

THE

OLD WOMAN.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
THE HORRORS OF OAKENDALE ABBEY.

“Fear on guilt attends, and deeds of darkness;
“The virtuous breast ne’er knows it.”

HAVARD.

VOL. I.

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THE
OLD WOMAN.

LETTER I.

Mrs. St. Edward to Mrs. Safforey.

Arkley Castle, July 23, 1797.

THIS has been a long silence, my dear Elinor; but the occasion must plead for my forgiveness.—I promised, in my haste, to write immediately, and then I fully intended it. Indeed, for the first few hours after we separated, I thought every little occurrence would be worth relating, and appeared such as would interest my Elinor. Since that time my mind has been in a whirl of variety and confusion, and scarce a moment has been allowed to my heart to ascertain either its pains or its pleasures. I have, during this time, written answers to a multitude of congratulatory notes and epistles, all of which expressed the same uniform hackneyed sentiments. If chance has thrown any of them in your way, and you form a judgment from their language, you will have nothing more to expect; nothing either to hope or fear; for they pronounce me the happiest of mortals.—Alas! my friend, they are indeed the dictates of my pen; would that my heart could as easily subscribe to such sentiments. You have a right to all its sincerity; and I am now writing, not from the outward forms of etiquette, but the inward feelings of a mind undisguised and open to your censure or applause.

From a very early period of our lives, you have been acquainted with all its weaknesses, all its follies, and may form some judgment of its present state; and yet, I think, you cannot have quite a just idea of my present situation, or one at all equal to the agitation of my mind;—I had almost said, to its tortures. Ah my friend! it is not too strong a word. When in the awful marriage service Mr. Goodworth pronounced that sentence which must strike all thinking people with hope or fear; when with that stern piety and emphasis for which he is so justly admired, he said, “I require and charge you both, as ye shall answer it at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed,” &c. &c. What at that moment did my mind undergo! You, my Elinor, are the only person who can form some judgment of its emotion, for well you know its weak propensities, and yet whatever you may suppose, will fall short of its agitation. Simpleton that I was! I was upon the point of stopping the ceremony—I was going to cry aloud there was an impediment—I was going to utter such things!—but my good or evil genius (as it may henceforth prove) prevented me, and my trembling hand and faltering voice resigned, and fixed my fate for ever.

You know how much I ever despised and reprobated those disgusting airs of affectation and design, which are not unfrequently practised by those whose hearts are firmly attached, and who would be indeed wretched were they to be divided. This was not the case with me. My agitated heart and trembling hand were but faint emblems of

my distracted feelings.—Yet, ought I to breathe such a confession? Only to you, my friend, who know all the secrets of my soul, would I dare thus to express myself. Nay, I have set bounds even to my ideas; but there are moments when they stray beyond those limits, and never so much as when I am addressing you, who, knowing all my failings, will make all due allowances for a divided, torn, and wounded heart. It is when I am writing to you, that my thoughts flow faster than my pen can express them; and surely I may not be denied this relief from the cruel anguish of dissimulation, in which I seem so involved, that I fear it will become habitual.—How am I dwelling upon retrospection, when I should be relating events, and describing those circumstances of joy and splendor, by which the heart of a bride is generally elated! Not a word neither of my husband, who should now be the chief object of my contemplations; and indeed, he is truly deserving of more praise and gratitude than I can give. He is kind, tender, and affectionate. I could even wish he were less so; for then my own duplicity would not give me so much pain.—After we left you, he used every attentive endeavour to reconcile me to my situation, and very kindly attributed all my agitation to extreme sensibility.

During our journey to Arkley Castle, he pointed out all the beauties of the country through which we passed. It abounded in hills, rich dales, beautiful woods, and distant views, all of which were justly worthy of my admiration; and the setting sun gilding the prospects, formed a truly picturesque and fine scene. The castle is a stately old building, of an immense size. I had never seen it since I was about eight years of age, when the mind is too young for much observation, and receives no impression beyond those of the moment. It was therefore new to me, and the superb magnificence of its size and its antiquity inspired me with awe, not altogether void of terror; for I remembered some idle stories of ghosts, which never fail to excite the attention of a child, and which the uninhabited part of the structure appears well calculated to inspire. I could have given way to my fears, had they not been dispelled by the ring of bells from the parish-church, the shouts of the peasants who surrounded the castle, expressing every mark of rustic congratulation, and all the clamorous joy of the domestics, some of whom I remembered, and they all seemed to show me the most marked respect, and to look upon me as a being of superior order. I hope I received all these compliments properly, but my mind was in a chaos of confusion, and I fear I acquitted myself with an ill grace.

The following day St. Edward led me through all the apartments, and in a closet he opened a cabinet, which was our grandmother's, and presented me with a superb necklace, ear-rings, and cross, of the finest brilliants I ever beheld. How would they have dazzled the imagination, and pleased the sight of most women, particularly when presented by a young and handsome husband, who likewise accompanied the action with saying, "These, my Julia, were the jewels of our grandmother, and when they are new set, will be an ornament to those charms, which will nevertheless eclipse their lustre." What a compliment! yet I received them with trembling hands and faltering thanks. The idea of *our* grandmother made me shudder. Ah my friend, first cousins are too nearly allied to marry. The son of my uncle—the nephew of my father—the same blood—only two removes from a parent—much the same as marrying my brother:—how repugnant not only to the laws of nature, but to the nicer feelings of the heart. Perhaps you have heard these sentiments from me before, and perhaps they are strengthened by the singularity of my fate. I will not pretend to say how that may be, but I think even my fondest attachment would be lessened by the knowledge of relationship. This is not a time,

however, to make these reflections, nor should I have been led to have mentioned them at all, had not particular circumstances awakened such ideas.

Yesterday, as I strolled through the gallery of family portraits, the figures of my father and uncle upon the same canvas, animated by the hand of the artist, seemed to possess the same soul. Here they were figured as children; but when they were represented in different pictures, and grown up, the same features, the same expression of countenance, shewed their relationship, and gave me a disgusting thought that the son of either should be my husband. We were certainly kindred bodies before our marriage, and now ought to be kindred souls;—but does this follow? Alas! I am running into a strain it was my intention to avoid.—I should have told you of our numerous visitors—of going to church—of a thousand things I meant to have said; but I have already trespassed on your time, and devoted too much of my own to ideas which are to have no place in my future reflections. Let me hear from you, let me know the welfare of all those most dear to you; allow me this indulgence, my Elinor, and believe me

Ever yours,

JULIA ST. EDWARD.

LETTER II.

*Mrs. Safforey to Captain Safforey, at ————
West Indies.*

Ledcombe, July 31.

YOUR last letter, my dearest George, brought me the best intelligence, and the greatest pleasure I can know in your absence, that of your health. How have I offered up my grateful thanks to the Almighty for having preserved you amidst that pestilence, which has been so fatal to so many of our brave countrymen. May the blessing be still continued to me; it is my constant prayer, and I trust will be heard; for, next to the protection of Heaven, your own temperance will be a great means of preserving you from infection; and I hope your next accounts will be still more favorable respecting the fate of our men.—My brother too; I have much to say concerning him; and I know not if the blow he may before this have received, may not be infinitely more severe than any pain of the body inflicted by the fever. If my intelligence is the earliest, break to him, my dear George, in the tenderest manner you can, the marriage of Julia St. Edward. Yes, she is now the wife of her cousin William St. Edward; nor do I see what could have prevented the indissoluble knot. Such a combination of circumstances rendered their union so necessary, that I think if any broken vows can be forgiven, her situation seems to claim pardon. She is truly amiable, and will, I hope, be happy, although I have not much encouragement that my wishes will be effectual, if I may judge by a letter I received from her a few days after her marriage. Many of her sentiments bespoke a heart but ill at ease, yet she mentioned her husband handsomely, nay, even kindly. The great difficulty will be to keep him ignorant of her first prepossession, and I fear she has too upright a heart to be a good dissembler.

I know not myself all the family reasons and motives for this alliance, but I am promised to have the whole particulars related by Mrs. Clifford, who has had the care of Julia from the time she lost her mother; and to whose kindness and friendship I am myself greatly indebted. Not that I doubt my Julia;—I sincerely believe she has no reserves from me;—I should not so well love her if she had:—for where confidence is lessened either in love or friendship, the ardour of the passion dies away, till all is diminished. This is a truth which experience will teach, and time will confirm; and I say it to you, my George, because I know I can claim your confidence as long as I deserve your love.

Mrs. Clifford is a sensible and a good woman, and will relate events impartially, and knows every circumstance of the family. I fear you will fancy my style is that of impertinent curiosity, and that I have adopted the sentiments of those females, who are never easy but when they are engaged in the business and concerns of other people; but be assured I have too well observed your admonitions to fall into that error. The present case is a particular one; and besides that, I am, I confess, sincerely interested for my friend, and anxious for all concerning her. Yet the feelings of my brother on this account, are not the least of my reasons for wishing to know why it was necessary that he should lose the best of women, and why her inclinations should be sacrificed to duty, or rather to

obedience; and, perhaps, when he is well informed of the real truth, there may be circumstances which may mitigate, if not perfectly heal, the wounds this intelligence will inflict.

I have dwelt so much on this subject, that I have allowed but little room for any other; indeed, the rest is comprised in affectionate wishes and tender love.—Of public events, you receive better accounts than I can give you, and I hope better than I hear.—One topic I reserve for the last, as I used, when a girl, to preserve my plumbs and sweetmeats for a *bonne bouche*. It is our dear child!—he must have a place for himself, though so young. He is every day dearer to me by a million of charms which I constantly discover, but none which endears him so much as the likeness he bears to his beloved father. O my George, when I behold the likeness which is expressed in every feature, I gaze at him with rapture till the tears gush from my eyes, and I am ready to exclaim on the cruelties of war, and all its train of severities. Ah surely no acquisitions can compensate for the loss of thousands slain by the sword, or left a prey to the ravages of disease. The cries of the widows and orphans must embitter the moments of victory, and dispirit the bravest troops. These are reflections which are ever uppermost in my mind.

May Heaven avert a continuance of the calamities of war, and preserve my husband to his Elinor, whose heart beats only for those most dear to her. Let me hear from you by every opportunity. Remember me kindly to my brother; and believe me, my dear George, all that the fondest wife can remain,

ELINOR SAFFOREY.

Accept loves and compliments from all friends, but they take up too much room to specify them. Adieu.

LETTER III.

Lord Fitzarnold to Lord Robert Carrington.

CARRINGTON! I am fallen in love;—nothing but my own confession would convince you of this. Yes, there is another conviction;—could you behold the divinity of my adoration, you would not for a moment doubt my assertion; nay, you would be in love yourself;—but beware of that, for I should certainly in that case cut your throat. No, I have a rival sufficient in her husband; for she is a bride at present—a modest, timid, lovely, blushing bride; so no danger of matrimony for your friend, unless I effect a divorce, and even then I shall contrive to wave the galling fetters.

She is beautiful as an angel; but this is not all. I can view flesh and blood, in its highest colouring, unmoved; but when animated by such features!—eyes which bespeak the emotions of the soul, with every attractive grace that can ornament the body!—it is not in human nature to resist such united charms. I expect you will tell me you have seen such a thousand times. No, Carrington, you never did. Yes, I have seen the finest complexion, the finest eyes, the most perfect symmetry of form, and yet I never before saw such a model of perfection. Here are three fine girls in the same house with me; the eldest particularly handsome; but compared to Mrs. St. Edward (for that is her name) they are mere dowdies. Their eyes are continually upon the watch to see which feature is most

regarded; their mouths are opened by certain rules; and their limbs are thrown into motion by a kind of mechanic rule, which conveys the idea of automatons moved by the springs of art, and robbing nature of her choicest gifts.

As Mrs. St. Edward has received from nature her most lavish favors, so she seems to return them by never departing from her precepts. Every sentiment she utters is natural; every motion, every gesture is natural; and every attitude in which she places herself, seems directed by the most graceful natural ease. But I begin to anticipate thy wishes, which, methinks, lead thee to have less of description, and more of her history. But I shall fail in the latter, for as yet I know it but imperfectly. St. Edward has been kept out of the possession of the family estate by some derangements of economy, and a marriage with this sweet creature was the terms of inheritance. They were no hard conditions for him; for her I am not so clear. It seems she shewed a reluctance to the union, but was a sacrifice to duty and obedience, from a thorough conviction of the rules of propriety and rectitude. They are first cousins; and if I have any skill in physiognomy, or rather in the observations of the heart, he is not the man she would have chosen for her husband.

Good encouragement this for me, you will say. No; my vanity does nothing for me on this occasion. She seems purity itself; and appears at least to reverence her husband—I am mistaken if she loves him. Not that he is an object by any means unlikely to inspire the tender passion. He is handsome, well made, and what is generally termed agreeable. I should conceive him to be quick, warm, and impetuous. His eyes seem rivetted to her charms; and when she speaks, he looks round with a conscious value of his treasure. I know not how the conversation turned upon the events in the West-Indies; of the numbers we had lost there by the yellow fever. I sat near her—I observed her eye—I observed her lovely bosom heave through her thin dress—and she could not conceal a fluttering solicitude far exceeding common anxiety, when some officers were named who had fallen victims to the contagion. She saw I observed her; and the more she tried to suppress her feelings, the more conspicuous they appeared. It is a point gained to know the subject which most interests the heart of a female:—touch but the tender string, and the vibration extends to all the soft chords, and beats with fond emotion.

When I am so happy as to be alone with her, I shall introduce the subject by the most pathetic lamentations for our dear countrymen. I shall pretend to have lost a relation there, whom I shall bewail with the tenderest pity; what if she should make me in return the confidante of her sorrows: let her once entrust me with a secret, and she is mine. Yes, my fair-one, then thou art in my power; and well I know thy heart does not palpitate thus for a brother, or any of thy kindred blood. No, it is for some object infinitely more dear. Happy dog!—and my rival too,—detested fellow! I must contrive thy destruction, if no lucky chance will do it for me.

Now, Carrington, don't tell me I am wrong, for that I know already; but I must at least indulge my wishes; and no other pursuit at present interests me. I am tired of every thing besides; and if thou wilt not indulge me in my only favourite theme, I shall write to thee no more. Lovefield teases me with the merits of his hunters, his hounds, and all the etceteras of the sport; but I have no more relish for them than I have for the country dinners and cards of invitation, on which his wife is continually descanting. Nor can I, for my soul, admire the girls when they are thumping at the harpsichord, or straining their throats for my amusement. I am sick of all. Even books have lost their charms. Try thy

hand at a letter, but write to me of Julia St. Edward, or I shall find no pleasure in anything thou canst relate.

Baintree Park.

Yours,
FITZARNOLD.

LETTER IV.

Mrs. Clifford to Mrs. Safforey.

Crayborne, August 2.

MY DEAR MADAM,

YOUR laudable curiosity, and your kind wishes, should have been sooner answered, had not a variety of events intervened to prevent my writing, trifling in themselves, perhaps, but such as sufficiently served to divest my mind of those powers of recollection necessary for the relation of events, in which I wish to be particularly minute.—When I am writing upon the subject of my dear Julia St. Edward, I am at once flattered and pleased; for the request you have made encourages me to hope that I shall, from time to time, be made acquainted with occurrences, about which I must ever be particularly interested; and I am well assured, that, as you know the concern I take in the events of my Julia's life, the known goodness of your heart leaves me no doubt in believing, that you will favor me with any intelligence you may have relating to her.

I have known her from her childhood, and I know her to be all that is good and amiable. I likewise know all the secrets of her heart; and although I have every reason to believe she would not wish to hide them from me, yet there is a distance which the difference of age always creates, and naturally places between that familiarity and unreserve, which I know subsists between younger people, and is best adapted to that congeniality of ideas which a more advanced period of life renders less communicative. I do not mean to be understood by this, that I am unacquainted with the great secret of her heart; on the contrary, I know it well;—for me it shall ever remain one, and may it be always as sacredly preserved;—for to be divulged, would be absolute ruin both to her and to her husband's happiness.—I only mean by the above sentiments to make an interest in your favor, in the hope of your placing that confidence in me, of which I trust you will find me deserving, and which I cannot now so well claim from Mrs. St. Edward herself.

Pardon, dear madam, my running into length upon a subject so evident, as well as detaining you from a relation of circumstances, about which you are so desirous to be informed.—It is not my intention to enter into a detail of my own misfortunes, farther than may be necessary to elucidate the history of those, concerning whose fate you are so justly solicitous.—I am the widow of an officer who fell early in the American war of 1776;—since that period every event has appeared to me comparatively small. We had been married only a few months, but years had impressed the knowledge of each others hearts, and the virtues we fondly supposed they each possessed; for we loved too well to be sensible of faults in either.—The first few months after I received the fatal intelligence of my husband's death, I was incapable of attending to anything. I wept incessantly; and

the petition I made in my daily prayers was for a speedy death to end my sufferings. Impatience under afflictions was a crime I had not then learned to subdue, and a long and severe illness was a just punishment for my murmurs against the all-wise Dispenser of events.—I had chiefly resided in the neighbourhood of Arkley Castle, and from a very early age I was impressed with an idea of the riches and goodness of its inhabitants. I have but a very faint remembrance of the old gentleman and lady, but a grand funeral for their only daughter dwelt upon my recollection; and during my childhood I remember listening to the current reports of their two surviving children being wild, dissipated, and extravagant; that the timber was cut down to supply them with money, and that when their profusion and ill conduct had made a mortgage upon the estate a necessary measure, I heard my uncle say, he was sure it would be the death of the old people, who had lived so many years in such high respectability, practising the virtues of charity and benevolence in their fullest extent. They never left their home; and if their lives were not marked by elegance of manners, and superiority of knowledge, they were nevertheless eminent for the good example they set. The most unbounded hospitality was the result of excellent economy; and the whole tenor of their lives exemplified all the Christian virtues.

The old gentleman had been persuaded to give his sons a very liberal education; they were, therefore, sent to the public seminaries of learning, where mixing with the most extravagant associates, and being allowed unlimited power to draw for what sums they pleased, (the old people being utterly unacquainted with the depravity of the times), they soon made such demands as occasioned vast and cruel depredations on this once rich and valuable domain, and reduced it to the state before mentioned. The old gentleman and lady survived each other but a few days. The loss of their daughter, and the folly of their sons, hastening the debt of nature, they died in a premature old age, lamenting that they had not brought up their sons in the simplicity and ignorance of their forefathers. What remained of the estate was remitted to these young men, who were squandering it in every act of extravagance and dissipation, never coming to the castle, great part of which was entirely shut up, and only an old part of it was reserved for the habitation of three old servants, who were allowed some small portion out of the estate for the remainder of their lives.

I was then in the fifteenth year of my age; stories of the horrible kind are then most apt to excite the attention. I listened with avidity to tales of ghosts and spectres, which the appearance of the castle in some degree authorized;—the approach to it was overgrown with weeds, the trees darkened the avenues, the rooks flew about in armies, the battlements were broken and crumbling to decay, and time had made cruel devastation throughout the whole building. Often have I looked through the broken casements in the daytime (for at night no one would venture) with an eager curiosity, expecting and almost wishing to behold some of the airy forms, of which I had heard such marvellous accounts from the common people in the vicinity. I could, however, never discover any thing but a scene of desolation, which seemed to pervade the whole building.

Soon after this period, the youngest of the brothers, Godfrey St. Edward, took a small house in the village where my uncle then resided. He brought his wife and an only daughter, then a child, the present Mrs. Julia St. Edward. They remained in this place about two years, during which time I contracted an intimacy with Mrs. Godfrey St.

