.

MADAME DE P—— TO OLIVIA.

Paris.

AND now, my charming Olivia, raise your fine eyes as high as ambition can look, and you will perhaps discover my grand object. You do not see it yet. Look again.—Do you not see the emperor of Russia?

What would you think of him for a lover? If it were only for novelty's sake, it would really be pleasant to have a czar at one's feet. Reign in his heart, and you in fact seat yourself invisibly on the throne of all the Russias: thence what a commanding prospect you have of the affairs of Europe! and how we should govern the world at our ease! The project is bold, but not impracticable. The ancients represent Cupid riding the Numidian lion; and why should he not tame the Russian bear? It would make a pretty design for a vignette. I can engrave as well as La Pompadour could at least, and anticipating your victory, my charming Olivia, I will engrave Cupid leading the bear in a chain of flowers. This shall be my seal. *Mon cachet de faveur.*

Courage, my fair politician! You have a difficult task; but the glory is in proportion to the labour; and those who value power properly are paid by its acquisition for all possible fatigue and hardships. With your knowledge of our modes, you will be at Petersburg the arbitress of delights. You have a charming taste and invention for fêtes and spectacles. Teach these people to vary their pleasures. Their monarch must adore you, if you banish from his presence that most dreadful enemy of kings, and most obstinate resident of courts, *ennui*. Trust, my Olivia, neither to your wit, nor your beauty, nor your accomplishments, but employ your "various arts of trifling prettily," and, take my word for it, you will succeed.

As I may not have an opportunity of sending you another private letter, and as lemon-juice, goulard,

and all those sympathetic inks, are subject to unlucky accidents, I must send you all my secret instructions by the present safe conveyance.

You must absolutely sacrifice, my dear child, all your romantic notions, and all your taste for love, to the grand object. The czar must not have the slightest cause for jealousy. These czars make nothing, you know, of cutting off their mistresses' pretty heads upon the bare suspicion of an intrigue. But you must do what is still more difficult than to be constant, you must yield your will, and, what is more, you must never let this czar guess that his will is not always your pleasure. Your humour, your tastes, your wishes, must be incessantly and with alacrity sacrificed to his. You must submit to the constraint of eternal court ceremony and court dissimulation. You must bear to be surrounded with masks, instead of the human face divine; and instead of fellow-creatures, you must content yourself with puppets. You will have the amusement of pulling the wires: but remember that you must wear a mask perpetually as well as others, and never attempt to speak, and never expect to hear the language of truth or of the heart. You must not be the dupe of attachment in those who call themselves friends, or zealous and affectionate servants, &c. &c. You must have sufficient strength of character to bear continually in mind that all these professions are mere words, that all these people are alike false, and actuated but by one motive, self-interest. To secure yourself from secret and open enemies, you must farther have sufficient courage to live without a friend or a confidante,

for such persons at court are only spies, traitors in the worst forms. All this is melancholy and provoking, to be sure; but all this you must see without feeling, or at least without showing a spark of indignation. A sentimental misanthropist, male or female, is quite out of place at court. You must see all that is odious and despicable in human nature in a comic point of view; and you must consider your fellow-creatures as objects to be laughed at, not to be hated. Laughter, besides being good for the health, and consequently for the complexion, always implies superiority. Without this gratification to our vanity there would be no possibility of enduring that eternal penance of hypocrisy, and that solitary state of suspicion, to which the ambitious condemn themselves. I fear, my romantic Olivia, that you, who are a person used to yield to first impressions, and not quite accustomed to subdue your passions to your interest, will think that politics require too much from you, almost as much as constancy or religion. But consider the difference! for Heaven's sake, my dear, consider the greatness of our object! Would to God that I had the eloquence of Bossuet, and I would make you a convert from love and a proselyte to glory. Dare, my Olivia, to be a martyr to ambition!—See! already high in air she holds a crown over your head—it is almost within your grasp—stretch out your white arm and seize it—fear not the thorns!—every crown has thorns—but who upon that account ever yet refused one? My dear empress, I have the honour to kiss your powerful hands.

GABRIELLE DE P——.

LETTER LXVII.

MR. L—— TO GENERAL B——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You need not hurry yourself to come to town on my account, for by this change of ministry my embassy will be delayed some weeks.

A few days ago this delay would have been a terrible disappointment to me; yet now I feel it a respite. A respite! you will exclaim. Yes, my dear friend—so it is. Such is the heart of man!—so changeable, so contradictory, so much at variance with itself from day to day, from hour to hour. I believe, from what I now feel, that every man under the dominion of passion is reduced to a most absurd and miserable condition.—I have just been reading some letters from Leonora, which have wrung my heart; letters addressed to her mother, laying open every feeling of her mind for some months. My dear friend, what injustice have I done to this admirable woman! With what tenderness, with what delicacy has she loved me! while I, mistaking modesty for coldness, fortitude for indifference, have neglected, injured, and abandoned her! With what sweetness of temper, with what persevering goodness has she borne with me, while, intoxicated with passion, I saw every thing in a false point of view! How often have I satisfied myself with the persuasion, that she scarcely observed my attachment to Olivia,

or beheld it unconcerned, secure by the absence of love from the pangs of jealousy! How often have I accused her of insensibility, whilst her heart was in tortures! Olivia was deceived also, and confirmed me in this cruel error. And all that time Leonora was defending her rival, and pleading her cause! With what generosity, with what magnanimity she speaks of Olivia in those letters! Her confidence was unbounded, her soul above suspicion; to the very last she doubted and blamed herself—dear amiable woman! blamed herself for our faults, for feeling that jealousy, which no wife who loved as she did could possibly subdue. She never betrayed it by a single word or look of reproach. Even though she fainted at that cursed fête champêtre, yet the moment she came to her senses, she managed so that none of the spectators could suspect she thought Olivia was her rival. My dear general, you will forgive me—as long as I praise Leonora you will understand me. At last you will acknowledge that I do justice to the merits of my wife. Justice! no—I am unworthy of her. I have no heart like hers to offer in return for such love. She wishes to go with me to Petersburg; she has forborne to make this offer directly to me; but I know it from her last letter to her mother, which now lies before me. How can I refuse?—and how can I accept? My soul is torn with violence different ways. How can I leave Leonora; and how can I tear myself from Olivia!—even if her charms had no power over my heart, how could I with honour desert the woman who has sacrificed every thing for me! I will not shield myself

from you, my friend, behind the word honour. See me as you have always seen me, without disguise, and now without defence. I respect, I love Leonora—but, alas! I am in love with Olivia!

Yours ever,
F. L——.

LETTER LXVIII.

MR. L—— TO OLIVIA.

TRIUMPHANT as you are over my heart, dear enchanting Olivia! you cannot make me false. I cannot, even to appease your anger, deny this morning what I said last night. It is inconsistent with all your professions, with your character, with your generous disposition, to desire me to "*abjure Leonora for ever!*" it would be to render myself for ever unworthy of Olivia. I am convinced, that had you read the letters of which I spoke, you would have been touched, you would have been struck by them as I was: instead of being hurt and displeased by the impression that they made upon me, you would have sympathized in my feelings, you would have been indignant if I had not admired, you would have detested and despised me if I could have been insensible to "*so much goodness and generosity.*" I repeat my words: I will not "*retract,*" I cannot "*repent of them.*" My dear Olivia! when you reflect upon what is past, I am persuaded you will acknowledge that your sensibility made you unjust. In-

deed, my love, you did not show your usual candour; I had just read all that Leonora had written of you, all that she had urged against her mother in your defence; even when she had most cause to be irritated against us, I could not avoid being shocked by the different manner in which you spoke of her. Perhaps I told you so too abruptly: if I had loved you less, I should have been more cautious and more calm—if I had esteemed you less, calmer still. I could then, possibly, have borne to hear you speak in a manner unbecoming yourself. Forgive me the pain I gave you—the pain I now give you, my dearest Olivia! My sincerity is the best security you can have for my future love. Banish therefore this unjust, this causeless jealousy: moderate this excessive sensibility for both our sakes, and depend upon the power you have over my heart. You cannot conceive how much I have felt from this misunderstanding—the first we have ever had. Let it be the last. I have spent a sleepless night. I am detained in town by provoking, tiresome, but necessary business. Meet me in the evening with smiles, my Olivia: let me behold in those fascinating eyes their wonted expression, and hear from your voice its usual, its natural tone of tenderness and love.

Ever devotedly yours,

F. L.—.

LETTER LXIX.

OLIVIA TO MR. L——.

You have spoken daggers to me! Come not to Richmond this evening! I cannot—will not see you! Not for the universe would I see you with my present feelings!

Write to me more letters like that which I have just received. Dip your pen in gall; find words more bitter than those which you have already used. Accuse me of want of candour, want of generosity, want of every amiable, every estimable quality. Upbraid me with the loss of all of which you have bereft me. Recollect every sacrifice that I have made, and, if you can, imagine every sacrifice that I would still make for you—peace of mind, friends, country, fortune, fame, virtue; name them all, and triumph—and disdain your triumph! Remind me how low I am fallen—sink me lower still—insult, debase, humble me to the dust. Exalt my rival, unroll to my aching eyes the emblazoned catalogue of her merits, her claims to your esteem, your affection; number them over, dwell upon those that I have forfeited, those which can never be regained; tell me that such merits are above all price; assure me that beyond all her sex you respect, you admire, you love your wife; say it with enthusiasm, with fire in your eyes, with all the energy of passion in your voice; then bid me sympathize in your feelings—bid me banish jealousy—wonder at my alarm—

call my sorrow anger—conjure me to restrain my sensibility! Restrain my sensibility! Unhappy Olivia! he is tired of your love. Let him then at once tell me the dreadful truth, and I will bear it. Any evil is better than uncertainty, than lingering hope. Drive all hope from my mind. Bid me despair and die—but do not stretch me on the rack of jealousy!—Yet if such be your cruel pleasure, enjoy it.—Determine how much I can endure and live. Stop just at the point when human nature sinks, that you may not lose your victim, that she may linger on from day to day, your sport and your derision.

OLIVIA.

LETTER LXX.

MR. L—— TO GENERAL B——.

MY DEAR GENERAL,

You will rejoice to hear that Olivia and I have been in a state of warfare for some days past, and you will be still more pleased when you learn the cause of our quarrel. On the day that I had been reading Leonora's letters I was rather later at Richmond than usual. Olivia, offended, insisted upon knowing by what I could possibly have been detained. Her anger knew no bounds when she heard the truth. She made use of some expressions, in speaking of my wife, which I could not, I hope, have borne at any time, but which shocked me beyond measure at that moment. I defended Leonora with warmth. Olivia,

in a scornful tone, talked of my wife's coldness of disposition, and bid me compare lady Leonora's love with hers. It was a comparison I had it more in my power to make than Olivia was aware of; it was the most disadvantageous moment for her in which that comparison could be made. She saw or suspected my feelings, and perceived that all she had said of my Leonora's *incapability of loving* produced an effect directly contrary to her expectations. Transported by jealousy, she then threw out hints respecting the prince. I spoke as I felt, indignantly. I know not precisely what I said, but Olivia and I parted in anger. I have since received a passionately fond note from her. But I feel unhappy. Dear general, when will you come to town?

Yours truly,

F. L——.

LETTER LXXI.

MRS. C—— TO THE DUCHESS OF ——.

MY DEAR MADAM,

YOUR grace's cautions and entreaties to lady Leonora not to over-exert and fatigue herself were, alas! as ineffectual as mine. From the time she heard that Mr. L—— had accepted this embassy to Petersburg, she was so eager to set out on her journey to town, and so impatient to see him, that neither her mind nor her body had one moment's tranquillity. She waited with indescribable anxiety for your grace's answer to her letter; and the instant she

was secure of your approbation, her carriage was ordered to the door. I saw that she was ill ; but she would not listen to my fears; she repeated with triumph, that her mother made no objection to her journey, and that she had no apprehensions for herself. However, she was obliged at last to yield. The carriage was actually at the door, when she was forced to submit to be carried to her bed. For several hours she was in such danger, that I never expected she could live till this day. Thank God ! she is now safe. Her infant, to her great delight, is a boy: she was extremely anxious to have a son, because Mr. L—— formerly wished for one so much. She forbids me to write to Mr. L——, lest I should communicate the account of her *sudden illness* too abruptly.

She particularly requests that your grace will mention to him this *accident* in the least alarming manner possible. I shall write again next post. Lady Leonora has now fallen asleep, and seems to sleep quietly. Who should sleep in peace if she cannot! I never saw her equal.

My dear madam,

I am,

With respect and attachment,

Your grace's

Sincerely affectionate,

HELEN C——.

It is with extreme concern I am forced to add, that since I wrote this letter the child has been so ill that I have fears for his life.—His poor mother !

LETTER LXXII.

MR. L—— TO GENERAL B——.

MY DEAR GENERAL,

ALL is upon velvet again. Poor Olivia was excessively hurt by my letter: she was ill for two days—seriously ill. Yesterday I at length obtained admittance. Olivia was all softness, all candour: she acknowledged that she had been wrong, and in so sweet a voice! She blamed herself till I could no longer think her blameable. She seemed so much humbled and depressed, such a tender melancholy appeared in her bewitching eyes, that I could not resist the fascination. I certainly gave her some cause for displeasure that unfortunate evening; for as Olivia has strong passions and exquisite sensibility, I should not have been so abrupt. A fit of jealousy may seize the best and most generous mind, and may prompt to what it would be incapable of saying or thinking in dispassionate moments. I am sure that Olivia has, upon reflection, felt more pain from this affair than I have. My Russian embassy is still in *abeyance*. Ministers seem to know their own minds as little as I know mine. Ambition has its quarrels and follies as well as love. At all events, I shall not leave England till next month; and I shall not go down to L—— castle till I have received my last instructions from our court, and till the day for my sailing is fixed. The parting with

Leonora will be a dreadful difficulty. I cannot think of it steadily. But as she herself says, "is it not better that she should lose a year of my affections than a life?" The duchess is mistaken in imagining it possible that any woman, let her influence be ever so great over my heart, could prejudice me against my amiable, my admirable wife. What has just passed between Olivia and me convinces me that it is impossible. She has too much knowledge of my character to hazard in future a similar attempt. No, my dear friend, be assured I would not suffer it. I have not yet lost all title to your esteem or to my own. This enchantress may intoxicate me with her cup, but shall never degrade me; and I should feel myself less degraded even by losing the human form than by forfeiting that principle of honour and virtue, which more nobly distinguishes man from brute.

Yours most sincerely,
F. L——.

LETTER LXXIII.

GENERAL B—— TO MR. L——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IT is well that I did not answer your letter of Saturday before I received that of Monday. My congratulations upon your quarrel with your fair one might have come just as you were kissing hands upon a reconciliation.

I have often found a great convenience in writing a bad hand ; my letters are so little like what they are intended for, and have among them such equality of unintelligibility, that each seems either ; and with the slightest alteration, each will stand and serve for the other. My *m*, *n*, and *u*, are convertible letters ; so are the terms and propositions of your present mode of reasoning, my dear L——, and I perceive that you find your account in it. Upon this I congratulate you ; and I congratulate lady Leonora upon your being detained some weeks longer in England. Those who have a just cause need never pray for victory ; they need only ask the gods for time. Time always brings victory to truth, and shame to falsehood. But you are not worthy of such fine apophthegms. At present “ You are not fit to hear yourself convinced.” I will wait for a better opportunity, and have patience with you, if I can.

You seem to plume yourself mightily upon your resolve to do justice to the merits of your wife, and upon the courage you have shown into stuffing cotton in your ears to prevent your listening to the voice of the siren : but pray take the cotton out, and hear all she can say or sing. Lady Leonora cannot be hurt by anything Olivia can say, but her own malice may destroy herself.

In the mean time, as you tell me that you are upon velvet again, I am to presume that you are perfectly at ease ; and I should be obliged to you, if, as often as you can find leisure, you would send me bulletins of your happiness. I have never yet been

in love with one of these high-flown heroines, and I am really curious to know what degree of felicity they can bestow upon a man of common sense. I should be glad to profit by the experience of a friend.

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER LXXIV.

OLIVIA TO MADAME DE P——.

Richmond.

ACCEPT my sincere thanks, inimitable Gabrielle ! for having taken off my hands a lover, who really has half-wearied me to death. If you had dealt more frankly with me, I could, however, have saved you much superfluous trouble and artifice. I now perfectly comprehend the cause of poor R***'s strange silence some months ago ; he was then under the influence of your charms, and it was your pleasure to deceive me even when there was no necessity for dissimulation. You knew the secret of my growing attachment to L——, and must have foreseen that R*** would be burthensome to me. You needed therefore only to have treated me with candour, and you would have gained a lover without losing a friend : but Mad. de P—— is too accomplished a politician to go the simple straight road to her object. I now perfectly comprehend why she took such pains to persuade me that an imperial

lover was alone worthy of my charms. She was alarmed by an imaginary danger. Believe me, I am incapable of disputing with any one *les restes d'un cœur*.

Permit me to assure you, madam, that your incomparable talents for explanation will be utterly thrown away on me in future. I am in possession of the whole truth, from a person whose information I cannot doubt: I know the precise date of the commencement of your connexion with R***, so that you must perceive it will be impracticable to make me believe that you have not betrayed my easy confidence.

I cannot, however, without those pangs of sentiment which your heart will never experience, reflect upon the treachery, the perfidy of one who has been my bosom friend.—Return my letters, Gabrielle.—With this you will receive certain *souvenirs*, at which I could never henceforward look without sighing. I return you that ring I have so long worn with delight, the picture of that treacherous eye,* which you know so well how to use.—Adieu, Gabrielle.—The illusion is over.—How many of the illusions of my fond heart have been dispelled by time and treachery!

OLIVIA.

* Certain ladies at this time carried pictures of the eyes of their favourites.

LETTER LXXV.

MADAME DE P—— TO MONSIEUR R***.

Paris, — 18, —.

I HAVE just received the most extravagant letter imaginable from your Olivia. Really you may congratulate yourself, my dear friend, upon having recovered your liberty. 'Twere better to be a galley slave at once than to be bound to please a woman for life, who knows not what she would have either in love or friendship. Can you conceive anything so absurd as her upbraiding me with treachery, because I know the value of a heart of which she tells me she was more than half tired? as if I were to blame for her falling in love with Mr. L——, and as if I did not know the whole progress of her inconstancy. Her letters to me give a new history of the birth and education of Love. Here we see Love born of Envy, nursed by *Ennui*, and dandled in turn by all the Vices.

And this lady Olivia fancies that she is a perfect French woman! There is nothing we Parisians abhor and ridicule so much as these foreign, and always awkward, caricatures of our manners. With us there are many who, according to a delicate distinction, lose their virtue without losing their taste for virtue; but I flatter myself there are few who resemble Olivia entirely—who have neither the virtues of a man nor of a woman. One cannot even say that “her head is the dupe of her heart,” since

shé has no heart. But enough of such a tiresome and incomprehensible subject.

How I overvalued that head, when I thought it could ever be fit for politics! 'Tis well we did not commit ourselves. You see how prudent I am, my dear R***, and how much those are mistaken who think that we women are not fit to be trusted with secrets of state. Love and politics make the best mixture in the world. Adieu. Victoire summons me to my toilette.

GABRIELLE DE P——.

LETTER LXXVI.

MADAME DE P—— TO LADY OLIVIA.

Paris, — 18, —.

REALLY, my dear Olivia, this is too childish. What! make a complaint in form against me for taking a lover off your hands when you did not know what to do with him! Do you quarrel in England every time you change partners in a country dance? But I must be serious; for the high-sounding words *treachery* and *perfidy* are surely sufficient to make any body grave. Seriously, then, if you are resolved to be tragical, *et de me faire une scène*, I must submit—console myself, and, above all things, take care not to be ridiculous.

Your letters, as you desire it so earnestly, and with so much reason, shall be returned by the first

safe conveyance ; but excuse me if I forbear to restore your *souvenirs*. With us Parisians this returning of keepsakes has been out of fashion since the days of Molière and *Le dépit amoureux*.

Adieu, my charming Olivia ! I embrace you tenderly, I was going to say ; but I believe, according to your English etiquette, I must now conclude with

I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your most obedient,

Humble servant,

GABRIELLE DE P——.

LETTER LXXVII.

FROM OLIVIA TO MR. L——.

Tuesday morning.

COME not to Richmond to-day ; I am not in spirits to see you, my dearest L——. Allow me to indulge my melancholy retired from every human eye.

OLIVIA.

LETTER LXXVIII.

FROM LADY OLIVIA TO MR. L——.

Tuesday evening.

“ EXPLAIN to you the cause of my melancholy ”—
Vain request !—cruel as vain ! Your ignorance of

the cause too well justifies my sad presentiments. Were our feelings in unison, as once they were, would not every chord of your heart vibrate responsively to mine ?

With me love is an absorbing vortex of the soul, into which all other thoughts, feelings, and ideas are irresistibly impelled; with you it is but as the stranger stream that crosses the peaceful lake, and as it flows wakens only the surface of the slumbering waters, communicating to them but a temporary agitation. With you, my dear, but too tranquil-minded friend, love is but one amid the vulgar crowd of pleasures; it concentrates not your ideas, it entrances not your faculties; it is not, as in my heart, the supreme delight, which renders all others tasteless, the only blessing which can make life supportable; the sole, sufficient object of existence. Alas! how cruelly different is the feeble attachment that I have inspired from that all-powerful sentiment to which I live a victim! Countless symptoms, by you unheeded, mark to my love-watchful eye the decline of passion. How often am I secretly shocked by the cold carelessness of your words and manner! How often does the sigh burst from my bosom, the tear fall from my eye, when you have left me at leisure to recall, by memory's torturing power, instances of your increasing indifference! Seek not to calm my too well-founded fears. Professions, with all their unmeaning, inanimate formality, but irritate my anguish. Permit me to indulge, to feed upon my grief in silence. Ask me no more to explain to you the cause of my melancholy. Too plainly, alas! I

feel it is beyond my utmost power to endure it. Amiable Werter—divine St. Preux—you would sympathize in my feelings! Sublime Goethe—all-eloquent Rousseau—you alone could feel as I do, and you alone could paint my anguish.

The miserable
OLIVIA.

