

THE
VICTIM OF FANCY.
VOL. I.

THE
VICTIM OF FANCY,
A NOVEL.
IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY A LADY,
Author of the CONQUESTS of the HEART.

VOL. I.

With frames and constitutions weaker than Men have, the passions of Women are warmer; and the rays of their genius concentrate to the object on which they engage themselves more strongly—it absorbs all other considerations.

PROGRESS OF FASHION.

LONDON;

Sold by R. BALDWIN, Pater-noster row; and
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MDCCLXXXVII.

DEDICATION.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq.

HARMONIOUS bard of "Britain's li-
ving choir,"
Whose skilful fingers touch the potent lyre;
Whose precepts, whilst they charm the soul,
improve,
And point each footstep to the goal you love;
Say, shall the candour of thy noble line,
Which says to Woman, "Poesy is thine,"
And bids, with dauntless aim, the female band
Pluck the green laurel from the Muses hand—
Rest all unnotic'd by one grateful lay,
Unsung by those to whom you point the way?
And shalt thou, Hayley, whose melodious
strain
Darts emulation thro' each glowing vein,
And fondly pays to fame and genius true,
The fair Commena's shade, the tribute due,
Whilst thy fair pages female worth retrieve,
Shalt thou no tribute from the sex receive?
Yes—whilst with homage throb a thousand
hearts,
Lo! from the throng the bold adventurer
starts;
Her cheek yet wet with admiration's tears,
And awed by genius which her soul reveres,
From motives, sacred as thy breast might own,
Her flowers she brings to thy poetic throne:
Simple and few, whilst at thy feet she strews
The warm effusions of a female muse,
She from the raptures of a youthful heart,
Tho' "not an artist, yet a friend to art,"
Would mark how woman venerates thy lays,
And trembling add, ennobled by thy praise,
A leaf of myrtle to thy wreath of bays!

ADVERTISEMENT.

AS those striking traits of originality and spirit, which mark the work called THE SORROWS OF WERTER, have excited attention and admiration almost universal, whilst the dubiousness of its moral has given rise to the severest censure; the writer of the following letters hopes to be excused for endeavouring to bring forward that moral in a more favourable, and, she trusts, a more just light, than it has hitherto appeared. She should esteem herself amply rewarded, might she hope to succeed in her attempt to wipe off the blot which tinges those beautiful pages; and she has only to wish, that, whilst endeavouring to render justice to acknowledged genius, and to regulate the principles of the heart, she may have been able to engage its affections, and to point out to it, as the most desirable of all blessings, Religion and Virtue.

She is not without some fears that the dedicating this trifle to such a name may be considered as a presumption; but she begs leave to remark, that the ancients, when they brought their offerings to the altar of Apollo, did not believe their presents in themselves worthy the acceptance of the "master of the lyre," but each, according to his capacity, laid them at his feet as a token of homage due to their inspirer, and of the consciousness they felt of his superiority.

THE
VICTIM OF FANCY.

LETTER I.

FREDERICK BURELL, *Esq.* to Major MORVEN, at Gibraltar.

My dear Friend,

WHEN I quitted you and embarked for France, you may remember I had no intention of making any stay in that kingdom; but my unexpected meeting with my brother, who was lately arrived there in his return from Italy, detained me longer than I had intended: you cannot, I imagine, have forgotten Vincent; and he bade me assure you that he remembers and respects you as a friend; and congratulates you on the particular, as well as general glory which you have acquired in the service you so gallantly engaged in. It was in tenderness to his mother only, that he relinquished his own predominant desire of being a soldier; and since her decease, warm as I know him to be with loyalty and valour, the peace which prevails in Europe has happily taken from him the possibility of indulging or signalizing the noble fire of his disposition; for the meanest soldier you have commanded there is to him an object of envy. He now intends passing some time at the French Court, where he is respected in a manner peculiarly flattering: but as many affairs called me to England, I quitted him after passing three weeks at Paris, leaving behind me a few grave cautions befitting an elder brother. My first care on my arrival in London was to fulfil the commission with which you had entrusted me; my credentials soon introduced me to your sister, and I have the satisfaction to find from her conversation, that what you so much wish to keep secret, has not yet transpired. You desired, at parting, my opinion of her, supposing she must be much altered in your three years absence, which have been almost wholly devoted by her to improvement. What she was when you left her, just released from a nunnery, where an interested step-mother would have buried her, it is impossible for me to tell—beautiful she must ever have been, and as soon as I saw her my heart pronounced her the most charming woman I had ever beheld. Can I say more, than, that joined to the most captivating figure, she possesses all the elegant accomplishments in a superior degree, in an age and country where they are almost universal? I shall ever think myself indebted to you for having announced me to her in the favourable light of your friend, since in ten minutes conversation, I found there could be no other half so pleasing to her. To that favour also I owe your aunt's admitting my visits with peculiar complacency, which, since the first, have been pretty frequent. When I told your sister the dangers with which you have been surrounded, the tears which stole through her long and dark eye-lashes, shewed the tender interest which she takes in her brother; and she thanked Heaven for your escape, with an earnestness which moved me so much, that I was scarce able to proceed. I soon found that she acknowledges her obligations to you, with the same nobleness of generosity with which you attempt to conceal them. Tremble for me, Morven, since to the softest appearance of feminine delicacy, she joins an animation and energy, believe me, superior to every thing I have

before seen, and I caught myself at first sitting in silent surprise, contemplating the unusual and enchanting combination.

Your aunt doats on her; I find I have recommended myself to the good lady, by the sentiments which have sometimes escaped me in your sister's absence. She has rendered herself mistress of the Italian, and in the learned languages has made a considerable progress, by an assiduity which has distinguished her in all her pursuits. The desire of knowledge in her, your aunt remarks, almost becomes a passion; but a man who loved her, would know there is another much stronger than that in the world, and would hope too, that such a mind as hers was destined some day or other to experience it. Perhaps this letter may make you suspect that there is at least one such man, and that there should be thousands would be no more than justice. I have the happiness of seeing her very often; but, alas! if she should hereafter be as deaf, as she is at present blind to my affection, I shall find no security but in flight. I think you will at least not be my enemy in this affair, and I don't desire any thing further: I know what she thinks of her obligations to her brother, and with all my friendship I would not be indebted even to you, for her acceptance of me as a lover. At present I am received both by her and your aunt with friendship, and admitted into their parties without reserve. I so much dread to forfeit these privileges, that, however painful the effort, I shall impose a long silence on myself, at least to your lovely sister.—I see too plainly an application to study in her which your aunt complains of, and shall make it my endeavour to dissipate her attention a little, if possible. Would to heaven I dare flatter myself, that, in endeavouring to be of service to her, I might advance by imperceptible steps toward my own happiness!—As you desired me to express freely my sentiments of your sister, and her situation, I will mention to you what strikes me as an error in your aunt's kindness, and which has given me some uneasiness. Your aunt reads but little herself—but she leaves the world of books open to your sister. Her taste and native delicacy, it is true, will prevent her from perusing any work which strikes her as inconsistent with pure morality and virtue; yet I cannot but fear lest her lively imagination should mislead her; since whatever she peruses, she enters into with a warmth of disposition, which from the first I have observed in her. I am strengthened in this opinion by her being charmed with a production which has lately fallen into her hands, concerning the author of which there has been some uncertainty. He has been censured with severity by some, and your sister, who thinks this censure unjust, stands forth as a champion in his cause; entering with such earnestness into the idea of his being injured, that, within these few days, she has expressed a desire of discovering and conversing with him, so earnestly indeed, that I feared lest it should amount to a resolution, and almost offended her by treating the execution of it as a jest. If she should persist, permit me, dear Morven, to supply your presence to her; suffer me to attend and protect this intelligent pupil of fancy, in whose conduct I find myself interested more than equally with yourself. I know your friendship for me will make you excuse the freedom of this confession, and I only offer mine for you, as an apology for it. I intreat you to believe that I remain, more firmly than ever,

Yours sincerely,
FREDERICK BURELL.

LETTER II.

Miss MORVEN to Colonel MORVEN.

YOU accuse me of enthusiasm!—you my brother who yet wander with the ardor of a soldier on the rock of Gibraltar, and have dedicated your life to the hero who defended it—you, in short, who have delivered from the devouring gulph of superstition a sister, whom the voice of interest would have sacrificed!—Be the period of that enthusiasm and of my existence but one, and I will never complain.—For twenty years immured from all that the heart pants after, from knowledge and even from nature; like a bird from its prison my soul bursts from confinement: awakened from the darkness of ignorance, I behold the face of creation: I hear the voice of genius, my heart vibrates to its sound: I now first feel that I exist; in the rapture, yet new to my heart, I spring forward; I rejoice in this my happier birth-day, I look on the first moment of being as infinitely less dear: my mind is no longer benighted; all the rays of intelligence pour in at once upon my soul, and I am happy.

My dear brother, independent of the world as you have made me, why should I blush to avow to that world my passionate admiration of the sublime effusions of science or sensibility?—From that admiration it arises that I have formed a wish which my aunt and your friend Burell combat in vain—I have read and admired Werter, and I would be ascertained of its author and his principles. I don't know how it is, but my heart answers not to the name of this Dr. Goethé; no, it eagerly looks to some child of liberty, to some son of Britain, for the author of that animated expression, that overwhelming tenderness, that frenzy of sensibility which those interesting pages display: and whoever this author is, he has been misunderstood and abused; he has held out a moral to mankind, and they turn their eyes away, and behold it not.—What would I give to remove the veil that obscures it, to stop the malignancy of that blast which may tarnish even the laurels of the writer of Werter!—The fire of genius, the charms of nature, painted as they are by his hand, even they, had he forgotten the ties of religion and the duties of society, would merit nothing but oblivion. My aunt blames this work which has enchanted me, she blames me also for defending it, and I have, for once, the happiness of being named with its author. Burell has just now left me; we talked of Werter; unfortunately he has strengthened my aunt's unfavourable opinion of it. Should the day ever come when I can confute them from the mouth of its author, I will not promise to use my triumph with moderation.

LETTER III.

FOR fifteen days have I watched incessantly over my dear aunt, she was suddenly seized with a fever, and her recovery was doubted. In the moments when reason ceased to enlighten her mind, in the wildness of that affection, which still throbbed at her heart, the name of your sister hung on her lips: what did I not before owe to her tenderness? Through her means was it known that I was not the idiot I had been represented. Through her was I brought to the arms of that brother to whom I owe more than existence. Our

hearts warm'd with similar affections, our minds glowing with all the ardor of youth, to know and to love each other was the same. Perhaps I ought not to say there is no love which can equal, but can I allow that any can surpass that of a sister?—I knelt by her on the couch of sickness, I poured forth my soul to the Author of Mercies; in him have I trusted, and she is restored to me.

Her fever was contagious; but be not alarmed; I am recovered. The bloom which you flattered is faded, but my heart is unalterable; it still beats for you; it is still open to the impressions of genius and sensibility.

LETTER IV.

MY aunt's recovery, thank heaven, is almost perfected: my own is less rapid in its progress, and I am yet debarred that application which has enabled me, in a time comparatively short to the period of education, to store my mind with the seeds of science, and ennoble my heart by the study of virtue. I feel myself much obliged by the interest which Burell has taken in my aunt's indisposition, and my own. His solicitude for those allied to you, has convinced me of that friendship which he has ever professed to bear you, and which he undoubtedly merits should be returned, in the manner of which you are so capable. He has been here, or rather he is never away. I repeated to him the wish that, before this illness attacked me, had arisen in my mind, and which has not yet subsided there; he again rallied me on it. I believe he pities, he talks of admiring me, but there is something about this fantastical brain of mine, which was never dreamt of in his philosophy. He found me alone, and I could not conceal from him the cause of those tears which then wetted my cheek. You will forgive me when I own they fell with impatience. Alas! it will yet be long, my dear brother, before I can read Homer in the original. And is the warmth of that heart, said Burell, to be wholly expended on works, though noble, inanimate? And those eyes, expressive of tenderness, shall their rays be directed in search of a being veiled in doubt and obscurity—a being who is perhaps at this minute insensible, while I—he looked in my face.

I knew that he alluded to my wish of discovering the author of a work which has enchanted me, and I interrupted him with that warmth of disposition which I have not yet learnt to subdue. I understand you, said I, whilst you can see the passion which hurries me away, and see it in that ridiculous light, which so many will be happy to place it in. It is possible then, exclaimed he, with a surprize which I can only account for from the difference of our sensations—it is then possible that this one idea so wholly possesses that intelligent mind, that no other can find entrance in it. I again broke in upon him. You mistake me, Burell, said I; one idea does not yet possess me wholly, to the exclusion of all others. You mistake me, I am not yet absolutely mad. He would have denied the inference, and seemed at a loss for words; but some of those visitors coming in whom nature seems to have thrown into the world just to fill up its vacuum, the conversation ended. I fell in, however, with them upon the reigning fashions—I admired their crapes and their blonds, and before they quitted us, they were all of opinion my judgment in those important affairs, might in time be expected to equal their own.

My aunt, who has just left me, came in while I was writing, and glancing her eye over this letter, Alas! my dear child, said she, keep secret this ardent desire of knowledge which possesses you so much, or perhaps even this brother will not love you the more for it. And would you infer, Madam, said I with emotion, that he could love me the less?

With what a sentence did she interrupt me! Were I capable of believing it, I would not transmit it to you: but the heart formed by nature not ungenerous, remains long shut to those severe dictates which age so often dignifies with the name of prudence.

Theresa, says my aunt, when women talk of their love of learning, half of the men charge it to affectation only; and, what is worse, when they believe it real, by a paradox I cannot solve, they at once envy and despise us for it. To own the truth, learning is a qualification seldom necessary in our sex; and, without extraordinary humility in its possessor, only disgusting—besides that there are a thousand others more conducive to happiness.—This turn of reasoning is not very consonant with my ideas; but it hurts me the less, as my aunt's frequent complaints of the diligence I am as incapable of abating as she perhaps of approving, points out to me a motive to which to attribute the severity of her reflections.

LETTER V.

I HAVE mentioned to you how much we were indebted to the attention of Burell. Mad as he thinks me, he seems desirous of obliging me, and has shewn it in an instance of which a common mind had been incapable—he has led me to the small grey stone which really covers the ashes of the divine *Milton*, and I have wept over it.