Edward; and the young Julia, though many years younger than myself, always expressed a partiality for me. At the death of Godfrey St. Edward, which was occasioned by a fall from his horse, Mrs. St. Edward and her daughter left the country, soon afterwards I left it also; and during that period of happiness, which was confined to a very short space, I was entirely absent from this county; and before my return, my worthy uncle was removed to Crayborne, where Mrs. Godfrey St. Edward, then a widow, soon took a small house, and resided there with Julia. The latter was much improved, and promised all those graces and beauty for which she is now so universally admired.

There had always been a shade of melancholy over the features of Mrs. St. Edward, which conveyed the idea of misery, when I was a stranger to it. Now that my mind had experienced the greatest of all misfortunes, in the loss of a kind and tender husband, I was more alive to the feelings of others; and her recent loss still adding to her melancholy, we became more closely united by misfortune; and although I never knew or pried into the secret causes of her grief, I frequently heard her say, she laboured under a secret which she wished to reveal, but durst not. It certainly preyed upon her health; and my spirits were but just beginning to recover, when they were again deeply oppressed by the death of Mrs. St. Edward. She very earnestly recommended her daughter to mine and my uncle's care, observing that quarterly remittances would be sent by her uncle, William St. Edward, for her use; and that he was to have the sole direction concerning her in future. Mrs. St. Edward died, as she had lived, oppressed with some secret, which, I have reason to think, was buried with her, as I never heard her daughter allude to it, nor do I believe she had any suspicion either of that, or of her own destiny.

The distance of Crayborne from Arkley rendered the castle too remote to be an object of contemplation. It was seldom mentioned; nor did we for a length of time hear any thing of Mr. William St. Edward, except that he was punctual in sending the remittances to my uncle. He never came to Crayborne, although it was said he every year visited the castle, which, in consequence, had undergone some repairs. He was a widower, with one son, who, it was reported, would reside at Arkley when he became of age. As to Julia, she was a composition of all that was lovely. Her visits to you constituted her chief happiness; and the knowledge I had of your family gave me the highest opinion of every branch of it. Julia spoke of your brother as the counterpart of yourself, and I had no need of a higher encomium. When Mr. Delafore accompanied you to Crayborne, during the time you were on a visit there, I immediately saw he had no common share in her esteem; and at that time I apprehended no evil from an attachment which seemed to promise all that was desirable.

Soon after this period, Mr. William St. Edward arrived at Crayborne, late in the evening. Julia was then on a visit at your house. Never shall I forget the agitated appearance of Mr. St. Edward; his looks bespoke the perturbation of his mind. He had a long conference with my uncle; and when he took his leave, I heard him in a peremptory tone, yet trembling voice, enforce something of an important nature to my uncle, whose melancholy looks and unusual manner indicated the agitation which the abrupt and unexpected visit of Mr. St. Edward had occasioned. He did not make me acquainted with what had passed, but appeared to be musing on something very perplexing. He said that Julia must immediately be sent for home; intimating that he was sorry she had ever passed so much time where it appeared she had formed an attachment which must now be given up.

“Yes,” added my dear uncle, “the fate of Julia has been fixed by her father and her uncle long before she was capable of distinguishing the nature of choice. The most solemn vows were made by each brother that their children should be united. Mr. St. Edward has this day repeated his oath, and enjoined me to see it fulfilled. I represented to him the cruelty, nay, even the sin of forcing the will, which the heart did not sanction; but he would not admit my argument. He appears to be agitated by enthusiastic zeal; says he has too long neglected the completion of their vow, and has been warned by a departed spirit to hasten the ratification, as the only terms of peace to a mind torn by affliction.—“What,” said my uncle, “can be offered to a man under the influence of such a persuasion? You must prepare Julia for the reception of her cousin, who will be here in a few days; after which, you are to inform her that he is to be her husband; that nothing can alter the decree; and she must shortly be mistress of Arkley Castle.”

What a task was mine (who so well knew the influence of the tender passions,) to endeavour to root it from her heart! yet, faithful to the trust reposed in me, I represented to her, in the most persuasive language, the necessity of her compliance. My uncle also enforced the same doctrine, while his heart bled for her misery.—Never can I forget the day she was informed of her father’s will. She had then seen her present husband, young William St. Edward, and had been speaking of him with that affectionate regard their relationship warranted; when my uncle told her she must entertain a still more tender love for him, and that he must be her husband.—It was evident what an interest she had gained in his heart, for he had spoken of her with rapture.—She absolutely shuddered with affright.

“No—no—no!” she repeated, “never! What, the son of my uncle!—Save, protect me from such a fate:” and then, as if more determined—“My will,” said she, “cannot be forced. My heart is not mine to bestow; it is given to the worthiest of men; the most pious vows have sealed the covenant, and Heaven would punish perjury like that of breaking them. My uncle never could approve it—nor you, my friends; and why torture me with fears of such a nature?” She seemed now to assume a countenance so satisfied, that my uncle could not then urge the subject farther, but only said, in his mild persuasive tones, “We will talk this matter over at some future time; till when, my dear child, be composed, and trust in the wise Disposer of all events for happiness in this world, as well as in that which is to come, for he alone can give it.”—She stood like a trembling victim, with the tears running down her cheeks, and seemed to have lost every power of exertion. My own feelings were little better than her’s; her distress recalled to my mind ideas of too tender a nature to admit of my offering her consolation, and the subject was not resumed again for some days; nor had my uncle either spirits or inclination to attempt it, till a letter from Mr. St. Edward again pointed out the necessity of the case, when it was again renewed, and enforced by the most gentle and kind persuasions. It was represented to her that, by refusing to comply with the will of her father, she deprived herself of all inheritance whatsoever, as by some unaccountable agreement between the brothers, that circumstance made a part of the contract.

She heard these remonstrances and expostulations with the same anguish as before; she endeavoured also to preserve the same firmness; and she offered to relinquish all right and claim to any part of her share in the inheritance, and give it up, without the smallest reserve, to her uncle and her cousin, if by so doing, she might preserve her liberty, and not be compelled in her choice. “Yes,” said she, (wringing her hands,) “leave

me destitute even of the necessaries of life; let me procure my livelihood by the work of my hands—let me be any thing but a perjured wretch. Oh Sir, I have vowed to be the wife of Henry Delafore, and never to be another's; he has declared the same to me; and Heaven has witnessed our plighted faith. Can any institution, even so sacred as that of marriage, set aside vows like these?"

My uncle was prepared for this offer, and assured her it would not be accepted. He told her, hard was the task imposed on him, to endeavour to alter sentiments so resolved, and inclinations so attached; but since he knew her fate to be so inevitably fixed, and since her cousin had declared his violent love for her, he still wished she could bring her mind to that degree of compliance, as would make what was an irrevocable destiny appear like a duteous choice. He represented the shortness of life, and how valueless the choicest of its blessings were, when compared with the rewards of duty and obedience in that which would be everlasting. Above all, he urged the strongest reasons to prevent her from giving Mr. St. Edward the most distant idea of her attachment to your brother; and as that gentleman had been absent so many months without any accounts of his safety being received, he ventured to hint at the probability of his having fallen a victim, amongst the multitude of others, to the unfavourable climate whither he was gone, and this was still more to be feared, as he had never written a syllable either to her or to any of his friends. She could not bear this idea; and her sufferings were greater than I can describe.

It would be only a repetition to dwell upon the arguments my uncle used to enforce the necessity of her compliance, and the constant refusal she gave and persevered in for a length of time, and which no persuasions seemed to lessen; and I am firmly persuaded that when she did at last consent, it was in a perfect belief that she should not survive the conflict it occasioned in her mind.

Three days before her marriage took place, she asked me if I did not think her looks much changed. I told her she was thin, but not less lovely. "Oh Mrs. Clifford!" she replied, "less tortures than my mind has suffered, would have deprived many people of life; but I am not to die; it pleases the Almighty to prolong my existence, although I have so ardently prayed for a period to it. My father and his brother," she continued, "entered into a solemn agreement it seems, that their children should be united, in order to cancel the obligations they were under to each other. My cousin and myself, the innocent offspring of two unhappy fathers, were made the victims of their rash vows, which, I understand, were rendered sacred by the most awful oaths and dreadful imprecations of everlasting happiness or misery to the survivor, if they were not fulfilled;—and shall so poor a creature as I am dare to break a covenant like this?—No;—my present design is to marry my cousin, and render myself a sacrifice to their vows. Cruel, indeed, has been the conflict; nor were the vows I made less binding, though they implicated no curses on posterity.—I have prayed (I hope they were not presumptuous prayers) that death would have decided my fate before I had given the fatal promise. Heaven has pleased to order it otherwise, and I submit to its decrees. Your good uncle has comforted me with the assurance that my submission will be rewarded, at least by an approving conscience. But of this—Oh! my friend, do not I break a vow as sacred as any my father could have made? and am I not more immediately answerable for that than for any other? Whither do these ideas lead me? Oh hide me from myself!"—She then rested her head upon my shoulder with a sigh that pierced my heart, and I would have given worlds to have

comforted her, but tears choked my utterance; I could not articulate words sufficient to express my sentiments. She saw my distress, withdrew her face from my bosom, and soon quitted the room. I had not any more conversation with her on the subject; we seemed both to make a point of avoiding it; and on the day she was married, she assumed a placid appearance, except during the ceremony, when she seemed much agitated. She left us soon afterwards; and when I saluted her cheek on taking leave, it felt as cold as marble; but she preserved an easy and not altogether uncheerful countenance.—Pray heaven she may be composed; happy I dare not suppose. From your friendship I know she will derive great consolation; her own good sense will regulate her conduct; and I have every reason to believe she is married to a man who truly loves her. She asked me to write to her, and to visit her when my uncle could spare me. As yet I have done neither. In writing I could say nothing that would not in some degree, recal former remembrances; and I think the more new scenes in which she is engaged, the better.

I fear the length of this letter will tire you, but I have a pleasure in obeying your request upon a subject in which I am too much interested to be limited. I trust it will need no further apology. I shall think myself much favored, if you will have the goodness to inform me of any particulars you may chance to know concerning Mrs. St. Edward; and I remain,

Dear Madam,

Your truly obliged and
obedient servant

ANN CLIFFORD.

LETTER V.

Lord Robert Carrington to Lord Fitzarnold.

Brighton, August 2, 17—.

DEAR FITZARNOLD,

YOUR letter was forwarded to me at this place. I wish you were here, or (I had almost said) at any other than your present residence. This I know would have given a scope to your wit.—You insist upon my writing to you of Julia St. Edward; so I will, and no other subject shall have a place in my letter. Does it not please you? I think I cannot pay her a higher compliment.—You desire me not to tell you, you are wrong, for you say you know it;—why then, I shall spare myself the trouble: but you do not prohibit me from saying, *I am right*, and that I will proceed to prove.

You say Julia St. Edward is not happy; and yet, instead of endeavouring to restore her happiness, you are studying the means of making her more wretched; for as you suppose her to be virtuous, you may rest assured, that every attempt you make to shake that principle, will not only contribute to her misfortunes, but at the same time defeat your own purpose. If she entertains a partiality for some distant friend, you may be very certain, as a woman of virtue, she is using her utmost efforts to correct and subdue every idea that is not consistent with the purity of her heart; and will you raise obstacles to this design? Will you light up the embers of a (perhaps) dying flame, and which, after all, may only exist in your wild imagination? Even were it otherwise, how would you be benefited by recalling remembrances forbidden and prohibited, and which, but for you, had been forgotten. It must at least be bad policy to introduce a rival in the breast where you seek an interest for yourself.—This is reasoning you cannot disallow, which your judgment must approve, though your wishes may condemn. Leave, then, Mrs. St. Edward to the protection of her husband, and to those peaceful virtues which are the reward of an innocent heart, and hasten from the fascinating object to thy ever faithful friend,
ROBERT CARRINGTON.

LETTER VI.

Mrs. Safforey to Mrs. St. Edward.

Ledcombe, August 19, 17—.

YOUR letter, my dear Julia, should not have remained so long unanswered, but I knew you did not expect from me a formal congratulation; neither was I willing to break in upon the many engagements and new avocations which must necessarily occupy the

hours of a bride, particularly in the situation you so deservedly fill. You will judge of the sincerity of my heart, by the kind of letter I shall write to you; for I study no forms when I am addressing my dearest friend: I write just what comes into my head, as I used to do, for I hope, my dear Julia, our friendship will continue the same as it ever was; indeed, I see no reason why it should not. I know you are incapable of changing, and I know my own heart; but besides this, your own dear husband said, he should always value my friendship, and hoped it would for ever be continued. I am persuaded, my Julia, you are a happy woman. I will hear none of your gloomy sentiments. You are the envy of your sex. How many females are there who would gladly be in your situation! Miss Langton told me, she never saw so handsome a man as Mr. St. Edward, and that when you drove past their house, she thought it was the lot of very few to be so happy: indeed the value of a kind and tender husband is incalculable. Tell me no more foolish nonsense about first cousins:—where did you pick up such obsolete notions? How many instances do I know of first cousins marrying, and being perfectly happy. Why should they not? In former ages it was considered a crime not to take a wife of our own kindred, and it is said to have grieved the hearts of the parents when their sons went out to see “*the daughters of the land.*” Really, my dear, I should have supposed that part of your letter to have been written by your nurse, or some superannuated old woman, and not by the pen of Julia St. Edward. Away with such superstition, never to be tolerated but in those days when we were silly girls, and used to consult dame Freedom upon the fortunes which were to mark our lives, and fancied she could tell us future events by poring into the grounds of a coffee-cup, or reading our destiny in a dirty pack of cards. Methinks I see her now spitting on her thumbs, and relating wonderful things of the lovers we were each to captivate; the profusion of riches which were to be showered upon us; of the delightful journies we were to take, or the superb presents which awaited us; with a thousand other promises, equally idle and ridiculous. Yet in those youthful hours we were as pleased with the old woman’s predictions, as we were with dressing our dolls at a still earlier period.

But a few years, my Julia, make as great an alteration in our sentiments as in our persons; and we look back upon them with wonder, that our minds could ever have received amusement from any trifles of this nature. As we grow to a more mature age, reason expands, and we consider those juvenile days, not less happy perhaps, but, very inferior to the more interesting pursuits which then occupy our minds. I know not any person whose prospects promise fairer than your’s. You are united to a man who appears to adore you, and by this union you are entitled to that fortune, which not only gives you the ample enjoyment of the good things of this world, but enables you to diffuse, with a liberal hand, those blessings to objects which may want or merit them.

You are placed in the seat of your ancestors, to honour their memory by imitating their example. No profession calls your husband from your arms: unless by choice, you need never be separated. No hostile mandate tears him away, nor between you does a boistrous ocean roll. These, my Julia, are inestimable blessings, and which you will, I hope, justly prize. These will bind you by stronger ties than even duty and obedience. Affection will rivet them; and you will look with pity upon those who feel almost the pains of misfortune under the dread of uncertainty; and none but those who suffer them, can tell how bitter is the potion. From evils like these you will be exempt; and amidst the choicest of your comforts, you may anticipate a race of St. Edwards adorned with virtues

like your own. You will be engaged in the delightful task of forming their minds to all that is lovely and good. I am the more anxious to have this wish realized, because it must be that of your husband. You are the only remaining branches of the family. Your uncle, from not having been heard of so long, is either dead, or living in some retirement, secluded from all belonging to him; and there is every reason to suppose he will never more visit Arkley Castle. Indeed, I understand, he made some such resolution when he was last there; and the last years he has passed, have been marked by such a train of eccentric ideas and odd fancies, that I should not be surprised to hear he was turned hermit, and would never associate again with his fellow creatures.

I beg you will write to me as often as you have leisure or opportunity. Be assured that no one living can be more interested in your happiness than I am, which I entreat you will promote, as well for your own sake as for your husband's. The welfare of both will chiefly rest in your power, and from you much will be expected. You have always been held out as a pattern to all that was amiable in the unmarried state:—in the married one you have an opportunity of being more conspicuously eminent. Let me, then, hear no more of your woes: you are, I am persuaded, too good a Christian to repine at a fate for which so many are inclined to envy you, and would gladly make an exchange with you. Let me have the pleasure of hearing that you will approve and take my counsel, which will afford the sincerest satisfaction to

Your faithful

ELINOR SAFFOREY.

LETTER VII.

Lord Fitzarnold to Lord Robert Carrington.

Baintree Park, September 2, 17—.

YOUR letter, Carrington, has not made an atom of difference in my sentiments or my designs: you know I told you it would not. You meant it well, my friend, but you have never seen my Julia. Yes, my Julia! I will have it so. Mine she must be, the Fates have so ordained it; and you know there is no resisting their decrees. Besides, it would be too much for such a fellow as St. Edward to possess entirely a jewel of such magnitude and brilliancy; it would be absolute monopoly. Yet don't think I rave; I am acting methodically; and I will endeavour to arrange my plans, and to write them in order.

Carrington, I have conversed with Julia on a tender subject; one, too, that is next her heart. I was right in my conjecture: she is not married to her love. She did not tell me this in express words, but what she said amounted to an avowal of it; and yet she has more sense than all the females I ever conversed with; and I had almost said, more prudence. But against that thou wouldst have cried out, "I wish you would come here, and engage the girls here from persecuting one, when I could wish to be otherwise employed." Miss Lovefield absolutely makes advances, and I should have no great trouble to have her, I believe, upon any terms: but no!—one dishonorable pursuit is sufficient at a time. You see I do not pretend to palliate, and call it by any name it does not deserve. And, indeed, when the heart is deeply engaged, as mine undoubtedly is, the attentions of all other women are impertinent and disgusting. I can but just bring myself within the rules of common decency and complaisance.

Mrs. Lovefield is quite the country squire's lady. Her vulgarisms are extreme; and she has not the most distant idea of elegance. Such a fine creature as Mrs. St. Edward seems beyond her comprehension, and therefore she abuses that angel, and says, "I do not know how 'tis, but there seems to me to be something monstrous awkward in that Mrs. St. Edward. She is so grave and formal. She certainly has not seen much of the world. No; she has none of the ease of a person of fashion, and there is no being intimate with her."

No;—well I know there is not, for Julia is of a different order of beings from this woman, who thinks good breeding consists in being familiar, and calling all her neighbours Mrs. G. and Mrs. B.; and then alludes to some silly joke, of which the rest of the company are ignorant. She has likewise, in some degree, taught her daughters this pretty sort of behaviour; for they stretch their mouths from ear to ear, and nod and look significant; with a hundred other grimaces with which my sweet Julia is as little acquainted as they are with her excellencies. I could not hear her named with disrespect; and therefore told my slanderous hostess (with as much civility as I could muster, after such an affront to my feelings,) that she had entirely mistaken the character of Mrs. St. Edward; that she was reserved from diffidence, and grave from habit and modest good breeding. But they all stared as if they did not understand me; and I was afraid to be too elaborate in her praise, lest they might take whims in their heads which I would on no account engender.

During this conversation, my friend Lovefield enjoyed a comfortable repose, an indulgence he never fails to yield to soon after dinner, unless the sports of the field or the merits of his hunters are the subject. He has, however, kind soul! invited me to stay during the shooting season; and were his slumbers prolonged, his wife's vulgarity increased, and the daughters persecutions insupportable, I would still accept his invitation, for it places me in the vicinity of all that is charming and desirable in this world. If you can indulge me in this darling theme, if you can point out any new plans by which my schemes may be successful, write to me without delay; but if thou canst only repeat truths which, though they may be truths, only fill me with disgust, (for conviction without resolution is a tormenting fiend,) keep thy good counsel for thine own use, and leave to chance, and her blest propitious favor,

Thy friend,
FITZARNOLD.