LETTER LXXIX.

MR. L—— TO GENERAL B——.

EXPECT no bulletin of happiness from me, my friend. I find it impossible to make Olivia happy. She has superior talents, accomplishments, beauty, grace, all that can attract and fascinate the human heart—that could triumph over every feeling, every principle that opposed her power: she lives with the man she loves, and yet she is miserable.

Rousseau, it has been said, never really loved any woman but his own Julie; I have lately been tempted to think that Olivia never really loved any man but St. Preux. Werter, perhaps, and some other German heroes, might dispute her heart even with St. Preux; but as for me, I begin to be aware that I am loved only as a feeble resemblance of those divine originals (to whom, however, my character bears not the slightest similarity), and I am often indirectly, and sometimes directly, reproached with my inferiority to imaginiary models. But how can a plain Englishman hope to reach

“ The high sublime of deep absurd ? ”

I am continually reviled for not using a romantic language, which I have never learned; and which, as far as I can judge, is foreign to all natural feeling. I wish to make Olivia happy. There is nothing I would not do to satisfy her of my sincerity; but nothing I can do will suffice. She has a sort of morbid sensibility, which is more alive to pain than pleasure, more susceptible of jealousy than of love. No terms are sufficiently strong to convince her of my affection, but an unguarded word makes her miserable for hours. She requires to be agitated by violent emotions, though they exhaust her mind, and leave her spiritless and discontented. In this alternation of rapture and despair all her time passes. As she says of herself, she has no soul but for love: she seems to think it a crime against sentiment to admit of relief from common occupations or indifferent subjects; with a sort of superstitious zeal she excludes all thoughts but those which relate to one object, and in this spirit of amorous mysticism she actually makes a penance even of love. I am astonished that her heart can endure this variety of self-inflicted torments. What will become of Olivia when she ceases to love and be loved? And what passion can be durable which is so violent as hers, and to which no respite is allowed? No affection can sustain these hourly trials of suspicion and reproach.

Jealousy of Leonora has taken such possession of Olivia's imagination, that she misinterprets all my words and actions. By restraining my thoughts, by throwing obstacles in the way of my affection for my wife, she stimulates and increases it: she forces upon

me continually those comparisons which she dreads. Till I knew Olivia more intimately than the common forms of a first acquaintance, or the illusions of a treacherous passion permitted, her defects did not appear; but now that I suffer, and that I see her suffer daily, I deplore them bitterly. Her happiness rests and weighs heavily on my honour. I feel myself bound to consider and to provide for the happiness of the woman who has sacrificed to me all independent means of felicity. A man without honour or humanity may perhaps finish an intrigue as easily as he can begin it, but this is not exactly the case of your imprudent friend,

F. L——.

LETTER LXXX.

GENERAL B—— TO MR. L——.

Wednesday.

Ay, ay! just as I thought it would be. This is all the comfort, my dear friend, that I can give you; all the comfort that wise people usually afford their friends in distress. Provided things happen just as they predicted, they care but little what is suffered in the accomplishment of their prophecies. But seriously, my dear L——, I am not sorry that you are in a course of vexation. The more you see of your charmer the better. She will allay your intoxication by gentle degrees, and send you sober home. Pray keep in the course you have begun, and

preserve your patience as long as possible. I should be sorry that you and Olivia quarrelled violently, and parted in a passion: such quarrels of lovers are proverbially the renewal of love.

“ Il faut délier l'amitié, il faut couper l'amour.”

In some cases this maxim may be just, but not in the present instance. I would rather wait till the knot is untied than cut it; for when once you see the art with which it was woven, a similar knot can never again perplex you.

Yours truly,
J. B.

LETTER LXXXI.

FROM OLIVIA TO MR. L——.

Richmond, Saturday.

You presume too much upon your power over my heart, and upon the softness of my nature. Know that I have spirit as well as tenderness—a spirit that will neither be injured nor insulted with impunity. You were amazed, you say, by the violence which I showed yesterday. Why did you provoke that violence, by opposing the warmest wish of my heart? and with a calmness that excited my tenfold indignation! Imagine not that I am a tame, subjugated female, to be treated with neglect if I remonstrate, and caressed as the price of obedience. Fancy not

that I am one of your chimney-corner, household goddesses, doomed to the dull uniformity of domestic worship, destined to be adored, to be hung with garlands, or undeified or degraded with indignity! I have been accustomed to a different species of worship; and the fondness of my weak heart has not yet sunk me so low, and rendered me so abject, that I cannot assert my rights. You tell me that you are unconscious of giving me any just cause of offence. Just cause!—How I hate the cold accuracy of your words! This single expression is sufficient offence to a heart like mine. You entreat me to be reasonable. Reasonable!—Did ever man talk of reason to a woman he loved? When once a man has recourse to reason and precision, there is an end of love. No just cause of offence!—What, have I no cause to be indignant, when I find you thus trifle with my feelings, postpone from week to week, and month to month, our departure from this hateful country—

“ Bid me hope on from day to day,
And wish and wish my soul away ! ”

Yes, you know it to be the most ardent wish of my soul to leave England; you know that I cannot enjoy a moment's peace of mind whilst I am here; yet in this racking suspense it is your pleasure to detain me. No, it shall not be—this shall not go on! It is in vain you tell me that the delay originates not with you, that you must wait for instructions and I know not what—paltry diplomatic excuses!

OLIVIA.

LETTER LXXXII.

MR. L—— TO GENERAL B——.

Richmond.

AMUSE yourself, my good general, at my expence; I know that you are seriously interested for my happiness; but the way is not quite so clear before me as you imagine. It is extremely easy to be philosophic for our friends; but difficult to be so for ourselves when our passions are concerned. Indeed, this would be a contradiction in terms; you might as well talk of a cold sun, or of hot ice, as of a philosopher falling in love, or of a man in love being a philosopher. You say that Olivia will wear out my passion, and that her defects will undo the work of her charms. I acknowledge that she sometimes ravel the web she has woven; but she is miraculously expeditious and skilful in repairing the mischief: the magical tissue again appears firm as ever, glowing with brighter colours, and exhibiting finer forms.

In plain prose, my dear friend—for as you are not in love, you will find it difficult to follow my poetic flights—in plain prose, I must confess that Olivia has the power to charm and touch my heart even after she has provoked me to the utmost verge of human patience. She knows her power, and I am afraid this tempts her to abuse it. Her temper, which formerly appeared to me all feminine gentleness, is now irritable and violent; but I am persuaded that this is not

her natural disposition; it is the effect of her present unhappy state of mind. Tortured by remorse and jealousy, if in the height of their paroxysms Olivia make me suffer from their fury, is it for me to complain? I, who caused, should at least endure the evil.

Every thing is arranged for my embassy, and the day is fixed for our leaving England. I go down to L—— castle next week.

Your faithful
F. L——.

LETTER LXXXIII.

JOSEPHINE TO VICTOIRE, MAD. DE P——'S WOMAN.

Richmond.

I AM in despair, dear Victoire; and unless your genius can assist me, absolutely undone! Here is this romantic lady of mine determined upon a journey to Russia with her new English lover. What whims ladies take into their heads, and how impossible it is to make them understand reason! I have been labouring in vain to convince my lady Olivia that this is the most absurd scheme imaginable: and I have repeated to her all I learnt from lady F——'s women, who are just returned from Petersburg, and whom I met at a party last night, all declaring they would rather die a thousand deaths than go through again what they have endured. Such seas of ice! such

going in sledges! such barbarians! such beds! and scarcely a looking-glass! And nothing fit to wear but what one carries with one, and God knows how long we may stay. At Petersburg the coachmen's ears are frozen off every night on their boxes waiting for their ladies. And there are bears and wild beasts, I am told, howling with their mouths wide open night and day in the forests which we are to pass through; and even in the towns the men, I hear, are little better, for it is the law of the country for the men to beat their wives, and many wear long beards. How horrid!—My lady F——'s woman, who is a Parisian born, and very pretty, if her eyes were not so small, and better dressed than her lady always, except diamonds, assures me upon her honour, she never had a civil thing said to her whilst she was in Russia, except by one or two Frenchmen in the suite of the ambassadors.

These Russians think of nothing but drinking brandy, and they put pepper into it! *Mon Dieu*, what savages! Put pepper into brandy! But that is inconceivable! Positively, I will never go to Petersburg. And yet if my lady goes, what will become of me? for you know my sentiments for Brunel, and he is decided to accompany my lady, so I cannot stay behind.

But absolutely I am shocked at this intrigue with Mr. L——, and my conscience reproaches me terribly with being a party concerned in it; for in this country an affair of gallantry between married people is not so light a thing as with us. Here wives sometimes love their husbands seriously, as if they were

their lovers ; and my lady Leonora L—— is one of this sort of wives. She is very unhappy, I am told. One day at L—— castle, I assure you my heart quite bled for her, when she gave me a beautiful gown of English muslin, little suspecting me then to be her enemy. She is certainly very unsuspecting, and very amiable, and I wish to Heaven her husband would think as I do, and take her with him to Petersburg, instead of carrying off my lady Olivia and me! Adieu, mon chou! Embrace every body I know tenderly for me.

JOSEPHINE.

LETTER LXXXIV.

MRS. C—— TO THE DUCHESS OF ——.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I BELIEVE, when I wrote last to your grace, I said, that I had no hopes of the child's life. From the moment of his birth there was but little probability of his being any thing but a source of misery to his mother. I cannot, on her account, regret that the struggle is over. He expired this morning. My poor friend had hopes to the last, though I had none; and it was most painful and alarming to see the feverish anxiety with which she watched over her little boy, frequently repeating, " Mr. L—— used to wish so much for a son.—I hope the boy will live to see his father."

Last night, partly by persuasion, partly by compulsion, I prevailed with her to let the child be taken out of her room. This morning, as soon as it was light, I heard her bell ring; the poor little thing was at that moment in convulsions; and knowing that lady Leonora rang to inquire for it, I went to prepare her mind for what I knew must be the event. The moment I came into the room she looked eagerly in my face, but did not ask me any questions about the child. I sat down by the side of her bed; but without listening to what I said about her own health, she rang her bell again more violently than before. Susan came in. "Susan!—without my child!"—said she, starting up. Susan hesitated, but I saw by her countenance that it was all over—so did lady Leonora. She said not a word, but drawing her curtain suddenly, she lay down, and never spoke or stirred for three hours. The first words she said afterwards were to me:

"You need not move so softly, my dear Helen; I am not asleep. Have you my mother's last letter? I think my mother says that she will be here tomorrow? She is very kind to come to me. Will you be so good as to write to her immediately, and send a servant with your letter as soon as you can to meet her on the road, that she may not be *surprised* when she arrives?"

Lady Leonora is now more composed and more like herself than she has been for some time past. I rejoice that your grace will so soon be here, because you will be her best possible consolation; and I do not know any other person in the world who could

have sufficient influence to prevent her from attempting to set out upon a journey before she can travel with safety. To do her justice, she has not hinted that such were her intentions; but still I know her mind so well, that I am certain what her thoughts are, and what her actions would be. Most ladies talk more than they act, but Leonora acts more decidedly than she talks.

Believe me, dear madam,
 With much respect,
 Your grace's
 Sincerely affectionate
 HELEN C——.

LETTER LXXXV.

MR. L—— TO GENERAL B——.

I THANK you, my excellent friend, for the kindness of your last letter,* which came to me at the time I wanted it most. In the whole course of my life I never felt so much self-reproach as I have done since I heard of the illness of Leonora and the loss of my son. From this blow my mind will not easily recover. Of all torments self-reproach is the worst. And even now I cannot follow the dictates of my own heart and of my better judgment.

In Olivia's company I am compelled to repress my feelings; she cannot sympathize in them; they offend

* This letter does not appear.

her: she is dissatisfied even with my silence, and complains of my being out of spirits. Out of spirits! —How can I be otherwise at present? Has Olivia no touch of pity for a woman who was once her friend, who always treated her with generous kindness? But perhaps I am a little unreasonable, and expect too much from female nature.

At all events, I wish that Olivia would spare me at this moment her sentimental metaphysics. She is for ever attempting to prove to me that I cannot love so well as she can. I admit that I cannot talk of love so finely. I hope all this will not go on when we arrive at Petersburg.

The ministry at last know their own minds. I saw — to-day, and every thing will be quickly arranged; therefore, my dear friend, do not delay coming to town, to

Your obliged
F. L—.

LETTER LXXXVI.

GENERAL B— TO MR. L—.

PERHAPS you are a *little* unreasonable! Indeed, my dear friend, I do not think you a *little* unreasonable, but very nearly stark mad. What! quarrel with your mistress because she is not sorry that your wife is ill, and because she cannot sympathize in your grief for the loss of your son! Where, except per-

haps in absurd novels, did you ever meet with these paragons of mistresses, who were so magnanimous and so generous as to sacrifice their own reputations, and then be satisfied to share the only possible good remaining to them in life, the heart of their lover, with a rival more estimable, more amiable than themselves, and who has the advantage of being a wife? This sharing of hearts, this union of souls with this opposition of interests—this metaphysical gallantry is absolute nonsense, and all who try it in real life will find it so to their cost. Why should you, my dear L——, expect such superlative excellence from your Olivia? Do you think that a woman by losing one virtue increases the strength of those that remain, as it is said that the loss of one of our senses renders all the others more acute? Do you think that a lady, by yielding to love, and by proving that she has not sufficient resolution or forbearance to preserve the honour of her sex, gives the best possible demonstration of her having sufficient strength of character to rise superior to all the other weaknesses incident to human, and more especially to female nature—envy and jealousy for instance?

No, no, my good friend, you have common sense, though you lately have been sparing of it in action. You had a wife, and a good wife, and you had some chance of being happy; but with a wife and a mistress, granting them to be both the best of their kind, the probabilities are rather against you. I speak only as a man of the world: morality, you know, is now merely an affair of calculation. According to the most approved tables of happiness, you have made a

bad bargain. But be just, at any rate, and do not blame your Olivia for the inconveniences and evils inseparable from the species of connexion that you have been pleased to form. Do you expect the whole course of society and the nature of the human heart to change for your special accommodation? Do you believe in truth by wholesale, and yet in detail expect a happy exception in your own favour.—Seriously, my dear friend, you must either break off this connexion or bear it. I shall see you in a few days.

Yours truly,
J. B.

LETTER LXXXVII.

MRS. C—— TO MISS B——.

L—— Castle.

LEONORA has recovered her strength surprisingly. She was so determined to be well, that her body dared not contradict her mind. Her excellent mother has been of the greatest possible service to us, for she has had sufficient influence to prevent her daughter from exerting herself too much. Her grace had a letter from Mr. L—— to-day—very short, but very kind—at least all that I heard read of it. He has set my heart somewhat more at ease by the comfortable assurance, that he will not leave England without seeing lady Leonora. I have the greatest hopes from this interview! I have not felt so happy

for many months—but I will not be too sanguine. Mr. L—— talks of being here the latter end of this month. The duchess, with her usual prudence, intends to leave her daughter before that time, lest Mr. L—— should be constrained by her presence, or should imagine that Leonora acts from any impulse but that of her own heart. I also, though much against my inclinations, shall decamp; for he might perhaps consider me as an adviser, caballer, confidante, or at least a troublesome spectator. All reconciliation scenes should be without spectators. Men do not like to be seen on their knees: they are at a loss, like sir Walter Raleigh in “The Critic;” they cannot get off gracefully. I am, dear Margaret,

Yours affectionately,

HELEN C——.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

GENERAL B—— TO MR. L——.

MY DEAR L——,

Friday.

ASK yourself, in the name of common sense, why you should go to Petersburg with this sentimental coquette, this romantic termagant, of whom I see you are already more than half tired. As to your being bound to her in honour, I cannot see how. Why should you make honour, justice, humanity, and gratitude, plead so finely all on one side, and that the wrong side of the question? Have none of these

one word to whisper in favour of any body in this world but of a worthless mistress, who makes you miserable? I think you have learned from your heroine to be so expert in sentimental logic, that you can change virtues into vices, and vices into virtues, till at last you do not know them asunder. Else why should you make it a point of conscience to abandon your wife—just at the moment, too, when you are thoroughly convinced of her love for you, when you are touched to the soul by her generous conduct, and when your heart longs to return to her?

Please to remember that this lady Olivia's reputation was not unimpeached before her acquaintance with you, and do not take more glory or more blame to yourself than properly falls to your share. Do not forget that *poor R**** was your predecessor, and do not let this delicate lady rest all the weight of her shame upon you, as certain Chinese culprits rest their portable pillories on the shoulders of their friends.

In two days I shall follow this letter, and repeat in person all the interrogatories I have just put to you, my dear friend. Prepare yourself to answer me sincerely such questions as I shall ask.

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER LXXXIX.

FROM OLIVIA TO MR. L——.

Monday, 12 o'clock.

FOR a few days did you say? To *bid adieu*? Oh! if once more you return to that fatal castle, that enchanted home, Olivia for ever loses all power over your heart. Bid her die, stab her to the heart, and she will call it mercy, and she will bless you with her dying lips; but talk not of leaving your Olivia! On her knees she writes this, her face all bathed in tears. And must she in her turn implore and supplicate? Must she abase herself even to the dust? Yes—love like hers vanquishes even the stubborn potency of female pride.

Your too fond

OLIVIA.

LETTER XC.

FROM OLIVIA TO MR. L——.

[Dated a few hours after the preceding.]

Monday, half-past three.

OH! this equivocating answer to my fond heart! Passion makes and admits of no compromise. Be mine, and wholly mine—or never, never will I survive your desertion! I can be happy only whilst I love; I can love only whilst I am beloved with fer-

vency equal to my own ; and when I cease to love, I cease to exist ! No coward fears restrain my soul. The word suicide shocks not my ear, appals not my understanding. Death I consider but as the eternal rest of the wretched—the sweet, the sole refuge of despair.

Your resolute

OLIVIA.

LETTER XCI.

FROM OLIVIA TO MR. L——.

Tuesday.

RETURN ! return ! on the wings of love return to the calm, the prudent, the happy, the transcendently happy Leonora ! Return—but not to bid her adieu—return to be hers for ever, and only hers. I give you back your faith—I *give* you back your promises—you have *taken* back your heart.

But if you should desire once more to see Olivia, if you should have any lingering wish to bid her a last adieu, it must be this evening. To-morrow's sun rises not for Olivia. For her but a few short hours remain. Love, let them be all thy own ! Intoxicate thy victim, mingle pleasure in the cup of death, and bid her fearless quaff it to the dregs !——

LETTER XCII.

MR. L—— TO GENERAL B——.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Thursday.

You have by argument and raillery, and by every means that kindness and goodness could devise, endeavoured to expel from my mind a passion which you justly foresaw would be destructive of my happiness, and of the peace of a most estimable and amiable woman. With all the skill that a thorough knowledge of human nature in general, and of my peculiar character and foibles, could bestow, you have employed those

——“ Words and spells which can control,
Between the fits, the fever of the soul.”

Circumstances have operated in conjunction with your skill to “medicine me to repose.” The fits have gradually become weaker and weaker, the fever is now gone, but I am still to suffer for the extravagancies committed during its delirium. I have entered into engagements which must be fulfilled; I have involved myself in difficulties from which I see no method of extricating myself honourably. Notwithstanding all the latitude which the system of modern gallantry allows to the conscience of our sex, and in spite of the convenient maxim, which maintains that all arts are allowable in love and war, I think that a man cannot break a promise, whether made in words or by tacit implication, on

the faith of which a woman sacrifices her reputation and happiness. Lady Olivia has thrown herself upon my protection. I am as sensible as you can be, my dear general, that scandal had attacked her reputation before our acquaintance commenced; but though the world had suspicions, they had no proofs: now there can be no longer any defence made for her character, there is no possibility of her returning to that rank in society to which she was entitled by her birth, and which she adorned with all the brilliant charms of wit and beauty; no happiness, no chance of happiness remains for her but from my constancy. Of naturally violent passions, unused to the control of authority, habit, reason, or religion, and at this time impelled by love and jealousy, Olivia is on the brink of despair. I am not apt to believe that women die in modern times for love, nor am I easily disposed to think that I could inspire a dangerous degree of enthusiasm; yet I am persuaded that Olivia's passion, compounded as it is of various sentiments beside love, has taken such possession of her imagination, and is, as she fancies, so necessary to her existence, that if I were to abandon her, she would destroy that life, which she has already attempted, I thank God! ineffectually. What a spectacle is a woman in a paroxysm of rage!—a woman we love, or whom we have loved!

Excuse me, my dear friend, if I wrote incoherently, for I have been interrupted many times since I began this letter. I am this day overwhelmed by

a multiplicity of affairs, which, in consequence of Olivia's urgency to leave England immediately, must be settled with an expedition for which my head is not at present well qualified. I do not feel well: I can command my attention but on one subject, and on that all my thoughts are to no purpose. Whichever way I now act, I must endure and inflict misery. I must either part from a wife who has given me the most tender, the most touching proofs of affection—a wife who is all that a man can esteem, admire, and love; or I must abandon a mistress, who loves me with all the desperation of passion to which she would fall a sacrifice. But why do I talk as if I were still at liberty to make a choice?—My head is certainly very confused. I forgot that I am bound by a solemn promise, and this is the evil which distracts me. I will give you, if I can, a clear narrative.

Last night I had a terrible scene with Olivia. I foresaw that she would be alarmed by my intended visit to L—— Castle, even though it was but to take leave of my Leonora. I abstained from seeing Olivia to avoid altercation, and with all the delicacy in my power I wrote to her, assuring her that my resolution was fixed. Note after note came from her, with pathetic and passionate appeals to my heart; but I was still resolute. At length, the day before that on which I was to set out for L—— Castle, she wrote to warn me, that if I wished to take a last farewell, I must see her that evening: her note concluded with, "To-morrow's sun will not rise for Olivia." This threat, and many strange hints of her opinions concerning suicide, I at the time disregarded, as

only thrown out to intimidate a lover. However, knowing the violence of Olivia's temper, I was punctual to the appointed hour, fully determined by my firmness to convince her that these female wiles were vain.

My dear friend, I would not advise the wisest man and the most courageous upon earth to brave such dangers, confident in his strength. Even a victory may cost him too dear.

