

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

In *FOUR VOLUMES*.

Inscrib'd with Permission to Col. HUNTER.

By Mrs. Bennett,  
AUTHOR OF THE  
WELCH HEIRESS, and JUVENILE INDISCRETIONS.

I know thou wilt grumble, courteous Reader, for every  
Reader in the World is a Grumbletonion more or less; and  
for my Part, I can grumble as well as the best of ye, when  
it is my turn to be a Reader. SCARRON.

VOL. II.

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MDCCLXXXIX.

AGNES DE-COURCI,

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DOMESTIC TALE.

LETTER XXIV.

*Mrs. Butler in continuation.*

Soho-Square.

MY correspondence with Lady Mary after our separation was far from being as frequent and unreserved as it had ever before been. It was Lord Ruthven's pleasure we should write on mere family affairs—but in this interval I was not unmindful of our absent friend—Mr. Butler often heard of him—and in two years after his return to the Brazils we were told from court that he had espoused a young lady, daughter of Don Sebastian Lorenzo, governor of the Brazils, by the king's particular desire, who, as a mark of his approbation, had raised the colonel to the rank of general and commander in chief of all his forces in that part of the world.

Lady Ruthven contrary to the prognostics of the medical people lingered three years after her return to England; what arguments, or whether any were used, to efface the tender impressions, love and Moncrass had left in the heart of the daughter, I know not—but think it is probable that the vortex of dissipation in which the Ruthven's were always plunged, the admiration her beauty excited, and the court paid her by all the beau-monde, added to a latent pique the consequence of the colonel's giving up his hopes in the moment her young heart had resigned itself with all its faculties to him, might by degrees wean her from her first attachment without any violent efforts on the part of her parents—and this no doubt the wary Earl foresaw, when he required so hard a sacrifice from Mr. Moncrass.

Numerous were the offers of marriage for his lovely daughter, received and rejected by Lord Ruthven; one was not rich enough—another a peer of yesterday—a third untitled—and the spirit of coquetry increasing with the adulation paid her beauty—Lady Mary became still more difficult to please than her father, and when I met her by appointment at Montpellier, on my return from Lisbon, where I was so unfortunate as to lose my worthy and beloved husband, I found her a spinster, with increased spirits, beauty and health, in her twenty-first year—and here to make you acquainted with the motives which induced her, who had rejected a ducal coronet, to accept the hand of a private gentleman, and one who proved himself totally unworthy a preference that astonished the world, I must introduce some of my own family anecdotes.

Lady Ruthven was the only child of Mr. Neville, of Gloucestershire, one of the wealthiest commoners in England—this gentleman was the elder of three brothers, I am the daughter of the second; Mr. John Neville, the third, was so fortunate as to be blest

with two sons, which, as the real Neville estates were entailed on the male issue of the family, rendered the future prospects of his children superior to those of his elder brothers.

I had the misfortune to lose both my parents before I was sensible of so great a calamity—so that as I before observed, I became an orphan ward to Lord Ruthven. Miss Neville's fortune (although her father was but a life tenant on the estate) was very large, which added to her personal graces rendered her an object of general admiration: Lord Ruthven's heart acknowledged her power, and she accepted his offer'd hand, before she had attained her eighteenth year, perfectly satisfied with the disposition their ancestors had made of the family estate; neither Mr. Neville or his daughter regretted its going to my youngest uncle and his sons—Mr. John Neville was as contracted in his mind as his elder brother was liberal. He watched with eager avidity every turn of his health, and when my uncle Edward died, seized the estates with such rudeness and rapacity, that the agents of Lord Ruthven were barely suffered to remove the personals from the different seats before he took possession; a conduct so opposite to humanity and good breeding, could not fail to confirm the dislike his narrow mind had long inspired in Lord Ruthven—and on his part (who was one of the strict abettors of the sect, then but just beginning to establish themselves, called methodists, and who held all who were not of his religious opinion in contempt) he considered Lord and Lady Ruthven, who lived in great splendour and magnificence, as beings devoted to perdition, and estranged himself and family from their connection and society. His elder son adopted his conduct and principles—but the younger, who was handsome, wild and expensive, was not to be restrained by the examples or commands of his father from visiting Ruthven-house, where he became a great favourite with the earl, but more particularly with the countess: many were the truant excursions for which he was severely punished at home—and which owed their origin to the fondness of his cousin, who supplied his purse with a liberality bordering on profusion. And thus by rendering him independant of his father (who continually reprimanded his son and reproach'd his neice) she became the ostensible cause of an irreconcilable rupture which happened between them about two years before we went to Lisbon.

The small-pox has been so greatly my enemy, you will perhaps smile when I tell you the Neville's were reckoned a remarkable handsome family—Lady Mary you know—Lady Ruthven was I think still handsomer, and James Neville resembled *her*, both in person and manner, after this, if you had known Lady Ruthven, you would allow it is unnecessary to add, he was a favourite wherever he appeared, particularly with the ladies.

Too volatile to fix, yet too susceptible of passion for every *new* beauty to escape the shafts of the blind deity—and too clever and sensible not to succeed in his attempts to render himself pleasing, many were the reputations that were sacrificed to his inclinations, to his art, and to his vanity. His first ambition on entering into life was to acquire the character of a *man of gallantry*, and few who are fond of being so *distinguished* choose their noble achievements in female ruin should remain untold. In a very short time, so easy and natural are the progressions of vicious habits, the modern man of gallantry became a confirmed *libertine*, and the more dangerous as he had a head

to contrive, and a heart to carry into practice, the most cruel machinations against *female honour*. Beauty was his pursuit, and innocence his prey.

A gentleman who lived in the neighbourhood of Neville-abbey, of the name of Woodburne, confiding in the integrity and religious principles of my uncle Neville, at his death left him guardian to his two children, a son and a daughter.

Miss Woodburne was young—innocent—and beautiful—attractions, which in the opinion of young Neville, entirely did away the sacred bond of protection due to an orphan ward of his father's, and of the sanctuary his roof should have afforded her.

The seduction of this young woman, it was not in his power, or indeed in his wish, to conceal. But it was necessary nevertheless he should absent himself awhile from the presence of an enraged parent.

Young Woodburne was at college when the disgraceful news reached him, he immediately followed Neville to London, sent him a challenge, and received his death wound from the same hand that had dishonoured his sister; before I lay down my pen, to drop a tear over the memory of those victims to libertinism, I must inform you that on the news of her brother's death, Miss Woodburne fled from the abbey, and was not again heard of till her corpse was brought by Mrs. Anne Mountford, your late worthy patroness, from Bristol hot-wells, to be interred in the family vault near her father, at her own last request.

Adieu sir, this simple story will let you completely into the character of Mr. James Neville, and with it I must conclude this letter, as I really am at present unable to proceed.

C.B.

## LETTER XXV.

*Mrs. Butler in continuation.*

Soho-Square.

EVEN this exploit did not lose Mr. Neville Lady Ruthven's friendship and protection. She still partially extolled the few tolerable qualities he possessed, and excused, with more than maternal blindness, actions which were condemned by all the rest of the world.

The whole body of methodists, who were by this time become both numerous and powerful, took up the cause of young Woodburne, whose father, as well as Mr. Neville, was one of the heads of their society; they wrote pamphlets, employed council, and entered into associations, which rendered the prosecution against him a matter of too serious a nature to be either evaded, or trifled with. He was soon apprehended. The violence of party was so strong against him, and the clamour on account of his barbarity to the ruined female so universal, it was with great difficulty that he was admitted to bail, when the enormous sum of ten thousand pounds was the security demanded for his liberty.

As the time of his trial approached, totally deserted by his father, who was among the most inveterate of his prosecutors, both Lady Ruthven and himself began to dread the event, and their fears encreasing with the danger, he at length quitted the kingdom by consent of Lord Ruthven, who generously paid the whole sum of ten thousand pounds in forfeiture of his recognizance—fond to distraction of his lady, every person who was dear to her was also of importance to him. Money was a thing he never set in competition with her happiness, and still further to indulge her fondness for the unworthy fugitive, he agreed to honour his drafts to the amount of two hundred guineas a year, and continued to allow it to him, till some events took place which very much reversed the fortune of Mr. Neville.

My uncle had the mortification to lose his eldest son within two years after the earl's return from Lisbon, so that the object of his hatred became the indisputable heir to his whole estate, and fortunate it was for young Neville this event did not happen while the earl was abroad, for his father's wrath became more irreconcilable, as his power to punish him diminished. He consulted the first lawyers in the kingdom, and, miser as he was in every other respect, laid his treasures before them; the rewards he offered were profuse, you cannot therefore doubt that the gentlemen of the long robe exerted their utmost endeavours to deprive the wanderer of his right; but the rank, the power, and the friendship of the earl of Ruthven exerted in the cause of justice, proved of the most essential service to Mr. Neville: his lordship was entirely ignorant on what part of the continent this strange man resided—his residence and manner of conducting himself were envelop'd in a mystery lord Ruthven felt the less inclined to penetrate, as the specimens he had hitherto given of his disposition were so very unfavourable, that any new discoveries were rather to be avoided than sought; the only means by which it was

possible to convey to him an account of the state of his affairs in England, were through a banker at Paris, to whom an express was immediately forwarded, which brought Mr. Neville to England.

Public prejudice is almost as unstable as public favour; time had entirely done away all the aggravating circumstances attending the seduction of Miss Woodburn, and the consequent death of her brother, before Neville's return, and the earl's fortune and interest were both so successfully made use of on the trial, that he was honourably acquitted of the murder, and at liberty, if he had chose it, to continue in his native country.

He was invited by Lord Ruthven to reside with him till his father should be no more, but he declined making his stay then in England, as he had some affairs (he said) to settle on the continent which would demand his personal attendance. Yet gratitude, and politeness, in which last at least he was by no means deficient, would not permit him to leave his country, without paying his devoirs to the countess, who was then very ill at Ruthven-house.

He accordingly accompanied the earl home, after the trial, and was met some miles from Ruthven, by a cavalcade of the earl's tenants, who paid him this mark of respect in compliment to their noble landlord.

At Ruthven, the house and garden (both of which are magnificent) were illuminated in the most superb style, and the gates thrown open, for the entertainment of the populace, whose acclamations on the road, the elegant groups who were assembled, by invitation, on purpose to congratulate him on the happy event of the trial, the visible transport of the dying relation, who had been so indulgent to the criminal excesses of his youth, and lastly, the modest unaffected welcome of the young and blooming Lady Mary, assailing at once a heart ever open to the impressions of vanity, and yielding to beauty, who will be surprised his was conquered by such favour, from such objects: his return to the continent was no longer insisted on, and all the mighty concerns which prevented his accepting Lord Ruthven's invitation to reside with the family, settled by a single glance from Lady Mary's fine eyes.

Mr. Neville had at various times been captivated with every sort of beauty, his fickle heart had by turns wore the chains of all that might be esteemed lovely in woman, but far different were now the sensations that filled his ideas to any he had before experienced; he saw his cousin, and seeing adored her—her beauty inspired him with a passion, as new as unconquerable; all that he had hitherto admired in other women, appeared to be united in her; he had seen the Venus de Medecis, and admired the brown beauty of that of Colona, but what were these in comparison with the charming Lady Mary; her wit at once poignant and pleasing, and the sensibility beaming from her sparkling eyes, captivated his understanding, as much as her personal attractions fired his imagination; then the honours and wealth she was heir to, gratified his utmost ambition; here then, at last, the wanderer was fixed, here was the magnet, which only had power to draw to one point, that heart—which had varied to all parts of the compass.

The evening ball was opened by the two cousins, Lady Ruthven would have it so, and saw with tears of pleasure, as she sat supported by pillows in her easy chair, the admiration they excited; the day which began in festivity, ended in the most joyful exhilaration of spirits, and the company separated to their respective apartments to court that rest, which was only denied to Mr. Neville.

He had, during his absence from England, greatly improved his manners and understanding, without, I fear, bettering his heart; he threw himself on his bed, ill enough disposed for sleep, and abandoned himself to reflection; it is true he saw the golden fleece within his grasp, but yet difficulties innumerable started in his way, and vain as he was, the improbables in his present pursuit, struck most forcibly on his mind, for however willing the earl had been to adopt the partiality of his lady, he could not help allowing, that it was not to be hoped either of them would be so prejudiced in his favour, as to disregard a single point essential to the happiness of their only child, and he had not only to court the affections of a young woman of fashion, whose natural good sense, as well as her familiar intercourse with the great world, would render her no very easy conquest, but he had also to combat with the fixed, and perhaps unfavourable, opinion of her parents, who he feared, too probably would consider the patronizing a wild relation, and the giving him their darling daughter, in two very different lights; but Mr. Neville, although he had in respect to Lady Mary, certainly a heart to love, had also, as I before observed, a head fertile in contrivance, and nil desperando was his favourite motto; every interview during his stay at Ruthven, added to, and confirmed his passion for his fair cousin, and had it not been for the consolation, and hope his remarks on the manners and disposition of the family gave him, he has since often declared he would have ended his life at her feet.

Lady Ruthven's unabated fondness for him, however, prevented him from having the dreadful sin of suicide added to the long catalogue of his vices, and he, who well knew when to seize the yielding moment, threw himself at her feet, confessed at once his love and demerits, yet pleaded the fond violence of his passions, and implored her sanction to his addressing her daughter, in the same breath that he vowed not to outlive her rejection.

The surprise into which this declaration threw her ladyship, was no sooner subsided, than the fondness she had always felt for her young cousin, returned in full force; his passion for her beloved child, was by no means an unpardonable offence, and she immediately recollected, that as all the great Neville estates must centre in him, he would by that means be, in point of affluence, the greatest offer that her daughter had hitherto received, nor can it be supposed, that among the agreeables which opened to Lady Ruthven's view on this occasion, the uniting the wealth of her own family, to the splendor of her lord's, were forgotten. Mr. Neville was untitled, but would not that circumstance render his alliance the more acceptable to Lord Ruthven, who was excessively attached to his family honours? could their future son-in-law possibly object to taking the name and title of the earl, when such noble fortunes would be blended in support of his dignity? Neville had to be sure been wild, very wild, but his good heart, of which Lady Ruthven entertained no doubt, and his fine understanding, which all the

world allowed, were unquestionable sureties that his professions of reformation were sincere.

Those arguments in favour of Mr. Neville's pretensions, having the solid advantage of family interest to back them, were no sooner acceded to by Lady Ruthven, then they were approved of by her lord, whose desires, wishes, and opinions were entirely the result of hers.

The declining health and very precarious existence of Lady Ruthven, added to her earnest desire to see the marriage, between the two persons so dear to her, take place, furnished pleas for bringing the treaty to a speedy conclusion, which Mr. Neville did not fail to turn to his advantage.

You will observe, that in no stage of this business, were Moncrass, his pretensions, or Lady Mary's former attachment to him, mentioned; the match with her cousin was proposed to her under the avowed sanction of a dying mother, the approbation of a respected and beloved father, the wishes of the families on both sides, excepting only Mr. Neville's father, who ever continued obdurate, and the most ardent and respectful protestations of the inviolable affections of a young man, who had always a sufficient degree of art to bring his fine person and accomplishments very forward on the canvas, while he had cunning to hide the deformity of his soul in the back ground.

Cloaths, equipage, jewels, splendour, in possession, and titles in reversion, were the brilliant appendages to this alliance, and having obtained a kind of indolent consent, extorted rather than given, to her mother's earnest wish from Lady Mary, the lover departed to the continent, to settle his affairs—possibly to get rid of a mistress, and lady Ruthven, now fonder of life than ever, engaged that herself and family should meet him at Montpellier, but death, the long expected finale to that lady's excursions, put a period to her existence within a few days after Mr. Neville left England.

And now, having taken up the pen to oblige my daughter; I would wish her, as thank heaven, she is recovered, to resume it; and pursue the history of lady Mary Neville; but the encroacher begs me to bring it down to the present time; and as she possesses in a very full degree the power of carrying every point with me; I shall, in a post or two proceed in my narrative; and desire you will, in the mean time, rank in the number of your warmest friends, yours,

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

## LETTER XXVI.

*Mrs. Butler in continuation.*

Soho-Square.

LADY Ruthven's death plunged the Earl, who tenderly loved her, into such an excess of grief; that it was feared he would not long survive her; Lady Mary was also extremely affected; but young minds have so much to hope in the future, and those of the Earl's experience and time of life so little, that there was all the difference in the world in their manner of feeling the death of the Countess: The Earl's grief grew stronger as Lady Mary's gave way; time, by degrees, weaned her memory from a mother who was always either an invalid, or immersed in dissipation; while it perpetually represented to his, the sweet companion of his youth, the woman he esteemed, the wife he adored; and his nervous system suffered so much, that it was now necessary, on account of *his* health, the Montpellier journey should be taken.

Mr. Neville heard with extreme regret, of the loss he had sustained; he hastened with a mixture of anxiety and fear, to Montpellier; where he waited, as you may imagine, with great impatience the commands of Lord Ruthven.

Lady Mary felt little inclination towards the completion of her engagements; but what was a father's advice *only*, while her mother lived; was now she was no more, an absolute command: He flew into transports of grief, and passion, at the remotest hint of her wish to evade, or delay the injunctions of his beloved wife; and perhaps a suspicion that she intended to protract, if not wholly avoid the marriage, hurried their journey to the continent; where, as I before said, I, by their desire met them; and in eight days after our arrival, the marriage was celebrated with the utmost privacy, on account of our recent loss: Our mourning was laid aside one day in compliment to the living, and it was resumed the next in respect to the dead.

The evening preceding her marriage, I received a summons, to attend the bride in her private apartment.

My own heart was so opprest with sorrow, and I was at that time so ill qualified to comfort others; that I was satisfied it was in kindness to me, Lady Mary had dispensed with my company, in her hours of retirement. It was, however, so natural for a young person on such an interesting occasion, to wish for a companion of her own sex, that I was not surprised at her message.

I found her, pensively looking at a miniature, which she held in her hand; she motioned to a chair without speaking, and when I was seated, turned the face of the picture towards me, when I discovered, with astonishment, it was Moncrass.

It is (said she, deeply sighing) three years since I saw this obdurate face: I am now on the point of avowing love and obedience to another. I sent for you, dear Constance, to indulge myself in the sad pleasure of speaking, for the last time, of that unfortunate man—does he yet exist?—have you ever heard any tidings of him?—does he? but do not tell me if he does; it is now too late, were I convinced I yet held a place in his heart, for me to think of him with innocence—you are surprised—you thought the various scenes of dissipation, and pleasure, in which I have been engaged; the number of men who have affected to sigh for me, and his cruel adherence to rectitude, had erased him from my memory; you are mistaken; all sense of delight must be dead in my bosom, when it ceases to throb at the sight of this picture; all power to distinguish between right, and wrong, lost, when I forget his honour, his misfortunes, and his self-denial; it was not a common attachment, could give me courage to offer myself to his acceptance: No! Constance—nor was it a common object who inspired that attachment. I saw the young hero superior to misfortune, he had lost his family honours, and inheritance—but his firm soul was all itself, and the chief of the first house in Scotland, dignified the paltry promotion which he had more than earned: when I felt my heart involuntarily spring to his melting eyes, it was not merely to the object of my choice; it was to the brave man struggling with adversity—to the hero, whose fame should have reached the heavens; his rejection of me, which this letter contains, would have drawn me after him, to the verge of the earth, had I been in possession of an independant fortune; but certain my father would never receive a proscribed rebel for his son—that my mother's heart would have broken, and that I should not only incur his narrow circumstances, but perhaps, by uniting my fate to his, draw the further vengeance of providence on his guiltless head, for taking a parricide to his heart; what could I do but give him up? and now, my dear Constance, answer my first question: does he exist?