LETTER VIII.

Mrs. St. Edward to Mrs. Safforey.

Arkley Castle, Sept. 4, 17—.

MY DEAR ELINOR,

YOUR intention is, I doubt not, very good, in sending me a letter which, except its assuring me of your health, could not possibly afford me any comfort. You rally me unmercifully on my low spirits and my superstitious sentiments, but you do not sooth me, and you know not how much I stand in need of that consolation. Indeed, my friend, were you a little to humour my failings, it might have a better effect. There are moments when my opprest mind flies for relief to some kind pitying heart, congenial with its own, and in seeking for such an asylum, I have, I fear, discovered, in some degree, the great secret of my soul to another besides my Elinor. It was a moment of weakness which nothing but the fullness of my heart could excuse. I have every reason to hope that the breast in which I have dared to repose it, is replete with honour.

Not to keep you in suspense, I must begin by introducing a family who are my nearest neighbours. They are the Lovefields of Baintree Park. He is a plain country squire, devoted to the sports of the field, and not a very brilliant companion. His wife is one of those notable dames who, having full power in her own department, and indeed usurping authority far beyond its extent, takes upon her not only to regulate the economy of her own household, but would be busy in the arrangement of all her neighbours. She appears to me vulgar, impertinent, and underbred. She has three daughters—the eldest a very fine woman; and one son a child. The girls have been well educated, but from the constant example before their eyes, they have imbibed some of her ideas, and have, besides, a great deal of conceit and affectation. Upon the whole, they all seem favorites with Mr. St. Edward. He is himself a great sportsman, and the horses and hounds have their full share in the conversations he holds with Mr. Lovefield. Do you think I have given you as yet any character to whom I could confide a secret; no, none of this group I have yet named: but there is one who at present forms a part of their family, and Heaven knows how he came to be a visitor to such people, or for what reason he prolongs his stay. It is Lord Fitzarnold. His manners are very pleasing, and he seems to possess an understanding far superior to any to which I have been lately used. He is certainly a man of the world, and as such, may adopt sentiments very different from his heart. But I know not how it is, his manners appear to be so regulated by decorum, and at the same time he shews such an interest and such a sensibility in all he expresses, that he imperceptibly gains upon the understanding, while his generous and liberal opinions lead you to unreserve, and divest the mind of all suspicion. Thus it was with me; and although I think well of Lord Fitzarnold, yet I did not mean to entrust him with the dearest secret of my heart: you may believe me, my Elinor, I did not. No,—let all its weakness be confined to the narrow circle which has hitherto contained it.

The subject of war happening to be introduced between us, he lamented in terms so pathetic the loss of a near relation in the West-Indies, as at once awakened my

attention, and led me to ask particulars. I fear my looks and manner betrayed an emotion the more apparent by endeavouring to conceal it. He looked at me as if he would penetrate my heart, while he expatiated upon the virtues of this beloved friend. "Yes," he continued, "he was in a few weeks to have returned, and been blest by the hand of a woman, lovely almost as Mrs. St. Edward." I attended not to the compliment, but eagerly asked how she bore the loss, and if she was yet unmarried. "Yet, and ever will remain so, my dearest madam," he replied; "for can you suppose that vows faithful as their's, approved on earth, and registered in Heaven, could ever be transferred to others, even though one of them were no more." This sentence, uttered with energy and warmth, was too much for my weak spirits. I felt my heart palpitate; I trembled from head to foot; and some inarticulate sentence involuntarily burst from my lips. I cannot say what it was, but I thought his looks seemed to express pity mixed with astonishment at what I had so inadvertently declared. In a moment I saw the danger as well as the folly into which I had been betrayed, and collecting all my resolution, I recovered myself, and I think came off pretty well. I said, "I have a very dear friend, whose husband is exposed to the dangers of the climate we have been speaking of, and I am so interested in whatever concerns her, that I cannot hear of its dangers without shewing an agitation, as if it were a husband of my own." I know not if he gave me credit for the truth of this, yet I cannot help fancying that he has ever since viewed me with pity: but whenever he has again led to that conversation, I have immediately changed it; for never more will I trust myself with a subject in which I have so little command of my feelings.

Lord Fitzarnold seems, by an easy politeness, and a redundancy of goodnature, to accommodate himself to all our humours. As to the Lovefields, it is impossible he can like them; yet they all speak of him in the highest terms. Mr. St. Edward too, seems pleased with his company; and, to speak truth, his sensible observations, sometimes seasoned with the most poignant wit, have beguiled, if not enlivened, some hours which would otherwise have hung heavily with your poor friend; for, my Elinor, to disclose a secret which will I know be as safe in your breast as in my own, Mr. St. Edward has but little conversation. I have tried on various subjects to engage his attention, but none seem to fix him for a moment. He is what the world calls good-humoured, that is, he always appears gay and pleased, yet is ever looking forward for a pleasure which never seems to arrive. The amusements of the field seem to engross much of his attention; and I believe it is a common observation, that where horses and dogs are in very high estimation, the more rational pleasures of society are less valued. When we are to dine at Baintree Park, or that family to dine with us, he anticipates the pleasure of it with as much joy as others would express on occasions of much higher delight, and has once or twice wondered that I was not equally elated with the idea; yet, when the day has arrived, any common observer would suppose that I was the happiest person of the two; for when the enjoyment is actually in his possession, it seems to have lost its charms, and he is then expatiating on the pleasures of some future day. This may be a happy sort of disposition to be always looking forward to felicity; it is surely better than to be looking back upon joys that must be thought of no more,—ah! never, never to return. I envy this happy propensity more than I can express. O that I could obliterate all the past, and only look forward to the joys which may be to come; yet I fear, those reserved for your Julia lie in a very narrow space.—You remind me of our juvenile days, when we consulted the old woman's astrological abilities, but you do not add how truly she prophesied my destiny.

Did she not repeatedly tell me I should not be married to the man of my heart? that I should be miserable, and he would not be happy? Few of those people tell you such unwelcome truths, but you must well remember she did, although at that time I did not believe her:—no, not a twelvemonth since would a far superior power have persuaded me that I should now be Mrs. St. Edward; that I should—Oh! but I will forbear: I grow giddy at retrospection.—Elinor, you do not use me well. You write me a nonsensical letter, and try to evade my questions, and amuse me by a trifling style of writing unlike yourself, and as if I were a child. You do not name your husband: surely, that is a subject about which you cannot even affect to be indifferent. You might at least have told me whether or not you had heard from him. You are not to learn that we should write to each other as more than common correspondents, or that there is little occasion to ransack our brains for fine sentiments, or witty sarcasms: you must remember you desired me to write you every thought of my mind; a heart like mine finds great relief in so doing, and I have strictly obeyed your injunction; but you have not fulfilled your part, and unless you do, expect to be treated with a reserve unworthy of our friendship, and truly foreign to the heart of

Your affectionate
JULIA ST. EDWARD.

LETTER IX.

From the same to the same.

Arkley Castle, Sept. 14, 17—.

I WILL not wait, my dear Elinor, for your answer to the last; I will suppose you have taken some time to consider its contents, and, according to my desire, improve your style, and lay aside your reserve. I am now alone: St. Edward is gone to London. You cannot think with what childish impatience he looked forward to his journey; but upon this disposition I have before enlarged, and the subject had, I believe, better drop. I was invited to go with him, but as he went upon business, and the journey would have afforded me no pleasure, I thought it best to remain here. Would you could come to me, for I feel myself very sad and forlorn in this great castle quite alone. My mind, opprest with sorrows, is weakened almost into fear. I am not superstitious; and used to possess a degree of courage which some of our sex think unfeminine; but now I seem to be less under the dominion of reason than formerly, although I cannot account for it.

I sat last night in a small dressing-room at the end of a long gallery. It is not very near my chamber, but I chose it for the fine view it has of the most beautiful part of the grounds and the adjacent country. I have decorated the brown oak wainscot with some of my paintings, ornamented with fanciful frames of my own making, which have a pretty effect, and I prefer it so to a more modern style.—There are many parts of this castle in which I have never been; and its antiquity and mode of building must render it suitable to the residence of airy inhabitants. I confess this idea pleased and amused me when I first came, and I welcomed the notion of supernatural forms and noises with the pleasure the

novelty inspired; but we think and talk of things at a distance with different sensations from those we feel when we really engage in them.—I suppose it may be rats which infest the rooms, and, perhaps, they have bred for many generations in some of the uninhabited parts of this castle; but I was really terrified last night at the strange and unaccountable noises I heard. To be sure I have no faith in ghosts and goblins, and yet I started from my chair several times, and was at last compelled, through absolute fear, to ring my bell; and when Lucy attended me, she discerned so much alarm impressed on my countenance, that she ventured to speak upon the subject of terrors occasioned by supernatural appearances, without that fear of my displeasure by which she had been hitherto restrained; for, on my first coming, the servants had told her a thousand frightful stories, the repetition of which I had prohibited, being replete with folly and superstition, and gathering additions each time they were related, until they were increased to a mass of the most incoherent nonsense you can suppose. It was now, however, that my courage and resolution deserted me, and I allowed her, unproved, to tell a tale, the recital of which may, perhaps, divert you, although I confess it terrified me.

To keep you therefore no longer in suspense, Lucy began by saying, (in a hesitating voice and a countenance strongly impressed with terror,) “Law, mame! you look frightened;—sure you hav’n’t seen any thing! O dear me, mame, this house is sartainly haunted. I have heard sitch noises as none but spirits could make; and as sure as I stands here alive, the t’other night, as I was a coming through the gallery where all the pictures be, I heard a noise, and as I turned my head, (tho’ I generally shuts my eyes if I comes that way,) law! I thought I should a died; for the great picture of the ould lady as fronts the door, and I always thinks looks at me, but now its eyes moved, and I saw them as plain, mame, as I now see your’s move. Well—I runs screaming back again, and just as I got to the great stairs I met Mary housemaid, and so she seeing me so frightened, we took fast hold of one another, and shut our eyes, and so we run down stairs; and when I told her what had made me so frightful, she was not at all surprised, for she said she had seen it more than once or twice; and when she told it in the kitchen, Mr. Harding, master’s gentleman, said there was no occasion to be afeard, for sitch things did happen now a-days; and said as how he had read a book called the Castle of Trantum, where pictures walked out of their frames, and sighed; and I think he said, sometimes spoke! Lord bless us! it makes me shake now but to think on’t. However, I have never ventured through the gallery since; but I believe it is the same in every place in the house; for the dairy-maid, who is up sometimes before ’tis light, says she has seen lights and faces a looking through the windows in the lower buildings, and heard sitch noises, as she’s sure the ghosts must be playing strange gambols.”

Lucy was going on, and indeed I know not where she would have stopped, for the subject seemed to be inexhaustible; but here I interrupted her. I told her she was not to attend to all the idle stories she heard; that as to the eyes moving, which she knew were only painted on a piece of canvas, it was folly in the extreme to suppose it; and as to the book she mentioned, neither herself or the man understood it. It was written by a very ingenious man, in order to display the powers of fancy upon the subject of terror, but by no means intended to be considered as truth, and was called the Castle of Otranto. I reasoned with her a long time upon the absurdity of her fears, and used all my rhetoric to dissuade her from her belief in supernatural appearances or noises. Unfortunately for my argument, just as I had pronounced that the latter was occasioned by rats, a most

uncommon noise assailed our ears, and, as if to disprove my assertion, such as was impossible to have been produced by a rat. We both started;—I endeavoured to collect my ideas so as to divest my countenance of fear, although I confess I knew not what to make of it. I hardly know how to describe it, but it appeared like three sharp strokes of a stick or cane upon a door which opens upon the top of three steps leading to a colonnade. This was not all, for in a moment after I distinctly heard several chords of music, sounding like those produced from a guitar or mandoline. The sounds then died away, and soon after entirely ceased. How am I to account for these things, my friend? Can you wonder at my surprise, not to say my fear? I kept Lucy with me for the remainder of the evening, and I used all my endeavours to dissipate her fears, at the same time I stood greatly in need myself of some able reasoner to dispel my own.

Perhaps I have never told you that Mr. St. Edward retains some very old servants in the castle, consisting of a steward, a butler, and a female servant, who all lived with our grandfather, and are, from age and infirmities, past service, but are allowed to remain here during their lives, and as a reward for their fidelity and attachment to the family in all its vicissitudes. The steward is infirm, but sensible and clear; the butler very sickly; and the female servant more alive and alert than either, notwithstanding she is the oldest of the three.

I frequently make a visit to these good people, and I always find myself in better humour after hearing their praises of my ancestors, their gratitude for the comforts they enjoy, and the abundant blessings they pray may be continued to the posterity of the St. Edwards. To this ancient circle I made a visit the next morning. They received me with their usual respect and cordiality. The butler, whose name is Arthur Bennet, is a very fine old man, with his hair as white as silver. He always wears a green apron; and on very particular gala days, will still stand at the sideboard. Mr. Bond, the old steward, is too far advanced in age to make any such distinctions, or bestow much notice on anything.

Alice Grundy, the female, is a cheerful neat old woman, with a sharp nose, and a pair of eyes, which, I have no doubt, did execution in their youth. She wears her gown laced down her stomach, and a mob cap tied under her chin, and as tight as a drum upon her head. Her faculties are so little impaired by time, that she is still of use, and spins and knits for the family. She will always resign her wicker chair to me, and overwhelms me with compliments and praises.—After enquiring the health of each, and observing on the weather, I alluded to old times, and asked Arthur Bennet, in a careless manner, if the castle had not been always famous for strange and unaccountable noises. “Yes, good madam,” he replied, “that it has; but I never minded the nonsense that was talked. I have lived in it nine-and-forty years come next Michaelmas, and, thank God, never see’d anything uglier than myself. As to noises, ’tis impossible that in such a great rambling place, but there must be noises. Why I reckon there be rats as old as I am, or nearly; and then the wind makes its way in all the long passages and staircases enough to startle a bold man. But I hope, my dear lady, you have met with nothing to fright or terrify you; and I am sorry you did not go to London with his honour: such a sweet couple should never be parted. My old master and mistress were never divided for fifty years, and then only by death. But fashions be changed since then, and they say as nobody lives in that sort of way now a-days,—the more’s the pity; for when two people loves one another, they should always be together.”

Perhaps I might have been more willing to subscribe to Arthur's opinions than most modern ladies would have done, but no matter, the subject made me grave, and a silence ensued, which was broken by Alice, who asked me, in a low voice, and an enquiring eye, if I had heard or seen any thing to alarm me. I replied, "No, nothing but what had just been accounted for, as occasioned by the wind, the rats, or various other causes, by no means worth investigating; except," I added, "the sound of music, which, not knowing any person in the castle practised besides myself, I could not easily account for." "Music!" repeated Arthur and Alice, both in a breath, and with looks of unfeigned surprise, "that cannot be!" "Certainly," I said, "it was, and heard not only by myself, but likewise by my maid, who was with me; that we distinctly heard several notes repeated upon the kind of instrument before mentioned; that I had made enquiry amongst the servants, and found that not one of them played upon any instrument whatsoever." The old man and woman viewed each other with what I thought very significant looks, but still doubting what I had affirmed; and finding I could gain no information, I concluded my visit with good wishes for their health.

This day's post brought me a letter from St. Edward. He does not talk of returning, on the contrary, he is going to Margate with a family of whom he speaks in a strain of rapture, which, from the pen of an adored husband, might create no small jealousy. Why it has not that effect on me I will leave to your penetration to discover, and content myself, as a good wife should, under such unfortunate circumstances. I have written you two long letters, and I think the least you can do is to answer them without delay, as well to console me in my widowed state, as to comfort me with the assurance that I may rely on your friendship; and ever remain,

Truly yours,

JULIA ST. EDWARD.

LETTER X.

Mrs. Safforey to Mrs. Clifford.

Ledcombe, Sept. 21, 17—.

MY DEAR MADAM,

EARNESTLY wishing that my next letter might convey to you good tidings of our friend, I have deferred, to a strange length of time, answering your kind and explanatory epistle, and for which my thanks are most gratefully due. You expressed a wish to hear from me of Mrs. St. Edward, as from the friend to whom she would be unreserved, nor have I any reason to complain of her on this score. I have two of her letters now before me, written, I am sure, from the heart. I have not yet answered either of them, for, indeed, I know not in what style to write. I rallied her on some of her sentiments, which I endeavoured to set in a childish and ridiculous light; but that would not do,—she felt offended; and to hurt her feelings would be cruelty in the extreme; yet she stands greatly in need of advice.

I like not the predicament in which she is now placed. St. Edward has been gone to London near three weeks; and now she tells me he is going to Margate. She is left a prey not only to her own reflections, but her mind, enervated by sorrow, is become subject to fears and superstition. You know the idle reports concerning Arkley Castle; my friend gives way to these chimeras, and listens to the tales of the servants. Can this be Julia St. Edward? methinks you ask: Yes;—but this is not the worst. I fear nothing in the shape of supernatural ideas;—Julia would in time be diverted at her own fears; but there is a hideous lord visiting at Baintree Park, and the intimacy between the two families, gives him frequent opportunities of seeing Julia. I have enquired his character, and do not find it such as will merit the favor of her acquaintance. He is artful and insinuating; and she has, in some of their conversations, inadvertently spoken on a subject too near her heart, to conceal its emotions. One of her letters informs me of this circumstance, and that she instantly saw the error into which she had fallen. I am alarmed on this account; not that I have any fears of the rectitude of her conduct,—Julia St. Edward is purity itself; and would shudder at any idea inconsistent with honour and integrity. Yet a man of the world, like Lord Fitzarnold, designing and engaging, is by no means a proper acquaintance for beauty and innocence like her's.

I am enraged at her husband for leaving her behind when he went to London, and still more for prolonging his stay, when no urgent cause, I am sure, requires it. Of what strange materials is the composition of some men formed. St. Edward was distractedly in love with Julia; his impatience for the marriage was beyond all bounds; but no sooner is the rich jewel entirely his own, than he leaves her in order to pursue every empty folly that has novelty for its allurements; and what is worse, he leaves her exposed to the impertinence of an unprincipled libertine. O that it were in my power to go to her, that I might watch over and guard her innocence with a zeal equal to the love and regard I feel for her; but that is now impossible. But, my dear madam, could not you give her your protection? it would be an act of the highest charity, I had almost said of piety. I know how truly she reveres your opinions, and will abide by all the counsels of your heart. In the pleasing hope that this wish of mine may meet your approbation, and suit your convenience, I will conclude, with respects to your worthy uncle; and am,

Dear madam,
Your affectionate humble servant,
ELINOR SAFFOREY.

LETTER XI.

Mrs. Clifford to Mrs. Safforey.

Crayborne, Sept. 27th, 17—.

DEAR MADAM,

AFTER thanking you most kindly for your letter, I am sorry to say I cannot comply with your request, respecting a visit to Arkley Castle; not, believe me, dear madam, from any

want of inclination, or that the necessity you point out does not strike me as proper at least, if not necessary. I love Mrs. St. Edward as if she were my own child; I see the danger of her situation, and I would be happy to oblige you; but there is a distance between the lady of Arkley Castle, and a dependant governess, which will not, by any means, allow of a visit voluntarily offered. 'Tis true, she asked me to visit her when she went away; but you must be sensible that both our situations demand a more formal invitation. Yet, such is my anxiety for her, and which your account has so greatly increased, that I would have broken through these bonds of propriety, and dared the imputation of impertinence, had I not yesterday heard that Mr. St. Edward is expected, and is to bring with him a great deal of company. How, then, can I be an intruder at such a time? Company will engage and amuse our dear friend; and I trust that the rectitude of her own heart will claim that protection which is never withheld from the deserving, and is so infinitely superior to all we can offer.