I found Olivia reclining on a sofa, her beautiful tresses unbound, her dress the perfection of elegant negligence. I half suspected that it was studied negligence: yet I could not help pausing, as I entered, to contemplate a figure. She never looked more beautiful—more fascinating. Holding out her hand to me, she said, with her languid smile and tender expression of voice and manner, "*You are* come then to bid me farewell. I doubted whether But I will not upbraid—mine be all the pain of this last adieu. During the few minutes we have to pass together,

‘Between us two let there be peace.’”

I sat down beside her, rather agitated, I confess, but commanding myself so that my emotion could not be visible. In a composed tone I asked, why she spoke of a last adieu? and observed that we should meet again in a few days.

“Never!” replied Olivia. “Weak woman as I am, love inspires me with sufficient force to make and to keep this resolution.”

As she spoke, she took from her bosom a rose, and

presenting it to me in a solemn manner, "Put this rose into water to-night," continued she; "to-morrow it will be alive!"

Her look, her expressive eyes, seemed to say this flower will be alive, but Olivia will be dead. I am ashamed to confess that I was silent, because I could not just then speak.

"I have used some precaution," resumed Olivia, "to spare you, my dearest L——, unnecessary pain.—Look around you."

The room, I now for the first time observed, was ornamented with flowers.

"This apartment, I hope," continued she, "has not the air of the chamber of death. I have endeavoured to give it a festive appearance, that the remembrance of your last interview with your once loved Olivia may be at least unmixed with horror."

At this instant, my dear general, a confused recollection of Rousseau's Heloise, the dying scene, and her room ornamented with flowers, came into my imagination, and destroying the idea of reality, changed suddenly the whole course of my feelings.

In a tone of raillery I represented to Olivia her resemblance to Julie, and observed that it was a pity she had not a lover whose temper was more similar than mine to that of the divine St. Preux. Stung to the heart by my ill-timed raillery, Olivia started up from the sofa, broke from my arms with sudden force, snatched from the table a penknife, and plunged it into her side.

She was about to repeat the blow, but I caught her arm—she struggled—"Promise me, then,"

cried she, "that you will never more see my hated rival."

"I cannot make such a promise, Olivia," said I, holding her uplifted arm forcibly. "I will not."

The words "hated rival," which showed me that Olivia was actuated more by the spirit of hatred than love, made me reply in as decided a tone as even you could have spoken, my dear general. But I was shocked, and reproached myself with cruelty, when I saw the blood flow from her side: she was terrified. I took the knife from her powerless hand, and she fainted in my arms. I had sufficient presence of mind to reflect that what had happened should be kept as secret as possible; therefore, without summoning Josephine, whose attachment to her mistress I have reason to suspect, I threw open the windows, gave Olivia air and water, and her senses returned: then I despatched my Swiss for a surgeon. I need not speak of my own feelings—no suspense could be more dreadful than that which I endured between the sending for the surgeon and the moment when he gave his opinion. He relieved me at once, by pronouncing it to be a slight flesh wound, that would be of no manner of consequence. Olivia, however, whether from alarm or pain, or from the sight of the blood, fainted three times during the dressing of her side; and though the surgeon assured her that it would be perfectly well in a few days, she was evidently apprehensive that we concealed from her the real danger. At the idea of the approach of death, which now took possession of her imagination, all courage forsook her, and for some time my efforts

to support her spirits were ineffectual. She could not dispense with the services of Josephine; and from the moment this French woman entered the room, there was nothing to be heard but exclamations the most violent and noisy. As to assistance, she could give none. At last her exaggerated demonstrations of horror and grief ended with,—“*Dieu merci! au moins nous voilà delivrés de ce voyage affreux. Apparemment qu’il ne sera plus question de ce vilain Petersburg pour madame.*”

A new train of thoughts was roused by these words in Olivia’s mind; and looking at me, she eagerly inquired why the journey to Petersburg was to be given up, if she was in no danger? I assured her that Josephine spoke at random, that my intentions with regard to the embassy to Russia were unaltered.

“*Seulement retardé un peu,*” said Josephine, who was intent only upon her own selfish object.—“*Sûrement, madame ne voyagera pas dans cet état!*”

Olivia started up, and looking at me with terrific wildness in her eyes, “*Swear to me,*” said she, “*swear that you will not deceive me, or I will this instant tear open this wound, and never more suffer it to be closed.*”

“*Deceive you, Olivia!*” cried I, “*what deceit can you fear from me?—What is it you require of me?*”

“*I require from you a promise, a solemn promise, that you will go with me to Russia!*”

“*I solemnly promise that I will,*” said I: “*now be tranquil, Olivia, I beseech you.*”

The surgeon represented the necessity of keeping herself quiet, and declared that he would not answer for the cure of his patient on any other terms. Satisfied by the solemnity of my promise, Olivia now suffered me to depart. This morning she sends me word that in a few days she shall be ready to leave England. Can you meet me, my dear friend, at L—— Castle? I go down there to-day, to bid adieu to Leonora. From thence I shall proceed to Yarmouth, and embark immediately. Olivia will follow me.

Your obliged
F. L——.

LETTER XCIII.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

DEAREST MOTHER,

L—— Castle.

My husband is here! at home with me, with your happy Leonora—and his heart is with her. His looks, his voice, his manner tell me so, and by them I never was deceived. No, he is incapable of deceit. Whatever have been his errors, he never stooped to dissimulation. He is again my own, still capable of loving me, still worthy of all my affection. I knew that the delusion could not last long, or rather you told me so, my best friend, and I believed you; you did him justice. He was indeed deceived—who might not have been deceived by Olivia? His passions were under the power of an enchantress; but now he has triumphed over her arts. He sees her such as she is, and her influence ceases.

I am not absolutely certain of all this; but I believe, because I hope it: yet he is evidently embarrassed, and seems unhappy: what can be the meaning of this? Perhaps he does not yet know his Leonora sufficiently to be secure of her forgiveness. How I long to set his heart at ease, and to say to him, let the past be forgotten for ever! How easy it is to the happy to forgive! There have been moments when I could not, I fear, have been just, when I am sure that I could not have been generous. I shall immediately offer to accompany Mr. L—— to Russia; I can have no farther hesitation, for I see that he wishes it; indeed, just now he almost said so. His baggage is already embarked at Yarmouth—he sails in a few days—and in a few hours your daughter's fate, your daughter's happiness, will be decided. It is decided, for I am sure he loves me; I see, I hear, I feel it. Dearest mother, I write to you in the first moment of joy.—I hear his foot upon the stairs.

Your happy

LEONORA L——.

LETTER XCIV.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

MY DEAR MOTHER,

L—— Castle.

My hopes are all vain. Your prophecies will never be accomplished. We have both been mistaken in Mr. L——'s character, and henceforward your daughter

must not depend upon him for any portion of her happiness. I once thought it impossible that my love for him could be diminished: he has changed my opinion. Mine is not that species of weak or abject affection which can exist under the sense of ill treatment and injustice, much less can my love survive esteem for its object.

I told you, my dear mother, and I believed, that his affections had returned to me; but I was mistaken. He has not sufficient strength or generosity of soul to love me, or to do justice to my love. I offered to go with him to Russia: he answered, "That is impossible."—Impossible!—Is it then impossible for him to do that which is just or honourable? or seeing what is right, must he follow what is wrong? or can his heart never more be touched by virtuous affections? Is his taste so changed, so depraved, that he can now be pleased and charmed only by what is despicable and profligate in our sex? Then I should rejoice that we are to be separated—separated for ever. May years and years pass away and wear out, if possible, the memory of all he has been to me! I think I could better, much better bear the total loss, the death of him I have loved, than endure to feel that he had survived both my affection and esteem; to see the person the same, but the soul changed; to feel every day, every hour, that I must despise what I have so admired and loved.

Mr. L—— is gone from hence. He leaves England the day after to-morrow. Lady Olivia is to *follow* him. I am glad that public decency is not to be outraged by their embarking together. My dearest

mother, be assured that at this moment your daughter's feelings are worthy of you. Indignation and the pride of virtue support her spirit.

LEONORA L——.

LETTER XCV.

GENERAL B—— TO LADY LEONORA L——.

Yarmouth.

HAD I not the highest confidence in lady Leonora L——'s fortitude, I should not venture to write to her at this moment, knowing as I do that she is but just recovered from a dangerous illness.

Mr. L—— had requested me to meet him at L—— Castle previous to his leaving England, but it was out of my power. I met him however on the road to Yarmouth, and as we travelled together I had full opportunity of seeing the state of his mind. Permit me—the urgency of the case requires it—to speak without reserve, with the freedom of an old friend. I imagine that your ladyship parted from Mr. L—— with feelings of indignation, at which I cannot be surprised: but if you had seen him as I saw him, indignation would have given way to pity. Loving you, madam, as you deserve to be loved, most ardently, most tenderly; touched to his inmost soul by the proofs of affection he had seen in your letters, in your whole conduct, even to the last moment of parting; my unhappy friend felt himself bound to resist the temptation of staying with you, or of

accepting your generous offer to accompany him to Petersburg. He thought himself bound in honour by a promise extorted from him to save from suicide one whom he thinks he has injured, one who has thrown herself upon his protection. Of the conflict in his mind at parting with your ladyship I can judge from what he suffered afterwards. I met Mr. L—— with feelings of extreme indignation, but before I had been an hour in his company, I never pitied any man so much in my life, for I never yet saw any one so truly wretched, and so thoroughly convinced that he deserved to be so. You know that he is not one who often gives way to his emotions, not one who expresses them much in words—but he could not command his feelings.

The struggle was too violent. I have no doubt that it was the real cause of his present illness. As the moment approached when he was to leave England, he became more and more agitated. Towards evening he sunk into a sort of apathy and gloomy silence, from which he suddenly broke into delirious raving. At twelve o'clock last night, the night he was to have sailed, he was seized with a violent and infectious fever. As to the degree of immediate danger, the physicians here cannot yet pronounce. I have sent to town for Dr. *****. Your ladyship may be certain that I shall not quit my friend, and that he shall have every possible assistance and attendance.

I am, with the truest esteem,
Your ladyship's faithful servant,
J. B.

LETTER XCVI.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

DEAR MOTHER,

L— Castle.

THIS moment an express from general B—. Mr. L— is dangerously ill at Yarmouth—a fever, brought on by the agitation of his mind. How unjust I have been! Forget all I said in my last. I write in the utmost haste—just setting out for Yarmouth. I hope to be there to-morrow.

Your affectionate

LEONORA L—.

I open this to enclose the general's letter, which will explain every thing.

LETTER XCVII.

GENERAL B— TO THE DUCHESS OF —.

MY DEAR MADAM,

Yarmouth.

YOUR grace, I find, is apprised of lady Leonora L—'s journey hither: I fear that you rely upon my prudence for preventing her exposing herself to the danger of catching this dreadful fever. But that has been beyond my power. Her ladyship arrived late last night. I had foreseen the probability of her coming, but not the possibility of her coming so soon. I had taken no precautions, and she was in the house

and upon the stairs in an instant. No entreaties, no arguments could stop her; I assured her that Mr. L——'s fever was pronounced by all the physicians to be of the most infectious kind. Dr. ***** joined me in representing that she would expose her life to almost certain danger if she persisted in her determination to see her husband; but she pressed forward, regardless of all that could be said. To the physicians she made no answer; to me she replied, "You are Mr. L——'s friend, but I am his wife: you have not feared to hazard your life for him, and do you think I can hesitate?" I urged that there was no necessity for more than one person's running this hazard; and that since it had fallen to my lot to be with my friend when he was first taken ill—— She interrupted me,—“Is not this taking a cruel advantage of me, general? You know that I, too, would have been with Mr. L—— if—if it had been possible.” Her manner, her pathetic emphasis, and the force of her implied meaning, struck me so much, that I was silent, and suffered her to pass on; but again the idea of her danger rushing upon my mind, I sprang before her to the door of Mr. L——'s apartment, and opposed her entrance. “Then, general,” said she, calmly, “perhaps you mistake me—perhaps you have heard repeated some unguarded words of mine in the moment of indignation unjust you best know how unjust indignation!—and you infer from these that my affection for my husband is extinguished. I deserve this—but do not punish me too severely.”

I still kept my hand upon the lock of the door,

expostulating with lady Leonora in your grace's name, and in Mr. L——'s, assuring her that if he were conscious of what was passing, and able to speak, he would order me to prevent her seeing him in his present situation.

“And you, too, general!” said she, bursting into tears: “I thought you were my friend—would you prevent me from seeing him? And is not he conscious of what is passing? And is not he able to speak. Sir, I must be admitted! You have done your duty—now let me do mine. Consider, my right is superior to yours. No power on earth should or can prevent a wife from seeing her husband when he is Dear, dear general!” said she, clasping her raised hands, and falling suddenly at my feet, “let me see him but for one minute, and I will be grateful to you for ever!”

I could resist no longer—I tremble for the consequences. I know your grace sufficiently to be aware that you ought to be told the whole truth. I have but little hopes of my poor friend's life.

With much respect,

Your grace's faithful servant,
J. B.

LETTER XCVIII.

OLIVIA TO MR. L——.

Richmond.

A MIST hung over my eyes, and “my ears with hollow murmurs rung,” when the dreadful tidings of

your alarming illness were announced by your cruel messenger. My dearest L——! why does inexorable destiny doom me to be absent from you at such a crisis? Oh! this fatal wound of mine! It would, I fear, certainly open again if I were to travel. So this corporeal being must be imprisoned here, while my anxious soul, my viewless spirit, hovers near you, longing to minister each tender consolation, each nameless comfort that love alone can, with fond pre-science and magic speed, summon round the couch of pain.

“O that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly to you!” Why must I resign the sweetly-painful task of soothing you in the hour of sickness? And shall others, with officious zeal,

“Guess the faint wish, explain the asking eye?”

Alas! it must be so—even were I to fly to him, my sensibility could not support the scene. To behold him stretched on the bed of disease—perhaps of death—would be agony past endurance. Let firmer nerves than Olivia’s, and hearts more callous, assume the offices from which they shrink not. ’Tis the fate, the hard fate of all endued with exquisite sensibility, to be palsied by the excess of their feelings, and to become imbecile at the moment their exertions are most necessary.

Your too tenderly sympathizing

OLIVIA.

LETTER XCIX.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

Yarmouth.

My husband is alive, and that is all. Never did I see, nor could I have conceived, such a change, and in so short a time! When I opened the door, his eyes turned upon me with unmeaning eagerness: he did not know me. The good general thought my voice might have some effect. I spoke, but could obtain no answer, no sign of intelligence. In vain I called upon him by every name that used to reach his heart. I knelt beside him, and took one of his burning hands in mine. I kissed it, and suddenly he started up, exclaiming, "Olivia! Olivia!" with dreadful vehemence. In his delirium he raved about Olivia's stabbing herself, and called upon us to hold her arm, looking wildly towards the foot of the bed, as if the figure were actually before him. Then he sunk back, as if quite exhausted, and gave a deep sigh. Some of my tears fell upon his hand; he felt them before I perceived that they had fallen, and looked so earnestly in my face, that I was in hopes his recollection was returning; but he only said, "Olivia, I believe that you love me;" then sighed more deeply than before, drew his hand away from me, and, as well as I could distinguish, said something about Leonora.

But why should I give you the pain of hearing all these circumstances, my dear mother? It is enough

to say, that he passed a dreadful night. This morning the physicians say, that if he passes this night—if—my dear mother, what a terrible suspense!

LEONORA L——.

LETTER C.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

Yarmouth.

MORNING is at last come, and my husband is still alive: so there is yet hope. When I said I thought I could bear to survive him, how little I knew of myself, and how little, how very little I expected to be so soon tried! All evils are remediable but one, that one which I dare not name.

The physicians assure me that he is better. His friend, to whose judgment I trust more, thinks as they do. I know not what to believe. I dread to flatter myself and to be disappointed. I will write again, dearest mother, to-morrow.

Your ever affectionate

LEONORA L——.

LETTER CI.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

Wednesday.

No material change since yesterday, my dear mother. This morning, as I was searching for some

medicine, I saw on the chimney-piece a note from lady Olivia —. It might have been there yesterday, and ever since my arrival, but I did not see it. At any other time it would have excited my indignation, but my mind is now too much weakened by sorrow. My fears for my husband's life absorb all other feelings.

LETTER CII.

OLIVIA TO MR. L——.

Richmond.

WORDS cannot express what I have suffered since I wrote last! Oh! why do I not hear that the danger is over!—Long since would I have been with you, all that my soul holds dear, could I have escaped from these tyrants, these medical despots, who detain me by absolute force, and watch over me with unrelenting vigilance. I have consulted Dr. ***, who assures me that my fears of my wound opening, were I to take so long a journey, are too well-founded; that in the present feverish state of my mind he would not answer for the consequences. I heed him not—life I value not.—Most joyfully would I sacrifice myself for the man I love. But even could I escape from my persecutors, too well I know that to see you would be a vain attempt—too well I know that I should not be admitted. Your love, your fears for Olivia would barbarously banish her and forbid her your dear, your dangerous atmosphere. Too

justly would you urge that my rashness might prove our mutual ruin—that in the moment of crisis or of convalescence, anxiety for me might defeat the kind purpose of nature. And even were I secure of your recovery, the delay, I speak not of the danger of my catching the disease, would, circumstanced as we are, be death to our hopes. We should be compelled to part. The winds would waft you from me. The waves would bear you to another region, far—oh, far from your

OLIVIA.

LETTER CIII.

GENERAL B ——— TO THE DUCHESS OF ———.

Yarmouth, Thursday,—.

MY DEAR MADAM,

MR. L—— has had a relapse, and is now more alarmingly ill than I have yet seen him: he does not know his situation, for his delirium has returned. The physicians give him over. Dr. H—— says that we must prepare for the worst.

I have but one word of comfort for your grace—that your admirable daughter's health has not yet suffered,

Your grace's faithful servant,

J. B.

LETTER CIV.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

Yarmouth.

THE delirium has subsided. A few minutes ago, as I was kneeling beside him, offering up an almost hopeless prayer for his recovery, his eyes opened, and I perceived that he knew me. He closed his eyes again without speaking, opened them once more, and then looking at me fixedly, exclaimed: "It is not a dream! You are Leonora!—*my* Leonora!"

What exquisite pleasure I felt at the sound of these words, at the tone in which they were pronounced! My husband folded me in his arms; and, till I felt his burning lips, I forgot that he was ill.

When he came thoroughly to his recollection, and when the idea that his fever might be infectious occurred to him, he endeavoured to prevail upon me to leave the room. But what danger can there be for me *now*? My whole soul, my whole frame is inspired with new life. If he recover, your daughter may still be happy.

LETTER CV.

GENERAL B———TO THE DUCHESS OF ——.

MY DEAR MADAM,

A FEW hours ago my friend became perfectly sensible of his danger, and calling me to his bedside,

told me that he was eager to make use of the little time which he might have to live. He was quite calm and collected. He employed me to write his last wishes and bequests; and I must do him the justice to declare, that the strongest idea and feeling in his mind evidently was the desire to show his entire confidence in his wife, and to give her, in his last moments, proofs of his esteem and affection. When he had settled his affairs, he begged to be left alone for some time. Between twelve and one his bell rang, and he desired to see lady Leonora and me. He spoke to me with that warmth of friendship which he has ever felt from our childhood. Then turning to his wife, his voice utterly failed, and he could only press to his lips that hand which was held out to him in speechless agony.

“Excellent woman!” he articulated at last; then collecting his mind, he exclaimed, “My beloved Leonora, I will not die without expressing my feelings for you; I know yours for me. I do not ask for that forgiveness which your generous heart granted long before I deserved it. Your affection for me has been shown by actions, at the hazard of your life; I can only thank you with weak words. You possess my whole heart, my esteem, my admiration, my gratitude.”

Lady Leonora, at the word *gratitude*, made an effort to speak, and laid her hand upon her husband's lips. He added, in a more enthusiastic tone, “You have my undivided love. Believe in the truth of these words—perhaps they are the last I may ever speak.”

My friend sunk back exhausted, and I carried Lady Leonora out of the room.

I returned half an hour ago, and found every thing silent : Mr. L—— is lying with his eyes closed—quite still—I hope asleep. This may be a favourable crisis. I cannot delay this letter longer.

Your grace's faithful servant,
J. B.

LETTER CVI.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

DEAREST MOTHER,

Yarmouth.

HE has slept several hours.—Dr. H——, the most skilful of all his physicians, says that we may now expect his recovery. Adieu. The good general will add a line to assure you that I am not deceived, nor too sanguine.

Yours most affectionately,
LEONORA L——.

Postscript by General B——.

I have some hopes—that is all I can venture to say to your grace.

LETTER CVII.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

DEAREST MOTHER,

Yarmouth.

EXCELLENT news for you to-day!—Mr. L—— is pronounced out of danger. He seems excessively

touched by my coming here, and so grateful for the little kindness I have been able to show him during his illness! But, alas! that fatal promise! the recollection of it comes across my mind like a spectre. Mr. L—— has never touched upon this subject,—I do all in my power to divert his thoughts to indifferent objects.

This morning, when I went into his room, I found him tearing to pieces that note which I mentioned to you a few days ago. He seemed much agitated, and desired to see general B——. They are now together, and were talking so loud in the next room to me, that I was obliged to retire, lest I should overhear secrets. Mr. L—— this moment sends for me. If I should not have time to add more, this short letter will satisfy you for to-day.

LEONORA L——.

I open my letter to say, that I am not so happy as I was when I began it. I have heard all the circumstances relative to this terrible affair. Mr. L—— will go to Russia. I am as far from happiness as ever.

LETTER CVIII.

OLIVIA TO MR. L——.

Richmond.

“ Say, is not absence death to those that love ? ”

How just, how beautiful a sentiment! yet cold and callous is that heart which knows not that there

is a pang more dreadful than absence—far as the death of lingering torture exceeds, in corporeal suffering, the soft slumber of expiring nature. Suspense! suspense! compared with thy racking agony, even absence is but the blessed euthanasia of love.