My husband, I told her, had made constant enquiries after him, and we had the pleasure to hear he was in health, but I added, he had not wrote to us.

Well, said she, concealing a falling tear with the picture; I rejoice he is well, but—she hesitated and blushed—and after a pause proceeded:

‘Has there not been a report, a kind of whisper’—and her agitation was so great, her voice, imperceptibly to herself, drop'd so low, I could but just hear her articulate—‘that he is married.’

As she had not before mentioned the name of Moncrass, I had not thought it proper, on my part, to revive a subject, I had every reason to suppose she had ceased to remember. But now, that the manner in which she had made her enquiry convinced me, she had still an interest in the fortunes of Mr. Moncrass; I was about to inform her of every particular, that had reached us, concerning his marriage; but as soon as I had confirmed the report she had heard—Enough—enough, (cried she) with quickness, if he is but happy, and content—she stopped, and gave vent to a gush of tears, and with an affecting dignity in her manner—this picture, cousin, (said she) no matter how I came by it—it cost me some pains, and expence; and this letter, you remember it.—It was that the colonel sent her at parting.—They are very dear to Mary Ruthven; but, Mary Neville should be a stranger to the emotions they occasion; take therefore the dear, dangerous

reliques; do not destroy them, but if you outlive me, and can do it with propriety, lay them on my bosom;—let them be buried with me; and then pressing them to her lips, and to her heart, she gave them into my possession, and after affectionately embracing me, retired to her closet. I saw her no more till she was attired for the altar next morning, when she gave her hand to Mr. Neville.

Never have I seen in any man, such an unbounded, such a frantic joy, as that which appeared to agitate the bridegroom, both during the ceremony, and after it was concluded. The whole of his behaviour indeed, from the instant the indissoluble knot was tied, to the moment when it pleased God to call him to himself, favoured of insanity.

It was the intention of the Earl, and his daughter, to winter at Montpellier; but the spirit of Neville might be truly said to be a perturbed one: ever restless and dissatisfied; a superstitious person would certainly say the injured ghosts of young Woodburne and his sister, haunted him; many of the dismal relations, every country village abounds in, had not, I dare to say, half such apparent grounds for their origin.

Neville hated, he said, Montpellier; he longed to retire into Rutlandshire; where the Earl had presented him with the fine old seat, where you was first introduced to Lady Mary; nor would he suffer them to rest, till he had carried his point, in separating his wife from her father.

I have great reason to believe, the Earl very early saw the wretched choice the Countess, and himself had made for their child; yet, when I consider his haughty temper, I cannot sufficiently admire the patience, and forbearance of his conduct to Neville; he endeavoured by gentle, and persuasive means, to soothe the savage ferocity of a temper, which ought, in common policy, to have been subservient to him; and when he found *that* impossible, always took care to let his giving up his own wish, appear like the consequence of a conviction that he was wrong; in order to avoid any thing, that might lead to future altercations; but every day's experience of Neville's unhappy disposition, added to the anxiety of his mind; would, I really believe, have put an end to his life; had he not suffered himself to be persuaded to submit to the separation so ardently desired by Neville.

As to Lady Mary—when her husband broke out into passions that transformed him to a fury; which, after he had once dropt the mask, happened on the most trivial occasions—I have seen her stand aghast; cold shivering fits would seize her whole frame, the blood forsook her cheeks; and, till relieved by a shower of tears, she would look the picture of despair.

Then, his transports would be as violent another way; he fell at her feet, addressed her by the most endearing epithets; wept himself; laid the blame on the climate, the place, and the people; all of whom he detested. In England all would be well—

To England then go, sir, said the Earl, after one of those extraordinary scenes: but beware how you continue to give way to the wicked violence of your temper; Lady Mary's life shall *not* be sacrificed to a lunatic. Alarmed at this threat, he affected a perfect

resignation to the will of Lord Ruthven; in a moment, the harmony of his features returned; he entreated pardon, promised to subdue his passions, and for fourteen days after, (we were no longer together) he was the humble, the insinuating, Neville, we had seen him before his marriage.

Lady Mary wish'd me to stay with her father, at Montpellier; his Lordship, as earnestly pressed me to accompany his daughter; and my own inclinations bent towards England, where my eldest son, (whom I had not seen, almost from his birth) was under the care of his grandmother; but Lord Ruthven's ill state of health, so affected his amiable, (and as she scrupled not to call herself to me) his miserable daughter; that I relinquished my own desire to return home, in compassion to her: I saw how her affectionate heart hung on her father, how severe the conflict between duty to her husband, and filial fondness for a beloved parent: what! said she, clasping my neck, is it not enough, his child—her whose whole life would have been too happy, spent in the delightful offices of soothing his painful hours, and attending his sick couch, should be torn from his dear parental arms, but must every body desert him? Oh! my good cousin, if ever I was dear to you, stay with my father; it will be a comfort to me, when, perhaps, I may have no other.

Ah! my poor cousin, thought I; thy comforts are reduced to a very narrow compass. I complied with her entreaties, and it is now a great satisfaction to me that I did so. The poor Earl was very near sinking under the sorrows of his heart, and the disorders of his body; we staid two years on the continent, rambling from air, to air, at the discretion of our physicians, and then returned to England; the Earl much mended in health, but distracted at the accounts we heard from others, for Lady Mary never complained of her wretchedness, and Neville's villany.

To trace this bad man, through all the extravagancies of his conduct; would be to revive the most distressful periods of my life; without entertaining you.

That Neville loved his wife, to a degree of adoration, I will not deny; but it was the love of Herod for his Marianne; it was rage, fury, and suspicion; a glance of common civility, marked the person on whom it was bestowed for hatred and revenge; he insisted on her confining herself to her apartments, first at Belle-Vue; and after his father's death, at Neville-abbey; he allowed her no society, and even her books, were often in his mad fits taken away. She loves not me he would say; I know I am the object of her hatred; she delights not in my society, I am a basilisk to her eyes; and shall I, who doat on her, suffer her to know pleasure when I am on the rack? no, I am miserable, let her be also wretched. Wicked wretch! how impotent was thy malice? my friend found that resource in her own bosom, conscience denied thee; "She received his injuries with all the calm fortitude of heroic patience; she firmly relied that providence would either put an end to her misfortunes, or support her under them; and with that animating hope, she seemed to feel less for herself, then for the author of her sufferings."

Lord Ruthven, less patient than his unhappy daughter; often vainly implored her to leave the barbarian, and put herself under his protection; and after bearing some years with Neville's atrocious behaviour, merely to enjoy the sad privilege of weeping over

his lovely child, two or three times in the year; worn out at length with vexation, and unable to prevail on her to separate herself from her unworthy husband; he gave up that poor consolation, and retired to Ruthven-house. I must not omit informing you, Miss Julia Neville was born in the first year of those inauspicious nuptials.

I defy any one to account for it, for Neville never gave a reason for any of his freaks; but I, who detested him, was, some how in tolerable estimation with him; but the utmost advantage I could make of his favour, was to prevail on him to suffer me to spend one month with my cousin every year; during that whole period, the man was in agonies; he could not bear we should be a moment alone together; fearing, as he confessed, I should inform her of some nonsense, the world might report concerning him.

The world was, indeed, pretty well informed; but I was too much interested in the peace of Lord Ruthven, and my friend; to repeat to either, what I could not help hearing. There was nothing vile in man, which common fame did not impute to him; innumerable were the stories circulated of his conduct, both towards his wife, and many others; some true, and (as is generally the case,) some false; nay, it was once confidently said, a young foreigner followed him to England, and claimed him as her lawful husband; but the matter after making a great noise, was suddenly hushed up, no body knew how.

For my own part, I believed him capable of any thing, where he was sure of his own safety: For when any danger immediately threatened himself, there did not breathe a more abject spirit; and yet he was, at his outset in life, said not to want courage; but vice, my dear sir, is a great enervator of the soul.

Lady Mary continued her exemplary conduct to the last; never did a fonder mother exist; her obedience to the will of her husband was implicit; but it was the obedience of principle, not affection; and was accompanied with a cold and feigned solemnity; which enraged Neville more than opposition, or perverseness could have done; I have often heard him swear, if she would take the trouble to contradict him, he should be happy—she never did.

At length, after spending the bloom of his life, in rendering himself terrible to his family, hateful to society, and contemptible to the world; he took cold by plunging into a river, as he was endeavouring to escape from his own game-keeper, who had caught him in the act of seducing his wife; the man either did not, or *pretended* he did not know who the delinquent was; but pursued him to the brink of the river, with an oaken trowel, which in the chase he had freely used: The water was both deep and rapid, and his career of wickedness had been then ended, had he not called aloud on his servant to, save his master, in the hearing of several passers by; who ran to his assistance, and preserved him from immediate death: But the effect of this accident, if it might be so called, was, though slow, equally sure; the cold fixed on his lungs, and inflammation followed, which terminated in what is called a galloping consumption.

The horrors of his conscience, and the death-bed retrospect of an ill-spent life, were in Mr. Neville so truly terrible, so shocking to humanity, that I hasten from the recollection of a scene, from which affrighted nature recoils. My cousin, at his desire, sent

for me to *comfort him*; poor wretch! had I not a stronger motive, so much did I abhor him, I really believe I should have rejected his summons.

The next extraordinary act of the unaccountable Neville, was to send for his wife, to his bed side; and there solemnly entreat she would comply with a request, on which his present and eternal peace, he said, depended; which he conjured her for the sake of his Julia, who stood weeping by her, not to refuse.

The end of this man was so unlike every other person, I had seen in that awful situation; one felt so *much* terror, and so *little* regret, that all the softening, and forgiving powers of a death-bed influence were annihilated: lost in the horror of the scene; the sweetness of Lady Mary's disposition, and his adjurations for the sake of her child, would certainly have prevailed on her to obey him, had I not been present; I bid him name his wish, before he extorted her promise to fulfil it:—He gave me a look—and finding she declined answering, informed us, his modest request was, that she would promise never to marry—she was silent.—Ah! said he, groaning, too well I know you will; Moncrass, your beloved Moncrass, will be your husband; you ever hated Neville!—Oh! Mary, promise me that the cursed Moncrass shall not be your choice; I leave you the whole world beside—Oh! promise, promise!—

The name of Moncrass, was an electrical shock to us both; we looked at each other, for information; it was long since I had even thought of him; he had not once, since her marriage, been the subject of our enquiry, or conversation; nor had we an idea Neville knew, or had ever heard of him.

Moncrass! cried Lady Mary, ah! where is he, does he yet exist?

Barbarous! answered Neville, is it thus you obey your husband?—thus you comply with my dying injunctions?—between consternation and terror, Lady Mary sunk into my arms.

Ah! cried he, as the intervals of pain, and weakness suffered him to speak; revive, my dearest Mary, my poor, injured,—he could then say no more, the hiccup and convulsions came on; pray for me—pity me—Oh! had I not loved as never mortal loved; the horrors of this moment had been spared me!—and then, but why should I shock my nature, or your's with the frightful description—he died the same evening. Oh! may none of our latter ends be like his.

C. BUTLER.

## LETTER XXVII.

*Mrs. Butler in continuation.*

Soho-Square.

WHEN I left Grovesnor-street, my daughter desired I would take the first convenient opportunity, to finish the history of General, and Lady Mary Moncrass; I was sorry to understand from her, you were indisposed; but hope this letter, if it does not find you perfectly recovered, will, as you say you are so much interested in the story, be a means of dispelling for awhile, the ennui of your very solitary life.

What I have further to say, will not take up such an enormous packet as the last—you may believe it is no small grief to me to reflect, that some other biographer, may have to conclude the remarkable occurrences of my friend's life, when I am perhaps no more. It is, indeed, very distressing to me, who have known, and felt with my friend, all her hopes, and fears; when providence has removed every obstacle to her happiness; to see that any should arise from the wickedness of man—more wounding to her peace, than all that has past; could my history have left her, in the quiet enjoyment of the felicity, she so eminently deserves, I should conclude it with pleasure: yet, if “whatever is, is right” why should we murmur?

Lord Ruthven, you will conclude, was not long before he embraced his daughter; his youth appeared to be renewed, and he bore the fatigue of travelling post, two hundred miles, without once getting out of his carriage, with the spirit of five and twenty—Lady Mary flew to him—I am restored to my father, cried she, and fainted in his arms.

My daughter, said the Earl, as she recovered, what hast thou not suffered—how dear has thy obedience cost thee, but never more will I attempt to bias the inclination of my child—never oppose the wish of her heart—that heart where patience, fortitude, and honour, have their residence, cannot feel an improper impulse; thy will, my daughter, shall in future be thy father's—need I say that in this hour of heartfelt gratulation, I also had my share of the good Earl's kindness.

We left Lord Ruthven at the abbey; who undertook to appoint proper people to settle Mr. Neville's affairs, and set off in his carriage to Ruthven; where we continued till the Earl joined us.

The strange man could not be persuaded to make a will; he had lived in such a contracted way, that he had not spent the tenth of his income; and what was very odd, and will serve to shew you the extreme absurdity of his character; although his domestic affairs were conducted with great parsimony, there were many thousand pounds, in each of his stewards hands, which had been suffered to accumulate from year, to year, without interest, from the time he came into the Neville estates, till his death; his personals were therefore very large, but the estates passed to a distant branch of the family in right of male inheritance; these matters were soon adjusted, and in a few months, we considered

the past troubles, merely as foils to our present happiness; we divided our time between Ruthven, and Belle-Vue, and I knew not of a wish my cousin had ungratified.

It was during one of our excursions to the latter place, when my eldest son, who was then on a visit to you, and his brother, came to pay his respects to Lady Mary.

Constance, said she, smiling, it is time Edward should go abroad; it would certainly raise a laugh were we to travel in his suite; but (again smiling) we might give him the meeting—Edward was in raptures at the idea.

Young men, I believe, seldom take Portugal in their tour, continued Lady Mary—Why not, madam, (said Edward) if to form a proper judgment of men, and manners, be the object of the grand tour, why should Portugal be passed by?—Nay, I know not, replied Lady Mary, and turning to me, I should think, cousin, some useful discoveries, or at least observations, might be made, even in the Brazils.

Agreeable one's, Lady Mary, I allow, answered I, but as to their use, you will pardon me.—Don't be a prude in your old-age, cousin, said she; I am resolved to be a traveller in mine.

I suspect as much *now*, but as Edward says, Portugal may lay in the way of the grand tour; and, as in that case, we may as well begin, as end there—why not send him to reconnoitre; a good general, cousin, will always know the state of the country through which he is to make his way.—And a smart aid-du-camp, interrupted Lady Mary, is no bad acquisition to the most experienced commander; but a thought has just struck me, will do better, than sending this poor lad in quest of adventures for me; when in all probability, he fancies himself perfectly qualified, to fight windmills, and relieve distressed damsels, on his own account.

Lady Mary was not quite so ingenuous in this matter, as I had always found her—for the truth is, the thought had *not just* struck her, it had been long planned, and digested; and only waited a proper period to be put in execution; you, Mr. Harley, must remember an absence of your worthy tutor for some months;—he was, I need not tell you, a man of strict morals, and solid understanding.

Mrs. Montford, was one among the many who paid their respects to Lady Mary on her return to Belle-Vue; she had been honoured in her younger days, with the friendship of the Ruthven family, when they occasionally visited that part of the world; and she was now, particularly anxious, to obtain the patronage of her ladyship for you: my daughter Butler, her niece, was also at that time under her protection; I perfectly remember her bringing you both with her, attended by Mr. Allen, to the old house, where now Belle-Vue stands.

Mrs. Montford was one of those ladies, who kept up the credit of a single life, by her urbanity, and good temper; she became suddenly, a prodigious favourite with Lady Mary; and at last it came out—that the result of all their closetings, was the commission my cousin gave Mr. Allen, to go to Lisbon in pursuit of Moncrass; he was now in waiting

for his final instructions; and as soon as she had concluded her last (and as it proved introductory speech) she directed a servant to inform Mr. Allen, she wished to see him.

He immediately appeared, and being furnished with proper credentials, began his journey to Lisbon the next morning;—his commission was to make every possible enquiry respecting Colonel Moncrass—his circumstances—situation in life—but above all, his domestic engagements. We returned as soon as he had departed to Ruthven; and there waited, with no small impatience, on the part of Lady Mary; the result of his enquiries.

Our first letter from Allen informed us, that the General was returned to Lisbon, older, and perhaps wiser, but not richer, than when in his youth he had left it; with the addition of a young son to educate, and provide for, out of his pay.

Moncrass had lost his wife, in bringing her son into the world, within the first year of their marriage; Don Sebastian, her father, a hale widower of fifty-six, after his daughter's death, took it into his head to supply her place, by taking a young bride—when an old man once adopts a whim of this kind, he is seldom over-nice in his choice—a buxom lass, daughter to one of his subalterns, happening to strike his fancy, he honoured her with his hand—and she in return, brought him heirs in plenty to his large fortune; whom she took care should not only inherit the governor's riches, but also engross his affections—and thus was poor Moncrass, and his son, cut off from all expectations from Don Sebastian.

The General, disgusted at this treatment from the governor, his health impaired by the climate, and tired of a situation, where his honour would not suffer him to grow rich, applied for a recall; and our enquirer found him at a small village, within a few leagues of Lisbon; where some other fugitive families, his countrymen, who had also been in the Portuguese service were settled; living with great frugality, and supplying to his son, the place of a tutor, he had not ability to pay.

Lady Mary instantly dispatched the inclosed letter: which with its answer, will render this a tolerable large packet—I shall therefore take the opportunity of closing it, and am yours affectionately

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

## LETTER XXVIII.

*Lady Mary Neville, to General Moncrass,  
inclosed in the preceding.*

Ruthven-house.

My dear General,

THIRTEEN years are now elapsed, since the most generous of men, rejected the affectionate heart of Mary Ruthven; I have the letter he then wrote, now before me; *my honour, my happiness*, and that of my parents, were pleas that were offered—in opposition to the feelings of his own heart—to the fondness of mine—those pleas he told me, were founded on the everlasting rule of right, from which *I* well knew *he* would not deviate.—Oh! thou mistaken casuist—could the fate, which thy unrelenting obstinacy exposed me to, have been known to thee—the days—years of sorrow I have endured—the insults and indignity I have suffered—lost to the blessings of mutual affection, to the joys of society; and to the endearments of my honored parent—a captive in the land of freedom—wedded to a man my heart abhorred—while every tender sentiment of my soul floated (tho' hopeless) on fancy's airy pinions in pursuit of thee—cou'dst thou have known this, at a time when thy sympathy *would* not condole, and *could* not relieve me; if I know thee, Moncrass—and I think I do, thy anguish would have been insupportable—but it is past—and my heart, my unalienable heart, which abandoned by thee, has, by turns swelled with grief, and sunk in despair; now seeks repose with thine.

Wealth, I know General Moncrass will despise, he is indeed *above* it; but he once feared to reduce his Mary to his fortunes—she exults it is now in her power, with consent of her father, to raise him to hers. He is an alien to his country. What is country but a name? a sound, a nothing. Are not the bounteous fruits of the ever-teeming earth, every where dispensed?—do not the dews of heaven fall, and one just God reign over the whole creation?—the country of a virtuous man is that where he can live, with least offence to his maker, and most benefit to his fellow creatures; and as to me, what are climes, country, kindred, to the possession of the man I love? say then, Moncrass, will you, *now at last*, all storms subsided, and peace within our reach, accept your Mary's once more offered hand? invite her to your retirement—say but she will be welcome—and believe her already on the wing to him who has ever been the *first* and *last* hope of

MARY NEVILLE.

## LETTER XIX.

*General Moncrass to Lady Mary, in answer.*

Lisbon.