I cannot endure the idea of Mrs. St. Edward entertaining fears like those you mention: that a mind like her's should be warped by superstition is a sad proof of our imperfection. I can only place it to the account of depression of spirits, and a mind, not quite at ease, being left to the whimsical workings of disordered fancy. The insinuating nobleman might to any other be a dangerous object, but Julia has a heart replete with honour, firmness, and integrity: she will in a moment recal and rectify the least deviation from propriety. Her husband will return; company will engage her attention; new scenes will amuse her; and all will be well. These are my hopes, my wishes, and my prayers: that they may not be disappointed, is the sincere desire of,

Dear madam,
Your obliged and faithful humble
servant,

ANN CLIFFORD.

LETTER XII.

From Mrs. St. Edward to Mrs. Safforey.

Arkley Castle, Sept. 30, 17—.

SO you will not write, my dear Elinor; well, I cannot help it;—but you must bear the punishment of another letter from me; and as I have received no prohibition, I shall conclude from your silence, that you like the histories of ghosts, and fears occasioned by them. I will, therefore, continue the supernatural strain, but first let me give precedence to the living. Mr. St. Edward writes me from Margate, where he has been staying with the family I mentioned in my last, that he has invited them to spend the remainder of the Autumn at Arkley Castle, and if nothing should happen to prevent them, they will be here in about three weeks. The high encomiums he passes on these new acquaintances is really diverting, and particularly the praises he bestows on the young lady; but, that you may use your own judgment, I will enclose it, because it really is an original.—Would to Heaven he had seen this enchanting creature some months back!

But to return to my first subject.—I am so habituated to noises and alarms, that I am almost grown callous to them, at least I am fearless; and have been prying into all the old rooms in the castle, some of which are, indeed, curious from their antiquity. I have traversed over every one of them, and I met with nothing that could frighten me in any. 'Tis true, it was in the day-time, when, I believe, ghosts never appear. About five o'clock in the afternoon of the same day, I strolled into the gallery of famous mention; and whether it was from what Lucy had related of my grandmother's picture, or that the painter has given the eyes an uncommon expression, I know not, but I was myself so firmly persuaded that they moved, that nothing but touching them could convince me to the contrary. I therefore took a high stool, which was in the room, and (give me credit for my courage,) stood upon it, and touched the face with my hand; nothing less would have convinced me; and canvas to be sure it was, although I could just before have confidently affirmed that it was alive. One of the noises which I have frequently heard, but cannot describe, made me jump from the stool, and hastily leave the gallery. My mind was unsettled; I felt unusually depressed; and I went into a small room below stairs, unworthy the name of a study, in which are some books placed upon shelves. I took down one after the other, without design or choice; and in an old volume of plays was a short copy of verses, which struck my fancy as in some degree applicable to my own situation; at least they were so consonant to my feelings, that I could not but admire them. The paper was perfectly clean, and the writing appeared fresh. I put them in my pocket, and have transcribed them for your perusal.

Whilst I dwell on the form which enraptures my mind,
I forget that my wishes must still be confin'd;
That the comfort, the hope, and delight of my soul,
Must be govern'd by laws, and submit to controul.
Oh, let not the sigh of a heart so sincere
Be suppress by suspicion, or stifled by fear:

Let the mind that's congenial be lib'ral and free,
Unfetter'd by forms of ill-omen'd decree;
So shall register'd vows of reciprocal love,
Be approv'd upon earth, and be blest from above.

What think you of the lines? I am no judge of poetry myself, but they convey sentiments congenial to my mind; and after I had read them, I indulged a train of ideas, not, indeed, calculated to mitigate my sorrows, nor such as I often allow, but yet such as can never, I fear, be obliterated; never, while busy memory plays about my heart.

Yesterday morning, Lord Fitzarnold called. He had been to Litchfield races, with the family at Baintree Park. He gave me a short account of them, but said, he was heartily tired before the completion of the week; that he detested such meetings; and gave a most ludicrous recital of some of their quarrels about precedence, and other matters equally trifling.

He is certainly a man of superior understanding to those with whom he generally associates, and it is for this reason that I am at a loss to account for his passing so much of his time with the Lovefields. The subject of literature happened to be introduced, when he spoke with more taste and knowledge on the subject than any person I have conversed with since I came here. I shewed him the verses I found, and asked his opinion of them. He read them carelessly, and said, all the merit they had was their being honoured by my approbation; and asked me if I was fond of poetry.—Pray, Elinor, do you ever mean to write to me again? I promise you I shall write no more till you do. Indeed, when this family arrives, of whom Mr. St. Edward speaks in so much rapture, I shall have no time, and, I may add, no inclination, unless you write to me in return. Adieu!

Ever yours,

JULIA ST. EDWARD.

LETTER XIII.

Mr. St. Edward to Mrs. St. Edward.

Margate, Sept. 25, 17—.

MY DEAR JULIA

I HOPE you are well. I have been at this place near three weeks, and found it very pleasant, though the weather has been rather warm for the time of year; but it is now getting cold, so close to the sea, and I begin to be tired of it. I have engaged Mr. and Mrs. Carroset, and their lovely daughter, to return with me to Arkley. They are very agreeable people, and I am sure you will like the young lady: she is a charming handsome girl, has been educated in France, and is highly accomplished. She will be a delightful companion for you; and I have promised for you, that you will do every thing in your power to make their visit pleasant to them.

I would have Robert kill a buck; the fattest he can find. I hope our neighbour Lovefield will supply us with more game than the keeper generally furnishes. Remember you give orders to have the great pond in the close dragged; but that need not be done till the morning of the day we arrive. I expect to have a profusion of fruit. Mr. Carroset is a judge of eating; and I would have every thing appear to the best advantage. Miss Carroset will frequently give you a drive in the phaeton; she can drive four in hand:—indeed, there is nothing in which she does not excel, and you will be very happy in her company. I have every reason to think that my father is no more. After all the enquiry I have made, I can hear no intelligence concerning him, nor discover whereabouts he is concealed, if he is, indeed, living, and in retirement. Give my compliments to all friends, and believe me,

Dear Julia,

Yours affectionately,

WILLIAM ST. EDWARD.

P.S. You will order the best apartments to be ready for the family I shall bring with me. I believe we shall be at Arkley by Tuesday, but this is uncertain, and I shall write again.

LETTER XIV.

Miss Carroset to Miss Baynard.

I PROMISED you a long letter, my dear Maria; I have subjects sufficient for one, and characters enough to delineate, but I have not so much time as I wish. That dear creature, St. Edward, is continually planning schemes for my amusement, and allows me no time to myself.—You can form no idea of the place we are at, nor can I give you a very just one of it. It is an immense large old castle, standing quite by itself, and is situated near the moorlands of Staffordshire. I cannot think how people could ever be so absurd as to build such a great rambling house in so forlorn a place. My father is persuading St. Edward to modernize it, but there are some queer people in the neighbourhood, who think it would be as bad as sacrilege to remove a pillar, or make the least alteration.

Mrs. St. Edward too, in a prim drawling voice, cries out against it, and says its beauty and its grandeur is derived from the antiquity of its appearance, and on no account should be changed. I'll tell you what Maria, this Mrs. St. Edward is a hateful being; I will not say what I would not do to vex and torment such a piece of starched prudery. She is said to be very handsome, and the men all seem to think her so; but for my own part, I hate such a countenance: she has a fine complexion to be sure, but that you know is not very uncommon; her eyes too are well enough; but she has such a provoking uniformity in her manner: I don't know that I have expressed it right neither, I don't know what it is. It is not nonchalance, it is not want of animation, but it is a kind of serious ease, bordering upon contempt, and yet perfectly civil. I dare say you may have met with such a character, though it is not, I believe, a very common one. Nothing seems to put her out of her way; not even the constant smiles and significant looks I every moment convey to her husband appear to have the least effect upon her. I suppose she has no great love for him; and yet, if I throw out rather a free expression, she darts such a look at me as I can scarcely encounter, for you must know she affects to be delicacy itself.

I ride, I walk, I fish, I romp, with St. Edward, yet this does not seem in the least to disturb her. If it was not for him I assure her I should not be here; but he is a handsome fellow, Maria, and between ourselves, he has no aversion to your friend:—this I knew before I came here, or nothing should have dragged me to such a place, which looks exactly like the picture of Noah's ark. In the park, indeed, there are some pleasant walks; and at the distance of about two miles, a family of the name of Lovefield, who have at present a lord for their visitor, and give themselves airs of consequence on this account. I can form but little judgment of their merits, having only seen them one morning when St. Edward drove me there in his phaeton, or rather, I drove him; for he always submits the reins to my hands, whilst he admires my dexterity in managing the horses, praises my complexion, and twists my ringlets round his fingers with admiration of my beautiful tresses, which you know are the true golden locks.

I think, Maria, this is a better way of spending the Autumn, than staying at a stupid watering place, where the men are all tired of looking at one; and where, indeed, there are such flocks of women, that they are quite a nuisance; and day after day passes, and you see nothing but petticoats. I confess I like the present way of passing my time infinitely better, and as yet I have not found it heavy. If I could chuse, I would be here

alone;—don't mistake me, my dear—not by myself for the whole world; but I mean without any of my own precious family. My mother, poor woman! affects to be what nature never designed her for, a fine lady. She is continually talking of nerves, delicacy, and fine feelings, but sadly misapplies the occasions on which they should be displayed: and as to my father, he absolutely disgusts me with his love of good things. He talks of his dinner whilst he is eating his breakfast; and when the fish and the venison, &c. &c. are placed upon the table, his eyes seem to devour every dish with the same greediness, which he afterwards displays in the actual filling his stomach with them.

It is, surely, a filthy thing to eat in such a manner, and to make it the great business of life. He is likewise very vulgar in all his ideas;—and these are the drawbacks to my present happiness: for otherwise, I have no great reason to complain. I pretty nearly follow my own inclinations; and you know, my education has given me a thousand advantages. There is but one misfortune annexed to it, which is, the inferiority of the rest of my family; for you know, I cannot shake them off as I could a very disagreeable awkward acquaintance. There is that brother of mine; Heaven forbid he should come here!—that is a circumstance that would absolutely quite overpower me;—and yet I fear nothing is more likely than his taking it into his head to, what he calls, *dash*, and make an excursion to this place; and fancy he should be admired; and, by exposing his folly, suppose himself very much the thing; boasting of his riches, and so on; and appealing to me for the truth of what he says, to confirm all his vulgar exploits. He calls me *Charlee!* at every word; and is, in every respect, tiresome. O the wretch!—defend me from his company! I hope to God he will not come here: we do tolerably well as it is. The homely phrases of my father are but little regarded; and whenever my mother is inclined to give herself airs, I take care to check her sufficiently either by words or looks, which, by the ascendancy I have gained, she appears pretty well to understand.—I am easy enough on these points here; for as to Mrs. St. Edward, I detest her, and care not what she thinks; and for St. Edward himself, (don't mention it again, my dear,) he is—no conjuror; only devilish handsome, and has enough sense to be captivated with a certain friend of your's, who gives him credit for his taste, and for whom I have some esteem; and you must allow it is a proof that he is not quite deficient in understanding.

I had written thus far, when I was summoned to the drawing-room, in order to entertain and be entertained by the family I have before mentioned, viz. the Lovefields, except the father, who, it seems, was hunting or racing, having little or no taste for anything else. The mother is a large overgrown creature, with cheeks that look as if they had been made red with saltpetre; two staring goggle eyes; and a mouth sufficiently wide to swallow a calf; she talks loud enough to deafen one; and is full of her own importance. The eldest girl is tolerably handsome, and seems to have acquired a confident stare, and a bold carriage, which I should not have expected to have been the produce of a confined and country education. Perhaps Lord Fitzarnold (who has been their visitor for some time, and who accompanied them,) has taken some pains to modernize her manners. She appeared to be endeavouring to attract his notice by every allurement she could throw out. The two other girls seemed of less consequence in their own opinion, and consequently in that of others.

Mrs. St. Edward received them with that ease and coolness of character which I have before described, and for which I could tear out her eyes: yes, Maria, it is the most provoking, because I fear it is not without its charms; at least there are people who admire such detestable manners. Give me no credit for my penetration, if that odious lord does not

view her with partial eyes. He seems to possess more knowledge of the world, and *certain ideas*, than any body I have yet seen; nor do I half like him. He watches every one's countenance, and looks as if he could read all that passes in the heart; and is the more to be feared, as it is concealed under very elegant manners and apparent good sense. I protest I felt almost afraid of him when he asked me, with a sort of ironical smile, when I had exhibited my equestrian powers, and given Mr. St. Edward an airing; and before I could collect myself sufficiently to answer him, he turned to Mrs. St. Edward, and with a significant sneer, said, "I think you never attempt "the management of the reins." "No," she replied; "it would require more skill and more courage than I can boast of." O the hateful puss! if I can detect anything between her and his lordship, it shall not be lost, nor want embellishments. I will amuse St. Edward with such a story as shall afford me ample vengeance upon the haughty dame.

It seems these people came to invite us to Baintree Park, the name of their place; but the day is not yet fixed. St. Edward addressed me with an impatience equally improper with the ill-timed compliment, to know which day would be most agreeable to me. For the first time, I believe, I gave him a look of contempt, and he appeared frightened and embarrassed; but I could not help it, for Lord Fitzarnold's eyes were rivetted upon us, and there was no bearing their scrutiny. However, I commanded my voice, and said, in a soft accent, there were others to be consulted before me, and that I should be perfectly satisfied with the determination of the rest of the company.

He whispered that I was an angel, which, I hope, was heard by no one but myself. I know not how it was decided; I only heard Mrs. St. Edward drawing out, that she should be happy to contribute to the amusement of her friends; and they soon after took their leave. She then addressed me, by asking what was my opinion of the party who had just left us. I told her, with an affected unconcern, that I had attended very little to them. They might be very good sort of people for anything I knew, but I must be better acquainted with them before I could venture an opinion. As to Lord Fitzarnold, it required but little judgment to give a decided one upon him.

"Indeed!" she replied; "Why, what is your idea of him?"

"A decided one," said I; "that he is an artful, licentious man of the world; perhaps a pleasant acquaintance, but a dangerous friend."

"Then you were acquainted with him before," she replied, with more quickness and spirit than I had ever seen her exert.

"No madam," said I, "I have no more knowledge of him than every woman must have who has seen anything of the world; and I think I have seen enough of that, to speak decidedly of Lord Fitzarnold."

She mused a moment, then lifted up her nasty eyes, and dropped the subject. I never saw any woman whose manners excited so much hatred; I fear I shall affront her.

To-morrow is Sunday, and it seems we are all to go to church. St. Edward appeared to make an apology for the custom, by saying, it was the fashion of the house. Mrs. St. Edward said she never missed going. My mother affected to be pious, and said her nervous head-achs had kept her away longer than she wished, and she should be very happy to have an opportunity of joining in the public worship. I was really ashamed of her cant. My father looked grave, and said nothing; and I asked, with a look full of meaning, if Lord Fitzarnold attended divine service.

“Yes,” said Mrs. St. Edward, “I have seen his lordship there, and have likewise observed that he behaved very properly.”

“O, no doubt,” I replied; “he knows when and where to pay his adorations.” I thought her prim countenance looked a little disconcerted at this speech, which was meant indeed more for St. Edward than for her; but he, I believe, did not even hear it, for he sat picking his teeth with the utmost sang froid, and seemed quite unacquainted with the conversation that was going on.

I shall be heartily glad when to-morrow is over. I suppose I must not take my netting to church; it would disturb the piety of the whole congregation; and yet I am sure I shall fall asleep for want of amusement, which will be as bad; and I suppose St. Edward must not make love at church. I wish in the mean time I had a letter from you; I could read that while I was pretending to say my prayers. Don’t fail to write to me by the Sunday following. Tell me every thing you can think of to entertain me; and believe me

Ever yours,

CHARLOTTE CARROSET.

Arkley Castle,
Oct. 1, 17—.

Monday, October 3.

I open my letter again my dear Maria, to tell you of the strangest thing, and the most frightful!—Oh I am terrified to death; I have not half recovered; I never shall forget it. I’m sure the house is haunted, and I have seen a ghost. I must never be left alone a moment again whilst I stay at this detestable old place; yet, would you believe it, Maria, I am, only laughed at. But nothing shall persuade me it was a real woman; no, it had all the appearance of a ghost; for though I never before saw one, I had an idea of its gliding along and its horrible looks. Maria, do you think there is any harm in playing at cards on a Sunday, especially after one had been at church? but that was not all, neither. However, I am not at confession, nor obliged to tell you more than I choose, notwithstanding I have been so alarmed. Well, but to keep you no longer in suspense—Yesterday was a terrible stupid day, you know. To be sure, I had a little walk in the park before dinner, with St. Edward, and he made love prettily enough. I asked him how we were to pass the evening, and described to him in glowing colours the delightful amusements we used to have in Paris on that day. He is always pleased with novelty, and expressed a wish, that we could both be conveyed there by some magic power, in order to enjoy those felicities, in the praises of which I had been so lavish. However, as that could not be, we suggested a plan of meeting in the evening in an unfrequented part of the castle, where we might have a game at picquet, and enjoy a little private conversation, without giving offence to the more pious part of the family.

This being arranged, and the evening advanced, we slipped away from the rest, which was no very difficult business; for Mrs. St. Edward was gone to read a sermon, or some such frumpish thing, to her maids; and my father and mother were both fast asleep. St. Edward led me up a narrow staircase, and then through a long passage, at the end of which was a nice little snug room, just fit for our purpose. We laughed at the oddity of our situation; and I never saw St. Edward more gay. We played at picquet for kisses: the time insensibly stole away, and darkness overtook us before we expected it. St. Edward

said he would go for a light, for we did not choose that the servants should know we were there alone. Accordingly he left me, and was no sooner gone, than a door (opposite to that by which we had entered, and which I had not observed,) slowly opened, and the figure of a woman, dressed in mourning, tall and pale, entered the room. She fixed her hideous glaring eyes on me, and seemed to be advancing to where I sat. I gave a dreadful scream, and ran as fast as my fears would allow out of the room by the door I had entered, and along the passage, screaming all the way, regardless of what opinions might be formed from being found in such a place. I know not whether the spectre followed me, for I never once dared turn my head; but the first objects my eyes encountered were Mr. and Mrs. St. Edward, with two of the servants. They plainly saw that I was terrified, and Mrs. St. Edward was endeavouring to soothe me by very kind and compassionate expressions, but that blockhead St. Edward, who is thrown off his guard by every little accident, and has no more command of himself than a child, pushed her aside, and gave even the servants an advantage over us, by saying, "What is the matter, my dear angel? Has any thing alarmed you? What a cursed fool I was to leave you alone in that place!"