My dearest L——, why this torturing silence? one line, one word, I beseech you, from *your own hand*; say but *I live and love you, my Olivia*. Hour after hour, and day after day, have I waited and waited, and hoped, and feared to hear from you. O, this intolerable agonizing suspense! Yet hope clings to my fond heart—hope! sweet treacherous hope!

“ Non so si la Speranza
Va con l'inganno unita ;
So che mantiene in vita
Qualche infelici almen.”

OLIVIA.

LETTER CIX.

MR. L—— TO OLIVIA.

MY DEAR OLIVIA,

Yarmouth.

THIS is the first line I have written since my illness. I could not sooner relieve you from suspense, for during most of this time I have been delirious, and never till now able to write. My physicians have this morning pronounced me out of danger; and as soon as my strength is sufficient to bear the voyage, I shall sail, according to my promise.

Your prudence, or that of your physician, has

saved me much anxiety—perhaps saved my life : for had you been so rash as to come hither, beside my fears for your safety, I should have been exposed, in the moment of my returning reason, to a conflict of passions which I could not have borne.

Leonora is with me ; she arrived the night after I was taken ill, and forced her way to me, when my fever was at the highest, and while I was in a state of delirium.

Lady Leonora will stay with me till the moment I sail, which I expect to do in about ten days. I cannot say positively, for I am still very weak, and may not be able to keep my word to a day. Adieu. I hope your mind will now be at ease. I am glad to hear from the surgeon that your wound is quite closed. I will write again, and more fully, when I am better able. Believe me, Olivia, I am most anxious to secure your happiness : allow me to believe that this will be in the power of

Yours sincerely,

F. L——.

LETTER CX.

OLIVIA TO MR. L——.

Richmond.

BARBAROUS man ! with what cold cruelty you plunge a dagger into my heart ! Leonora is with you !—Leonora ! Then I am undone. Yes, she will—she has resumed all her power, her rights, her habitual

empire over your heart. Wretched Olivia!—But you say it is your wish to secure my happiness, you bid me allow you to believe it is in your power. What phrases!—You will sail, *according to your promise*.—Then nothing but your honour binds you to Olivia. And even now, at this guilty instant, in your secret soul, you wish, you expect from my offended pride, from my disgusted delicacy, a renunciation of this promise, a release from all the ties that bind you to me. You are right: this is what I ought to do; what I would do, if love had not so weakened my soul, so prostrated my spirit, rendered me so abject a creature, that *I cannot what I would*.

I must love on—female pride and resentment call upon me in vain. I cannot hate you. Even by the feeble tie, which I see you long to break, I must hold, rather than let you go for ever. I will not renounce your promise. I claim it. I adjure you by all which a man of honour holds most sacred to quit England the moment your health will allow you to sail. No equivocating with your conscience!—I hold you to your word. Oh, my dearest L——! to feel myself reduced to use such language to you, to find myself clinging to that last resource of shipwrecked love, *a promise!* It is with unspeakable agony I feel all this; lower I cannot sink in misery. Raise me, if indeed you wish my happiness—raise me! it is yet in your power. Tell me, that my too susceptible heart has mistaken phantoms for realities—tell me, that your last was not colder than usual; yes, I am ready to be deceived. Tell me that it was

only the languor of disease; assure me that my rival forced her way only to your presence, that she has not won her easy way back to your heart— assure me that you are impatient once more to see your own

OLIVIA.

LETTER CXI.

LEONORA TO HER MOTHER.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

Yarmouth.

CAN you believe or imagine that I am actually unwilling to say or to think that Mr. L—— is quite well? yet this is the fact. Such is the inconsistency and weakness of our natures—of my nature, I should say. But a short time ago I thought that no evil could be so great as his danger; now, that danger is past, I dread to hear him say that he is perfectly recovered. The moment he is able he goes to Russia; that is decided irrevocably. The promise has been claimed and repeated. A solemn promise cannot be broken for any human consideration. I should despise him if he broke it; but can I love him for keeping it? His mind is at this instant agitated as much as mine is—more it cannot. Yet I ought to be better able to part with him now than when we parted before, because I have now at least the consolation of knowing that he leaves me against his will—that his heart will not go from me. This time I cannot be deceived; I have had the most explicit

assurances of his *undivided* love. And indeed I was never deceived. All the appearances of regret at parting with me were genuine. The general witnessed the consequent struggle in Mr. L——'s mind, and this fever followed.

I will endeavour to calm and content myself with the possession of his love, and with the assurance that he will return to me as soon as possible. As soon as possible! but what a vague hope! He sails with the first fair wind. What a dreadful certainty! Perhaps to-morrow! Oh, my dearest mother, perhaps to-night!

LEONORA L——.

LETTER CXII.

GENERAL B—— TO THE DUCHESS OF ——.

MY DEAR MADAM,

Yarmouth.

TO-DAY Mr. L——, finding himself sufficiently recovered, gave orders to all his suite to embark, and the wind being fair, determined to go on board immediately. In the midst of the bustle of the preparations for his departure, lady Leonora, exhausted by her former activity, and unable to take any part in what was passing, sat silent, pale and motionless, opposite to a window, which looked out upon the sea; the vessel in which her husband was to sail lay in sight, and her eyes were fixed upon the streamers, watching their motion in the wind.

Mr. L—— was in his own apartment writing letters. An express arrived ; and among other letters for the English ambassador to Russia, there was a large packet directed to lady Leonora L——. Upon opening it, the crimson colour flew into her face, and she exclaimed, “ Olivia’s letters!—Lady Olivia ——’s letters to Mad. de P——. Who could send these to me ? ”

“ I give you joy with all my heart ! ” cried I ; “ no matter how they come—they come in the most fortunate moment possible. I would stake my life upon it they will unmask Olivia at once. Where is Mr. L—— ? He must read them this moment.”

I was hurrying out of the room to call my friend, but lady Leonora stopped my career, and checked the transport of my joy.

“ You do not think, my dear general,” said she, “ that I would for any consideration do so dishonourable an action as to read these letters ? ”

“ Only let Mr. L—— read them,” interrupted I, “ that is I ask of your ladyship. Give them to me. For the soul of me I can see nothing dishonourable in this. Let lady Olivia be judged by her own words. Your ladyship shall not be troubled with her trash, but give the letters to me, I beseech you.”

“ No, I cannot,” said lady Leonora, steadily. “ It is a great temptation ; but I ought not to yield.” She deliberately folded them up in a blank cover, directed them to lady Olivia, and sealed them ; whilst I, half in admiration and half in anger, went on expostulating.

“ Good God ! this is being too generous ! But,

my dear lady Leonora, why will you sacrifice yourself? This is misplaced delicacy! Show those letters, and I'll lay my life Mr. L—— never goes to Russia."

"My dear friend," said she, looking up with tears in her eyes, "do not tempt me beyond my power to resist. Say no more." At this instant Mr. L—— came into the room; and I am ashamed to confess to your grace, I really was so little master of myself, that I was upon the point of seizing Olivia's letters, and putting them into his hands. "L——," said I, "here is your admirable wife absurdly, yes, I must say it, absurdly standing upon a point of honour with one who has none! That packet which she has before her——"

Lady Leonora imposed silence upon me by one of those looks which no man can resist.

"My dear Leonora, you are right," said Mr. L——; "and you are almost right, my dear general: I know what that packet contains; and without doing anything dishonourable, I hold myself absolved from my promise; I shall not go to Russia, my dearest wife!" He flew into her arms—and I left them. I question whether they either of them felt much more than I did.

For some minutes I was content with knowing that these things had really happened, that I had heard Mr. L—— say he was absolved from all promises, and that he would not go to Russia; but how did all this happen so suddenly?—How did he know the contents of Olivia's letters, and without doing anything dishonourable? There are some people

who cannot be perfectly happy till they know the *rationale* of their happiness. I am one of these. I did not feel "a sober certainty of waking bliss," till I read a letter which Mr. L—— received by the same express that brought Olivia's letters, and which he read while we were debating. I beg your grace's pardon if I am too minute in explanation; but I do as I would be done by. The letter was from one of the private secretaries, who is, I understand, a relation and friend of lady Leonora L——. As the original goes this night to lady Olivia, I send your grace a copy. You will give me credit for copying, and at such a time as this! I congratulate your grace, and
I have the honour to be, &c.,

J. B.

LETTER CXIII.

TO MR. L——.

[Private.]

MY DEAR SIR,

London, St. James's-street.

IN the same moment you receive this, your lady, for whom I have the highest regard, will receive from me a valuable present, a packet of lady Olivia ——'s letters to one of her French friends. These letters were lately found in a French frigate, taken by one of our cruisers; and, as *intercepted correspondence* is the order of the day, these, with all the despatches on board, were transmitted to our office to be exa-

mined, in hopes of making reprisals of state secrets. Some letters about the court and emperor of Russia led us to suppose that we should find some political manœuvres, and we examined farther. The examination fortunately fell to my lot, as private secretary. After looking them all over, however, I found that these papers contain only family secrets: I obtained permission to send them to lady Leonora L——, to ensure the triumph of virtue over vice—to put it into her ladyship's power completely to unmask her unworthy rival. These letters will show you by what arts you have been deceived. You will find yourself ridiculed as *a cold awkward Englishman*; one who will *hottentot* again, whatever pains may be taken to civilise him; a man of ice, to be taken as a lover from *pure charity*, or *pure curiosity*, or the *pure besoin d'aimer*. Here are many pure motives, of which you will, my dear sir, take your choice. You will farther observe in one of her letters, that lady Olivia premeditated the design of prevailing with you to carry her to Russia, that she might show her power to *that proudest of earthly prudes*, the duchess of ***, and that she might *gratify her great revenge against lady Leonora L——*.

Sincerely hoping, my dear sir, that these letters may open your eyes, and restore you and my amiable relation to domestic happiness, I make no apology for the liberty I take, and cannot regret the momentary pain I may inflict. You are at liberty to make what use you think proper of this letter.

I have it in command from my lord —— to add, that if your health, or any other circumstances,

should render this embassy to Russia less desirable to you than it appeared some time ago, other arrangements can be made, and another friend of government is ready to supply your place.

I am, my dear sir,
Yours, &c.

To F. L——, Esq, &c.

LETTER CXIV.

FROM LADY LEONORA L—— TO THE DUCHESS
OF ——.

Yarmouth.

Joy, dearest mother! Come and share your daughter's happiness!

Continued by General B——.

* * * * *

Lady Olivia, thus unmasked by her own hand, has fled to the continent, declaring that she will never more return to England. There she is right—England is not a country fit for such women.—But I will never waste another word or thought upon her.

Mr. L—— has given up the Russian embassy, and returns with lady Leonora to L—— Castle to-morrow. He has invited me to accompany them. Lady

Leonora is now the happiest of wives, and your grace the happiest of mothers.

I have the honour and the pleasure to be
Your grace's sincerely attached,
J. B——.

LETTER CXV.

THE DUCHESS OF —— TO LADY LEONORA L——.

MY beloved daughter, pride and delight of your happy mother's heart, I give you joy! Your temper, fortitude, and persevering affection, have now their just reward. Enjoy your happiness, heightened as it must be by the sense of self-approbation, and the sympathy of all who know you. And now let me indulge the vanity of a mother; let me exult in the accomplishment of my prophecies, and let me be listened to with due humility, when I prophesy again. With as much certainty as I foretold what is now present, I foresee, my child, your future destiny, and I predict that you will preserve while you live your husband's fondest affections. Your prudence will prevent you from indulging too far your taste for retirement, or for the exclusive society of your intimate friends. Spend your winters in London: your rank, your fortune, and I may be permitted to add, your character, manners, and abilities, give you the power of drawing round you persons of the best information and of the highest

talents. Your husband will find, in such society, every thing that can attach him to his home ; and in you, his most rational friend and his most charming companion, who will excite him to every generous and noble exertion.

For the good and wise there is in love a power unknown to the ignorant and the vicious, a power of communicating fresh energy to all the faculties of the soul, of exalting them to the highest state of perfection. The friendship which in later life succeeds to such love is perhaps the greatest, and certainly the most permanent blessing of life.

An admirable German writer—you see, my dear, that I have no prejudices against good German writers—an admirable German writer says, that “ Love is like the morning shadows, which diminish as the day advances ; but friendship is like the shadows of the evening, which increase even till the setting of the sun.”

1805.

L E T T E R
FROM
A GENTLEMAN TO HIS FRIEND,
UPON THE
BIRTH OF A DAUGHTER;
WITH THE ANSWER.

LETTER

FROM

A GENTLEMAN TO HIS FRIEND,

&c.

I CONGRATULATE you, my dear sir, upon the birth of your daughter ; and I wish that some of the fairies of ancient times were at hand to endow the damsel with health, 'wealth, wit, and beauty. Wit?—I should make a long pause before I accepted of this gift for a daughter—you would make none.

As I know it to be your opinion that it is in the power of education, more certainly than it was ever believed to be in the power of fairies, to bestow all mental gifts ; and as I have heard you say that education should begin as early as possible ; I am in haste to offer you my sentiments, lest my advice should come too late.

Your general ideas of the habits and virtues essential to the perfection of the female character nearly agree with mine ; but we differ materially as to the cultivation which it is necessary or expedient to bestow upon the understandings of women. You are a champion for the rights of woman, and insist upon the equality of the sexes : but since the days of

chivalry are past, and since modern gallantry permits men to speak, at least to one another, in less sublime language of the fair ; I may confess to you that I see neither from experience nor analogy much reason to believe that, in the human species alone, there are no marks of inferiority in the female:—curious and admirable exceptions there may be, but many such have not fallen within my observation. I cannot say that I have been much enraptured, either on a first view or on a closer inspection, with female prodigies. Prodigies are scarcely less offensive to my taste than monsters: humanity makes us refrain from expressing disgust at the awkward shame of the one, whilst the intemperate vanity of the other justly provokes ridicule and indignation. I have always observed in the understandings of women who have been too much cultivated some disproportion between the different faculties of their minds. One power of the mind undoubtedly may be cultivated at the expense of the rest ; as we see that one muscle or limb may acquire excessive strength, and an unnatural size, at the expense of the health of the whole body: I cannot think this desirable either for the individual or for society.—The unfortunate people in certain mountains of Switzerland are, some of them, proud of the excrescence by which they are deformed. I have seen women vain of exhibiting mental deformities, which to me appeared no less disgusting. In the course of my life it has never been my good fortune to meet with a female whose mind, in strength, just proportion, and activity, I could compare to that of a sensible man.

Allowing, however, that women are equal to our sex in natural abilities; from their situation in society, from their domestic duties, their taste for dissipation, their love of romance, poetry, and all the lighter parts of literature, their time must be so fully occupied, that they could never have leisure for, even supposing that they were capable of, that severe application to which our sex submit.—Between persons of equal genius and equal industry, time becomes the only measure of their acquirements.—Now calculate the time which is wasted by the fair sex, and tell me how much the start of us they ought to have in the beginning of the race, if they are to reach the goal before us?—It is not possible that women should ever be our equals in knowledge, unless you assert that they are far our superiors in natural capacity.—Not only time but opportunity must be wanting to complete female studies:—we mix with the world without restraint, we converse freely with all classes of people, with men of wit, of science, of learning, with the artist, the mechanic, the labourer; every scene of life is open to our view; every assistance that foreign or domestic ingenuity can invent, to encourage literary studies, is ours almost exclusively. From academies, colleges, public libraries, private associations of literary men, women are excluded, if not by law, at least by custom, which cannot easily be conquered.—Whenever women appear, even when we seem to admit them as our equals in understanding, every thing assumes a different form; our politeness, delicacy, habits towards the sex forbid us to argue or to converse with them as we do with one

another:—we see things as they are; but women must always see things through a veil, or cease to be women.—With these insuperable difficulties in their education and in their passage through life, it seems impossible that their minds should ever acquire that vigour and *efficiency*, which accurate knowledge and various experience of life and manners can bestow.

Much attention has lately been paid to the education of the female sex; and you will say that we have been amply repaid for our care,—that ladies have lately exhibited such brilliant proofs of genius as must dazzle and confound their critics. I do not ask for proofs of genius, I ask for solid proofs of utility. In which of the useful arts, in which of the exact sciences, have we been assisted by female sagacity or penetration?—I should be glad to see a list of discoveries, of inventions, of observations, evincing patient research, of truths established upon actual experiment, or deduced by just reasoning from previous principles:—if these, or any of these, can be presented by a female champion for her sex, I shall be the first to clear the way for her to the temple of Fame.

I must not speak of my contemporaries, else candour might oblige me to allow that there are some few instances of great talents applied to useful purposes:—but, except these, what have been the literary productions of women? In poetry, plays, and romances, in the art of imposing upon the understanding by means of the imagination, they have excelled;—but to useful literature they have scarcely turned their thoughts. I have never heard of any

female proficient in science—few have pretended to science till within these few years.

You will tell me, that in the most difficult and most extensive science of politics women have succeeded;—you will cite the names of some illustrious queens. I am inclined to think, with the duke of Burgundy, that “queens who reigned well were governed by men, and kings who reigned ill were governed by women.”

The isolated examples of a few heroines cannot convince me that it is safe or expedient to trust the sex with power:—their power over themselves has regularly been found to diminish in proportion as their power over others has been increased. I should not refer you to the scandalous chronicles of modern times, to volumes of private anecdotes, or to the abominable secret histories of courts, where female influence and female depravity are synonymous terms; but I appeal to the open equitable page of history, to a body of evidence collected from the testimony of ages, for experiments tried upon the grandest scale of which nature admits, registered by various hands, without the possibility of collusion, and without a view to any particular system:—from these you must be convinced that similar consequences have uniformly resulted from the same causes, in nations the most unlike, and at periods the most distant. Trace the history of female nature, from the court of Augustus to the court of Lewis the Fourteenth, and tell me whether you can hesitate to acknowledge that the influence, the liberty, and the *power* of women have been constant concomitants of the moral and political

decline of empires;—I say the concomitants: where events are thus invariably connected, I might be justified in saying that they were *causes*—you would call them *effects*; but we need not dispute about the momentary precedence of evils, which are found to be inseparable companions:—they may be alternately cause and effect,—the reality of the connexion is established; it may be difficult to ascertain precisely its nature.

You will assert that the fatal consequences which have resulted from our trusting the sex with liberty and power have been originally occasioned by the subjection and ignorance in which they had previously been held, and of our subsequent folly and imprudence, in *throwing the reins of dominion into hands unprepared and uneducated to guide them*. I am at a loss to conceive any system of education that can properly prepare women for the exercise of power. Cultivate their understandings, “cleanse the visual orb with euphrasy and rue,” till they can with one comprehensive glance take in “one half at least of round eternity;” still you have no security that their reason will govern their conduct. The moral character seems, even amongst men of superior strength of mind, to have no certain dependence upon the reasoning faculty;—habit, prejudice, taste, example, and the different strength of various passions, form the moral character. We are impelled to action frequently contrary to the belief of our sober reason; and we pursue what we could, in the hour of deliberation, demonstrate to be inconsistent with *that greatest possible share of happiness, which it is*

the object of every rational creature to secure. We frequently “think with one species of enthusiasm, and act with another:” and can we expect from women more consistency of conduct, if they are allowed the same liberty?—No one can feel more strongly than you do the necessity and the value of female integrity; no one can more clearly perceive how much in society depends upon the honour of women; and how much it is the interest of every individual, as well as of every state, to guard their virtue, and to preserve inviolate the purity of their manners. Allow me, then, to warn you of the danger of talking in loud strains to the sex of the noble contempt of prejudice. You would look with horror at one who should go to sap the foundations of the building; beware then how you venture to tear away the ivy which clings to the walls, and braces the loose stones together.

I am by no means disposed to indulge in the fashionable ridicule of prejudice. There is a sentimental, metaphysical argument, which, independently of all others, has lately been used, to prevail upon us to relinquish that superiority which strength of body in savage, and strength of mind in civilized nations, secure to man. We are told, that as women are reasonable creatures, they should be governed only by reason; and that we *disgrace* ourselves, and *enslave* them, when we instil even the most useful truths as prejudices.—Morality should, we are told, be founded upon demonstration, not upon sentiment; and we should not require human beings to submit to any laws or customs, without convincing their under-

standings of the universal utility of these political conventions. When are we to expect this conviction? We cannot expect it from childhood, scarcely from youth; but from the maturity of the understanding we are told that we may expect it with certainty.— And of what use can it then be to us? When the habits are fixed, when the character is decided, when the manners are formed, what can be done by the bare conviction of the understanding? What could we expect from that woman whose moral education was to begin at the moment when she was called upon to *act*; and who, without having imbibed in her early years any of the salutary prejudices of her sex, or without having been educated in the amiable acquiescence to well established maxims of female prudence, should boldly venture to conduct herself by the immediate conviction of her understanding? I care not for the names or titles of my guides; all that I shall inquire is, which is best acquainted with the road. Provided women be conducted quietly to their good, it is scarcely worth their while to dispute about the pompous metaphysical names or precedency of their motives. Why should they deem it disgraceful to be induced to pursue their interest by what some philosophers are pleased to call *weak* motives? Is it not much less disgraceful to be peaceably governed by weak reasons than to be incapable of being restrained by the strongest? The dignity of human nature, and the boasted free-will of rational agents, are high-sounding words, likely to impose upon the vanity of the fair sex, as well as upon the pride of ours; but if we analyse the ideas annexed

to these terms, to what shall we reduce them? Reason in its highest perfection seems just to arrive at the certainty of instinct; and truth, impressed upon the mind in early youth by the united voice of affection and authority, gives all the real advantages of the most investigating spirit of philosophy. If the result of the thought, experience, and sufferings of one race of beings is (when inculcated upon the belief of the next) to be stigmatized as prejudice, there is an end to all the benefits of history and of education. The mutual intercourse of individuals and of nations must be only for the traffic or amusement of the day. Every age must repeat the same experiments; every man and every nation must make the same mistakes, and suffer the same miseries, whilst the civilization and happiness of the world, if not retrograde in their course, must for ever be stationary.

Let us not then despise, or teach the other sex to despise, the traditional maxims of experience, or those early prepossessions, which may be termed prejudices, but which in reality serve as their moral instinct. I can see neither tyranny on our part, nor slavery on theirs, in this system of education. This sentimental or metaphysical appeal to our candour and generosity has then no real force; and every other argument for the *literary* and *philosophical* education of women, and for the extraordinary cultivation of their understandings, I have examined.