WHAT shall I say to you, most lovely, and most beloved of women? how reconcile you to yourself, for having made the noble and generous offer your letter contains? or to the wretched Moncrass for rejecting it? Ah! my adored Mary, were then thy beauty, thy innocence, and thy virtue, sacrificed to one, whose barbarous heart was not congenial to thy own? who knew not, felt not, the power of thy fascinating graces? and did thy wounded, thy dejected soul, turn in tenderness to the unfortunate Moncrass?—sweet flatterer! ever charming friend! I am unequal to the task, which honor imposes—how dare I tell the woman I have ever adored, she must forget I exist? how much less, dare I rob her family, and her country, of their brightest ornament? bring a woman of rank—and *such* a woman! to associate with a set of ruined fugitives; live on her bounty—and accept from her, a fortune, which my cruel destiny, disables me from returning; and what is of the last importance, entail disgrace on her posterity. It must not be—yet believe him, who has yet to learn the art of deceit, I love—I adore you, even more than ever—were I a prince, with what pride would I invite my Mary to my arms; poor, undone, and fugitive as I am, I yet want resolution to bid you forget me.—No—madam—let me yet live in your memory, though fate forever separates you from

MONCRASS.

## LETTER XXX.

*Mrs. Butler in continuation.*

Soho-Square.

I Will suppose you have read General Moncrass's heroic billet, for it could scarce be called a letter, which we had no sooner done, then it was tossed into the fire, and as quickly rescued from the flames.

Did ever any body know any thing so vexatious? cried Lady Mary, bursting into tears—but I am determined to conquer his proud spirit; and after half an hour's conversation with the Earl, during which both our abigails and myself, were in a violent bustle—we set off under the escort of my son to Falmouth, where we fretted away a fortnight waiting for wind; at last that served, and we had a fine passage to Lisbon.

We went immediately to the hotel, where Mr. Allen waited to hear from us; and the next morning, proceeded to the residence of Moncrass.

We found the General, sitting under the shelter of some vines, with his son; to whom he was reading Fitzosborne's letters, and was in the moment we approached him, at the part of that tender one to Cleora:

“It is impossible, I perceive, to turn off the mind at once from an object which it has long dwelt upon with pleasure; my heart, like a poor bird hunted from her nest, is still returning to the place of its affections; and after some vain efforts to fly off, settles again, where all its cares, and all its tenderness are centred.”

At the conclusion of the letter, he laid down the book, and appeared to be lost in reflection.

I thought him much altered, he was sun-burnt; his hair, which was undressed and out of powder, was in many places changed, from a fine glossy black, to grey; the extreme brilliancy of his eyes, were changed, though not less pleasing, to a swimming melancholy, his figure retained its former grandeur, but there was also an interesting pensiveness, in his whole appearance.

Vanity, will certainly keep its reign in the heart of a woman, as long as it is sensible of the tender passion; Lady Mary had taken uncommon pains in the decoration of her person; she was then in her thirty-first year, a little inclined to the embonpoint, and allowing (as Hewson says) for alterations, as lovely as ever. She trembled and changed colour, as we observed him,—insomuch, that I was alarmed for her; and my emotion disturbed him—he started—and perceiving a group of strangers, was approaching us with a polite respect; but recollecting me, he again started with surprise, and again came forward, but though his eyes darted a joyful welcome, he passed me without speaking.

Lady Mary, as she told me afterwards, felt in that moment for the dignity of her sex; her conduct, in thus pursuing the General, was a kind of retrograde motion, that then displeased herself; and she had sat down, overcome with shame, at the foot of a tree, half fainting, hardly able to wipe the falling tear from her eye.

The General did not see her at first, but the moment he knew me, his heart informed him who was near, and guided him to her feet.

This interview beggar'd description, his kneeling posture was soon changed to a more endearing one; he supported her into his plain, but elegant house; and in fine, before sun-set, the heroism of self-denial was no more; romance kicked out of doors, and Lady Mary Neville, metamorphosed into Lady Mary Moncrass.

The Earl soon joined us, with Julia; who was two years younger than Reuben, the General's son; and I then left the happy groupe, to return to my own affairs in England; where in two years, I had the supreme felicity of meeting them again; his majesty having been graciously pleased to take off the attainder, against those unfortunate gentlemen, the wandering descendants of those, who had been in actual rebellion, and also restored to them their confiscated estates: the General therefore, now in possession of his natural inheritance, the weight of obligation removed from his mind, and no longer depending on the fortune of his lady, whose pride it was, nevertheless to invest him with it; had begun to taste the sweets of real felicity, or acted it extremely well; when the event happened, which has entirely destroyed the peace, and will I fear, ultimately, prey on the *life* of my friend. And we perceive, sir, in her fate, the vanity of all human foresight; two people whom kingdoms, and seas could not divide; now agree on a voluntary separation; but I must do the General justice, however changed he may be in other respects, his noble independant spirit, is still the same. He has declined retaining any part of Lady Mary's fortune, and even refused to reside in the house he rebuilt in your neighbourhood, though he is very partial to the situation, on any other terms but that of paying an equivalent, for the ground on which it stands.

I believe, sir, I have now satisfied your curiosity, and fulfilled my daughter's desire, in respect to General Moncrass and my cousin:—should any thing have escaped me, which you wish to be further informed of; I shall be very ready to resume the subject, and am, sir, &c.

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

## LETTER XXI.

*Edward Harley, Esq; to Mrs. J. Butler.*

Hermitage.

YESTERDAY, oh! my dear friends, the enchanting yesterday, I set off for Belle-Vue, after a very restless night, during which I had framed many apologies for my conduct to Agnes, but rejected them, as inadequate to what my folly required, I was, however at last, so fortunate, as to please myself in what I intended to say; nay so earnest was I in my desire, to offer such an excuse to a woman of sense, as she might accept, and so fearful of omitting any palliative circumstance, that I committed my ideas to paper; and set off to Belle-Vue early, in order to have time, should an opportunity offer, of entertaining Mademoiselle before dinner.

Within half a mile of the castle, as I crossed the common, I saw Agnes enter a little cottage in the green lane, at the back of the park paling; I knew it was impossible I could be mistaken, for though it was at a considerable distance that I saw her, there is something so peculiarly elegant, in her form, her manner, her—in short there is none like her; my heart bounded at the sight, she was alone, and unattended. I shall want courage thought I, to address her before the General, or should he be absent, there is Madame de Vallmont.

I immediately alighted, and tied my horse to the gate: I was soon at the door of the cottage, which was shut, and it was not till I had rapt with my whip, that I recollected, how extremely absurd I was acting; what excuse could I possibly make, for intruding on the privacy of a lady, to whose connections and conduct, I was so great a stranger?

I was interrupted in a train of unpleasing ideas, which were crowding on my imagination, and prevented from returning to my horse, by the appearance of a youth about seventeen, in a ragged black coat, who approached the door, with a basket in his hand, and, as he with great caution opened the latch, in a very low voice demanded my business; it was no easy matter you will allow, for me to tell the lad, what I did not know myself; after waiting a moment for an answer, I was not prepared to give him.—

Oh! I know, said he, appearing to recollect, be pleased to walk in; which I did, into a miserable apartment through which he went on beckoning me to follow, to the foot of a little pair of stairs, where he took off his shoes, and ascended. My curiosity was now greatly excited—where could Agnes be?—and what her business in such a place as that? at all events I was determined to know; yet I stopt involuntary at the chamber door—where I heard whispering from different voices, and a decent elderly woman, prayed I would walk in, there, Oh! Butler—

There I beheld the lovely Agnes, sitting at the side of sickness, and heart-rending sorrow—Oh! how divinely animated was her countenance, what beams of celestial fire darted from her lovely eyes, what a glow of sensibility irradiated her countenance.

A young girl was kneeling at her feet—the lad who had opened the basket, stood behind the chair, while she smelled, as if to try their efficacy, some sal volatile drops; on the bed lay the emaciated form of an elderly woman, at that moment offering up thanksgiving, and prayers, for the heavenly creature, who had supplied her wants, and who had given peace to her departing spirit, by a firm promise to protect her children.

The surprise of Agnes, at sight of me, was visible; her face was crimsoned over. Mr. Harley, said she, is it you?—for heavens sake what brings you here? did not you say, (turning to the boy) it was the doctor?  
He verily thought so, he answered.

Whoever you are, sir, said the sick woman, bear witness to the goodness of that angel—hear my grateful prayers, for my gentle benefactress; and let not her sweet example be lost to the world. Behold the widow's heart, rendered joyful, even in the pangs of death; hear her speak comfort to my poor orphans, and oh! may angels waft her goodness; to the throne of the prince of peace.

There was something in this address much superior to what I expected in such a place; which added to the solemnity of the scene, and the placid look of the angel, who illumined it; so affected me, I cannot describe it, I could scarce refrain from prostration at her feet; and should certainly have done it, had not the doctor, for whom the lad had mistaken me, just then entered.

Agnes, the adorable Agnes! then arose, and retired with him to the further end of the room; after some little conversation, the doctor approached the sick bed—and Agnes with inimitable grace, presented me her hand; *here* sir, said she, looking round her—you will perhaps trust yourself with *me*—I led her down the stairs, she took her umbrella, and again presenting her hand—in this place, Mr. Harley, continued she; the inmates of your favourite grove are strangers; it is long since happiness, peace, or contentment, have entered this dwelling.

And yet—madam, I found *you* there.

Yes, returned she, and you are surprised at it.

That poor woman, is the widow of a clergyman, the curate of a neighbouring parish, whose life was a sacrifice to the duty of his profession; being called to perform the last holy office, to one of his flock, in a putrid fever; he caught the infection and died—leaving his widow, and those two children, totally destitute; grief and want has reduced the widow to the situation you have seen—shame, and a false shame I think it was; (since every body knows the liberal heart of General Moncrass) prevented her owning her poverty, 'till *she* was dying—and the children almost starved. I am the General's almoner on these occasions; but how came you to drop in?—yet why do I ask?—your philanthropy, my philosopher, is much better known than your person.

What could be the reason, having followed her into the cottage, for the express purpose of apologising for my behaviour to her yesterday; that I could neither avow it, or avail myself of the opportunity which chance had afforded me, of delivering the

harrangue, I had taken such pains to compose? studied speeches, like after wit, are generally out of time; and the truth is, I forgot every syllable of mine.

Agnes ascribed my visit at the cottage to a motive, I knew I did not merit—but it was in vain, that I called to my recollection, the meanness of attributing, or suffering her to attribute it to charity; my heart told me it was wrong, that in this instance the suffering her to continue in her mistake, was an act of deceit; all this I felt; yet could I not, had my existence depended on it, have assigned this interview to its real cause; but, as we proceeded in our walk towards Belle-Vue, I felt myself less constrained; she was in remarkable high spirits, and so blended her fine understanding, with good humour, that I was in raptures; and could very justly say of her, what the friend of Euphrates said of that wise man: “her conversation so captivates your attention, that you hang as it were upon her lips, and even after the heart is convinced; the ear still wishes to hang on the harmonious reasoner.”

Before we reached the house, I had got the better of my irresolution, timidity, or what you please to call it—I could do justice to the benevolence of her soul, the elegance of her manners, and the sweetness of her disposition; her eyes became less brilliant, but more beautiful, (yet how could that be) than when I met her at the cottage; she hung on my arm, flattered me with her esteem, said, she believed there was a likeness in our dispositions, a parity of sentiments, that might, she believed, conciliate a virtuous friendship; if I was one of those, who allowed such a thing might exist; between two young people of a different sex. She is ingenuity itself, and the primitive simplicity of the graces is in all she utters. Was it strange, so charmed, so engaged, and so favor'd; I entirely forgot where I had left my horse, 'till on entering the house, still arm in arm; the divine woman took hold of the general, with her other arm; and walking between us, round the saloon, repeated to him, every circumstance of our accidental meeting; on which he asked me, smiling, if I had walk'd so far, for my health this morning? I then recollected the situation in which I left my horse, and confess'd, that I had found Miss de Courci's conversation so fascinating, it had entirely shut out all the rest of the world; he was so good as to direct a groom to take my orders; but the creature had no sympathy, the degenerate houyhnhnms had got loose, and taken himself quietly home, unmindful of the poor yahoo his master; a circumstance not altogether pleasing to Benson, who was perfectly sure when she saw him return, I had met with some accident; in consequence of which, all my own people, with half the rabble of the village at their heels, came posting down to Belle-Vue, enquiring all the way, whether any of his honor's stray limbs had been seen.

Good heavens! cried Madame de Vallmont, as we sat at dinner, opposite the bow window, which commands the road; where are all those people driving? what can possibly be the matter? it was a sight perfectly new at Belle-Vue, though the good creatures often favour *me*, with their company in scores; a servant was dispatched to make enquiries, and returned with a dismal account of “as how 'squire Harley had rode out in the morning, and sure, and sarten broke his neck, because as how the horse was come home with all his tackle loose.” This was ridiculous enough, you'll say, but I have forgiven William, who was out of the way without leave, or would have behaved more reasonably; and I have given Benson a new gown, because, in the first place, the General

was pleased to express himself delighted at such proofs of affection from my servants, and poor neighbours; and because it called the tear into the eye of Agnes, who gave her own orders the honest creatures should be regaled with cold meat and strong beer; and because, Butler, she again presented me her soft hand, and would walk between me and the General to the servant's-hall, to convince them 'squire Harley was alive and well.

What more passed, before—afterwards, or at the time; I protest I know not: the General, Agnes, and Madame de Vallmont; were so obliging as to set me down at the foot of our hill; from whence I watched the return of the carriage, 'till "Darkness hover'd o'er the ground." When I returned to communicate to you, the happiness of your

EDWARD HARLEY.

## LETTER XXXII.

*Edward Harley, Esq; to S. Butler, Esq;*

Hermitage.

I Dined yesterday, by invitation, at Belle-Vue; it was the birth-day anniversary of the prince, in whose service, the General passed the early part of his life; and is always observed with splendour, and magnificence, at whatever place he happens to be; the General was seated at the head of his own table, Miss de Courci on his right hand, and Madame de Vallmont on his left; the guests were seventeen in number besides myself, and all gentlemen: our host, was all that wit, wine, and good humour could make him; it is his custom, he informed us on this anniversary, to do all possible honour to the king of Portugal; bon mots, and repartees, flew about; a band of music played during the time of our dining, the ladies, in compliment to the General, were also very chearful, wine, and music, were blended with the sallies of lively imaginations, and thought was—

No, it was *not* banish'd; my soul sunk within me, when I beheld the charming Agnes, her whose feeling heart, whose benevolent tenderness, and whose modest ingenuity; had so charmed me in our walk from the cottage; when I beheld, and considered her, all lovely as she is, the property of libertism: ah! Butler, how was it possible I could enter into the festivity of the day; she withdrew after dinner, rather earlier than usual, what would I not have given to have attended her? but custom, tyrant custom forbad it; yet the aching void she left in my heart, rendered me almost insensible; amidst the roar of mirth, I was inanimate; and wine, instead of having the usual effect of exhilarating my spirits, served only to depress them the more.

At last the welcome summons to the tea-table, changed the scene; which was no sooner removed, then the General led the devoted Agnes to the organ; where she played and sung, for the amusement of men, whose soberest faculties could not have done justice to her taste and execution; and who now, heated with wine; dishonoured her by their vociferous applause: Ah! Butler! how I felt for her—for her sex—for my *own*.

A magnificent supper, concluded the festivity of the day; the General insisted on my taking a bed at Belle-Vue, as it was very late, or rather early before the guests separated: Agnes did not appear at supper, I indeed could well spare *her* from such a party; her absence now was pleasing to me, I rejoiced at it—and it was the first time I could do so.

I arose this morning rather before my usual hour, and walked into the air, in hopes to get rid of a violent pain in my head; and had the pleasure of meeting Miss de Courci on the terrace; my head-ach vanished at her sight, but ah! Butler, where is the prescription, which will remove, the still more acute pain of my heart.—Three hours we loitered in this delightful walk, occasionally resting on one, or other of the garden seats; three hours, I had the felicity to entertain, and be entertained by her; what transporting sensations are created by friendship for such a woman; could the sensualist, whose insatiate appetite

roves without true pleasure, because without sensibility, in quest of variety; could the libertine, who triumphs in the fall of innocence, without daring to say *he* has tasted unalloyed happiness; could they experience the feelings of a heart, so fraught with friendship, as mine for Agnes; they would acknowledge the futility, the vanity of their own pursuits; and devote themselves to a platonic regard, for such a woman, if such there be, as Agnes de Courci.

With her I am not in danger, I may indulge the thrilling partiality of my soul for her, without injury to *her* peace, or risk to my own; I cannot involve *her* in the inconveniences of my small fortune; I cannot marry *her*, and how can I regret, that I have not that in my power; yet Butler, it is a solemn truth, that in her society, I could forget the world.

EDWARD HARLEY.

## LETTER XXXIII.

*J. Butler, Esq; to Edward Harley, Esq;*

My dear Edward,

CAROLINE being yet forbid writing, I take at her request, one half hour, before I leave town, to say to you, a great deal from her, and a few words from myself. In the first place then, she says, that although she certainly did express great curiosity respecting the favorite of General Moncrass; it was very far from her *wish*, or expectation, that a woman of *her* character, should so entirely engross the attention of her dear Harley; she is alarmed at the extreme pleasure, you take in her society; which she thinks is an impeachment of your understanding; and wishes you to remember, the old axiom, of evil communications, &c. she bargained to be told, as in the case of Patty Lucas; all the rural transactions of your village, which you seem entirely now to neglect; and to substitute in their room, observations, and events, which are so full of Agnes, that they are like the feast of Boileau, every dish savours of nutmeg; and would, were she not certain of the innate rectitude, and honest pride of your heart, make her tremble for your peace, for with such a right turned mind as yours, utter ruin, she thinks, would be the consequence, of your imbibing a passion, incompatible with honor, and reason; she therefore implores you to guard your heart, against the Circe of Belle-Vue.

So much for Caroline, and now Edward, a word, or two, from myself.

This Agnes, all the world allows is a very fine girl, she is, you say, pleasing in her manner, sensible, engaging, and accomplished; she has even the art, for art depend upon it, it is; to affect that certain delicacy, that truly feminine something, to which the hearts of men of understanding, oftener pay homage, than to beauty; *there is none like her*; upon my word, Mr. Edward Harley, you go great lengths in this fair ones commendation; and were there not a few insurmountable buts in the way, I should, as Caroline says, tremble for you myself—you are a little touched I believe, but 'tis not from the aforesaid buts, I dare say any thing more than a mere scratch; it is impossible, a toy, a woman kept for the purpose of vice, by an old married man, can have made a serious impression on Edward Harley; I do not suffer myself to suppose it; while therefore, you find you can play with your partiality for her, I shall be glad to hear you indulge it; because if you once become attached to the society of sprightly females, the next step will be to leave a place where they *are not*, and remove to where they *are* to be found; so far, so good; but Edward, if on the contrary, you feel this woman grows of importance to your happiness; order your chaise and fly immediately; there is no alternative—you esteem the General, but you would not marry his mistress; nor would you rival him, in the affection of a woman he has given such proofs of loving, even if it were in your power, or if you did, success in this case, would be destruction; remember therefore, there is as much honor, in a well conducted retreat, as in conquest; but one word more of Caroline, she insists on your continuing an unreserved correspondence, as she cannot else flatter herself, you take in good part, the friendly solicitude for your welfare, ever felt by,

Dear Ned, your truly affectionate

JAMES  
CAROLINE BUTLER.

## LETTER XXXIV.

*Edward Harley, Esq; to J. Butler, Esq;*

Hermitage.

WHAT shall I say to you, my brother, my sister, your cautions are well meant, but if your surmises are just, they come too late to be of any service to me; certain it is, this woman fills my soul, the woman whose conduct *you* say, and I cannot deny, is an offence to virtue, occupies the whole heart of him who would not swerve from her strictest rule.