How many are there, my brother, who complain that they are confined to one spot of this earth, and that to few it is given to wander over the surface even of this atom, and to pay their devotions at the tombs of those whose names at the distance of ages are repeated with ardor, and whose works are preserved as immortal! yet how many are there who sigh to visit the grottos of Tivoli, who have yet forgotten to pay that tribute to the more noble manes of our sublime bard! I have kissed the neglected receptacle of the bones of Milton; I have wetted his grave with the enthusiastic tears of admiration. I have before beheld his bust with pleasure, even where so many imaginary heroes and poets have found place; but the spot which really conceals his last venerable remains, seemed for a moment to infuse his spirit into my breast: I felt superior to the beings which surrounded me, and could almost have fancied that I heard those harps for ever strung, with which he has represented the angels of heaven. I looked on the stone, and my heart felt emotions which I am not able to describe. How often have I lamented, how often hereafter shall I lament, the impossibility of adequately explaining the sensations which arise in my soul! I take the pen in hand; I put my thoughts on paper, and they are nothing. That one idea in Werter, has won me over to admire him, and never may I be an apostate!—So much fire and ease as there is in every line of that work!—Surely we peruse it in its original language, or, like the songs of Ossian, the genius of its first author has inspired the nameless translator. How is it that real merit thus shuns the praise which it excites, and, sublimely conscious of its own superiority, hides from the world those brows for which fame prepares a wreath equally honourable and unfading? I yet flatter

myself I shall persuade my aunt to suffer me to seek out this doubtful author. If ever, like the generous painter, I shall be so happy as to exclaim, "I have found him!" how dear will be the spot to my eyes—how sacred the remembrance to my heart!

LETTER VI.

BURELL knows my admiration of painting, that more than speaking sister of poetry; and has promised to introduce me to the galleries of those masters whose names are the glory of our kingdom, of Europe, of the world I will say.—Burell, who I believe loves the arts, knows many of the professors; I shall therefore see their private collections. I have said that I think he pities me—it is a pity, believe me, without contempt—a pity worthy of a good heart, which is only mistaken in its object. I told my aunt so this morning; she answered me only by asking why then I had no pity for him?—I! said I; I pity no one for a difference of sentiments; for I am well convinced, that the disposer of hearts has so ordered it, that each rests satisfied with his own, and beholds those of another as a delusion: but it is a pleasing one; and the man who plods over his grounds without one idea but of their fertility, is as jealous of his opinions, and perhaps better contented with them, than the first genius of the universe. Why, my dear girl, said my aunt, you would not have it supposed you neither understand me nor Burell. I am not so easily deceived; I know how penetrating are the eyes of a young woman in such cases. I did not understand her meaning; but she only laughed at my saying so. We were interrupted, and what she then said, remains as much a riddle to me as ever.

I have been with her to see some of those relations who so obligingly wished to immure me for life. As I quitted them, I pointed them out to my aunt, as a testimony of what I had before advanced. I regard them as objects of pity, while they look on me as no less so. Whispered sentences, tokens of wonder, the epithet fantastical, and others as harsh, frequently escaped them. My aunt would not allow the cases to be similar, and I gained no argument from her but a smile of good-humour, and a half-pronounced something of blindness.

LETTER VII.

WHEN I take up my pen to pour out to you the effusions of my heart, I am most happy; for you, my dear brother, can answer my feelings with that warmth which first enchanted me, and allow for the raptures of a mind new to the pleasures it was formed to taste. The tears, which in these moments wet my paper, will not render me less dear to you: our errors, if they are such, are similar; and those virtues, for which I love you, are reflected, if it be but faintly, in the bosom of your sister.

I have been with Burrell, and seen that noble freedom of pencil which marks the works of the British Raphael—the robe flowing to the wind, the animated countenance, the ease, the elegance, the fire, which from the master's hand pervade the warrior panting for battle, or the soft charms of feminine beauty. You, who have delighted to contemplate those enchanting works, and have studied them with an enthusiasm perhaps almost equal to that with which they were at first conceived, will know how to apply my descriptions.

I have seen also, from another pencil—a pencil which speaks to every feeling of the heart—the pale face of the warrior who dies in the arms of his brother heroes. It is imprinted on my memory with a force which no years can efface, and I yet seem to behold the faithful attendant who revenged him. An hour did I contemplate that interesting picture. A lady, who stood near me, kindly directed my attention to the frame, which she assured me cost 150 guineas—the frame, my dear brother, of a picture, and such a picture!—For my part, I had not even seen that it had one.

Do you remember, but I am convinced you do, the works of another son of science sacred to religion and truth. Those faces which ought to be, which, from the hands of the master who undertakes them, are represented as divine. The heart which conceived them, surely, must be filled with ideas of benevolence, of piety, of dignity, and, may I say, of divinity? With what pleasure did my eyes dwell on them! But there is one picture I found in my way which moved and transported me: as I beheld it, my heart melted within me; it addressed itself, it fell prostrate before the Eternal; and my spirit, like that of the smiling infant represented there, seemed transporting to the kingdom of God.

Within a few days I have wept on the tomb of Milton; I have since pressed his faithful resemblance to my heart—What would I give, might I but wear it there for ever! “Severe in youthful beauty,” I have seen him, and a century has rolled in vain to prevent me from contemplating his countenance. How frequently do I bow down in thankfulness for my destiny! Had I been used from my infancy to all the treasures of knowledge and all the charms of poetry, I had not known the satisfaction which I now feel. The man who uninterruptedly enjoys the blessings of liberty and peace, feels not that conscious satisfaction which inspires the breast of him who escapes from a dungeon after years of confinement and despair; and what dungeon is there so dark as that of ignorance?—what confinement so drear as that of the mind!

LETTER VIII.

AFTER much entreaty, I have at length prevailed with my aunt, and to-morrow we have resolved to begin a journey which may never have a period; to-morrow I may, perhaps, be some steps nearer to the author of *Werter*. At length this research, which I have so earnestly desired to make, will begin. My aunt will not wholly explain herself, but talks of some hints which she has received, and our first search after him is to be at Bath. With what ardor does my mind spring forward to that invisible goal towards which it so impetuously tends! My heart beats high with a thousand inexplicable expectations, and I vainly endeavour to restrain their impetuosity, by reflecting that they may never be fulfilled.

LETTER IX.

WE have set out and performed our first stage. My aunt is not yet able to travel far at a time, and would persuade me that I am not.

Ought I to inform you that your friend Burell is not well? He has an air of dejection, a look of wearing sorrow that affects me. Ah! my brother, he is your correspondent—How my heart beat, how was every nerve agitated, when I first observed this alteration in his countenance! I looked at him, I would have enquired after you, but the sound died on my lips. He at length understood me; you are well, and I am happy.

Burell has just quitted us, having thought fit to ask my leave to accompany us thus far, and our chaise is now getting ready to proceed. I will own this slow progress agrees not at all with the ardor of my spirit. I feel myself as a painter, who still burns with impatience for the last stroke which shall finish some favourite picture—he sees it grow under his eye, but he fears lest, in the course of the work, some idea should be forgotten. It is with equal warmth that I wish for the moment when my plan shall be completed, and I shall be satisfied. We have some books with us, but even they will not shorten the way to me. My aunt recommends history to me. I have read history, and what, my dear brother, is it? A picture of the crimes of mankind from generation to generation—too often a false mirror of persons, such as they never existed; while those characters alone worthy of imitation, are frequently lost in the multitude, without even a memorial of their virtues remaining.

LETTER X.

OUR progress is again stopped; yet, would you believe it? I am willing it should be so, and am happy to give up a few days to the knowing of those hearts I have fallen in with.

At this minute we are sheltered in a neat house, where nothing is wanting to convenience, though not much is given to elegance. At the side of my bed, (for I am confined to it,) a little cherub, the picture of health, mirth, and innocence, stands at the knees of her mother, a lovely woman of five-and-twenty, who looks like the mild picture of love and contemplation. I have the happiness to be obliged to this charming woman—But I forget you are ignorant whom I am talking of, and how I became acquainted with them. It was thus:

A few days since, when our chaise was ready, we set out and travelled ten delightful miles. My heart joined in the orisons of the feathered millions that surrounded us; the mild serenity of the morning, the delightful sensation I felt in following the most enthusiastic of my wishes, every thing conspired to render our journey enchanting. For my own part, I could have travelled thus for ever, but my aunt complained of being weary. We stopped at the little village I am yet so near; and whilst she lay down to repose herself, I straggled round it to look for an acquaintance among its inhabitants. At a small distance from the village, and opposite to the low wooden paling of the very house I now write from, I stopped to converse with an old man, who, after spending eighty years of life in labour and penury, is now tottering on its verge. The feebleness of his walk, the few grey locks that covered his sun-burnt temples, attracted my attention and my

reverence. Poverty and grief are seldom hard of access. Before he moved his hat I had resolved to speak to him. He has spent his life, as I said, in penury and labour; he complains of injustice and misfortune; he lamented he was no longer able to pursue the track of his youth, and yet he has still hopes of getting better, and is still desirous of living: at eighty years of age he flatters himself with future health, and hopes for that happiness and prosperity which the days of his youth never afforded him. I have observed this, but never before did it strike me so strongly.

I stood contemplating this strange desire of present existence in silence. I had gathered as I stood, without thinking, a wild rose, which hung near me—its leaves fell—the wind carried them away, and not a trace of it remained. I continued to contemplate it as the emblem no less of life than of beauty. The old man seemed to think I was unwilling to listen to him, and had walked away; but I slipped a trifle into his hand, and quitted him, buried in thought. I crossed over and rested on the paling I before mentioned; but on casting up my eyes to the window of the house whose little garden it enclosed, my whole attention was engaged—I beheld a handsome young man, resting his arms on a table which stood near it—I could perceive the animation and tenderness of his countenance earnestly stretched forward—his eyes directed mine to the object on which his attention was fixed. Though half shaded from observation by the window curtain, I saw that lovely woman, whom I have mentioned to you already, the fair mother of the infant now near me: she stood timid, blushing, as if attempting to retire. In the window sat her little girl, busied, with the earnestness of her age, in forming a nosegay of some flowers which lay scattered in her lap. You will think how my attention was engaged. I looked on all three—I wished to be acquainted with them, and in that wish forgot the impropriety I was guilty of in thus stopping to observe them. I do not know when I should have recollected myself, if the little creature, having finished her bouquet, had not hastily risen, and, scattering the remaining flowers on the floor, presented it with the winning grace of innocence to the young gentleman. He took her in his arms, and, what I myself longed to do, almost smothered her with kisses. But her mother approached to take her from him, and then first lifted up her eyes, and beheld me. The blushes on her countenance soon covered me with equal confusion, and I hurried away from the interesting scene. I cast my eyes back a thousand times, in hopes she might have the curiosity to look after me; but I was disappointed, and returned again to the inn at which we had put up, where I found my aunt and dinner waiting for me. I longed, and yet dared not explain myself to her: she would have supposed the whole scene the effects of my wild imagination, as she delights to call it.

How is it, my brother, that there are people, and worthy people too, to whom the book of nature seems opened in vain—that book, every page of which is so sacred to me?

In my last I lamented the slowness of our progress, yet I now myself wished to delay it: but I saw no method of accomplishing it; my aunt for once seemed in haste, and I had no resource left. I found a moment, however, to describe the house to the postillion, and desired him to drive near it. My aunt will attempt no more than twenty miles a day; I knew therefore he would move slowly.

We sat off, and as we passed the little habitation, I saw the child running on the grass-plot at the door, and strained my eyes, but in vain, in search of some other of the inhabitants. I had even lost sight of her, when I found the chaise overturning. I stretched out my arm over the window, to protect my aunt, and in a minute we were laid in the

dust. My injunctions had, I imagine, awakened the postillion's curiosity, and, whilst looking behind him, he drove the chaise wheel on the stump of a tree which stood near the road side, and was not sensible of the mischief time enough to recover himself. The accident was soon perceived: every one near ran to our assistance, and among the rest I beheld the young man who had first attracted my attention. My aunt was unhurt; I had not thought myself much frightened, yet a sickness, unaccountable to me, came over me. With some difficulty I was lifted out of the carriage, and brought into this house; the mistress of which flew to my assistance, but, instead of reviving, I grew yet fainter, and in short, my dear brother, soon discovered my left arm had been broken. A surgeon was sent for, and all is now well: he insists on confining me some days longer; but writing I will not be denied. I have a thousand things more to add; but my aunt, dear woman! too watchful over me, insists on my deferring them for the present. I want to give you a description of my companion, of her little pratler, and of her Frank—I have already learnt his name. My heart labours with a thousand emotions, and I am forbidden to express them.

LETTER XI.

I REPEAT, with pleasure, that I have the happiness to be indebted to the attention of this charming woman.—Peace to those narrow souls who wish never to be obliged!—For my own part, it is my boast that I receive a favour from a noble mind, with a satisfaction even greater than that which I know in conferring one; yet I have felt my heart glow when I have bestowed—it has swelled with sensations on that account which the world should not bribe me to relinquish.

How often do I thank heaven for the exquisite happiness I find myself possessed of, in opening myself to a heart, every pulse of which vibrates to the feelings of my own! That first, that dearest treasure of my life, shall I ever be required to relinquish it? No, my dear brother; the web of my being is more feeble in its texture than yours, and I exist but in the hope of its shorter duration.

This lovely Ruth, the mistress of the little habitation that now contains me, whom, at the moment when I despaired of knowing her, chance has so happily brought in my way, is all that her fine eyes express her to be—open, generous, sensible, and refined—uncultivated by art; but what has not nature bestowed upon her? Though my aunt has more than once chid me for the expression, I will yet call that chance happy, which put me in a situation to contemplate the ingenuousness and sensibility I was born to admire. Are the pains of the body to be regarded when so greatly overbalanced by the pleasures of the mind? I would describe her person to you, since her soul speaks through it, but that I fear even you may think it is rather the painting of fancy than truth; for though I will own I have seen a thousand faces which have excelled hers in every thing but expression, yet her eyes I never saw equalled—they are mild, blue, and intelligent; and when she raises them from some object beneath to look at your face, there is a winning softness in them that passes description. Surely to behold them without forming an exalted opinion of her soul, is impossible. I have read, or rather I have repeated Werter to her: I knew she

would admire it. I shall soon quit my chamber, when I am to be introduced to her Frank; and will now relate to you the little history Mrs. Aylesby has given me of herself.—

Such as you this day see me, said she, whilst a blush crimsoned her cheeks, I am the daughter of a clergyman, and, I will not attempt to conceal it from you, a man not more worthy than he was necessitous. When I was but eleven years old, I lost that tender father, whom I yet remember with a soft regret which I am persuaded you can conceive, and which still continues to endear him to me. When I saw the grave which received those dear remains, and beheld it cover him for ever, child as I was, I believed myself incapable of surviving; but I have lived to lose the mother, by whose side I then wept, so equally tender and so equally beloved—I saw her ashes mingled with those of a husband but too dear. The cold sod which concealed them from my eyes, congealed for ever those channels through which the soft consciousness of filial affection had been so long accustomed to flow—they were closed never more to be opened.

Ruth stopped to weep at the remembrance; and you, my brother, who know the tears which I have shed for that dear and amiable woman, who, in the being she gave to me, resigned her own into the hands of her Creator, will conceive how much I was affected. My heart, which has so often and so eagerly panted to pour itself out at the feet of that other dear, though deluded parent, how was it oppressed! But I will not remove the veil you have so tenderly endeavoured to throw over his foibles. Surely she, whom my father once made his wife, injured as I was by her artifice, must be secure: her name shall not be mentioned by me with detestation.—Alas! who can be proof against the deceptions of those they love?