Never shall I forget the looks of Mrs. St. Edward: she was turning from me with all that contempt which is assumed by boasted virtue, when I instantly caught her hand, and with more humility and respect than I had ever before shewn her, I thanked her for her polite attention to me, and uttered something like an apology for having alarmed her. I added it was Mr. St. Edward alone that was to blame, for carrying me up at that time in the evening, to look at an old part of the castle, which we could not see for the darkness; and that while he was gone to fetch a light, I had been extremely terrified by the appearance of a woman dressed in black, with a long pale face, and large eyes. St. Edward was by this time a little collected, and corroborated my story, except seeing the phantom, which, he assured me, was nothing but the effect of my fears at being left in the dark.

I still persisted in what I had at first declared, and Mrs. St. Edward, with a very stiff air, said, it was possible; for that three very old and respectable servants, who were past service, resided near that part of the castle; that one of them was a female, though she did not at all resemble the figure I had represented; but for this she accounted by my fears, which of course magnified her figure, and otherwise altered her appearance. I felt myself in an awkward situation, and wished nothing farther to be said; for I could not encounter her looks with the same degree of confidence I had before assumed. I said my fright had made me unfit for company; I pleaded a head-ach; and ordering my maid to attend me, I retired to my chamber. I have seen none of them this morning.

I hate to be exposed in so foolish a way. What the devil do people keep a parcel of antiquated creatures about a house, frightful enough in itself without such appendages, and who render it still more terrible. Did you ever hear of servants being kept because they were old and good for nothing? I suppose this is a whim of Mrs. St. Edward's; I dare say she takes great merit to herself in allowing these odious creatures to stalk about the castle, to add to the antiquity of her family, and to terrify her visitors by their hideous appearance. Well—defend me from such fancies! And yet I cannot be persuaded that the thing I saw was an inhabitant of this world, nor had she in the least the air of a servant. I hope I shall never see it again. This adventure has broken in upon my arrangements; I do not like it; I am at present in a very ill humour; but I wish to send off my letter, and so must once more bid you adieu.

LETTER XV.

Mrs. St. Edward to Mrs. Safforey.

I HAVE had no time, my dear Elinor, to answer your letter* before, and I fear least you should think I resent your chidings;—indeed I do not; for I wished to thank you for them, and not only to thank, but assure you that they were not thrown away upon me. I have observed an uniform and strict mode of behaviour towards Lord Fitzarnold, and have been rigidly reserved upon every subject that could possibly throw me off my guard; but the character of that gentleman you have mistaken; and I am well assured, he never thought of your friend in any other light than as an acquaintance. I am truly glad, my dear, that you were mistaken; I wish you had been as much so in another character on whom you have spoken even more decidedly. Alas, my Elinor! I am a wretched being! Would you believe it? I am jealous!—at least I think it must be jealousy; and yet I fear I never loved St. Edward sufficiently to feel that sensation, which, I have heard, is a torment the most acute. Indeed, I can well believe it; for had I experienced the same injury and neglect from an object more dear, and placed in the same situation, I think the pangs must have been too keen for me to have supported. May I not, then, derive at least that comfort from my adverse fate? Ah no! Henry Delafore would never have behaved as St. Edward has done! You see I am grown bold, and write a name at length which I once considered as prohibited, and never allowed myself even to murmur it in a whisper; so true is that excellent proverb, *Evil communications corrupt good manners*. But I am keeping you in suspense with my observations, and you will again call me childish, and tell me I write like a silly girl; I will, therefore, endeavour to proceed with more order and method.

You must remember the family I told you I expected, and the curious letter St. Edward sent to announce their intended visit:—I confess it diverted me; so did the family when they came. I soon observed that St. Edward was wonderfully delighted with the young lady, who, to do her justice, is very handsome; but I was perfectly easy on this head, for I knew that he was always governed by the whim of the moment, and that his partialities were of no long duration. In this case, however, I have been mistaken; and I have every reason to believe, that St. Edward loves Miss Carroset with a firm and steady attachment; and in proportion as he loves her, so must he hate me; for I hope we are direct opposites. His attentions to her, though they were carried to excess, never had the smallest effect upon me, except now and then to cause a smile at the extravagance of his admiration, which, I considered, would cool and wear off with the same rapidity it had began. He could neither be said to behave well or ill to me; he seemed not to know that I existed; and was wholly absorbed in the contemplation of one object; it was, therefore, more incumbent on me to fulfil the duties of my province, and to support the character of his wife by my attention to the rest of the company. I declare my spirits are exhausted by pressing civilities on the old people; and am condemned for hours to hear the father's vulgarisms, and the no less tiresome complaints of the mother, who will persist in descanting upon the system of her nerves, and, with a tedious monotony, relate histories which can be interesting to no one creature.

* This letter from Mrs. Safforey does not appear.

To all this I submit, and even bear it with patience, knowing that it will not always last; and although my prospects are not enriched by much diversity, I yet look forward to the time when there will be an end of this visit; when St. Edward will again be more collected; and again I may be considered a novelty, and become his favourite. With these hopes I shut my eyes to the tender looks he gives Miss Carroset, as I do my ears to the gallantry of his expressions. The airs of coquetry, and the allurements she is constantly practising, likewise pass unregarded; nor do I ever shew a look of reproach, except when her allusions border upon indelicacy, then, indeed, I express something like reproof; for that is a kind of conversation I detest.

This mode of behaviour has been pursued for a length of time:—her father will sometimes make a few coarse and ill-timed remarks upon it; but these are never regarded;—and her mother is too much engrossed with her nerves, to attend properly to the conduct of her daughter. However, as we have lived pretty much at home, and seldom see any visitors, except the family from Baintree Park, in whose presence the young lady seems more upon her guard, the absurdity of their indiscretions might have been confined within our own circle, had they set any bounds to their folly.

Last Sunday, a day which should have been marked by better conduct, they chose to retire, when the evening was far advanced, to an unfrequented part of the castle, where they remained till it was too dark for them to find their way back without a light. St. Edward therefore left her for the purpose of procuring one, when this fair-one, who had boasted of such Amazonian courage! who derided religion as a superstitious form! and ridiculed the timidity natural to the sex! was by some strange occurrence thrown into a dreadful alarm. She screamed with the terror of real affright, and her looks expressed so much agitation and dismay, that I could not help shewing my compassion and pity, by endeavouring to soothe and recover her; what then was my astonishment (I had almost added my contempt), when I was rudely pushed aside by St. Edward! Yes, Elinor, roughly pushed away before all the servants, who were drawn together by her screams, and were witnesses of the frantic way in which he addressed her; and whilst he held her in his arms, fondly kissing her forehead and her eyes, speaking to her by the kindest and the most endearing epithets, and cursing himself for having left her to the possible chance of alarm. During this scene I stood motionless; every eye was turned from them to myself alternately; pity, and contempt by turns agitated me; and I flew to my chamber, where a violent burst of tears in some degree relieved me. I believe pride had the greatest share in my affliction, for as to any other passion—Oh Elinor, my pen shall never describe the feelings of my heart upon this occasion! To be thus treated before the servants, and to hear their comments, which I could neither avoid nor reprove; their indignation getting the better of all respect;—one wishing she had been frightened to death; another declaring it was no wonder the devil should come in person to wait upon her; and a third pronouncing that it was only her own wicked conscience that had terrified her.

As soon as I could command a tolerable appearance of composure, I ventured into the drawing-room, where I found Mr. Carroset and St. Edward, both sitting in sullen sadness, and Mrs. Carroset was holding volatiles to her nose. On my entrance, St. Edward turned his eyes toward the door, in hope, as I supposed, of seeing his fair-one return; but she was retired for the night, and after repeated enquiries sent from him to know of her health, the concluding answer was, that she found herself too much indisposed to return any more that evening.

My part now became a difficult one: I own I felt so much resentment, that I thought it would be mean to solicit the notice of St. Edward. Had he shewn any compunction, I would not for a moment have hesitated to have offered him consolation, and assurances of my forgiveness; but of neither was he in any degree solicitous; and I verily believe, so much was he employed in the study of his enamorata, that he totally forgot that there was such a being as myself existing. I therefore addressed Mrs. Carroset, and hoped she had recovered from the fright the alarm had occasioned. She assured me she had not, and added, that her nerves were shattered to pieces, and she had not even power to go and console her dear girl; at the mention of whom, St. Edward started from his reverie, and asked, with an impatient solicitude, how the dear creature was. His manner and expression drew from the old man something like an oath, which he half-mutteringly pronounced; and rising from his chair, and stumping up to me, he said—"We should apologize to you, madam, for all this uproar; and I cannot find words to express my anger at that foolish girl; but it is her mother's fault, who would have her educated in France, where she has learnt such free manners and unrestrained notions, that she is not fit to be a visitor in a decent sober house."

I never heard him express so much good sense before, but it was entirely thrown away upon the major part of his auditors; for Mrs. Carroset only begged him not to shock her weak nerves by any cruel reflections, either upon her, or her dear child; and St. Edward said there was no occasion for apology; he was only afraid that Miss Carroset had received such a shock from the fright, as would deprive us of the pleasure of her company for the remainder of the evening, and, perhaps, he added in a fretful tone, give her a dislike to the house: then turning to me, said, "Do you know how she is?"

I could have made him a severe reply; but I knew not in the humour he then was, how it might be received, and I dared not venture it. I suppress my resentment, and told him I would go and enquire, if he wished it. My manner in saying this was marked, and he might have discovered what passed in my mind, but he thought not of me, and my condescension only subjected me to fresh insult, for I was no sooner at her chamber-door, and making enquiries of her maid, than he was there also; and, upon hearing that she was very much indisposed, he pushed himself before me, and with a voice full of compassionate tenderness, said, "My dear Charlotte, how are you?" It was too much:—I did not stay to hear the answer, but returned to the parlour, where he soon joined me; and the arrival of the supper having perfectly restored Mr. Carroset's good-humour, the evening was concluded with its usual dullness.

Since I came up to my dressing-room I have given you this detail, upon which I expect your opinion; yes, Elinor, your candid free opinion. Do not any longer affect to view me in a different light from that in which I really appear: you must know my wretchedness. Was it not sufficient to be torn from all that was dear to me, to be united to one for whom I felt not even a partiality; to feel the bitter remorse of a broken vow; and to know myself the wife of a man who has not a decided preference beyond the whim of the moment; but that I must bear with insolence as well as ignorance, and be insulted before my own servants, for the sake of a woman, whose conduct has rendered her truly contemptible, even in the eyes of those very servants. Oh, my friend, I will lay aside my pen, but not close my letter till to-morrow.

I resume my pen to inform you of the events of this morning. I find my spirits better than they were last night, and for a reason which might seem extraordinary to those who are unacquainted with my real situation: it is no other than because I am again to be left alone in this castle, which is said to be the abode of supernatural inhabitants. When we met at breakfast, Miss Carroset appeared in a new character: she was grave, formal, and gave herself airs of consequence. After the usual complimentary enquiries were past, she said, in a very serious manner, that the extreme terror she had experienced on the preceding evening, had given a severe shock to her spirits. Whether what she had seen was a real person, or only a phantom of her imagination, was a matter she should never have resolution, or, indeed, inclination to discuss, still less to investigate; but whatever it might be, the result was, that she could no longer stay in the castle; and as Mr. St. Edward had proposed a tour to explore the wonders of Derbyshire, she thought there could not be a better opportunity than the present to make that excursion. The time would be just sufficient to fill up the space which would intervene from the present moment, and when they would be wishing to go to London; and she supposed that this proposition would be agreeable to all parties.

In the mean time, Mr. St. Edward looked all agitation; and her mother was beginning to expatiate upon the weak system of her nerves; when the old man, with the strongest expression of disappointment, vociferated the following elegant harangue: — “Why, Charlotte, you are enough to drive anybody mad. Is there any such thing in the world as pleasing you? Did not we come driving from Margate just as the prime fish were coming in, because forsooth you languished for the retirements of the country? and no sooner are we got to one of the charmingest places that can be, again—the best venison I ever tasted, and the choicest fruit!—and because you could not spend Sunday like a Christian, but be following after some of your d—d French fancies, and raising such an uproar as if the house was on fire, only because a poor old servant came into a room where you had no business; so we are now to be posted again to some heathenish place, where we shall get nothing either to eat or to drink, or a bed to sleep on. If we should chance to light upon any comforts, you’ll be then sure to set up your pipes, and away we must be hurried off again to some other quarter:—and I tell ye now, miss, once for all, that I will not be raced about like a post-horse any longer; for I have neither money, nor inclination, to gratify such whims.”

Miss Carroset stared at him for some moments, and the poor man looked half afraid of what he had said; but when she burst into tears, he seemed again to renew his courage, and was going to add something more to what he had advanced, when our whole attention was engaged by Mrs. Carroset, who had fallen back in her chair in a fainting fit. Mr. Carroset seemed alarmed, and dropt his subject: but whether or not these fits are frequent, or whether the young lady was too much absorbed in her own sorrows, she appeared to take but little notice of her mother, and seemed to consider her fainting as a matter of course. For my own part, I have heard of these fits being counterfeited, and adapted to occasions for which they may be best calculated; but never having been in the way of these deceptions, I can form no decided opinion as to the reality of the disorder. My attention, therefore, was natural, and I gave her all the assistance my province required, as well as that which humanity excited.

She soon recovered, and was carried to her chamber, bewailing the violent disposition of her husband, whose boisterous behaviour had ruined her poor nerves!

Having left her to the care of her maid, and busied myself in superintending some domestic arrangements, I returned to the breakfast-parlour, where I soon discovered that all Mr. Carroset's reasoning had been overruled, and the Derbyshire tour was fixed on to take place in a few days. As neither my opinion or my concurrence had been at all consulted, I had nothing to say on the subject, and I verily believe it would never once have been thought of, had not Mr. Carroset asked me if I had ever been in that county, and if I should like the jaunt as well as the rest of the party?

I replied, "I never was in Derbyshire, and should by no means wish to go now, unless I am particularly desired by Mr. St. Edward." "Not go! my dear lady," said Mr. Carroset; "why to be sure, Mr. St. Edward and all of us must wish and desire you to go."

St. Edward was in earnest conversation with Miss Carroset, but upon this speech, and before I could return any answer, he said, "Why, as to going—you know, it is entirely your own affair. I really think—I—I would have you do as you like: it is no manner of con—— that is, it is not necessary that you should go; and——"

"Mr. St. Edward," I replied, with more spirit and haughtiness than I knew I possessed, "I shall not go, unless my company was particularly wished: neither the journey or the party would afford me any pleasure."

"True," said Miss Carroset, with an air the most insolent I ever saw, "every thing depends upon people's own feelings on these occasions." "Certainly!" echoed St. Edward. I did not deign to give any answer, and soon after left the room.

No, Elinor, I will not go with them; both my pride and my resentment urges me to this determination: I am indeed both proud and angry. There is nothing that calls forth the malignant passions so much as ill-usage; and I cannot help thinking myself ill-used. The style of contemptuous indifference with which St. Edward treats me, is to me far more mortifying than a few hasty sentiments would be, uttered in the warmth of honest anger. I shall not be sorry when they are gone; when I shall roam about this ancient castle by myself, and be less annoyed by the fearful phantoms it is said to contain, than I am by its present visitors. I am the better reconciled to this plan now Lord Fitzarnold has left the country; for although I have no fears either on his account or my own, his behaviour to me having been uniformly proper, yet this artful Miss Carroset has more than once thrown out hints, which would have created suspicions dangerous to my peace, if St. Edward had not been so entirely devoted to her, that he had not a thought to bestow upon any other object. For these reasons, I repeat, I am glad that Lord Fitzarnold has left the country. Could you, my friend, come with your boy, you would be most welcome visitors. Is such a plan an absolute impossibility? Am I condemned to renounce all my comforts? There was a time when I thought myself surrounded by them;—how few are now remaining! How painful is the remembrance of past enjoyments, when we know they are never to return.

A number of circumstances recal events endeared by tender recollection; and the preparations now making for the intended tour, remind me of a little journey we once went. Do you not know what I mean, Elinor? How I wished for the morning! It was one of the finest I ever beheld! How gaily the sun illumined every object! How light were our hearts! We were in a chaise, and Safforey and Delafore rode on each side. They gathered the hawthorn and the wild flowers with which the hedges were then loaded, and flung them into the chaise in profusion. But you will chide me for thus alluding to scenes like these. Indeed, it is a subject on which I hardly dare think, much less trust my pen; and it

is time that I laid it aside. Let me hear from you, if I must not expect to see you; and believe me,

Arkley Castle,
Oct. 7, 17—.

Ever yours,
JULIA ST. EDWARD.

LETTER XVI.

From the same to the same.

ALTHOUGH my last letter was so long, and bore so late a date, I am still furnished with fresh matter to communicate, and, I may add, fresh mortification. On the very day I sent away my last, just as we were all assembled in the eating-room, I observed a phaeton driving up the avenue, and before I could express my conjecture of whose it might be, every voice was at once exerted in vociferously exclaiming "It is George! aye, it is him indeed!" "It is the young dog himself!" said the old man, "It is the dear fellow!" said Mrs. Carroset. The young lady only said "Mercy on me! this was what I dreaded!" and St. Edward's looks spoke him pleased at any novelty; and he said, "Aye, he is just in time to go with us!" This brought him to the door; and without waiting for the ceremony of being announced, he rushed into the room in the most boisterous ungentlemanlike manner I ever saw. As to describing him, I know not how to begin!

Figure to yourself a young man, awkwardly tall, with a face not altogether unhandsome, if it had not been disguised by the extreme of fashion, and distorted by grimace; for his hair was absolutely sheared close to his head, and his throat so enormously stuffed out with wrap, that the former bore no sort of proportion to the height and breadth of his body: his coat was dark brown, with small shining buttons; and he had pale pink pantaloons tied with white ribbon. You will, perhaps, wonder at my being so particular in the description of his dress, but really he diverted me, and I am desirous that you should partake of all my amusements, as they seem now to be confined to those of this nature. I believe he made a slight bow, or rather an inclination of the head to me, and then bawled out, in a voice totally void of grace or even modulation, "Well, how are ye all? you see I have followed you;—left all my friends at Margate. Bob Guzzle vows he'll never forgive me;—wanted me to stay and see him run his Juniper against Jack Flyer's bay mare;—goes to Brighton next week;—Prince a Wales expected;—a deal of company;—every house full;—and yet I left all this fun to come to this here rum old place, that looks for all the world like an old church:—good rooms too within side—" looking round and up to the ceiling.

"Good rooms!" replied the father; "aye, faith are they; and good dinners too my boy. My friend here," putting his hand upon St. Edward's knee, "has some of the best venison I ever tasted;—fat, that thickness!" crossing one finger over the other to give him the exact measure; "and yet for all this," he added, "we are going to leave it."

"Leave it!" said the young man; "why when, where are you going! Damme, did not you send me word you should stay a month longer; else, d'ye think I should have been at the trouble and expence of coming all this here way for nothing. To be sure I

liked seeing a new country; and as to money, why you know I don't mind that; but then I expected for to be a little entertained, and seen something of this place."

"I hope you will, Mr. George," said St. Edward, who had not before spoken; "we are now only going to make a little excursion into Derbyshire, and at our return, I shall hope to prevail upon you to prolong your stay to a longer term than a month."

"I thank you, sir," said the young man; "but where are you going? and how do you travel? All trundle into a coach together, hay mother?" turning to Mrs. Carroset, who replied, "I don't know, my dear, but I believe not." He then looked round with the most conscious puppyism I ever beheld, and, with a half whistle, said, "I wonder who will go with me in my phaeton?" implying by his manner it was an honour of such magnitude as would be almost presumption to aspire to;—but fixing his eyes on me, and making a kind of inclination of his head, "I believe, madam, you will be the person I shall choose to take with me." I said I was obliged to him, but I should not go.