*Rival the General:—marry his mistress:—*how my principles reject the one supposition, and my honor the other; to fly then is your alternative. Ah! Butler! leave her—see her no more—where—in what distant clime—among what race of beings could I forget her? where is it her image would not pursue me? where would the soft sound of her voice, be lost on my ears? what amusements? what avocations would exclude her from my ideas? would the hardest labour, take from my hand, the trembling sensibility, a touch from hers occasions? my mind is against her, but my heart is subjugated: If I appeal to reason, what will that avail me?—I have already made the experiment—reason only points out to me her thousand excellencies—it applauds her judgment—echoes her sentiments, and repeats her very words; I oppose the precepts of morality—which have been the guide of my own actions—against the imputed enormity of hers—but in vain—her charity, her benevolence, and sweet disposition; are a standard of morality, more lovely, and more attractive, than all philosophy ever taught; I have no happiness but in her society—and have not resolution to tear myself from her. I am now a constant visitor at Belle-View, or rather, I am perfectly at home there.

We walk out—we ride—we converse—and form the most happy parties together; the General and Madame de Vallmont are an addition, but no interruption to our society, because we are not conscious of a meaning, it is improper for them to develope; I have the honor, frequently, to give them tea at my Hermitage; and sometimes she drops in alone; she paints with exquisite taste, my library is adorned with many of her pieces—and I have some of her poetry, which would convince my Caroline, if she is lost to virtue, it is not by choice.

But she is here, my soul bounds at her approach, oh! how my senses ach at her.

My hand, which ever trembles when I write of her, had spots of ink on it.

You are writing, Mr. Harley, said she.

I own'd I was.

I would venture a trifling wager now, by that guilty look I was your subject, come, let me see how I look on your paper; and she was actually proceeding to the library—

I trembling seized her hand.

She saw my confusion, which I believe raised her curiosity—she struggled—fear of offending rendered me resolute—she said I hurt her hand, and burst into tears.

Wretch! that I was—*I* excited those tears—I gave pain to the *heart* of Agnes, for sure I am I did not hurt her hand.

I threw myself at her feet—dearest Agnes—do not kill me with the sight of those precious drops.

Her tears continued to flow.

I was half distracted—I attempted in vain to soothe her—she turn'd from me with displeasure—it was the first frown I had ever seen on her brow, it almost took from me the power to breathe—I flew to my library, and fetch'd the unfinished letter—

Here thou irresistible woman, cried I, in anguish; this is the letter I was writing—*you are* the subject—read it—and then compleat my fate—banish me from your friendship, and presence forever—

Pleasure again resumed her natural throne—the eyes of Agnes sparkled—every trace of vexation vanished, and the dreadful frown was no more; No, Mr. Harley, said she, I will not accept of an extorted confidence; nor believe, though attested by yourself, *you could* write, what were I to read, would lose you my friendship; put up your letter my philosopher—and extending her hand—let us be friends.

On my knees I took the dear pledge of peace and pressed it ardently to my lips.

Oh! Agnes, Agnes, never—never more venture at such an act of reconciliation; in that moment—

Butler let not my sister know my weakness.

In that moment, all my boasted fortitude had near forsaken me; I tremble at my own ideas—yes—in that moment, I forgot what was due to myself—and to *her*—the obstacles to an *honorable* union; the infamy of a *vicious* one; passion, wild and ungovernable, took possession of my whole soul; the dear Agnes melted at the emotions she had occasioned—looked—but let me forever forget her looks—for while I knelt before her, I remembered only that *she* was lovely, and that *I* adored her.

Happily however, before an act, a word had escaped me, to confirm the wild disorder of my looks; recollection flashed like fire on my brain—the strong sensations of my mind, the inward conviction of latent guilt, and ingratitude, actually existing in my soul, under the plausible form of platonic friendship, overcame me—a darkness, which I can only liken to what I conceive of Milton's meaning, when he speaks of

“Darkness visible”  
came before my eyes; I fell back.

Agnes shrieked and called for help—she flew to support me, but her weak efforts could not prevent my sinking on the ground—my servants, who now entered, helped to raise me, I soon recovered; and they left the room.

How you have frightened me, Mr. Harley, said she, taking my hand—  
To her astonishment, I snatched it from her,  
Tears again gushed from her eyes—and I was again frantic; I besought her to leave me—bid her, who had the world at her command, not to associate with misery—  
She wept without answering—

Oh! Agnes, cried I, I conjure you to leave me—on my knees I conjure you—you are not safe with me—I am not to be trusted—return to your protector—I am miserable—but I would not make you so—leave me to my fate.

If you wish me gone, Mr. Harley (said she) in a tender accent, I will certainly oblige you—but something has disturbed and perhaps afflicted you—compose yourself—then if you say you are weary of my friendship, and desire my absence, I will instantly leave you; she turned from me to the window—I followed her—tears were in her eyes—

Do you really wish me gone, Mr. Harley? said she, in a voice scarce articulate. What could I say?

She continued with me so late, that we did not reach Belle-Vue 'till dinner was served—I returned in the evening, and found this once dear paradise a desert.

The poor widow is dead—I took her weeping son from the grave of his mother, as Agnes did the daughter; how eloquent is he in her praise—shunning ostentation in all her charities, she attributes to the General's command, the relief her own heart communicates.

You may truly say, Caroline, that I neglect the rural occurrences of my own village—I am even so abstracted, from every concern, in which Agnes has not a share; that I am become a stranger in my own house; the old gardener with tiresome assiduity, talks of this improvement, and that plantation; if I hear him, it is with a distasteful apathy, if by accident he meets me in the grove, and points out to my observation, any of the mighty things on which he is so intent, I see them indeed, but it is with a vacant eye; yet, do not chide, my beloved sister, the heart, which with all its frailties, will ever be warmly, and affectionately devoted to you.

EDWARD HARLEY.

## LETTER XXXII.

*Edward Harley, Esq; to J. Butler, Esq;*

Hermitage

I Have again deliberately, and would I could say dispassionately, perused your letter; you are perfectly right, my safety is only in flight; I have lost all taste for every earthly enjoyment but her society; the whole world, is divided in my ideas, only by where *she* is, and where she is not; the little spot which contains her, would, were I the greatest potentate on earth, be a boundary to my ambition.

How has this fatal passion grown on me—in how short a period have I experienced the veracity of your predictions.

But will absence restore my serenity? Oh! that it would! in respect to your advice, and in regard to my own peace, I ought to make the trial.

I will not visit Belle-Vue, I will endeavour to recal my wandering thoughts, to those sweet haunts, where once, they were bounded by content; my poor neighbours, and guileless friends, I have neglected your wants, and forsaken your interests; thou venerable shade, impervious to the rays of the scorching sun; canst thou not screen me from the devouring flame that consumes me? will not the gentle murmur of the clear stream, whose enamelled banks I have so carefully decorated, assuage the anguish of my tortured soul?

At least I will try.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is the second day I have adhered to my resolution; what a frightful chasm has it made in my existence; I would write to you every hour, but have no subject, but her, I will not name.

\* \* \* \* \*

Eight days are now elapsed, since I have been at Belle-Vue; I have answered to the repeated enquiries of the General, that the business of my farm, deprives me of the honor of attending him; an apology which were I capable of applying to my affairs would not only be natural, but true. Eight days!—I have not heard the sound of Agnes's name, except from the friendly echo of my own grove, eight days!—I have not seen the face I adore—I have not contemplated the master-piece of nature—I have not even enquired after her!

When the servants appeared from Belle-Vue, I retired out of sight, not daring as I eagerly used to do, to take a message myself, lest my officious tongue should enquire after *her*. *Her*—whom? the mistress of General Moncrass. Ah! she is here!

EDWARD HARLEY.

## LETTER XXXIV.

*Edward Harley, Esq; to J. Butler, Esq;*

THE instant you receive this, take the proper steps to purchase a commission for me in a marching regiment; one going to the East, or West-Indies—to the Antipodes—any where.

I inclose power to sell out of the stocks, what money may be necessary for the purpose—I will accept no favour from General Moncrass.

EDWARD HARLEY.

## LETTER XXXV.

*In answer to a letter that does not appear.*

*Mr. Harley to Mr. Butler.*

WHY, my dear brother, do you so deeply probe the wounds of your unhappy Harley? you know not the pain you inflict; it is on the condition only, of your forbearing your cruel kindness I can resume my pen.

General Moncrass has no right to be offended with me, for refusing his favor—what—because I am conscious I cannot be grateful? would you infer *that* is a reason I should accept obligations? has he, or any man, a right to impose a debt on me, it is not in my nature to pay? I accept no favor from General Moncrass, let him take it as he will, my resolution is unchangeable.

E. HARLEY.

What are Caroline's dislikes to the German story of Werter? what reason will her gentle nature give, for refusing her compassion to the involuntary sorrows of the heart? "it is a bad story, she says, divinely told," the story may be fictitious, but the writer must have felt—poor Patty Lucas said it was hard to die of love—but yet, she aver'd it might be—I am sure it may—but a pistol ball is quicker, more certain, and less pain.

## LETTER XXXVI.

*Mr. Harley to Mr. Butler.*

Hermitage.

WEAKER than infancy, and more variable than the elements, is your Edward; two days ago I rejected all favour from General Moncrass: to-day, my Agnes, ah! would to God she was indeed *mine*; brought the commission; I spurned at the idea of accepting it.

For *my* sake, Mr. Harley, for the sake of Agnes de Courci; oh! *her* power over my senses, her empire over my reason is enchantment—

I go to-morrow to insult my own principles, by returning thanks for a favor, my heart revolts at accepting; my bursting heart!

E. HARLEY.

## LETTER XXXVII.

*Mr. Harley to Mr. Butler in continuation.*

THE General's reception of me, was at once friendly and solemn; he did not, he said, wish to know more of my affairs, than I chose to confide to his friendship, he would not therefore enquire into the reasons of my depriving him of the pleasure of seeing me at Belle-Vue: nor of the motives, that had so suddenly induced me to give up a plan (alas it was torn from my soul) too romantic, he had always foreseen, to be lasting: it was enough for him, that I meant to become a useful member of society, without troubling himself about the methods, by which an event so acceptable to him, and all my friends, had been brought about: he cautioned me to avoid an error, many young people he knew had fallen into; who having began in retirement, and fancied themselves wonderfully happy; no sooner get a glance at the great world, than they fall into the most blameable excesses; he warned me against deep play—and added, that as the first approaches to evil, were easiest avoided, and as I had at present, too many resources within my own mind, to be fond of cards; he recommended it to me, never to enter into parties, to which my inclinations, as well as the respect, and politeness, due to the company, I might happen to meet with, did not lead me.

As to your general conduct, Harley, said he, putting a volume of Shakespere into my hand; if you engrave the advice given by old Polonious to his son on your memory, and adhere to the excellent maxim, he lays down for the conduct of Laertes; you will need no other monitor through life.

Noble General Moncrass! why cannot I be the very man you first honoured with your notice? his son, Mr. Reuben Moncrass, a very fine young man, whom I had not before seen, was present; he introduced me to him, with so many encomiums on the goodness of my heart, and such manifest proofs of the tenderness of his own; that I was on the point of throwing myself at his feet, and laying all the secret depravity of my soul, open to him.

But I was deterred by the fear of injuring Agnes, and returned home exceedingly indisposed, as soon as dinner was removed.

Home did I say—what home have the miserable? once, it was the mansion of peace—it is now dark, dismal, and hateful; the officious kindness of poor Benson, throws me into transports of passion—I, who was once respected for the mildness of my temper, am become furious and vindictive; I no longer regard my farm—the clamours of my discarded poor, cease to affect me—my senses fleet from me—all sense of joy I mean, for that of *sorrow* is sunk deep in my heart—

Peggy, the widow's daughter, has just brought me a note—it is from Agnes—

The NOTE.

*Agnes de Courci to Mr. Harley.*

I am grieved at the distracted state of your mind; unhappy man! whence arises your despair; rouse from this unavailing sorrow; you place happiness out of the reach of time; you are *now* a soldier, your country is at peace, but you have a task more difficult than conquering the foe, you must subdue yourself; in the mean time you will come to bid us adieu: Let me ask a proof of your friendship for Agnes de Courci, you will receive many of hers to you; let us see you chearful, *deserve* to be fortunate, and you will be so.

AGNES DE COURCI.

I am now going (having informed my own people of my intention, and given the necessary orders for my departure) to pay my respects at Belle-Vue; I shall see you very soon. Adieu!

E. HARLEY.

## LETTER XXXVIII.

—*Harley, Esq; to J. Butler.*

Hermitage.

YES, Butler, yes, Caroline, rigid moralists, I have obeyed you; I have left my Hermitage; heavens! can it be? I am now thirty miles from Belle-Vue, from Agnes; and does my heart yet beat? flows the blood, which rose to all the perturbation of frenzy, but last night at her touch, in even currents through my veins? oh! thou ever enchanting arbitress of my fate! it is in vain I measure space to fly from thee; thy loved idea will pursue me to the confines of mortality; and to forget thee, every thing must vanish from my mental view; I had resolved to leave her, and went to Belle-Vue to take a final adieu; my coward tongue would not, could not speak the dreadful farewell; and I was returning without hinting my intention, when Peggy overtook me, and put a billet into my hand; I could not credit my senses, it was an assignation; how I trembled, my emotion stopped respiration; yet Butler, and were it otherwise, I should not approach the chaste wife of my friend, with this detail, I almost instantly recovered to a sense only of disgust; against report, against appearances, and almost against reason; my heart had hitherto refused belief, of the infamous connection, in which she was said to live with the General; but *here* was confirmation strong of all; the captivating modesty, which had enslaved my reason, as much as her beauty, had excited my passion, was now no more; the appointed hour was midnight, the place of rendezvous the temple, a small building almost hid in a thick wood at the bottom of the flower garden.

My mind was in tumults 'till the hour arrived, when I repaired to the temple, my whole heart fixed on one object, that of reforming the charming creature, of snatching her from destruction, from infamy; and so delighted was I with this scheme, I had brought it to a certainty in my mind, that I should succeed: the moon, as if conscious of the scene she was to witness, shone with extreme splendor; and my eyes, achingly fixed in eager expectation of *her* on whom they ever dwell with adoration and pleasure; were at last gratified by the sight of her, walking calmly down the avenue: Oh! Butler let me own to thee, I forgot in that extatic moment all the laudable purpose of my soul—I flew in ardour, in rapture to meet her, she shrunk from my warm embrace, I saw all the traces of affright, and terror in her countenance, she would have retreated and it was by force only I detained her—I have done wrong—I see I have done wrong, said the angel, pray Mr. Harley let me go; the modest terror, visible in her manner surprised me, I recollected myself, if thought I this agitation is real, how unpractised in vice must she be: I told her she must not yet go, I had a great deal I must, and would say to her; and attempting to lead her into the temple, she burst into tears: Oh! Butler, my soul is congenial to hers, no emotion of her mind is visible, when I am present, but what I am instantly by a sympathetic power, affected with; let naturalists, those who please themselves with a minute investigation of causes, and effects, 'till lost in the labyrinth of their own wisdom; let those account for it; my tears accompanied hers still in displeasure; though I had given her no indelicate cause, she would have left me; at length I became more collected; and

then with as much earnestness, as if my soul depended on the event; I endeavoured to make her sensible of her disgraceful situation.

Butler, she is either white as ministring angels, or she is deceitful as the damned; her first emotion was surprise; she questioned me with quickness, but as I proceeded, she seemed lost in attention; wept to agony, and at length burst suddenly from me.

I had no power to detain her, yet how many things of moment to my peace, to my existence, had I left unsaid, I did (I hope Caroline will not be offended) offer her my sister's protection, if she would leave the General; I was authorised, I thought to do that, both by virtue, and prudence; had I been so fortunate as to prevail on her, it would have been a great satisfaction to Lady Mary to know how she was disposed of, and to me, oh! what would it not have been to me.

How I reached the Hermitage; the God under whose eye I had acted only knows; her image, her tears, the sound of her voice, accompanied me; I threw myself on my bed, and continued ruminating on the scene I had passed with Agnes, 'till my servant informed me the chaise was at the door; and the trunks, which I had ordered to be ready, all chained on.

What I felt at that moment, Butler, is not to be conceived, or expressed; a thousand procrastinations, which shame forbid my uttering, rose to my lips; what would I not have given for one, only one interview more—the officious Benson brought my chocolate, it stood untouched; and now awakened from my reverie, I heard the bustle below among my servants.

I looked out of my window, oh! how delightful the verdure of the fields, and the rich drapery of the surrounding trees; the melody of the vocal throng, which was only to be exceeded in sweetness, by the songstress of my soul, formed a concert as if to invite my stay; I had been ungratefully insensible of the beauty of my own paradise, which now I was leaving it, seemed to reproach my neglect; but it was thee Agnes, who weaned my soul from all in which it had delighted, and it was thy dear form, that now lurked under the pleasing scene before me, and with thy magnetic power still drew me to one point: oh! for one moment's resolution I cried, and ran down to the chaise—the lad went off in a hand gallop, I passed the obelisk with such velocity, I had hardly time to give it a sigh; and my mind has been in a perfect chaos ever since.

I have thought on several things, I omitted to say to her, absolutely necessary to my peace, and *her* welfare: I should have told her, where the man, who offered himself as her guide to virtue, might be found; I should have assured her of my unchangeable devotion, and services; I might under the cover of the night have taken a lock of her lovely hair, and I should not perhaps, as I was going from her, possibly forever, have been refused her picture; many more things I should have thought on, which then I forgot, but now can think of nothing else; what a dismal road from the Hermitage here, I will go no farther this night.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is in vain to disguise the truth, why indeed should I attempt it; I cannot leave the country without one more interview with Agnes; a dreadful foreboding hangs on my heart; how could I go, without knowing whether she got into the house in safety? whether her tender, and delicate constitution did not receive injury from the damp of the night, from the mortification she will feel, if she has the least sense of honor, on a retrospect of our conversation? I was too little master of myself, her soul mild as virtue, adorned by the graces, must have felt the rude shock, of my incautious address; I should have soothed, not terrified her; I yet see her terror, I feel her agitation, when pressed to my beating heart; and can I then leave her forever, without obtaining her pardon? Butler, forgive and pity me; I return, I cannot exist from her; yet to what purpose do I return? alas! perhaps to die at her feet; oh! that without a dreadfull act of my own, I could indeed die, where I must not hope to live.

E. HARLEY.

LETTER XXXIX.

*Mrs. J. Butler to Edward Harley.*

London.

REflections my dearest Edward, are insult, where the mind enervated with sorrow, and self reproach, is sensible of its own debasement; I feel the pangs which rend your heart; yes, Edward, Caroline Butler's virtuous joys, her happiness is sacrificed at the shrine of a wanton—you start, you are angry: the eye that has penetrated *your* heart you fancy cannot beam with impurity; *you* only, will not allow your Agnes to be less than angelic, while the whole world knows she is an abandoned woman; I may in the bitterness of my grief, inveigh against a cause so fatal to whomsoever comes within the contagion of her influence; the ruin of the peace of the amiable Lady Moncrass, is not enough; Julia Neville her only daughter, distractedly fond of young Reuben, and impatient at the restraint laid on her, has left her mother, without a possibility of retracing her erring steps—sure this woman, this Agnes, was sent among us for general destruction; yours in particular, I firmly believe she will occasion: how are you changed, how fallen is that mind where honor, and all the dignity of placid virtue, were wont to dwell; oh! Edward with your peace is flown that of the sister of your youth, she suffers for you, and the gay hopes of a happy and prosperous life, are in their opening closed; by the miserable infatuation of her adopted brother.