Involuntarily I joined my tears with those of Ruth, and mourned with her over a path of happiness which had never been opened to me, and recalled those ideas which from infancy had been used to agitate me. She saw my emotion, stopped and hesitated. I entreated her to proceed. She stifled her sighs—she dispersed the tears from her own eyes, fearful of wounding me. I saw her attention, and it was not for me to be insensible to it. From that moment my soul flew out to meet, it seemed capable of mingling with hers. —Mrs. Aylesby continued her narration.

A few months before my losing that dear mother, she had bestowed me on a worthy man. Perhaps, had I chosen for myself—

Ruth blushed, and again hesitated; but I looked down, and she continued—

The importunities of such a mother, it had been ingratitude and impiety to refuse. Mr. Aylesby loved me; he had an excellent heart, and was possessed of a decent competency. I ought to have been happy—and I was happy with him; for I was convinced the last moments of that dear woman were rendered more easy by the protection she had procured for her daughter. It was the soft sigh of placid resignation that she breathed in my bosom—that last, that lamented one, in which her unpolled soul escaped from mortality. I have sat on her grave at the grey twilight of evening — I have visited it with the first beams of the morning; and on the turf which concealed her, all the flowers of the spring have been taught to blossom. Shall I confess my weakness to you, Miss Morven? It was a blow I had not prepared myself for—I was married, yet she it was who was most dear to me, and for a short time my reason, too feeble to suppress, became a martyr to my feelings. It was to the care and tenderness of the worthy man whom she had confided me to, that I owe perhaps its restoration. After that period, a few months only had passed in which I had been able to testify my gratitude to him, before he was himself seized with a

fever, which on the ninth day robbed me of the greatest support I had experienced. My little Sophy, whom I baptised after her grandmother, was then an infant. His small estate died with him, (being settled on his nephew,) and the pittance which the law then afforded me, with some little works of my own, have since supported myself and the dear little one in the manner which you now see.

She stopped, and I thanked her a thousand times for her condescension; but I will own to you I was not contented. Who was this Frank whom I had first seen? Frank I had heard her call him. I asked her with some hesitation, she answered with greater, but at last, with that sweet ingenuousness of manner which had won me to her, I will own, said she, before I was ever engaged to Mr. Aylesby, I had seen another—this Frank—he is a distant relation—in short, might I have chosen for myself, it had been him: but he had quitted the village where I then resided, and I could not dream that he had thought of me. My dear mother believed Mr. Aylesby could make me happy. I was united to him, and never during his life did I see this young man; and for three years which I have passed in widowhood, he has been on a voyage to China. I had almost forgotten that he existed; at least I flattered myself I had: but a few days ago I was surprised with the sight of him, and fainted before he could speak; and that day, Miss Morven, on which I first saw you,—how doubly dear will it ever be to my heart!—was that on which my Frank first made an avowal of affection to me—Could I do otherwise than believe him?—

She concluded, vainly endeavouring to hide her blushes. I wanted words to express how much she had obliged me; but her eyes could understand me without; they expressed to her how much her charming candour and tenderness have enchanted me.—I shall soon be introduced to this Frank, whom it is easy to see she loves; and I, my dear brother, was born, I believe, to love nothing equal to you.

LETTER XII.

I HAVE seen and conversed with Frank, but know not how it is, I am not yet of intelligence with him—I do not, in fact, find him all that I expected. His eyes dark, bright, and penetrating, there is soul in them; but are they those of a lover? Do they follow incessantly the mild expression of my Ruth's, of his Ruth's? Does he not rather receive than return the affection which glows on her cheek, and the tenderness that trembles on her lip? He is capable of talking to a stranger of graces, of other graces than those of his lovely widow.—I already dislike him; for he seems unworthy of the affection she bears him, and I could almost think insensible to it. He can fix his looks on another, and even distresses me with his attention. How shall I despise this Frank, whom I expected to admire, if he is capable of playing with her tenderness!

I am new to the world, yet already, my brother, have I observed that cruel serenity with which your sex can behold the embarrassment of ours. Boldly they fix their eyes on us—we are covered with confusion, and wish to shrink into ourselves; but that gaze, so distressing, pursues us, and the language of our blushes is not understood. You accuse us of vanity, and peruse us with a scrutinizing eye, as if willing to mortify us. It is not beauty alone which attracts those looks so perplexing: there is no face but has been sometimes so perused, and for what, but to add to the too visible uneasiness already

glowing there? My imagination is raised by this conduct. Once, I remember, it conquered me. In a room full of company, at Lady Carlton's, a young man, for near an hour, had fixed his eyes on me; at last he came behind, and, resting on my chair, seemed as if willing to penetrate my heart through the light covering that concealed it. I could almost have wished that the glance which I gave him as I quitted the room with precipitation had been mortal. When I met him once afterwards, he offered an apology, and was more disgusting to me than ever.—But to my present situation.

I have made up a little library here, in a closet which joins to the room I am now in, and when I go I shall even leave my Werter with this Ruth, who has already attached me: and to the dear girl, whom she has taught already to read, I have given the works of the charming Countess of Genlis, those works so formed to open the heart, and awaken it to all the finer sensations. You will scarce believe how much I envy to France the birth of that benevolent writer. I find with pleasure Sophy already comprehend something of her story of Pamela. Those pleasing and animating pictures of the infant heart, when shall I say to myself I have sufficiently perused them?

With what pleasure do I place the flowers which Sophy gathers from the fields for me next my heart?—I have walked out to the village more than once, and find that my aunt and I are much talked of there, a whisper being circulated that we are certainly somebody. A lover would surely take that opportunity of staying with his mistress; but, on the contrary, Frank accompanies, and is attentive to us, and I like him less than ever.

LETTER XIII.

IT is Sunday, and I went this morning to church. How shall I express to you the surprize or the rapture I there experienced! You should imagine a man, who has been blind from his birth, in one moment blest with universal vision and unbounded intelligence — you should think in what sounds he would express himself, with all the mercies of heaven, all the beauties of nature, pouring in upon him at once; and perhaps, my brother, you might then form some idea of the manner in which I have this day heard the Benedicite read. Surprized, I fixed my eyes on the reverend deliverer. The curate of a neglected country village fulfilled to my soul all that it ever imagined of energy, propriety, sublimity, and feeling. The notes from an organ, full, clear, melodious, modulated, are nothing to his voice; since the animated expression—that expression, the offspring only of the human heart—informs every inflection of it, and every sound seems only to pass through his lips but to owe its origin to the soul.—

I was greatly flattered by his finding something in me worthy of his attention. I thought I more than once caught his eye, and, when the service was ended, was honoured by his requesting me to sit this afternoon in his pew; and at the same time, with an air of kind prepossession, he invited me to drink tea with his wife. I own I long to enter into a conversation with him, of which I almost feel myself unworthy. You will believe that the man who thus read the Benedicite, performed all other parts of the service equally devoutly, equally wonderfully. Ruth will not accompany me; and when I told her the pleasure which I promised myself, she smiled. Could I believe it possible for her to smile

satirically, I should have been alarmed for this new favourite—but no, I will rather believe it to be at that warmth with which I already interest myself concerning him.

I have since walked out with Sophy: to hear the prattle of the innocent, to gather the sentiments of their hearts, to see the little eyes glisten when you talk of the necessity of leaving them, and to listen to those enchanting expressions of affection which we know to be sincere; is there a pleasure on earth to compare with it?

I like Mrs. Aylesby's lover better than I did: he did not this morning offer to accompany me. When I came home, I found him sitting beside Ruth; her hand was in his, and his eyes seemed overflowing with tenderness. His soul may be more capacious than I have yet been able to conceive; he may be capable of loving with all the ardor this sweet woman deserves; and he may yet be capable of paying me those attentions he may fancy I expect. He does not yet know me; if he did, he would be assured, that when his eyes assiduously follow her, when he forgets to give me the tea which she has just put in his hand, I think better of him than if he spent an hour in encomiums on myself.

LETTER XIV.

AH! my dear brother, the dews of the morning are not more rapidly dispelled by the beams of the summer sun, than the opinions I had formed have disappeared before conviction. The enthusiasm I boast of deceives me. The deception is removed, but the discovery that it was such has left a wound, and that the deepest, behind. The torrent of eloquence and energy which I had heard, flung a mist before my eyes: he who had enchanted me with it, seemed struck with the sensibility I could not repress, and I was blinded completely.

I have been again to church; I have passed two hours in the company of this wonderful reader, this enchanting preacher, and I have not another favourable epithet to add.—But I should tell you what has disgusted me: read on, and you will own I have reason to be so.

I accepted the curate's invitation, and accompanied him home. Ever desirous of expressing myself rather with energy than volubility, I was now more than usually silent. He gave me the characters of several of his parishioners as they passed, and I was sorry to find them, by his description, so little worthy of their pastor. I observed the poignancy of his wit; I could not avoid also observing the severity of his satire. When arrived at his house, I was received there by his wife; the ease of whose manners would grace a duchess, and the motherly affection with which she seemed to view me, won her my whole heart.

This couple have one son, the object in which their mutual affections seem to centre. He is the last of many children. My heart bled when I beheld this dear and only hope oppressed with sickness, and only kept by continual attention, as Ruth had before informed me, from the grave. I witnessed with sympathising pity the apprehensive tenderness which breathed through every accent of the trembling parents. I was really struck with them, they seemed no less so with me; and I will own that the compliments I received from both, though too pointed wholly to agree with my ideas of delicacy, were yet very grateful to me—to my vanity perhaps I should say. A thousand enquiries—how shall I say it?—a thousand impertinent enquiries succeeded—my income, my family, where I was going, on what account—in short, all that the most insatiable curiosity could suggest, or all that a mind the most unfeeling and unpolished could demand. Embarrassed and confused at the gross improprieties I found this person, who had so charmed me, to be capable of, I wished only to escape. I staid, however, long enough to see him guilty of worse than flagrant unpoliteness and mean curiosity.

A young man rode up to the gate on horseback—You shall hear the character the curate gave him, and I will, if possible, have patience to tell you what passed afterwards. That, said he, is the son of a neighbouring gentleman: you see in him, my dear child, one of the most profligate and despicable young fellows breathing. He on whom this character was bestowed, alighted, however, and when he entered, believe me, I do not exaggerate, the same look of cordiality and appearance of pleasure I had been flattered by, were resumed. Mr. Manvill the curate, even expressed a regard for the young man, whom a minute before he had represented as despicable and profligate, pressed him to stay with all the apparent earnestness of friendship, and engaged him for some weeks next shooting season.

I was totally confounded. Grieved and indignant, I did not even trust my eyes. Mr. Manvill introduced me to this stranger. You will not wonder that I have not terms to express my detestation, when I tell you, that this reverend monitor was capable of raising a blush on the cheek of modesty: in short, he forgot he was a gentleman, and took pleasure in the bold laugh which he gave rise to in the young man, and the confusion with which he covered me.—Think what I felt in discovering that indelicacy is a term of praise to what he deserves.—I quitted him with precipitation, and the hand which I had before given him as a father, almost as a saint, shrunk from his. Cold and disgusted as I was, his penetrating eye and smiling countenance perused mine. If unconquerable and undisguised contempt was written there, can I help it? I am not formed to dissemble.

On my return, I wept in the bosom of the gentle Ruth—she knew him. Alas! his life is marked with duplicity;—yet she knows him capable of benevolent actions. My aunt chid me. It is this, said she, I blame in you:—a man has talents; he has some of the virtues, and you expect him to be possessed of all. You dream, my child; awaken yourself, or the shocks you must yet have to suffer, will overcome you. A little less ardor and more moderation in your expectations had secured you from this. I can detest his faults, and may be perhaps even surprised at, but I am not overcome by them.—My aunt may be right; I will believe she is; but, ah! my dear brother, she verges on fifty, and I, as to the world, am but an infant.

On Tuesday I quit this dear asylum and its benevolent mistress. She sighs at the approaching separation; but when I am gone, her Frank will be every thing to her.

To-morrow is the first day of May, and I have prepared some rustic decorations. Perhaps I may tell you of them.

My aunt has been more impatient than myself at this delay—she rallies me on the regard I feel for Ruth, and is surprized, she tells me, that I, who behold talents and genius with such admiration, and with all the envy which a heart not ignoble can entertain, should be attached to this soft and amiable being.—Ah! my brother, what has genius, what have talents to do with the affections? We may admire the understanding, but it is the heart only we love. In Ruth I find all the simple and unaffected graces of nature. Perhaps I would travel miles to behold a Gibbon or a Hayley, to view the features of a Reynolds or a Copley; and I should feel that gratification in seeing them, which the presence of a superior being might be supposed to produce; but for the soft intercourse of mutual friendship, we do not require to be dazzled only; it is sufficient that our hearts are moved, and we find ourselves pleased.

LETTER XV.

I FEEL my mind at this minute in a state of perplexity; for suspicions have arisen in it, which, if just, may be dangerous to the peace of my friend, to the quiet of my own heart—which, if unjust, I ought bitterly to reproach myself with.—You will smile perhaps when I tell you the trifle which has given rise to them.

Ruth and I this morning rose early, and strolled out to enjoy the fragrance which breathes from every shrub and flower, which the hand of nature scatters with wild and beautiful profusion on the earth. We had not proceeded far before Frank followed and

overtook us. My eyes fixed in admiring the beauties which surrounded me, my heart in silently adoring their Almighty Creator, I did not at first perceive the cold and formal silence which he kept. I walked slowly forward, and, leaning on the first stile that presented itself, looked toward heaven, and lost all ideas but those of devotion:—but the approach of some labourers soon roused me, when removing a few steps to give way to them, I was surprized to see Frank looking in my face with an attention that confused me, whilst Ruth leaned on his arm, and was perusing his with no less. As I turned, Frank started, and held out his hand to offer me assistance I was not in need of, and then pressing his hat lower on his forehead, hemmed two or three times as if willing to speak, whilst the deepest crimson covered his whole countenance. Both Ruth and myself caught the glow which we could not help observing, and we all fixed our eyes on the ground, and proceeded for some minutes without uttering a syllable.

Perhaps I had not so much remarked this little occurrence, but for some words which yesterday struck me as they escaped Frank. He was with Ruth and myself, who were talking of Werter. He had sate silent for more than half an hour, till on Ruth's saying there could certainly be no misery equal to that of injuring the peace of those we love—not even that of loving ourselves without hope,—he started up, and catching Ruth's hand, who sate next him, said, with emotion—True, my dear Ruth, and when both those evils fall on one man, surely they should produce distraction.—The sudden and earnest address startled her—He saw it, and seemed to endeavour at an air of tranquillity.—I had myself observed the vehemence with which he had expressed himself, and was happy that the entrance of my aunt gave a new turn to the conversation.—Frank, I know not why, was never a favourite of hers, and I could almost fancy he has seen it, and assiduously avoids intruding on her.—He soon after quitted the room, and the impression which the whole circumstance then made on my mind had worn off, but for that of this morning, which, trifling as it was, recalled and strengthened some fears which my own observation and some hints of my aunt had given rise to.