"Not go!" said he, with his mouth extended; "what stay here by yourself! No, no,—we'll talk about that bye-and-bye."

By this time the dinner was announced, and at the table every body seemed so occupied, that there was room for very little conversation. As soon as we left the gentlemen to their wine, Miss Carroset and her mother entered into a conversation, but which might, with more propriety, be termed altercation, on the arrival of our visitor, in which the former shewed no very sisterly affection, and the latter a very evident partiality to her son.

"Yes," said Miss Carroset, "your darling favourite, who is no better than a blockhead, is come here to destroy all our pleasure. He is so vulgar, and so full of himself, that one is ashamed to be seen with him; and I declare now he is to be of our party, I would not give a pin to go."

"Don't talk so, my dear Charlotte," said Mrs. Carroset; "you know how it affects my nerves; and as to your dislike to your poor brother, I can't see what it is for. Does not he dress and behave like a gentleman; and has more money in his pocket than he knows what to do with?"

The entrance of the gentlemen put an end to their discourse, and the evening being fine, a walk in the park was proposed, when Mr. St. Edward and Miss Carroset walked by themselves arm in arm, and appeared to be engaged in particular conversation. The young man offered me his arm, with an assurance of having it accepted, which would have disgusted me had I been inclined to take it; but he is not one of those that are easily repulsed. He not only persisted in soliciting me, but he rudely snatched my hand, and was placing it under his arm with a violence I could not endure, at the same time saying, "You shall take my arm! Why I don't come here to say soft things to my mother. Don't you see how kindly my sister hangs on the arm of your husband; and if you had been educated in France, as she was, you would not have had these prudish old-fashioned notions."

I gave him a look of the utmost contempt;—told him I was sorry he did not approve of my manners, but I could not with him lament that they were not formed exactly upon the plan of his sister's. I know not what possessed me to make this speech; I was vexed the moment I had said it; for it not only gave him an opportunity of displaying his folly in the most conceited terms, but subjected me afterwards to the impertinence of Miss Carroset; and what was worse, the resentment of my husband: for this silly coxcomb was no sooner in their company; than he related all I had been saying, swearing

he never was so treated in all his life. This was not lost on his sister, whose face reddened through the rouge; and she retorted upon me by all the spiteful speeches she could invent. St. Edward pretended to laugh it off, but it was visible enough for me to see how angry he was; and I was compelled to atone for the slip of my tongue, during the remainder of the evening, by the greatest attention and complaisance to each party. This was a mode of behaviour which, in some degree, mortified the pride of the young lady, pleased the old people, and so far humanized the youth, as to render him bearable. As to St. Edward, I saw he was in an ill-humour, which he took but little pains to conceal; and seemed to take a cruel and exulting pleasure in seeing me teased by young Carroset, who again offered to take me in his phaeton, to join the party into Derbyshire. I again declined accepting his offer, but with the utmost politeness; for fear made me timid, and a wish to preserve peace made me civil to the whole party.

Ah Elinor, you now behold your friend a hypocrite! Little did I ever suppose that I should have been under the necessity of disguising my feelings; and acting a part my soul disdains: far different were my ideas of a married state. The picture I had drawn was that of an union of hearts which should know no disguise, should have no secrets, no reserves, but confidence unlimited. Are there not such?—but whither am I wandering? I will return to my narrative. I was just got into my dressing-room, and began to feel myself relieved from the embarrassment of being the principal actor in a part for which I am totally unfit, when St. Edward entered, and in a voice of anger told Lucy to retire. He then threw himself into a chair, and looking at me with a degree of fierceness and resentment I had never before seen, he said, “Pray, madam, how is it that you treat my friends in this unhandsome manner? Do you think your beauty a sufficient reason to entitle you to these airs? As to your education, if it has not taught you to behave better, you should be silent to those who have had the advantage of a superior one; and for your prudish airs, they make me sick. You would not have refused the arm of Lord Fitzarnold, nor declined a place in his phaeton, had he offered it; but he knew better than that: you only served to amuse him just whilst he was down here, and had nothing better to look at. You may rest assured he has forgotten you by this time, and so you may as well behave properly to my friends, though they are not graced with titles, or honoured by the approbation of a silly girl, who fancies her conduct and her knowledge superior to every body’s.”

I was going to reply, but after repeating the last words, which he drawled out in the most contemptuous voice, he flung out of the room; and though I intreated him to return and hear me, he would not, but hastened to his own apartment, whither I had not courage to follow him. I passed several hours in ruminating on what he could mean respecting Lord Fitzarnold: it must have been caused by some vile insinuation of Miss Carroset's, for I never, to the best of my recollection, accepted his arm in my life, nor do I know any part either of his conduct or mine, that should call forth the smallest censure. To you I related every thing that passed, and except one instance in which I dropped an unguarded expression, I know of nothing that my own heart should condemn.

When we met at breakfast the next morning, each appeared conscious of some embarrassment, and nobody seemed inclined to begin a conversation. The young man paid all his attention to me, and again importuned me to make one of the party in the intended tour, and as I timidly declined his offers, (for I begin to be afraid of St. Edward,) he the more forcibly pressed them; and I thought the looks of my husband and Miss Carroset seemed to speak a language of suspicion on my conduct: when, therefore, I said

I should remain here during their absence, young Carroset asked me if I should stay here alone, and the looks which were then so directly pointed, made me answer in a hesitation, I believed I should. "Then, by G—d, madam," replied this tormentor, "the laws of gallantry will not permit me to leave you alone, had I no other inducement; but with your permission," bowing to St. Edward, "sir, I shall stay and endeavour to amuse Mrs. St. Edward."

I confess my heart beat with passion I believe, for I felt the colour rise in my face when my husband replied, with the utmost coolness, he had no objection. As soon as I could command my voice into a tone of composure, I begged him not to think of such a thing, for I assured him I should be a very dull companion, and should make a rule of not stirring out whilst Mr. St. Edward was absent. "Oh—what a Gothic notion is that," said he: "Yes, yes,—I shall make you break that pious resolution I promise you: we'll find some pleasant drives and excursions, and you'll soon change your note, or my name is not George." Did you ever hear such a wretch? I was obliged to exert myself by very seriously assuring him, that I should strictly adhere to the plan I had laid down; and I was otherwise well aware, that his ideas of amusement and mine were so totally opposite, that our time would be rendered extremely irksome to each other. He looked conceitedly significant; and during our altercation, St. Edward and Miss Carroset were conversing in a half whisper.

Cannot you, my friend, come to me, should I be reduced to the necessity of remaining alone with this coxcomb? Gladly will I receive any admonitions you may think necessary, to enable me to steer a right course in the labyrinth of unmerited evils which seem to await me, and for which I feel at times totally unequal. Before the family of the Carrosets came, and during St. Edward's absence, I thought of inviting Mrs. Clifford to come and stay with me; indeed, since the Derbyshire scheme has been projected, I began a letter of invitation to her, which I left upon my writing table, but have never been able to find it since. As it happened it was of no consequence. I urged my wishes to see her, and to enjoy her company when I was alone, with that warmth of expression which my sincere friendship for her dictated; but I wrote no particulars of my situation, or gave any of my free opinions, which I so unreservedly relate to you. I would on no account have any of my letters to you seen; they are to you alone, and for many reasons, are only fit for your perusal. The feelings of my heart are apt to be too pointedly expressed, and, perhaps, ought to be less so; but I am got into the habit of writing my thoughts as they flow, and I feel that it eases my heart of oppression. In the belief that you feel an interest in whatever concerns me, and although my narrations can boast of but little variety, and as far as regards myself, can afford you no pleasure, I will nevertheless continue them as a relief from dwelling upon reflections cruelly painful. Adieu, and believe me

Ever yours,

JULIA ST. EDWARD.

Arkley Castle,
Oct. 11, 17—.

LETTER XVII.

Mrs. Safforey to Mrs. Clifford.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I MUST begin my letter with the subject nearest my heart, and I must beg and entreat that, if nothing very particular should detain you at Crayborne, you will, as soon as you conveniently can after the receipt of this, make your long promised visit to our friend at Arkley. I urge this request in the strongest manner, as your going to her at this time will be of the most important service; and the necessity of your visit will be proved by the relation I am going to communicate.

In several letters lately received from Julia, I am led to believe she stands greatly in need of a proper female companion; one who can protect her as well as give her counsel; and I had (on discovering traits in her husband's character which I never suspected) intended to have taken my boy with me, and to make her a visit myself. Every thing was arranged for this purpose, and I meant to have surprised my friend by appearing before her without any notice of my intention, when the enclosed letter arrived from the West-Indies. I make no scruple of putting it into your hands; the contents will secure secrecy, and shew you the reasons why my visit must now be postponed, as well as the necessity of making your's. I will not therefore detain you from reading my husband's letter, and delay you from the necessary preparations for your journey, which I entreat may be speedy, and allow of no punctilious ceremony. The sad predicament in which my friend now stands must apologize for all intrusion, as well as the earnest request of,

Dear Madam,
Your truly obliged and sincere friend,
ELINOR SAFFOREY.

Ledcombe, October 17.

LETTER XVIII.

Captain Safforey to Mrs. Safforey.

MY DEAREST ELINOR,

TWO days before your letter arrived, your brother heard of Julia's marriage. The intelligence came from a quarter we could not doubt, and which your's corroborated. I should fail in attempting to give you any idea of what he has, and still does suffer, although he is now much more calm and composed than he was; yet I know not from which I have most to fear, the violence of frenzy which first seized him, and was in some degree vented in the ravings of a lunatic, or the sullen agony in which he pours forth the most melancholy and bitter lamentations. Three nights I watched him in the ravings of despair; and on the two following nature was so exhausted, that I really doubted his existence. Since that time he has been slowly recovering, but with such frequent relapses of wildness and misery, as to render me fearful for the preservation of his senses. It would seem unkind, my dear Elinor, to execrate your sex when I am writing to one who possesses all its excellences, and is entitled to my fondest love; but why did Julia behave thus to your brother? Ah why did she marry? No vows of whatsoever nature could have been more binding than were theirs. These were all upon which he rested his security, all that enabled him to look forward with hope, and mitigated the pangs of parting. It was this which enabled him to combat with sickness and contagion, gave spirit to his heart and valour to his arm. Indeed, my dear Elinor, it is not in my power to describe his sufferings, and I fear a still deeper tragedy will close the scene. I do not mean his death, which might probably prevent still greater misfortunes, I mean his coming to England to investigate his wrongs.

Before this fatal blow to his peace, he had settled every thing for his departure; and in the last few days, when he appeared to possess cooler moments, I urged him to remain here; I assured him I would not leave him, but would stay and do everything in my power to afford him comfort. He replied, with more calm deliberation than I had before observed, or indeed wished, for it seemed the result of a fixed purpose, that it was not now in the power of any human being to give him comfort; he had laid down a plan to which he would adhere with determined resolution. As his leave had been for some time obtained, and he had before only waited for me to accompany him, he should now go immediately, as he did not wish to have me a witness of the consequences which might follow his return.

I dread the effects of his disappointment, and I lose not a moment in giving you this intimation of his design. I hope it will reach you before he arrives; but this is very uncertain, as he will lose no time. I have used every endeavour to get leave to accompany him, but without success.—I think it might be proper to give Mrs. St. Edward some hint of his return, that she may be in some degree guarded against the surprise of seeing him, as well as prepared for the effects of that despair to which she has so unfortunately driven him. The gloomy steadiness he has adopted gives me a fearful presage of his designs.

I know you will do all in your power on this trying occasion, which will likewise be an apology to you for my writing on no other subject. A thousand thanks to you for

your good wishes, for your kind expressions; I return them sevenfold. May every blessing be redoubled on you and my boy, and both be preserved for the arms of, my dearest Elinor,

Your faithful and affectionate
husband,
GEORGE SAFFOREY.

— Sept. 19, 17—.

LETTER XIX.

Mrs. Clifford to Mrs. Safforey.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I DELAY not a moment to answer your letter; I wish I could as readily comply with your request. A strange fatality seems to hang over our friend, as well as to render our designs abortive. My uncle has been confined near three weeks with an unsettled gout, and for the last few days has been dangerously ill with spasms in his stomach. Were he not in the most imminent danger, and my duty and attendance absolutely necessary, I would not for a moment delay going to our dear Julia, whose situation is indeed most critical. The apprehensions so justly entertained by Mr. Safforey, as well as the hints you have thrown out of St. Edward's conduct, adds to my uneasiness at not being able at this time to leave Crayborne. I know not what to advise, nor how to suggest any method whereby we might prevent the impending danger. I see with you the necessity of your remaining where you are; for should Mr. Delafore arrive, and find you at Arkley, it will admit not the shadow of a doubt but he would follow you thither; an event which, if possible, we must endeavour to counteract. Why does not Mrs. St. Edward accompany her husband in all the excursions he makes? I cannot think it right that she should always remain at home. It may still not be too late for her to make one in their party; or she may be persuaded to follow them. Whatever happens, she will be most safe in her husband's company. But if she cannot gain that succour and protection to which she is intitled by the tenderest claim, may that just God, who permits the distresses of his creatures for the wisest and best purposes, which our finite reason cannot discover, guard and preserve her. In this trust I remain,

Dear madam,
Your ever faithfully obliged
ANN CLIFFORD.

Crayborne, Oct. 12, 17—.

LETTER XX.

Mrs. St. Edward to Mrs. Safforey.

I AM once more alone, my dear Elinor; and this stupendous castle, contrary to all other instances, exhibits a more lively picture, and conveys more content to my mind, than when its late gay visitors inhabited its walls: yes, the solemn stillness which now reigns in every apartment, the gloomy light admitted by the small panes of glass, and the echoing footsteps, which vibrate in hollow sounds as they pass through the spacious rooms, are more congenial to my mind than the numerous candles, the perpetual hum of voices, and the quick clatter of hasty steps in the busy occurrences of employment. With

much difficulty I evaded the pressing solicitations of young Carroset to take me in his phaeton; with difficulty was I restrained from affronting him; for his behaviour grew to such a height of impertinence, that nothing but my fears of offending the rest of the family kept me from declaring my real sentiments. St. Edward, as I before observed, seemed to take a particular delight in hearing him make fulsome speeches to me, and seeing my distress at being, as it were, compelled to receive them. He had even the audacity to hint to me the terms of fondness upon which his sister and St. Edward were; and added, that it was setting an example worthy my imitation, and which my husband seemed pointing out to me to follow. My patience was nearly exhausted, and I said loud enough for the whole family to hear, that however he might think to profit by so pernicious an example, it only served to fill me with disgust and contempt; and, I added, that if he had any thoughts of staying at Arkley with me, he would find himself disappointed, for from the specimen I had of his behaviour now, I should in that case think myself obliged to be shut up entirely from his company, in order to preserve the honour and credit of my husband as well as my own. I fixed my eyes full upon St. Edward as I closed my speech, half trembling and half assured; but he seemed to be too much engaged with Miss Carroset to regard any thing I said.

On the silly young man my speech had the desired-effect; he bit his lips, and coloured with passion: "Very well, madam," said he, "just as you please: faith I don't want to carry you away against your inclination. I suppose you have been reading romances; but no such things happen now-a-days;—no, no, depend upon it you'll never be carried off by force: but let me tell you, madam, there are those, aye, and handsome ones too, that won't stay to be asked twice to ride in my phaeton. As to staying here, I never intended that; I only said so out of fun, for I'm sure I should find it plaguy dull; and I would not interrupt your meditations in this here old castle: no, no, we'll leave you to make assignations with the rooks, or whatever else you can find."

Vulgar and impertinent as were these remarks, and uttered with the most evident tokens of anger, yet I could in my heart have thanked him for it, since it relieved me from the most irksome attentions, and freed me from the apprehension of being left alone with him.—The following morning was fixed for their departure, and I hope I may be forgiven when I confess that I hailed its approach with joy. St. Edward took a cold leave of me; Miss Carroset, affecting an affable smile, put out her hand with an air of haughty freedom; the old man bustled up and took a kiss, saying he hoped we should meet again sooner than we expected; Mrs. Carroset made some formal speeches like thanks, wished I was going with them, and hoped they should encounter no dangers to terrify and alarm her. She, with her husband and maid, the lap-dog, and band-boxes, very compleatly filled their chariot; St. Edward and Miss Carroset in the phaeton; and the young man in his own alone, in which he stood up to display his figure, bowed with an affected air of carelessness, and drawing the reins up to his chin, smacked his whip and drove off.

Could I be sure of never seeing them again, I should feel still more pleased than I do, but the idea of experiencing the same again hangs over me, and throws a damp upon my spirits, which are at no time very good. Yet, surely, St. Edward will grow tired of his present attachment; I never knew him fond of any thing for such a length of time before; but he seems as much pleased with her now as when she was the novelty of a day. Perhaps he is really in love with her, and never felt that passion in its truest extent before, for I believe there are many spurious sorts; if so, I pity him, and perhaps I ought not to

have told his weaknesses as I have done, even to you, my friend; and yet there is such a relief in unburdening the mind of its griefs, in depositing our secrets in a bosom faithful as one's own, that although I have ever held that woman in contempt who exposed the faults of her husband, yet to you it does not strike me in the same light; or is it that blindness to my own faults makes me thus extenuate them? It may be so, but they seem to me pious confessions, by which my mind is strengthened, and better enabled to support those vicissitudes of adverse fortune to which I am subjected. I endeavour to dissipate reflections, the indulgence of which would absorb all my faculties, by various avocations. I have been since their departure arranging my domestic affairs as far as comes within my province; I have visited my old family, from whom I derive a very great pleasure; and though last, not least, I have been employed in giving a relation of events, trifling indeed in themselves, yet such as, being nearest my heart, are, I am certain, not uninteresting to you. Adieu my ever dear friend. I know if you can, you will come to

Your affectionate,

JULIA ST. EDWARD.

Arkley Castle,
Oct. 18, 17—.

LETTER XXI.

Miss Carroset to Miss Baynard.

Buxton, October 21.

YOU will wonder, my dear Maria, to see a letter dated from this place, and particularly so late in the season, but the weather is uncommonly fine, and Buxton is what is called full, that is, there are several families, and some very pleasant people. You may congratulate me, my dear, on having left that horrid place Arkley Castle, where I was absolutely near being deprived of my senses, and where I was liable to continual affronts from that squeamish thing Mrs. St. Edward. She is left there alone, and it is the fittest place for her. Would you believe it, she affects propriety, or rather prudery, in so high a degree, that she refused to accept a place in my brother's phaeton; and because he said a few gallant things to her, she thought proper to resent it; when, if she had engaged in a little harmless flirtation, we might all have been comfortable, and made the journey pleasant: but she is, as I said before, such an old-fashioned starched piece of goods,—well, I will leave her and her old notions in the old castle as relics of antiquity, while I proceed to give you an account of our journey. To be sure there never was such places as we have been to see! How people can take pleasure in such sights I cannot imagine! They got me into one cavern all dripping with wet, with great stones rolling under one's feet, in a place where you cannot stand upright, and two or three of the most hideous old women to attend you I ever beheld, who talked in a dialect I could not understand, but seemed to express the beauties as well as the wonders of the place; at the same time holding out their shrivelled hands, from which I shrunk back as I would from a toad. St. Edward, George, and my father went to another cavern, which they said was much larger, but I

would not proceed with them, for when I came to the entrance, several of these creatures, whom I can scarce believe to be human, took off my hat without even asking my leave, crushed the feather, told me I must tye a handkerchief over my eyes, and would have put a filthy tallow candle into my hand, in order to light me into this subterraneous abode. I pushed them away, recovered my hat, and desired St. Edward would conduct me back to the inn. He grumbled with a kind of childish impatience, least he should loose the sight, and would absolutely have refused to return with me, had not the rest of the party promised to wait till he came back. I refused his arm, and walked as slow as I could on purpose to vex him, and so sullen, that I would not speak a word. I have no notion of his giving himself such airs, to prefer going into a nasty damp frightful cave to the pleasure of my company! Was it not insufferable?