What a letter is your last, it is wet with my tears; what more than magic spell has enchanted you?—

“You have left your Hermitage. You have parted with Agnes.” Oh! that the first event had preceded your visit at Belle-Vue; but you return to take a last look—I am shocked at your inconsistency; you talk of living like a madman, and dying like an infidel.

Among the myriads whom the omniscient father of the creation has sent into the world, the finished master pieces of his unerring hand; whose innate virtue, is seen to

beam on their countenance; were there none but this fatal woman, not one, who could touch the heart of Edward Harley? where, in what part of that sacred grove, where our late amiable mistress taught us the mild precepts of purity; could my Edward nourish a passion, which strikes at his mental existence?

How deep are the perfections you idolize, who but my infatuated Edward, would expose themselves to ridicule, by extolling the *virtue*, the *graces*, the *honor* of a woman, who is companion to a married man? Oh! Edward, blush—handsome no doubt she may be, and the charms with which nature has endowed her, are doubtless improved by art: her lillies, and roses, will I dare say stand the test of time—then she sings; and plays; heavens! that an angel should boast accomplishments—any of the Signora's in the Hay-market, may be seen displaying, for half-a-guinea; how futile, how inadequate to your own self justification, are the fullest extent of her attractions.

Leave the country, my dear Edward, risk not, for God's sake, another interview; she is your bane—you are not equal to the art of such a woman; what are plain moral virtue, and rectitude, when opposed to cunning deck'd in *her* seducing garb? Once more I entreat you—delay not a moment, I tremble with apprehension, 'till you are safe, with my James, and your

C.J.B.

## LETTER XL.

*Edward Harley, Esq; to J. Butler, Esq;*

Hermitage.

DO I live? may I believe my senses? Agnes, *my* Agnes is awakened to a sense of virtue; she has left Belle-Vue, on the very night, within perhaps the very hour, when her Harley implored her so to do.

Blessed hour! when inspired by the soul of honor, I dared to speak unwelcome truths to the woman I adore.

But where, Butler? where is she now? alone, unprotected, a stranger in the kingdom; who knows into what perils she may fall; O thou almighty defender of the innocent, protect, preserve my Agnes.

Yes, Butler, my Agnes will yet be an honor to society, and oh! do not severely judge of that fond heart, which swells in rapture, at the hope of receiving the dear wanderer, to its inmost recess; nor you, my sister, my friend, turn in scorn from a penitent, over whom God himself will rejoice: Oh! my friend, now that I dare hope the time may come, when I shall call Agnes mine, when I shall see her fine eyes lifted up in confidence, among the virtuous of her sex; my full heart, cannot contain itself; did you but know her, were you to hear the sentiments she utters, and were you to melt like me at the sound of her melodious voice, like me, did I say, no, she is my kindred soul, who in every atom will be affected by her like me? I shall live, I shall once more tread the sweet maze of my woods with rapture, if heaven destines her to be my companion there; a message from Belle-Vue, the General is ill; he was here yesterday, enquired whether Agnes had been seen here; adieu, I am going to obey his summons.

E. HARLEY.

## LETTER XLI.

*Edward Harley, Esq; to J. Butler, Esq;  
In continuation.*

Hermitage.

I Told you in my last I was sent for to Belle-Vue, and that I was just going thither—I found the house in confusion—the General seized with the gout in his stomach, and the family in great apprehensions for his life; Gallina hesitated about admitting me, yet he knew his master wished much to see me.

Madame de Vallmont came to me, the moment she heard I was arrived—

Oh! Mr. Harley, said she, I have but one hope, and it rests on you; I know you had an interview with Miss de Courci, the night before the last; you were absent yesterday, tell me on your honor, do you know any thing of her, has she put herself under your protection? I declared on my honor, as I truly might, she had not; and I added to this asservation, my fervent wish that she had—Madame de Vallmont wept, poor thing, said she—she is then gone to France, Madame St. Lawrens is not there, she will follow her to Abbeville, she will disturb the last moments of her poor mother, and will infallibly break her own heart: all this was leading to the subject next mine; which was bent on pursuing Agnes; I was already on the road to France in my wishes, and it was with great difficulty, she prevailed on me to stay at Belle-Vue, 'till the physician could be consulted, on the safety of my being admitted to the General; to my great joy he forbid it, and I am just now setting out post, for the convent of which Madame St. Lawrens is abbess, and where Agnes is certainly gone; if I do not overtake her by the way, I shall be sure to meet her at the convent. Hope, my dear sister, is my fellow traveller; who knows but my angel is innocent; how the thought elates me, it is after all more than possible; would the abbess else patronize her? would she fly to the protection of a convent, from the arms of pollution? or grant the worst, she will yet reform, and oh! extatic thought, she will yet be mine; when you receive this I shall be far on my way to France; yes, beloved shades, where I have wandered in peaceful security; where I thought care could not enter, and where also I found, the futility of every precaution, to shut out the passion that now occupies my whole soul, I have bid you adieu, never more to return, never more to solace in your calm delights, except I bring my Agnes to share with me the joys of virtuous love; yet Caroline, though lost in the wild transports, which hope, so long a stranger to my breast inspires; I do not forget how delusive it may prove; and should it now deceive me, my lesson will be a very short one, I have only to learn how to die; I cannot exist without Agnes, she is all that can render life desirable, nay she is life itself; and should that fail, think, my beloved James, and still dearer Caroline, with pity on the fate of your lost

E. HARLEY.

You will find my will in the third drawer of my secretary.

## LETTER XLII.

*General Moncrass to Major Melrose.*

Belle-Vue.

My dear Major,

I Am too much indisposed to move, or should have been with you, instead of this letter; Agnes, my beloved Agnes, has left me; she is gone from Belle-Vue: dear unfortunate fugitive! the pride of her soul took alarm; yet I thought I had used every precaution—

But I write to you in riddles, and am too ill to be more explicit; *that* I have said before, and you did spare your friend the more for the information; but yours is the warmth of a noble heart, and would be a severe reproof to mine, if all was not right, in the grand account between me, and my maker—I need not say I know nothing of Julia, yet I should not be sorry that Reuben did; but he was at Glasgow, and ignorant of her elopement.

I dare not think on Lady Mary's sufferings; but I believe she has a consolation very ill founded, she thinks Julia has put herself under my protection, dear imprudent child, I wish to heaven she was with me—

So many distressing events crowd on me together, some you do, and some you do not know, rend my heart, and take from me all my boasted fortitude; a gouty attack is just repelled from my stomach, my nerves are no longer proof against grief, and indeed my whole frame is in a terrible shattered state: I write particularly to beg my dear Major, you will immediately, both by yourself, and what emissaries you think proper to employ; make every possible enquiry after Agnes, she will certainly endeavour to get a passage to France; whither I am just now, solicitous to prevent her going; but should you be so happy as to find her, lay her under no restraint, only say that I have a letter for her from St. Clare; recover her, dear Melrose, and guard her honor, and her person, as you would your wife, or sister; she is *not* my mistress. She is nearer to my heart than ever woman in that situation, was to man.

MONCRASS.

## LETTER XLIII.

*Major Melrose to General Moncrass.*

London.

My dear General,

YOU are certain, notwithstanding the levity, I *should* perhaps be ashamed at *my* years to confess, that I share in all your distresses: I am indeed, not only surprised at the unaccountable elopement of your Agnes, but exceedingly alarmed at the effect it has had on your health: But General, never let it be said after all the storms you have weathered, that a woman has at last conquered you; don't be angry, I'll swear your Agnes is a vestal, and yourself an anchorite, rather than on a sick bed, you should tax me with unkindness.—By heaven between you, and your wife (who to be sure, as usual in all matrimonial squabbles, are both in the right) I am terribly out of sorts. Her ladyship is in town and her servant left a card for me, the moment of her arrival.

I have made all possible enquiries after your stray lamb, and as the whim is of such importance to you, wish I had succeeded better; I have likewise taken the surest method of gaining information, should any young person of her description, apply for a passage to the continent from hence; that is, I have made it the *interest* of those, who were most likely to know it, to give me early intelligence; my inclination would certainly carry me to Belle-Vue, were I not persuaded, I shall by persisting in my enquiries after Agnes, more oblige my friend.

And now to your lady; upon my soul, dear Moncrass, the wisest thing you can both do, is to return to your mutual vows; I foresee if you do not, I shall be obliged to be executor to you both.

I do not wonder at Julia's elopement—the house in St. James's-place has more the appearance of a mausoleum, than the gay, and elegant mansion of Lady Moncrass. I congratulated her ladyship, that it had taken place *before* marriage.

Oh! Major, said Lady Mary, mildly, is not that judging *too* hard of *my* daughter?

I am judging, madam, of Mr. Neville's daughter (she coloured) and of human nature—

Poor human nature, sigh'd she, but for all that, Major, if I could recover my truant girl—

You would wed her to a puppy, interrupted I.

Lord Morden, answered she gravely, is far from a contemptible character, and I had rather see her the wife of a common labourer than—

Than who, Lady Mary? speak out.

You know who I mean.

Well, madam, I confess I do; and am sorry to my soul to hear you make such a declaration; and will Lady Mary forgive me, if I tell her in the softest whisper, she has suffered the baneful effects of one passion, to taint the lustre of her whole life—

How sir? cried she, colouring.

Indeed you have, all you see, and hear, every action, every word you utter, are all tingured with jealousy, cursed jealousy; how else could a woman of your understanding, ever suppose, Julia Neville, an over-indulged heiress in her own right, sensible, spirited, and volatile, would give up the first attachment of her young heart, an attachment originally countenanced by yourself, in compliment to your caprice (pardon me) and make herself the implement of resentment for an imaginary wrong; (she at least thinks it so) offered a mother, who was as ready to sacrifice all for love, as her daughter can be for the soul of her?—

Very well, Major—very well—my domestic misfortunes expose me to contempt, to ridicule—

They do indeed, madam—but not from me—

Heavens! Major, is it you, who address me, in this manner? how, sir, have I deserved? and her proud heart swelled to her eyes.

Faithful, Lady Mary, are the wounds of a friend.

A friend, sir, is this friendship? is it humane; to upbraid me with the fatal consequences, of that love for *your* friend, which has cost me so dear? if the imprudence of my only child is to be ascribed to that cause; do I not, think you, sir, suffer enough from my own feelings? and do you call it the office of a *friend*, to stab me to the heart with reproaches, that more properly belong to the barbarous man, who has so cruelly involved me in such complicated sorrow?

Ah! Lady Mary, how changed would your manner of speaking of General Moncrass be, if his present illness were to terminate fatally:

Illness, Major, what illness? who is ill? terminate fatally—and she actually panted for breath—dear Melrose, taking out her sal volatile, sure General Moncrass is not ill, you would not conceal it; O too sure (and then indeed the torrent burst forth, she wept even to agony) I am not equal to that trial—no—all my prayers are offered to heaven, that *I* may be the victim, that my life may fleet from me in the sad ejulation of my heart—I indeed wonder, that I yet live; but grief, though slow, is sure in its definitive effect on the human frame; God *only* knows, how contentedly I should resign a life, in which I find no comfort; every hope of happiness, every prospect of felicity, shut in forever from me, when I lost the affections, of my once adored Moncrass—

You have not, Lady Mary, lost his affections—he still—

Oh! forbear Major, forbear an attempt, that insults my reason; speaking of mere personal attractions, what hope have I, could I stoop to the trial, to wean his heart, from his present attachment: his Agnes is beautiful, young, and accomplished; if she has errors, the bloom of health, and youth are a covering, which fondness will not penetrate:—I alas! am past the season of beauty, “homely age hath the alluring beauty took from my poor cheek,” my spirit broke, my form wasting, and subject to many infirmities; some from constitution, and more from grief of heart; this face, Major, and this fading form might indeed claim compassion from General Moncrass; but my spirit is too near akin to *his*, to accept so inadequate a substitute for love; my passion for him still retains all the warmth of its first impression: in the enthusiasm of unbounded fondness, I forgot he was mortal; happy had I been, if he had suffered me to die in the pleasing delirium: but I pain you, Major, (indeed she did) and what do these repetitions, those fond regrets all tend to, but to convince you, although I know the world will ridicule me for it; the delicacy of my affection for General Moncrass is such, that even if he had, as I requested, acknowledged

his error, and resigned his favorite to me, I should, though not in a state of separation, have been equally miserable: never should I then any more than now, have forgot that “such things were;” perhaps I am wrong—perhaps I am myself convinced that I am so; but in me it is nature, and I cannot divest myself of prejudices, imbibed at a very early period of my life; when my heart received the guest which has been always dear to it—when I first loved Moncrass, my sentiments were exactly what they now are, and were rooted in my mind by his coincidence.

Dear Lady Mary, return’d I, permit me only to remind you, that never yet was a man created without some imperfection, some alloy; and however desirable that extreme purity, on which you are pleased to rest your notions of happiness; we live in an age, when it would be impossible to retain it, without being absolutely ridiculous.—

I do not contend that it is, Major, answered she, what I have said has been rather a confession of my own particularities, than a wish to set up *my* opinion, as a standard of what is right, and what is wrong: Custom reconciles you gentlemen to many things, which in the weaker sex would be atrocious; a modern husband will not blush to be told of actions, which would deprive his wife of every thing valuable; would render her an alien to her friends, an outcast to society, and leave her dependent on the man she had injured, for means of subsistence, how large soever her dower might be: All this, can custom upheld by social law effect, but Major, ask your heart, if it has ever been tenderly enslaved, what had custom *then* to do with your feelings? could it blunt the edge of one pang, inflicted by injured love?—Custom cannot reconcile us to a deprivation of our dearest treasure, nor relieve the aching woe of deserted tenderness; in these cases, it rather irritates, than alleviates; and in such minds as mine, only serves to wean it from every earthly hope, without divesting it of the agonizing remembrance of past days, which will *live even in death*: You know your *friend*, and you know *me*; why then defend in *him* a conduct, which has so weak a source, and reproach *me* for what preys on myself, without injuring any other person—

I beg your pardon, madam, I do not reproach, I venerate your many virtues, and I consider your grief as sacred; I would only awaken you to a sense of the dangerous predicament in which yourself, the General, and your daughter now stand: my friend is very ill—she started—*your* countenance, madam, is not of the most flattering; and where now is Julia?

With him, I suppose, answered she, colouring with resentment—

Upon my honor, no—madam—I wish she were!

She is then with Reuben, and he knows it—

Now, General, I want to know at this period, exactly what will be your thoughts on the next act of your friend; I am not perfectly pleased with myself, and have only the intention to comfort me, under a kind of latent reproach my mind gives me; and which should your blame be added to it, will be rather an uneasy sensation—

I had your letter in my pocket, and without recollecting the great solicitude it expressed for Agnes, thought it would at least convince Lady Mary of your innocence, with respect to Julia: It had that effect to be sure, but the many expressions of tenderness for Agnes, and the conviction, that her daughter was actually out of the protection of her friends, operated in a dreadful manner; I really thought two hours that I staid, her life in

the greatest danger; successive faintings, and hysterics, left her almost lifeless; physicians were called in, when I returned home to curse my officious folly, and write this letter—

Upon my soul, Moncrass, Lady Mary is actually in an ill state of health—I do not blame you—you are not perhaps deserving of it, but I wish to the Lord the time was come when your innocence might be made known, and these cursed riddle-me-ree's expounded.

I am returning to St. James's-place, one moment my heart bleeds for you, the next for your lady—then again I form to myself the mischievous consequences of that little vixen, Julia's elopement, a pretty figure hers, to be dancing into the world alone, and unprotected, in search of adventures; I am a little sorry for your Agnes, and in conclusion, wish you all fairly at the devil; but dear Moncrass, need I bid you not regard my nonsense, the warmth of my affection, and friendship for you, should excuse it; I am impatient to hear from you, and almost as impatient to give you a proof of my assiduity in your service, by sending you some news of your runaway, adieu,

MELROSE.

## LETTER XLIV.

*Agnes de Courci to Madame St. Lawrens.*

London.

AH! madam, why did St. Clare? and why did you suffer your poor Agnes to enter a world *you* rejected? if the magnanimity of *your* souls, the strength of *your* understanding, and the severity of *your* virtues, were, as you have often declared; too weak to defend *you*, from the insinuations of passion, and the temptation, as well as injuries of the wicked; why did you consign your Agnes, to the sin, the sorrow and regret; in which only, she has found this boasted world to abound? ever dear, and ever honored lady Abbess, why did you not rather keep so weak a creature in the bosom of your love, unknowing, and unknown, to all but yourself, St. Clare, and the dear sisterhood of our convent; how will they, and how will you tremble? not your own innate goodness, not the holy fervor which fills your peaceful souls; will support you, when you are told, your Agnes, the child of your adoption, is a fugitive, among strangers, a wanderer in a country she knows not—without one friend or protector; that the house of General Moncrass is no longer her asylum: yes, madam, I have left Belle-Vue, I have abandoned the protector to whom St. Clare consigned me; him, in whose commendation, I have been so lavish; and I am become a voluntary exile, from the charming spot, where every thing conspired to lull me into a fancied security, and render me insensible, to the disgrace of my situation.

Is it then possible? can vice reside in a bosom, apparently consecrated to every social virtue? or if not, can there be so much refined malice among men? are there then spirits, who seek the haunts of innocence, and honor, for the fell purpose of columny? and are they suffered to dwell in safety, while their envenomed shafts, strike deep into the guiltless unoffending heart, and there wound even to death? Alas! alas! and am I alone, unknown, and unprotected; in such a world, and among such spirits—such was my affright at the horrid explanation; and such my eagerness to escape, that having once compassed what I so much desired; I had no idea of a good it would not ensure, nor dread of any evil, but prevention—

I had at the moment, no recollection of my situation; it did not occur to me, that I was in a foreign country, that out of the connection I was leaving, there was not in England a being to whom I could apply for protection; all *my* ideas were immersed, in the anticipation of my reception at your convent; I thought not of the space of land, and sea, which divided me from you; and still less did I think on the means, necessary to carry me so long a journey—

Money had never been of importance to me, nor influenced a single act of my life; the dear friends who taught me, that virtue was above price, that honour had no union with interest, and that true piety, and worldly wealth, were distinct things; forgot to *add*, we send you Agnes where you may possibly *hear* of the things *we* have taught you to prize; but, where, gold is of more importance than any of them—

I knew not the value of a louis at Paris, except to relieve the indigent; nor of an English guinea, but to raise the meek hearted, or chase poverty from the roof of industry.

But now, I am indigent myself, and I write this short, incoherent letter, to tell my dear lady Abbess, her Agnes is in distress; that she waits for a remittance to enable her to return to her convent:—Oh! that I never had left it; I am among people from whose familiarity my heart recoils, they may be respectable enough in their way; but oh! how different from those, whom under your sacred protection, and at Belle-Vue, I have been used to associate with.

I know I shall immediately receive a letter of credit from you, and then, with what alacrity shall I begin the last journey, I trust I shall ever take; once again in the peaceful shelter of our dear cloyster; never, never more, shall my heart, or feet become wanderers.

I pant with hope, and expectation; my dreams are full of you, I am continually with you, and dear St. Clare; I hear her voice, melting in tenderness, as she prays; yes, I know she joins your prayers for the poor fugitive; oh! may they avail, may they obtain the protection of the saints, for your

AGNES.

For reasons I shall explain you must address thus:  
Louisa Fermer, at Madame du Mitand,  
Great Suffolk-street, London.