You probably imagine that, by the superior ingenuity and care you may bestow on your daughter's education, you shall make her an exception to

general maxims ; you shall give her all the blessings of a literary cultivation, and at the same time preserve her from all the follies, and faults, and evils, which have been found to attend the character of a literary lady.

Systems produce projects ; and as projects in education are of all others the most hazardous, they should not be followed till after the most mature deliberation. Though it may be natural, is it wise for any man to expect extraordinary success, from his efforts or his precautions, beyond what has ever been the share of those who have had motives as strong for care and for exertion, and some of whom were possibly his equals in ability? Is it not incumbent upon you, as a parent and as a philosopher, to calculate accurately what you have to fear, as well as what you have to hope? You can at present, with a sober degree of interest, bear to hear me enumerate the evils, and ridicule the foibles, incident to literary ladies ; but if your daughter were actually in this class, you would not think it friendly if I were to attack them. In this favourable moment, then, I beg you to hear me with temper ; and as I touch upon every danger and every fault, consider cautiously whether you have a certain preventive or a specific remedy in store for each of them.

Women of literature are much more numerous of late than they were a few years ago. They make a class in society, they fill the public eye, and have acquired a degree of consequence and an appropriate character. The esteem of private friends, and the admiration of the public for their talents, are circum-

stances highly flattering to their vanity; and as such I will allow them to be substantial pleasures. I am also ready to acknowledge that a taste for literature adds much to the happiness of life, and that women may enjoy to a certain degree this happiness as well as men. But with literary women this silent happiness seems at best but a subordinate consideration; it is not by the treasures they possess, but by those which they have an opportunity of displaying, that they estimate their wealth. To obtain public applause, they are betrayed too often into a miserable ostentation of their learning. Coxe tells us, that certain Russian ladies split their pearls, in order to make a greater display of finery.

The pleasure of being admired for wit or erudition I cannot exactly measure in a female mind; but state it to be as delightful as you can imagine it to be, there are evils attendant upon it, which, in the estimation of a prudent father, may overbalance the good. The intoxicating effect of wit upon the brain has been well remarked by a poet, who was a friend to the fair sex: and too many ridiculous, and too many disgusting examples confirm the truth of the observation. The deference that is paid to genius sometimes makes the fair sex forget that genius will be respected only when united with discretion. Those who have acquired fame, fancy that they can afford to sacrifice reputation. I will suppose, however, that their heads shall be strong enough to bear inebriating admiration, and that their conduct shall be essentially irreproachable; yet they will show in their manners and conversation that contempt of inferior minds,

and that neglect of common forms and customs, which will provoke the indignation of fools, and which cannot escape the censure of the wise. Even whilst we are secure of their innocence, we dislike that daring spirit in the female sex, which delights to oppose the common opinions of society, and from apparent trifles we draw unfavourable omens, which experience too often confirms. You will ask me why I should suppose that wits are more liable to be spoiled by admiration than beauties, who have usually a larger share of it, and who are not more exempt from vanity? Those who are vain of trifling accomplishments, of rank, of riches, or of beauty, depend upon the world for their immediate gratification. They are sensible of their dependence; they listen with deference to the maxims, and attend with anxiety to the opinions of those, from whom they expect their reward and their daily amusements. In their subjection consists their safety; whilst women, who neither feel dependent for amusement nor for self-approbation upon company and public places, are apt to consider this subjection as humiliating, if not insupportable: perceiving their own superiority, they despise, and even set at defiance, the opinions of their acquaintance of inferior abilities: contempt, where it cannot be openly retorted, produces aversion, not the less to be dreaded because constrained to silence: envy, considered as the involuntary tribute extorted by merit, is flattering to pride: and I know that many women delight to excite envy, even whilst they affect to fear its consequences: but they who imprudently provoke it are little aware of the tor-

ments they prepare for themselves.—“Cover your face well before you disturb the hornet’s nest,” was a maxim of the *experienced* Catherine de Medicis.

Men of literature, if we may trust to the bitter expressions of anguish in their writings, and in their private letters, feel acutely all the stings of envy. Women, who have more susceptibility of temper, and less strength of mind, and who, from the delicate nature of their reputation, are more exposed to attack, are also less able to endure it. Malignant critics, when they cannot attack an author’s peace in his writings, frequently scrutinize his private life; and every personal anecdote is published without regard to truth or propriety. How will the delicacy of the female character endure this treatment? How will her friends bear to see her pursued even in domestic retirement, if she should be wise enough to make that retirement her choice? How will they like to see premature memoirs and spurious collections of familiar letters published by needy booksellers, or designing enemies? Yet to all these things men of letters are subject; and such must literary ladies expect, if they attain to any degree of eminence.—Judging, then, from the experience of our sex, I may pronounce envy to be one of the evils which women of uncommon genius have to dread. “Censure,” says a celebrated writer, “is a tax which every man must pay to the public, who seeks to be eminent.” Women must expect to pay it doubly.

Your daughter, perhaps, shall be above scandal. She shall despise the idle whisper, and the common tattle of her sex; her soul shall be raised above the

ignorant and the frivolous; she shall have a relish for higher conversation, and a taste for higher society; but where is she to find, or how is she to obtain this society? You make her incapable of friendship with her own sex. Where is she to look for friends, for companions, for equals? Amongst men? Amongst what class of men? Not amongst men of business, or men of gallantry, but amongst men of literature.

Learned men have usually chosen for their wives, or for their companions, women who were rather below than above the standard of mediocrity: this seems to me natural and reasonable. Such men, probably, feel their own incapacity for the daily business of life, their ignorance of the world, their slovenly habits, and neglect of domestic affairs. They do not want wives who have precisely their own defects; they rather desire to find such as shall, by the opposite habits and virtues, supply their deficiencies. I do not see why two books should marry, any more than two estates. Some few exceptions might be quoted against Stewart's observations. I have just seen, under the article "A Literary Wife," in D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature*, an account of Francis Phidelpus, a great scholar in the fifteenth century, who was so desirous of acquiring the Greek language in perfection, that he travelled to Constantinople in search of a *Grecian wife*: the lady proved a scold. "But to do justice to the name of Theodora," as this author adds, "she has been honourably mentioned in the French Academy of Sciences." I hope this proved an adequate compensation to her husband for his domestic broils.

Happy Mad. Dacier! you found a husband suited to your taste! You and Mons. Dacier, if D'Alembert tells the story rightly, once cooked a dish in concert, by a receipt which you found in Apicius, and you both sat down and ate of your learned ragout till you were both like to die.

Were I sure, my dear friend, that every literary lady would be equally fortunate in finding in a husband a man who would sympathize in her tastes, I should diminish my formidable catalogue of evils. But, alas! M. Dacier is no more; "and we shall never live to see his fellow." Literary ladies will, I am afraid, be losers in love as well as in friendship, by the superiority.—Cupid is a timid, playful child, and is frightened at the helmet of Minerva. It has been observed, that gentlemen are not apt to admire a prodigious quantity of learning and masculine acquirements in the fair sex;—we usually consider a certain degree of weakness, both of mind and body, as friendly to female grace. I am not absolutely of this opinion; yet I do not see the advantage of supernatural force, either of body or mind, to female excellence. Hercules-Spinster found his strength rather an incumbrance than an advantage.

Superiority of mind must be united with great temper and generosity, to be tolerated by those who are forced to submit to its influence. I have seen witty and learned ladies, who did not seem to think it at all incumbent upon them to sacrifice any thing to the sense of propriety. On the contrary, they seemed to take both pride and pleasure in showing

the utmost stretch of their strength, regardless of the consequences, panting only for victory. Upon such occasions, when the adversary has been a husband or a father, I must acknowledge that I have felt sensations which few ladies can easily believe they excite. Airs and graces I can bear as well as another; but airs without graces no man thinks himself bound to bear, and learned airs least of all. Ladies of high rank in the court of Parnassus are apt, sometimes, to claim precedency out of their own dominions, which creates much confusion, and generally ends in their being affronted. That knowledge of the world which keeps people in their proper places they will never learn from the Muses.

Moliere has pointed out, with all the force of comic ridicule, in the *Femmes Savantes*, that a lady who aspires to the sublime delights of philosophy and poetry must forego the simple pleasures, and will despise the duties of domestic life. I should not expect that my house affairs would be with haste despatched by a Desdemona, weeping over some unvarnished tale, or petrified with some history of horrors, at the very time when she should be ordering dinner or paying the butcher's bill.—I should have the less hope of rousing her attention to my culinary concerns and domestic grievances, because I should probably incur her contempt for hinting at these sublunary matters, and her indignation for supposing that she ought to be employed in such degrading occupations. I have heard, that if these sublime geniuses are awakened from their reveries

by the *appulse* of external circumstances, they start, and exhibit all the perturbation and amazement of *cataleptic* patients.

Sir Charles Harrington, in the days of queen Elizabeth, addressed a copy of verses to his wife, "on Women's Vertues:"—these he divides into "the private, *civill*, and heroyke; the private belong to the country housewife, whom it concerneth chiefly—

"The fruit, malt, hops, to tend, to dry, to utter,
 To beat, strip, spin the wool, the hemp, the flax,
 Breed poultry, gather honey, try the wax,
 And more than all, to have good cheese and butter.
 Then next a step, but yet a large step higher,
 Came *civill* vertue fitter for the city,
 With modest looks, good cloths, and answers witty.
 These baser things not done, but guided by her."

As for heroyke vertue, and heroyke dames, honest sir Charles would have nothing to do with them.

Allowing, however, that you could combine all these virtues—that you could form a perfect whole, a female wonder from every creature's best—dangers still threaten you. How will you preserve your daughter from that desire of universal admiration, which will ruin all your work? How will you, along with all the pride of knowledge, give her that "retiring modesty," which is supposed to have more charms for our sex than the fullest display of wit and beauty?

The *fair Pauca of Thoulouse* was so called, because she was so fair that no one could live either

with or without beholding her :—whenever she came forth from her own mansion, which, history observes, she did very seldom, such impetuous crowds rushed to obtain a sight of her, that limbs were broken and lives were lost wherever she appeared. She ventured abroad less frequently—the evil increased—till at length the magistrates of the city issued an edict commanding the fair Pauca, under the pain of perpetual imprisonment, to appear in broad daylight for one hour, every week, in the public market-place.

Modern ladies, by frequenting public places so regularly, declare their approbation of the wholesome regulations of these prudent magistrates. Very different was the crafty policy of the prophet Mahomet, who forbid his worshippers even to paint his picture. The Turks have pictures of the hand, the foot, the features of Mahomet, but no representation of the whole face or person is allowed. The portraits of our beauties, in our exhibition-room, show a proper contempt of this insidious policy ; and those learned and ingenious ladies who publish their private letters, select maxims, secret anecdotes, and family memoirs, are entitled to our thanks, for thus presenting us with full-lengths of their minds.

Can you expect, my dear sir, that your daughter, with all the genius and learning which you intend to give her, should refrain from these imprudent exhibitions? Will she “yield her charms of mind with sweet delay?” Will she, in every moment of her life, recollect that the fatal desire for universal applause always defeats its own purpose, especially

if the purpose be to win our love as well as our admiration? It is in vain to tell me, that more enlarged ideas in our sex would alter our tastes, and alter even the associations which now influence our passions. The captive who has numbered the links of his chains, and who has even discovered how those chains are constructed, is not therefore nearer to the recovery of his liberty.

Besides, it must take a length of time to alter associations and opinions, which, if not *just*, are at least *common* in our sex. You cannot expect even that conviction should operate immediately upon the public taste. You will, in a few years, have educated your daughter; and if the world be not educated exactly at the right time to judge of her perfections, to admire and love them, you will have wasted your labour, and you will have sacrificed your daughter's happiness: that happiness, analyse it as a man of the world or as a philosopher, must depend on friendship, love, the exercise of her virtues, the just performance of all the duties of life, and the self-approbation arising from the consciousness of good conduct.

I am, my dear friend,
Yours sincerely.

ANSWER

TO

THE PRECEDING LETTER.

I HAVE as little taste for Mad. Dacier's learned ragout as you can have, my dear sir ; and I pity the great scholar, who travelled to Constantinople for the termagant Theodora, believing, as you do, that the honourable mention made of her by the French Academy of Sciences could be no adequate compensation to her husband for domestic disquiet: but the lady's learning was not essential to his misfortune ; he might have met with a scolding dame, though he had not married a Grecian. A profusion of vulgar aphorisms in the dialects of all the counties in England, proverbs in Welsh, Scottish, French, Spanish, Italian, and Hebrew, might be adduced to prove that scolds are to be found amongst all classes of women. I am, however, willing to allow, that the more learning, and wit, and eloquence a lady possesses, the more troublesome and the more dangerous she may become as a wife or daughter, unless she is also possessed of good sense and good temper. Of your honest sir Charles Harrington's two pattern wives, I think I should prefer the country housewife, with whom I could be sure of having good cheese and butter, to the *citty dame* with her good clothes and answers witty.—I should be afraid that these answers witty

might be turned against me, and might prove the torment of my life.—You, who have attended to female disputants, must have remarked, that, learned or unlearned, they seldom know how to reason ; they assert and declaim, employ wit, and eloquence, and sophistry, to confute, persuade, or abash their adversaries ; but distinct reasoning they neither use nor comprehend.—Till women learn to reason, it is in vain that they acquire learning.

You are satisfied, I am sure, with this acknowledgment.—I will go farther, and at once give up to you all the learned ladies that exist, or that ever have existed : but when I use the term literary ladies, I mean women who have cultivated their understandings not for the purposes of parade, but with the desire to make themselves useful and agreeable. I estimate the value of a woman's abilities and acquirements by the degree in which they contribute to her happiness.

You think yourself happy because you are wise, said a philosopher to a pedant.—I think myself wise because I am happy.

You tell me, that even supposing I could educate my daughter so as to raise her above the common faults and follies of her sex ; even supposing I could give her an enlarged understanding, and literature free from pedantry, she would be in danger of becoming unhappy, because she would not, amongst her own sex, find friends suited to her taste, nor amongst ours admirers adequate to her expectations : you represent her as in the situation of the poor flying-fish, exposed to dangerous enemies in her own

element, yet certain, if she tries to soar above them, of being pounced upon by the hawk-eyed critics of the higher regions.

You allow, however, that women of literature are much more numerous of late than they were a few years ago ; that they make a class in society, and have acquired a considerable degree of consequence, and an appropriate character ; how can you then fear that a woman of cultivated understanding should be driven from the society of her own sex in search of dangerous companions amongst ours? In the female world she will be neither without an equal nor without a judge ; she will not have much to fear from envy, because its malignant eye will not fix upon one object exclusively, when there are numbers to distract its attention, and share the stroke. The fragile nature of female friendships, the petty jealousies which break out at the ball or in the drawing room, have been from time immemorial the jest of mankind. Trifles light as air will necessarily excite not only the jealousy but the envy of those who think only of trifles. Give them more employment for their thoughts, give them a nobler spirit of emulation, and we shall hear no more of these paltry feuds ; give them more useful and more interesting subjects of conversation, and they become not only more agreeable, but safer companions for each other.

Unmarried women, who have stored their minds with knowledge, who have various tastes and literary occupations, who can amuse and be amused in the conversation of well-informed people, are in no danger of becoming burthensome to their friends or to

society: though they may not be seen haunting every place of amusement or of public resort, they are not isolated or forlorn; by a variety of associations they are connected with the world, and their sympathy is expanded and supported by the cultivation of their understandings; nor can it sink, settle, and concentrate upon cats, parrots, and monkeys. How far the human heart may be contracted by ignorance it is difficult to determine; but I am little inclined to envy the *simple* pleasures of those whose understandings are totally uncultivated.—Sir William Hamilton, in his account of the last eruption of Mount Vesuvius, gives us a curious picture of the excessive ignorance and stupidity of some nuns in a convent at Torre del Greco:—one of these nuns was found warming herself at the red-hot lava, which had rolled up to the window of her cell. It was with the greatest difficulty that these scarcely rational beings could be made to comprehend the nature of their danger; and when at last they were prevailed upon to quit the convent, and were advised to carry with them whatever they thought most valuable, they loaded themselves with sweetmeats.—Those who wish for ignorant wives may find them in other parts of the world as well as in Italy.

I do not pretend, that even by cultivating my daughter's understanding I can secure for her a husband suited to her taste; it will therefore be prudent to make her felicity in some degree independent of matrimony. Many parents have sufficient kindness and foresight to provide, in point of fortune, for their daughters; but few consider that if a single life

should be their choice or their doom, something more is necessary to secure respect and happiness for them in the decline of life. The silent *unreproved* pleasures of literature are the sure resource of those who have cultivated minds ; those who have not must wear out their disconsolate unoccupied old age as chance directs.

When you say that men of superior understanding dislike the appearance of extraordinary strength of mind in the fair sex, you probably mean that the display of that strength is disgusting, and you associate with the idea of strength of mind, masculine, arrogant, or pedantic manners : but there is no necessary connexion between these things ; and it seems probable that the faults usually ascribed to learned ladies, like those peculiar to learned men, may have arisen in a great measure from circumstances which the progress of civilization in society has much altered.

In the times of ignorance, men of deep science were considered by the vulgar as a class of necromancers, and they were looked upon alternately with terror and admiration ; and learned men imposed upon the vulgar by assuming strange airs of mystery and self-importance, wore long beards and solemn looks ; they spoke and wrote in a phraseology peculiar to themselves, and affected to consider the rest of mankind as beneath their notice : but since knowledge has been generally diffused, all this affectation has been laid aside ; and though we now and then hear of men of genius who indulge themselves in peculiarities, yet upon the whole the manners of

literary men are not strikingly nor wilfully different from those of the rest of the world. The peculiarities of literary women will also disappear as their numbers increase. You are disgusted by their ostentation of learning. Have patience with them, my dear sir; their taste will become more simple when they have been taught by experience that this parade is offensive: even the bitter expression of your disgust may be advantageous to those whose manners are yet to be formed; they will at least learn from it what to avoid; and your letter may perhaps hereafter be of service in my daughter's education.—It is scarcely to be supposed that a girl of good understanding would deliberately imitate the faults and follies which she hears ridiculed during her childhood by those whom she esteems.

As to your dread of prodigies, that will subside:—prodigies are heard of most frequently during the ages of ignorance. A woman may now possess a considerable stock of information without being gazed upon as a miracle of learning; and there is not much danger of her being vain of accomplishments which cease to be astonishing. Nor will her peace be disturbed by the idle remarks of the ignorant vulgar.—A literary lady is no longer a sight; the spectacle is now too common to attract curiosity; the species of animal is too well known even to admit of much exaggeration in the description of its appearance. A lady riding on horseback upon a side-saddle is not thought a wonderful thing by the common people in England; but when an English lady rode upon a side-saddle in an Italian city, where the sight was

unusual, she was universally gazed at by the populace; to some she appeared an object of astonishment, to others of compassion:—"Ah! poverina," they exclaimed, "n'ha che una gamba!"

The same objects excite different emotions in different situations; and to judge what will astonish or delight any given set of people some years hence, we must consider not merely what is the fashion of to-day, but whither the current of opinion runs, and what is likely to be the fashion of hereafter.—You must have observed that the public opinion is at present more favourable to the cultivation of the understanding of the female sex than it was some years ago; more attention is paid to the education of women, more knowledge and literature are expected from them in society. From the literary lady of the present day something more is expected than that she should know how to spell and to write better than Swift's celebrated Stella, whom he reproves for writing *villian* and *daenger*:—perhaps this very Stella was an object of envy in her own day to those who were her inferiors in literature. No man wishes his wife to be obviously less cultivated than those of her own rank; and something more is now required, even from ordinary talents, than what distinguished the accomplished lady of the seventeenth century. What the standard of excellence may be in the next age we cannot ascertain, but we may guess that the taste for literature will continue to be progressive; therefore, even if you assume that the education of the female sex should be guided by the taste and reigning opinions of ours, and that it should be the

object of their lives to win and keep our hearts, you must admit the expediency of attending to that fashionable demand for literature and the fine arts, which has arisen in society.

No woman can foresee what may be the taste of the man with whom she may be united ; much of her happiness, however, will depend upon her being able to conform her taste to his: for this reason I should therefore, in female education, cultivate the general powers of the mind, rather than any particular faculty. I do not desire to make my daughter merely a musician, a painter, or a poet ; I do not desire to make her merely a botanist, a mathematician, or a chemist ; but I wish to give her early the habit of industry and attention, the love of knowledge, and the power of reasoning: these will enable her to attend to excellence in any pursuit to which she may direct her talents. You will observe, that many things which formerly were thought above the comprehension of women, or unfit for their sex, are now acknowledged to be perfectly within the compass of their abilities, and suited to their situation. —Formerly the fair sex was kept in Turkish ignorance ; every means of acquiring knowledge was discountenanced by fashion, and impracticable even to those who despised fashion ;—our books of science were full of unintelligible jargon, and mystery veiled pompous ignorance from public contempt : but now writers must offer their discoveries to the public in distinct terms, which every body may understand ; technical language no longer supplies the place of knowledge, and the art of teaching has been carried



to such perfection, that a degree of knowledge may now with ease be acquired in the course of a few years, which formerly it was the business of a life to attain. All this is much in favour of female literature. Ladies have become ambitious to superintend the education of their children, and hence they have been induced to instruct themselves, that they may be able to direct and inform their pupils. The mother, who now aspires to be the esteemed and beloved instructress of her children, must have a considerable portion of knowledge. Science has of late "*been enlisted under the banners of imagination,*" by the irresistible charms of genius; by the same power her votaries will be led "*from the looser analogies which dress out the imagery of poetry to the stricter ones which form the ratiocination of philosophy.*"*— Botany has become fashionable; in time it may become useful, if it be not so already. Chemistry will follow botany. Chemistry is a science well suited to the talents and situation of women; it is not a science of parade; it affords occupation and infinite variety; it demands no bodily strength; it can be pursued in retirement; it applies immediately to useful and domestic purposes: and whilst the ingenuity of the most inventive mind may in this science be exercised, there is no danger of inflaming the imagination, because the mind is intent upon realities, the knowledge that is acquired is exact, and the pleasure of the pursuit is a sufficient reward for the labour.