When we came to the inn, we found my mother in the chaise with the horses taken off. She was so impressed with fear by accounts she had been told of the cavern, that she fancied the house unsafe, and no persuasions could get her into it. I soon laughed her out of her fears, and she ventured into the parlour, where we waited more than an hour before we were joined by the rest of our party, who seemed highly pleased with the wonders they had seen, all but my father, who declared nothing should ever again get him to venture into such an infernal hole; that he never expected to come out alive; that he felt the damps in his stomach; and he supposed from the appearance of the inn, he should get nothing fit to eat. Aye, it was just what he expected when he left Arkley, to come upon such a wild-goose chace, at such a time of the year too!

During this time George was relating to my mother the dangers he had been encountering in the cavern, where he said he had crossed a wide river under a rock, which hung down so close upon him, that he was put to the necessity of lying upon his back in the boat, with nothing but candles to light them! "Tell me no more, my dear boy," said my mother, "for I shudder to think of the escape you have had." "Aye," replied my father, "and I must needs be hoisted upon a fellow's back as if I was going to be flogged, and so carried through what George calls a river!" "Calls a river!" retorted George; "and so it is a river, and a wide river too!" "Pooh pooh—a little water only," said my father, "which your fears magnified into a river!" "My fears," replied George, "that's a good one! when the truth is, your's were so great, that you shut your eyes all the way to prevent seeing the danger." It is impossible to say how this altercation would have concluded, had not the dinner at that instant made its appearance, which gave but little satisfaction; nothing was good; every one of us seemed to be out of humour. St. Edward promised a better repast where we were to sup; and so indeed it happened, for we find every thing good and in proper order here.

The next day we dined in a large mixed company, which is the fashion at this place, in a very large inn called the Hall. We have a motley set, it is true; but I like to see such a variety of characters, as they afford matter for a deal of amusing criticism. I will give them to you just as they strike my fancy, and pretty much as they are. To begin with the church, as in duty bound, because, instead of setting an example of humility, they are always the foremost in pride and consequence,—Doctor Bullface, a dignitary of the church, his wife and daughters, take up more room, give themselves more airs, and would be considered of more consequence, than any others. Two maiden sisters named Crotchet, are of a more harmless nature: it is the first time they have ever ventured into a public place by themselves, though their age would have insured their safety any time

these last fifteen years; but they still affect an air of childish fearfulness, which subjects them to continual alarms. Alderman Pasty, his wife and niece, are no small fools. The widow of an eminent brewer, with a sickly son, does not think little of herself. These, with a physician, a couple of Irishmen who seem to belong only to themselves, and are of no profession, an old officer on half-pay, with a few other insignificants not worth noticing, compose our party. I have seen no one person here yet that I would be at the smallest pains to make a conquest of, I therefore still retain St. Edward in my chains, notwithstanding he sometimes provokes me, and we have had several quarrels; but to do him justice, he does not seem comfortable till they are made up again.—We were very well received in this goodly company, for we make no despicable appearance. We have three carriages, five men servants, and two Abigail. I overheard, from my window, Doctor Bullface making enquiry who and what we were; and I observed at supper that he relaxed somewhat of his pompous dignity, asked my mother after her nervous head-ach, and if the young lady, meaning me, did not honour Buxton for amusement, not health, as, if he might judge by her looks, she seemed to enjoy an ample portion of that choice blessing. During this speech his wife and daughters were surveying me from head to foot. To some people this might have been distressing, to me it was not: I have none of that mauvaise honte which awkward English-educated girls feel on these occasions; it is long since I experienced any of those symptoms. I returned stare for stare, and would have entered into conversation with them, had I not thought it would have flattered their pride, of which they seem to have a full share; and St. Edward that moment coming up and taking my hand, I walked off.

George amuses himself in playing off the two Miss Crotchets, and inventing stories to alarm them. It is very well he has found such an exercise for his genius, as he is a sad boor, and would be an eternal plague to me, if he had nothing else to engage his attention. As to my father, he does pretty well, as the table is in general well provided, and that is all he cares about; though he frequently sends sighs of regret for the venison at Arkley. St. Edward mentioned sending for some, but he does not love trouble, and I shall not remind him of anything there. By the way I am inclined to think his carasposa will not pass all her solitary hours alone: she could not possibly have been so averse to either of my brother's plans, if she had not a pleasanter one of her own. I gave a little hint of this to her husband, but he either did not or would not understand it. What a delectable treat a discovery of this nature would be! He is warm in all his pursuits; and I think he would not be deficient in resentment. Who knows but your friend may one day be the sovereign lady of Arkley Castle! I say the sovereign, because I would admit of no competitors. Ah—how I would change the whole arrangement there; ferret the old spectres out of their holes; and totally annihilate those hideous old servants about whom they make such a fuss. These are castles which I build at present, but which may be as firm as that at Arkley in some future time.—The Misses Bullface have asked me to accompany them in a walk: perhaps they may think this mighty condescending, but I shall soon give them to understand my opinion on that subject. However, it obliges me to lay down my pen, but I will not close this at present.

These girls are insufferably proud; they think nothing is equal to fat preferment, rolling at ease, and looking down upon their inferiors. I was perfectly sickened with their great acquaintance; nothing under a title seemed to come under that denomination.

“When papa dined with Lord this, and mama went a shopping with Lady that; and we were asked by Sir Thomas what we thought!” This was the nature of their conversation: to be sure I gave myself as many airs in my turn, though not exactly in the same way; and thus we parted with no very good opinion of each.

When I returned to the Hall I perceived that something more than usual was in agitation, and although I saw no new faces or any fresh retinue, it was confidently announced that a lord was arrived, and not only a lord, but Lord Robert Carrington, brother to the Duke of Delmont.—I hastened to my apartment; I summoned my maid to arrange my wardrobe, and from it I selected such of my paraphernalia as I thought most captivating, and best adapted to looks which I determined should be pointed to do execution. Yes, Maria, I should like to hook this lord; it would be a conquest worthy your friend; and although I had arranged in my mind a plan of execution respecting Arkley and its present inhabitants, yet the arrival of this nobleman has caused my ideas to soar to a much higher region. I dare say I shall have many competitors even in this narrow circle; but I defy their powers:—I think I may without vanity presume I have more knowledge in the arts of conquest than all the misses here put together. You, my friend, too, must give place to so important an undertaking, so farewell for the present. Perhaps I may again add more before I conclude.

I have seen and conversed with Lord Robert Carrington, Maria! and he is just such a person as I should like to lead captive in my chains; I say literally as to person, for he is too reserved, too particular, too scrutinizing, too conscientious, and let me add, too modest for the chosen companion of my heart. But that you may form some judgment, I will give you a sketch of what has just passed. When he made his entrée, he joined our motley set with an ease of manners which spoke him the man of fashion, and took his place at our table. Doctor Bullface affected to know him; and after puffing out his cheeks, erecting his eye-brows, and pretending a consequential cough, he made his way next to him,—hoped his grace the Duke of Delmont was well, and that he had the honour of seeing his lordship in perfect health. The satisfaction he had of meeting him at this place would, he hoped, not be lessened by hearing that his lordship came to Buxton on account of his health. To this profusion of civility Lord Robert answered with the utmost politeness, and assured the worthy doctor, that he did not come here for his health, but merely took it in his way as he was passing through the county. These compliments being over, Lord Robert addressed one of the Miss Crotchets, as she was placed next him; but whether or not she had never been spoken to by a lord before, or for what other reason I know not, but she coloured, hesitated, and gave him no answer.

I wanted to enter into conversation with him, and he seemed particularly to distinguish me by his looks, but it was absolutely impossible; that insufferable Doctor Bullface engrossed him wholly; and such was his pride and pomp that he would not deign to speak to any other person. When my father said “Well doctor, have you rode out this morning?” a stiff nod was the only answer; and when somebody else asked if he had seen the papers, a haughty “No!” was the only return. Lord Robert did not appear to like his situation, so encircled by the doctor’s greatness: he tried several times to make the conversation more general, but he failed in the attempt; and it was rendered still more unpleasant by my stupid brother, who, thinking to make himself conspicuous, bawled out from the bottom of the table, “Is there any news my lord? I should be glad to hear

something that was new, for we are all getting d—d dull!” Doctor Bullface contrived to engage his lordship’s attention, so as to prevent his giving any answer to the ill-timed question of George, which served to make the company more reserved than they were before, except one or two, who endeavoured to stifle a laugh; and I expressed my resentment sufficiently by my looks. But this was to be a day of mortification for me; for when a walk was proposed, and I thought I might secure a chance of introducing myself to his lordship, that foolish fellow St. Edward came up, and taking my hand, addressed me by the appellation of his dear, a silly way he has, which he knows not how to confine to proper times and places. This led to a most unpleasant mistake; for having reached the ear of Lord Carrington, he instantly supposed us to be man and wife!—no great proof you will think of his sense; for few men and their wives use such endearing epithets in these days: however, upon hearing the name of St. Edward, he immediately asked if I was not Mrs. St. Edward, and being answered in the negative, he professed a sort of wonder, and honoured me with a very scrutinizing look. I had soon after this an opportunity of exchanging a few words with him, and then formed that opinion of his merits which I gave you at the beginning of this: nevertheless I shall not abandon my project for a little difference in opinion; perhaps I can adopt my sentiments to his! I would make a greater sacrifice to become a duke’s sister! I will conclude my long letter in the delightful hope that I shall succeed; and believe me in all situations, my dear Maria,

Ever yours,

CHARLOTTE CARROSET.

LETTER XXII.

Lord Robert Carrington to Mr. Audley.

Buxton, October 31, 17—.

WHEN I left you, my dear Audley, I had no design of visiting this place, still less of making any stay here, nor, indeed, do I know that I shall remain another day; and when I tell you I have not met with a single being I can call my acquaintance, you will wonder that I have already passed three days at Buxton. The variety of odd characters which compose the present inhabitants of the Hall, on my first introduction to them, in some degree disgusted me: on a nearer acquaintance, their several humours served to amuse me; and as I became intimate, I also became interested and diverted. It is no matter how a man passes his time or where, provided he can derive satisfaction from the companions with whom he associates. There are few from whom we can gain knowledge, but there are many from whom one may glean some information; and in a mixture, such as forms our present society, a knowledge of the human heart is more easily obtained than in a more select circle. As this is a study which no man can be too well acquainted with, I therefore do not think my time absolutely thrown away in devoting a short portion of it to this investigation.

I shall not pretend to give you each character as it presents itself, but relate some of our conversations as they happened, by which you may form your own opinion of my

new acquaintance; and were I a vain fellow, I should begin with telling you, that a pair of the most brilliant eyes I ever saw have spoken more in my favour than words could express. "How do you like Buxton, my lord?" said Miss Carroset; "I am afraid it has not charms sufficient to give us hopes that your lordship will honour us with your company for any time." This was uttered in the kindest accents, from lips of coral guarding rows of pearls. My answer was I hope expressive of the honour she did me, but it would have been returned with more gallantry and better grace, had not a small mistake at the moment helped to embarrass my manners by confusing my ideas. A Mr. St. Edward, to whose name I was not quite a stranger, had addressed this fair-one by the appellation of "My dear!" I had heard Mrs. St. Edward was beautiful, and I was such a confounded old-fashioned dog, as to form the strange supposition that they were man and wife; and I had but just time to correct my exploded opinion, when the before mentioned speech from the lady required my attention. In this awkward moment, therefore, I am afraid I acquitted myself but ill, and still added to my want of gallantry by asking (which I could not for the life of me avoid,) where and which was Mrs. St. Edward; for by the freedom of his address to Miss Carroset, I supposed her to be the sister of his wife, who, I imagined, must needs be in the company.

It was an unlucky question:—the languishing softness of the young lady's eyes was instantly changed to a fierceness of expression by no means engaging, and she hastily replied, "Mrs. St. Edward! do you know her? Why she has no taste for travelling or mixing with company; she takes more pleasure in sitting whole days in a hideous old castle, finding out beauties of nature in the park and the grounds, taking sketches of them, and making discoveries of this kind, which seem to suit her taste; and indeed she is a very odd character take her altogether." "But surely these are amiable traits! Are you not related to her?" "Related to her!" repeated Miss Carroset; "Heaven and earth forbid! I assure you, my lord, all these simple amusements are only a pretence of innocence. Visiting the sick, administering to the wants of the poor, were all mighty pretty things to talk of, but charity covers a multitude of sins: and I hope I am not ill-natured, but I could venture to pronounce that Mrs. St. Edward, with all her love of solitude and retirement, is at this very moment *not alone!*" "But my dear Miss Carroset," said I, and taking her fan, began flirting it with great gallantry, for I had my reasons for wishing her to go on, "does her husband suspect any thing of this nature? Is he not fond of her? They have not I think been married long; and as her friend, it is pity but you would advise her, and with your superior knowledge of the world, admonish her against appearances which may be prejudicial to her peace." "O—as to that, she was sufficiently intreated to accompany us here, but she had her reasons, I dare say." I was going to reply, when Doctor Bullface interrupted the discourse, by begging pardon for breaking in upon our tête-a-tête, but his daughter, Miss Georgina Bullface, had brought one of the most beautiful spars to shew my lordship; "And really," said this stately prebendary, "she has shewn a wonderful taste in the collection she has made since we have been here, and wishes to have your lordship's opinion."

I answered him, I am afraid, rather impatiently, though with due respect to the young lady's attention, for I wanted to hear more of Mrs. St. Edward, about whom I am in some degree interested, for a reason you shall some time know. I respect the church as a body, but there are members of it which I do not respect. Doctor Bullface is a sycophant, who runs after titles, and has gained his dignities by meanness. He had been

giving me a history of the people who are here, all of whom he held in the most sovereign contempt; not for any particular vice in their characters, but because they had most of them gained an independency from their industry, being, as he said, sprung from trade, and ignoble of descent; not but if the doctor's own pedigree had been traced, it could not have boasted of more noble ancestors than those on whom he looked down with so much insolence. Mr. St. Edward, he said, was of good family, and was now in possession of a good estate; but who the Carrosets were he did not seem to know. The father was vulgar, and had evidently been in trade, but the daughter seemed to know something of genteel life, and were she not so very forward and conceited, he should not object to his girls being acquainted with her; but as to the son, he was the most incorrigible puppy he had ever beheld. "And it is a cruel thing, my lord," said the doctor, "that one is obliged to associate with people of this cast. For my own part," continued he, "though I am not proud, I confess I always seek the company of my superiors, and my dear Mrs. Bullface and myself have so brought up our girls, that they never degrade and let themselves down, by making any acquaintance with those beneath them; and we have given them educations which will, in some degree, supply the want of fortunes, and fit them for situations in life, should they be called into them, of the highest rank."

Mrs. Bullface is a mere echo to her husband; and the girls are two strange uncouth things, with whom I can form no intimacy: instead, therefore, of talking to the young lady on the beauties of spars and minerals, I asked the doctor if he did not think it odd, that Mrs. St. Edward, who, I had been informed, was a very beautiful young woman, and lately married, should not accompany her husband here. He said he knew nothing of them: it was not the age for married people to be much together; but he never investigated matters of that sort. I could have answered this in a way he would not have liked, but he has lived too long under the influence of his own opinions to be easily put out of them, and I am not going to set up for a reformer of manners.

A Mr. Tracy added to our group at supper. He said he came from London; and upon being asked for news, he replied that the papers must have informed us of events later than any he could bring, as he had been five days coming from the metropolis. "Five days!" repeated young Carroset; "then I suppose, sir, you have been ill upon the road!" "No, sir, I have not; I never was better in my life." "Why then," replied the young man, "how did you travel?" "In my own carriage," said the stranger; "And your own horses I presume," replied Carroset. "Yes, sir." "Why even then you must have been a devilish time crawling on!—surely you had better have posted! You have only a pair I suppose?" "But one, sir," returned Mr. Tracy. "O—a gig: well, but the devil's in it if you might not have come at a better rate, or your horse must be devilishly out of condition!" "Not the least, sir: there is not a horse in England in better condition, or he should not draw me." "Well, sir, I do not comprehend your mode of travelling; but rot me if I had not rather get into a stage-coach, which does now and then whip off pretty rapidly, than I would be condemned to be five days creeping from London to Buxton!" "It is very possible you would, sir," replied Mr. Tracy; "and could I feel myself comfortable in a stage-coach, I should have no objection to travelling in one; for, on account of weather, and other inconveniences, I might find it preferable to the carriage I have; and I would by no means have you suppose, that I am above travelling in a stage-coach; I think them excellent modes of conveyance: but I have particular notions, and as I make these excursions to afford satisfaction to my mind as well as health to my body, I cannot for the life of me

enjoy the beauties of the country, or sit at my ease, while the noblest animal of the brute creation is under the most excruciating and cruel tortures, that he may, by a velocity more rapid than can be pleasing, bring me a certain stage at a certain hour. The poor creatures are allowed a very short portion of time for their rest, but just long enough to cool their limbs, which, by the stiffened state they are then brought to, subjects them to the merciless blows of the horsekeeper to bring them again into their harness, where they are exposed to the no less merciless coachman, who whips them on till a fever relaxes every joint, and they are loaded with the accumulated pangs of torture and disease. I confess the weakness of my nature is such, that were I to be gratified by the most beautiful scenery, were my body indulged in the most luxurious ease, and my mind enlightened by the most sublime conversation, it could be no counterpoise for the feelings I should experience at the sufferings of these poor animals: but when, added to this, I should be crammed into a space not half large enough to fit in comfort, be whirled past the most beautiful prospects without a possibility of seeing them, compelled to endure the dirt of the inside passengers, and be annoyed by the discourse of those without, whose numbers are increased by the sordid avarice of the coachman, till the roof is in danger of falling in upon you,—these, sir, exclusive of the perils of an overturn, and numerous other accidents, are my objections to a stagecoach, a conveyance originally meant to be safe, pleasant, and humane. It is the inhumanity likewise which operates on my mind against posting: you are certainly yourself then more at ease, but the poor horses not a whit more; and you have the additional mortification to be an eye-witness of the injuries they receive. Thus, sir, I have explained my reasons for preferring an uncouth vehicle, constructed for convenience rather than show, to any more elegant, fashionable, and rapid method of travelling; and when you see my horses, for my servant rides one, which draws alternately, you will not be surprised at the length of time I have been coming from London.