## LETTER XLV.

*Agnes to M. St. Lawrens in continuation.*

I Know the tenderness of your nature, the love you bear your Agnes, and your solicitude for her happiness, too well, to doubt the painful anxiety, my letter must have created in you, or to defer letting you know my present situation, 'till the return of the mail; more especially, as it will be some days, even after that, before I could personally unravel the hateful mystery, which obliged me to leave Belle-Vue; I feel, with equal certainty, and gratitude, that while you continue in this anxious suspense, you will be wretched; it is a long detail—but no matter—you will read it with indulgence; in the tedious interval, which the return of the post will occasion, I shall have but too much leisure, and my heart, dreadfully oppressed, seeks a motive to carry it out of itself.—

When I parted with my beloved St. Clare, her last words to me were (after recommending me to God) “Child of my heart—my Agnes—be not curious—suffer not thy peace to be disturbed, by any thing, which appears like mystery; time, a short time, will convince my child, how dear her welfare is to me—follow implicitly the directions of the worthy man under whose protection, I now solemnly place thee.”

Did I, madam, ever disobey that dear saint? a look from her, has always been the ultimate rule of my actions.—She tore herself from my embrace, and left me, fainting in the arms of General Moncrass, who was himself overwhelmed with sorrow; we proceeded (when the packet was out of sight), in the General's carriage to London; where he placed me under the care of Madame de Vallmont, and having furnished me with every appendage to rank and family, left me; but this I have told you before.

Madame de Vallmont, is the widow of the Chevalier de Vallmont, a gentleman of good expectations, but who from some family misfortunes, was obliged to leave France; grief, it is thought, on that account shortened his life; and his widow, having some valuable connections in England, chose to remain here; she is sensible, good-tempered, and perfectly well-bred; though she has lived many years in this country, she still retains all the obliging insinuation in her manners which distinguish the first ladies in Paris; at the time I had the honor of being introduced to her, her stile of living, was genteel but retired; her fortune, she made no scruple to own, was very small, but with it, she was content; nevertheless, the addition made to her income, by the General on my account, and that of my suite, was both pleasing and beneficial.

We were hardly settled on this agreeable plan, when Madame de Vallmont received a letter from General Moncrass, inviting her to accompany me to Belle-Vue; and acquainting her, with some disagreeable domestic occurrences, which had taken place in his family, after his departure from London.

Madame Vallmont was both grieved, and surprised, at the contents of this letter; which however, she did not wholly make *me* acquainted with; we made all possible haste to obey the General, and reached Belle-Vue in three days. Here madam, I found myself in

the most enchanting place in the world, in the arms of a man, who shed tears over me; who vow'd to protect, to love, to be my *father*—

It was a relative, my heart had never recognized, I had not, indeed, felt the want of parental protection; I had lived with my dear lady Abbess, in the regions of peace, in the mansions of piety; but *father, I will be thy father*, oh! madam, dear St. Clare, those were sounds, that struck the most tender chords of sensibility, which vibrated in my heart. I bathed his hand with my tears, I could not speak—but from that moment, the painful sense of obligation, his liberality had raised in my bosom, changed to unreserved confidence, and unbounded affection; not a day passed, but I received fresh proofs of the paternal love, with which I was so delighted; it was your pleasure, madam, to have me instructed in all the female accomplishments taught in our convent, my proficiency far surpassed his expectations, he admired my drawings—was pleased to see me employed in my fine works—in his serious hours I read to him, and when, which often happened, he was pensive; my voice, he said, had the power to dissipate sorrow, and soothe the jarring passions into peace; in short, every thing I did raised in him pleasure, and admiration; his house, fortune, servants, nay, himself, seemed to live to oblige me—and thus passed five of the months, since I parted with you; so smooth, so unruffled, and yet so amply filled, that I had no time or inclination to penetrate the mystery, which as St. Clare had foretold, appeared to hang over the actions of General Moncrass—

About this time, a young man came to Belle-Vue who was introduced to me, by the General, as a prodigy; he was young, sensible, and handsome; without ambition, and free from the influence of passion; he was in possession of a very moderate fortune, with which he was so perfectly content, that though he had been offered, nay, urged to accept of affluence, rank, and honor; he rejected them all; and came to Belle-Vue, respectfully to decline a commission in the army, which had been procured for him, by the General's interest.

I confess, madam, I saw no such prodigy in all this; the man regulated his desires, by his own power; his heart retreated from a sense of obligation; he formed his plan of conduct, consistent with the independence of his mind; he lived to *himself* not to the *world*, and perfectly satisfied, to be a reasonable being, was content, that greatness should pass his door; did it require any violent exertion of philosophy to act thus? I should think not, I have not it is true, met with any in the narrow sphere of my acquaintance with the world, of this particular turn, but it is right; and how many right minds, have you, my dear madam, made me mentally acquainted with? but Mr. Harley (that is his name) is least amiable at first sight, you only *see* that he is handsome, and when you are previously acquainted with his character, his youth, and self denial, form a contrast much to his advantage; but as you know him better, you perceive there is a grace, a manner, which adorns his fine person, and renders it perfectly pleasing; he is not forward in conversation, but when once drawn out, his knowledge is so universal, his judgment so correct, and his delivery so eloquent; you are disposed to regret *his* silence, and to respect no other speaker—and while he without vanity or ostentation, captivates the ear with sentiments, in which wisdom, and elegance are blended; his countenance, at once chearful, and animated, proves he is at peace with himself.

I had no reason to be vain of Mr. Harley's attention to me, and therefore perhaps was the more solicitous to obtain it; the English gentlemen are in general very polite, and not a little anxious to persuade us of the ascendancy our sex has over them; but this young man, for some time, chose to convince me, however well-bred he might be in other respects, politeness to my sex, was not his forte:—this, madam, was but for a time; it was not 'till after he had paid several visits at Belle-Vue, he appeared to have formed any opinion at all of *me*; not indeed, 'till the many instances which had come to my knowledge, of the urbanity of his nature, had rendered him in my idea, one of the first of men.

He soon became a constant, and welcome visitor at Belle-Vue; the General was never better pleased, than when in his company; and continually regreted that such a fine young fellow should seclude himself from the world; once, when after a slight indisposition, he took me to air in the chariot, we stopped at the Hermitage; and he commissioned me to endeavour to prevail on the philosopher, as we called Mr. Harley; to give up his favourite system, and adopt that, which his friends conceived would be so much more to his advantage; but it was an office for which my own sentiments, by no means qualified me; I did indeed make *one* effort, but it was too weak to be successful.

Why it is I cannot explain; but at this period of my narration, my heart fails me; you know me incapable of deceit, or varying from truth; but the *whole* truth now comes reluctantly from my pen; I feel an inward shame, (yet it is a false shame, and therefore I will conquer it) which would destroy the unreserved, the natural confidence, I have ever placed, in the most respectable, the most indulgent friends that ever poor orphan was blest with.

What woman is blind to the passion she inspires? I am going to lay open all the weakness of my heart to you, and will not therefore begin my confession with an act of disingenuity:—I saw, I felt—that Edward Harley loved your Agnes; and oh! madam, pity and forgive, the poor heart that *would* receive, and return his love; in spite of all the weak efforts of reason, and the dictates of duty; little apprehensive however of the errors, into which I was running; I persuaded myself the partiality I felt for Mr. Harley, arose from a source as innocent, as free from danger—and imputed those sensations to friendship, which I was too soon convinced, sprung from a passion, I wanted inclination to resist, and power to conquer; I early became sensible of this my inexcuseable error, but the same motive that condemned my thus giving way to an attachment, I feared you would disapprove; tempted me also to conceal it from you; not having as you enjoined me, laid open every movement of my heart, to my beloved mistress, I became every day more and more miserable; time, which added to my guilt, increased my compunction; but after having proceeded thus far, I could not prevail on myself, to begin a confession so long delayed; many were the resolutions I made—but the offence was too sweet—the crime too dear to be abandoned; fear therefore on one hand, and shame on the other, ever took from my faithless pen, all power to trace the characters, which form the name of—Edward Harley.

Let me not however weary my friends, on a subject, too pleasing to myself: with Mr. Harley's passion, a melancholy visibly increased, on the cheerfulness, that was wont

to delight us; Madame de Vallmont discovered its source; Harley loves you Agnes, (she would say) poor youth! he is blind to his own danger, he knows not the obstacles he has to surmount: whether she communicated her observations to the General or not, I am yet to learn; mine I confess, were so totally engrossed by the alteration in the countenance, and manners of our new friend; I paid little regard to any thing else.

The unembarrassed air, the sprightly look, the florid countenance, and unapprehensive eye, were changed into restraint, dejection, pale cheeks, and fearful sadness; the Harley we first knew was no more; his senses appeared to be touched, frequent absences, during which, I found he abandoned himself to despair; sudden returns, ambiguous, yet tender expressions, involuntary bursts of tears and sighs; these were the only proofs of love, he gave your Agnes, but these were irresistible; and while they raised compassion, gave birth to tenderness; I dreaded the effect of those struggles of his mind, and used all my influence to prevail on him to accept the commission; which the General had before procured for him—he complied with my entreaties; oh! madam, he had no heart to oppose my desires; yet when he came to bid us adieu, his agonies and distress were undecipherable. I saw the fatal farewell glistening on his eye, and quivering on his lip—I—oh! how shall I own it; how confess to those pure beings, whose lessons of female delicacy, and reserve, were so many years implanted in my mind—I—yes, madam, your Agnes, the child you have so often clasped to your modest bosom, sought an interview—made an appointment, and admitted a man to visit her, in a private part of the garden—at *midnight*—

You tremble, you start, you throw down my letter with abhorrence; you no longer consider me as the daughter of your adoption, the child of your heart: Ah! madam, resume my unhappy story; receive again the poor Agnes to your compassion, and to your love; she was in this instance, impelled by an irresistible impulse; she was imprudent, but not criminal: let my tears, my present anguish expiate my first, my only offence, against the purity of your instructions; heinous was my crime, deep and bitter is my punishment.

The unhappy Edward was at the temple before me;—but how can I make, even to you, the degrading confession; he appeared flushed, as if with wine; he was it is true, agitated, but not by that dejected sorrow, which excited my compassion; violence, not respect, marked his actions, he seized my hand.

Terrified at a change so astonishing, and unexpected; all the imprudence of my conduct, flashed at once, upon my recollection.

The moon shone very bright, and the radiant beams of that chaste planet, which glistened through the foliage of the surrounding trees, served at once to reproach, and animate me; fear it is true, filled my heart, but the blush of indignation glowed on my cheek.

How strong is the force of virtue; how easily resumed are the habits of propriety; Mr. Harley trembled at the silent agony of my looks; he fell at my feet, deplored my resentment, called heaven, and earth to witness the ardour of his love, vowed, wept,

and—yes, madam, he dared to solicit me to fly with him: Ah! what would I not have given, that I had not authorised *his* temerity, by *my own* imprudence.

To repeat all that passed at this painful interview is impossible; let me therefore hasten to the important, the dreadful explanation—

My meaning, but dear lady Abbess, but I feel the folly of the expression, what young creature who suffers passion to conquer reason, can develop her own meaning?

My intention then, as far as I am myself acquainted with it, in giving Harley this meeting; was to have reasoned him out of the dejection, that appeared to over-power his faculties; and by persuading him to enter into the world, on equal terms with other people, to meliorate that extreme sensibility, which, depending on my own foresight, I concluded would be the ruin of his peace; when therefore he had the confidence, to urge me to a flight with him, I felt my degradation, and was ashamed of my fancied wisdom; self-condemned, and shocked at my own deviation from delicacy; I lost all concern for him, in fear for myself; and wished immediately to retire.

My indignation at his proposal, and the scorn in my countenance, which however was levelled at myself; appeared to pique him.

His fortune, he said, small as it was, would support us.

I started, and again attempted to leave him; but, no, madam! no respect was due to me; the virgin pride that swelled in my bosom, the offended innocence that animated my countenance; appeared to him the effects of art, and affectation; how shall I tell you? how wound St. Clare with the horrid repetition? he considered me as the wanton favorite of General Moncrass, the companion of his loose hours, do you comprehend me, madam? his mistress.

The world, common fame, and even the domestics of Belle-Vue, all, he had the barbarity to tell me, looked on me in that light: Alas! do not the lucid drops of compassion flow from your eyes, do you not conceive that the agonies I felt, and still feel, have expiated the act of imprudence I was guilty of in meeting him.

What I suffered, or how I supported myself, the Being who witnessed the hateful calumny, only knows; I did not weep, nor speak, my heart was bursting:—With all the energy, all the dignity of innate honor; Mr. Harley, then abandoned his first pleas for favour to himself; and entreated me to fly from Belle-Vue, from Moncrass, from guilt: I did not yet weep—my heart was too full—he offered me an asylum with his sister, a woman of amiable and unblemished character, who would, he said, protect me: Lady Moncrass, the noblest, best of women; whose peace had been destroyed—

Oh! my venerable monitress! beloved St. Clare! by what fatality was I given to the protection of this man? was it necessary, my entrance into the world, should be marked by such a humiliating injury? is it your Agnes, the humble disciple of rectitude; her to whose utmost wish, the grate of your convent, was a welcome boundary? is it her, who

inverts the connubial blessing? who breaks the heart and domestic comfort of a lady, not more respected for her rank, than admired for her many virtues; one, who is confessedly the ornament of her country.

I had been told the General was a married man, and that some family disputes, had seperated him from his wife: I imputed the many melancholy hours he passed to that cause; I heard him sigh, I saw the unbidden tear roll down his cheeks; how often have I prayed for rest to his mind, how often thought ill of a woman who could treat such a man with unkindness; but little indeed could I suspect *myself* to be the cause of their unhappy division.

But to return; tender regret for my supposed miserable fate, succeeded admonitions, which were dictated by unsullied honor.

Oh Agnes! (cried he) wringing his hands, how shall I wean my soul from its dotage on thy perfections? I leave thee, I go to explore a world I abhor—I seek to lose thy image in the multitude; but I know, I feel, how vain the attempt; were thou but innocent, to *toil*, to *die* for thee, would be luxury; but remember the warning I give thee, let not the bloom of thy life be devoted to guilt, let not the fascination of thy senses in the present moment, rob thee of all the blessings of a long futurity; let it not cheat thee of *comfort*, of innocence; leave thy seducer; what though he is noble, brave, benevolent—amiable—and rich? think of the pangs his infidelity inflicts on the heart of a virtuous woman, who adores him; think also that thou, the fairest master-piece of nature, art an accomplice in his guilt; that thy soul, which the creator has so divinely adorned, with every grace that is estimable in woman, instead of being a temple of virtue, is the seat of—he stopped, and throwing himself on a bench sobbed aloud.

Unable any longer to suppress the violence of my emotions, and unwilling to enter into explanations with one, who by his contemptible opinion of me, rendered himself unworthy my regard; I hastily left the temple, and returned to the house, with the utmost speed.—

And now, my dear honoured friends; you have before you the motives which induced me to leave Belle-Vue: but I did not take so important a step, without fully informing myself, of the truth of the horrid tale I heard from Harley.

The orphan girl who attended me is innocence itself; I was very much embarrassed how to enter on such a subject with her, but my delicacy was needless—it was a respect I might owe my own feelings, but was not in this case due to hers; since I found, that not only the domestics of the house, but the whole country, received it as an indisputable fact—that I was the General's mistress; and not only so, but that my guilt was aggravated by the dissention I had caused between him and Lady Mary.

I remarked to you in the first letter I wrote from Belle-Vue, that I thought very few families of distinction dwelt in that part of the country; as we had not many male, and no female visitors: See now, a reason why solitude which rendered it a thousand times more charming to me, reigned in the house and gardens of Belle-Vue.

Mortified at the reflection, tired of the hateful subject, sick of the world, and displeased with myself; permit me dear lady Abbess, here to conclude this long letter; I understand nothing of the mails—when they go out, or when they arrive; as I shall therefore only give vent to the sorrows that oppress me, before I again resume my pen, two packets may possibly reach you together, from your unhappy

AGNES.

## LETTER XLVI.

*Agnes in continuation.*

I Had ordered Peggy to sit up until my return from the garden; and I now threw myself on the bed, in the presence of the affrighted girl, and gave way to the agonies that distracted me; in my first transports of grief, I called on St. Clare, on you, reproached you for exposing me to such insults, then again implored you in the tenderest terms to relieve, to protect, and to justify me; at length after exhausting myself by the excess of my passion, and indignation—I began seriously to revolve in my mind, the whole tenor of General Moncrass's conduct to me, from the time of his taking me under his protection, to that hour.

I could have no doubt of the truth of what Harley had just told me; it was confirmed by my own servant, whose veracity I never had reason to suspect; and by a thousand concurrent circumstances, which now rushed on my memory; yet notwithstanding all this, I could not help doing justice to the delicacy of the General's behaviour at all times towards me: I could not recollect a single circumstance, which would have alarmed the strictest, or even the most suspicious purity—if I was ill he watched over me with the tenderest, and most paternal solicitude; my recovery ever afforded him the strongest satisfaction, and my wishes, whenever he could make himself acquainted with them, were anticipated: you, madam, by your example, made your Agnes a strict observer of countenances; and I had even flattered myself, that I had acquired some of your sagacity, in forming the judgment, which was the result of those observations—it was always a particular pleasure to me, to read the heart of General Moncrass in his face—it had all the simplicity of the character, you so much admire in the celebrated English writer, and all the fire, wit, and tenderness of Sterne himself: not once, no not once, did I perceive a trace of duplicity in it—when I compared his paternal conduct towards me, with what I had always conceived of true fatherly affection, a thought darted across my imagination, which for a few moments involved me in perplexity of another kind: St. Clare has often told me, and you, dear lady Abbess, as often confirmed it, that I was of honourable, and noble birth; although it was necessary for prudential reasons to conceal my origin, even from myself.

“Be not curious Agnes, seek not to penetrate the mystery which may appear to cloud the actions of the worthy man in whose protection I place you,” said my beloved St. Clare; ah! thought I, Moncrass is then my father, this surmise confirmed by *his* conduct, and by my own feelings, was, I for a moment fancied, founded on reason; but a second thought bade me give up that idea, as visionary, the General had been married twice; I could not be the daughter of Leonora Sebastian, his first wife; and my age was a sufficient proof, as well as Lady Mary's displeasure on my account, that I was not hers: if therefore I had any filial claims on the General, they must have been illegitimate, and could not then, be either *noble* or *honorable*; so that I was obliged to relinquish that surmise, as equally chimerical with many other preceding ones.

But what was to be done?

Should the sun rise on Agnes de Courci, under the roof of a man, who was deemed the seducer of her innocence; and who was accused of violating every moral, and social duty in his protection of her? should she meet the eyes of his domestics, fixed on her as an object of infamy? the meanest of whom might say—this woman is our mistress—we obey, but we also despise her—behold her gaudy trappings, they are the price of her honor; we are not so fine, but we are less guilty than her: Ah! St. Clare! this was not one of the mysteries you forbade me to develope; and thus fore-armed, should any latent design, hostile to virtue, really lie concealed under a mask of tender regard; would not you? would not my own heart condemn me, had I staid to tempt my fate, 'till it was too late to escape the danger? this last reflection determined me; I feigned to have recomposed my spirits, said I was sleepy, and bid Peggy retire.

I know not whether it is the general custom of the country, or whether it is only in the neighbourhood of Belle-Vue; that the master is beloved, not feared by his vassals; hard fare, and impregnable honesty, appear to me to be the hereditary rights of the English peasant; no locks, or bars are necessary to protect the property of the rich, or the persons of the poor; at least in the demesne of Belle-Vue, such was the mutual confidence, between the inmates and the neighbourhood, that the drawing a slight bolt, and sometimes not that, was deemed a sufficient night security; having therefore once formed my resolution, I had no difficulties in putting them in execution, but those which arose in my own mind.

Never, never, shall I know rest, 'till I find it in your arms; 'till I receive your pardon, and once more hear the saint-like voice of St. Clare melt in fondness over her

AGNES.