A clear and ready knowledge of arithmetic is surely no useless acquirement for those who are to

* Vide preface to Darwin's Botanic Garden.

regulate the expences of a family. Economy is not the mean "penny wise and pound foolish" policy which some suppose it to be; it is the art of calculation joined to the habit of order, and the power of proportioning our wishes to the means of gratifying them. The little pilfering temper of a wife is despicable and odious to every man of sense; but there is a judicious, graceful species of economy, which has no connexion with an avaricious temper, and which, as it depends upon the understanding, can be expected only from cultivated minds. Women who have been well educated, far from despising domestic duties, will hold them in high respect; because they will see that the whole happiness of life is made up of the happiness of each particular day and hour, and that much of the enjoyment of these must depend upon the punctual practice of those virtues which are more valuable than splendid.

It is not, I hope, your opinion, that ignorance is the best security for female virtue. If this connexion between virtue and ignorance could once be clearly proved, we ought to drown our books deeper than ever plummet sounded:—I say *we*—for the danger extends equally to both sexes, unless you assert that the duties of men rest upon a more certain foundation than the duties of the other sex: if our virtues can be demonstrated to be advantageous, why should theirs suffer for being exposed to the light of reason?—All social virtue conduces to our own happiness or that of our fellow-creatures; can it weaken the sense of duty to illustrate this truth?—Having once pointed out to the understanding of a sensible woman

the necessary connexion between her virtues and her happiness, must not those virtues, and the means of preserving them, become in her eyes objects of the most interesting importance? But you fear, that even if their conduct continued to be irreproachable, the manners of women might be rendered less delicate by the increase of their knowledge; you dislike in the female sex that daring spirit which despises the common forms of society, and which breaks through the reserve and delicacy of female manners:—so do I:—and the best method to make my pupil respect these things is to show her how they are indispensably connected with the largest interests of society: surely this perception of the utility of forms apparently trifling must be a strong security to the prudential reserve of the sex, and far superior to the automatic habits of those who submit to the conventions of the world without consideration or conviction. Habit, confirmed by reason, assumes the rank of virtue. The motives that restrain from vice must be increased by the clear conviction that vice and wretchedness are inseparably united.

Do not, however, imagine, my dear sir, that I shall attempt to lay moral demonstration before a *child*, who could not possibly comprehend my meaning; do not imagine, that because I intend to cultivate my daughter's understanding, I shall neglect to give her those early habits of reserve and modesty which constitute the female character.—Believing, as I do, that woman, as well as man, may be called a bundle of habits, I shall be peculiarly careful, during my child's early education, to give her as many good habits as

possible; by degrees as her understanding, that is to say, as her knowledge and power of reasoning shall increase, I can explain the advantages of these habits, and confirm their power by the voice of reason. I lose no time, I expose myself to no danger, by this system. On the contrary, those who depend entirely upon the force of custom and prejudice expose themselves to infinite danger. If once their pupils begin to reflect upon their own hood-winked education, they will probably suspect that they have been deceived in all that they have been taught, and they will burst their bonds with indignation.—Credulity is always rash in the moment she detects the impositions that have been practised upon her easy temper. In this inquiring age, few have any chance of passing through life without being excited to examine the motives and principles from which they act: is it not, therefore, prudent to cultivate the reasoning faculty, by which alone this examination can be made with safety? A false argument, a repartee, the charms of wit or eloquence, the voice of fashion, of folly, of numbers, might, if she had no substantial reasons to support her cause, put virtue not only out of countenance, but out of humour.

You speak of moral instinct. As far as I understand the term, it implies certain habits early acquired from education; to these I would add the power of reasoning, and then, and not till then, I should think myself safe:—for I have observed that the pupils of habit are utterly confounded when they are placed in circumstances different from those to which they have been accustomed.—It has been

remarked by travellers and naturalists, that animals, notwithstanding their boasted instinctive knowledge, sometimes make strange and fatal mistakes in their conduct, when they are placed in new situations:—destitute of the reasoning faculty, and deceived by resemblances, they mistake poison for food. Thus the bull-frog will swallow burning charcoal, mistaking it for fire-flies; and the European hogs and poultry which travelled to Surinam poisoned themselves by eating plants that were unknown to them.*

You seem, my dear sir, to be afraid that truth should not keep so firm a hold upon the mind as prejudice; and you produce an allusion to justify your fears. You tell us that civil society is like a building, and you warn me not to tear down the ivy which clings to the walls, and braces the loose stones together.—I believe that ivy, in some situations, tends to pull down the walls to which it clings.—You think it is not worth while to cultivate the understandings of women, because you say that you have no security that the conviction of their reason will have any permanent good effect upon their conduct; and to persuade me of this, you bid me observe, that men, who are superior to women in strength of mind and judgment, are frequently misled by their passions.—By this mode of argument, you may conclude that reason is totally useless to the whole human race; but you cannot, with any show of justice, infer that it ought to be monopolized by one-half of mankind. But why should you quarrel with reason because passion sometimes conquers her?

* Vide Stedman's Voyage to Surinam, vol. ii. p. 47.

—You should endeavour to strengthen the connexion between theory and practice, if it be not sufficiently strong already; but you can gain nothing by destroying theory.—Happiness is your aim; but your unpractised or unsteady hand does not obey your will: you do not at the first trial hit the mark precisely.—Would you, because you are awkward, insist upon being blind?

The strength of mind which enables people to govern themselves by their reason is not always connected with abilities even in their most cultivated state: I deplore the instances which I have seen of this truth, but I do not despair; on the contrary, I am excited to inquire into the causes of this phenomenon; nor, because I see some evil, would I sacrifice the good upon a bare motive of suspicion. It is a contradiction to say, that giving the power to discern what is good is giving a disposition to prefer what is bad. I acknowledge with regret, that women who have been but half instructed, who have seen only superficially the relations of moral and political ideas, and who have obtained but an imperfect knowledge of the human heart, have conducted themselves so as to disgrace their talents and their sex; these are conspicuous and melancholy examples, which are cited oftener with malice than with pity. But I appeal to examples amongst our contemporaries, to which every man of literature will immediately advert, to prove, that where the female understanding has been properly cultivated, women have not only obtained admiration by their useful abilities, but respect by their exemplary conduct.

I apprehend that many of the errors into which women of literature have fallen may have arisen from an improper choice of books. Those who read chiefly works of imagination receive from them false ideas of life and of the human heart. Many of these productions I should keep as I would deadly poison from my child; I should rather endeavour to turn her attention to science than to romance, and to give her early that taste for truth and utility, which, when once implanted, can scarcely be eradicated. There is a wide difference between innocence and ignorance: ignorant women may have minds the most debased and perverted, whilst the most cultivated understanding may be united with the most perfect innocence and simplicity.

Even if literature were of no other use to the fair sex than to supply them with employment, I should think the time dedicated to the cultivation of their minds well bestowed: they are surely better occupied when they are reading or writing than when coquetting or gaming, losing their fortunes or their characters. You despise the writings of women:—you think that they might have made a better use of the pen, than to write plays, and poetry, and romances. Considering that the pen was to women a new instrument, I think they have made at least as good a use of it as learned men did of the needle some centuries ago, when they set themselves to determine how many spirits could stand upon its point, and were ready to tear one another to pieces in the discussion of this sublime question. Let the sexes mutually forgive each other their follies; or, what is much better, let

them combine their talents for their general advantage.—You say, that the experiments we have made do not encourage us to proceed—that the increased care and pains which have been of late years bestowed upon female education have produced no adequate returns ; but you in the same breath allow that amongst your contemporaries, whom you prudently forbear to mention, there are some instances of great talents applied to useful purposes. Did you expect that the fruits of good cultivation should appear before the seed was sown? You triumphantly enumerate the disadvantages to which women, from the laws and customs of society, are liable:—they cannot converse freely with men of wit, science, and learning, nor even with the artist, or artificers; they are excluded from academies, public libraries, &c. Even our politeness prevents us, you say, from ever speaking plain truth and sense to the fair sex:—every assistance that foreign or domestic ingenuity can invent to encourage literary studies is, as you boast, almost exclusively ours: and after pointing out all these causes for the inferiority of women in knowledge, you ask for a list of the inventions and discoveries of those who, by your own statement of the question, have not been allowed opportunities for observation. With the insulting injustice of an Egyptian task-master, you demand the work, and deny the necessary materials.

I admit, that with respect to the opportunities of acquiring knowledge, institutions and manners are, as you have stated, much in favour of our sex ; but your argument concerning *time* appears to me to be

unfounded.—Women who do not love dissipation must have more time for the cultivation of their understandings than men can have, if you compute the whole of life :—whilst the knowledge of the learned languages continues to form an indispensable part of a gentleman's education, many years of childhood and youth must be devoted to their attainment.—During these studies, the general cultivation of the understanding is in some degree retarded. All the intellectual powers are cramped, except the memory, which is sufficiently exercised, but which is overloaded with words, and with words that are not always understood.—The genius of living and of dead languages differs so much, that the pains which are taken to write elegant Latin frequently spoil the English style.—Girls usually write much better than boys ; they think and express their thoughts clearly at an age when young men can scarcely write an easy letter upon any common occasion. Women do not read the good authors of antiquity as school-books, but they can have excellent translations of most of them when they are capable of tasting the beauties of composition.—I know that it is supposed we cannot judge of the classics by translations, and I am sensible that much of the merit of the originals may be lost ; but I think the difference in pleasure is more than overbalanced to women by the *time* that is saved, and by the labour and misapplication of abilities which are spared. If they do not acquire a classical taste, neither do they imbibe classic prejudices ; nor are they early disgusted with literature by pedagogues, lexicons, grammars, and all the melancholy

apparatus of learning.—Women begin to taste the pleasures of reading, and the best authors in the English language are their amusement, just at the age when young men, disgusted by their studies, begin to be ashamed of alluding to literature amongst their companions. Travelling, lounging, field sports, gaming, and what is called pleasure in various shapes, usually fill the interval between quitting the university and settling for life.—When this period is past, business, the necessity of pursuing a profession, the ambition to shine in parliament, or to rise in public life, occupy a large portion of their lives.—In many professions the understanding is but partially cultivated ; and general literature must be neglected by those who are occupied in earning bread or amassing riches for their family:—men of genius are often heard to complain, that in the pursuit of a profession they are obliged to contract their inquiries and concentrate their powers ; statesmen lament that they must often pursue the *expedient* even when they discern that it is not *the right* ; and men of letters, who earn their bread by their writings, inveigh bitterly against the tyranny of booksellers, who degrade them to the state of “ literary artisans.”——“ Literary artisans” is the comprehensive term under which a celebrated philosopher* classes all those who cultivate only particular talents or powers of the mind, and who suffer their other faculties to lose all strength and vigour for want of exercise. The other sex have

* Professor Dugald Stewart.—History of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

no such constraint upon their understandings; neither the necessity of earning their bread, nor the ambition to shine in public affairs, hurry or prejudice their minds: in domestic life they have leisure to be wise.

Far from being ashamed that so little has been done by female abilities in science and useful literature, I am surprised that so much has been effected. On natural history, on criticism, on moral philosophy, on education, they have written with elegance, eloquence, precision, and ingenuity. Your complaint that women do not turn their attention to useful literature is surely ill-timed. If they merely increased the number of books in circulation, you might declaim against them with success; but when they add to the general fund of useful and entertaining knowledge, you cannot with any show of justice prohibit their labours: there can be no danger that the market should ever be overstocked with produce of intrinsic worth.

The despotic monarchs of Spain forbid the exploring of any new gold or silver mines without the express permission of government, and they have ordered several rich ones to be shut up as not equal to the cost of working. There is some *appearance* of reason for this exertion of power: it may prevent the world from being encumbered by nominal wealth.—But the Dutch merchants, who burn whole cargoes of spice lest they should lower the price of the commodity in which they deal, show a mean spirit of monopoly which can plead no plausible excuse.—I

hope you feel nothing like a disposition to Spanish despotism or Dutch jealousy, when you would exclude female talents from the literary market.

You observe, that since censure is a tax which every man must pay who aspires to eminence, women must expect to pay it doubly. Why the tax should not be equally assessed, I am at a loss to conjecture: but in fact it does not fall very heavy upon those who have any portion of philosophy: they may, with *the poet of reason*, exclaim—

“ Though doubly tax'd, how little have I lost ! ”

Your dread of the envy attendant upon literary excellence might with equal justice be extended to every species of merit, and might be urged against all that is good in art or nature.—Scandal is said to attack always the fairest characters, as the birds always peck most at the ripest fruit ; but would you for this reason have no fruit ripen, or no characters aspire to excellence ?

But if it be your opinion that women are naturally inferior to us in capacity, why do you feel so much apprehension of their becoming eminent, or of their obtaining power, in consequence of the cultivation of their understandings ?—These expressions of scorn and jealousy neutralize each other. If your contempt were unmixed and genuine, it would be cool and tranquil, inclining rather to pity than to anger.

You say that in all animals the female is the inferior ; and you have never seen any reason to believe that the human species affords an exception to this

observation.—Superiority amongst brutes depends upon force; superiority amongst the human species depends upon reason: that men are naturally stronger than women is evident; but strength of mind has no necessary connexion with strength of body; and intellectual ability has ever conquered mere physical force, from the times of Ajax and Ulysses to the present day. In civilized nations, that species of superiority which belongs to force is much reduced in value amongst the higher classes of society.—The baron who struck his sword into an oak, and defied any one to pull out the weapon, would not in these days fill the hearts of his antagonists with terror; nor would the twisting of a horse-shoe be deemed a feat worthy to decide a nation in their choice of a king.—The days of chivalry are no more: the knight no longer sallies forth in ponderous armour, mounted upon “a steed as invulnerable as himself.”—The damsel no longer depends upon the prowess of his mighty arm to maintain the glory of her charms, or the purity of her fame; grim barons, and castles guarded by monsters and all-devouring dragons, are no more; and from being the champions and masters of the fair sex, we are now become their friends and companions. We have not surely been losers by this change; the fading glories of romance have vanished, but the real permanent pleasures of domestic life remain in their stead; and what the fair have lost of adulation they have gained in friendship.

Do not, my dear sir, call me a champion for the

• Condorcet.—History of the Progress of the Human Mind.

rights of woman ; I am too much their friend to be their partisan, and I am more anxious for their happiness than intent upon a metaphysical discussion of their rights: their happiness is so nearly connected with ours, that it seems to me absurd to manage any argument so as to set the two sexes at variance by vain contention for superiority. It ought not to be our object to make an invidious division of privileges, or an ostentatious declaration of rights, but to determine what is most for our general advantage.

You fear that the minds of women should be enlarged and cultivated, lest their power in society and their liberty should consequently increase. Observe that the word *liberty*, applied to the female sex, conveys alarming ideas to our minds, because we do not stay to define the term ; we have a confused notion that it implies want of reserve, want of delicacy ; boldness of manners, or of conduct ; in short, liberty to do wrong.—Surely this is a species of liberty which knowledge can never make desirable. Those who understand the real interests of society, who clearly see the connexion between virtue and happiness, must know that *the liberty to do wrong* is synonymous with *the liberty to make themselves miserable*. This is a privilege of which none would choose to avail themselves. When reason defines the term, there is no danger of its being misunderstood ; but imagination and false associations often make this word liberty, in its perverted sense, sound delightful to those who have been kept in ignorance and slavery. Girls who have been disciplined under the strict high hand of authority, are apt to fancy that to escape

from habitual restraint, to exercise their own will, no matter how, is to be free and to be happy.—Hence innumerable errors in their conduct; hence their mistaken notions of liberty, and that inordinate ambition to acquire power, which ignorant, ill-educated women show in every petty struggle, where they are permitted to act in private life. You believe this temper to be inherent in the sex; and a man who has just published a book upon the Spanish bull-fights declares his belief that the passion for bull-fighting is innate in the breast of every Spaniard.—Do not, my friend, assign two causes for an effect where one is obviously adequate. The disposition to love command need not be attributed to any innate cause in the minds of females, whilst it may be fairly ascribed to their erroneous education.

I shall early cultivate my daughter's judgment, to prevent her from being wilful or positive; I shall leave her to choose for herself in all those trifles upon which the happiness of childhood depends; and I shall gradually teach her to reflect upon the consequences of her actions, to compare and judge of her feelings, and to compute the morn and evening to her day.—I shall thus, I hope, induce her to reason upon all subjects, even upon matters of taste, where many women think it sufficient to say I admire; or, I detest:—Oh charming! or, Oh horrible!—People who have reasons for their preferences and aversions are never so provokingly zealous in the support of their own tastes as those usually are who have no arguments to convince themselves or others that they are in the right.

But you are apprehensive that the desire to govern, which women show in domestic life, should obtain a larger field to display itself in public affairs.—It seems to me impossible that they can ever acquire the species of direct power which you dread: their influence must be private; it is therefore of the utmost consequence that it should be judicious.—It was not Themistocles, but his wife and child, who governed the Athenians; it was therefore of some consequence that the boy who governed the mother, who governed her husband, should not be a spoiled child; and consequently that the mother who educated this child should be a reasonable woman. Thus are human affairs chained together; and female influence is a necessary and important link, which you cannot break without destroying the whole.

If it be your object, my dear sir, to monopolize power for our sex, you cannot possibly secure it better from the wishes of the other than by enlightening their minds and enlarging their views: they will then be convinced, not by the voice of the moralist, who puts us to sleep whilst he persuades us of the vanity of all sublunary enjoyments, but by their own awakened observation: they will be convinced that power is generally an evil to its possessor; that to those who really wish for the good of their fellow-creatures, it is at best but a painful trust.—The mad philosopher in *Rasselas*, who imagined that he regulated the weather and distributed the seasons, could never enjoy a moment's repose, lest he should not make "to the different nations of the earth an impartial dividend of rain and sunshine."—Those who

are intrusted with the government of nations must, if they have an acute sense of justice, experience something like the anxiety felt by this unfortunate monarch of the clouds.

Lord Kenyon has lately decided that a woman may be *an overseer of a parish*; but you are not, I suppose, apprehensive that many ladies of cultivated understanding should become ambitious of this honour.—One step farther in reasoning, and a woman would desire as little to be a queen or an empress as to be the overseer of a parish.—You may perhaps reply, that men, even those of the greatest understanding, have been ambitious, and fond even to excess of power. That ambition is the glorious fault of heroes, I allow; but heroes are not always men of the most enlarged understandings—they are possessed by the spirit of military adventure—an infectious spirit, which men catch from one another in the course of their education:—to this contagion the fair sex are not exposed.

At all events, if you suppose that women are likely to acquire influence in the state, it is prudent to enlighten their understandings, that they may not make an absurd or pernicious use of their power. You appeal to history, to prove that great calamities have ensued whenever the female sex has obtained power; yet you acknowledge that we cannot with certainty determine whether these evils have been the effects of our trusting them with liberty, or of our neglecting previously to instruct them in the use of it:—upon the decision of this question rests your whole argument. In a most awful tone of declamation, you bid

me follow the history of female nature, from the court of Augustus to that of Lewis the XIVth, and tell you whether I can hesitate to acknowledge, that the liberty and influence of women have always been the greatest during the decline of empires.—But you have not proved to me that women had more knowledge, that they were better educated, at the court of Augustus, or during the reign of Lewis XIVth, than at any other place, or during any other period of the world ; therefore your argument gains nothing by the admission of your assertions ; and unless I could trace the history of female education, it is vain for me to follow what you call the history of female nature.

It is, however, remarkable, that the means by which the sex have hitherto obtained that species of power which they have abused, have arisen chiefly from their personal, and not from their mental qualifications ; from their skill in the arts of persuasion, and from their accomplishments ; not from their superior powers of reasoning, or from the cultivation of their understanding. The most refined species of coquetry can undoubtedly be practised in the highest perfection by women, who to personal graces unite all the fascination of wit and eloquence. There is infinite danger in permitting such women to obtain power without having acquired habits of reasoning. Rousseau admires these sirens ; but the system of Rousseau, pursued to its fullest extent, would overturn the world, would make every woman a Cleopatra, and every man an Antony ; it would destroy all domestic virtue, all domestic happiness, all the pleasures of truth and

love.—In the midst of that delirium of passion to which Antony gave the name of love, what must have been the state of his degraded, wretched soul, when he could suspect his mistress of designs upon his life?—To cure him of these suspicions, she at a banquet poisoned the flowers of his garland, waited till she saw him inflamed with wine, then persuaded him to break the tops of his flowers into his goblet, and just stopped him when the cup was at his lips, exclaiming—“ Those flowers are poisoned : you see that I do not want the means of destroying you, if you were become tiresome to me, or if I could live without you.”—And this is the happy pair who instituted the orders of *The inimitable lovers!*—and *The companions in death!**

These are the circumstances which should early be pointed out, to both sexes, with all the energy of truth: let them learn that the most exquisite arts of the most consummate coquette could not obtain the confidence of him who sacrificed to her charms the empire of the world. It is from the experience of the past that we must form our judgment of the future. How unjustly you accuse me of desiring to destroy the memory of past experiments, the wisdom collected by the labour of ages! *You* would prohibit this treasure of knowledge to one half of the human species; and *I* on the contrary would lay it open to all my fellow-creatures.—I speak as if it were actually in our option to retard or to accelerate the intellectual progress of the sex; but in fact it is absolutely out of our power to drive the fair sex back

* Vide Plutarch.

to their former state of darkness: the art of printing has totally changed their situation; their eyes are opened,—the classic page is unrolled, they *will* read:—all we can do is to induce them to read with judgment—to enlarge their minds so that they may take a full view of their interests and of ours. I have no fear that the truth upon any subject should injure my daughter's mind; it is falsehood that I dread. I dread that she should acquire preposterous notions of love, of happiness, from the furtive perusal of vulgar novels, or from the clandestine conversation of ignorant waiting-maids:—I dread that she should acquire, even from the enchanting eloquence of Rousseau, the fatal idea, that cunning and address are the natural resources of her sex; that coquetry it necessary to attract, and dissimulation to preserve the heart of man.—I would not, however, proscribe an author, because I believe some of his opinions to be false; I would have my daughter read and compare various books, and correct her judgment of books by listening to the conversation of persons of sense and experience. Women may learn much of what is essential to their happiness from the unprejudiced testimony of a father or a brother; they may learn to distinguish the pictures of real life from paintings of imaginary manners and passions which never had, which never can have, any existence.—They may learn that it is not the reserve of hypocrisy, the affected demeanour either of a prude or a coquette, that we admire; but it is the simple, graceful, natural modesty of a woman, whose mind is innocent. With this belief impressed upon her

heart, do you think, my dear friend, that she who can reflect and reason would take the means to disgust where she wishes to please? or that she would incur contempt, when she knows how to secure esteem?—Do you think that she will employ artifice to entangle some heedless heart, when she knows that every heart which can be so won is not worth the winning?—She will not look upon our sex either as dupes or tyrants; she will be aware of the important difference between evanescent passion, and that affection founded upon mutual esteem, which forms the permanent happiness of life.