Our departure from hence is fixed for to-morrow, and perhaps I ought rather to rejoice at, than regret it.

* * *

Since I quitted my pen I have been much surprized. I will tell you things as they happened.

I had had a may-pole raised—At noon all the children of the village assembled round it, their mothers bringing baskets of flowers—six of the prettiest (Sophy was one), in light running dresses, drawn round the bosoms, and tied trowser-wise at the little ankles, with a girdle of ribbon round their waist, stood expecting the signal for the race which I had appointed. The swiftest was to be queen, and I had prepared a garland to crown her. I will own we thought our Sophy would win, and she was, as we expected, just at the pole, her little hands stretched forward to grasp it, when the child next to her fell down—she turned to assist her—another passed by, and claimed the prize—Poor Sophy burst into tears—I had been touched with the child's tenderness; for through that only she had forfeited the reward of victory. However, to be strictly impartial, I made another garland with some artificial flowers and pink ribbon, which happily her little rival preferred; and the wreath I had made for Sophy, of the only roses I had been able to

procure, a sprig of myrtle, and here and there a white narcissus, fastened behind with a sky-blue ribbon, admirably suiting her fair hair, was adjusted to her head; but on the rest looking a little jealous, Ruth and I seated ourselves on the grass in the midst of them, and with a few cowslips and violets set all to rights, and, after a distribution of cakes and sweetmeats, they ran to form a ring round the may-pole. — I had thought it ill fixed in the morning; the wind rose a little, and I saw it was near falling. I screamed to the children, and flew myself forwards to support it; but, before I could reach it, I found myself drawn back, and (judge my surprize) I saw Burell dart before me, and avert the danger. The inclosure we were in was behind the house, and whilst my aunt was seated at one of the back windows, Burell had arrived, and had scarce spent a minute in enquiry.

When he saw the situation I had put myself in—it was dangerous enough, considering my but ill-recovered arm—he feared for me, and the rest happened as I told you.

Unable to account for his interposition, Ruth looked at me, and my wonder almost equalled her own; but Burell leaving the pole to the care of the country-folks, I gave him my hand—he is your friend, he must be mine.—His eyes sparkled with pleasure. Good God! said he, trembling as he held it, what have I endured for these few days past! Is there a power on earth which can again oblige me to lose sight of you, even for a moment?

His energy, his eyes fixed on my face, disconcerted me; I saw again the look of dejection I have before mentioned to you: I half withdrew my hand. Charming woman! said he, as hesitating he detained it, what have I uttered? I had lost you—I am again at your side—can you expect me to be reasonable?

At this minute Frank approached from the house, as if intending to join us; but scarce stopping, made a slight inclination to Burell; and quickening his pace, he passed on, and I have not since seen him. Burell's eyes followed him with a kind of stern curiosity, and when he had lost sight of him, he for the first time addressed himself to Ruth with an enquiry after Frank—an incoherent one, and surely it was needless. Her blushes might have told him who he was, and what he was to her.

The arrival of the stranger had disconcerted the whole group of little ones; to relieve them therefore, and desirous of knowing what had brought Burell on so sudden a visit, I led the way in, but could scarcely persuade Ruth to join us—she for the first time talked of intruding. In short, Burell's behaviour, and her looks, more archly intelligent than I had before seen them, have opened my eyes—or am I again deceiving myself?

When we joined my aunt, Burell told me, that when he last quitted us, he proceeded to Bath.—I am mistaken, if by his saying it my aunt gained any information.—When he found we did not arrive there, and when at last returning by the rout he knew we should take, he could gain no intelligence of us, he was uneasy, to use his own words—he was frantic with apprehension. Night and day he travelled the road, till, after having discovered the stage we last quitted, and wandering near it yet in uncertainty, he met our servant in the village, who informed him of the place of our residence, and the accident which had detained us here.

This ardor, my dear brother, so like my own, and this attention to me, does it proceed from his friendship for you, and from the interest he takes in me as your sister only? I would willingly yet believe it possible from my own heart—I will believe it; for what is there, my brother, that, as your friend, I would not do for him?

The curate called in here this evening: he had heard of our intended departure, and could not, he said, deny himself the pleasure of spending half an hour in our company. The young man I mentioned before—you remember his opinion of him—was on his arm; could Mr. Manvill then think to gratify me by that flattering language, that look of affection with which he addressed me? Is it possible, that, possessed of such talents himself, he imagines the rest of the world can neither compare nor combine? That vanity must indeed be egregious, which could be deceived by so flimsy a covering. Can the man, who, conversing with you, treats indiscriminately with contempt and degradation all who are mentioned, be weak enough to suppose you can think yourself exempted from his satire any longer than whilst you are with him? And whilst he seemed even to wish that I should observe the ironical compliments he paid this young man, could he suppose I was not conscious his treatment of me might be the same? He has the secret of adapting the deception to the object, and his mean soul can triumph in it. He now triumphs in it; but will the moment never be at hand when he shall wish, but in vain, to be disguised to himself—when those words of praise to a virtue unknown to him, “Behold an Israelite in whom there is no guile!” like the voice of thunder, shall fall on his soul? Will the time never come, when, as a reproach he shall feel them, and shall envy the simplest son of nature to whom they can be applied?

LETTER XVI.

I HAVE quitted my amiable hostess. I do not know how it was, though I would have given the world to be without them, I felt a thousand forebodings—I strained her to my heart—it seemed ready to burst its prison—I looked at her sleeping Sophy, whom I had the courage not to awaken: one little hand was under her head, her fair locks curling round her delicate face: the flowers of yesterday were on her pillow. Lovely human blossom! and thou also must fade: said I to myself, as my tears fell on her forehead—She started and I hurried away. I asked for Frank; but late last night he took his horse, and left an apology with his Ruth—some sudden business he talked of—but when she told me of it, a sweet sadness sat on every feature.—My mind seemed strongly to forbode some misfortunes to one or both of them; but I would avoid these fancies, and I made Ruth promise to write to me.

When the chaise drove from her door, as she stooped over the little gate, when I saw the last waving of her handkerchief, my voice died on my lips. 'Tis true that when the fault was past repairing, I was angry with myself for the weakness I had shewn, and my aunt too seemed vexed. If your heart flies out thus to every stranger, said she, what, my dear niece, will your existence be? If you feel so much in leaving an acquaintance of a week or two, how do you think the great misfortunes of life are to be borne?

My aunt was perfectly right, and these were the very sentiments which had just passed in my own mind; yet I don't know how it was, her delivering them, and that with a little severity of tone too, recalled the very ideas she wished to destroy, and I was as weak again as ever. I attempted in vain to anticipate the pleasure I should experience in meeting with Ruth, and in seeing the improvement of her lovely infant. I know not why, but I felt my fears so much stronger than my hopes that I could scarce refrain from fresh tears: but I remembered my obligations to my aunt; her displeasure, I know, was mixed with uneasiness; they both arose only from her tenderness to me, and are equally calls on me to exert myself. I obeyed them; I appeared calm; and soon became more chearful.

LETTER XVII.

LIKE a stream stopped in its channel, this impetuous desire, which has lain awhile so still, returns with redoubled force. I read Werter again; I contemplate its beauties; I look forward to meeting with its author.

I scarce perceived till to-day that Burell again accompanies us. I am convinced, my dear brother, I think I may say convinced, that he loves me. I can say this to you without fearing that you should attribute it to vanity:—I have just found it out, and now wonder I have been so long blind. My aunt encourages his passion, which I own makes me uneasy. Perhaps he has told you of this unhappy partiality. I am sure I have not deserved it of him. I can respect him; I can wish him happy with another; but my heart, I am convinced, cannot answer to his. As to love, I can talk of it to you. If ever I shall feel that passion, it will like lightning penetrate my heart, and I fear it will in a moment be fixed there. I can see this is very unreasonable, but it is me.—Burell is a good creature; he can bear with, he can humour my foibles; but to be loved, he must sympathize with them: for that passion, so ardent, so unbounded, and when real so disinterested, I admire, but I acknowledge that I dread it—And you, my dear brother, have you no mistress but glory?

LETTER XVIII.

WE are now at Bath, where we arrived this evening. Burrell had ridden forward to see that no accommodations were wanting for us, and I took that opportunity of speaking to my aunt, and of telling her what my sentiments of him are, and what they ever must be. She seemed both surprized and angry. Shall I say it, she was even severe—she called me whimsical and ungrateful. I bore it—I am bound to bear it from her; but do I deserve those epithets? Surely not, my brother. They sunk very deep into my heart.

In the fervor of my soul, I talked too of the project she had indulged me in, and again anticipated my pleasure and my triumph over those who mistake Werter, and see no moral in it. She answered me only with coldly saying, she thought I had grown wiser. I was silent; but since I parted with you, I have not felt such pain as the whole of her behaviour, cold, severe, and distant, gave me. She seems to think there may be another way of controlling me beside tenderness.—Never, my brother, will I forget the favours I receive; and as to injuries, I can forgive, but I am not insensible to them.

LETTER XIX.

My dear Brother,

I WILL own I am too impatient of control. My spirits were sinking, and what a cordial have I received!—I have received a letter from you, who have given me every thing, and who are every thing to me—from you, who excel me so much, and who can yet sympathize in all my feelings. You can allow the motives of them to be worthy, perhaps noble—but I see you think me extravagant. This passion for genius, has it found no visible object? you ask me; and shall I say it distressed me that you too mention Burell?

You send me the portrait of a lady, and ask my opinion of it: I will tell it you frankly. Shall I not say every thing, when I acknowledge your own cannot exceed it, and I can fancy I behold in the face all I think you worthy of, and all I think worthy of you? You know my heart, my dear brother, you will judge how perfect I then believe the mind which illuminates it.

I wish you was with me; for I have gained nothing by my journey. I find no road of enquiry open; my soul sickens at my disappointment. Like an eagle confined by a chain, who wishes in vain to soar to the gates of the morning, and behold the fountain of light, I am bound in the trammels of custom.

My aunt is more serious than ever; she perfectly shocks me. A young woman, she says, wanders about to search after a man.—She was not always so severe. Has she altered her opinion, or is it possible she before meant to deceive me?

Burell too persists almost ungenerously.—If my ideas and my affections are to be confined, I will quit them, I will quit England, and fly from their persecutions. The ardor of my soul is not, I cannot wish it to be subdued. They attempt to stop this torrent; but they mistake, they only encrease its rapidity.

LETTER XX.

FREDERICK BURELL *to Major MORVEN.*

Dear Morven,

WHEN first I acknowledged that passion for your sister, which I thought myself bound in honor to avow to you, I believed it incapable of increase; but I find every moment which has added to my knowledge of her virtues, has insensibly added also to my love for her.—I have been happy enough to render myself agreeable to your aunt; but your sister, whom I now believe above affectation, treats me with a marked reserve, which almost destroys my hopes, and with them my happiness.

I had flattered myself too much from the friendship with which she had honored me: from continually seeing her, she was become necessary to my peace, and I had cherished I know not what fancy, that time might make me so to hers. Whilst she remained in reality blind to my affection, a thought sometimes arose in my mind, that she was yet a woman, and might only appear to be so. I saw not, that, open and ingenuous as

she is, she was incapable of the little artifices her sex are sometimes charged with; but, Morven, I have found, though too late, that, while she is every thing to me, I am to her nothing more than her brother's friend. But she is disengaged, and whilst she remains so, I will not yet despair—To resist unremitted perseverance is the province of few, and perhaps even her heart is capable of being subdued by it.

She has told you on what idea she came to Bath, and I now write to inform you of a scheme which I have formed in consequence of the end which she proposes in this journey.—She expects here to meet with the author of Werter: I believe that to be impossible; but a circumstance having happened which hastens my brother's departure from France, offering to me one on whose honor I can rely to personate this author, has given me the idea of engaging him so to do. Though I believe myself as jealous as even you can be in whatever relates to the delicacy of your sister, I would not go so far without informing you of it. I will relate to you, in a few words, the occasion of my brother's quitting Paris so soon, which did not a little surprize me, and you will recognize in it that impetuosity of temper which has ever characterized him.

At Versailles he became acquainted with a Madame le Mer, a widow lady of family, whose only daughter was long addressed by a young nobleman, to whom her affections were engaged. Madame le Mer went as usual to pass a month in the summer with her daughter, at a retired seat she possessed about a league from Versailles, during which time the lover paid them no further visits. Vincent, who had been invited by Madame le Mer to spend the week with them in their retirement, saw the grief of the young lady, and was informed of the source of it by her mother. As hasty in executing as he is quick in conceiving an idea, he sat out unsolicited for Paris, where the lover resided, designing to enter into an explanation with him. On arriving at his house, Vincent immediately desired to be introduced to him; but was surprized with an account of his being on the point of marriage with another lady, with whom he was at that time gone on a little excursion. He enquired the route they had taken, followed, and overtook them, who were then in fact on their way to be married; and had been joined just without the town by a grand cavalcade, consisting mostly of the relations of the intended bride. Without debating a moment, Vincent, approaching the carriage, where he discovered the unfaithful lover and his intended lady, ordered it to stop. He then told his name and business, and insisted on the nobleman's alighting. The young man, though confounded at this address, ordered the coach to proceed, saying it was only a mad-headed Englishman; but Vincent leaped from his horse, and in a moment opened the coach door, and handed the gentleman into the road, and without much ceremony insisted on his immediately defending himself, or mounting the horse he had just quitted, and returning immediately to Mademoiselle le Mer. Enraged, he chose the latter alternative, and Vincent, entering the carriage, applied himself to consoling the lady the intended bridegroom had just quitted, and to her family, who highly incensed gathered round him, he explained the whole motives of his actions, at the same time declaring himself ready to meet any one who thought they had a right either to question or blame him. The lady, however, acknowledging herself satisfied, nothing further arose; but the affair made so much noise that Vincent wished to escape from a place where he had rendered himself remarkable. He received the thanks of Madame le Mer, whose daughter was weak enough to pardon her lover, and to be married to him in a short time afterwards.

Vincent has also, I understand, from another quarter, an additional motive for quitting Paris; the friends of the lady having given him hints of a passion with which his gallantry has inspired her. Be that as it will, I know his aversion to being shewn and complimented, and therefore expect him over soon.—If you should not disapprove the idea I have thrown out, I shall certainly pursue it.

I was happy to meet, some time since, with colonel Bolton, who had then just returned from Gibraltar; but the account I heard from him of you, gave me an uneasiness which I was unable to conceal from the penetrating eye of your sister, and when she then enquired after you, I answered her rather consonant to my hopes than my wishes.