## LETTER XLVII.

*Agnes in continuation.*

I Continue to write to my only friends, certain that I shall, as soon as the possible return of any conveyance will admit it, be furnished with means of returning, to your dear, and *now* dearer, than ever, convent; because I am sure you are solicitous to know the whole of a story, which though it may in some parts deserve your just reprehension, yet it is your Agnes who confesses her faults, who casts herself at your feet for pardon; and whose errors, however enormous, are at this moment punished more severely, than her partial friends would perhaps think adequate to her offence.

I quitted Belle-View with a certain undescribable heaviness of heart, which had I not felt the propriety of the act; would have deprived me of the resolution, and presence of mind, which only could support me in the step I was taking.

I have before acquainted you with the situation of this noble building; it has a south aspect, and commands a most delightful view of the fertile valley, to which from the house you see no end; it is defended from the north wind, by a range of uplands, and on each side it is adorned with beautiful plantations, which though raised by a skilful gardener, appear to be the spontaneous work of nature; at the extremity of those plantations, are gravel walks, bordered by the most delicious flowery banks, whose verdure are preserved by the constant lavings of two clear streams, whose natural windings beautify, as well as replenish the whole valley: the great road leads close by the park palings, at the back of the house; so far I knew the way I meant to go, and so far I proceeded with tolerable resolution.

Let me endeavour to describe to you, dearest madam, my sensations, when from the window of the General's apartment, where the curtains were not let down; I saw him, walk about in a disturbed manner, and by the lights which stood on the writing table, I could perceive him, often attempting either to read, or write, then suddenly rise, and continue traversing the room.

All his kindness at that instant recur'd to my memory, his voice, his look, his parental tenderness, rendered more interesting by the apparent anxiety of his mind; at this moment, filled me with the most painful regret.

Cruel Harley! cried I, bursting into tears, why hast thou torn the veil from my delighted eyes? what to me were the censures of the barbarous, ill-judging world? when in the security of my own innocence, and resting in full confidence on the honor, and integrity of my generous protector, my utmost ambition was to contribute to his happiness, and my fondest wish to give thee peace; what is now my pursuit? what the consequence of this rash elopement? I add to the sorrows which already deprive him of rest, and I tear myself from *thee* forever.—

Still were my flowing eyes fixed on the window; one instance of the General's tenderness, succeeded another on my memory; my heart sunk at the retrospect; I was on the point of returning, when the idea that his present uneasiness, might proceed from his disunion from his wife, and that the cause once removed, the effect would also cease; I turned my reluctant eyes away, and proceeded on my lonesome journey; then in the tumult of my mind, your figure and that of St. Clare appeared to my mental view.

What said my dear monitress, hast thou Agnes, seen the beloved St. Clare dying a living death, her bloom wasting, her beauteous form shrinking from the wounds of calamity; her eyes weeping night and day for offences *she* had not committed; resigning herself with patience to sickness and sorrow? thus depressed, broken hearted, and almost expiring; would *she* thinkest thou have hesitated, whether to leave a terrestrial paradise, or stay in it, to endanger her own honor; to acquiesce in the most injurious calumny, and wound the feelings of a virtuous wife?

Ah! no, cried I, St. Clare would in my situation have taken the very steps her Agnes has now done: she would hasten from the scene of such complicated ills, she would fly from a man whose tenderness was at best but equivocal, she would reject every advantage, that wore the guise of dishonor.

Thus, madam did I reconcile to my own heart, the pain I knew I should inflict on the General; and thus did I re-animate my sinking courage, till having past the summit of the hill, I had wholly, and perhaps forever, lost sight of Belle-Vue.

I now found the benefit of the exercise I am so fond of, having walked near ten miles before the sun rose; when feeling myself weary, and my spirits from their unusual exertions, nearly exhausted; I accosted a poor woman, who was placing her spinning-wheel at the door of a hut, that could hardly be distinguished by the name of house; I entreated she would suffer me to rest, and get me a dish of tea, for which I promised her ample payment.

She very courteously shewed me in, but in a barbarous and uncouth corruption of the English language, took great pains to convince me that though many of her neighbours, who were no better to pass than herself, had forsooth, got the custom of drinking that flip-flop stuff—*she* never had, nor ever would suffer it to enter her dwelling; but she readily put before me her brown loaf, a few eggs, some butter-milk, and a wooden dish filled with whey; I took a draught of the latter, and an egg, and laid down on the pallet from whence my hostess was but just risen, whose kindness abundantly compensated for the rudeness of her dialect, and the hardness of her fare.

It was in vain I endeavoured to compose myself to rest, my mind was too much agitated; but as my feet were exceedingly blistered, and I found myself unable to pursue my journey, I lay some hours a prey to reflections I cannot describe.

My hostess who appeared to be about sixty, and very far from that robust make, which characterises the peasants of this country; lamented she had no better bed for me, assured me I should be mainly welcome if she had, for that I was the tightest lass she had

seen many a day, and sure, and sure if she had a golden bed, she should not think it was too good for me.

Are you not charmed, madam, with this artless creature? her song as she sat spinning, which but for the benevolence of her nature, I should call a horrible scream, was interrupted by my sighs; and she attributed my restlessness to her hard pallet, happy mortal! she could conceive no other cause, which after walking all night, should prevent my sleeping.

This woman was a strange composition, wherein the extremes of humanity, and indifference were blended; she saw me weep, and her own tears were ready to start; she was very eager to do me any kind office, and even offered to go to a neighbour's, as she called a house two miles off, and borrow not only crockery, but tea, sugar she had, as she proved by shewing me a yellow porringer, full of some very coarse, and moist, which she told me she always kept for posset, in case she should be sick; yet though she was thus kind, and attentive to every thing she thought would contribute to my ease; she expressed not the least curiosity either by looks, or words, at the singular appearance I made; my dress, which was a plain muslin chemise, tied with green, must have been superior to any thing she had seen, yet I could not observe in her an atom of curiosity, or the least desire to be acquainted with any thing about me, but my looks; which she assured me, over and over, pleased her hugely.

She asked me if I was a maiden body, and on being answered in the affirmative, bid me keep so, and not mind the men, of whom in the whole world there were but two sorts, the false-hearted—and the good-for-nothing—and she thanked God, days, weeks, and sometimes months passed, without her seeing any of them.

This piece of intelligence rendered me perfectly easy in my situation, but I profited so little by her good example, that I really felt great curiosity to know her history.

She had, (she said) had her share of trouble—but it was all comprised in one, and one only remarkable incident, which brought a glow of resentment into her cheeks: she had been in her youthful days plighted to a neighbouring husbandman, who had forsaken her in all her bridal finery, the savings of three years servitude, at the church door; and enlisted for a soldier—

And what became of the wretch? said I.

Oh! he was either killed abroad, answered she very composedly—or hanged at London—no matter which—then walking very leisurely up to a large brown chest, she opened it, and taking the things it contained out, one by one, shewed me her bridal suit, which she said she had never worn since her first, and last disappointment, but kept it as a warning to all the young maidens that came to her house.

What will you say, madam, when you are told that while this good creature, was thus gratifying her pique to the men, and seeking to amuse me, I formed a scheme to rob her of those valuable reliques?

I had reason to expect, that as soon as my elopement was discovered at Belle-Vue, the General would at least wish to inform himself of the route I had taken; and perhaps too, for never more will I conceal a thought from my only friends; Harley might fancy himself interested in my fate.—Ingrate! *my* imagination had deified *him*, *his* had reduced *me* to the lowest contempt.

I was sure the cloaths would fit me, and that I should in them pass through the country towns in my way to N—— where I remembered to have seen the London stages stop, when I was going to Belle-Vue, without exciting curiosity, which it was of importance to me to avoid.

After passing that day, and the next night with the good old maiden; I pretended a head-ach, and accepted her offer to go to her neighbours, and borrow the tea, and crockery; which she chearfully undertook to do, at the same time, I charged her not to say any thing about me.

Why child, said she, what can I say of you? if you are as good as you look, I can say no harm; and if you be *worse*, it must be somebody wiser than Cicely to find you out; and so child make yourself easy, and away tripped the old dame.

The instant she was gone, I began my operations; and in ten minutes, set out from the cottage quite a country lass; in a fine flowered linen gown, pink petticoat, straw hat, and white cloth cloak; my satin shoes I changed for a pair of black leather pumps, and drew on a pair of pink stockings, with white clocks, over my own silk ones; my hair was fortunately out of powder, but I found the most difficult part in my whole dress, was that of tucking it all under the round-ear'd cap; I left my muslin dress, and all the rest of my cloaths in the chest, from whence I had taken those belonging to Cicely; with one guinea out of the three I had in my purse, and fully satisfied with myself, although I had put such a trick upon my hostess, made the best of my way toward the great road.

I had not walked half a mile, before I met two of the General's domestics on horseback; whom I afterwards heard had been describing my person and dress and making enquiries after me, in the next and neighbouring villages.

Imagine, madam, my anxiety when on looking back, I saw one of them strike out of the high road, and make directly towards the cottage I had just quitted; fortunately Cicely was not returned, and I had left no traces behind me, that could lead to a discovery of my having been there, except my cloaths which were not in sight; however I quickened my pace, and had the pleasure to see, on looking behind me sometime after, the man who I concluded had satisfied himself by searching the old woman's cottage, had rejoined his companion.

I entered the first village with fear and trembling, but to my infinite joy passed it unobserved; and presently met a kind of carrier of goods to the next town, who offered to place me between his panniers, and convey me there, for two shillings; I accordingly mounted, and though it was a most uneasy seat, found it a much more pleasant method of travelling, than the pedestrian one I had been obliged to set out with.

It was late in the evening when we got to the end of our days journey; my guide put up at a miserable house he called an inn, but which was not a bit superior to old Cicely's hut, in convenience, and accommodation, and very much inferior to it, in every degree of cleanliness.

From hence I procured a man and double horse to take me to N— five and thirty miles, which we travelled the next day, and my guide, by my directions took me to the inn, from whence the London carriages set out; I slept that night very comfortably, enjoying for the first time since I left Belle-View, the luxury of a good bed, and decent apartment: in the morning, while I was enquiring of the landlord, whether there were any nearer road to France, than through London, a footman in livery accosted me in French, and informed me, that although there were several sea-ports, from whence I might procure a passage to the continent, much nearer to N——, than the metropolis; yet that the vessels were so uncertain, I might be detained a month before any sailed—on the contrary, if I went through London, I might either go in a French trader from thence, or travel by land to Dover, from whence the passage was very short; I thanked him for his information, and immediately enquired when the stage set out to London, and what was the fare. Imagine, my dear lady Abbess, my consternation and embarrassment, when I found that the whole contents of my purse, were insufficient to defray the expences of the journey; the man perceived my confusion, and advised me to ride outside, which was seconded by the coachman, who added some coarse jokes on my pretty person.

I retired into the room, I had left in the utmost anxiety; I had not a single resource from the anguish of my own reflections, and now severely felt the ill consequences of my improvident thoughtlessness in leaving Belle-View, where my cabinet was never in a state of poverty, without a sufficient sum of money for travelling expences; I had, it is necessary for me to tell you, though I did not at *that* time recollect it myself, a pair of pearl bracelets, with diamond clasps, which the General had presented to me; and insisted on putting on my arms the very day I left Belle-View; these I had worn in compliment to him, 'till I retired after supper, and then only took them off, to put them in the case, which I had in my pocket, the moment before I left my apartment to meet Harley—but this circumstance had totally escaped my memory; and having left my buckles in my shoes at old Cicely's, I had nothing I could sell to assist me in my present exigence:—While I was ruminating on my unhappy situation, the same footman who had accosted me in the inn yard, came to desire I would go to his mistress, who wished to speak with me.

Not a little surprised at this message, I followed him into one of the best apartments in the inn, where I found a lady with a fine child on her lap, about three years old; who told me with great civility, and good-nature, in French—that hearing I could speak the language, and wanted a conveyance to France, she sent for me to offer to bear my expences to London, if I would undertake the care of her child; that she had brought his nurse with them into the country, who had unfortunately been taken ill; and their engagements requiring their return to town, they were obliged to leave her behind them; that the child was become so fretful at the loss of his nurse, and not being able to converse, or amuse himself in the English language, she was sinking under the fatigue of attending him.

Well madam, you will not doubt my acceptance of this offer, behold therefore, now your Agnes, entered on the humble office of nurse, Louisa her name, to master Mitard; the child was naturally good-tempered, he had been fretted by being consigned to the care of strangers—whose language he did not understand, and grew proportionably fonder of me, with whom he could hold his little parleys; and his mamma was so delighted at being relieved from the fatigue of attending to him, that she insisted on paying the charge I had already incur'd at the inn, and that I should immediately consider myself as one of her family; I purchased a change of linen at N——, and after a journey, which had it not been for the secret anxiety of my mind, would have been far from unpleasant, we arrived in Suffolk-street, on the third day after our leaving N——.

Monsieur and Madame Mitard were very averse to the thoughts of parting with me; the child would not be satisfied when I was out of his sight, and they entreated me to continue, at least till they heard the fate of their old nurse, or could procure a new one to answer their purpose.

I had not money to defray my expences to France, my poverty therefore as the English bard expresses it, but not my will consented, for my situation became much less agreeable here than on the journey; yet as I had no alternative but to wait till I heard from you, and was entirely unconnected and unknown in this city, which is larger and far more populous than Paris, where, considering the state of my finances could I have been more eligibly situated? I therefore consented to stay, not till the recovery of their nurse, but 'till I should receive a letter from my friends at Paris.

It was four days before I discovered the profession of Monsieur and Madame Mitard, they are Opera performers; Madame dances and Monsieur sings; they had been in the north of England at a rural fete, given on account of the marriage of a nobleman in that part of the world, and were on their return to London, when I, so fortunately met with them.

I have not given Mr. du Mitard the least reason to suspect, from my own conduct, that I am of rank superior to my appearance; he has nevertheless rallied me on my dress, which he says, he is sure is a disguise: you shall never persuade me, Louisa, he cries, those luxurious ringlets, have always been confined to so narrow a compass; then your hand, and arm, there are many a duchess who would be proud to exchange with you—come, come, confess, a lover is at the bottom of all this; how should a young person of your figure be dropped as it were out of the elements in such a part of the world?

Shocking, cries Madame, my nerves were totally deranged by the horrid bores, we met with there; certainly Louisa you have been engaged in some adventures; she then obligingly presses me to change my dress, and offers to supply me, either from her own wardrobe, or with money, to purchase cloaths, more suitable to the sphere, she is persuaded I have been used to move in.

Were I adept enough in dissimulation, to persuade them their conjectures are entirely devoid of foundation, I should thereby be deprived of an advantage of great

importance to me at present, which is that of eating at their table; as I must else take my meals with their footman and cook.

Madame is, I fancy, much admired—she is visited by many noblemen who pay her high compliments, which she receives with the ease of a woman, to whom the incense of flattery is not new; among the rest, is a young lord to whom she insisted on introducing me; what had passed between them I know not, but he looked surprised: whether at my dress, as to be sure Cicely's wedding suit is a little particular, or at the story they think proper to suppose for me, or perhaps a little of both.

This lord, who is really very conceited, saluted me by the appellation of beautiful nurse; said a thousand nothings in French, shewed his white teeth, played with the child a long while, and at parting, gave him a paper which he bade him present to his nurse to buy pins; it was an English bank note for twenty pounds; I could not conceal either my surprise, or anger.

Madame Mitard laughed—his lordship, she said, meant to present me with it, to purchase a more becoming dress.

My face was in a glow—I burst into tears—scorn and indignation flashed from my eyes—what, madam, at that moment were my sensations?

Madame Mitard stared—she is really very impenetrable; the wonder in her looks, reminded me of my situation—I had no right to deport myself so haughtily, was I not a dependant—a servant?

The sense of my fallen situation, the uncertainty when I might hear from you, the further mortifications I might be subject to in Madame Mitard's family, and the different scenes I might be exposed to if I left it; all struck so forcibly on my mind, that it took from me the power of utterance.

I sunk on the floor without motion.

Madame Mitard's nerves are very strong—mine the reverse; she therefore never carries eau-de-luce—but she knew I did, and searching my pocket for the bottle, drew out, by what accident she has not said, the shagreen case with my bracelets.

The respect of those little people, was wonderfully increased by the sight of the jewels; they insisted I should no longer consider myself as their dependant; they had *always* thought, and were *now* convinced, I was a person of rank; they besought I would honour them by partaking their humble means, 'till my affairs (however deranged) were accommodated.

Madame again intreated I would accept from her, money, to purchase cloaths more suitable to my rank, and which would prevent my being an object of curiosity—

The last consideration was of most weight with me; yet I could not bear to accept pecuniary obligations from those people, and so at length I plainly told them.

Ciel mademoiselle, replied Madame, why will you talk of incurring obligation, with such riches in your possession, glancing her eyes at the bracelets—in short, madam, the jewels were valuable, and Monsieur knew how to dispose of them; he carried them to a person who lives by this sort of traffic with the necessitous, and brought me twenty guineas, with right to redeem my jewels, whenever it is in my power.

I have purchased some white dresses, and a few necessaries just to appear in.

Madame Mitard undertakes to return Lord Morden his note; and now, I wait with inconceivable impatience to hear from you; if you have wrote by the first return of the mail, I am told I shall receive your letter in two days—oh! how I desire, yet dread to know your sentiments on the step I have taken, on the whole of my conduct; if you acquit me, I know God will do the same; and then you and St. Clare will take to your beloved hearts your own

AGNES.

## LETTER XLVIII.

*Agnes in continuation.*

Suffolk-Street.

THE day is past on which I was informed I might have heard from Paris: I have already learnt to distinguish the two loud knocks, which announce the post-man's approach; he passed our door, yet so strong was my confidence, that you had wrote, I prevailed on Mr. Mitard to go to the general office, and examine whether any mistake had deprived me of the consolation, to know I was yet dear to you; to-morrow they say, your letter may arrive; oh! that this country could afford me a little cell, where I might shut out the world, and pray for you 'till then: Oh! my prophetic fears! St. Clare!—but I cannot bear the supposition—however unhappy your Agnes may be in your displeasure, you will not reject her fond petitions, to be again taken to your bosom; nor abandon her to her fate; however she may deserve it—my St. Clare, I know, loves only her God, and you better than her adopted child.

It is now twenty-six days since I left Belle-Vue, it is yet longer since I have heard from you; what may not have happened in that space, to you, to St. Clare; you are, it is true, happily exempted from all the evils, which in the great world, are the source of temptation, and the offsprings of passion; your serene lives are undisturbed by the turbulence of vain wishes, and the fear of imaginary evils; secure of the rich reward, due to your piety and virtue; you tread with confidence, and fortitude, the path which leads to the "heaven of heavens," but though your souls are sanctified, even in this state of mortality, how many bodily complaints are you not subject to.

What a languid state was poor St. Clare in, when she tore herself from my embrace; how had her sweet countenance suffered within the last year, and how wounding to me were the groans which pain extorted from her.

Alas! when I think of this, and fancy it possible you have journeyed to Abberville to render the last kind office to her, I am lost in anguish.

Again, industrious to torment myself, I reflect, that notwithstanding *your* happy state of health, and your still more even mind; it is also possible that *you* may be attacked by some dangerous indisposition, which preys on you with the more violence, from your heretofore excellent constitution.

These are my fears for *you* my only friends, for *myself* they are innumerable.

I do not by any means like my present situation; Madame Mitard adds to the sprightly naïveté of our French ladies, a levity, and coquetry that disgusts me extremely; she is at times gross in her conversation, and rude in her repartees, particularly to gentlemen; but as these are diverted by her sallies, and are constantly making her little presents, she is contented to believe they admire her, without troubling herself to

distinguish whether they laugh *with* or *at* her; she is displeased when I look grave, and says I am a sly prude, a character *she* detests—but *her* opinion of *me* is of small importance to *my* peace, *mine* of *her* is a distinct affair.