Mr. Tracy ceased speaking; and whatever opinions his sentiments had excited in his auditors, they were not expressed; every one preserving a profound silence, which I was first to break; for I must confess, so much did my ideas coincide with Mr. Tracy's, particularly in the treatments of horses, that I could not help warmly applauding his sentiments. Young Carroset yawned, threw himself back in his chair and said, "Aye, why he believed a stage-coach was but a bad conveyance; but every one as they liked: for his part he was partial to getting on. Keep moving, hey George?" said the old man; while his lady mother protested it quite shook her nerves to see how he drove sometimes; but then to be sure, she added, the horses were such pretty creatures! Miss Carroset observed, that she thought moderate travel was best; but men were in general such impatient creatures! This led to a conversation too trifling to relate. We concluded the evening with a dance. I was honoured with the hand of both Miss Bullface and Miss Carroset in the course of the evening. They are rival beauties, but the latter has every personal advantage, though I am mistaken if a great share of duplicity does not pervade her mind. She adapted her opinions to mine in too studied a manner, however flattering the idea: I fear I did not make the returns she seemed to be laying out for. Miss Bullface too was not deficient in her modes of attraction; and the doctor, who was joined by his lady, whispered me that Miss Carroset was not just the character with whom they wished their daughters to associate; that she had acquired a certain boldness from her French education; and her conduct towards Mr. St. Edward, who was a married man, was not strictly decorous. I

think I had observed this before; but were I inclined to indulge my vanity, I might chance to rival this benedict: I have, however, no such intentions. My stay here will not be long. If I find Tracy, on a further acquaintance, to be the intelligent man I suppose him, it may be an inducement to keep me here a few days longer.

I wish to gain some information respecting our friend Fitzarnold: I cannot hear where he now is. He was some time since in Staffordshire, on a visit at a gentleman's house in the neighbourhood of Mr. St. Edward: I have reason to think he is not there now. I named him to St. Edward, but he appeared to know nothing of him.

I have had a great deal of conversation with Tracy. He has a fund of knowledge, and is a very singular character. I have received more information from his opinions than I ever did before. He has descanted upon serious subjects in a manner which has led me to see them in a light entirely new. I am not, I hope, among the worst of mankind, but I find I have much to reform; and I shall think myself indebted to his counsel for a clearer conscience than I might otherwise have experienced. How much more is to be gleaned from his sensible well-timed remarks, than from the pride and consequential nothings which flow from the lips of the stately Dr. Bullface. Surely, if pride ever appears in its most hateful form, it is when displayed by an order of men, whose profession should be marked by humility, as one of the Christian virtues, more particularly exemplified in the life and doctrines of their great master. You see I have already profited by the lectures of my new acquaintance; not that I ever looked upon sacred truths in a light manner; but I am not going to sermonize, unless my letter should come under that denomination by its length, to which I will not add, except to inform you that I shall leave this place before a letter from you can reach me here; and always remain,

Truly yours,

CARRINGTON.

LETTER XXIII.

Miss Carroset to Miss Baynard.

MY scheme upon Lord Robert Carrington has failed; I despise him. He is as silly and as squeamish as Mrs. St. Edward, and adopts all the old-fashioned absurd notions of that frumpish fellow Tracy. How sick I should be of a husband who would be every moment giving me lectures upon propriety of conduct: O defend me from such an one! Yes, I assure you Lord Robert is absolutely pious, and bores one to death about principles of virtue and honour; very good things in their way, perhaps, but not fit to be brought and exhibited at a public place. I now relinquish all hopes of a coronet, and all its fascinating appendages; I must content myself with being plain Mrs. St. Edward, and to secure that I will spare neither time nor trouble. I have, as I told you I would, already thrown out some hints to St. Edward, in order to found a jealousy, upon which I must build my fabric. I had made several attempts of this nature before I had so much interest in the cause as I now have, and merely for a matter of amusement, and to promote a little dear mischief; but he either had so little of jealousy blended in his composition, or so implicit a confidence in his wife, (I know not which,) that he never appeared to understand any of my hints, and never wished to have them explained. This, however, is of little consequence; I have a grand effort in reserve, and I think the time is now arrived when I shall put it in execution.

I love to tell you my plans; for though I shall abide by no decision but my own, I take a pleasure in your approving and admiring my ingenuity. Know then, Maria, and as you hear be secret, that during the time I was on the visit at Arkley Castle, I went one day accidentally into Mrs. St. Edward's dressing-room: she was not there, but on her table lay an unfinished letter to some female friend, as I suppose, but it was marked by no particular address, and might have been designed for either sex. No matter how that was, it suited my purpose. I took the liberty of concealing it, and have preserved it against a time when it might be of infinite use in my operations.

Yesterday I asked him if he did not think Mrs. St. Edward must be very dull in that old castle by herself; he said, "Yes, it must be dull;" but added, "you know it was her own choice; she might have been here if she pleased, therefore she can't complain of any restraint upon her inclinations; and she likes solitude, and has various ways of amusement." "And do you think," I replied, "that she had no particular reason for wishing to stay there by herself?" "No,—no other reason than because she did not expect to find any pleasure in coming here." "And do you think," I replied, "that she is quite alone?" "Yes, I suppose so; who should be with her there?" "Why—but it may be only conjecture, and," I hesitatingly said, "I would not on any account give you suspicions of circumstances which, perhaps, you would be the last person to know, and of which you seem so entirely ignorant, that—" I was going to proceed, but the spark was kindled, and it was not time to let it blaze yet. "What is it you mean? tell me: Do you know anything of which I ought to be informed? Do not keep me in suspense." "Indeed, Mr. St. Edward," returned I, with great gravity and consequence thrown into my countenance, "it is a subject on which I must beg to be excused speaking, that is, speaking my real opinion. There is a delicacy, nay, danger in mentioning subjects of this nature; and I

would be the last person in the world to give you ideas of Mrs. St. Edward's being partial—that is, I mean, having a preference—a not being exactly what you wish her." So saying, I left him to the workings of his fancy. I have began with a gentle dose, the next shall be stronger; and I am certain from what I have observed, it will not fail in its operation. In the mean time, to you I will confess my weakness, and the restless jealousy which pervades my active mind: it is this,—although I cannot build my own advancement upon any structure but the ruin of Mrs. St. Edward, which must be the consequence of St. Edward's jealousy, yet does not that very jealousy, necessary as it is to my design, imply a degree of love? Yes, where there is no love there can be no jealousy; it is love's truest standard; and such are my fine feelings, that I cannot bear St. Edward should retain one particle of that tender passion for any one object but myself.

Yet how to arrange my plans without raising these emotions I know not. If he has no jealousy he has no love; and if he has no love he would have no jealousy; then of course he could have no resentment, the usual concomitant of that passion; and resentment, if well nurtured, will soon produce hatred: only I must wait these charming effects; and as I am the principal actor in the drama, I must observe the gradations of these passions, and with patience more than human be a witness to the expiring flames which once, and that but lately, twisted the fetters of enamoured fancy, which, when once firmly united, must cause a pang to be undone. Yet such a task is mine, Maria: but there is a necessity far more powerful than any claim I have yet mentioned. I am no whimperer; and as to love, my heart has long been steeled against its utmost incitements, and left callous to all its attacks; and besides, I never intended to lead a single life. St. Edward is the kind of husband I can manage as I please, for I have gained an amazing ascendancy over him now; and when once I can break off all his regard for that doll of a wife he has at present, I shall fear no rival. You shall hear what progress I make in my enterprize, and I have no doubt but success will crown my wishes.

Adieu,
Ever yours,
CHARLOTTE CARROSET.

Buxton, Oct. 25.

LETTER XXIV.

Mrs. St. Edward to Mrs. Safforey.

Arkley Castle, October 27, 17—.

GLOOM and solitude, my dear Elinor, have again infected me with superstition and dread: I should be ashamed to confess my fears, or relate my weakness to any other but such a dear friend. My spirits, whilst they were engaged by passing events, or agitated by resentment, were supported from that drooping languor which I now feel so very oppressive. I have had recourse to books, to music, to drawing, besides inspecting

domestic arrangements, and yet the day hangs heavy; and when the evenings begin to close, which you know at this season is early, I feel my spirits scarcely equal to encounter the many hours between that and my bed-time. Time and use would, perhaps, reconcile me to this solitude, and I might grow so enamoured of my own company as to wish for no other; but this is not all. This castle is calculated to inspire terror. Last night I was greatly alarmed. I had been walking in the park as long as I deemed it safe to be alone; I had given way to a variety of melancholy recollections; I traced the opening of my early prospects, with the pleasing gaiety they then promised; I recalled the youthful days we had passed together; the innocent and delightful amusements we had shared; the playful exploits of an object ever dear to my memory; and the harmless sports in which this trio used to engage: time was not then marked by leaden wings; ah, no,—it flew with too much rapidity. I sat ruminating on these past pleasures, till the lengthening shadows began to depart; the owl hooted, which was returned by melancholy echoes; the moon appeared rising behind a dark cloud;

And drowsy tinklings lulled the distant folds.

My mind was in unison with the scene: I could have remained there for a much longer time, but fear impelled me to return to the castle. I retired to my dressing-room, where, after beguiling a few tedious hours, I prepared to go to bed. I had dismissed Lucy, and was nearly undressed, when my ear was arrested, as once before, by a few notes of soft music. As the sound proceeded from under the window, I concealed my light in a closet; I wrapped my bedgown round me, and went on tip-toe to the window. I gently opened the shutter, and as the moon shone very bright, I could plainly distinguish a man, whose figure and appearance were not of an inferior order. I started, and drew back; I felt alarmed in a way I cannot describe: my mind had been oppressed with unusual lowness the preceding part of the evening, and the sound of the music gave me a fear annexed to that one of supernatural lights and noises.

I stood for some minutes, as if recollecting myself; I felt afraid to approach the window a second time; my trembling limbs would scarce support me; and I plainly heard gentle footsteps passing to and fro. I knelt down, I prayed for protection; and I felt my courage revive. I again ventured to the window; all was still, and nothing appeared. I had almost assumed confidence enough to open it, but I instantly suppress the idea, as no curiosity could possibly justify hazarding myself to such an exposure; I therefore gently fastened the shutter, and having resumed my light, I searched every part of the room, the closet, and under the bed; I fastened the door, and I again addressed that Being, on whom alone we can rely for safety.

During the first part of the night, my mind dwelt upon a thousand images of fear and dismay; but towards morning, I sunk into a sweet and composed sleep, which sovereign balm so renovated my faculties, and restored my spirits, that I did not recollect the circumstances of the preceding night with that degree of horror they had at first occasioned. Nevertheless, my dear Elinor, I am extremely puzzled by the adventure. Were I inclined to give way to the superstitious opinions, which pervade the inhabitants of the castle, I could not in this instance allow my fancy to be deceived. The sounds I heard were those of some instrument, and the form I saw was that of an inhabitant of this world. Where or why he comes here is beyond my comprehension. I have not stirred out

today, though it is uncommonly fine weather; yet I am not afraid; I see no reason to be apprehensive; for what should any being attempt that could signify to me, and what advantage would be gained by alarming me? I have servants enough to protect me, and they seem well disposed and attached. I could indeed wish that I had some female friend, to whom I could confide such secrets as these; for I do not love to tell servants any thing that has the appearance of marvellous, they are so ready to add so much of their own. Had I told Lucy what I saw and heard last night, it would by this time have been magnified into a dozen men, with a band of music. I wish Mrs. Clifford could have come; but when her uncle is in so dangerous a state, it would be cruel to desire it. A still dearer friend too would have been still more desirable; but I must likewise admit your excuses, for I know there must be cogent reasons, or you would not have allowed them to act against your wishes. I hope and trust I am safe, and that this unknown, whose serenades so much alarm me, will confine himself to them alone, or what is still better, to hope that I shall neither see or hear any thing more of him.

I believe there are few young women that are just in the same predicament as myself. I have been married little more than three months, to a man whose conduct at that time led me to believe he preferred me to all other women; I am not conscious of having given him any reason to complain of my want of affection, or any other flagrant breach of duty; yet he has not only totally neglected me, but has shewn a decided preference to another, and has left me a prey to melancholy reflections, as well as exposed to the dangers and attempts of the midnight assassin, or more dreaded invader of my peace. Yet I have not the most distant guess at the person of my nocturnal visitor; but am inclined to suppose, that he is still more formidable than a robber, inasmuch as any intimation of a person of this description watching me at such an hour, would be more injurious to my reputation, than any deprivation of my property could possibly be; and where a woman has lost her best protection, she is left to the mercy of a thousand wicked agents of malice and revenge, with no other shield but her own rectitude and innocence. These are truths which make me very sad; and there are moments when still more acute reflections render my heart the seat of misery. I am sorry, my dear Elinor, to close my letter with such mournful ideas, but I feel an uncommon lowness of spirits, and the longer I write the more keenly I find they oppress me. I will, therefore, no longer dwell on ideas so painful, but with the most fervent good wishes bid you adieu.

Ever yours,

JULIA ST. EDWARD.

LETTER XXV.

Miss Carroset to Miss Baynard.

Buxton, October 30, 17—.

MARIA! the fates work for me! nay, they improve upon my plan! This morning an express arrived from Arkley that Mrs. St. Edward was gone off; the pious, proper, uniform Julia; she that was held out as a pattern for her sex, that looked with disdain on every one who had not sufficient art to affect her prudish affectation; yes, this fair paragon has eloped! When I told St. Edward I thought she had some plan for wishing to remain alone at Arkley, I really did not suspect she had any. I thought I could discover that Lord Fitzarnold had a penchant for her, but so artfully did she conceal her feelings, I never could discover that she had the most distant partiality for him; and I frequently wondered at it, when I considered the slights she received from her husband, than which nothing is more likely to make the gentlest spirits retort; but these opinions must be entirely confined to your own breast, for to you alone I confide them. I hold a very different language to others; I pretend to have known her propensities long ago, and shew no sort of surprise at her elopement; and when St. Edward came to tell me the news, he seemed mad with rage, jealousy, and compassion: yes,—with compassion; for he accused himself for having neglected and forsaken the sweetest creature in the world, whom he had left a prey to the vile machinations of some concealed enemy. This, Maria, was the language he held forth to me, even to me his distinguished chere amie. Was it in human patience to endure such mortification? Yet I commanded a coolness I did not feel. Now was the moment to fix my fate for ever. I told him he was deceived; that to my certain knowledge Mrs. St. Edward had carried on a secret intrigue with somebody for a long time; that she staid there alone the better to facilitate her amour; and that I had a convincing proof of her infidelity in my pocket, which should have remained for ever concealed, had not this flagrant act of her elopement made it unjust to conceal any longer such proof of her iniquity. In saying this, I drew forth the unfinished letter I had purloined from her dressing-room, which ran thus:

“Mr. St. Edward means to accompany the family who have been our visitors into Derbyshire. I know you wish to enjoy my company alone, and then indeed it will be on every account most desirable. I know the tender concern you take in my interests, and I anticipate with sincere affection the happy hours we shall pass together, uninterrupted by any other visitors. I have a thousand things to say to you, and I depend on the reciprocal communications you may have for me. Lose not a moment, my dear friend, in coming to me when I shall inform you I am alone, and be assured that my affectionate regards can never be altered, although—”

When St. Edward had read this fragment, which he was well assured was the identical hand-writing of his wife, all the tenderness which a few minutes before had found a place in his heart, at once gave way to the most bitter invectives against her: and I came in myself for a share of his anger, for he asked me, with the fury of a madman, why I did not shew it him before? and why I did not inform him of every thing I knew

before we left Arkley, that he might have detected the wretched culprits, and if possible have preserved her's and his own honour?

I knew not what arguments to use in defence of my own conduct, and to corroborate the evidence, which already appeared so much against her, but required farther proofs to criminate her character. In reality, I suppose there was something between her and Lord Fitzarnold, and I hope there was, because it will in that case bring things sooner to an issue, and I shall feel my conscience more easy than I should had she been entirely innocent; for though I do not in general allow qualms of that sort to cramp my enterprising genius, yet if she had been accused and sacrificed quite wrongfully, I should not have felt so comfortable when I am the mistress of Arkley Castle, lest if she had broke her heart, her ghost should have taken it into its head to terrify and alarm me in that place, which seems to be the residence of evil spirits; not that I shall ever reside there for any length of time, for I shall make St. Edward take a house in London; I should be moped to death to live entirely in that odious castle. But it shall not remain in the state it now is, for I will have it entirely new modelled; it shall not look like a place for the residence of hobgoblins; all the old-fashioned trumpery, and all the old inhabitants shall turn out; I will leave no relics of antiquity:—but I fear these schemes will be some time in adjusting; it is a long time before a divorce is compleated;—those abominable lawyers are so tedious. I cannot doubt but there will be proof sufficient now they are gone off together, but there must be so many tiresome forms. I think I could make a new code of laws quite as beneficial to society without so much parade.

Well, St. Edward will, however, lose no time, for he is gone as fast as his horses can carry him, but not so fast as my impatient spirit would convey him. I shall be miserable till I hear from him; and he has promised to write the moment he has any intelligence to communicate, which I think must be before long. I suppose we shall leave this place too very soon, and make the best of our way to London; but if anything particular occurs, you shall hear from me again; and believe me always

Most truly yours,

CHARLOTTE CARROSET.

LETTER XXVI.

Mrs. Safforey to Mrs. Clifford.

THE most extraordinary intelligence, my dear madam, has this moment reached me;—pray heaven it may not be true, and yet I have every reason to fear it is. Mrs. St. Edward is missing! our dear Julia! What villain has dared to molest innocence like her's? You know my fears, and how much they were excited on account of my poor brother, whose return I have been hourly expecting; but he is clear of all suspicion relating to this event, for the ship in which he embarked is not yet arrived. I know not on whom to fix my surmise. She had so few acquaintance, has led such a retired life, that I can form no guess; and yet from her last I was not easy: somebody was lurking about the castle the night before she wrote her last letter, which she concluded with unusual low spirits, as if she had a presentiment of what was to happen; not that I mean to attach any guilt to her,—no, she is as pure as human nature can be.

I have thought of Lord Fitzarnold, who was lately visiting at Baintree Park, but from all the accounts I can collect, he has left the country some time. I know not what to think. I hear an express is sent to St. Edward at Buxton; he had no business to be absent. The servants can give no satisfactory account; they are all as much perplexed as I am. A labouring man, whose family are much indebted to the charity of Julia, brought me the first intelligence. He was sent by Lucy, her maid, who said she never had stirred out the whole day; that when she left her at night she appeared perfectly composed; talked to her during the time she was undressing about a poor woman in the village, to whom Lucy had been sent in the course of the day to carry child-bed linen and other things, as she was near lying-in; that in the morning, not hearing her mistress's bell ring at the usual hour, and having waited some time beyond it, she ventured to rap gently at the door of her chamber, and not having any answer, she rapped still louder, but hearing no return, she called, and no answer being given, she then began to be alarmed. There was a drop-bolt to the door, which, upon trying to open, she found was down; and she felt so frightened and so fully persuaded her dear mistress was dead, that she stood for a minute and cried; but recollecting herself, she called for help, and ran down to the rest of the servants with her alarming account, and they returning with her, the door was instantly forced open, and the room found empty. It did not appear that Mrs. St. Edward had been in bed, nor was there the least trace by which they could mark by what means she had departed. Various were their conjectures, and having made a search throughout the park, gardens, and offices, they gave up all hopes of discovery, and dispatched servants different ways to inform those most nearly concerned of this sad and unaccountable catastrophe. This is the substance of the account the man brought to me, only that I have omitted relating his belief that she is carried away by supernatural power, to prove which, he related wonderful sights he had witnessed, and as firmly credited. For my own part, I am lost in wonder at the circumstances, such as he has related them; but can form no decided opinion till I hear a more rational account. I dare say there are clues which might lead to some investigation, were a proper examination to be made; but until such can be effected, we must submit to that patience which only can make us bear a suspense almost

insupportable. I know you will join with me in prayers for the preservation of the most deserving of women; and believe me,

Ever yours,
ELINOR SAFFOREY.

Ledcombe, Oct. 30.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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