Adieu, dear Morven! I will guard your secret, but I should be very unhappy, if you concealed any material alteration from your friend.—Write to me soon and sincerely, and believe me to remain, with unalterable affection and friendship,

Yours,

FREDERICK BURELL.

LETTER XXI.

MY aunt is certainly right, my dear brother, when she tells me that slight incidents affect me too much. Why is it then, that with all the pain which this disposition causes me, I wish not to be other than I am? They would persuade me—my aunt and Burell I mean—that I am very ill; and, to oblige them, or, to speak more justly, to avoid their importunities, I have confined myself to my chamber. What is the world to me, if I am not permitted to roam in it as I please, to seek out those with whom my soul is in unison? I declare to you, whom I know capable of believing me, that all which it contains is tedious and even disgusting to me, otherwise than as it moves the mind and its affection—in short, otherwise than as it relates to the heart.

I travelled here under a false hope; I see it disappointed, perhaps even derided; and the city which I am now in, seems a boundary scarce less narrow to me than the dungeon of a criminal, who, at the expected moment of escaping from darkness and doubt, finds the door which confines him still guarded without intermission and without pity.

At my aunt's request, I have attended her to drink the waters. On casting my eyes round the scene of sickness which presented itself, new to a sight so distressing, you will easily judge the feelings which it excited. I beheld, painted in all the warm and glowing colours of imagination, the mothers who should so soon weep over the ashes of their children—the children who should water the grave of their parents with tears. Melted as I felt myself, I was yet capable of concealing those emotions, when I perceived a young soldier, who pressed near me; pale, wan, emaciated, he seemed scarce hovering on the last verge of existence. With a trembling hand, a neat young woman, who accompanied him, presented the glass to him—it was his sister. I have no words to explain the anguish which I felt at my heart; but you can conceive, my dear brother, and can account for it. Fool that I was, the glass dropped from my hand, and I seemed surrounded by darkness and confusion. On my recovery, the attention I had excited covered me with blushes. As I rose to come away the eyes of the whole room followed me, and the murmur of enquiry

and pity reached my ears. When seated in the carriage, I first took notice of an elegant young man who had assisted in supporting me to it, and recovered myself sufficiently to join in my aunt's compliments to him for the assistance which he had offered me. She could not deny the permission he requested to wait on her, of which he has already availed himself; and I am happy to have had an opportunity of acquitting myself toward him with more propriety than was before in my power. Burell was present; his visits to my aunt, or rather to me, though I receive them not as such, are as constant as ever: I have by chance heard an opinion of his; assiduity, he told my aunt, would gain any woman, and she seemed to join with him; but he deceives himself, my dear brother: though without it we are not to be won, he will find that neither are we always gained with it. Persuasion may subdue a weak, pity a too gentle mind; but his rule will not then be universal.

Burell, though I think with haughtiness, returned his thanks also to my aunt's new visitor; and, when he quitted us, informed us how necessary it was to be careful of what acquaintance we cultivated here: but his good humour did not seem much encreased, when my aunt told him, by the enquiries she had thought proper to make, she knew this young man to be the only son of Lord S——, who had been ordered to Bath for the recovery of his health—though perhaps more to pacify his father, who had been lately reduced almost to despair by a slight illness of his.

This conversation dropped, and Burell then joined my aunt in urging me to submit to have some advice, and in telling me that slight incidents, as I have before said, made too strong an impression on my mind. I know my dear aunt's tenderness for me; and, though not at all convinced by her arguments, I have submitted to her wishes, and the physician has felt my pulse, shakes his head, and advised some days of tranquillity and retirement. As to retirement, I acquiesce; but whilst my mind remains agitated by wishes unfulfilled, and hopes, though clouded, unsubdued, I shall have little to do with tranquillity.

LETTER XXII.

I AM convinced, that, in half the sickness of the world, it is the mind which should be consulted more than the frame.

My aunt has told the physician, whom she obliges to attend me, the warmth and impetuosity, the peculiarity, as she calls it, of my disposition. She wished him to deny me the enjoyment of those moments when time so rapidly flies, those hours which I delight to spend in reading, or in writing to my dear brother; but he seems to understand me better, and they are again allowed me—for I have been for some days denied them both. I have myself had some conversation with Dr. C. and he does not seem to think of immuring me any longer. He is chearful, amiable, accessible, and has invited us to visit him. I heard him say something to my aunt of drawing my attention from those objects which at present engross it too much. Can there be no means, he said, of satisfying this fancy of hers? These expressions of his induce me to hope that I shall engage this good man in my cause. As to my illness, believe me, nothing but the tenderness of my aunt's fears can make her even imagine it dangerous.

I am more than half angry with Ruth; for she has not yet written to me. Her heart so warm to love, can it be cold, is it therefore insensible, to the duties of friendship? If it is so, am I not right, when I wish that this passion, which consumes all ties but its own, may remain still a stranger to my breast?

LETTER XXIII.

ACCORDING to Dr. C——'s advice, I go to the pump-room now to drink the waters, though I cannot apprehend the benefit which will accrue to me from being every morning made sick. On my complaining, he has remedied this a little by leaving the quantity to my own judgment. There I regularly see the Mr. S—— whom I have mentioned to you, and who has since visited us. I find something of elegance and refinement about him, which I have not before met with. There is a soft politeness, an appearance even of tenderness in his compliments, which is very prepossessing. He saw my aunt frequently during my few days of confinement. This morning his father Lord S—— was in the room, whose eyes scarce a moment quitted this darling son, though he himself did not join our party, of which during our short stay his son made one.

The morning being damp, Burell almost forced my aunt to hurry away, fearful, he said, of my catching cold. Why will he interest himself thus about me, who am unworthy of his attachment, and who have sincerely and definitively told him the impossibility of my returning it? When I see how the coldness, so different to my nature, which I assume towards him, wounds and afflicts him, I am scarce capable of preserving it; yet he still obliges me to treat him otherwise than as a friend, since too plainly I perceive, when with confidence and tenderness I speak to him as such, he imagines I am become favourable to him as a lover. He forces me to think myself of this importance to him, and I therefore, for his sake, hear with pleasure that he intends absenting himself some time from us. He goes to meet a brother who has been abroad some years. Happy Burell! And if half my wishes were accomplished, never would he be otherwise—A heart open to the affections of nature cannot deserve to be miserable.

On my entering the pump-room this morning we were delayed a few minutes by the press, when, on turning to receive the apologies of some person who had a good deal incommoded me, the intelligent countenance of a lady, who stood near, interested me at the first glance. We were scarce entered before I perceived the universal attention which was attracted, and in a moment the name of *Lee* circulated in a whisper, which, with the look directed so near our party, and that had at first half distressed me, informed me of the object which had excited it.—And this then, thought I, is the *Temeraire*, whose name has been publicly joined with that of one of the first female writers of our age!

My prepossession for her vanished; since who, my dear brother, is there that should be ranked with the writer of *Cecilia*? There is a strength of mind and nobleness of sentiment pervading that whole work, which has often forced tears from my eyes, and has warmed and enraptured my heart.

I wished, however, to address this celebrated author; but Mr. S—— joined us, and, before my attention was again disengaged, she was so much surrounded, I could not think of breaking through the circle she had attracted, and Burell, too anxious for my health, staid not till it was dispersed.

I will read this *Recess*, of which she is the author, if I shall be able to procure it; for so watchful is my aunt of my health, that all which could enlighten my mind she would deny as hurtful to my body. This body, my dear brother, this texture of dust and ashes, why are we so careful of preserving it? For my own part, I regard it only as the case of that invaluable essence, whose powers I believe it our duty to call forth, whose vigour we were born but to exercise.

LETTER XXIV.

BURELL has now quitted me, and set out to meet his brother. He entered just after our breakfast, and I was leaving the room to dedicate some hours to music. It is the science of the feeling soul, and was wont to cheer me in the lone days of confinement and ignorance. He knows my arrangement, and I was retiring without apology, when in a low and hasty voice he recalled me. Forgive me, Theresa, said he, I ask only a minute—one minute, the last perhaps on this subject.

I heard his hesitation, his emotion, and how could I avoid returning? On all subjects, said I, on any subject but one, I must hear with pleasure my brother's friend and mine.

Why was he so agitated as I pronounced these words? Why did he faintly and inarticulately repeat—"His friend and yours"—O! too dear and charming appellation!—O word, which from those lips informs me I must never hope to gain more!—Why is my soul wrung?—Why was I born not to be content with it?

He pressed his hand on his forehead—he looked stedfastly on me, and his agitation seemed to encrease.

My aunt had hastily left the room; I would have now given the world she had been near. I feared to encrease his emotion, already too painful; yet how could I act with tenderness to him, with justice to myself—I, who know his wishes, and my own heart, insensible as to them?

One moment I held out my hand to him, the next I feared his constructions, and hastily withdrew it. The motion, however, had not escaped him; with more composure than before, he held out his. I understand you, Theresa, said he, melting into tears—as a friend only—O treasure every way inestimable!—tender and invaluable pledge, I will endeavour to receive it as such.

He took my extended hand.—I feel, my dear brother, I yet feel the sorrowful and tender pressure with which he detained it in both his.—I had remained silent, fearing to add to his emotion by my own: my voice, had I before spoken, would have revealed it. When I again saw the increasing violence of his, I summoned my resolution to dispel it, and, making enquiries concerning his brother, I congratulated him on their expected meeting. I spoke of my happiness in you, my dear brother, and of the friendship you bear to him. He looked at me, but seemed almost insensible that I addressed him, till I talked of his quitting Bath. Yes, Theresa, said he, charming Theresa! you are now my friend; you must then allow me to speak to you as such—and is there any term which can express how dear you are to me, how necessary the sight of you is almost to my existence?—Of this friendship let us talk no more, hastily said I—yours I cannot doubt, and if you will trust to mine, never, Burell, shall you be deceived in it.—A doubtful pleasure seemed to gleam in his eyes as I spoke.—Trust to it, repeated he—O if salvation depended on it!—

Too plainly I beheld in his countenance an emotion, the offspring of latent expectation, and again broke in upon him. You will, I am assured, said I, believe that all which I profess I feel; and let me, Burell, conjure you, painful though necessary task, let me conjure you to believe also, that all which I feel I have professed.—It is enough, Theresa, his voice again faltering. One thing only I have to request of you as a friend:

suffer me to devote myself to your welfare; as such, as that friend only I would ask. Forgive me, I have one wish—

He hesitated, but he saw me attentive, and proceeded—

O that as a friend I might be thought worthy of your confidence; and that when, in the days yet to come, you shall yield to another, when you shall bestow the heart I must now hope for no more—that heart whose emotions I have watched over and adored when present—whose lovely and beloved owner has alone occupied me when absent.—But, Theresa, I forget myself; yet when in some happier moment by another shall be gained that jewel, inestimable to me—

The trembling agitation with which he spoke, pained me; I thought I understood him, and wished to spare us both a further explanation.

Burell, said I, it is a testimony of friendship which I owe you, and that moment, if ever it shall arrive, I promise to confide to you.—Noble, amiable condescension, said Burell; yet what is there I should be surprized at from you?

I was willing to interrupt a conversation but too painful, and continued—I believe—I know you, Burell, to be too generous to make any use of it which could injure either the affections or the honour of Theresa. From me, Burell, believe me, you shall ever command all the effusions of gratitude, and all the warmth of esteem.

I stopped, fearful of saying more. He read my uneasiness in my face, and pressing the hand I had again given him as a confirmation of my promise, he bent over it in silence, and then hastily quitted me. The best wishes of my heart went with him. The tears which I had restrained from flowing, now gave ease to my spirits, too apt to be oppressed. His look, as he left me, soft, tender, un-upbraiding, a thousand sentences had less affected me. You, my brother, knowing as you do every emotion of my soul, will not, I am sure, blame me. You may feel pity for your friend, but let not that pity overcome your love for your sister.

I will own my aunt's behaviour has surprized me; she seems to have ceased being his advocate, and has not even asked, since Burell this morning quitted me, the intent of his speaking to me, nor the end which it produced. But why should I wonder at her tenderness to me, of which she every day gives me new proofs?

We were to have gone to Dr. C—'s in the evening; but this day I dedicate to Burell: how many has he not bestowed upon me! I should be but too happy, might I hope never myself to want that pity which I now unaffectedly bestow on him.

LETTER XXV.

Mrs. DEBORAH CARLTON *to Colonel*
MORVEN.

My dear Nephew,

AFTER my having procured that justice to be done to your sister which you was so willing to complete, and having afterwards, at your request, taken her under my protection, I am convinced you can have no doubt of the sincerity of my affection to you both.—Whatever remonstrances, therefore, I shall lay before you concerning her, I am certain, with all your affection for her, you will receive and consider as you ought.

You must have observed from her letters, how every new emotion hurries her away: mild and gentle as she is in other things, when once some object for her impetuosity interposes, she is not to be withstood; she fixes her mind with a fantastical earnestness on one point, and then sees nothing with complacency, but what tends toward it. Who but herself ever thought of setting out in search of an author, because she is persuaded, she knows not why, that he is an Englishman, and fancies herself the only person in the world who does him justice.

The indifferent state of her health, which I see with a concern I cannot sufficiently express, inclined me to yield to the intreaties of your friend Mr. Burell: indeed, I could think of no other method to dissipate that unremitting attention she had, I fear, too long paid to her studies, than by seemingly giving into this whim of hers. To speak the truth, nephew, I know not what to do with one whom opposition afflicts and oppresses. After much deliberation and persuasion, I agreed, therefore, to this deception, hoping that in seeming to be fulfilled, her wishes would insensibly wear out; but the event has not answered my expectation, and the unfortunate overturning of our chaise, by the accident it occasioned to her, seemed to add another blow to her health, before but indifferently established.

Again too, at Mrs. Aylesby's, taken up with the friendship she formed with her, she was blind to a passion with which, evidently to me, she from the first moment inspired the lover of her new friend. She had before, when wholly occupied with her books, been no less so to that of Mr. Burell. If I had not myself hurried her away from this spot, I know not what confusion she might have been the cause of; I could not but dread the pain which a heart so generous as hers would have felt, had she staid to make the discovery.—As nothing, however, is more likely to stop a rising passion than a total insensibility to it in its object, I am in hopes this affair, which has given me some uneasiness, will go no further, and I shall find some excuse in our return to take another route than that which leads to Mrs. Aylesby.

She there also convinced me how happy it is for her, that she possesses that independence you so nobly settled on her. Though with five hundred pounds a year, she bestows as if she had five thousand. Under the name of gratifications for the docility of the child, she introduced conveniences for her mother, and furnished out a wardrobe with less offence to the delicacy of the receiver, than a common person would have bestowed a trinket.