As I have before told you, they are visited by many men of rank; the greatest inconvenience of my situation, since they have thought proper to consider me as their equal, is the obligation politeness lays on me to attend Madame Mitard in the room, where she receives her company; we have very few female friends, Madame Mitard dislikes her own sex in general—and English women in particular, she despises; that sentiment might perhaps be reciprocal, if she were much known to them.

Is it not very provoking, madam, to be obliged to hear all the impertinence, men who (as they fancy themselves our superiors) think they have an exclusive right to utter.

I have however absolutely refused to be seen abroad with Madame Mitard, and notwithstanding she is extremely angry, am determined to adhere to my resolution—no madam! Madame Mitard is not a chaperon for *your Agnes*—

\* \* \* \* \*

Madame Mitard undertook to return Lord Morden's note, may I own without incurring the censure of your upright heart, for my want of candour; that I suspect she has not kept her word?

That young nobleman treats me with a freedom unusual in this country, he adopts he says, when I am displeased, the manners of mine; and following Madame Mitard's example, thinks vivacity and delicacy are not to be found blended in a French education; this is an error (and a very illiberal one you will allow) which I have found to be prevalent, among the few of the *common* order of beings, with whom I have been in any degree conversant, since I have been in England; but it is of too gross a nature to be adopted by any of those of a superior cast, I am therefore not easily reconciled to an apology so absurdly founded, nor is my opinion of this nobleman at all raised by his contracted ideas.

Lord Morden is no favorite with me, he is introduced to my knowledge, at a period very unfavorable for a man of the world; the contrast between him and those I have been used to converse with is too striking.

General Moncrass is the very essence of politeness, and good breeding; there is a manly, and graceful turn in his manner, which even when he condescends to trifle, takes from him all appearance of frivolity; in his most lively sallies *he* is a stranger to that—

“—————lawless joy,  
“Which pains the sage ear, and hurts the sober eye.”

He is the only man I ever saw, who retained the lively, and undeviating attention to our sex, which we always meet with in France from well-bred men; and yet was so

particularly happy in his judgment, as to preserve the appearance of a feeling sincerity in his compliments, without sacrificing his good sense; in short the cap of Minerva rested on his temples, while

“Words sweet as honey from his lips distil’d.”

And then Edward Harley, what an humble elegance was there in that young man’s address, what eloquence and grace in his conversation, and what propriety marked his judgment; his face was the true index to his mind, and whether it was adorned with the glow of sensibility, the blush of modesty, or the emanation of joy; whether it was animated with hope, oppressed with grief, or clouded with despair; all his sensations were founded on rectitude; and had honour for their guide; such is Edward Harley:—I think of him as one I have known, and forgive me, dear madam, if I add, one whom I have *loved*, but am no more to behold—one who is forever lost to me, but whose image will live in my heart, ’till I follow your steps, and those of dear St. Clare, and offer my humble vow on the altar of him, who made Edward Harley what he is.

Lord Morden is tall, genteel, and they say generally reckoned handsome. Madame Mitard says he has fine eyes; but confident indeed must the woman be who could examine them; you never, madam, saw such a determined starrer—he appears to endeavour, and I dare say succeeds, to look down every female who is unfortunately near him—then his conversation—but—I was educated in the convent of D——, and since I have left that sacred haunt of all the virtues, I have most conversed with General Moncrass, and Edward Harley, I am therefore ill qualified to speak of Lord Morden: such however as he is, a Miss Julia Neville, one of the greatest heiresses in the kingdom, was by command of her relations his affianced bride; but to his great mortification, the young lady has actually eloped from her family, to avoid a marriage, to which she was averse.

I am more particular respecting this lord than any of Madame’s visitors, because he is here quite en famille—we are indeed more (properly speaking) of his family, than he of ours; as our dinners, and suppers are served at his expence, from a neighbouring hotel; from what I have said, you will certainly believe I shall be very joyful, when I leave England—nor be surprised if I am at your feet, even before you have read this long, uninteresting detail, from your grateful

AGNES.

## LETTER XLIX.

*Agnes in continuation.*

MERCIFUL God! what will become of me—eight days are now elapsed since the return of the mail, and I have not received a line of consolation, or assistance, from my more than parents; some unforeseen accident, some fatal event, must have happened; never would you knowingly have abandoned your child in such distress—whatever be the cause of your silence, I know you have not deserted your Agnes.

Distracted at the suspense in which I am kept, I thought of an expedient to raise money for my journey to France, which I flattered myself could not fail.

When Mr. Mitard brought the money he borrowed on my jewels, he begged I would not make myself uneasy about hearing from my friends, as they were of great value, and I might command sums to a large amount on them; I therefore applied to him to take up fifty more guineas, and declared my intention of going to France immediately.

I met to my surprise no opposition in this arrangement; Monsieur very alertly accepted my commission, and went out to execute it; but no words can express my grief, and consternation at his return.

The person, he said, had been deceived in their value when he first saw them; and now, instead of advancing any further sums, would be glad if I could pay what I had already borrowed, and take back the jewels.

Heavens! cried I, they cost —

No matter, madam, interrupted Monsieur, what they cost—buying and selling in this country are very different things; they were presented to you I presume?

Indeed they were! answered I,

By a gentleman? said Monsieur.

I wept—

Ah! Mademoiselle, continued he, gentlemen will do these things; but with beauty, youth, and accomplishments like yours; what is the defection of one lover? you are very charming, and there are many who are sensible of your attractions, of whose generosity it will be prudent in you to avail yourself.

Judge my astonishment—my indignation—my disgust—at this (as it proved) preamble to the sentiment of Mr. and Madame Mitard; but the misery of my situation had not yet fully explained itself; I was so much interested to believe, the man's coarse expressions, were as unmeaning as the servility, he mistook for politeness, that I did not suffer myself to seek for explanations, but coldly said—I did not comprehend him, and was retiring—

Madame Mitard, however, had not the charity to suffer me to continue in ignorance—

Stop, Miss, said she, you are in great haste to leave people who have been your very good friends; and it is now necessary, you should be acquainted with what is expected from you—

I made a very precipitate retreat from the door, which I was opening, and seating myself by her, waited with no small impatience, the result of a conversation, not more extraordinary than unexpected; my extreme earnestness disconcerted Madame Mitard; the curious attention with which I looked on her face, actually embarrassed her; it is not often she blushes, or that her eyes are withdrawn, but it so happened now, that the mounting of the blood into her cheeks, notwithstanding the quantity of rouge she wears, was very visible; and that the carpet for some moments, received all the fire of her glances—but her native fortitude soon returned.

With respect to those jewels, Mademoiselle, said she, they are counterfeits—absolutely counterfeits—Monsieur's credit is pledged for the money you borrowed on them—you are besides considerably in our debt, yet you would leave us, without the smallest regret; we are therefore bound in prudence to take care of ourselves; we are indebted to our talents for subsistence, you are equally capable to provide for yourself by yours—we have certainly been your friends, and might have continued so longer, had you not dropt the mask, but there is no reason why we should be losers for our charity.

Here had she stopped her conclusions had not been unjust, although I am certain the jewels, whatever their value, were not counterfeits; General Moncrass would not stoop to so paltry a deception, and I am further confirmed in this opinion by what followed.

I acknowledge, madam, I answered, my obligations for your professions of kindness, but I must be pardoned saying, I do not conceive they ought to prevent my wish to return to my friends: I am extremely concerned Monsieur should involve himself in any difficulties for me, but I cannot easily believe those bracelets were counterfeits, the person from whom I received them was a man of such—

They both eagerly interrupted me—and protested they were mock pearl and rose diamonds.

Well, madam, said I coldly, and what is the amount of the other pecuniary debts you claim from me?

She had not made a regular account, but should expect to be paid for bringing me from the country, as well as for my board, from that time—we live, you see, Mademoiselle in a tolerable genteel way, your bill will by no means be a light one.

I smiled a little contemptuously, I believe, and Madame Mitard's stock of philosophy is rather small, she was exceedingly irritated.

Well, my little friend, continued she, in a rage, we shall see whether the payment of our debt will sit quite so easy on you, assure yourself you do not leave us 'till it is discharged.

Not leave you, madam, answered I—my staying with you, would by no means facilitate the payment of your debt—on the contrary, were I once to rejoin my friends, they would amply repay every civility shewn me.

Madame Mitard returned my contemptuous smile, and pray Miss, said she, who are those friends of yours in whom we are so implicitly to confide?

I was silent.

You deal in mysteries, Miss, but come, we are not disposed to be mortally offended at the ingratitude you have shewn us.

We will forgive you, said Monsieur, approaching me, provided you will take our advice in future.

Certainly, rejoined Madame, nothing can be more reasonable, than to know on whom, and for what purpose we confer obligations; and have assurance Mademoiselle will not leave our house, without giving us every requisite satisfaction.

I was extremely embarrassed, I was very averse to the giving them a promise, I certainly did not mean to keep, of staying with them; neither did I think it prudent to irritate them by an avowal of my real sentiments; while I was in this dilemma Lord Morden was announced; I was retiring with some haste, but Madame, with an air partly authoritative, and partly suppliant, intreated I would not affront her best friend, and most powerful protector, by a conduct so disobliging—I had not time to answer before his lordship entered.

Ah! said he, as soon as he saw me, my dear little shy friend, are *you* there? then turning to Madame Mitard, with a freedom I had often before observed in his address to her; this is very obliging, I had begun to despair of ever meeting your little skittish damsel again; why child, continued he, familiarly taking my hand, you run away from me as if you were afraid of being eaten.

Louisa (said Madame Mitard) my Lord is not used to company of your lordship's rank, it is therefore natural she should be embarrassed.

Oh! answered the rude man putting his arms round me, if that be all, trouble yourself Mitard to order tea, and we will in the mean time become better friends.

Imagine, madam, my situation.

The woman actually left the room, and was immediately followed by her husband.

Lord Morden again, for I had before disengaged myself from him, attempted to throw his arms round my waist, I flew to the window, which looked into the street, the sash was up.

But this young nobleman (who as himself boasts, is above paying any regard to decency) was not to be deterred by fear of *public* exposure, from following the bent of his own inclinations.

You mean, Miss, said he, with a most undaunted countenance, to give me all possible trouble; but believe me, child, that is not wisely done, you would make more of

me by half, by trusting to my generosity, as I think you might understand by the handsome earnest I gave you.

I have not, I haughtily answered, the honor to understand your lordship.

No, replied he, gad I think twenty guineas, or pounds is speaking pretty plain to a little adventuress like you—

If you mean, my lord, the bit of paper you gave Master Mitard—

The bit of paper pretty one, why it was a bank note, what, in a voice wherein curiosity, and apprehension were blended; what have you done with it, you know the value of it I hope, you have not destroyed it—you have not destroyed a twenty pound note?

Be composed, my lord, with as much nonchalance as I could assume, Madame Mitard was so obliging as to undertake to restore it to your lordship; you are yourself I hope, a competent judge of its value, and will not in future, throw away such good things on children, and ideots.

Let me die, returned he, but I believe you are a wit; though your giving the note to Mitard is a strong proof you have very little common sense; but as there is nothing new in that, and as she has most probably placed it in her own sinking fund, you shall not be the loser, let me know your terms, and I am so desperately in love with you, that if they are within the compass of my fortune, or credit, I will comply with them; you are not I see the simpleton I took you for; you have wit, and what is better, you have pride; it is a devilish stupid thing in a nobleman to take a mistress, who has not pride to support her own dignity; you have profited by Mitard's instructions, and I like you the better; do her justice, no woman is more qualified to render you the ton, and the ton you will certainly be, as soon as it is known you are mine; it is true, I have some thoughts of marrying, on which account, you must in common decency, keep a little in the back ground; but you will very soon have me all to yourself; I feel I shall be very foolish, only too fond of you, that's all; I shall give you a town house, and you shall reside at one of my own villas in summer; as to my bride, she has at present the impudence to pretend to dislike me, for which reason, were there no other, and were it to cost me half my fortune, I am determined to oblige her to marry me; Lady Mary Moncrass—

Good heavens! madam, how I started—the insipid haranguer minded me not, he went on:

Lady Mary Moncrass an outrageously foolish woman, took it into her head to be jealous of her husband, because he liked a younger piece than herself, and in revenge to *him*, resolves to give *me* her daughter, merely because young Moncrass shall not have her; 'tis a poor little insipid thing, but her fortune is immense, and you, my Louisa, shall share it with your Morden, nay, you shall be mistress of it; be not therefore so coy my little angel, attempting to take my hand, which I withdrew; ah! you cunning baggage, what I must sign and seal first—well, prithee dear girl then get it done, I am impatient to have you all my own.

Does Madame Mitard know of your lordship's honorable intention towards me? with as much composure as I could assume.

Not altogether, answered he, as little embarrassed as you would conceive, shall I confess the truth?—Why then, Louisa, to convince you, how open I in future mean to deal with you, I must tell you, your rival Mitard, she is handsome, lively, paints well, and is in

short tolerably amusing; she is not perhaps without her hopes, that she shall turn the tables, and rival you in her turn; she is mistaken—you are just the girl to my taste—there is, however no absolute necessity to make her acquainted with *every* thing, as she would naturally be mortified, I should give you more substantial proofs of my passion, than she has been able to draw from me, you will therefore act wisely, in concealing from *her*, my handsome designs in *your* favor.

Here madam, here St. Clare—if ever this letter should reach you, of which I have a thousand fears; here is a specimen of English morality; they talk in this country, with wonderful gravity, of the liberties men of gallantry allow themselves in France, and tell a thousand fabulous stories of the excesses in which, particularly after marriage, they indulge, but I think Lord Morden may dispute the palm with any of our French libertines; indeed, if ingenuity be a merit, I can form no idea to myself, of there being a possibility of excelling him in that; he certainly is neither ashamed of his vices, or afraid of their consequences; what he dares do, I really believe he will dare to justify; he is too haughty, and too brave, to fear offending his maker.

But under the roof of Madame Mitard, and in the power of such a man, do you not tremble for your Agnes? yet again my sad heart presages that you will not receive this, or any of my former letters; else, what can be the meaning of this cruel, this distressing silence? how many conjectures have I form'd, and given up as soon as form'd, of the cause; if you were displeas'd with me, you would surely take the trouble to reprimand me, you would not desert the wretched orphan, who has none to help her—no, it cannot be—I am sure it cannot, but said an author, you early taught me to distinguish.

“There is little difference betwixt fearing an evil and feeling it; except that the evil one feels has bounds, whereas ones apprehensions has none, for we can suffer no more than what actually *has* but we fear all that possibly *can* happen.”

And fear it too often, madam, against reason and probability; it has unhappily in my fate, followed the danger, instead of preceding it; my poor heart, shrinks under the consequences of the step I have taken; and now that I know the real evil to which I am exposed; the imaginary ones from which I fled, appear a mere shadow.

Yet madam, let me once more cast myself at your feet, let me raise my flowing eyes to him, whose throne is the fountain of mercy, and forgiveness; let me implore *his* protection, and hope for *yours*; should my letters reach you, no longer withhold your favor, yet it may be too late, again must the wretched Agnes become a wanderer, again cast herself on that providence, that will uphold the virtuous, and again seek some happy chance of reaching the serene house of religious chastity.

I have learnt, fatally learnt, since I have been with the Mitards, to condemn the folly that threw me from the protective roof of a man of honor:—I feel with self reproach, the rash ingratitude I was guilty of, in leaving General Moncrass, and my heart condemns me from a latent motive, hidden almost from myself, which my weakness had misnamed prudence—ah! madam, I have promised to lay my whole heart open to you, never more will I conceal a thought from the most indulgent of women, it was Harley's suspicion of

my honor, which stabbed me to the heart; it was *him* I thought to wound by my flight; in the same moment he is convinced of my innocence, he shall also know, said I, that I am lost to him forever; and while I flattered myself, I only sought to clear my fame, wounded—alas! by whom? by the man to whose protection, the parting St. Clare, and virtuous St. Lawrence committed the object in whom their fondest love was centered.

Ingrate! that I am, how could I forget the paternal tears he shed over me, when almost convulsed with agony he parted with St. Clare? why do I hesitate? why do I not return to his protection? why not implore his pardon and confess the weakness of my heart?

But what would Harley say? would he?—O forgive me, madam, what indeed is Harley to me; would to God I was with you, that I might vent the sorrows of my heart at your feet!

\* \* \* \* \*

I had presence of mind, notwithstanding my indignation, and terror, to preserve an unruffled countenance during the whole of the conversation I have related; Lord Morden has I imagine, more vanity than even vice in his composition—he fancied his attractions ought to charm me, and concluded that they did so.

If pique, thought I, in that moment, urges this nobleman to take a wife for whom he has himself no predilection, and whose affections are pre-engaged, avowedly to punish her dislike of him, how far may it not urge him, to revenge himself on me, for a similar offence? and if Madame Mitard had the meanness, to convert the note I entrusted her to return, to her own use, will not a temptation of the same kind, carry her still greater lengths? these were the conclusions of a moment, and you will own they were not ill founded.

I requested a few hours to consider Lord Morden's proposals, and suffered him to believe, that I should give directions about drawing the settlements he offered; and in order to favor this scheme he insisted on the Mitards going in his party to Vauxhall.

Whether they suspected my design to leave them, or whether it was Monsieur's little gout for his wives company; which he always avoided, when he could do it decently, I cannot tell; but when the tea was brought up he followed the servant; I was much disconcerted when I saw him, as I am determined on leaving their house this evening; I have employed the time since Lord Morden and Mrs. Mitard have been gone, in packing up my few wearables, and writing to you—and am now at the secretary pursuing the same employment, while he is sauntering about the room and amusing himself with his flute; all my hopes are that some of the gay Signora's who lodge in this street, will pass by, and tempt him (for he is a man of prodigious gallantry) to walk out; in the mean time, I will just give you a sketch of my design; you will say I am a schemer, how little did I once foresee the necessity I should be under to adopt that character.

M. Mitard's mantua-maker is a French woman, who takes many journies in the year to Paris to learn the fashions, and generally imports a great quantity of goods, which are prohibited here; a friend of Monsieur's had sent over some fine lace for ruffles, which were seized by the revenue officers; Mrs. du Bois who was supposed to be conversant in such matters, was consulted on the possibility of regaining the lace, and in the course of conversation, acquainted them with the method she took to convey her goods from France.

A Mr. Arnold, who resides a little beyond a place called Greenwich, where that is, heaven knows! but I must find it; keeps a couple of sailing boats, large enough to accommodate two or three passengers; and such swift sailors, that superadded to his own extreme sobriety and caution, constantly eluded the vigilance of the revenue officers; this man, she said, who made it a point never to trade for himself, had accumulated a decent fortune by the integrity with which he transacted contraband business for other people, and, continued du Bois, I always go and return with him, and have never lost a thread.

This information made a deep impression on me, and I took care to enter every particular in my tablets; du Bois is now at Paris, and Mitard is too volatile to remember this circumstance; to Greenwich therefore I am resolved to go; I will explain my situation to the man, he is the father of a family of children, and however easy his circumstances, a man who continually risks his life to encrease his store, will not refuse a handsome present on such a simple occasion, as carrying a poor worthless young creature back to her dear country: I shall be very liberal in my promises, and hire him to take me to Boulogne, where the good father Dominick will, I am sure, enable me to perform all my engagements—if I am so happy as ever to see my honored lady Abbess, and beloved St. Clare, they will reimburse the venerable priest; if not, if that only happiness after which my heart pants, is denied me, I shall at least lay my bones in some of the cloysters of our holy church.

Ah! madam, I tremble, my eagerness will betray me—Monsieur is actually going out—his servant is brushing his chapeau—two Italians wait in the street, it is a warm evening, they talk of airing on the water.

He is gone—he is out of sight—adieu, adieu, most beloved, most honored of friends, oh! pray for your

AGNES.

END of the SECOND VOLUME.