I am not apprehensive, my dear sir, that Cupid should be scared by the helmet of Minerva; he has conquered his idle fears, and has been familiarized to Minerva and the Muses:

“ And now of power his darts are found,
Twice ten thousand times to wound.”*

That the power of beauty over the human heart is infinitely increased by the associated ideas of virtue and intellectual excellence has been long acknowledged.—A set of features, however regular, inspire but little admiration or enthusiasm, unless they be irradiated by that sunshine of the soul which creates beauty. The expression of intelligent benevolence renders even homely features and cheeks of sorry grain † agreeable; and it has been observed, that

* See the introduction of Cupid to the Muses and Minerva, in a charming poem of Mrs. Barbauld’s—“*The origin of song-writing.*”—Would it not afford a beautiful subject for a picture?

† Milton.

the most lasting attachments have not always been excited by the most beautiful of the sex. As men have become more cultivated, they have attended more to the expression of amiable and estimable qualities in the female countenance; and in all probability the taste for this species of beauty will increase amongst the good and wise. When agreeable qualities are connected with the view of any particular form, we learn to love that form, though it may have no other merit. Women who have no pretensions to Grecian beauty may, if their countenances are expressive of good temper and good sense, have some chance of pleasing men of cultivated minds.—In an excellent Review* of Gillier's *Essays on the Causes of the Perfection of Antique Sculpture*, which I have just seen, it is observed, that our exclusive admiration of the physiognomy of the Greeks arises from prejudice, since the Grecian countenance cannot be necessarily associated with any of the perfections which now distinguish accomplished or excellent men. This remark in a popular periodical work shows that the public mind is not bigoted in matters of taste, and that the standard is no longer supposed to be fixed by the voice of ancient authority. The changes that are made in the opinions of our sex as to female beauty, according to the different situations in which women are placed, and the different qualities on which we fix the idea of their excellence, are curious and striking. Ask a

* Appendix to Monthly Review, from January to April 1798, page 516.

northern Indian, says a traveller who has lately visited them, ask a northern Indian what is beauty? and he will answer, a broad flat face, small eyes, high cheek bones, three or four broad black lines across each cheek, a low forehead, a large broad chin, a clumsy hook nose, &c. These beauties are greatly heightened, or at least rendered more valuable, when the possessor is capable of dressing all kinds of skins, converting them into the different parts of their clothing, and able to carry eight or ten stone in summer, or haul a much greater weight in winter.—Prince Matanabee, adds this author, prided himself much upon the height and strength of his wives, and would frequently say, few women could carry or haul heavier loads. If, some years ago, you had asked a Frenchman what he meant by beauty, he would have talked to you of *l'air piquant*, *l'air spirituel*, *l'air noble*, *l'air comme il faut*, and he would have referred ultimately to that *je ne sais quoi*, for which Parisian belles were formerly celebrated.—French women mixed much in company, the charms of what they called *esprit* were admired in conversation, and the *petit minois* denoting lively wit and coquetry became fashionable in France, whilst gallantry and a taste for the pleasures of *society* prevailed. The countenance expressive of sober sense and modest reserve continues to be the taste of the English, who wisely prefer the pleasures of domestic life.—Domestic life should, however, be enlivened and embellished with all the wit and vivacity and politeness for which French women were once admired, without admitting any of their vices or fol-

lies. The more men of literature and polished manners desire to spend their time in their own families, the more they must wish that their wives and daughters may have tastes and habits similar to their own. If they can meet with conversation suited to their taste at home, they will not be driven to clubs for companions; they will invite the men of wit and science of their acquaintance to their own houses, instead of appointing some place of meeting from which ladies are to be excluded. This mixture of the talents and knowledge of both sexes must be advantageous to the interests of society, by increasing domestic happiness.—Private *virtues* are public benefits: if each bee were content in his cell, there could be no grumbling hive; and if each cell were complete, the whole fabric must be perfect.

When you asserted, my dear sir, that learned men usually prefer for their wives women rather below than above the standard of mental mediocrity, you forgot many instances strongly in contradiction of this opinion.—Since I began this letter, I met with the following pathetic passage, which I cannot forbear transcribing.

“ The greatest part of the observations contained in the foregoing pages were derived from a lady, who is now beyond the reach of being affected by anything in this sublunary world. Her beneficence of disposition induced her never to overlook any fact or circumstance that fell within the sphere of her observation, which promised to be in any respect beneficial to her fellow-creatures. To her gentle influence the public are indebted, if they be indeed

indebted at all, for whatever useful hints may at any time have dropt from my pen. A being, she thought, who must depend so much as man does on the assistance of others, owes, as a debt to his fellow-creatures, the communication of the little useful knowledge that chance may have thrown in his way. Such has been my constant aim; such were the views of the wife of my bosom, the friend of my heart, who supported and assisted me in all my pursuits.—I now feel a melancholy satisfaction in contemplating those objects she once delighted to elucidate.”*

Dr. Gregory, Haller, and lord Lyttleton, have, in the language of affection, poetry, and truth, described the pleasures which men of science and literature enjoy in an union with women who can sympathize in all their thoughts and feelings, who can converse with them as equals, and live with them as friends; who can assist them in the important and delightful duty of educating their children; who can make their family their most agreeable society, and their home the attractive centre of happiness.

Can women of uncultivated understandings make such wives or such mothers?

* J. Anderson—*Essay on the Management of a Dairy.*

LETTERS
OF
JULIA AND CAROLINE.

No penance can absolve their guilty fame,
Nor tears, that wash out guilt, can wash out shame.

PRIOR.

LETTER I.

JULIA TO CAROLINE.

IN vain, dear Caroline, you urge me to *think*; I profess only to *feel*.

“*Reflect upon my own feelings!* Analyse my notions of happiness! explain to you my system!”—My system! But I have no system: *that* is the very difference between us. My notions of happiness cannot be resolved into simple, fixed principles. Nor dare I even attempt to analyse them; the subtle essence would escape in the process: just punishment to the alchymist in morality!

You, Caroline, are of a more sedate, contemplative character. Philosophy becomes the rigid mistress of

your life, enchanting enthusiasm the companion of mine. Suppose she lead me now and then in pursuit of a meteor; am not I happy in the chase? When one illusion vanishes, another shall appear, and, still leading me forward towards an horizon that retreats as I advance, the happy prospect of futurity shall vanish only with my existence.

“Reflect upon my feelings!”—Dear Caroline, is it not enough that I do feel?—All that I dread is that *apathy* which philosophers call tranquillity. You tell me that by continually *indulging*, I shall weaken my natural sensibility;—are not all the faculties of the soul improved, refined by exercise? and why shall *this* be excepted from the general law?

But I must not, you tell me, indulge my taste for romance and poetry, lest I waste that sympathy on *fiction* which *reality* so much better deserves. My dear friend, let us cherish the precious propensity to pity! no matter what the object; sympathy with fiction or reality arises from the same disposition.

When the sigh of compassion rises in my bosom, when the spontaneous tear starts from my eye, what frigid moralist shall “stop the genial current of the soul;” shall say to the tide of passion, *so far shalt thou go, and no farther?*—Shall man presume to circumscribe that which Providence has left unbounded?

But, O Caroline! if our feelings as well as our days are numbered; if, by the immutable law of nature, apathy be the sleep of passion, and languor the necessary consequence of exertion; if indeed

the pleasures of life are so ill proportioned to its duration, oh may that duration be shortened to me! —Kind Heaven, let not my soul die before my body!

Yes, if at this instant my guardian genius were to appear before me, and offering me the choice of my future destiny; on the one hand, the even temper, the poised judgment, the stoical serenity of philosophy; on the other, the eager genius, the exquisite sensibility of enthusiasm: if the genius said to me “Choose”—the lot of the one is great pleasure, and great pain—great virtues, and great defects—ardent hope, and severe disappointment—ecstasy, and despair:—the lot of the other is calm happiness unmixed with violent grief—virtue without heroism—respect without admiration—and a length of life, in which to every moment is allotted its proper portion of felicity:—Gracious genius! I should exclaim, if half my existence must be the sacrifice, take it; *enthusiasm is my choice.*

Such, my dear friend, would be my choice were I a man; as a woman, how much more readily should I determine!

What has woman to do with philosophy? The graces flourish not under her empire: a woman's part in life is to please, and Providence has assigned to her *success* all the pride and pleasure of her being.

Then leave us our weakness, leave us our follies; they are our best arms:—

“Leave us to trifle with more grace and ease,
Whom folly pleases and whose follies please.”

The moment grave sense and solid merit appear, adieu the bewitching caprice, the "*lively nonsense*," the exquisite, yet childish susceptibility which charms, interests, captivates.—Believe me, our *amiable defects* win more than our noblest virtues. Love requires sympathy, and sympathy is seldom connected with a sense of superiority. I envy none their "*painful pre-eminence*." Alas! whether it be deformity or excellence which makes us say with Richard the Third,

" I am myself alone! "

it comes to much the same thing. Then let us, Caroline, content ourselves to gain in love what we lose in esteem.

Man is to be held only by the *slightest* chains; with the idea that he can break them at pleasure, he submits to them in sport; but his pride revolts against the power to which his *reason* tells him he ought to submit. What then can woman gain by reason? Can she prove by argument that she is amiable? or demonstrate that she is an angel?

Vain was the industry of the artist, who, to produce the image of perfect beauty, selected from the fairest faces their most faultless features. Equally vain must be the efforts of the philosopher, who would excite the idea of mental perfection, by combining an assemblage of party-coloured virtues.

Such, I had almost said, is my *system*, but I mean my *sentiments*. I am not accurate enough to compose a *system*. After all, how vain are systems, and theories, and reasonings!

We may *declaim*, but what do we really know? All is uncertainty—human prudence does nothing—fortune every thing: I leave every thing therefore to fortune; *you* leave nothing. Such is the difference between us,—and which shall be the happiest, time alone can decide.

Farewell, dear Caroline; I love you better than I thought I could love a philosopher.

Your ever affectionate

JULIA.

LETTER II.

CAROLINE'S ANSWER TO JULIA.

AT the hazard of ceasing to be "*charming*," "*interesting*," "*captivating*," I must, dear Julia, venture to reason with you, to examine your favourite doctrine of "*amiable defects*," and, if possible, to dissipate that unjust dread of perfection which you seem to have continually before your eyes.

It is the sole object of a woman's life, you say, to *please*. Her amiable defects *please* more than her noblest virtues, her follies more than her wisdom, her caprice more than her temper, and *something*, a nameless something, which no art can imitate and no science can teach, more than all.

Art, you say, spoils the graces and corrupts the heart of woman; and at best can produce only a cold model of perfection; which, though perhaps strictly conformable to *rule*, can never touch the soul, or

please the unprejudiced taste, like one simple stroke of genuine nature.

I have often observed, dear Julia, that an inaccurate use of words produces such a strange confusion in all reasoning, that in the heat of debate, the combatants, unable to distinguish their friends from their foes, fall promiscuously on both. A skilful disputant knows well how to take advantage of this confusion, and sometimes endeavours to create it. I do not know whether I am to suspect you of such a design; but I must guard against it.

You have with great address availed yourself of the *two* ideas connected with the word *art*: first, as opposed to simplicity, it implies artifice; and next, as opposed to ignorance, it comprehends all the improvements of science, which, leading us to search for general causes, rewards us with a dominion over their dependant effects:—that which instructs how to pursue the objects which we may have in view with the greatest probability of success. All men who act from general principles are so far philosophers. Their objects may be, when attained, insufficient to their happiness, or they may not previously have known all the necessary means to obtain them: but they must not therefore complain, if they do not meet with success, which they have no reason to expect.

Parrhasius, in collecting the most admired excellencies from various models, to produce perfection, concluded from general principles that mankind would be pleased again with what had once excited their admiration.—So far he was a philosopher: but he was disappointed of success:—yes, for he was

ignorant of the cause necessary to produce it. The separate features might be perfect, but they were unsuited to each other, and in their forced union he could not give to the whole countenance symmetry and an appropriate expression.

There was, as you say, a *something* wanting, which his science had not taught him. He should then have set himself to examine what that *something* was, and how it was to be obtained. His want of success arose from the *insufficiency*, not the *fallacy*, of theory. Your object, dear Julia, we will suppose is "to please." If general observation and experience have taught you that slight accomplishments and a trivial character succeed more certainly in obtaining this end than higher worth and sense, you act from principle in rejecting the one and aiming at the other. You have discovered, or think you have discovered, the secret causes which produce the desired effect, and you employ them. Do not call this *instinct* or *nature*; this also, though you scorn it, is *philosophy*.

But when you come soberly to reflect, you have a feeling in your mind that reason and cool judgment disapprove of the part you are acting.

Let us, however, distinguish between disapprobation of the *object*, and the means.

Averse as enthusiasm is to the retrograde motion of analysis, let me, my dear friend, lead you one step backward.

Why do you wish to please? I except at present from the question, the desire to please, arising from a passion which requires a reciprocal return. Con-

fined as *this* wish must be in a woman's heart to one object alone, when you say, Julia, *that the admiration of others* will be absolutely necessary to your happiness, I must suppose you mean to express only a *general* desire to please?

Then under this limitation—let me ask you again, why do you wish to please?

Do not let a word stop you. The word *vanity* conveys to us a disagreeable idea. There seems something *selfish* in the sentiment—that all the pleasure we feel in pleasing others arises from the gratification it affords to our own *vanity*.

We refine, and explain, and never can bring ourselves fairly to make a confession, which we are sensible must lower us in the opinion of others, and consequently mortify the very *vanity* we would conceal. So strangely then do we deceive ourselves, as to deny the existence of a motive, which at the instant prompts the denial. But let us, dear Julia, exchange the word *vanity* for a less odious word, *self-complacency*; let us acknowledge that we wish to please, because the success raises our self-complacency. If you ask why raising our self-approbation gives us pleasure, I must answer, that I do not know. Yet I see and feel that it does; I observe that the voice of numbers is capable of raising the highest transport or the most fatal despair. The eye of man seems to possess a fascinating power over his fellow-creatures, to raise the blush of shame, or the glow of pride.

I look around me, and I see riches, titles, dignities, pursued with such eagerness by thousands, only as the signs of distinction. Nay, are not all these

things sacrificed the moment they cease to be distinctions? The moment the prize of glory is to be won by other means, do not millions sacrifice their fortunes, their peace, their health, their lives, for *fame*? Then amongst the highest pleasures of human beings I must place self-approbation. With this belief, let us endeavour to secure it in the greatest extent, and to the longest duration.

Then, Julia, the wish to please becomes only a secondary motive, subordinate to the desire I have to secure my own self-complacency. We will examine how far they are connected.

In reflecting upon my own mind, I observe that I am flattered by the opinion of others, in proportion to the opinion I have previously formed of their judgment; or I perceive that the opinion of numbers, merely as numbers, has power to give me great pleasure or great pain. I would unite both these pleasures if I could, but in general I cannot—they are incompatible. The opinion of the vulgar crowd and the enlightened individual, the applause of the highest and the lowest of mankind, cannot be obtained by the same means.

Another question then arises,—whom shall we wish to please? We must choose, and be decided in the choice.

You say that you are proud; I am prouder.—You will be content with indiscriminate admiration—nothing will content me but what is *select*. As long as I have the use of my reason—as long as my heart can feel the delightful sense of a “well-earned praise,” I will fix my eye on the highest pitch of excellence, and steadily endeavour to attain it.

Conscious of her worth, and daring to assert it, I would have a woman early in life know that she is capable of filling the heart of a man of sense and merit; that she is worthy to be his companion and friend. With all the energy of her soul, with all the powers of her understanding, I would have a woman endeavour to please those whom she esteems and loves.

She runs a risk, you will say, of never meeting her equal. Hearts and understandings of a superior order are seldom met with in the world; or when met with, it may not be her particular good fortune to win them.—True; but if ever she *wins*, she will *keep* them; and the prize appears to me well worth the pains and difficulty of attaining.

I, Julia, admire and feel enthusiasm; but I would have philosophy directed to the highest objects. I dread apathy as much as you can; and I would endeavour to prevent it, not by sacrificing half my existence, but by enjoying the whole with moderation.

You ask, why exercise does not increase sensibility, and why sympathy with imaginary distress will not also increase the disposition to sympathize with what is real?—Because pity should, I think, always be associated with the active desire to relieve. If it be suffered to become a *passive sensation*, it is a *useless weakness*, not a virtue. The species of reading you speak of must be hurtful, even in this respect, to the mind, as it indulges all the luxury of woe in sympathy with fictitious distress, without requiring the exertion which reality demands: besides, universal experience proves to us that habit, so far from

increasing sensibility, absolutely destroys it, by familiarizing it with objects of compassion.

Let me, my dear friend, appeal even to your own experience in the very instance you mention. Is there any pathetic writer in the world who could move you as much at the "twentieth reading as at the first?"* Speak naturally, and at the third or fourth reading, you would probably say, It is very pathetic, but I have read it before—I liked it better the first time; that is to say, it *did* touch me once—I know it *ought* to touch me now, but it *does not*. Beware of this! Do not let life become *as tedious as a twice-told tale*.

Farewell, dear Julia: this is the answer of fact against eloquence, philosophy against enthusiasm. You appeal from my understanding to my heart—I appeal from the heart to the understanding of my judge; and ten years hence the decision perhaps will be in my favour.

Yours sincerely,

CAROLINE.

LETTER III.

CAROLINE TO JULIA,

On her intended marriage.

INDEED, my dear Julia, I hardly know how to venture to give you my advice upon a subject which

* Hume said, that Parnell's poems were as fresh at the twentieth reading as at the first.

ought to depend so much upon your own taste and feelings. My opinion and my wishes I could readily tell you: the idea of seeing you united and attached to my brother is certainly the most agreeable to me; but I am to divest myself of the partiality of a sister, and to consider my brother and lord V—— as equal candidates for your preference—equal, I mean, in your regard; for you say that “Your heart is not yet decided in its choice.—If that oracle would declare itself in intelligible terms, you would not hesitate a moment to obey its dictates.” But, my dear Julia, is there not another, a *safer*, I do not say a *better* oracle, to be consulted—your reason? Whilst the “doubtful beam still nods from side to side,” you may with a steady hand weigh your own motives, and determine what things will be essential to your happiness, and what *price* you will pay for them; for

“ Each pleasure has its *price* ; and they who pay
Too much of pain, but squander life away.”

Do me the justice to believe that I do not quote these lines of Dryden as being the finest poetry he ever wrote; for poets, you know, as Waller wittily observed, never succeed so well in truth as in fiction.

Since we cannot in life expect to realize all our wishes, we must distinguish those which claim the rank of wants. We must separate the fanciful from the real, or at least make the one subservient to the other.

It is of the utmost importance to you, more par-

ticularly, to take every precaution before you decide for life, because disappointment and restraint afterwards would be insupportable to your temper.

You have often declared to me, my dear friend, that your love of poetry, and of all the refinements of literary and romantic pursuits, is so intimately “interwoven in your mind, that nothing could separate them, without destroying the whole fabric.”

Your tastes, you say, are fixed; if they are so, you must be doubly careful to ensure their gratification. If you cannot make *them* subservient to external circumstances, you should certainly, if it be in your power, choose a situation in which circumstances will be subservient to them. If you are convinced that you could not adopt the tastes of another, it will be absolutely necessary for your happiness to live with one whose tastes are similar to your own.

The belief in that sympathy of souls which the poets suppose declares itself between two people at first sight, is perhaps as absurd as the late fashionable belief in animal magnetism: but there is a sympathy which, if it be not the foundation, may be called the cement of affection. Two people could not, I should think, retain any lasting affection for each other, without a mutual sympathy in taste and in their diurnal occupations and domestic pleasures. This you will allow, my dear Julia, even in a fuller extent than I do. Now, my brother's tastes, character, and habits of life, are so very different from lord V——'s, that I scarcely know how you can compare them; at least before you can decide which of the two would make you the happiest in life, you

must determine what kind of life you may wish to lead; for my brother, though he might make you very happy in domestic life, would not make the countess of V—— happy; nor would lord V—— make Mrs. Percy happy. They must be two different women, with different habits, and different wishes; so that you must divide yourself, my dear Julia, like Araspes, into two selves; I do not say into a bad and a good self; choose some other epithets to distinguish them, but distinct they must be: so let them now declare and decide their pretensions; and let the victor have not only the honours of a triumph, but all the prerogatives of victory. Let the subdued be subdued for life—let the victor take every precaution which policy can dictate, to prevent the possibility of future contests with the vanquished.