When we quitted Mrs. Aylesby's, though, by your friend Burell's following her there, her eyes were open to him, he gained nothing by it; nor did her former hopes of searching out and finding this author lose any thing by the delay. I was almost as much surprized as chagrined when I made this discovery, and I believe the manner in which I spoke to her informed her of it; but her mind is too fervent for the delicacy of her frame. The uncertain state I see her health in, subdues me when I wish to be most severe; and I find myself obliged to resume that gentleness which my judgment would bid me disallow.

Mr. Burell, who is but too anxious about her, ever since our arrival here, has been conjuring me to give way to another scheme, which, he thinks, by carrying the deception something further, more likely to satisfy her; and I have promised, after one more endeavour to wean her mind from this fancy, to consent to it.

The physician who attends her, interests himself much concerning her: I have told him her whim, and he has proposed to enter into the subject with her. But the principal end of my writing is to tell you I much wish you to be near her, since I know the power you have over her, and that what you disapprove, I am certain, she would at any time avoid.

Do not suffer yourself to be carried away in the same manner as herself, nor, through a romantic admiration of the general you have so well distinguished yourself under, suffer your sister to want that protection which her peculiar turn of mind, her inexperience, and her very attractive person, put her so much in need of. With a thousand graces, of which she is charmingly unconscious, she is now almost first entering into a world, where I plainly see she will not fail of engaging attention and admiration. To the striking advantages of height, grace, and complexion, she joins the most attractive manners and expressive countenance. I do not therefore wonder that she has already gained a lover here in the only son of a nobleman, a young man, worthy it should seem of the rank he is born to inherit. I see no reasonable objection, should any proposal on his part arise, and which I have little doubt but there will; yet she paid a thousand times more attention to the entrance of a young lady, who has lately distinguished herself as a writer, than to all the compliments of this new and elegant lover. For my part, nephew, I tremble lest some designing person should get scent of that peculiar turn of mind of hers, which might lay her open to arts of which she would be the last person in the world to imagine herself the object.

I hope what I have here said may be sufficient to incline you to hasten over, to be near to support and direct her: if it is not, what else can I say which may not too much alarm you?

When I first began my letter, I did not intend to mention to you what my fears tell me is perhaps too necessary. This dear, this amiable girl, how shall I write it to you?—I fear she has never perfectly recovered herself from that violent and malignant fever which she caught during her attendance on me. I watch her health, and have many reasons to fear its decline. The unremitting eagerness with which she has pursued after knowledge from the time of her being with me, has, I fear, impaired a constitution naturally delicate. In the first earnestness of enquiry she wished to comprehend every thing at once, and, all her talents being in their full perfection, the rapidity of her own progress, which surprized every tutor she employed, encouraged her, perhaps too much indeed, to persevere. Rest, food, pleasure, with her, all gave way to study. She must

perceive an alteration in herself; yet her temper retains all its sweetness, and her mind all its gentleness as well as its force. If this should really be the case, if a slow and devouring disease, contracted in the kindest offices of grateful tenderness, is really consuming this dear and lovely girl, how can I support the thoughts of it?

Dr. C——, an eminent physician, who attends her here, tells me I am too apprehensive; but there is no making those gentlemen of the faculty explicit. He would have me introduce her into a larger circle than she has yet moved in, and, for this reason indeed principally, as he said, ordered her every morning to attend the pump-room; but there I see with pain one object of compassion engages her attention more strongly than all the giddy multitude with which she is surrounded, and distress reaches her susceptible and unexperienced heart, with a force which she can neither prevent nor conceal.

I will yet hope that I have been too apprehensive; I do not doubt, however, but that from the whole of what I have said, you will think it necessary to be near her: your presence every way may do much for her. In the mean time, be convinced of my tenderest care and affection for her; and be assured yourself, I shall ever remain,

Hers and your affectionate aunt,
D. CARLTON.

LETTER XXVI.

Miss MORVEN to Colonel MORVEN.

I HAVE had a dispute, my dear brother; I had almost said I had gained a victory for the author of Werter.

We went this afternoon to Dr. C——'s. In our way thither we were not a little frightened, and we were again obliged to Mr. S—— for his assistance; but how that happened I can tell you afterwards: as it was, we went in his carriage to Dr. C——'s, who introduced us to his daughter. She is a genteel young woman: she may have sense perhaps, but, by her silence concerning every thing but cards and fashions, I can be no judge of it.

Happily there was a party without me. My aunt and a brother of Dr. C——'s sat down to whist with a gentleman and Miss C——. The doctor seated himself next me, and we entered into conversation, which he politely turned on books, those sources of knowledge and entertainment, those delightful improvers of the heart and understanding, in which we behold the manners of past ages, the heroes of other times. We read of the errors of man, and are humbled: we hear of the virtuous and the mighty, and emulation, the offspring of generous admiration, throbs through our hearts. How often have I wished that I were like them! How often to the dead, to the living, have I envied those deeds of glory, those works of genius, which it was theirs to perform, which it is mine only to admire!

I believe I express myself more warmly than the rest of the world; and when I would explain my sentiments, the impetuosity of them hurries me away. I cannot, my dear brother, mention the sons and daughters of fame without emotion. It was thus, that, in talking to Dr. C——, my own energy stopped me; I felt my eyes too near overflowing, and endeavoured to speak more calmly. He seemed to agree with my sentiments, and owned our obligations to the children of genius. But it is to those, said he, who would point out the right path, to whom we are obliged—who would take us, as it were, by the hand, and, as they lead us in the flowery road of fable, would shew us the errors we should shun, and the guilt we must learn to avoid—to these my dear madam, we are obliged: but what shall we say to the man, who, under the mask of fable and fancy, would subvert every principle which can support society, and every duty of morality and religion?

What a picture, my brother! could I suspect?—But I will continue—

Good heaven! said I, if such a man really exists, let him be an outcast from the society he has injured; let him first feel the effects of that depravity he has meant to introduce.—Certain it is, said Dr. C——, that some such monster the world has produced, and that this age, enlightened and refined as it is, has, in the work now in my hand, received and applauded the apology of a suicide, and, excuse me the expression, an adulterer also.—

He opened the book he had taken from a seat near us: judge my surprize on finding it a volume of Werter, and that all this severity was levelled at that charming work and its calumniated author. It was not immediately that I could utter, and at length I will own indignantly, Is it then possible, my good sir, that even from the liberal-minded, that from you I have such an opinion as this to encounter?—an opinion, forgive me if I

say——And forgive me, also, madam, said he, interrupting me, if I too exclaim, Is it possible that in a lady, and such a lady, so calculated to excite and suffer from all the passions raging in the heart of this Werter—that in beauty, delicacy, and tenderness, I behold his apologist?—O could my expressions but equal what I wish, said I—could I explain my ideas with that force of conviction with which they strike on my own mind, in me, sir, you would see that person—in me sir, whose frame shudders, whose heart revolts at the crimes you mention, you would behold that apologist.—Did I not know, said Dr. C——, smiling, that it is the province of the ladies to reconcile contradictions, I might be surprized; as it is, I am determined to be only attentive. He bowed and sat silent.

My aunt, and the rest of the company in compliment to her, laid down their cards. How often had I wished for an opportunity of refuting these cruel and injurious opinions; but all the interest I took in the subject could not now raise my spirits. The attention I had unthinkingly centered in myself, covered me with confusion, which every moment of silence increased. If all shame is false which arises not from guilt, I have very little excuse for that which at this minute so oppressingly distressed me.

My aunt took the only way of relieving me by resuming her cards; and Dr. C—— again renewed the discourse, by saying, You have heard my accusations of this work, madam; yet, so warmly as you espouse the cause of its author, I hope you will believe I am more desirous of having myself convinced, than of convincing you.—I do believe it, sir, said I: the candour which inclines you to that confession, must also incline you to wish such a writer as this before us freed from a charge so injurious to his fame, so derogatory to all that is most estimable in human nature, the desire of being serviceable to our fellow-creatures. In Werter we behold—Sir, you have read the book, I presume—some, I know, there are, who blame it upon reputation only.—

You do not address yourself to one of those, said Dr. C——. Continue, I entreat you, madam.

Do we not behold in Werter, my dear sir, the ill effects which the gentlest passions, when unrestrained, may have on the best and most noble hearts? Do we not behold in him all that nature and genius can render deserving, wretched, forlorn, and ruined by one error, by one passion unconquered, by one wish imprudent only at first unsubdued? There may we not trace every step of the path which leads to guilt, to misery, to despair, and death? We behold the slow and almost imperceptible approaches which conduct him to the brink of the grave. We see him, my dear sir, all the powers of his imagination wasted—all the ties of religion subdued in his heart. Alone he stands in the world. The fountain of his tears, the source of his prayers, are no more. He meditates on murder and violence. He persuades himself that he is weak; he becomes so. He abandons himself; he is abandoned of the eternal.

How is it possible, my good sir, that there can be one reader, at whose breast this moral, this interesting moral, does not strike? How have I felt, how do I now feel it throbbing at mine!—Fly! it seems to say, ye children of innocence and peace, fly while ye are yet strong! O wait not till the arrow empoisoned, however distantly empoisoned with guilt, has spread its subtle and unconquerable venom through the heart! O wait not till that hour, which rapidly with the moments of time still approaches, when every thought shall be tintured with some meditated crime—when guilt shall lose its horrors to your soul—and when, at length, abandoned by heaven and by virtue, by your own hand, in the blossom of your days, ye may fall—when ye shall rush through the silent and dark

habitation, where the powers of repentance are lost — the curtain, which no more can be raised, is fallen for ever—unbidden, uncalled, in the presence of the Father of Righteousness, ye shall tremble, then polluted with murder, with suicide, at the footstool of judgment, at the tribunal of justice everlasting——

The image which I had conceived was too terrible to behold: the cold hand of horror, which had thrilled at my heart, seemed to enwrap all my faculties: a dim faintness came over me, and before I found assistance was necessary, I had fallen. By the common applications I quickly recovered—the gentlemen had quitted the room, and Miss C——, supposing the heat had affected me, opening the windows, in a quarter of an hour I was well again. I saw, however, during the evening, that Dr. C——, avoided renewing the conversation; but when we came away, with the tenderness of a father he pressed my hand, and said, we must not talk any more of this for some days at least; besides, I know not if there be any occasion for it, as I question if you have not half convinced me already.—He said so, yet many of the arguments on which I rest I have left unmentioned; but I hope to find an opportunity of conveying them.

Gently and tenderly as we returned home, my aunt chid me for suffering myself to be hurried away. I perceive, my dear brother, she has justice on her side; but in these moments to which she refers, I forget her friendly and necessary cautions: the object then present to my mind seems alone to occupy all its faculties, and it is not till the error overcomes me, that I perceive I have again fallen into it. Even now I have been in some degree committing it; and, what is worse, my aunt has discovered me; she has been in my chamber, and found me dedicating that time to my pen and to you, my brother, which she thinks necessary to my own repose. I promised to leave off, and therefore I cannot tell you what happened to us in our way to Dr. C——'s to-night, as I had intended; nor the attention my aunt seemed to pay me, when I just now reminded her of that end to my journey with which she once flattered me. Is it for me, my dear brother, whilst her tears of tenderness yet wet my cheek, to disobey her injunctions?

LETTER XXVII.

THE purple beams of the morning have this day displayed their beauties for me, as for thousands, in vain, and the hours which I have been accustomed to dedicate to instruction, have elapsed in insensibility and slumber. It is thus that fearfully and wonderfully we are formed. It is to this slumber, to this insensibility, if we would enjoy the one half of our existence, that nature obliges us nearly to dedicate the other.

Mr. S—— has sent an enquiry after our health, when it is his own in reality which was most in danger. I told you we were yesterday obliged to him for his assistance, and I will now explain to you how it happened.

In our way to Dr. C——'s our carriage, in one of the narrow streets here, got entangled with a cart, and through the ill behaviour of the driver was so jammed in, that we were apprehensive it would be broken to pieces, and ourselves crushed against the wall, or trampled upon by our own horses, who were not without difficulty kept under command. It was in vain that the footman, unable to pass to our assistance, alternately threatened and intreated—our terror increased, and we heard the wheel of our carriage

crash as the man again attempted to drive by us. I put down the back window to call for assistance. The people, who now began to gather round, at the sight of our situation, soon applied themselves to relieving it; and the carman, from his own whip, received the discipline he had with unnecessary and inhuman barbarity bestowed on his horses, who, seemingly more sensible than their master, had forborne to tear through all impediments. The cart was removed; but our situation, from the frail state of the wheel, which prevented the carriage from proceeding, was yet very disagreeable, the extreme dirtiness of the streets, the weather having been rainy, and the shower which was then falling, rendering it almost impossible for us to alight.

In this dilemma Mr. S—— very unexpectedly presented himself at the carriage side: his own, it seems, had been stopped by the crowd gathered by our disaster, and, understanding there were some ladies in distress, he came to offer his assistance. On recognizing us, he insisted on our making use of his. My aunt acquiesced, and having, by his advice, wrapped herself in a great coat of the coachman's, he conducted her first; when he returned, I was equipped in the same manner. But he expressed his perplexity at the risk I must run of being wetted in passing along the street, though a few paces only; and just as, incumbered with the coat, I was stepping out of the carriage, desiring me not to alarm myself, before I was aware he took me in his arms, and in a minute lifted me into his own: then bowing to us both, and pointing to his dress, which was by this time completely wetted, he was gone before we could make our acknowledgments; and it was in vain that my aunt entreated him not to run the chance of injuring his own health to avoid a little incommoding us; but kissing his hand, he hastened his pace, and was out of sight in a moment.

I have before mentioned to you the politeness of his address, and the soft elegance of his manners: I will own, that, to render him complete, he seems only to want some of that vivacity and fire which distinguishes that brother to whom I am too apt to compare all whom I have any opportunity of knowing. Are not our very ideas of perfection always swayed by the passions of the mind; or, rather, are they not formed after those images most dear to the affections of the heart?

I have been talking with my aunt this morning, and have repeated to her, a little more reasonably, as she called it, the conversation which passed yesterday between Dr. C—— and me. My aunt has one argument on this head which she thinks unanswerable; and that is, that the hero of the tale—Werter I mean—the moment he is most guilty, is made most to excite our compassion: his hand strikes the premeditated blow, and we behold him with more pity than abhorrence. But what other, my dear brother, what man less amiable, could so strongly engage our attention, or so forcibly point out that loss and destruction with which an object so excellent in its nature is overwhelmed?

She blames that idea of the rectitude of his actions, with which he is represented to be so forcibly impressed. I replied, and surely with justice, What, my dear aunt, would you blame that idea which strikes on the mind of the madman? Would you blame him, who, confined in a dungeon, and stretched on his pittance of straw, imagines himself possessed of the couch of magnificence, and the splendor of royalty? To me the situation of Werter seems similar; and, as I peruse those delusions of his disordered fancy, as I behold the pangs he undergoes, I look on him with terror and pity—my heart, in the language of Shakespear, exclaims,

“O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!”