But without talking poetry to you, my dear friend, let me seriously recommend it to you to examine your own mind carefully; and if you find that public diversions and public admiration, dissipation, and all the pleasures of riches and high rank, are really and truly essential to your happiness, direct your choice accordingly. Marry lord V——: he has a large fortune, extensive connexions, and an exalted station; his own taste for show and expence, his family pride, and personal vanity, will all tend to the end you propose. Your house, table, equipages, may be all in the highest style of magnificence. Lord V——'s easiness of temper, and fondness for you, will readily give you that entire ascendancy over his pleasures, which your abilities give you over his un-

derstanding. He will not control your wishes ; you may gratify them to the utmost bounds of his fortune, and perhaps beyond those bounds ; you may have entire command at home and abroad. If these are your objects, Julia, take them ; they are in your power. But remember, you must take them with their necessary concomitants—the restraints upon your time, upon the choice of your friends and your company, which high life imposes ; the *ennui* subsequent to dissipation ; the mortifications of rivalry in beauty, wit, rank, and magnificence ; the trouble of managing a large fortune, and the chance of involving your affairs and your family in difficulty and distress ; these and a thousand more evils you must submit to. You must renounce all the pleasures of the heart and of the imagination ; you must give up the idea of cultivating literary taste ; you must not expect from your husband friendship and confidence, or any of the delicacies of affection :—you govern him, he cannot therefore be your equal ; you may be a fond mother, but you cannot educate your children ; you will neither have the time nor the power to do it ; you must trust them to a governess. In the selection of your friends, and in the enjoyment of their company and conversation, you will be still more restrained : in short, you must give up the pleasures of domestic life ; for that is not in this case the life you have chosen. But you will exclaim against me for supposing you capable of making such a choice—such sacrifices !—I am sure, *next to my brother*, I am the last person in the world who would wish you to make them.

You have another choice, my dear Julia: domestic

life is offered to you by one who has every wish and every power to make it agreeable to you; by one whose tastes resemble your own; who would be a judge and a fond admirer of all your perfections. You would have perpetual motives to cultivate every talent, and to exert every power of pleasing for his sake—for *his* sake, whose penetration no improvement would escape, and whose affection would be susceptible of every proof of yours. Am I drawing too flattering a picture?—A sister's hand may draw a partial likeness, but still it will be a likeness. At all events, my dear Julia, you would be certain of the mode of life you would lead with my brother. The regulation of your time and occupations would be your own. In the education of your family you would meet with no interruptions or restraint. You would have no governess to counteract, no strangers to intrude; you might follow your own judgment, or yield to the judgment of one who would never require you to submit to his opinion, but to his reasons.

All the pleasures of friendship you would enjoy in your own family in the highest perfection, and you would have for your sister the friend of your infancy,

CAROLINE.

LETTER IV.

CAROLINE TO LADY V——,

Upon her intended separation from her husband.

You need not fear, my dear lady V——, that I should triumph in the accomplishment of my pro-

phencies; or that I should reproach you for having preferred your own opinion to my advice. Believe me, my dear Julia, I am your friend, nor would the name of sister have increased my friendship.

Five years have made then so great a change in your feelings and views of life, that a few days ago, when my letter to you on your marriage accidentally fell into your hands, "*you were struck with a species of astonishment at your choice, and you burst into tears in an agony of despair, on reading the wretched doom foretold to the wife of lord V——. A doom,*" you add, "*which I feel hourly accomplishing, and which I see no possibility of averting, but by a separation from a husband, with whom, I now think, it was madness to unite myself.*" Your opinion I must already know upon this subject, "*as the same arguments which should have prevented me from making such a choice, ought now to determine me to abjure it.*"

You say, dear Julia, that my letter struck you with despair.—Despair is either madness or folly; it obtains, it deserves nothing from mankind but pity; and pity, though it be akin to love, has yet a secret affinity to contempt. In strong minds, despair is an acute disease; the prelude to great exertion. In weak minds, it is a chronic distemper, followed by incurable indolence. Let the crisis be favourable, and resume your wonted energy. Instead of suffering the imagination to dwell with unavailing sorrow on the past, let us turn our attention towards the future. When an evil is irremediable, let us acknowledge it to be such, and bear it:—there is no power to which

we submit so certainly as to necessity. With our hopes, our wishes cease. Imagination has a contracting, as well as an expansive faculty. The prisoner, who, deprived of all that we conceive to constitute the pleasures of life, could interest or occupy himself with the labours of a spider, was certainly a philosopher. He enjoyed all the means of happiness that were left in his power.

I know, my dear lady V——, that words have little effect over grief; and I do not, I assure you, mean to insult you with the parade of stoic philosophy. But consider, your error is not perhaps so great as you imagine. Certainly, they who at the beginning of life can with a steady eye look through the long perspective of distant years, who can in one view comprise all the different objects of happiness and misery, who can compare accurately, and justly estimate their respective degrees of importance; and who, after having formed such a calculation, are capable of acting uniformly, in consequence of their own conviction, are the *wisest*, and, as far as prudence can influence our fortune, the *happiest* of human beings. Next to this favoured class are those who can perceive and repair their own errors; who can stop at any given period, to take a new view of life. If unfortunate circumstances have denied you a place in the first rank, you may, dear Julia, secure yourself a station in the second. Is not the conduct of a woman, after her marriage, of infinitely more importance than her previous choice, whatever it may have been? Then now consider what yours should be.

You say that it is easier to *break* a chain than to

stretch it; but remember that when broken, your part of the chain, Julia, will still remain with you, and fetter and disgrace you through life. Why should a woman be so circumspect in her choice? Is it not because when once made she must abide by it? "She sets her life upon the cast, and she must stand the hazard of the die." From domestic uneasiness a man has a thousand resources: in middling life, the tavern; in high life, the gaming-table, suspends the anxiety of thought. Dissipation, ambition, business, the occupation of a profession, change of place, change of company, afford him agreeable and honourable relief from domestic chagrin. If his home become tiresome, he leaves it; if his wife become disagreeable to him, he leaves her, and in leaving her loses *only* a wife. But what resource has a woman?—Precluded from all the occupations common to the other sex, she loses even those peculiar to her own. She has no remedy, from the company of a man she dislikes, but a separation; and this remedy, desperate as it is, is allowed only to a certain class of women in society; to those whose fortune affords them the means of subsistence, and whose friends have secured to them a separate maintenance. A peeress then probably can leave her husband if she wish it; a peasant's wife cannot; she depends upon the character and privileges of a wife for actual subsistence. Her domestic care, if not her affection, is secured to her husband; and it is just that it should. He sacrifices his liberty, his labour, his ingenuity, his time, for the support and protection of his wife; and in proportion to his protection is his power.

In higher life, where the sacrifices of both parties in the original union are more equal, the evils of a separation are more nearly balanced. But even here, the wife who has hazarded least suffers the most by the dissolution of the partnership; she loses a great part of her fortune, and of the conveniences and luxuries of life. She loses her home, her rank in society. She loses both the repellent and the attractive power of a mistress of a family. "Her occupation is gone." She becomes a wanderer. Whilst her youth and beauty last, she may enjoy that species of delirium, caused by public admiration; fortunate if habit does not destroy the power of this charm, before the season of its duration expire. It was said to be the wish of a celebrated modern beauty, "that she might not survive her nine-and-twentieth birthday." I have often heard this wish quoted for its extravagance; but I always admired it for its good sense. The lady foresaw the inevitable doom of her declining years. Her apprehensions for the future embittered even her enjoyment of the present; and she had resolution enough to offer to take "a bond of fate," to sacrifice one half of her life, to secure the pleasure of the other.

But, dear lady V——, probably this wish was made at some distance from the destined period of its accomplishment. On the eve of her nine-and-twentieth birthday, the lady perhaps might have felt inclined to retract her prayer. At least we should provide for the cowardice which might seize the female mind at such an instant. Even the most wretched life has power to attach us; none can be more wretched than

the old age of a dissipated beauty:—unless, lady V——, it be that of a woman, who to all her evils has the addition of remorse, for having abjured her duties and abandoned her family. Such is the situation of a woman who separates from her husband. Reduced to go the same insipid round of public amusements, yet more restrained than an unmarried beauty in youth, yet more miserable in age, the superiority of her genius and the sensibility of her heart become her greatest evils. She, indeed, must pray for indifference. Avoided by all her family connexions, hated and despised where she might have been loved and respected, solitary in the midst of society, she feels herself deserted at the time of life when she most wants social comfort and assistance.

Dear Julia, whilst it is yet in your power secure to yourself a happier fate; retire to the bosom of your own family; prepare for yourself a new society; perform the duties, and you shall soon enjoy the pleasures of domestic life; educate your children; whilst they are young it shall be your occupation; as they grow up it shall be your glory. Let me anticipate your future success, when they shall appear such as you can make them; when the world shall ask “who educated these amiable young women? Who formed their character? Who cultivated the talents of this promising young man? Why does this whole family live together in such perfect union?” With one voice, dear Julia, your children shall name their mother; she who in the bloom of youth checked herself in the career of dissipation, and turned all the ability and energy of her mind to their education.

Such will be your future fame. In the mean time, before you have formed for yourself companions in your own family, you will want a society suited to your taste. "Disgusted as you have been with frivolous company, you say that you wish to draw around you a society of literary and estimable friends, whose conversation and talents shall delight you, and who at the same time that they are excited to display their own abilities, shall be a judge of yours."

But, dear lady V——, the possibility of your forming such a society must depend on your having a home to receive, a character and consequence in life to invite and attach friends. The opinion of numbers is necessary to excite the ambition of individuals. To be a female Mecænas you must have power to confer favours, as well as judgment to discern merit.

What castles in the air are built by the synthetic wand of imagination, which vanish when exposed to the analysis of reason!

Then, Julia, supposing that lord V——, as your husband, becomes a negative quantity as to your happiness, yet he will acquire another species of value as the master of your family and the father of your children; as a person who supports your public consequence, and your private self-complacency. Yes, dear lady V——, he will increase your self-complacency; for do you not think, that when your husband sees his children prosper under your care, his family united under your management—whilst he feels your merit at home, and hears your praises abroad, do you not think he will himself learn to respect and love you? You say that "*he is not a judge*"

of female excellence ; that he has no real taste ; that vanity is his ruling passion." Then if his judgment be dependent on the opinions of others, he will be the more easily led by the public voice, and you will command the suffrages of the public. If he has not taste enough to approve, he will have vanity enough to be proud of you ; and a vain man insensibly begins to love that of which he is proud. Why does lord V—— love his buildings, his paintings, his equipages? It is not for their intrinsic value ; but because they are means of distinction to him. Let his wife become a greater distinction to him, and on the same principles he will prefer her. Set an example, then, dear lady V——, of domestic virtue ; your talents shall make it admired, your rank shall make it conspicuous. You are ambitious, Julia, you love praise ; you have been used to it ; you cannot live happily without it.

Praise is a mental luxury, which becomes from habit absolutely necessary to our existence ; and in purchasing it we must pay the price set upon it by society. The more curious, the more avaricious we become of this "aerial coin," the more it is our interest to preserve its currency and increase its value. You, my dear Julia, in particular, who have amassed so much of it, should not cry down its price, for your own sake !—Do not then say in a fit of disgust, that "you are grown too wise now to value applause."

If, during youth, your appetite for applause was indiscriminate, and indulged to excess, you are now more difficult in your choice, and are become an *epicure* in your *taste* for praise.

Adieu, my dear Julia ; I hope still to see you as
happy in domestic life as

Your ever affectionate

And sincere friend,

CAROLINE.

LETTER V.

CAROLINE TO LADY V——,

*On her conduct after her separation from her
husband.*

A DELICACY, of which I now begin to repent, has of late prevented me from writing to you. I am afraid I shall be abrupt, but it is necessary to be explicit. Your conduct, ever since your separation from your husband, has been anxiously watched from a variety of motives, by his family and your own;—it has been blamed. Reflect upon your own mind, and examine with what justice.

Last summer, when I was with you, I observed a change in your conversation, and the whole turn of your thoughts. I perceived an unusual impatience of restraint; a confusion in your ideas when you began to reason,—an eloquence in your language when you began to declaim, which convinced me that from some secret cause the powers of your reason had been declining, and those of your imagination rapidly increasing; the boundaries of right and wrong seemed to be no longer marked in your mind. Neither the

rational hope of happiness, nor a sense of duty governed you; but some unknown, wayward power seemed to have taken possession of your understanding, and to have thrown every thing into confusion. You appeared peculiarly averse to philosophy: let me recall your own words to you; you asked "of what use philosophy could be to beings who had no free will, and how the ideas of just punishment and involuntary crime could be reconciled?"

Your understanding involved itself in metaphysical absurdity. In conversing upon literary subjects one evening, in speaking of the striking difference between the conduct and the understanding of the great lord Bacon, you said, that "it by no means surprised you; that to an enlarged mind, accustomed to consider the universe as one vast *whole*, the conduct of that little animated atom, that inconsiderable part *self*, must be too insignificant to fix or merit attention. It was nothing," you said, "in the general mass of vice and virtue, happiness and misery." I believe I answered, "that it might be *nothing* compared to the great *whole*, but it was *every thing* to the individual." Such were your opinions in theory; you must know enough of the human heart to perceive their tendency when reduced to practice. Speculative opinions, I know, have little influence over the practice of those who *act* much and think little; but I should conceive their power to be considerable over the conduct of those who have much time for reflection and little necessity for action. In one case the habit of action governs the thoughts upon any sudden emergency; in the other,

the thoughts govern the actions. The truth or falsehood then of speculative opinions is of much greater consequence to our sex than to the other ; as we live a life of reflection, they of action.

Retrace, then, dear Julia, in your mind the course of your thoughts for some time past ; discover the cause of this revolution in your opinions ; judge yourself ; and remember, that in the *mind* as well as in the body, the highest pitch of disease is often attended with an unconsciousness of its existence. If, then, lady V——, upon receiving my letter, you should feel averse to this self-examination, or if you should imagine it to be useless, I no longer advise, I command you to quit your present abode ; come to me : fly from the danger, and be safe.

Dear Julia, I must assume this peremptory tone : if you are angry, I must disregard your anger ; it is the anger of disease, the anger of one who is roused from that sleep which would end in death.

I respect the equality of friendship ; but this equality permits, nay requires, the temporary ascendancy I assume. In real friendship the judgment, the genius, the prudence of each party become the common property of both. Even if they are equals, they may not be so *always*. Those transient fits of passion, to which the best and wisest are liable, may deprive even the superior of the advantage of their reason. She then has still in her friend an *impartial*, though perhaps an inferior judgment ; each becomes the guardian of the *other*, as their mutual safety may require.

Heaven seems to have granted this double chance

of virtue and happiness, as the peculiar reward of friendship.

Use it, then, my dear friend ; accept the assistance you could so well return. Obey me ; I shall judge of you by your resolution at this crisis ; on it depends your fate, and my friendship.

Your sincere
and affectionate
CAROLINE.

LETTER VI.

CAROLINE TO LADY V——,

Just before she went to France.

THE time is now come, lady V——, when I must bid you an eternal adieu. With what deep regret, I need not, Julia, I cannot tell you.

I burned your letter the moment I had read it. Your past confidence I never will betray ; but I must renounce all future intercourse with you. I am a sister, a wife, a mother ; all these connexions forbid me to be longer your friend. In misfortune, in sickness, or in poverty, I never would have forsaken you ; but infamy I cannot share. I would have gone, I went, to the brink of the precipice to save you ; with all my force I held you back ; but in vain. But why do I vindicate my conduct to you now ? Accustomed as I have always been to think your approbation necessary to my happiness, I forgot

that henceforward your opinion is to be nothing to me, or mine to you.

O Julia, the idea, the certainty, that you must, if you live, be in a few years, in a few months perhaps, reduced to absolute want, in a foreign country—without a friend—a protector, the fate of women who have fallen from a state as high as yours, the names of L——, of G——, the horror I feel at joining your name to theirs, impels me to make one more attempt to save you.

Companion of my earliest years! friend of my youth! my beloved Julia! by the happy innocent hours we have spent together, by the love you had for me, by the respect you bear to the memory of your mother, by the agony with which your father will hear of the loss of his daughter, by all that has power to touch your mind—I conjure you, I implore you to pause!—Farewell!

CAROLINE.

LETTER VII.

CAROLINE TO LORD V——,

Written a few months after the date of the preceding letter.

MY LORD,

THOUGH I am too sensible that all connexion between my unfortunate friend and her family must for some time have been dissolved, I venture now to address myself to your lordship.

On Wednesday last, about half after six o'clock in the evening, the following note was brought to me. It had been written with such a trembling hand that it was scarcely legible ; but I knew the writing too well.

“ If you ever loved me, Caroline, read this—do not tear it the moment you see the name of Julia : she has suffered—she is humbled. I left France with the hope of seeing you once more ; but, now I am so near you, my courage fails, and my heart sinks within me. I have no friend upon earth—I deserve none ; yet I cannot help wishing to see once more before I die the friend of my youth, to thank her with my last breath.

“ But, dear Caroline, if I must not see you, write to me, if possible, one line of consolation.

“ Tell me, is my father living—do you know any thing of my children ?—I dare not ask for my husband. Adieu ! I am so weak that I can scarcely write—I hope I shall soon be no more. Farewell !

JULIA.”

I immediately determined to follow the bearer of this letter. Julia was waiting for my answer at a small inn, in a neighbouring village, at a few miles distance. It was night when I got there : every thing was silent—all the houses were shut up, excepting one, in which we saw two or three lights glimmering through the window—this was the inn : as your lordship may imagine, it was a very miserable place. The mistress of the house seemed to be touched with pity for the stranger : she opened the

door of a small room, where she said the poor lady was resting ; and retired as I entered.

Upon a low matted seat beside the fire sat lady V—— ; she was in black ; her knees were crossed, and her white but emaciated arms flung on one side over her lap ; her hands were clasped together, and her eyes fixed upon the fire : she seemed neither to hear nor see any thing round her, but, totally absorbed in her own reflections, to have sunk into insensibility. I dreaded to rouse her from this state of torpor ; and I believe I stood for some moments motionless : at last I moved softly towards her—she turned her head—started up—a scarlet blush overspread her face—she grew livid again instantly, gave a faint shriek, and sunk senseless into my arms.

When she returned to herself, and found her head lying upon my shoulder, and heard my voice soothing her with all the expressions of kindness I could think of, she smiled with a look of gratitude, which I never shall forget. Like one who had been long unused to kindness, she seemed ready to pour forth all the fondness of her heart : but, as if recollecting herself better, she immediately checked her feelings—withdrew her hand from mine—thanked me—said she was quite well again—cast down her eyes, and her manner changed from tenderness to timidity. She seemed to think that she had lost all right to sympathy, and received even the common offices of humanity with surprise : her high spirit, I saw, was quite broken.

I think I never felt such sorrow as I did in contemplating Julia at this instant : she who stood

before me, sinking under the sense of inferiority, I knew to be my equal—my superior; yet by fatal imprudence, by one rash step, all her great, and good, and amiable qualities were irretrievably lost to the world and to herself.

When I thought that she was a little recovered, I begged of her, if she was not too much fatigued, to let me carry her home. At these words she looked at me with surprise. Her eyes filled with tears; but without making any other reply, she suffered me to draw her arm within mine, and attempted to follow me. I did not know how feeble she was till she began to walk; it was with the utmost difficulty I supported her to the door; and by the assistance of the people of the house she was lifted into the carriage: we went very slowly. When the carriage stopped, she was seized with an universal tremor; she started when the man knocked at the door, and seemed to dread its being opened. The appearance of light and the sound of cheerful voices struck her with horror.

I could not myself help being shocked with the contrast between the dreadful situation of my friend and the happiness of the family to which I was returning.

“Oh!” said she, “what are these voices?—Whither are you taking me?—For Heaven’s sake do not let any body see me!”

I assured her that she should go directly to her own apartment, and that no human being should approach her without her express permission.

Alas! it happened at this very moment that all

my children came running with the utmost gaiety into the hall to meet us, and the very circumstance which I had been so anxious to prevent happened—little Julia was amongst them. The gaiety of the children suddenly ceased the moment they saw lady V—— coming up the steps—they were struck with her melancholy air and countenance: she, leaning upon my arm, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, let me lead her in, and sunk upon the first chair she came to. I made a sign to the children to retire; but the moment they began to move, lady V—— looked up—saw her daughter—and now for the first time burst into tears. The little girl did not recollect her poor mother till she heard the sound of her voice; and then she threw her arms round her neck, crying, “Is it you, mamma?”—and all the children immediately crowded round and asked, “if this was the same lady V—— who used to play with them.”

It is impossible to describe the effect these simple questions had on Julia: a variety of emotions seemed struggling in her countenance; she rose and made an attempt to break from the children, but could not—she had not strength to support herself. We carried her away and put her to bed; she took no notice of any body, nor did she even seem to know that I was with her: I thought she was insensible, but as I drew the curtains I heard her give a deep sigh.

I left her, and carried away her little girl, who had followed us up stairs and begged to stay with her mother; but I was apprehensive that the sight of her might renew her agitation.

After I was gone, they told me that she was per-

fectly still, with her eyes closed ; and I stayed away some time, in hopes that she might sleep : however, about midnight she sent to beg to speak to me : she was very ill—she beckoned to me to sit down by her bedside—every one left the room ; and when Julia saw herself alone with me, she took my hand, and in a low but calm voice, she said, “I have not many hours to live—my heart is broken—I wished to see you, to thank you whilst it was yet in my power.” She pressed my hand to her trembling lips : “Your kindness,” added she, “touches me more than all the rest ; but how ashamed you must be of such a friend ! Oh Caroline ! to die a disgrace to all who ever loved me !”

The tears trickled down her face, and choked her utterance : she wiped them away hastily. “But it is not now a time,” said she, “to think of myself—can I see my daughter ?” The little girl was asleep : she was awakened, and I brought her to her mother. Julia raised herself in her bed, and summoning up all her strength, “My dearest friend !” said she, putting her child’s hand into mine, “when I am gone, be a mother to this child—let her know my whole history, let nothing be concealed from her. Poor girl ! you will live to blush at your mother’s name.” She paused, and leaned back : I was going to take the child away, but she held out her arms again for her, and kissed her several times. “Farewell !” said she ; “I shall never see you again.” The little girl burst into tears. Julia wished to say something more—she raised herself again—at last she uttered these words with energy :—“My love, be

good and happy;" she then sunk down on the pillow quite exhausted—she never spoke afterwards: I took her hand—it was cold—her pulse scarcely beat—her eyes rolled without meaning—in a few moments she expired.

Painful as it has been to me to recall the circumstances of her death to my imagination, I have given your lordship this exact and detailed account of my unfortunate friend's behaviour in her last moments. Whatever may have been her errors, her soul never became callous from vice. The sense of her own ill conduct was undoubtedly the immediate cause of her illness, and the remorse which had long preyed upon her mind at length brought her to the grave—

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I have the honour to be,

My lord, &c.

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