I afterwards pressed my aunt to explain to me the reason of her avoiding those enquiries I have here wished to make. She answered me only by saying, I think, niece, there are few things I would not do to give you pleasure; and, perhaps, all may yet happen as you wish before our quitting this place.—What is it that she means? and why does she yet keep me in suspense?

Here is another more serious circumstance which gives me pain—not a line, since I quitted her, have I received from my dear Ruth! Her silence gives me a thousand fears for her and her little Sophy. Sometimes I imagine, that, united to her Frank, she centers in him every wish of her soul, and every ray of her affection. Can she neglect, or does she disbelieve, that tenderness which I felt for, and which I so earnestly wished to manifest to her? Disbelieve it, surely, she cannot; and that she is capable of neglecting it, never will I believe it to be possible.

LETTER XXVIII.

HOW truly is it said, that by the loss, rather than by the presence, of our friends, we most discover the importance they are of to us!

We went this morning to the pump-room for the first time since Burell's absence, and for the first time also Mr. S—— was not there, who always used to join us a few minutes after our entering. The young men with great familiarity crowded round us, and one in particular disconcerted me by the impertinent and immoveable scrutiny I underwent from his eyes—from his eye, with more propriety I might say, since he, like many others whom I have seen, seems incapable of using more than one at a time, nor even that without the assistance of a glass. How despicable is that vanity, which makes even the affectation of infirmity a fashion!

The young soldier and his sister, whom I once before saw, were there again this morning, and, much I fear, want as well as sorrow sat on the faded cheek of the afflicted sister. I was prevented from speaking to them by the attentions and impertinent conversation of the coxcomb who had before disconcerted me. I must know more of their situation, and have now sent my servant to make enquiry after them. If, added to the ills of sickness, and the pangs of apprehension, they have any distresses which can be soothed by my hand, how joyfully will it be extended to their relief, and how willingly and happily employed in their assistance!

My thoughts followed their footsteps as they quitted the room, and I longed to be at liberty to enquire after them; but my aunt at that minute directed my attention to a person wrapped in a large coat, by the cape of which and the flapping of his hat he had concealed his face. He followed us at a distance during the whole of our stay. I remember that such a person Burell once observed; but, having fixed his eye on him, he mingled in the crowd, and we saw no more of him.

I could almost have persuaded myself there was something in the air of this man with which I was acquainted; but my aunt has ridiculed me so much for the supposition, that I have discarded it, and begin to fear lest he should rather prove some modest object of compassion.—My aunt, whose partial fondness leads her to centre all her ideas in me, suspects in him the spy of some lover of mine, or of the father of Mr. S——, whom she

regards as such. I will own to you this supposition appears to me an unreasonable, and, from any other, I should almost call it unwarrantable, offspring of affection. Who and what am I, my dear brother, to be made of consequence to any but my friends by time and nature attached to me? And is there any thing in my actions which can authorise from any one the indignity of watching over them?—

This minute my servant is returned, and finds that this young soldier and his sister have lodgings at a small distance from the town, and that their circumstances are not supposed to be very easy. I must find some way of introducing myself to them, and I long till to-morrow shall arrive for that purpose. This evening Dr. C—— and his daughter spend with us. I will try, if, in the course of his practice, he should be acquainted with them: I might then better know how to offer that assistance and relief I may be capable of bestowing.

Miss C—— brings with her this celebrated Recess: she was reading it when I visited her, and told me it was a pretty thing in its way. If on reading I think no more of it, I shall have little idea of ranking its author with that of Evelina and Cecilia.

I am going to employ myself very happily till their arrival, in completing a packet for you. My aunt would have me believe the pocket-book and ruffles I send you with it are master-pieces, and I can believe that they will not be indifferent to you, from the fingers which worked them. But you think I have no curiosity, my dear brother; or, after the picture I received from you with your last, surely you had not so long remained silent. May the original bestow on you that felicity which I so warmly wish you to enjoy! If she is capable of making you happy, is there any esteem, any love, which I cannot think her deserving of? Or, rather, is there any esteem which I can believe to be equal, or any affection which can exceed what her merit demands?

LETTER XXIX.

SHALL I ever be able to describe to you, my dear brother, all the ideas now floating in my brain, and the thousand emotions that are now throbbing at my heart—My heart!—How do I blush and tremble, when I would own to you, that at last it has felt—perhaps I ought not to express to you what it has felt—but you will be able to conceive its emotions, when I shall tell you, that, under the resemblance—the more beautiful resemblance shall I say?—of one by the ties of nature and choice first in my affection, I have discovered all the virtues most dear to my heart! How I have made this discovery I will relate to you; but I must first acquaint you I have read the Recess, and have been confined three days in consequence.

This morning, however—Shall I ever forget it?—Had I any suspicion, when I rose, of what this morning would produce?—Little could I imagine, that, in following the dictates of compassion only, I should find——But you will learn nothing from these exclamations; I will then try to be methodical.

I went out this morning for an airing. My aunt was not risen, and, as I am apt to be faint, I took her maid with me in the chariot. I told you, I think, I had found out the situation of the soldier and his sister: I was driven toward where they live; and as the house stands some little way from the road, I got out to walk to it. We were passing the

garden hedge, when, breaking through the melody of the birds, the soft breathings of a flute exquisitely touched drew my attention. Ah! my brother, I was “all ear,” and took in strains that “might create a soul under the ribs of death.” You know my partiality for that romantic instrument: it was from you, my dear brother, that I first heard all the enchanting inflexions of sound it is capable of.

I stood for some minutes, every reflection lost, every faculty but hearing suspended; when a girl, coming out of the house, desired to know if I wanted any body there. I don’t know what answer I made, but I followed her in, and, beginning to recollect my intention in coming, was glad to be addressed by her mistress, a decent woman. I now enquired after those I had heard were her lodgers, and soon learnt from her the particulars of their situation.

Alas! stretched on the bed of sickness, to feel the afflictions of poverty, is there an idea of wretchedness beyond it? To weep over such distress is merely human; yet the earnestness of my enquiries, the tears that fell as she spoke, made her imagine I had some nearer interest in them than that of common humanity.

She was telling me, that, till within these few days, they had no prospect of relief, and was praising the hand which within that time had afforded it, when a scream from a further apartment pierced my ears. In a moment the young woman, whom I recollected as the sister of the soldier, rushed out with all the symptoms of despair in her countenance; and, wringing her hands, called for help, still exclaiming, He is dead! he is dead! he is dying! The mistress and the maid of the house ran to her assistance, and I followed them. As I entered the apartment, I beheld the soldier extended and inanimate on the floor. After sprinkling some water on him, and applying some restoratives, which all but myself, overcome with terror, had appeared incapable of, I found he began to recover from what was only indeed a sudden faintness. His sister, trembling and almost incapable of motion, hung over him as she knelt at his side; her eyes, as in the agony of earnest attention she stretched forward to observe him, wildly fixed on his face, one hand eagerly grasping his, as yet unconscious, whilst the other pressed on her heart, which seemed almost bursting with terror and anxiety.

I can feel, but can I, my dear brother, describe her emotion?

When she beheld the first symptoms of returning sensation, she clasped her hands, she cast up her eyes to heaven, she would have spoken, but from her pale and agitated lips a few inarticulate sounds only found their way. I quitted her reviving brother, to give a glass of water to her: she drank it, and wet his forehead with the tears which now burst from her; and then again, as if unable to support herself, bent over him, like a flower that droops under the torrents of the north, and pressing his arm, You live, William, said she, you live, and an angel from heaven has not come in vain to our assistance!

I felt her situation too strongly, and now moved to quit the room; but she flung herself on her knees before me, and, uttering a thousand incoherent thanks, almost overpowered me. I raised her with difficulty: she kissed my hands, and, as I held hers, endeavouring to moderate her transports, looking in my face, and seeming first to recollect the strangeness of my being there, Ah! madam, said she, with an expression of anxious curiosity, who then are you, and how—but I can guess—

Her brother now faintly calling her, she broke off, and I quitted the room, and soon recovered myself. As I had been obliged to use some drops, I thought it better to

stay, more thoroughly to recover and compose myself. I am seldom used to be so careful, but I wished to know more of her.

The mistress of the house, making many apologies for not being able to attend me, insisted on ushering me into her best parlour. On the table there, among a sheet or two of music and some writing implements carelessly scattered, I found the *Tempest*, and that beautiful and heart-rending poem of Falkner's, the *Shipwreck*. I was taking up the last, when another book caught my eye—it was *Werter*. Under it lay a half-finished drawing. *Werter* was represented there by the side of his favourite spring, fixing his eyes, full of expression, on those of Charlotte. The stones, half covered with moss, formed the descent to the water, and the willows hung their dark leaves over the translucent surface. I had attempted something of this kind myself, but this a thousand times exceeded it; and I felt a curiosity, almost insurmountable, to behold the person who had thus surpassed me.

Twice I rose to walk out in the little garden from whence I had heard the flute, and twice the consciousness I felt of wishing to meet this stranger detained me.—There are moments in which the heart seems to forebode the importance of the circumstances which approach; why else did mine at that minute flutter so ungovernably?

After having, for the first time, cast my eyes with indifference over some pages of *Werter*, I was laying it down with the intent of going out, when I was again stopped. It was not now merely by my own reflections; it was by the entrance of Joannah. You have yet known her only by the name of the soldier's sister. Again she poured out her thanks to me. I told her I should hope to be further acquainted with her, and expressed my regret at having so long delayed visiting her. The gentleman has been here but these two days, madam, said she, so how should you think of visiting us before?—Gentleman! I repeated; what gentleman?—To be sure, you know what gentleman, madam, returned Joannah, or you could not, as I said, have thought of coming here.—I assured her that I did not even know to whom she alluded. I told her my whole intention in coming there was to find her, and alleviate, if possible, her sufferings.—She now repeated, Not know him, madam! with tokens of surprize: is it out of goodness to us, then, only that you come here?—I repeated my assurances to her.

The modest effusions of her grateful heart at once pained and delighted me. I was incapable of stopping her, and she continued, O, madam! are there many so beautiful and so good?—My brother has been some months ill; he looks very bad now; but the Doctors assure me he is likely to recover—yet I was so foolish to-day, I could not bear to see him faint.—We have been in want indeed; my fingers earned us but a poor support: I was obliged to attend him too till this week, when the gentleman I told you of came—He is like an angel, more than any thing else; so good, so mild, so compassionate. The first night he was here, he saw my brother; we have wanted for nothing since; and I thought, madam, indeed I beg your pardon, but I thought you must have belonged to him.

There was nothing in the idea, certainly, to be offended at, and I know not when I should have broken off the conversation, if the maid, whom I left in the carriage, had not come in search of me. She was alarmed at my stay, and feared lest my aunt might be so; but telling her I was well, and would soon be with her, I sent her back again to the carriage.

When again alone with Joannah, I took my leave of her, and, as she held my hand, I slipped my purse, which I had some time kept there, unknowing how to offer it, into

hers, and, promising to visit her again soon, stepped as hastily as I could to a door which I saw open. I had got some paces from it, before I found it led a different way from that at which I had entered. I was looking if there was any path which I could follow, without returning through the house, when I saw Joannah's brother coming towards me; he was coming, but not alone. Shall I own the elegant, the more than elegant figure of the young man, on whose arm he leaned, arrested my footsteps?

Good heaven! will it ever be possible for me to forget my astonishment, when, as they approached, I almost thought I beheld the lineaments of your countenance, that expressive look, that air so peculiar to you, and so graceful?

I know not what I did—I stood still, I believe, gazing on the stranger; for I had not sufficient command of myself, at the moment, to avoid it. I saw him, my brother, whilst the glow of health and vivacity crimsoned his cheek, whilst the eagerness of surprize and curiosity sparkled through his intelligent eyes, attentive to the feeble and slow steps of the invalid, who was supported by his arm.

I cannot describe my perplexity, and scarce heard the thanks which the low voice of Joannah's brother attempted to express. I would have recollected myself; but the eyes of the young stranger, like a sun-beam, seemed at once to penetrate and dive into my heart—his eyes, my brother, I will own, I think even yours do not equal them—they are dark, and, alas, how piercing!—but there is yet something in them “so winning, soft, so amiably mild;” in short, prepossessed as I was in his favour, and desirous as I had been of seeing him, it was not for me to resist them; and the almost wonderful resemblance which he bears to you, was scarcely necessary to make that impression on my heart which so strongly I then felt—the impression I am too conscious I even yet do, and perhaps for ever shall feel.

Why, as these sentiments arise in my mind, should I blush to commit them to paper? And what is there in this passion, pure and untainted as it glows in my heart, which is shameful to be acknowledged?

I was attempting to make some answer to the thanks of the young ensign, when his sister, the tears bathing her cheeks, hastily and eagerly joined us. O, my dear William! you know not half. O, sir! said she, sobbing as she spoke, this lady is another of the best, of the tenderest—Yes, madam! and this is the kind, the considerate gentleman—a few days since I had not believed there were two such in the world.

Two such! interrupted her brother's companion, surveying with an intent look my embarrassed and blushing countenance; and is it possible that there are two such in the world!

He understood, I am certain, the more than compliment which was intended to him; but should I own how much I was flattered by that which he conveyed to me; or was I wrong in acknowledging it by an inclination?

Something I said of having mistaken my way out, and, pressing the hand of Joannah, which would have borne mine to her lips, I desired her only to shew me the path toward the road. The young gentleman—I know not his name—overheard the enquiry, and, leaving Joannah with her brother, conducted me by the way I entered at.

As he walked by my side, I felt myself for a minute at a loss—it was not for conversation, but I wished for I know not what expression. I talked, and you will think not without emotion, of the scene I had just beheld, and that tender affection I had just been witness to. Some lines, from a beautiful manuscript poem I was once favoured with

reading, recurring to my mind, I repeated them almost before I perceived I was doing other than expressing my own sentiments in the most easy and applicable terms. I often find myself doing this when interested, and I always am interested in the subject I am talking of, for on any others I remain silent.

As I spoke, I read in his eyes that he understood me: I continued—We should cultivate, said I, the friendship of the unhappy; in doing so, we have the pleasing hope of relieving their hearts, and we are at least sure to soften and ennoble our own. We see, among the faculty, a thousand instances that a good heart, though more firm, becomes not less tender towards the sickness which it daily beholds, and which so many from benevolence and humanity only daily relieve.

As I said this, we reached the road, and the carriage, which I had ordered to stand at some distance, drew up. With an appearance of surprize, he said, You walk no further then, madam.—I said, I had, been absent too long already, I feared.—He handed me in; but the maid asking if I had not my cloak in the carriage, I recollected the having left it behind me; and whilst the footman was dispatched for it, the young stranger, with one foot on the step, and his hat in one hand resting on his knee, continued the conversation.

Good heaven! as he looked up, how the clear brown of his open forehead, the arch of his dark brows, presented you, my dear brother, to my eyes! In the elegance of his figure, in the easy dignity of his air, I beheld your image. My cheeks glowed as I looked at him, and I do not wonder at his saying, That want of health should have called you to Bath, surely, is not possible; I will flatter myself you reside there.—At least, said I, I shall not yet, I believe, quit it.—He was again speaking, when the man returned with my cloak. As he took it from him, I heard him say, Has the man flown for it? When he gave it to me,—May I be assured you do not at least, said he, leave Bath for some days only?—I told him I had not any such expectation.—He retired from the door, the man put up the step and shut it, and we were gone in an instant. I looked out, however, to the spot I had left him on; I saw his eyes follow the carriage; he perceived that I looked toward him, and bowed; but we were too distant, I doubt, for him to see the waving of my hand, by which I acknowledged it.

I came home, and wished to think of nothing else: I wished, but in vain, to discover the reason of his residing in the retirement in which he is now concealed. I am not yet able to make up my mind, whether I shall—indeed whether I ought, dangerous as I find him, to visit Joanna again.

I lay my whole soul, in all its weakness, open before you. Why is it, that my aunt, by her raillery when I have explained the sensations of my bosom to her, has now taught me to fear her austerity, and to fly from her confidence? A thousand times, when in the warmth of my heart I have talked to her, with the cold and chilling aspect of indifference or serenity, has she listened to its emotions. She intended, perhaps, to subdue—alas! she has only taught me to conceal them. I know, indeed, that strictly speaking, it ought not to have this effect; but that it should, is only human nature, and 'tis in vain that we think to guide the passions, to subdue the errors of youth, without studying, and sometimes also yielding a little to its frailty. Such as we are, rectitude, in all its severity, is more apt to disgust than entice: we are overawed, we feel the harshness of its effect, and forget the excellence of its cause.

Whenever I think on this subject, I could shed tears; for I now feel from it, I have felt from it. When I was but yet a child, I had a favourite teacher; and, as nature put few

grains of reserve in my disposition, I would run, in any trifling distress of my companions, any childish misdemeanours, to her—I would tell her our little distresses, and our little imprudencies, which a few falsities might have concealed. She would forget to commend that love of truth which really actuated me, and, attributing my confession to the fear only of being discovered, would reprove me with the same severity as if the faults had been denied as well as perpetrated; and punishment unmitigated was frequently the only effect I drew from my sincerity.—It is thus, my dear brother, that even now, when I express to my aunt all that I feel, and would paint to her all that imagination presents to me, she reproves or rallies me; and I have now learnt to spare her, as well as myself, the pain which I see my difference of sentiment gives her.

I have yet many things to say; but my aunt, who would never leave me alone, having had company, prevented me from sitting down to write to you till night: but I could not sleep without relating to you the ideas which now fill my imagination and my heart. I have related them, and the first streams of the dawn now penetrate my windows, and obscure the light on my table.—Adieu then, my dear brother. I think of you with a thousand emotions of tenderness, but to-night I will not promise to dream only of you.

LETTER XXX.

SLEEP and I have at all times but little to do with each other, and at present we have less than ever.

I rose this morning and went with my aunt to the pump-room. I saw and heard nothing there till the entrance of the young ensign and his sister: till that minute I had not known whether I wished to see them there or not. They came, and were as usual unaccompanied, and I then perceived too plainly the feeble satisfaction of beholding them was not all that I had hoped for. I conversed with them; but I could not ask, and they said not a word of the stranger—that benevolent stranger whom yesterday Joanna was so willing to talk of, and as such so desirous to introduce to me.—I was yet talking with them, when Lord S——, for the first time, addressed me. His son was not there, who has been indisposed, but he is recovering; and Lord S—— desired to introduce him to me as to-morrow. I thanked him for the honour which he seemed not to forget he was conferring on me; but remain as yet at a loss for the motives of it.

Lord S—— is one of the many who are very polite as far as respects themselves, but, as to those whom they address, much otherwise. He appears to imagine his superiority would be forgotten, if for a moment he himself laid the consciousness of it aside.—Alas! these children of vanity and weakness imagine they create respect where they excite disgust; and that mist, which conceals the error from themselves, increases its enormity to all others.

While I was ill, Lord S—— had before waited on my aunt; but I had made no enquiry about it, and now I only know that he interrupted my conversation with Joanna, who presently after quitted the room.

My aunt has just left me, and has proposed an airing, for which I well know her reason, as she will always find some method of drawing me from my writing; yet it is then that I most feel that bond of nature which draws me so irresistibly to you, my

brother; it is then that I most feel, and that I most rejoice in that sympathy of soul between us, which enables me to acknowledge every emotion as it passes, every passion as it arises in mine.

We have been out, my dear brother: the choice of our route was left to me. Do you think I had philosophy enough to name any other than that of yesterday? Indeed I had not; and, shall I own it? I scarce wish to have. I thought the carriage would never come in sight of the house—to speak more sincerely, I thought it would never reach the spot where I last beheld the animated stranger. As we drew near I looked out. I was scarce conscious of doing it, or of the wish which I had formed again to behold him there. This wish, which, warmly as my fancy pursues every one which arises, amounted to suspense, to hope, to expectation. I was yet unconscious of its strength, till, casting my eyes toward the spot, I beheld its disappointment. We passed on, and lost sight of the house in a minute. We returned by another way, and today at least I shall live without beholding or knowing more of him who has thus intruded on my peace.

My aunt, who I believe observed my absence of mind, entered into a conversation with me, and talked of Werter and its author, and of completing all my wishes on that head. She then asked what I thought of the Recess.

I have not told you the story of my reading it. Two days ago, could I have believed I could put pen to paper after perusing that work, and have written so many sheets without expatiating on its beauties!—that elegant work, in which is united all that is most charming to the heart and the imagination! Its language, with all the fire and all the softness of poetry, conveys images the most enchanting to the fancy, and scenes the most interesting to the heart. Dr C——'s daughter brought it to me. I began it the next day, and, from the moment I first opened it, till the last sorrowful scene which closes that overwhelming narration of miseries, I quitted not the book. As I read, I felt all the pains of suspense at my heart, and I know not a term which can convey to you an idea how infinitely I felt myself interested through the whole: I was frequently affected even beyond the power of weeping, and scarcely could prevail on my aunt, with all my entreaties, to let me read the last volume: but persuading her that I should, perhaps, be less affected when alone, I had all the luxury of weeping over it by myself. I concluded it some hours before I attempted to rest, and then I started from my dreams, impressed with all the sensations I had felt so strongly in perusing it. Want of repose, and the extreme agitation of my spirits, produced a slight fever: my aunt thought it violent, and concluded me delirious; but a draught ordered by Dr. C—— soon composed me, and I waked from a sleep of some hours as well in health, and as sound in my intellects, as I usually am. Another day of quiet, however, was prescribed me: I obeyed, and till yesterday morning quitted not my room. It was then that I was permitted to make this visit I had before resolved on. When I projected it I thought only of the children of sickness and sorrow: I knew not, my brother, that the roof which concealed them, concealed also a son of genius and science, the pupil of sensibility and graces.

LETTER XXXI.

MY aunt cultivates a numerous acquaintance here. She took me this afternoon to Mrs. ——, a schoolfellow of hers: I remembered being once introduced to her at London. She is very gay, and there were several card-tables. Miss C—— was one of the company, and a Mr. Layton with her, whom I remembered having seen when I was at Dr. C——'s: I was put in a party with them and a troublesome coxcomb, who, since Burell has left us, contrives to conduct my aunt and me from the pump-room of a morning. He is one who joins great forwardness and affectation of manners to a most disagreeable and inelegant form, united to a countenance as bold as it is otherwise inexpressive.—What a contrast, my dear brother, to him whom I yesterday saw!

This strange being surprized me by enquiring of me after Mr. S——, who, he said, had been dangerously ill, he had heard, and that from serving me. Dr. C—— had told my aunt he was confined with a cold. I had felt myself interested for him, fearing it had originated from his politeness to us. I slightly, however, informed this coxcomb how far my knowledge reached on the subject.

He played with me, and we lost two rubbers, entirely, he told me, through my fault. Miss C—— took him in compassion, as she said; but it was in vain; Mr. Layton and myself beat them two others, and his ill luck, joined to Mr. Layton's raillery, seemed beyond his philosophy, and he gave signs of impatience and ill temper which a more trying occasion would scarcely have excused.

How many are the complaints of the crosses of life! And yet it is thus that out of nothing we create them, and multiply them upon ourselves.

Miss C—— is addressed by this Mr. Layton, and they are soon to be married.—I think, were I in the situation she acknowledges, I should not bear to see the man, on whom I was so near bestowing myself, sufficiently easy and disengaged to join in every laugh, or scarcely to rally any one. Happily Miss C—— is not of that opinion, and she seems fully contented with the homage Mr. Layton pays her, in allowing neither wit or beauty to any other woman.—I have met with some gentlemen, whose universal system of politeness to women seems to consist in this alone: their own hearts best know what are the passions which they thus mean to gratify, and what must be their opinion of the minds to which they thus address themselves. On what idea they would proceed I know not; but to me they are doubly disgusting, as I perceive their injustice to others, and, as I am certain of it in another situation, to myself.

We did not come home till it was late. I have not yet told you, that, in the course of the evening, Miss C—— asked me if I did not think the Recess a pretty thing enough. I was at some loss for an answer; but I conquered myself, however; and said only, Yes.—

I once saw the charming author of this work, who was long injured in my opinion; I now wish to acknowledge my prejudice and injustice, and my present consciousness that it was such to her; but I am not to be so fortunate.

Miss C—— informs me, that she has set out on a visit to a neighbouring kingdom, where perhaps even now she wanders over the hills once marked with the footsteps of Ossian, and there, whilst the blast of the heath conveys his spirit to her soul, she contemplates those singular and touching graces of nature which she so well knows how to describe. For me, my dear brother,

“Who feel, whene’er I touch my lyre,
“My spirits sunk beneath my proud desire,”

when I began to awaken from the sweet delusion, that, guided by her, my imagination had yielded to—when I could behold it as the offspring only of fiction and fancy, I wet this first and most beautiful effort of modern romance with the involuntary tears of admiration, and thought of the words of Caracchi. I will flatter myself, that something like what passed in his mind, when, on beholding the paintings of Raphael, the emphatic exclamation, “And I too am a painter!” burst from his lips, at that enthusiastic moment enraptured my heart.—

How have I lost myself in my subject! I told you Miss C——’s question, and how I answered. I had reason to be angry with myself, when I saw Mr. Layton’s face; and thought of what you once told me, when you said that my sentiments might be rather said to be conveyed by my eyes than my lips. He seemed hurt for Miss C——, but, happily for me, his confusion served to conceal that which he had raised in me.—He shuffled the cards that lay next him, mixed half of them with his own, and then, bursting into an assumed fit of laughter, said, he had lost deal. This produced a dispute between the two gentlemen, on which, what had really caused it was forgotten; and I felt myself obliged to Mr. Layton for the manner in which he had relieved me as well as himself. I was in fact to blame; for I should have known that in this age of science, of reading, and sensibility, numbers peruse what is publicly approved, only because it is so, and for that reason alone join in talking of writings and feelings, which they neither conceive nor understand. Miss C—— I imagine to be one of this class; but she was sincere, and expressed what she felt, and no more; and that ardor with which I would have spoken of this work, might have discomposed her as much as the coldness and the vagueness of her expressions did me.

LETTER XXXII.

I BROKE off abruptly last night, lost in a thousand conjectures when and by what means I should see more of that resemblance of you which has so much prepossessed me. The minutes passed unperceived away: and as I recalled the figure and the expression of every animated feature which had struck me, I wished to make out the reason of his residing where he now does; but only bewildered myself, and when I cast my eyes on my watch, an hour had elapsed.

It is thus that, on the wings of contemplation and fancy, the time of our being is borne away: alas! it is in the periods of sorrow we wish it to pass, but in vain: in the slow and lingering moments of anguish, we bewail the length of that span of existence which is allotted to us. I sighed as the reflection occurred to me. I kissed your dear little picture, and resolved to be detained no longer; but this resolve was made only to be broken. On my toilet lay some trinkets I had arranged there, and which I had purchased for my Ruth and her little Sophy. But why should I say *my* Ruth? I have deceived myself; I have felt a friendship which has not been returned; I have opened my heart to receive her, and she forgets me. I have written to her, but received no answer. My aunt triumphs over me, and talks to me of becoming wise by experience; but experience, my dear brother, it shall be. I will not trust to doubts after my second letter. I would have sent a messenger, but my aunt rallied me, and would not suffer it; but if this day passes and my suspense is not relieved, if she refuses that request, I will myself go to my Ruth—the world shall not detain me.

As I cast my eyes on the expression I have just used, warm as it is, I find, when I look into my heart, that it means nothing. I perceive too plainly, that the curiosity and anxiety I now feel only to know more of one inhabitant of a small and insignificant spot, is alone sufficient to detain me. I am determined, however, I will send to Ruth, and a thousand apprehensions for her, a thousand suppositions from her conduct, throbbed at my heart, and drove all sleep for some hours from my eye-lids.

I am not to go out this morning, in expectation of Lord S——. What have I to do with the formality of introducing his son? Is it not sufficient that my aunt should receive them?

I have breakfasted with my aunt, and my dress does not please her; it is too simple, I think is her objection. I am to set myself off, and I see my drawings laid about with an air of negligence. This I always hated, and now it is more displeasing to me than ever. I read something in the looks of my aunt which I cannot account for—

I was called suddenly away—I have been surprized, and overjoyed. A gentleman, was my aunt's message, waited for me.

How often has it been observed, how often will it be observed, that the mind, when strongly impressed with some leading idea, still connects every new one with that which already predominates there! It was so with me: my feet, "swift as imagination or the wings of love," conducted me to the room where I expected to see——Need I tell you whom I expected to see?——I opened the door—I looked, I will own, for my stranger, when, with steps almost as rapid as my own, Burell advanced. Disappointed, trembling, and agitated, I scarce knew how to receive him. The disorder of my countenance was in a moment communicated to his. I recollected myself: My friend Burell! said I, as I gave him my hand. He recovered himself. My aunt expressed her sorrow at having so much

surprized me; but the intelligence he came to communicate compensated, how much more than compensated, for it. Burell, I saw it with pain, gazed earnestly at me, and seemed willing to dive further into the cause of that involuntary emotion which had nearly overcome me. My aunt mentioned our expected visitors, and all I had before felt was painted in his countenance. He made some incoherent enquiries: I explained the whole to him. As he looked at me, his spirits seemed to return: he talked of my health, and seemed to sympathize in my pleasure, as he told me that these arms may again hope to receive, that these eyes may soon expect to behold, the restorer of my existence, my friend, the friend of nature and of choice, in you, my dear brother.—I perused the tender sentence where you mention your Theresa, and kissed the brotherly lines. I shall be all impatience till your arrival.

Burell did not stay long; he seemed disturbed, and I flew to my own apartment, where I look at your picture, and alternately write and contemplate it as it lies beside me.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.